

Managing Two Future Changes in Leisure and Tourism Services

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Introduction

Two important issues of change for leisure and tourism services will be the changing age demographics and Micro Trends related to leisure behavior. For example in the U.S., there will be a large population shift when the Boomer generation (born 1946-1964) starts retiring in after 2011 [1]. As this shift occurs, the Boomer generation will be able to manage time differently while the X generation (born 1965-1976) and Y generation (born 1977-1999) will be poised to change working positions and earn more discretionary money. In addition, there will be more public awareness for Micro Trends related to leisure behavior that could enhance the tourism experience.

Aging populations and time as a resource for leisure behavior

The demographic of age can be associated with increased opportunities to market services or products oriented to tourism and leisure-based behaviors [1]. In general, the population of the world is older in developed countries [2]. For example, Germany is expected to have half of its population be over the age of 65 by 2030. Similar reports are expected for Italy and France. Currently, Japan has a median age of 41 and is characterized as the oldest population in the world [2]. In the U.S., the generation demographics of Boomers (born 1946-1964), Xers (born 1965-1976), and Yers (born 1977-1999) will create social changes as each generation ages [3].

This major demographic shift for serving older tourists may occur in phases, but Nazareth (2007) cautions tourism service providers to consider the characteristics of leisure behavior when planning products and services. For example, Nazareth [1] suggests that many older tourists will have more discretionary time and concern for quality, instead of a concern for "speedy transactions". Nazareth [1] predicts the emergence of a "New Leisure Economy" where the large group of older tourists shifts their lifestyles. As members of the Boomer generation retire, customers for leisure-based services will have more time opportunities and choose their services and products with an orientation to personal needs, instead of work or career influences. In contrast, younger generations of workers will move up in the workplace and also represent a large source of customers for leisure behavior. In the U.S. as of 2010, the Y generation has become larger than the Boomer generation [2]. Nazareth [1] points out that these generations will demonstrate different priorities for life. Specifically, Nazareth [1] predicts that Xers and Yers will be oriented to balancing work commitments with more leisure experiences than the Boomer generation. Overall, these social shifts in demographics suggest that professionals who want to market services or products oriented to leisure and tourism will have increased opportunities to develop enterprise ideas by increasing the time for participation and the quality associated with experiences for older tourists. Younger generations of tourists will still orient to the scarcity of time in their lifestyles, but there are Micro Trends occurring that relate to leisure and tourism services for all generations.

Micro trends related to leisure and tourism

For older tourists, both Penn [4] and Nazareth [1] suggest that the experience and challenges of aging will result in a growing attention to

nutrition, an increased use of individualized leisure activity to support wellness/health, and a demand for experiences that result in inspiration or enlightenment through interpretation or facilitation.

In the U.S., approximately one third of the American population is labeled as obese. Another third of the population is labeled as overweight [5]. There are growing concerns about the numbers of people who are experiencing high blood pressure, weight management issues, diabetes, and mobility problems [6]. One obvious service concern for people with weight management issues will be the role of nutrition for improving the health of individuals. Leisure and tourism operations that include food services will see increasing opportunities to market the nutritional benefits associated with vacation or travel experiences.

Penn [4] reports that participation in team activities like baseball, volleyball, and hockey have been declining by an average of 13% a year (1995-2005). Sports like golf and basketball have flattened. On the rise are activities that were virtually unheard of 20 years ago. One new micro trend identified by Penn [4] are activities characterized as nature-based activities and include skateboarding, kayaking, snowboarding, mountain biking, and backpacking. This micro trend suggests that activities can be personal, rather than communal (e.g. group-oriented stadium sports). Penn [4] characterizes these sports as providing the opportunity to retreat to less controlled environments for individualized experiences. Specifically, the ethereal effect of participation in physical activity is a prime factor for many individuals who continue to be active well into their senior years. Whether it be the endorphin release or in another case the coupling of exercise and communing with the outdoors, these experiences have a definite impact on activity selection. In today's market for leisure and tourism services, this could indicate a stronger market for designed opportunities such as fishing, hiking, or canoe trips.

Lastly, professionals in leisure and tourism services may want to consider marketing information and products for education or enlightenment that permit customization and personalization. Moe [7] refers to this trend as a convergence of holistic medicine and people wishing to live longer with a better quality of life. One obvious variable in this micro trend is the need for information that provides education and motivation. Customers are likely to want programs and products that can be changed to different levels of complexity and adapted for

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climate, budget, and their level of health. Professionals in leisure and tourism settings would need to have specific leadership skills and knowledge to offer education and enlightenment experiences. Outdoor recreation settings could include meditation products and information to enhance park visits, hikes, and nature interpretation. Personal trainers could develop programs that incorporate and measure greater body awareness or relaxation states, such as yoga, tai-chi, or Ai-chi.

Conclusion

One response to these prospective changes is to continue with traditional services for leisure and tourism. The assumption that future tourists and their participation will stay the same is not supported by the historic changes noted for the leisure and tourism industry by Barrows, Powers, and Reynolds [2]. Leisure and tourism services are significant contributors to local, state, national, and international economies. The prospective changes that could result in a growing leisure economy are related to changing age demographics and micro trends related to leisure and tourism behavior. Professionals in leisure and tourism

services may want to anticipate these prospective changes in terms of the way services are delivered to customers and the types of activity experiences that are offered.

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