

BABY BOOMERS COULD REIGNITE BOOM TIMES FOR TOURISM

They invented back-packing and readily identify with adventure, expanding horizons and even a little rebellion. Now the first wave of baby boomers, born just after World War II, is ready to relax, indulge and enjoy life's next adventure: retirement. But is the current global crisis going to afford them this luxury?

To a tourism industry in the doldrums, this may be a yawning opportunity.

Baby boomers are the largest demographic segment in the Australian population, and they control around 50 per cent of the country's wealth. In retirement they are ready to play, if they can, yet few businesses really understand the baby boomer demographic or how to engage it.

To bridge this gap, and answer these questions, the inaugural **Baby Boomer Tourism Summit is being held on 25 May at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney.**

The Summit will examine the latest research showing trends and forecasts for this demographic phenomenon, as well as exploring the moods and motivations of this sector, and the triggers for successfully engaging it.

"The sheer size of the baby boomer group means we can't afford to ignore them. They have been on the radar for governments and policy-makers for some time now because of the implications for government services and the economy in general," said Mr Leigh Kealton, Baby Boomer Tourism Summit convenor.

"Businesses are yet to really understand and engage with this demographic. Many would be unaware that boomers are the fastest growing group using Facebook, for example. With the front runners now in their early to mid sixties and a massive wave of their generation to follow, there is a real opportunity to capitalise on a market that is freeing up from restraints such as mortgages, children and full time work."

Baby boomers are a very distinct generation, born after World War II up until the early 1960s. They identify with being young-at-heart rather than senior citizens, yet advertising research has shown they feel neglected and under-represented in advertising and marketing.

They are also on a mission.

“The current economic climate has been a body blow for many retirees’ nest-eggs but they are also aware that they are ageing, and they won’t always be fit enough to take on the travels and adventures they would like to do.”

In this sense, baby boomers share ground with backpackers, who also see themselves as having a limited window of opportunity to travel, regardless of external financial factors such as exchange rates or stock markets. A similarity noted by Mr Kealton after an extensive career in adventure and backpacking tourism niche marketing.

Baby boomers are a valuable demographic group that could help to fill the gaps in an otherwise spartan marketplace.

International visitor numbers have been struggling for several years, and the current global economic turmoil has drowned any hopes of a radical turn around in the short term. At the same time, employment fears and a decrease in disposable income are curbing many other Australians’ travel plans.

“Destinations and operators need to start planning urgently to cater for the interests and requirements of the travelling baby boomer. It’s not only the grey nomad experience baby boomers are interested in. There is enormous opportunity in pub-stays, B&B, cruising, skiing and festival hopping for example,” said Mr Kealton.

“The boomers haven’t lost the sense of adventure they had in the 1960’s and 70’s. They don’t necessarily want to spend the kids’ inheritance, although some will feel

like they've earned a bit of luxury, but most do want to travel comfortably, get beyond the usual 'package' experience and have some fun."

The one day summit will include an address by Roy Morgan Research (Tourism Travel and Leisure) and the latest baby boomer research undertaken by leading researchers, alongside other eminent experts with practical advice on tapping into this potentially lucrative demographic.

For program details and registrations please go to www.boomersummit.com.au

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