



Multifaceted tourists: A focus on grey travelers' holidays

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Study Objectives

- To evaluate the grey market in terms of their characteristics in relation to holiday taking
- Greys are also referred to as seniors, mature market, older market, muppie market, young sengies, whoopies, retiring baby boom and pappy boom



UK Grey Travellers

- Until the 1980's mature travellers were not recognised as a significant segment (Jang and Ham, 2009; Moschis, 2003)
- Segmentation of the tourism market has developed considerably in recent years although much of it has been focused on understanding motivation (Sedgley, Pritchard and Morgan, 2011; Shoemaker, 1989, 2000)
- Issues of definition of age segments (Littrell, Paige and Song 2004)
- This study categorises greys as 50 plus years, in line with most definitions and with the Thomson Holidays' Gold profile

Grey travellers

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- Are overlooked in tourism literature (Littrell et., al 2004)
- Are increasing in longevity
- Market segment will grow in size and wealth and propensity to spend on travel ...and they spend longer on holiday (Callan and Bowman, 2000; Huang and Tsai, 2003, Hunter Jones and Blackburn, 2007, Reece, 2004)
- Have more discretionary time, and prefer to travel in off-season or shoulder season (Anderson and Langmayer, 1982; Callan and Bowman, 2000; Hunter Jones-and Blackburn, 2007; Patterson and Pegg, 2009)
- Have a higher discretionary income, less debt, are often empty nesters (Callan and Bowman, 2000; Littrell *et al* 2004; Ryan, 1995)

Slide 4

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You have a lot on this page

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The grey holiday maker

- Does not like to be portrayed as old
- Can be very loyal
- Takes more holidays than average and plans at least two holidays within a year
- Most likely to take a package holiday
- This is because it is less risky

(Callan and Bowman, 2000, Evans, Jamal and Foxall, 2009; Hornerman, Carter Wei and Rus, 2004, Mintel, 2010)



While on holiday....

- Greys have different experiences and there are different typologies
- Limited literature
- One typology: 'Younger at heart and older at heart' (Littrell *et al.*, 2004)
- 'Live for today' (Mintel, 2004)
- 'So much time to live' (Fleischer and Pizam, 2002)



Implications from literature

- Industry should capitalise on grey attitude and propensity (Hudson, 2010; Hunter-Jones and Blackburn, 2007)
- Need for marketers to explore actual statements from older people based on feelings and experiences (Patterson and Pegg, (2009)
- Crucial for incoming and outgoing marketers to understand grey travel behaviour. There is an over research on socio-economic variables and health (Reece, 2004) and a lack on grey travellers' actual holiday experience
- This is essential for tour operators, hotel managers and destination managers to be able to attract this valuable market

However.....

- Financial circumstances of greys is changing
- Adults have children later and young adults stay at home longer
- Savings have reduced (Huffington Post, 2012)
- Economic downturn makes the elderly more vulnerable
- Fuel costs have soared and pensioners are vulnerable
- Greys are still taking holidays but feel they are less affordable (Fenge, Hean, Worswick, Wilkinson, Fernely and Ersser, 2012)



Methodology

- Interpretive approach, qualitative research using phenomenological semi structured interviews
- TUI UK granted access to their Gold consumers
- Interviews took place in a Thomson Gold hotel, in Los Gigantes, Tenerife over a period of one week and lasted between half an hour and one hour
- 12 interviews were conducted and saturation was reached
- Recorded transcripts were evaluated using template analysis
- Interviews were also conducted with Thomson senior management as a part of the holistic study but findings are not applicable to this focus/paper

Interview Room



Findings: The UK grey market package holiday experience



Discussion of findings

- The theme of security was clearly evidenced; this fed into all the other themes
- Security did not necessarily manifest itself as 'security' as such
- The literature on risk is applicable and transferable
- For many of the themes there are large gaps in the literature

Implications of study

- The grey market is extremely important to the UK travel industry
- There is a lack of detailed research on the grey market holiday experience
- Practitioners and industry stakeholders should capitalise on grey market needs to enhance their holiday experience and therefore loyalty and profitability

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