

# Trends, Consumer Groups and How to Inspire Visitors

Steve Taylor, University of the Highlands and Islands

## Aims

- ▶ To identify:
  - ▶ Generic consumer trends
  - ▶ Tourism and ecotourism developments
  - ▶ Potential national and international consumers
- ▶ Introduce ideas to inspire these consumers
- ▶ Conclusions on branding and marketing-cluster activity

## Methodology

- ▶ Primary and secondary research by partners

## 'Caveats'

- ▶ This is a 'snapshot'
- ▶ Trends are very 'fluid'
- ▶ Issues with generalising
  - ▶ eg. overlapping typologies
- ▶ Regional variations - eg. consumer markets
- ▶ Focus on 'demand side', not 'supply side' (ie. Business operation)

## Generic consumer trends

- ▶ Holistic approach to well-being
- ▶ Growing empowerment of consumers (TripAdvisor reviews)
- ▶ 'Visibility' of product choices (sharing on social media)
- ▶ Rethinking plastic
- ▶ Local foods (with provenance)
- ▶ 'The sharing economy - access not ownership
- ▶ 'Try before you buy' (the rise of VR)
- ▶ Learning to disconnect

## Dopamine detox

# TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING

**SILICON VALLEY'S** latest wellness trend is dopamine fasting, which means cutting back or regulating the amount of the so-called happy hormone. This is done by reducing pleasurable activities such as spending time online, socialising, or eating certain foods. For example, some people feel a hit of pleasure when they check their social media posts to see how many likes they've received. Tuning out of social media is a way to cut back on hits and find calm and ease stress in an over-stimulated world.

### **FUN FACT**

According to the New York Times, a more accurate term would be "stimulation fasting."

*Is it time  
to reset  
your happy  
hormones?*



## Megatrends in tourism - drivers of change

- ▶ Limitless discoveries - the road less travelled - 'overtourism' issues (time to 'dwell' and out-of-season)
- ▶ Sustainability issues becoming more prominent (sustainable travel is an oxymoron?)
- ▶ A move towards 'experiences' not products (ref. AirBnB or TripAdvisor)
- ▶ Technology that inspires, informs and captures - but is there a 'backlash'?

## Trends in tourism/ ecotourism

- ▶ 'Live like a local' (AirBnB)
- ▶ Wellness tourism - physical and mental
- ▶ Trav-agogy (vacations complement formal education)
- ▶ 'Immersion' in the environment/community
- ▶ Creative retreats
- ▶ Increase in 'trail tourism'
- ▶ Increasing product range for female travellers
- ▶ Solo travel (1 in 4 US travellers last year)

## Consumer typologies

- ▶ Curious travellers<sup>1</sup> - affluent free spirits, who want new experiences
- ▶ Natural advocates<sup>1</sup> - slower travellers and explorers with above-average income, who want to 'get away from it all'
- ▶ Ethical travellers<sup>2</sup> - shunning big business
- ▶ Soft v dedicated eco-tourists<sup>3</sup> - cf 'acting responsibly' v 'driven by sustainability principles'
- ▶ Fun-loving globetrotter<sup>4</sup> - like guided activities. Dislike 'inauthentic' and 'harmful' experiences

<sup>1</sup> VisitScotland

<sup>2</sup> Future Foundation

<sup>3</sup> Holden, 2000

<sup>4</sup> Promote Iceland

## Key consumer groups

- ▶ Millennials (mid-20s to mid-30s)
- ▶ Baby boomers (born 1946-64)
- ▶ Families
- ▶ Small group travellers
- ▶ Solo travellers
- ▶ Female travellers
- ▶ 'Passion communities'



Different types of marketing activities dictated by who we are trying to reach

The tourism passion communities are groups of people that travel with the primary idea of pursuing a special interest, including a hobby, an activity or a motivation. This infographic provides insights on four passion groups – gastronomy lovers, city life enthusiasts, immersive explorers, and explorers of cultural identity and roots. Findings are based on a survey conducted among 3012 respondents from 12 countries.

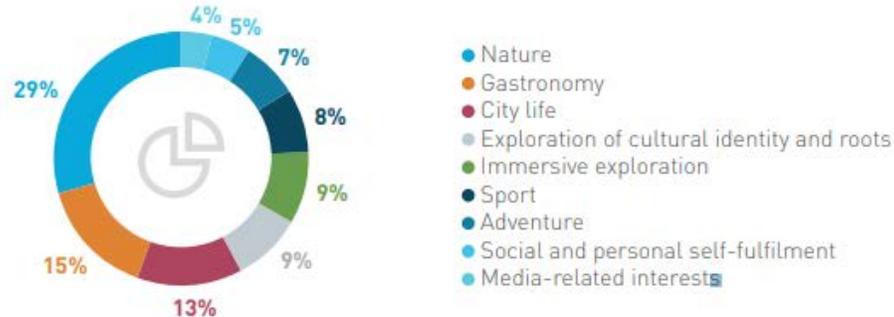
**1/3** RESPONDENTS INDICATED THAT THEIR INTERESTS AND PASSIONS ARE KEY FOR THE CHOICE OF HOLIDAY DESTINATIONS.

## TOURISM PASSION COMMUNITIES



### NATURE IS THE LARGEST INTEREST DRIVING PEOPLE'S TRAVEL DECISIONS

Primary interest to travel (share of respondents)



### EUROPE IS VERY WELL POSITIONED TO ATTRACT EACH OF THE FOUR PASSION GROUPS

Most attractive places visited to pursue a specific interest – regional aggregate

## Countries to target - established markets

- ▶ Netherlands - great travellers and enjoy outdoor activities
  - ▶ Germany - more affluent and will pay for quality
  - ▶ USA - culture and history and family connections important
  - ▶ Canada - similar to American consumers
  - ▶ Australia/NZ - family connections and historical 'narratives' are key
  - ▶ UK - especially from 'urban melting pots'
- 
- ▶ High propensity for repeat visitors for all of the above, for differing reasons

## Emerging markets

- ▶ China - less inclined to be active, and often in large family groups
- ▶ Japan - more likely to try new experiences and travel independently
- ▶ India - sightseeing and landmarks more important
- ▶ Russia - wealthy and looking for luxury (already key in Finland)
- ▶ Italy - surprisingly less motivated to be outdoors
- ▶ France - less likely to travel abroad

## Reaching consumers - booking

- ▶ Online booking - 'live availability', easy booking, consumer feedback
- ▶ Independent bookings = 80%+ of market
- ▶ Online travel agency (OTA)
  - ▶ By 2022 over 33% OTA booking will be on 'mobile devices'
- ▶ Tour operators - still growing
- ▶ AirBnB, Expedia, TripAdvisor 'experiences' - at a cost...
- ▶ Personalized offerings (and past behaviours) tailoring products

## Promoting ecotourism – key messages

- ▶ Wanting quality - and 'value', not cheap
- ▶ A need for privacy - time to reflect
- ▶ But want to share social capital
- ▶ Seeking simplicity
- ▶ 'Empathy' - respect and responsibility
- ▶ Importance of novelty
- ▶ Have a clear 'identity' and USP (and differentiation)

## Promoting ecotourism – key messages

- ▶ Expertise of guides highly valued
- ▶ Wilderness means different things to different people
- ▶ Life-affirming experiences
- ▶ ‘Post-experience communal effervescence’
- ▶ Use stories (on myths and legends) to engage
- ▶ Link food back to the landscape
- ▶ Exhibit genuine ‘Finnish-ness’ etc.