CBI Product Factsheet:

Senior travel from Europe
**Introduction**

Europe is a promising source market for senior travellers, due to the increasing volume of its senior population and the increasing penetration of travel throughout this group. Seniors are nowadays healthier and wealthier than previous generations, and they are more flexible in their travel periods than other categories of travellers are. Tourism providers will have to adapt their product range to the needs and preferences of senior travellers. Senior travellers are especially interested in experience holidays which combine adventure, nature, culture and encounters with local people. The interest of senior citizens in derived products such as spa and wellness treatments is also expected to increase.

**Product description**

**Product definition**

All European countries are facing a similar demographic trend: the share of senior citizens is increasingly significantly. In this Product Factsheet, the term ‘senior’ is used to refer to retired people (who are generally 65 years of age or older).

**Traveller profile**

**Common characteristics**

Some common characteristics of European senior travellers are that they:

- Are more willing to spend money on travel.
- Are searching for new experiences and are willing to pay higher prices for such experiences if they find them worthwhile.
- Are able to enjoy longer holidays as they have few or no work or family commitments.
- Prefer to travel in off-peak periods as they can save money through off-peak discounts and avoid crowds.
- Spend more time planning their trip than younger age groups.
- Frequently use word-of-mouth information to make decisions.
- Generally make more use of traditional media such as newspapers and television.

**Tips:**

- For most tourism providers, tourism is a seasonal business. By targeting senior travellers, particularly in low season, you could promote off-peak seasons and create a more stable income.
- Research the specific needs and requirements of senior travellers and incorporate the results into your product range. This Product Fact Sheet will give you a good starting point.
- Besides modern media such as the internet, also use traditional media like newspapers, television and senior magazines to target seniors.

**Not a homogeneous group**

Despite the aforementioned common characteristics, European senior travellers should not be considered as a homogeneous group, as they have different needs and motivations. Where some travel for rest and relaxation, others travel in order to undertake physical activities or to learn about other cultures.

**Tips:**

- Focus on the development of specific niche products for the senior travel market (e.g. cycling, cultural, health & wellness, cruise or culinary tourism).
- Develop flexible travel packages that contain optional modules with different types of activities and accommodation and different price and comfort levels which senior travellers can choose and combine to create their own customised travel programme.

**Product specifications**

The following product specifications are important for European senior travellers.
Safety

Safety is a major requirement of European senior travellers. They tend to avoid unsafe areas, such as areas with political unrest. Furthermore, they are used to high safety and security standards and would expect the same level when travelling. For example, tourist police in major tourist attractions, safe transportation systems, safety procedures at the beach (such as life belts and life guards), fire extinguishers and emergency exits. The importance of safety tends to increase as they grow older.

Tips:
- In your marketing activities, refer to information from ministries of foreign affairs or embassies about the safety situation in your country/area to reassure safety.
- Pay attention to safety measures and address them in your marketing activities towards seniors to reassure them that your tourism product is safe.

Unique experiences

Today’s senior travellers are more keen to have deep experiences than previous generations were, as they seek to spend their time in more meaningful ways. They like to be active, learn and discover, and they find joy in new experiences. Sense appeal is another key to engage senior travellers. They find a travel experience that incorporates taste, touch, smell or sound generally more memorable.

Tips:
- Engage senior travellers by offering unique experiences: combine adventure, nature and culture with educational components and contact with locals. For example, consider offering a cultural walking tour that includes visits to local communities. In addition, many European senior citizens appreciate having some opportunity to engage in volunteering.
- Engage senior travellers in the life of local seniors (e.g. by joining a tea dance at a senior centre).
- Include culinary components, visual arts or musical elements to help create unforgettable experiences.

High levels of quality

Contemporary European senior citizens are more experienced and more sophisticated travellers than previous generations. They are becoming increasingly quality-conscious and demanding. Examples of quality requirements for tourism providers are personalised and 24/7 services, friendly staff, clean, secure and well-maintained facilities, comfortable rooms and beds, and varied and healthy meals.

Tip:
- Tourism providers should take the quality requirements of senior people into account in their product development. Many of these requirements are also valued by other travel groups, which is an extra advantage.

Good accessibility

Older travellers generally have higher demands in terms of accessibility than other demographic segments. This is because they generally have more minor disabilities. Seniors with mobility limitations, for example, actively seek hotels with ramps and lifts.

Tips:
- Accommodation providers should consider providing facilities for senior citizens for a part of their accommodation, such as ramps and handle bars in toilets, some ground floor rooms, lifts and help with luggage. Provide information regarding these facilities, but do not generalise.
- Tour operators should include transfers in their product range (e.g. door-to-door transport).

Medical facilities

Health concerns are likely to increase when ageing. Some senior travellers seek information regarding the availability of health facilities at their holiday destination. This information will make them feel more secure about travelling away from local health services.
Senior travellers place a higher preference on package travel than younger age groups. Almost 40% of their tourism expenditure for long holiday trips is spent on package travel according to Eurostat, as compared to the average of 24%. The main reason that seniors have for choosing a package holiday is that they find package tours more reliable. Furthermore, they generally prefer to travel in groups of 20-25 persons as they like to meet other people and feel more secure when having other people around them.

**Language**

Tourism providers are expected to have good English language skills. Depending on their European home country, some senior travellers prefer to have guides that speak their own language. This also increases their sense of trust. German senior travellers for example, greatly prefer German speaking guides.

**What is the demand for senior travel from Europe?**

**The number of senior citizens is increasing rapidly**

In 2013, 18.2% of the European population (94.4 million people) were aged 65 years or older. According to population projections, the number of 65+ persons will have grown to more than 20% in 2020 compared to 2010 (Figure 1). With 20.6%, Germany had the highest share of senior citizens, not only in relative numbers but also in absolute numbers, as the country also has the largest population of all European countries.

**Figure 1: Trends in European population by age group, 2010-2060 (index: 2010=100)**

*Source: Eurostat*

**Tip:**

- If you want to focus on volume, target the German and/or the UK senior travel markets, as they have the largest volumes of potential senior travellers in Europe. Furthermore, these markets are very mature, and as mature travellers are generally more likely to travel to developing countries, this offers opportunities for tourism providers in developing countries.
Senior age group showed the strongest growth in long outbound trips

Three of every 10 European seniors travel abroad, according to statistics of Eurostat. Whereas long outbound trips decreased in all age groups between 2006-2011, long outbound trips by senior citizens increased by 15% (Figure 2). Although these are figures from 2011, industry experts expect this trend to continue in the long term, due to the ageing European population. This means that there is considerable potential for increasing the number of foreign trips taken by seniors.

Figure 2: Share of people taking long outbound trips, by age, EU27, 2011/2006 percentage change

Source: Eurostat

Tip:
- Carry out continuous market research, public relations and promotion programs to take full advantage of the growing senior travel market.

Seniors in smaller markets have highest incomes

Seniors in smaller European markets such as Norway, Luxembourg and Switzerland generally have higher net incomes than seniors in Eastern and Southern European markets (Figure 3). Tourism expenditure is also expected to be higher among seniors from these countries.

Figure 3: Median equivalised net income 65+ age group, European countries, 2009-2013, in € thousands

Source: Eurostat

Tip:
- If you want to focus on senior citizens with high tourism expenditure, focus on smaller European markets such as Norway and Switzerland. Travellers with higher incomes are more likely to choose long-haul travel, as such trips are generally more expensive.

Developing Countries in Asia most popular

Developing countries in Asia are the most often visited by European travellers, with Turkey being the leading Developing Countries destination. Turkey is also popular among seniors, not only because of its sun and beaches, but also because of its rich history, culture and nature. Another popular Developing Country destination for European seniors is Thailand, especially for Swedish seniors. Seniors are increasingly expected to visit less known Developing Country destinations in the search for new experiences. An increasing interest among senior travellers in Latin American countries, for example, has been noticed in recent years. Long haul Developing Country destinations are more popular during the winter period, as many European seniors want to escape the cold winter.

Tips:
- In your marketing activities, highlight the unique, authentic experiences that senior travellers will have if they purchase your products. Distinguish yourself from your competitors by differentiating these experiences from those that they could find elsewhere. Enhance the experience even further by using visuals (e.g. high-resolution photos and videos).
- Positive country branding is very important to increase awareness of your destination. However, you cannot do this alone; you need both your local public and the private sectors. You are, therefore, advised to join forces with other tourism stakeholders in your country.
- Intensify your promotion for the winter period, as senior travellers tend to travel more to long haul destinations during the European winter.

For information on tourism trade statistics and macro-economic indicators in the European market in general, refer to CBI’s 'Trade Statistics' for Tourism.
Which trends offer opportunities on the European market for senior travel?

Growing demand for health and wellness tourism

The demand for health and wellness tourism by European seniors is expected to grow strongly in the coming years, as a result of the ageing population and rising costs of health treatment and insurance in their home countries. There are three major driving forces behind this growth: saving time (because of waiting lists in their own country), saving money (if the treatment costs are lower abroad), and the unavailability of treatments in their own country. Not all treatments are medically necessary. Some seniors also want to undergo light medical surgery (non-invasive), such as Botox. India is very popular for health and wellness tourism as it has highly trained medical professionals, it is cheap, treatments are mostly covered by insurance and there are no waiting lists. Eastern European countries such as Romania and Hungary are also popular.

**Tips:**

- Focus on health and wellness tourism for seniors. For example, compose tourism packages that combine spa or (light) medical treatments with accommodation, activities and transfers. Also compose partner packages, as most health and wellness travellers travel in pairs.
- Offer competitive prices for health and wellness tourism: it should be worthwhile for seniors in terms of cost savings to have a health or wellness treatment at your destination.
- If you do not wish to specialise in health and wellness tourism, compose travel packages for senior citizens with optional health and wellness modules.

Seniors are looking for more adventurous holidays

Seniors are healthier than ever and have a more active lifestyle than previous generations. This active lifestyle is also reflected in their holidays. Seniors are increasingly interested in soft adventure activities, which are light physical activities that are combined with interaction with nature or cultural learning. Examples of soft adventure activities are hiking, cycling or snorkelling. This trend is expected to continue in the coming years.

**Tips:**

- Tour operators should consider including light physical activities in senior travel packages such as walking, hiking or cycling tours. Also include enrichments like archaeology, history or culture.
- Add sun and beach modules as extra options in your travel packages. This is very much appreciated by senior travellers from countries with cold winter months (e.g. Sweden).

Family travel

Families increasingly go on holidays together. For example grandparents, parents and children or grandparents with grandchildren. Traditionally, most families used to stay in one resort or destination within their own country or within Europe. Nowadays, families are looking for more adventurous holiday activities further away that they can share and enjoy together, such as going on a safari in Kenya. Long haul destinations that are gaining popularity for family travel are Morocco, Borneo, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Costa Rica.

**Tips:**

- Adapt your product to accommodate travel by multiple generations. Accommodation providers should for example consider having some family rooms available and organising entertainment for children, parents and grandparents.
- Tour operators should consider developing travel packages that are suitable for families.
- Demonstrate your understanding of the diverse needs of multi-generation parties in your marketing activities.

Disposable incomes of senior people expected to decrease

Disposable incomes of seniors are expected to decrease as seniors are facing pension cuts and higher costs of living. This might affect their tourism expenditure as the level of income has a strong impact on whether they will travel and how much they will spend. Furthermore, European residents who will turn 65 during the next ten years might have to work longer as the pension age is being raised in several European countries. These developments can form a threat to tourism providers. However, many seniors have fewer financial commitments such as mortgages and prefer to spend their money...
on experiences rather than on owning many possessions. As a result, they are generally prepared to spend a larger amount of their disposable income on holidays than other groups. The decrease in disposable income is therefore not expected to have a serious effect on senior travel to developing countries.

**Tip:**
- Focus on offering value for money. In addition, consider offering seasonal discounts and special senior discounts to attract seniors with lower disposable incomes.

For information on tourism market trends in the European market in general, refer to CBI’s ‘Trends’ for Tourism.

**With which requirements must senior travel comply in order to be allowed on the European market?**

**Musts**

**No legal European requirements**

Because long-haul senior travel is offered outside the European market, no legal European requirements apply.

**Tip:**
- Although European partners will not pass on legal requirements, you have to comply with the legal requirements in your own country.

**Additional requirements**

**Reliability**

European tour operators are looking for reliable, professional partners. To this end, many request their partners to adhere to codes of conduct they have set for themselves. These codes generally include health and safety requirements, as well as requirements concerning business ethics and social responsibility. They are also likely to regard membership of national and international sector associations and networks as proof of reliability and professionalism.

**Tips:**
- Study the codes of conduct of European tour operators and see how they correspond to your business practices. Consider adapting your business practices accordingly, in order to increase your chances on the European market.
- Join national and international sector associations and networks (e.g. your own country’s tourism trade association). Place the logos of these memberships on your website.
- Share photos and videos, and obtain testimonials and reviews in order to enhance your trustworthiness.

**Liability**

Many Western European senior travellers take out travel insurance before going on a holiday, as their health risks are generally higher. However, European tour operators increasingly ask their (potential) partners for liability insurance to cover possible damage and accidents of their customers during their holiday, especially for travel outside Europe. This is because their own liability insurance often does not cover damage caused by third parties. Tourism providers in Developing Countries who have such an insurance have a great advantage over those who have not. It is difficult to obtain liability insurance in many developing countries, however, as such insurance is not yet available.
Younger people are generally more concerned about environmental and sustainability issues than seniors. A global survey showed that 60+ people had the lowest share of membership of environmental movements (16%) and younger people the highest (26%). However, concern about sustainability is growing, especially in Western Europe. Tour operators in these countries are increasingly looking for sustainable products and partners. Examples of credible sustainable and/or green tourism certification programs are Green Globe, Rainforest Alliance, and Travelife.

For information on tourism buyer requirements in the European market in general, refer to CBI’s ‘European Buyer Requirements’ for Tourism.

What competition do I face on the European market for senior travel?

Competition on the European senior travel market is based on the same aspects as for competition on the general market for long-haul tourism. You may therefore consult the CBI publication entitled ‘Field of Competition’ for Tourism to obtain additional insight into competition.

In addition, consult CBI’s ‘Top 10 Tips for Doing Business with European Buyers’ to learn how to prepare your first contact with European buyers or how to improve your existing relationship with European buyers and gain a competitive edge.

What do the trade channels and interesting market segments look like in the European market for senior travel?

The trade structure for senior travel from Europe does not differ significantly from the trade structure for European tourism to developing countries in general. The most important trade channels for tourism providers in developing countries include local inbound tour operators, specialised European senior travel tour operators, and senior clubs. For an overview of the general trade structure for tourism, refer to Figure 1 in the CBI publication on ‘Trade Channels and Segments’ for Tourism.

Focus on specialised tour operators

Most European senior citizens prefer personal contact when booking their holidays, especially for long-haul destinations. As a result, they continue to book many of their trips through tour operators and travel agencies. Specialised senior travel tour operators offer one of the best opportunities to enter the European senior travel market. Specialised senior travel tour operators know the interests and requirements of their customers very well and can help you to fine-tune your products. In addition, many developing countries are still relatively unknown emerging destinations, and European tour operators who want to offer trips to Developing Countries are therefore quite dependent on local partners. European tour operators tend to work with inbound tour operators or Destination Management Companies that select travel packages for them.
Senior clubs

Some European senior citizens are members of senior clubs, which sometimes offer trips for their members. These clubs might therefore be an interesting trade channel.

Tips:

- Consider using senior clubs (including travel clubs) to promote your products.
- Advertise in senior magazines or on websites dedicated to seniors. One example is Age UK, an online community for senior UK citizens with a section dedicated to travel and lifestyle.
- Have a professional, high quality website with quality photos and videos and detailed product information, as detailed information is very important for senior travellers. Also invest in online promotion such as Search Engine Optimisation so that senior travellers are able to find you.
- When doing business online, it is essential for local companies to offer secure methods of online payment that are accepted nationally and internationally.

For information on tourism market channels and segments in the European market in general, refer to CBI’s ‘Trade Channels and Segments’ for Tourism.

In addition, refer to the CBI publication on ’Finding Buyers’ for tips on locating buyers in the European market.

Useful sources

- European Federation of Retired and Older Persons - [http://ferpa.etuc.org](http://ferpa.etuc.org): publishes interesting publications about relevant topics (e.g. purchasing power of seniors).
- European Travel Commission - [http://www.etc-corporate.org](http://www.etc-corporate.org) - publishes interesting reports about the European travel and tourism market, including the report ‘Demographic changes and tourism’.
- Senior Travel Forum of Tripadvisor - [http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowForum-g1-i13626-Senior_Travel.html](http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowForum-g1-i13626-Senior_Travel.html) - a community about senior travel. Might give you interesting insights into the needs and requirements of senior travellers.

For all CBI market-intelligence documents relating to tourism, visit the CBI ‘Market Intelligence Platform for Tourism’.