

GENERATION Y: The Impact of Generational Changes in Consumer Behaviour on the Marketing of Tourist Attractions

ABSTRACT

This research study compares and contrasts the marketing strategies adopted by operators of tourist attractions aiming to engage effectively with Generation Y (Gen Y) consumers. Gen Y is widely regarded as the next big lifelong cohort with its own unique combination of needs, wants and expectations. For the purpose of this study Gen Y are deemed to be those born between the years 1982 and 1995. Gen Y tend to have relatively high levels of discretionary spend, demonstrate high social orientation and levels of personalisation, and regularly seek authentic experiences. The overall objective of this research is to establish the core behavioural characteristics of Gen Y; identifying how such characteristics manifest themselves in patterns of consumption; and to identify how tourist attraction providers have linked their services to meet these characteristics. The research was undertaken across a range of tourist attractions by employing qualitative semi-structured interviews to gather the necessary data.

The research findings suggest that Gen Y wish to listen less and do more in their visit experiences. Gen Y have a preference for cluster activity and experiences and tourist attractions need to strike a suitable balance between offering a sense of adventure, fun and relaxation if they are to succeed in attracting this particular market segment on a long-term basis. The research identifies a trend toward the co-creation of visit experiences through personalised interpretive encounters facilitated through the employment of mobile media. There is clear evidence that the extent to which tourist attractions' actively encourage and facilitate internet-enabled developments has a direct impact on the extent to which they are viewed as Gen Y friendly.

The paper goes on to advance a number of approaches that attractions could employ to more effectively capture the Gen Y market segment.

KEY WORDS: Marketing strategies, Generation Y, Consumption, Consumer Experiences, Information Communication Technology, Tourist Attractions