



Tech Note

Kansas State Historical Society

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Getting on Board the Tourism Bandwagon: Part I

This is part one of a two-part technical leaflet examining audience from a marketing perspective.

As I drive along the highways and byways of Kansas I find myself automatically looking at car tags. I'm sure this habit originated through a game my family plays to occupy our children on trips, but it is a very enlightening pastime in and of itself. From the smallest Kansas towns to the largest Kansas cities you see cars from around the state and nation. When my children are with me these cars usually mean no more than another state or county to add to the list of what states or counties we've spotted. When I'm in a work mind-set these same cars represent potential visitors to our museums, historic sites, and other heritage attractions throughout the state. Tourists!

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in our nation. In the United States alone one out of every eight people is employed in the travel and tourism industry. It is the third largest retail service industry in the nation following only auto and food sales. These facts are echoed in Kansas where approximately \$3.2 billion dollars annually comes into the state directly through tourism, and 48,000 jobs are tied to the industry. A bonus for organizations involved in preserving and/or interpreting the heritage of Kansas is that cultural, or heritage, tourism is currently one of the favorite destinations of tourists. This type of tourism focuses on our culture, heritage, traditions, and history.

The situation seems ideal! The perfect avenue to increase visitation, bring in more income, and share our heritage with more people. Tourists seek cultural attractions. They want to know about the history and heritage of our nation, of Kansas. What could be better for us? We have "it." They want "it." They'll come to us to get "it." Easy!

Unfortunately, it isn't that easy. Visitors need to find us before they can visit. Then, once they've found us, they have to want to visit. In a nutshell, we need to do three things. First, we need to decide who our target audience is. Who do we want to attract? What do they want from their visit? Who will we target with our promotional materials? Next, we have to make sure that the services and experiences we offer these visitors are what they want. Last, but definitely not least, we need to promote ourselves to our target audience, let them know who we are and what we have to offer them. And, to top it off, we have to do all of this while constantly focusing on our organization's mission.

Knowing who your audiences are and what they want is a good place to begin. Too often we speak of our visitors as the "general public." There really is nothing general about them. Audiences can be examined from many different angles and broken down into many different groups. Each way of looking at our current or potential audiences provides us with a bit more insight about who they are and what they want. By exploring

this we have a better chance of providing the services and experiences that will appeal to them.

Where Does Your Audience Live?

One aspect of our audience that is often ignored is where they come from. Tourists from across the state or across the country usually are looking for a different type of experience than would a local visitor. Local visitors are often your repeat visitors. They tend to want a relaxing visit, to show off a local attraction to out-of-town guests, an opportunity to visit with friends or family, opportunities for cultural experiences, or a place to participate in their community. Tourists from afar often arrive after a several hour drive and usually want restrooms, a gift shop, and to see your most spectacular or interesting pieces. They want to see what makes you unique, what makes you different from the next museum down the road. They also expect good roads, convenient lodging, and good restaurants.

There is a place for both of these groups in most museums, but it is good to consciously think about what each group is looking for as you plan events and promote your organization. The needs of one group does not mirror the needs of the other. So, what you offer one group will likely differ somewhat from what you offer the other group. How to promote yourself to your local audience will probably differ from how you promote yourself to tourists traveling in from across the state. Look at the flyer, brochure, or promotional piece(s) you are using to market your museum. Are you using the same piece(s) to attract both local and tourist audiences? Does it effectively speak to each audience about how you will meet its needs?

Marketing Psychographics

Psychographic research is an intimidating phrase that simply describes how people's beliefs, opinions, and interests are measured and analyzed to create consumer profiles. Demographic research counts numbers, and psychographic research counts information such as music tastes, religious beliefs, and personality traits. If you have ever purchased an item with a mail-in warranty registration card enclosed that asked you what your hobbies are, what magazines you subscribe to, how many children you have, etc. you've been part of the psychographic research trying to explain today's society.

By using this psychographic research the tourism industry has shown that vacation decisions can be categorized by age. Simply speaking, this means that through marketing research the general public has been divided into four groups based on age. Descriptions of each group includes generic characteristics, traits, and motivational forces. Examining these groups as potential audiences may help you decide which group best matches your organization's mission and resources.

- 1) **Matures** (68 million born between 1909 and 1949) The Matures have been further divided into two subgroups.
 - a) Savvy Seniors (1909-1934) Most people in this group grew up with their mother working in the home and extended family close by. They worked hard all their lives and see retirement as an opportunity to travel. Visiting family and friends is often the impetus to their travel. They like to socialize. The tourism boom of the late 1960s began as this group entered retirement age.

They are easy to please, and enjoy "one-size-fits-all" vacation packages. This group would be very happy taking a pre-packaged bus trip where their entire schedule is arranged for them. Savvy Seniors would be happy joining a group from their church or retirement center on a bus trip that includes tours of several Santa Fe Trail museums, motor coach transportation, lodging, meals, and entrance fees.

- b) Sophisticated Seniors (1935-1949) Sophisticated Seniors grew up in a society where pursuing the "American Dream" and mothers working in the home were the norm. Milestones in their youth included television, civil rights, the cold war, Sputnik, and Disneyland. They are interested in being active learners. This Mature group doesn't feel growing old is "cool." Intergenerational travel is popular as they take their grandchildren on trips that the children's parents have no time for. Many are familiar with traveling and want more freedom and flexibility than most "one-size-fits-all" vacation tours allow. They want the ability to choose between shopping and sightseeing or between staying with the bus tour or renting a car for a day or two on their own before rejoining the group. Sophisticated Seniors might be very interested in joining a group from their retirement center on a vacation of Santa Fe Trail museums that includes lodging, meals, and motor coach transportation. They would prefer having the flexibility to rent a car to visit a trail site of personal interest that is not included in the vacation package and then rejoining the group a couple of days later.

2) Boomers (76 million born between 1946-1964)

During their youth Boomers experienced a societal shift toward the disintegration of the family, women working outside the home, and parents who indulged their children. Boomers are individuals who "know" they are special. This group visualizes themselves as being healthy and attractive forever. They have no interest in "one-size-fits-all" vacation packages. They want what they want when they want it. This group was raised during a period of affluence, and they think that times will always be good economically. Their secret weapon that reinforces this belief is the credit card. They are BIG into family travel and take their children everywhere. Boomers are also one of the first generations known for being starved for time. This generation lives busy lives and is tired of hassles, crowds, and noise. They often look for the opposite lifestyle while on vacation – quiet, peaceful, laid back. Boomers are into soft adventure. They would like to "experience" the Santa Fe Trail by spending several hours riding in a wagon across the plains, or "experience" the life of a cowboy by eating trail food and listening to cowboy poets and music around a campfire in the evening.

3) Generation Xers (42 million born between 1965 and 1978)

This latchkey generation grew up with working mothers, single family households, and the disintegration of the nuclear family. Their emphasis is on friends, not family. They grew up on the computer, and they tend to want immediate gratification. Xers look for recreational experiences that are often solitary, inward directed, and independent. They are pragmatic, have high expectations, live for today,

and are difficult to please. Business travel is often part of their work life. More than half have children and live very busy lives. As parents they feel guilty about being a two-income family. Vacation destinations for Generation Xers often cater to children and provide opportunities for busy parents to spend quality time with their children. In an effort to merge their busy schedules with their need to spend time with family, Generation Xers often choose to go on more frequent, but shorter, vacations. They want cutting edge, extreme adventure. They wouldn't be happy sitting around a campfire in the evening eating trail food and listening to cowboy poets. They would prefer being on horseback in the dust, the wind, and the sun rounding up cattle. A bike ride whose image is set by its name, such as the "Flint Hills Death Ride," will also likely draw this group.

4) Generation Y/Echo Boomers/Millennials (78 million born after 1979)

This group is the largest of the four generational groups in this psychographic analysis. One third of all American households contain an echo boomer. They are growing up in a society of two-income families or single-parent households. Their parents feel guilty about working so much. Theirs is the first generation since World War II not to rebel against their parents. They have a significant influence on vacation destinations and how money is spent. Their world is one of global economy, global media, technology, cultural diversity, new social worries, and a fluid family structure. Echo Boomers were raised not just on the computer, but on the internet, MTV, and sound bytes. They are wired, impatient, and have short attention spans. Their peers are their primary reference point for self-definition, personal discovery, and shared experiences. They take more frequent, and shorter, vacations. Instead of getting away for two weeks at a time they squeeze in short family trips on long weekends or wherever they can fit them in. This group likes ownership and creating something that is uniquely theirs; this is the generation that first discovered priceline.com. Echo Boomers have moved away from the self-reliance of the Generation Xers and toward self-invention. They want to walk away from an experience feeling empowered.

Part II of this technical leaflet will explore unforgettable experiences and how the length of vacations is changing.