

Chapter 4

What Will the Tourist Be Doing in 2030?

Tourism began when time began. Babylonian money-traders travelled for business, the Egyptian Queen Hatshepsut took a cruise along the east coast of Africa and the British aristocracy took Grand Tour of Europe with Thomas Cook in the nineteenth century. Tourism is about experiences, whether exploring an unfamiliar culture, shopping, lying on a beach or enjoying sport in far-flung places — or a little nearer home.

What has changed is the massive growth in tourism, including both the choice of destinations and the number of tourists. In Chapter 3, many world megatrends were discussed; this chapter places them in the context of consumer behaviour in the first decades of the twenty-first century. What are the drivers and trends that will shape world tourism and the tourist of the future? Two main areas have been identified: Megadrivers, the macro conditions that will shape international tourism, and trends, which shape individuals' thought processes when they make choices about destination or activity.

Mega Drivers — Economic and Political

A range of factors determines the scale of tourism. Some continue to exert influence decade after decade; others have an effect for a much shorter period. According to the UN World Tourism Organisation (2001), the principal determinants and influences that will impinge on the development and growth of tourism in the future, affecting and creating the tourism economies, are prosperity and affordability, accessibility, events, culture, globalization, competition, and climate.

Prosperity and Affordability

According to research by the Future Foundation, consumers perceive holidays as the number-one luxury product. They desire holidays over houses, fast cars, expensive perfumes and designer clothes (Allsopp, 2004). This desire for holidays has been driven by consumer prosperity and product affordability (Silverstein, Fiske, & Butman, 2005). Prosperity has resulted from rising incomes, which in real terms have doubled over the past 20 years; and affordability has resulted from falling prices.

This is exemplified by consumers who stay in luxury hotels but travel by budget carrier. Consumers are making their money go further, as incomes rise, prices fall. This pattern of economic behaviour is happening all over the world, and over the next two decades the number of people in the middle classes in China, India, and Eastern Europe will grow — and these will be the tourists of tomorrow.

Accessibility

The tourists' world is shrinking because of technological advances. The ability of the Internet to inform and to break boundaries allows consumers to choose a tourist destination anywhere in the world — and beyond. With an improvement in the economies of scale brought about by the online economy, travel and tourism are becoming a buyers' market. In recent years, low-cost airlines have come to represent the pinnacle in the adoption of technology. Travel is much easier today, with more direct flights between destinations, and the cost in real terms — yield per passenger per airline kilometre — is the lowest since statistics have been recorded (Kuhlmann, 2004). The world is opening up to the tourist. Even just a few years ago, many citizens of China and Russia could not imagine travelling outside their village — international travel was more a dream than reality. Today, visa restrictions are less onerous and the world is accessible to nearly everyone.

Events

With the worldwide expansion of accessible tourism destinations, people are increasingly exposed to and influenced by events, whether sporting occasions or environmental disasters. Arbitrary acts of violence by terrorist organisations, increasing occurrences of extreme weather in popular tourist destinations and the role of government policies in all areas of society determine how safe people feel in a particular situation. A lot depends on how specific negative events are dealt with. It has been shown that US tourists are increasingly suffering from “American Angst”, preferring to stay at home or to go to only foreign destinations which are perceived as being pro-American (World Travel Market, 2005). On the positive side, events such as the Olympic Games and the football World Cup increase the number of international visitors to the host countries. Cultural events such as the Edinburgh International Festival and the Hajj in Saudi Arabia shape destinations' social cachet through event-based strategies.

Cultural Capital

As wealth and educational attainment increase, culture becomes more important as a destination driver. The cultural capital of a destination is a measure of the total stock of knowledge, attitudes, perception, skills and tastes that are encompassed within the

arts, sports and heritage of a nation. Anholt (2006) sees culture and heritage as one of the six components of a nation's brand, a key measurement of tourism and the propensity to travel to a destination.

Globalisation and Competition

Globalisation and localisation are two concurrent but apparently conflicting developments: The world is increasingly polarised between the 'macro' and the 'micro'. All countries are integrally locked into the global economy and no country can succeed without operating in all the major established and emerging markets. People respond to globalisation of economies and cultures by looking to their own identities. The openness of the world economy means that the tourist has more choices and increased competition means better value.

Climate

That climate shapes a destination's tourism product is obvious: What would Switzerland be like without snow and skiing or the Caribbean without sun and beach holidays? Figure 4.1 shows how consumer's perception of the climate of a destination influences luxury travellers' choices across all age groups.

Consumer Trends Which Will Shape the Tourist's Choice

How consumers make decisions about their choice of destination is the next consideration. Individual trends shape the tourism proposition and influence the motivation to travel. The trends identified are anxiety about health and safety, demographics, image and brand, technology, environment, individualism, time pressures, movement from an experience economy to authenticity, hedonism and erotica, and perceptions of luxury.

Anxiety about Health and Safety

Since 9/11 and the London bombing, terrorism has come to influence and shape tourism flows and destination choice (Yeoman, Galt, & McMahon-Beattie, 2005). This backdrop of anxiety forces the consumer to decide between two courses of action. Fear leads to risk-minimisation so that perceived dangers will be avoided. However, over time, a sense of complacency develops and people think that "whatever will happen, will happen", so a wider choice opens up again. Associated with this is the events mega driver, where specific events affect tourism in the short term but the resilience of the consumer invariably returns within a short time.

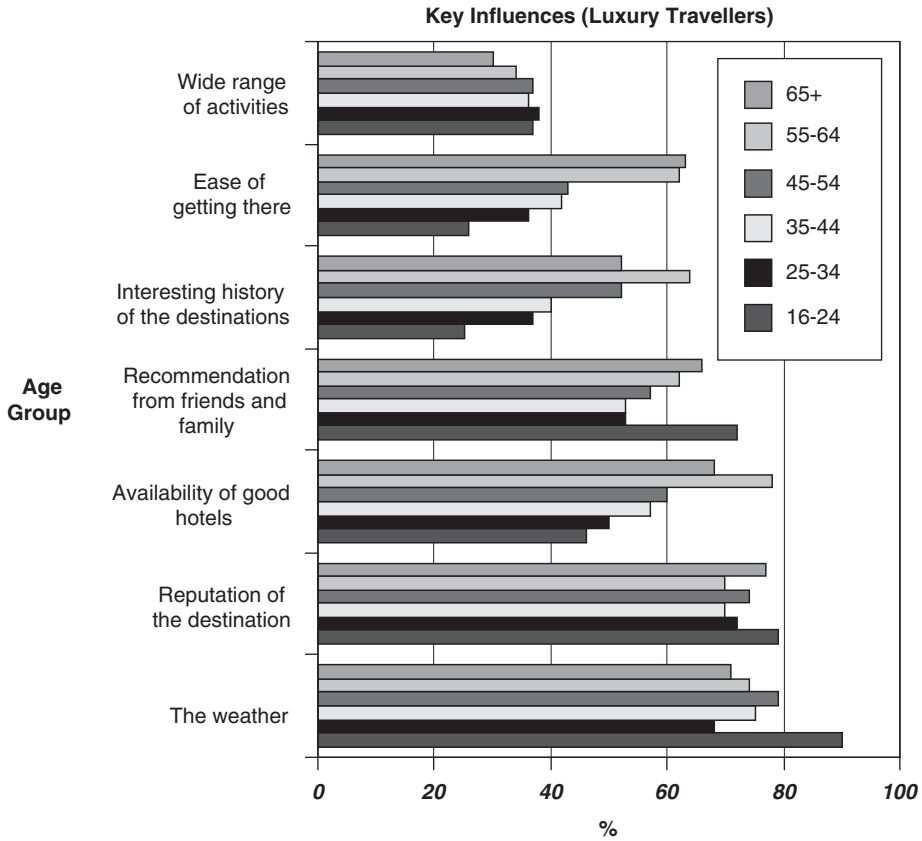


Figure 4.1: Determinants of destination choice amongst luxury travellers.

Demographics

In the established economies the population is ageing, and with an ageing population comes a shrinking workforce and the economic restraints of relying on a pension. Society is changing demographically in other ways as well: higher divorce rates, starting families later in life, and second marriages are altering the make-up of households. In the future greater emphasis will be on multi-generational holidays where destinations have to cater for everyone, from grandparents to grandchildren.

Image and Brand

Destinations will become increasingly fashionable in the future. Tourism products will need to offer something that the consumer can associate with (such as heritage or celebrity endorsement), and new destinations perceived as being ‘untouched’ will

develop an associated cachet. Brand will be a marketing tool increasingly used to distinguish between destinations when the market is saturated with messages. Furthermore, brands and images will become more important, because the choice of destination will be shaped by the values held by the consumer. Destination brands will, in the future, have to be trustworthy, ethical, and sustainable (Yeoman, Munro, & McMahon-Beattie, 2006).

Technology

The tourist of tomorrow will be better informed, have wider choice and be able to purchase holidays on demand, helped by technology such as the Internet, video on demand and online booking.

Environment

Tourists' growing awareness of social and environmental issues leads to a conflict between conscience and the desire to travel. The provision of sustainable travel products (i.e. carbon offsetting) aims to bridge the gap between these two states of mind, but the consumer will ultimately have to decide whether the environment or freedom to travel is of greater importance.

Individualism

A main challenge to the marketing of tourist destinations will be consumers' increasing diversification of interests, tastes, and demands. According to the Future Foundation's *Changing Lives* survey, today's consumers change their hairstyle every 18 months, make a new friend every year and select a new holiday destination every year. Therefore, in this world of constant change and diversification, destinations need to be increasingly innovative in product development, specifically offering tailored experiences to meet changing attitudes and beliefs.

Time Pressures

With changing work practices and traditional work-leisure boundaries blurring, the trend is increasingly towards escapism and indulgence. Several shorter breaks are replacing the established long break as consumers adopt a snacking culture towards holidays, i.e. sampling lots of experiences rather than one main holiday. Increasingly, people want to capture the experience of a place through relaxation or by overloading their senses with adrenaline-charging activities. Tourists want holidays that offer physical and mental recharging in a short time, before they must return to normal life.

Movement from an Experience Economy to Authenticity

From a tourism perspective, as the experience economy matures consumers desire more authentic and real experiences rather than false and manufactured experiences we associate with theme parks and resorts. Driving this trend is higher education attainment, ageing populations, a knowledgeable consumer and concern for how we lead our lives.

Hedonism and Erotica

Hedonism is the philosophy that pleasure is the most important pursuit of humans. The word derives from the Greek 'hēdonē', 'pleasure'. One of the basic tenets of tourism is having fun, whether lying on the beach, sky diving in Namibia or gambling in Macau — it's all about pleasure, entertainment and fun. One of the genres of hedonism is erotica — the pursuit of sexual desire, whether pursued through romance or a lap-dancing experience.

Perceptions of Luxury

Luxury is becoming less about materialism and increasingly about self-enrichment and time. The consumer is increasingly aware of the importance of luxury as a concept of fulfilment. Destinations are adapting to this demand by diversifying into niche areas where the traditional perceptions of luxury and opulence share the market with wellness and self-fulfilment. At the same time, a polarised society of 'haves' and 'have nots' increases the propensity for gated communities, the second homes' debate and the importance of materialism in societies where wealth is just beginning. As consumers in the East gain wealth, they will focus on opulence and 'bling' when on holiday, compared to Western Europeans who already have comparatively high standards of living and who can, therefore, focus on holidays which offer an experience.

What Do People Do on a Holiday?

It has been shown that many factors determine the choices made by tourists. Because of direct and indirect forces, the consumer is making greater demands of the tourist industry. Since the mid-1980s the consumers' view of what a holiday should be has evolved from the traditional fortnight beach holiday into a multiplicity of new experiences, such as short adventure breaks or a 6-month trip round the world.

Studies carried out by Mintel (2005) discovered that the content of holidays is changing. Families are spending more time on activities, although the pool-based holiday is still high on the list of priorities because it provides entertainment for children, whilst allowing parents to relax. However, holidays are now perceived as prime family quality time, something that is on the wane at home. Activity-based

breaks as a means of bonding for families are becoming increasingly popular. Culture-based holidays are also on the increase, with their popularity highest amongst the active-retired generation. The recently retired, or 'empty-nesters', have gone against trends by taking more adventurous holiday breaks than people of similar demographics in the past. The baby-boomer generation is living longer, is more affluent and is undertaking more holidays than comparable generations in the past. With the world experiencing an ageing demographic over the next few decades, plus financial issues associated with pensions and long-term care, this trend, however, may be short lived.

Other areas of the traditional tourism industry are also changing. Business travellers' habits are evolving in the face of uncertain global economic conditions. Digital communication and teleconferencing allow virtual face-to-face meetings without the expense and inconvenience of travelling round the world. For companies tightening their budgets this is seen as a benefit. However, with the market becoming globalised, cultural differences between countries mean that some business dealings are best handled by personal meetings, and this may lead to the development of some travel routes and a decline in others.

Eco-tourism and issues of sustainability are gaining importance with consumers. Although the negative ecological impact of air travel is widely accepted, people's desire to travel to remote areas to experience an unspoiled natural environment continues unabated. Tour operators are quickly beginning to understand the relationship the consumer has with the environment and are providing packages which meet those needs. Ongoing factors which may deter tourists from travelling to certain destinations are fluctuating fuel prices and fear of terrorist attacks. Such factors move the focus of tourism clusters, depending on the current activity in these areas.

Conclusions

Tomorrow's tourists lead complicated lives and have a fluid identity. On one hand they desire eco-stress-free experiences but at the same time they play the tables at Las Vegas. New experiences, luxury, culture and authenticity are some of the trends that will shape the future of world tourism. The tourist wants to sample the ethnicity of the destination, increasingly interests in culture, food and sport are shaping the way people approach their choice of holiday. As a society, our leisure time and disposable wealth are increasing and are primary catalysts within a growing tourism industry. However, the consumers' perception is one of blurring between increasing stress at work and a desire to rejuvenate through experience. In contrast, consumers have a wealth of choice, which means that they search for value for money. The challenge for destinations will be how to offer a heterogeneous product when tourism is becoming homogeneous. Throughout the rest of the book, many of the trends mentioned above will be elaborated on in order to show how they are shaping tourist experiences and products.