

Special Target Markets

Tourism marketing is not an amorphous collection of cold statistics. One cannot pigeon-hole available markets into "one-size-fits-all" compartments. Each tourist is a flesh-and-blood being with his or her individual desires, needs, and expectations.

In the past, conventional wisdom tended to ignore the differences and diversity among segments of the traveling public. However, improvements in buying power and economic status among these segments, changes in political and social attitudes, and increasing mobility in American society and the world itself necessitate a heightened awareness of the needs and desires of these diverse elements.

While the Midland Trail is a stable physical region of 119 miles, it becomes a multitude of regions to different eyes, values, and mindsets. Following are looks at these special markets, with psychological profiles and strategies for catering to these markets.



I. WOMEN

At this writing, Malden is planning a Women's Park, to be situated in the Booker Washington Park. The Women's Park will feature a series of interpretive panels which afford a look at the outstanding women of the Trail and of West Virginia. As women increase in social and economic power, the tourism market must change to meet the needs of the woman traveler.

The number of women-owned businesses is increasing; as such, the Trail should be sensitive to the economic power women wield.

As a group, women tend:

1. To favor shopping as part of their travel experience. This experience includes boutique, antiques, and arts and crafts shopping.
2. To desire clean, comfortable, aesthetically-pleasing surroundings, whether in restaurants or even in restrooms. This tendency seems to be more prevalent among women than men.

At present, the Trail not only lacks sufficient restroom amenities, but also seems to lack sufficient clean rest-room areas.

3. To enjoy leisurely meals at restaurants, more than do men. Pleasant ambience is important. This characteristic suggests that women not only tend to value their travel experiences more than do men, but value them more on an emotional and psychological level than men do.

4. To show greater concern for ensuring a memorable travel experience for their children. Additionally, they tend to show great concern that "child-friendly" programs and activities exist for their children at the destination location. Concern extends to the desire that the activity be exciting and entertaining, maybe even educational.

With this thought in mind, the Trail's marketing should not only emphasize the "child-friendly" nature of its visitor experience, but also direct this aspect of marketing to the mother.

5. To emphasize price and good value in their shopping choices.

II. AFRICAN-AMERICANS

This segment's buying power is increasing, and with it the desire for some kind of heritage experience. Additionally, any kind of heritage experience should include with it a sense of discovery. That is, the visitor should have the opportunity to "discover" certain things about history and culture.

Characteristics of this type traveler are as follows:

In the 1990s, African-Americans have exhibited a growing desire to rediscover and recapture their heritage, their cultural roots. They are not alone; both adult and child visitors of the 1990s, whether black or white, tend to be rather cut off and isolated from any education about their country's or particular culture's past, and seem to gravitate toward activities which include "living history". By "living

history", we mean not merely the use of characters dressed in costume, but enacting certain events, such as significant historical events, or activities, such as those which people would perform as part of everyday living (cooking, sewing, weapon-making).

III. FOREIGN VISITORS

We cannot disregard foreign travel to the Midland Trail. Canadians, Japanese and Europeans have shown the most interest in visiting West Virginia. As the Trail grows, it must look to concentrating marketing campaigns internationally to these areas.

One Trail inn has counted guests from 30 different nations, many from Europe, and its Internet site has received inquiries from as far away as Taiwan.

1. Canadians pass through West Virginia and cross the Trail at Hico as they travel between Canada and the southern US. WV is about a halfway point for those traveling to Florida. Tamarack reports significant business from Canadian tourists.

2. The Trail may find fertile marketing ground within the wealthy, developed nations of Western Europe, if the nascent economic partnership and power of the European Community prospers financially and politically, as the Community's plans intend. In fact, the Community's single currency, the ecu, may become strong against the U.S. dollar, and stronger currency tends to encourage spending, travel, and tourism.

Moreover, since WV has established a trade office in Germany, a marketing campaign within Germany itself would benefit the Trail.

3. Several Japanese companies have located in West Virginia and with WV

having a trade office in Nagoya there is a potential for courting this trade.

4. The Australian market has potential, too. Many Australian adventure lovers travel for thousands of miles just to raft the state's whitewater rivers.

5. There is desire to see "the real America", not just a travel package of sanitized tours. The Trail's strength lies in its character and personality (from the normal to the quirky).

IV. THE ELDERLY

"The Midland Trail--
For The Mature Traveler",
by Karen Glazier,
Good Living Homes, Malden

Several travel companions
go on their quest
for visitor experience
(A Quest For The Holy Trail)

[Note: certain helpful hints and mention
of desirable services and amenities have
been highlighted for the reader's convenience]

Bright blue skies smiled down upon delighted daffodils as my two companions and I set out on our Midland Trail Senior Adventure Tour! Our mission--to view the Trail's offerings through the eyes of and with the physical capabilities of the older adult. My two traveling companions possessed the necessary age credentials. Additionally, a combined total of more than one hundred years in the field of professional geriatrics proved a common bond between us.

The Midland Trail provides the leisure traveler with excellent day-trip possibilities. We started at our beginning, cruising first into the Cultural Center parking lot at the State Capitol. My companions, both out-of-staters, noted that **it would be help-**

ful to have clearer signage indicating the Veterans' Memorial, Cultural Center, and Capitol Building. **Moderate walking capabilities will suffice to tour these areas, all accessible by ramp.** The friendly receptionist at the Cultural Center was **familiar with the Midland Trail Destination Guide, but had none on hand that day to share with us. I think these are a must at the Trail's start.** We did not check the visitor's stop at the Capitol. Hopefully, the Guide is available there as well. Touring these areas could easily take two-plus hours.

As we left the Cultural Center parking lot, **my companions asked me how anyone new to the area would know how to proceed along the Trail. Midland Trail signage with a directional arrow would be helpful at Greenbrier and Washington Streets, as well as at the intersection of Greenbrier and Kanawha Boulevard.**

A coal-laden barge plied the waters of the Kanawha River as we headed east along the Trail. Daniel Boone Park is the next stop. The Craik-Patton House, an 1834 structure, is open for tours April through October, but **does require some step-climbing.** The P.A. Denny Sternwheeler docks at the park with easy access. The park is a perfect spot for a picnic, with numerous picnic tables, public restrooms, and an accessible fishing dock. If you wish to picnic nearer the river, on the lower bank, **some walking will be required**, as you must park your car in the upper lot. **Again, we felt that overhead Midland Trail signage as one leaves the park would be helpful in steering him correctly back to the Trail and up onto the four-lane highway.**

As we proceeded, we noted several casual dining spots, in case you forget to pack the picnic lunch! We counted three possibilities between the park and Port Amherst. The view of Port Amherst Coal

Industries is impressive. **How interesting a tour of that site might be!**

Next, we followed the Trail into historic Malden. We veered slightly right off the Trail--approximately two blocks--to visit Kelly Bratton's auto museum and Greyhound (the bus, not the dog!) Memorabilia mecca. This attraction is the result of an avocation handed down from father to son. It will be of interest to antique car buffs and Greyhound bus aficionados. Mr. Bratton possesses possibly the largest collection of Greyhound souvenirs known to the world. He will hospitably invite you to peruse his interesting array of antique vehicles, all in varying states of refurbishment. One of my companions was particularly drawn to a Franklin automobile that is currently being renovated. Mr. Bratton enjoys showing guests around and is present most every day. **You can park next to the building, and there are no steps required in order to gain entrance.**

Back onto the Trail! Other "must-see" stops in Malden included Cabin Creek Quilts, the internationally-acclaimed woman-owned quilting cooperative. **Parking is available and a ramp provides easy access into the main shop.** Tours of the nearby (1 1/2 blocks) reconstructed Booker T. Washington boyhood cabin are available, by appointment, through the cooperative. Across the street from Cabin Creek Quilts we noted that **a traveler could seek quiet respite at the Booker Washington Park.** A poem by former state Poet Laureate Louise McNeill, commemorating the great black educator's achievements, adorns a brick wall at the entrance to the park. Two small grocery stores along the main street through town afford an **excellent opportunity to replenish snack supplies** before continuing along the Trail!

We drove through the village proper and next found ourselves at Terra Salis Garden Center outside of town. Unusual

plant varieties, an attractive indoor garden shop, and creatively designed display gardens will appeal to both the seasoned and the amateur gardener alike. The shop is accessed by steps, but the display gardens and most flower and plant varieties **can be seen easily by traversing level ground. Note: An access ramp to the shop is available at left of the stairs.**

The next point of interest along the Trail is the Marmet Locks, to the right off the highway. With luck, you will arrive in time to see a coal or chemical barge proceeding through the locks. River travel buffs will appreciate this stop.

The huge white tank of DuPont's Belle plant soon comes into view. Wartime production was critical to the World War II defense effort. Veterans and those who appreciate the technological history of this area will be impressed by this stop.

Ironically, the next stop along the Trail takes you back through history to a simpler time. The Old Stone House at Belle is just off the Trail at mile 10. You can park nearby and visit on third Saturdays of each month, May through October and by appointment. From there we drove into the town of Belle, which offers another **stop for casual dining** or a convenience gas station. Leaving the Belle area, **we felt that additional signage would be helpful for indicating a return to the four-lane highway.** To your left, as you get back onto the highway, is a Dairy Queen at Witcher, which might be a wise stop for a cool treat!

Our next stop along the Trail was Virginia's Chapel in Cedar Grove. Built by an early settler, William Tompkins, as a graduation gift for his daughter in 1853, the Chapel is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. You can park next to the church and tour the small chapel and the small



cemetery that surrounds it. As we visited, we learned of possible plans to restore the Tompkins homeplace across the road. If so, this will be another good tour stop in years to come.

The London Locks at mile 24 was our last major stop of the day. You can pull into the parking area and easily see the locks from the comfort of your vehicle. Or you may wish to stretch your legs a bit. A small picnic area beside the locks offers a pleasant spot for viewing river activities while enjoying a bite to eat. Three picnic tables all afford good views, one of which is situated beneath a shade tree. Restroom accommodations are in the form of three portable toilets, one of which is **handicap-accessible**, and all can be reached by a hard-top pathway (be sure to bring your own supply of Wet Ones!)

From the London Locks we proceeded to Gauley Bridge. Off to the left we pulled into a McDonald's for a hot (watch that cup!) cup of coffee before turning back toward the Trail's start. We all felt that this portion of the journey was one good full day of touring. We decided to save the rest of the Trail for another day's outing. We had pleasant memories enough for one day!

THIS REPORT WAS PREPARED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF AN EVER-GROWING NUMBER OF OLDER ADULTS WITH LEISURE TIME AND ADEQUATE RESOURCES WHO ARE INTERESTED IN HERITAGE TRAILS. THE MATERIAL IS INTENDED TO BE HELPFUL TO THOSE WHO MIGHT MARKET TO THAT GROUP. GERIATRIC PROFESSIONALS FROM THE FIELDS OF SOCIAL WORK, NURSING, AND MEDICINE WERE INVOLVED IN THIS TRIP.

THE "BABY BOOMER"

This generation, born during the period 1945 through 1964, represented a period never before seen in this country's history; the "Baby Boomer" was born into a country which emerged from WWII as the world's (perhaps even history's) richest and most materially prosperous nation. As one expert put it, this generation was unlike any other which it followed. The "Baby Boomer" grew up and lived in a time of material abundance, and this abundance formed the Boomer's thinking.

Characteristics of this generation are as follows:

1. Usually desires some instant or immediate results in his or her travel experience, especially in provision of goods and services. Essentially, instant gratification is significant to any visit. Relevance should be immediate and applicable to everyday living.

2. Normally very individualistic in his or her approach to life. This generation was taught the importance of self-help and self-growth. Additionally, he or she absorbed growing cultural attitudes toward independence in thinking and acting. The "Baby Boomer" likes a travel experience in which he or she can be "spoiled" or pampered, perhaps experiences which allow some self-indulgence.

3. Usually concerned with youth, physical exercise, health, and diet. Post-WWII life saw advances in medicine and quality of life that emphasized "good", healthful living. "Baby Boomers" tend to be very sensitive about the issue of aging, so they address it with activities which are healthy, wholesome, and invigorating.

4. A generation with individualistic attitudes tends to favor activities which are "meaningful" and "significant" to self-growth. As such, the "Baby Boomer", stud-

ies have shown, has turned his or her attention away from destination locations such as Disneyland and the beach toward adventure travel which allows some sense of discovery and growth in experience. This attitude manifests itself in part as the weekend or overnight "communing with nature" or "roughing it" even while enjoying comfort and amenities. In West Virginia, this discovery comes through such leisure activity as whitewater rafting, mountain biking, and rock-climbing.

5. Material prosperity brought about a materialistic outlook toward life. He or she likes the best in goods and services. The "Baby Boomer" enjoys travel which includes acquisition, namely, shopping.

6. Usually possesses substantial disposable income. The "Baby Boomer" generally looked not only to family, but also to career and occupation, for fulfillment and satisfaction. Emphasis upon advancement and growth at work has brought about increased purchasing power.

Emphasis upon Boomers' spending for enjoyment constitutes, as one Boomer researcher called it, "spending their inheritance now".

7. A more "family-oriented" generation than any previous generation in America. Families are closer-knit. The "Baby Boomer" parent, raised with individualistic and independent thinking, tends to include his or her children into plans for vacationing, and in several ways. First, their children have more input in the family's decision-making as to how and where to spend the family's leisure time. Moreover, the "Baby Boomer" parent tends to look for "child-friendly" activities. This manifests itself either as an emphasis on activities which the family can do together or as activities in which the children can participate separately from the adults. Grandparents also tend to bring their grandchildren, leading to the "three-gen-

eration vacation".

8. More than ever, amenities play a significant role in choice of lodging. For example, many "Boomers" desire efficiency accommodations.

9. Look forward to retirement as a time to travel and to enjoy themselves. The "Boomers" began reaching middle age in 1995, and will begin reaching the nationally accepted retirement age of 65 in 2010.

10. Advances in education and material abundance, as well as the post-WWII growth of individualistic attitudes, fashioned the "Boomer" into an educated, savvy consumer. This consumer knows what she wants and how and when she wants it. As such, she will be particular in her choice of goods and services.

Additionally, unlike his forebears, he does not have brand loyalty; factors such as price, fashionability, and convenience override those of brand names.

11. Favors having all amenities and experiences in one area. Convenience is significant in the "Boomer's" choice of destination and amenities. For example, the "Boomer" who rafts may like to have lodging and restaurants either on the rafting company's grounds or within easy traveling distance. This personality aspect is part of the motivation and argument for casting the Trail as "having it all".

12. Because they pursue careers and usually do not have much time for leisure, Boomers usually want vacations which include everything that they can get into those limited vacation days. The slogan "**We Have It All**" takes on added significance here. As such, he or she will try to receive more value for the dollar spent.



Package deals are particularly attractive.

13. Presence of the corporate vacation. This class of vacation can have a double purpose: leisure and business. In some instances, the corporation wants to build co-workers as teams and to network.

VI. "GENERATION X"

Material abundance, increased emphasis upon individualism and independence, and the penetration of technology into the home has created a second-generation educated consumer. "Baby Boomer" attitudes have helped shape the Gen-Xer into an educated consumer. Born during the period 1964 through 1975, this generation, at 2000, is now moving into positions of influence and significant purchasing power.

Many of their characteristics are similar to those of the "Boomers".

1. Materialistic outlook toward life. However, this perspective does not seem to play as important part in travel as it does with the "Boomers".

2. Educated consumers who look less to brand-name reliability than to fashionability, i.e., which tends to make a "statement".

3. Like the "Boomer", the Xer seems to favor amenities and travel experiences in one area or within easy travel distance of each other.

4. This generation grew up with the computer and, like the succeeding generations, usually grew up with it in the classroom and at home. As such, the Xer and the younger generations have become not only comfortable with the computer (unlike his forebears' fear of or reluctance to use this

device) as an educational tool, but have also become technologically savvy.

With the ability to arrange travel through the home computer, the marketplace will likely see a shift in travel arranging away from the traditional visit to the travel agency and more into the home. Remember: convenience. Additionally, whereas the travel agency often served as the "middleman" in arrangements, now the traveler can design his or her travel directly, without an agent. Essentially, the goods and services provider will educate not the agent, but the traveler, as to offerings.

The emergence of this generation as a technical power in the marketplace necessitates certain shifts in approach. The Midland Trail would benefit by developing an integrated computer system which links each Visitor Center with each place of lodging, recreation location, historic site, and business within one Website and allows the traveler to design his or her own travel at home.

Additionally--and something not usually observed or understood--this generation is less oriented toward the written word than to visual and graphic representations in learning and reasoning. Videotapes seem to be just as important as textbooks in the educational process. As such, the Trail would benefit by developing short film vignettes for play on its Website, e.g., instead of writing about historical re-enactments, the Site could play actual tapes of such events.

Considering the emergence of the educated consumer and the ability to design travel conveniently at home, this generation also has the opportunity to conduct a great deal of research with the Internet without leaving the home. Again: convenience. Moreover, with the Internet, we have seen a shift away from the customary trip to the library to research at home; the computer has become the growing medium of choice for research. The Trail would benefit by supplying details about its experiences for the home

computer researcher.

5. Unlike previous generations, educated more toward preservation and protection of the environment. Schools emphasized this part of education more than in previous times. Essentially, environmentally-conscious and -educated.

Travel experiences would benefit by incorporating some communion with and appreciation of the environment.

6. Also unlike previous generations, has more tolerance toward, or at least greater acceptance of, multi-culturalism and cultural diversity as a pattern of everyday life. Factors such as integration in public schools; growth of political influence and economic status among African-Americans, Asians, and women; introduction of cultural diversity into school curricula; and these segments' desire for rediscovering and establishing their special heritages and roots have shifted American educational and heritage themes away from predominantly white and male toward more diverse approaches to heritage education.

As such, the Xer is liberal on social issues, but fiscally conservative.

Marketing strategies may include events which showcase the cultural diversity and multi-cultural aspects of the Midland Trail, such as the contribution of African-Americans to Trail coal mining, to the economy, to Appalachian life in general. European immigrants, including those from Italy and East Europe, also made contributions, and there is rich potential for development of immigrant themes, such as their part in industrial development, e.g., the Hawks Nest Tunnel, and in fashioning an architectural style along the Trail in its varied homes.

The "Trail Tales" portion of this Plan is a concrete example of the marketing which will set the Trail apart for its future visitors.

7. Tends to favor adventure/outdoors

experiences in places which do not have a great deal of development, but at the same time the desired amenities. At skiing resorts, for example, Xer, Echo Boomer, and Millennial males tend to enjoy snowboarding.

8. Starting with this generation, and becoming even stronger with the following ones, the enjoyment of games of all sorts. The abundance of video and computer games has given these younger generations the desire--indeed, an appetite--for all sorts of games, especially ones which contain excitement, action, and a quest for a prize.

Potential exists for integration of games of all kinds into heritage experience.

9. Continuous, accelerating technological change and a shift away from traditional, conservative methodologies in the classroom and even in the workplace has habituated and exposed Generation X and their younger counterparts to a significant amount of novelty in their lives.

Unlike previous generations, which may not be as tolerant or accepting of novelty, those 30 and under at this writing are accustomed to constant newness and almost mind-numbing change in the world about them. Rapid change has become accepted as a pattern of life. As such, Trail planners, government bureaus, and businesses have the continuous opportunity to introduce novel sensations and creative programs into their goods and services to this young consumer.

Additionally, while the Trail is steeped in the old and historic, marketing should be able to emphasize the "New Trail" as well. This approach can balance new with old. That is, businesses and service-providers can combine history and heritage with

current and developing political, social, and cultural themes.

10. This generation does not value money as the key to happiness and fulfillment as much as older generations, but seek these things through job satisfaction, meaningful experiences, etc. Even more, a career is not valued as the key to happiness as much as it was with the previous generations.

As such, programs and activities should focus on meaning and purposeful activity.

11. However, Generation X in the next 5 to 10 years stands to receive an overall substantial windfall in the form of their Baby Boomer parents' inheritances. As such, we should expect this generation to have disposable resources for travel enjoyment in their later years, likely starting around 2005.

12. Wise, even cynical, toward the media. According to research, they present a difficult market to penetrate. Advertising will need to shift its approach. Descriptions include a generation which is distrustful and careful about consumer products, contracts, and advertising. Religious beliefs tend to be non-traditional; rather, they are described as developing their own unique religious beliefs.

This enhanced marketplace wisdom underscores the need for trained "information providers" who are well versed on Trail offerings, heritage, and intrinsic qualities.

VII. THE "ECHO BOOMER"

This generation, born in the mid-70s, exhibits much of the same characteristics as their generational predecessors. The "Echo Boomers" will begin emerging as one of the nation's social

and economic powers in the mid-2000s, likely around 2005.

Characteristics:

1. Like the Xers, computer-smart. Increased tendency to rely upon the computer for research and inquiry. Use of computer graphics and film vignettes to educate about visitor experience. Computers and interactive screens at numerous sites and museums along the Trail would blend computers with interpretation successfully for the "Echoer".

2. However, a de-emphasis in past years on heritage and history have tended to leave the younger generations heritage-alienated, without a past and without a future. Reasons for these are many; increasing pace of life and advances in technology have habituated America to favoring the novel over the traditional, public schools seem to be diminishing the importance of history in their curricula, and American society's emphasis on the "useful" over the "theoretical" have undermined and perhaps even called into question the need for heritage studies. These younger generations seem to favor living history through such media as individual and group re-enactments, arts and crafts festivals, and drama as a way to reconnect themselves with something which was lost.

Re-enactment programs, such as the West Virginia Humanities Council's Living History Program, the Mary Ingles Trail Associates in Winfield, and Prickett's Fort's re-enactors, are proof of the popularity of living history. Colonial Williamsburg has developed their program to a high degree of success.

If the Trail is to survive and grow as a tourist destination, this element will have to play a significant part in Trail visitor experience.

3. As with Xers, greater tolerance toward multi-culturalism and cultural diversity.

The Trail is forging an identity as one community even as it persists in rich diversity. Accordingly themes along the Trail should consider multi-culturalism and diversity as a necessary and tonic part of the motif of community.

4. The theme of "community" is becoming significant and will increase in significance. Older generations tended toward more "local community" thinking, sometimes even a little isolationism. Starting with Generation X and increasing with the younger generations is the perspective beyond the immediate town as "community". Multi-cultural (cultural diversity) studies in the school, increasing interracial acceptance and coexistence, increasing use of the global "community" of the Internet and e-mail, the rise of political philosophies which encourage communal assistance to the less fortunate and discourage individual profit-making, and liberal philosophies in the church have exposed today's youth and young adults to the idea of the world as one large "community".

As such, the younger generations may be amenable to programs and activities on the Trail which encourage and educate about the "community" aspects of Trail heritage and history.

VIII. THE "MILLENNIAL GENERATION"

Born between 1977 and 1994, this generation comes--and will come--of age as the calendar switches over to the 21st century. Planning for this group should take into account that it will emerge as a financial power starting around 2007.

This group is known to share many characteristics of the preceding two generations.

1. More racially and ethnically diverse than any generation preceding. One description delineates them as highly accepting of diversity. Successful themes might focus on three values which have received increas-

ing emphasis in the schools during this 17-year period: tolerance, multi-culturalism, and heightened social awareness. According to research, the Millennials are more liberal on civil liberties than are Xers.

2. Millennial females have penetrated once male-dominated areas, and women now outnumber men in American universities and colleges. Trail themes must focus significantly on female heritage.

3. Termed the "first high-tech generation". Attractions at Trail sites of interest would benefit with the use of technology.

4. With any advance in technology comes a hunger to rediscover the past. The next 20 years promises great opportunities if the Trail offers rediscovery of the past--especially if it uses technology in that rediscovery.

5. Described as ambitious, optimistic, and altruistic.

6. Highly significant for planners, this generation sees lifelong learning as a priority. Trail planning might consider multiple opportunities for learning and education at its different sites.

7. Preservation of the environment is a priority. Publicity which targets this group should take into account that the Trail:

- Has preserved its environment in such a way that it remains unspoiled.
- Is a place of natural beauty which offers an ideal get-away.
- Offers something of a "return to nature".

8. Family, not money, is the key to happiness. As such, Trail tourism planning should consider family themes and family activities.

