

Preface

Population aging is one of the most significant trends of the twenty-first century. By 2030, people aged 60 years and older will outnumber children aged under nine years. Even though this trend is most advanced in high-income countries, population aging is proceeding at a fast pace also in developing and emerging countries, and already has profound social and economic implications. Within this context, an increasing number of individuals of all ages participate in tourism activities. According to recent European statistics, the 65-plus age group has significantly contributed to counterbalancing the negative impact of the economic and financial crisis by increasing both tourist arrivals and overnight stays. Hence, population aging poses new challenges and opportunities to tourism, which is by far one of the most important and dynamic global industries.

For these reasons, the older tourist market a viable and fascinating stream of research for scholars belonging to different fields, including the social sciences, psychology, medicine, the arts and humanities, and business. According to the Scopus database, among business, management, and accounting journals, the number of tourism articles dealing with aging-related topics has increased fourfold from the period of 2000 to 2016. This datum gives an idea of the growing attention tourism scholars are devoting to population aging.

Extant research on older tourists has focused on themes such as socio-demographic and travel characteristics, travel motivations, and psychological factors (Jang et al. 2009). Other scholars have focused on older tourists' accessibility requirements, perceptions of service features, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) adoption. However, despite its potential, the older tourist market is still under researched, and stereotypical images of older adults are still used in marketing practices. Even though a few scholars have examined tourism organizations and their marketing strategies aimed at older individuals, for example in the context of accessible tourism, the literature has devoted limited attention to suppliers targeting older tourists. Overall, there is a need for a comprehensive analysis of the older tourist market that considers both tourists' behavior as well as suppliers' strategies.

This book aims to provide an in-depth analysis of population aging challenges and opportunities from a tourism marketing perspective by combining a demand-side and supply-side approach to older tourists. The methodological approach used in this book stems from the consideration that tourism marketing must be customer-centered if it is to be successful. Tourism organizations must carefully segment their market and understand—or better, anticipate—their customers' needs and desires to provide successful product, price, place and promotion strategies. In other words, the use of marketing tools should derive from scrupulous and constant marketing research activity. Accordingly, this book first addresses older tourists' characteristics and travel behavior, and then discusses how tourism organizations can develop their marketing strategies to target this specific market segment.

This book consists of three main parts. The first part (Chaps. 1–2) introduces the population aging phenomenon from a tourism marketing perspective. In particular, Chap. 1 presents an overview of the main challenges of aging and addresses some of the most common stereotypes about older consumers. In addition, the chapter begins a depiction of the profile of the older tourist. Chapter 2 provides a review of existing segmentation approaches to older tourists by distinguishing between *a priori* (or conceptual) methods and *a posteriori* (or data-driven) methods.

The second part (Chaps. 3–5) adopts a demand-side perspective and focuses on key aspects of older tourists' behavior. Specifically, Chap. 3 analyzes the travel planning process from travel needs to travel organization. Chapter 4 discusses ICT adoption among older individuals and displays how technology is changing travel behavior within this specific market. Chapter 5 deals with older tourists' accommodation choices, focusing in particular on hotels.

The third and last part (Chaps. 6–7) represents the empirical heart of the book and focuses on the suppliers' perspective. To provide some insights into marketing approaches to older tourists, Chap. 6 presents a selection of case studies about travel companies targeting older tourists: a Canadian-based tour operator offering exotic adventure travels, a Slovenian-based tour operator and travel agency specializing in slow garden travels, and a British company offering long-term stay accommodation in southern Europe. Chapter 7 draws on the literature review and the case studies provided in the previous chapters to propose some theoretical contributions as well as a practical toolbox for firms and professionals willing to target older individuals.

From a methodological point of view, the first two parts of the book are the result of an extensive literature review of the top international tourism and hospitality journals and industry reports, as well as of empirical studies conducted by the author during the last five years. In the last part, three original case studies are developed following a qualitative research approach based on semi-structured in-depth interviews. This method enabled a holistic understanding of respondents' experiences that could not have been achieved otherwise, given that the suppliers' perspective has hitherto been under-investigated. The book concludes by encouraging further research in this field in order to respond to the challenges and opportunities of this rapidly increasing segment.

My interest in the older-market segment started in 2012. When talking about macro-trends with my husband, he commented about Lombard Odier's Golden Age Fund, a global equity thematic fund designed to seize the opportunity of the long-term aging population trend across multiple sectors. It invests in equities that derive mainly from the aging population theme, including for example health care products and services, healthy food, cosmetics, leisure, and financial planning. Later, in early 2013, Liz Gill, a colleague from the University of Sydney, held a seminar at the University of Verona and discussed a paper concerning older people's empowerment and social engagement, which stimulated me further to explore the relationship between age and consumer behavior in a research area that has been fascinating me since my master's degree in tourism management.

The book is intended to be a helpful reference work for academics, researchers, postgraduate students, and practitioners in the tourism and hospitality industry willing to deepen their knowledge about the older tourist market and its potentialities.

I am grateful to many people who contributed to the completion of this book. First, I would like to thank Prof. Federico Testa, who over the years supported me in my work and stimulated me to pursue new and challenging areas of research. My gratitude goes to Prof. Marta Ugolini, who generously offered me precious insights and advice during the development of this book. I am also thankful to my colleagues Francesca Simeoni, Fabio Cassia, and Nicola Cobelli for their warm-hearted exchange of thoughts and ideas and their daily presence.

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Dialogues with academic and industry experts at several international conferences (in particular, at the Tourism&Aging Conference, the Academy of Marketing Science World Marketing Congress, and the ENTER-Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism Conference) contributed as a stimulus to design the structure of this book. At the Tourism&Aging Conference, held in Lisbon in 2014, I had the opportunity to meet and discuss my work with Prof. Ian Patterson, whose studies about older tourists are a reference point for tourism scholars. His book "Growing Older: Tourism and Leisure Behavior of Older Adults" is a milestone in this field of research.

I would also like to thank Springer's anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments in the first draft of my work. Their suggestions were extremely helpful for improving the manuscript. Last but not least, I am grateful to Maria Cristina Acocella, Assistant Editor of Springer, for her continuous assistance throughout the writing process.

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