

## Factors in the provision of engaging experiences for the Traditionalist market at visitor attractions.

### 1.0 Introduction

There is recognition and a growing understanding that the global population is ageing, with the number of older adults due to double by 2050 (Patterson, 2017; Page et al., 2014). Generational studies have identified the significance and importance of this sector of the population as a potential market for sustainable tourism activity (Patterson, 2017; Stewart, 2016). This shift in demographics has encouraged a focus on the older consumer with tourism organisations recognising the value of this emerging market, though little research exists regarding the needs and preferences of this market segment within a tourism context. In particular, there is a lack of data to inform the development of tourism experiences for the Traditionalist visitor, born pre-WW2, many of whom have a lifetime habit of engaging in tourism activities such as holidaying abroad and visiting local visitor attractions, but now find it increasingly difficult to continue with that engagement.

As key components of the tourism destination offering, visitor attractions play a significant role in attracting visitors and adding to the cultural landscape of a destination for local residents (Leask, 2018; Black, 2016). Whilst enabling differentiation between destinations to encourage visits, they offer visitors the opportunity to engage with tangible and intangible features via a broad range of experiences and may offer reasons for extended stays and repeat visits. To demonstrate value and meet financial objectives in an increasingly competitive marketplace, visitor attractions need to attract tourists and day visitors alike. They must also convince potential local audiences of their relevance and ability to provide engaging and meaningful experiences (Black, 2016). One approach adopted has been the creation of alternative products, experiences and methods of visitor engagement (Leask et al., 2013). Taheri et al.'s (2014) research emphasised the importance of understanding visitor engagement in the achievement of successful heritage management, and there is a recognition that museums, for example, need to be much more than an arena for the display of artefacts (Camarero, et al., 2009).

Visitor attractions have realised the value of identifying and engaging with specific generational groups (Skinner et al., 2018; Barron & Leask, 2017; Waltl, 2006). The development of experiences and services for an increasingly ageing population generation appears to present an opportunity to assist in the achievement of several visitor attraction objectives. This could be via traditional measures such as volume and value figures or working across wider policy and social agendas via inclusive practices and the development of specific experiences developed to counter aspects particularly experienced by this generation, such as social isolation and wellbeing. Little research has been conducted on the accessibility and availability of programmes and activities specifically designed for the older visitor (Smiraglia, 2016; Alen et al., 2016), though it is suggested that older visitors to visitor attractions possess characteristics different from other generational groups. To facilitate this visitation, these factors require consideration when designing and providing engagement opportunities within the visitor attraction (Smiraglia, 2016), so that potential visitors see the value in this engagement. Active ageing has resulted in a 'sensation seeking' tourist who is well travelled, educated, demanding and prepared to pay for high-quality products, suggesting that it is worth investing in the development of specialist services and products at visitor attractions (Stewart, 2018).

This paper aims to address this through an exploration of the factors involved in the experiences for the Traditionalist (those born pre-WW2) visitor to attractions in Scotland. Via a series of interviews with both visitors and managers, the paper will explore the barriers to and enablers for Traditionalists visiting attractions across Scotland. The Traditionalist visitor primary research will involve local resident and day visitor perspectives on the visitor attraction experiences, while the manager research

considers the experiences of all Traditionalist visitor experiences. Once an understanding of the barriers and enablers to the Traditionalists' engagement at visitor attractions is established, the paper will identify the key factors to inform the development of inclusive and participative experiences for older visitors to visitor attractions. The paper then concludes with practical recommendations to guide visitor attractions in enabling greater engagement with the Traditionalist visitor market.

## 2.0 Literature Review and context

### 2.1 Visitor attractions and visitor engagement

Visitor attractions are defined as natural, cultural or built assets that have been created or converted into a permanent visitor experience, where visitor interpretation and engagement with the asset is a core purpose of the development and management of the site (Leask, 2018). Attractions operate in dynamic operating environments within destinations, with growing competition for declining resources and shifting patterns of demand (Black, 2016; Edelheim, 2015). Changing social and political circumstances have resulted in a growing emphasis on the demonstration of value for funders. This is usually evidenced by increasing visitor volume and spend across a broad range of visitor types and markets, which often requires investment in facilities, products and services to enable this broader engagement. For example, attractions may need to invest to adhere to legal and environmental policies, such as equal access for all, as concerns intellectual and physical access and consumption (Cloquet et al., 2018; Aspiridis et al., 2015). Visitor attractions have a range of measures of effectiveness as dictated by their ownership, the nature of their asset, and their stakeholders. These can involve, for example, often competing objectives, to increase the volume of new and repeat visitors; the need to attract local residents to demonstrate relevance and value; to generate income rather than rely on public funds; and to maintain the authenticity and condition of the resource (Leask, 2016; Connell, Page & Meyer, 2015).

Originally discussed in education and sociology research areas, a broad explanation of visitor engagement is the two-way process by which a member of a community actively participates in some aspect of a visitor attraction operation, as, for example, a visitor, employee, volunteer, or supporter. According to Loureiro and Sarmiento (2018:1), 'engagement goes beyond involvement and commitment, and comprises a proactive relationship between a consumer or tourist and the object or place (e.g. museum or attraction)'. Existing visitor attraction research on visitor engagement has generally focussed on visitor experiences during actual visits to physical sites (Leask, 2016; Edelheim, 2015), rather than via remote or virtual experiences, and at the barriers that discourage people from visiting (Black, 2012). Therefore, in the visitor attraction context, engagement is often associated with innovative presentation and interpretative techniques (Welsh, 2005) and the nature of how visitors engage with exhibits and the facilities that may be in place to encourage the engagement process (Loureiro & Sarmiento, 2018). Much of the work relates to museums, which have worked to enhancing visitor engagement to encourage balanced use of resources (Barron & Leask, 2017; Wells et al., 2016; Museums Association, 2016) by providing a range of experiences that will engage them effectively and encourage them to re-visit. Taheri et al. (2014) developed an engagement scale that can be used by cultural organisations can use to complement their existing research methods and enhance visitor engagement. Taheri et al. (2014) go on to state that engaging with an audience is the most effective method of enhancing the visitor experience, with Bryce et al. (2015:573) noting that there is a 'positive relationship between increasing engagement and satisfying consumption experiences amongst consumers'.

Competition between visitor attractions has driven the provision of a greater choice of experiences and other leisure pursuits that are now available to visitors (Leask, 2016). Several articles go on to discuss how improved engagement with potential (and actual) new visitor groups can assist in achieving a visitor attraction's goals at the pre, during and post-visit stages. Sinclair (2015:67) states that a 'strategy of engaging People in a unique Place yields Profit' and that encouraging visits from a young age is a means of future-proofing sustainability in engagement and attendance, so establishing engagement can contribute to the achievement of broader visitor attraction objectives. However, little research exists that focusses on the development of experiences to enhance engagement with visitors as a mechanism for driving visitor demand. An exception to this is Leask et al.'s (2013) paper on engaging Generation Y (those born between 1982-2000) at visitor attractions. Explored via the use of an 'Audience Experience' model developed by the article authors, this research investigated the various components involved in the development of entertaining consumer experiences. Based on literature across a range of service sectors, including retail, tourism and recreation, this identified two key sets of factors – 'organisation' factors (including prices, product/service selection, servicescape and personnel) and 'consumer' factors (including social aspects, available time, degree of involvement and discretionary finances). When combined with 'other relevant service/experience' factors, such as level of collaboration external to the organisation and visitor attraction individuality, this model provides a structure for the exploration of how a visitor attraction could best develop relevant consumer experiences for different generations of visitors.

## 2.2 Demographic change and visitor attractions

A key driver of future consumer demand, demographic change affects consumer choices concerning activities and engagement within tourism destinations and visitor attractions. In developed countries, one key change identified relates to an increasingly ageing population, with forecasted figures for Europe showing that by 2030 people over age 65 will comprise more than 28% of the population in Germany, 25% in Italy and that Japan has one of the fastest ageing populations in the world (Chen, et al., 2013). Scotland has an ageing population, with above-average figures for the over 50s and growth of the over 65s from 14% to 19% between 1983 and 2018 (National Records of Scotland).

Research relating to ageing populations often focuses on the associated rising health and social care costs (Chen et al., 2013; Page et al., 2014; Hung & Lu, 2016). However, this change might also result in new markets from a growing number of adults with time, money and a desire to stay active (Hansen & Zipsane, 2014); opportunities afforded by developing stakeholder contributions (Hamblin & Harper, 2016) and opportunities to demonstrate value via improved social inclusion and greater use of resources (Cloquet et al., 2018; Guachalla, 2017). Hansen and Zipsane (2014) also question the morality of the heritage sector in targeting the older population for commercial activities, whilst highlighting the benefits for social and learning activities. While older members of the population may be stakeholders in visitor attractions as visitors, paid workers or volunteers, the focus of this paper is on the visitor engagement aspects of their visitor experiences.

Rather than simply using chronological age, research has demonstrated the relevance of defining the population into different cohorts as a mechanism to identify associated characteristics and generation-based consumption preferences that can inform future tourism practices (Haddouche & Salamone, 2018; Glover & Prideaux, 2008; Smiraglia, 2016). While recognising the difficulty in determining these cohorts, they are generally referred to as the *Traditionalist* (pre-WW2); *Baby Boomers* (1946-1965); *Generation X* (1966-1982); *Generation Y* (1982-2000); and *Generation Z* (2001 onwards) (Allen & Allen, 2019; Leask et al., 2013). The terminology used to discuss those in the

Traditionalist cohort can include *Silver* (Kyrikou & Belias, 2017; Zsarnoczky et al., 2016) those aged fifty-plus; *Seniors* (Alen et al., 2016) an inclusive term including those that are retired, over 55 and the elderly; and *Older* referring to over 50s (Chen et al. 2013), over 60s (Hansen & Zipsane, 2014) and those over 75 (Hamblin & Harper, 2016). As Stewart (2018:95) states, 'not all older persons feel that they fit the stereotypical image of an older person', explaining that a better understanding of the generational cohorts, rather than age alone, will aid with effective targeting of cohorts. This includes developing a better understanding of sub-categories within generational cohorts (Patterson, 2018), to develop insights into a sub-category whilst acknowledging that they may share some similar characteristics with other categories. Therefore, this paper focuses on the specific needs and experiences of a narrow definition of the Traditionalist cohort, those born pre-WW2 and over 75, as a sub-category that is not focused upon in previous generational research.

The literature records that older visitors cover a broad range of characteristics that distinguish them from other generations. While many of the older visitors to visitor attractions may be healthy and active, some do suffer from illness or cognitive decline that affects their ability to engage with visitor attractions (Dodd & Jones, 2014). In their research on the over 50s, Zsarnoczky et al. (2016) found that many were retired and had an increasing commitment to tourism with more discretionary time and money than other generations. They are available during off-peak times of the day, week and year, thus making them an appealing market for attractions. Increasingly involved in childcare commitments, they like being with people of their age but also enjoy visiting with grandchildren (International Longevity Centre, 2014). This generation of older adults exhibits a greater need for socialisation and cognitive stimulation than some others (Smiraglia, 2016). Described as cautious and loyal (Patterson, 2018), older visitors (those over 65) value the opinions of experts, seek comfortable and safe environments and seek the opportunity to learn as part of their holiday experience. Patterson (2018) notes that older travellers are becoming a separate and distinct market due to them being wealthier, healthier and more independent than previous generations of this age.

Changing visitor characteristics and rising visitor expectations entail an increased need for visitor attraction managers to understand market dynamics and to engage more effectively with potential new visitors and repeat visitors. Research on the opportunities and implications of older visitors to engage with visitor attractions is somewhat limited. The exception is in the museum sector, where work by Hamblin and Harper (2016) and Smiraglia (2016) feature work on programs developed specifically for this consumer group as visitors and in the variety of other stakeholder roles, such as volunteers, workers and donors. There is recognition of the broad benefits of older visitors engagement with arts and culture (Arts Council England, 2016), where engagement with museums and galleries as visitors is seen to be beneficial for older people (those over 65) in terms of promoting social engagement, health and wellbeing, and reducing isolation (Hamblin & Harper, 2016). Some research exists that considers aspects that might be associated with some older visitors, for example, how destinations could adapt to provide for specific medical conditions such as dementia (Page et al., 2014) and how visitor attractions could improve physical and intellectual accessibility (Jamaludin & Kadir, 2014; Poria et al., 2009).

In many cases, visitor attractions have responded by researching the individual characteristics of the markets, considering the individuality of their resources, and subsequently developing new (or adapting existing) products specifically targeting those consumers. For example, the development of 'Lates' events at heritage sites (Barron & Leask, 2017) to engage the Gen Y audience and product development such as the Eden Project's 'Little Eden for Grandparents', developed in response to the growing number of grandparents formally caring for grandchildren and resultant inter-generational visitors (<https://www.edenproject.com/visit/whats-on/little-eden-for-grandparents>). However, in

their research regarding Gen Y experience development at visitor attractions, Leask, Fyall and Barron (2013:41) found those visitor attraction managers had an evident 'lack of detailed understanding of Gen Y and their core characteristics and patterns of behaviour beyond stereotypical anecdotes based on speculative evidence'. This research proposed an Audience Experience Model as an effective tool to investigate the nature of the visitor experience from a generational perspective to enable visitor attraction managers to develop relevant products for their target markets.

Demographic change is forecasted to result in older visitors being considered as one of the biggest growth and most important markets in the tourism industry, with the older visitor differing from earlier generations in their lifestyles and attitudes, and placing greater importance on travel and active ageing (Stewart, 2016; Hung & Lu, 2016; Alen et al., 2016). This means that older visitors have characteristics and needs that are often distinct from those of other visitors (Smiraglia, 2016) and that barriers exist that discourage people from visiting (Cloquet et al., 2018; Black, 2012). Visitor attractions face increasing demands to demonstrate value via increased engagement with a broader range of visitors, but they lack data and knowledge of specific market needs and interests (Leask, 2018; Page et al., 2014). A paucity of research has been conducted with regards to the Traditionalist i.e. those aged over 75 (Stewart, 2018; Hung & Lu, 2016), who may have an established habit of visiting and engaging with visitor attractions but are no longer able to engage, or who may not have previously engaged with the sector. This cohort shares many characteristics with other older visitors, but specifically encounters declining opportunities to travel outside of the home, increased social isolation and a feeling of invisibility. Hence the need for this research to explore the barriers and enablers for this specific market and to enhance the opportunities for this generational cohort to engage with visitor attractions.

### 3.0 Methods

This study assesses participant views on the enablers and barriers experienced by Traditionalist visitors when engaging with a range of visitor attractions in Scotland. Gathering the perspectives of both older visitors and managers of visitor attractions will allow for a clearer understanding of this issue and allow for a comparison of perspectives from a user and provider point of view.

#### 3.1 Research approach and methods

Given the desire to develop a deeper understanding of this issue and thus gain richer data, this study was guided by an interpretive research paradigm and thus pursued a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is considered to be 'concerned with understanding things rather than with measuring them' (Gordon & Langmaid, 1988:2), whereby the 'subjectivity and the authenticity of human experience' (Silverman, 2017:138) allow the researcher to gain an insight into the different meanings, experiences and attitudes of research subjects (Holloway, Brown & Shipway, 2010; Veal, 2017).

A range of data gathering methods was considered, including focus group interviews. However, whilst the advantages of such an approach are well documented (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013), the researchers decided against this method for this research. There were several reasons for this, firstly the importance of giving voice to individual managers and older visitors, and thus avoid the gathered data being influenced by one or two more vocal participants (Doody, Slevin & Taggart, 2013). Also, the practicalities of attending a focus group interview that might have been challenging for both sets of participants and the personal nature of some of the visitor barriers might mean that they were less open in their explanations. Thus, as a means of achieving the required deeper understanding of individual experiences (Flick, 2014; Cang, 2009), it was considered that data should be gathered via a

series of semi-structured interviews (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019) with both Traditionalist visitors and visitor attraction managers.

### 3.2 Interview design and format

Therefore, based on the literature review, and specifically the Leask, Fyall and Barron (2013) Audience Experience model, a series of interview questions were developed for Traditionalist visitors and managers of visitor attractions. Previous studies have used a range of words to describe this group of visitors, including ageing, older, oldest-old and Traditionalists. For this study, it has been decided to henceforth refer to this visitor group as Traditionalists, as this is considered to be a positive term that describes the general characteristics of the cohort well and differentiates them from others in the broader older category. Focussing on engagement in the form of visitation to visitor attractions, the interviews designed for the older visitors comprised three sections (see Appendix 1). Initially, participants detailed the extent of visits to visitor attractions such as museums, galleries and castles. Next, participants reflected on both the enablers that would encourage them to visit an attraction, and then to identify the barriers that might discourage them from making such a visit. Finally, older visitors considered what a visitor attraction experience, designed specifically for their generational cohort, might include.

The questions were framed in a manner that encouraged participants to reflect on their general experiences of visiting attractions, as opposed to one visit experience at a particular attraction. For example, in the first question participants were given examples of attractions (e.g. castles, museums, galleries etc.) and asked if they had made visits to such an attraction. This encouraged participants to consider their experiences from a general perspective and reflect on the general barriers and enablers that they were able to recall. It was felt that this approach was the most appropriate as it also accommodated participants who had never either visited an attraction or perhaps could not remember specific examples. Thus, participants framed their answers to the questions asked by considering their general experience or their perception of enablers and barriers that might be encountered when visiting attractions. Where relevant, participants were invited to provide specific examples of their experiences to fully explain the barriers and enablers to those individual visits.

The interviews with visitor attraction managers comprised four sections (see Appendix 1). However, before the commencement of interviews, managers were alerted to the specific generation of interest in this study and provided with a clear indication that phrases, such as 'the older generation' and 'traditionalists', referred to those visitors born pre WW2 and typically over 75. Thereafter, the first section focusing on the concept of the 'older visitor' and questions aimed to identify their visitor profile and determine if the older visitor was a target market for their attraction and what if any, barriers and enablers existed in their attraction for this particular market segment. This first section included a discussion of the terminology regarding older visitors and the definition of the Traditionalist cohort. Secondly, managers reflected on the older visitors' experience in their attraction and identified any products and services specifically aimed at this cohort and invited them to refer to any aspects developed specifically for the Traditionalist group (those over 75). The third section aimed to determine what marketing and promotion activities the visitor attraction had introduced that were specific to the older visitor group, and finally, managers considered how they might design and develop a consumer experience that was focussed on the older visitor and, specifically, Traditionalist aged over 75 visitors.

Whilst the qualitative nature of the semi-structured interview allows for a certain level of flexibility during the interview and provides the opportunity for the researcher to probe interesting issues or press for a more full response to a particular question, a series of pilot interviews were conducted,

two with Traditionalist visitors and one with an attraction manager. These interviews were conducted, not as a means of reducing flexibility through the structure, but rather as a means of checking timing, suitability and clarity as well as understanding the accuracy of the information collected (Yin, 2014). Subsequently, several questions were slightly adjusted to ensure an appropriate interviewee experience and accuracy of collected information.

### 3.3 Data sampling

The sample of participants for this research was a selection of older people in the Traditionalist cohort willing to take part in such a study and participants were initially sourced from Age Scotland and the University of the Third Age. A snowballing selection and recruitment approach (Bryman & Bell, 2015) was adopted thereafter as a means of utilising initial participants' contacts and thus increasing the total number of older visitors that were willing to become involved in the study. This sampling approach resulted in the identification of 12 participants who were over 75 years, from various social groups and a range of locations across Scotland. These participants agreed to be interviewed individually, with semi-structured interviews taking place in October and November 2017 at the participant's home and lasting between 30 and 45 minutes.

Table 1: Summary of 'Traditionalist' visitors interviewed for this study

Respondent	Age	Gender
Traditionalist A	75-80	Female
Traditionalist B	75-80	Male
Traditionalist C	75-80	Male
Traditionalist D	75-80	Male
Traditionalist E	80-85	Male
Traditionalist F	80-85	Female
Traditionalist G	75-80	Female
Traditionalist H	75-80	Female
Traditionalist I	86-90	Female
Traditionalist J	86-90	Male
Traditionalist K	80-85	Male
Traditionalist L	75-80	Female

Whilst all studies are required to undertake ethical research as a means of maximising the trustworthiness of the data gathered, results presented and conclusions are drawn, the authors argue that this study had a particular focus that required the researchers to reflect on ethical issues surrounding the gathering of data. For example, there was a recognition that the age of participants and the fact that interviews were conducted in the participants' home required the researchers to be cognizant of the potentially sensitive nature of this study (Tinker & Coomber, 2004). Therefore, planning before the interview ensured that participants were fully aware of the reason for the interview and on arrival, the researchers provided additional detail regarding the study, guaranteed anonymity and obtained informed consent from all participants. All participants were contacted the day after the interview to determine the participants' satisfaction with the process and further reinforce not only the confidential nature of the data collected but also what data gathered from the interview was to be used for. Finally, all participants were provided with a summary of their interview transcript for both information and the opportunity to comment on accuracy. The approach detailed above allowed the researchers to achieve both a high level of trustworthiness in the data collected and an appropriate approach to research integrity (Cope, 2014).

The sample of visitor attractions that took part in this study was selected from an initial call, via the Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions (ASVA) e-newsletter, for attractions who wished to engage with older visitors. Several attractions whom the research team had identified, via their web pages, as already engaging with this particular group through the provision of older visitor product offerings were invited to take part in the study. This resulted in identifying a sample of 10 visitor attractions, 5 of whom did not currently engage with the older visitor via specific products and 5 attractions who had developed specific products and services for this group. The rationale for this split was to identify what, if any, differences might exist between these two groups, but mainly to develop an understanding of not only managers who had focussed on this group but also discover the opinions of managers who were interested in this group of visitors but were not currently doing so. However, regardless of the level of engagement with this group of visitors, it was considered that managers of these organisations would offer valuable perspectives on the barriers and enablers that this group of visitors could experience. Individual semi-structured interviews took place in October and November 2017 at the participant’s workplace and lasted approximately 45 minutes.

Respondent	Role/Position	Attraction Type	Location	Engaging with Traditionalists
Manager A	Operations Manager	Castle	Rural	no
Manager B	Operations Manager	Museum	City	yes
Manager C	Marketing Manager	Visitor Attraction	City	yes
Manager D	Operations Director	Visitor Attraction	City Centre	no
Manager E	Marketing Manager	Gallery	City Centre	no
Manager F	Operations Manager	Museum	Rural	yes
Manager G	Manager	Outdoor Attraction	City	yes
Manager H	Marketing Manager	Art Gallery	City Centre	yes
Manager I	Operations Manager	Museum	City Centre	no
Manager J	Marketing Manager	Outdoor Attraction	City	no

Table 2: Summary of Visitor Attraction managers interviewed for this study

Given the qualitative nature of this study and the use of a particular theoretical construct, the concept of theoretical saturation was important. As a means of efficiently gathering the amount of data required to appropriately conclude it was found that interviewing 12 visitors and 10 managers achieved theoretical saturation in that data being gathered from subsequent interviews no longer suggested new insights or dimensions (MacQuarrie, 2010).

### 3.4 Data analysis

The data collected were transcribed and a thematic analysis was undertaken based on the themes identified in the Audience Experience Model (AEM) developed by Leask, Fyall and Barron (2013). Whilst it is recognised that the semi-structured approach to interviewing provides an element of



flexibility (as discussed above), framing the interview questions within the structure of the AEM allowed for data gathered to be coded using the analytical framework provided by this model. Accordingly, data were coded under the three general themes proposed by the AEM (1) Organisational factors – which would include responses pertaining to price, the selection process of the product or service, the servicescape, and the interaction with the human element of the organisation; (2) Entertaining consumer experience – which would include responses that are associated with the overall experience provided or consumed and the consequent level of entertainment/enjoyment; and, (3) Consumer factors – which would include responses relating to social interaction, time, the degree of involvement, and financial aspects such as value. Whilst the AEM provided a robust analytical framework, it was important to reflect on the potential limitations of the framework during analysis and the researchers understood the benefits of looking beyond the constraints of the framework according to the responses made by participants. The following results section presents and explores the themes identified.

#### 4.0 Findings and analysis

##### 4.1 Key barriers to the Traditionalist visitors' engagement with visitor attractions

The Traditionalist visitors that took part in this study had developed a lifetime habit of engaging with visitor attractions, mainly via visitation, with this continuing, to some extent, into older age. There was a general feeling that keeping their brain active was a key reason for visiting attractions and those such visits also provided a focus and contributed to maintaining a reasonable social life. However, a few participants agreed with the findings of The International Longevity Centre (2014) research, in that a barrier to visits was created by their busy lives and that they often did not have the energy to visit attractions or they had alternative social or caring activities that took up much of their time. The availability (or otherwise) of time to engage was identified as one of the key consumer factors in Leask et al.'s (2013) paper concerning Gen Y. Indeed, participants said that available time was a significant barrier to visiting and that, in some instances, these other activities created enough social interactivity to negate the need for a visit to a visitor attraction. Please see Table 3 for the key findings shown by visitor and manager responses.

Not surprisingly, the majority of the visitor participants stated that poor external and internal accessibility would be the critical barrier that influences their choice of visitor attractions they visit - this includes access to the attraction via public transport, ease of parking, and movement around the attraction (lifts, ramps, and accessible toilets). 'Ease of access by public transport and ease of parking are key in my choice of where I visit' (Traditionalist H). The lack of easily available accessibility information was raised as a barrier, along with a reluctance to visit places where this information was not specifically stated, perhaps linking to their particular desire for safe environments (Patterson, 2018). 'I do not use the Internet, so always telephone for access information before I visit' (Traditionalist L). However, the concept of accessibility was not confined to the physical layout of the attraction and other barriers to accessibility were intellectual considerations, for example feeling a lack of confidence regarding educational requirements needed for visiting an attraction or for attending a particular experience offered by the visitor attraction.

A key consumer factor identified in Leask et al.'s (2013) model, financial accessibility was mentioned by several participants, who indicated that regular visits to paid attractions were felt to be extravagant. However, most participants commented on and appreciated the fact that access to most museums and art galleries was free of charge and that temporary exhibitions offer discounted tickets

for senior citizens. All those interviewed stated that an occasional entrance fee or charge to visit an attraction or exhibition would generally not be an inhibiting factor to a visit. Indeed, a number of those interviewed commented on the positive comparison with the cost of museum and art gallery entrance charges in the UK when compared to the entrance fees for museums and galleries experienced when on holiday overseas.

The visitor attraction managers had similar views regarding the barriers and all mentioned elements of physical accessibility as being inhibiting factors to older visitors. Issues such as the physical location (e.g. topography of site/ congested city centre location with poor public transport links) and the nature of the building (e.g. old and difficult to navigate) seen to be the biggest barriers for older visitors due to perceived mobility issues. It was found that several attractions had gone some way to addressing these issues and had, for example, introduced mobility scooters that were available for visitors, whilst some had developed an 'easy access route' around the attraction as a means of addressing this. The results above indicate the central nature of accessibility in its widest sense and concur with research undertaken by Jamaludin and Kadir (2014) and Poria et al. (2009) that calls for attractions to not only consider the barriers that exist via physical accessibility but also recognise the less obvious intellectual barriers that might significantly impact on a desire to visit.

Visitor attraction managers also identified that the lack of publicity and marketing was a barrier to this group of visitors and, as identified by Glover and Prideaux (2008) and Smiraglia (2016) indicated that there was value in developing a deeper understanding of the requirements and demands of particular generational cohorts. Few of the visitor attractions that took part in this study were marketing specifically to the older visitor market segment. It was found that there was a lack of market intelligence regarding the needs, want and requirements of this group and that these visitors are perceived as an invisible group. This was further complicated in that many were visiting with other older people who might be disabled and that a lack of familiarity with the location and access was a barrier. When asked about marketing to this specific group, many attraction managers expressed caution as they felt that promotion aimed at this market, for example, including photographs of older people, might put off other groups. Additionally, managers considered this group to be a difficult group to focus on, as they are perceived as 'hard to reach', partly due to their limited use of popular social media marketing. So, while the attraction managers are arguably in control of their marketing activities, there were barriers that were limiting a focus on the Traditionalist market. However, this study found that occasionally attractions did focus on a more mature market. This was especially the case for attractions with regal connections, where one such attraction manager explained that:

'We use intergenerational imagery for promotions and general marketing and often use images of the Queen when marketing specific exhibitions. We also advertise on radio stations that might be associated more with the older listener (Manager E)'.

In general, managers of attractions had several misconceptions regarding the needs of this group. Most did not realise that older visitors are often very busy with active social lives and significant caring responsibilities; also, many had preconceived ideas regarding this market's physical abilities and lack of access to information regarding support offered by attractions. There is a consensus regarding the benefits of engaging older visitors with arts and culture (Arts Council England, 2016) in terms of promoting socialisation, health and wellbeing, and reducing isolation (Cloquet et al., 2018; Hamblin & Harper, 2016). The results of this study suggest that attraction managers need to recognise the importance of engaging with this generational group as a means of achieving the overall organisational objectives of widening access, community involvement and potential financial sustainability.

Table 3. Barriers to Traditionalist visits to visitor attractions

Potential visitors' lack of time due to multiple social activities and/or caring responsibilities
Potential visitors' lack of confidence due to health or mobility concerns regarding the suitability of VA
Visitors' lack of confidence in intellectual suitability for visits
Visitors' financial constraints or unwilling to pay for local VA experiences
External accessibility concerns – public transport, available parking due to location
Internal accessibility concerns – movement within VA, toilets, café due to the nature of the building
Lack of market intelligence on the needs of older visitors, leading to misconceptions regarding visitor needs
Managers' perception of this being a 'hard to reach' audience with limited potential for engagement

#### 4.2 Key enablers to enhance older visitors' engagement with visitor attractions

The Traditionalist visitors that took part in this study identified a range of enablers that would encourage them to visit attractions. Key amongst these was the creation of specific products and services aimed at the older visitor. Participants suggested that this might take the form of the development of a bespoke programme that might include elements of education and socialisation that was appropriate to this group. The availability of experiences available on a regular, scheduled programme might overcome the previously identified issue of visitor attractions competing with other social activities and responsibilities, in the provision of experiences to achieve several outcomes. Several participants considered that this would be even more attractive where such programmes have an inter-generational focus, for example, grandparent and grandchildren. An example of such provision is Glasgow Museums 'Grand Day Out' which comprises a series of events that rotate around Glasgow's museums and encourages grandparents and their grandchildren to engage in structured events that encourage reminiscence and storytelling. See Table 4 for visitor and manager views on enabling factors.

In agreement with studies undertaken by Jamaludin and Kadir (2014) and Poria et al. (2009), all of the older visitors mentioned that inclusive design of both facilities and products that allowed for easy accessibility for themselves and carers if appropriate would be an essential enabler. This is likely to be particularly important for the Traditionalist visitors who may have greater physical access support needs. This would include the clear communication of information on accessibility made available in a usable format; having staff appropriately trained in the specific needs of the older visitor; strategically placed opportunities for seating and rests, and very easily accessible toilet facilities. This concurs with the observation of Zsarnoczky et al. (2016) that the development of senior-friendly accessibility is not only relevant to spaces designed for older visitors but also contributes to a more user-friendly environment for all visitors. Transport to the visitor attractions was also a significant issue for this cohort, with strong concerns regarding walking distances required for public transport use, lack of drop-off points for cars, and worries regarding the potential for injury using public transport. Traditionalist L also commented that her husband had previously been the main driver and that she lacked confidence in driving, particularly where parking information was difficult to access.

The majority of older visitors that took part in this study also mentioned that marketing and promotional material aimed specifically at them would be a significant enabler to their visit, as exemplified through images of older visitors in promotional material and clear communication of relevant access and experience information. Participants identified that this would make them feel

valued as a visitor and indicate that the attraction had recognised them as a specific group and gone some way to understand their specific needs and wants. This echoes with Cloquet et al.'s (2018) findings concerning those with disabilities.

The recognition of the needs of older visitors as a unique group could also be through the provision of appropriate food and beverage offering and social space to address needs identified by Smiraglia (2016). Indeed, for all those interviewed, a visit to the cafe or restaurant offered the chance to socialise and provided a welcome opportunity to rest during a visit. Specifically, participants commented that an appropriate accessible location and inclusive design of the catering facilities is important and those menu items and portion sizes should be reflective of the needs of this group, for example, smaller portions or with price deals. Appropriate training of staff would contribute to the overall positive experience and service provision of both the catering outlet and the attraction overall. These are all organisational factors identified by Leask et al.'s (2013) model that managers could implement in the development of entertaining consumer experiences for this specific generation.

The findings from VA managers suggested that there was no specific recording of older visitors by any of the attractions beyond the recording of 'concession' ticket sales where appropriate and no data specifically on the Traditionalist category. Consequently, this study agrees with Hung and Lu (2016) and suggests that there is no, or very little, detailed data gathered by the attractions regarding the number, type and categories of older visitors. Indeed, it was found that none of the visitor attractions that took part in this study indicated that they were marketing specifically to this group of visitors with most managers indicating that generic marketing was more the norm or, where a focus did exist, then this was toward particular nationalities or they were on the family or younger demographic. Managers could note the disparity between their practice and the views of potential visitors as regards factors to enable visits.

However, some of the attractions that took part in this study do have some understanding of the specific needs of this group and have identified and addressed particular issues to enable visits. For example, many participants indicated that significant use is being made of mixed media interpretation and information methods, audio-visual presentations, hearing loops, large print, British Sign Language/ American Sign Language. Regarding physical accessibility, historic buildings and attractions in city centre locations presented significant challenges. However, all attractions had an *Access Statement*, generally accessible via organisation web pages, and some attractions had explored and introduced strategies to cope with specific issues such as mobility scooters, electric buggy shuttles and the development of easy access route around difficult sites. Indeed, one manager (Manager C stated that their organisation:

'Recognise the accessibility issues associated with running such a unique attraction. We have introduced a range of measures including better parking opportunities, wheelchairs being available and specific facilities for those with hearing or sight problems.'

Certain attraction managers, especially those who represented historic, harder to access establishments had considered extending engagement via the introduction of outreach programmes as a means of overcoming physical access issues. The majority of the attractions indicated that they had undertaken some sort of staff training focused on issues relating to special needs of access, mobility, sight or hearing impaired visitors and some managers mentioned specific training relating to the needs of visitors with dementia. Whilst recognising that this training was not specifically focussed on older visitors, it was found that staff knowledge and understanding of these issues could act as an enabler to the Traditionalist visitor.

All visitor attraction managers recognised the value of their café/restaurant offer as a key enabling component and the very existence of such a facility contributed significantly to the important socialising dimension of the older visitor experience. One manager (J) stated, ‘whilst we don’t have a menu aimed particularly at the older visitor, we feel that what we have is appealing as we know that everyone likes a cake and a scone.’ Indeed, certain attractions specifically redesigned the physical layout and the food and beverage offering the older visitor in mind.

Whilst there was limited specific marketing activity focussed towards this group, this study found that there was recognition, by attraction managers, of the value of this group. It was interesting, however, to find that many of the managers interviewed understood the dangers of viewing the older visitor as one homogenous group and recognised the significant difference between older people who have developed a lifetime habit of visiting attractions and those who rarely or never visited VAs, and who were perhaps socially isolated. There was little evidence of enablers specific to the Traditionalist category, though those discussed would relate to the broad range of older visitors. There was an understanding of the link between the organisational remit or objectives of education, engagement and community involvement and the consequent requirements to engage with all community groups including the older visitor. However, whilst this general opinion existed, many attraction managers had, hitherto, ignored this group – preferring, or being required, to focus on older visitors with particular health and wellbeing conditions. Many attraction managers indicated that this study had alerted them to a recognition of the importance of this significant element of the population and indeed, several attraction managers indicated their willingness to consider having members of this group become involved in the governance of the organisation.

Table 4. Enablers to encourage Traditionalist visits to visitor attractions

Provision of services aimed at older visitors, with staff training where relevant e.g. café products and support
Inclusive design for access to the VA and movement within the VA and encourage repeat visitation via programmes to encourage VA familiarity and visitor confidence
Development of specific experiences aimed at older visitors – with learning and social opportunities
Clear communication including the use of relevant images to emphasise appeal, value and welcome
Clear communication of available offering – BSL, access statements, availability of trained staff
Provision of mobility support – scooters, easy access routes – and available support services
Data collection on demographic regarding needs, suitable themes, services

#### 4.3 Potential factors in the development of engaging experiences for Traditionalist visitors to visitor attractions

In addition to identifying the barriers and enablers, the Traditionalist visitors who took part in this study were asked what changes or adjustments to existing products currently offered by attractions would further enable them to visit attractions. Please see Table 5 for findings for both general experience development and specific programme developments.

Examples of visitor attraction responses to such requests can be seen in product development such as

A strong theme to the findings from this study was the development of a specific programme aimed at the Traditionalist visitor. Participants considered and recognised the extensive resource that already existed in many visitor attractions but felt that this might be packaged better as a means of

encouraging the older visitor to become more fully engaged. This could enhance the degree of involvement, established as being a key consumer factor in creating interaction with the various products and services on offer (Leask et al., 2013).

When asked what format this package might take, participants said that the development of a specific programme that comprised an organised and managed series of event experiences across a range of attractions appeared attractive. Participants were keen to visit a range of attractions through co-operation between visitor attractions and follow a structured programme over several weeks. This programme could include elements of education (for example some form of co-creative activity); an opportunity for socialisation (perhaps accompanied by refreshments); and some free time, but it was found that to be successful, certain elements should remain constant. These included regular scheduling, for example, the programme should occur over a set period, be scheduled for a two-hour slot at the same time, on the same day for a period of (for example) six weeks. As highlighted by Loureiro and Sarmento (2018), full organisation and clear communication of the programme would be required by the visitor attraction. Also important was recognition of the Traditionalists' prior experiences, linking back to Taheri et al.'s (2014) and Loureiro and Sarmento's (2018) findings relating to the creation of recreational and enjoyable moments during the visit and the potential to theme the programme or build upon individual visits to particular attractions. All participants noted that the introduction of a charge for such a programme would not be an inhibiting factor in their engagement, as explored in Leask et al.'s (2013) consumer factor of discretionary financial resources.

Several attraction managers stated they were keen to explore the development of a structured and cooperative programme and many immediately identified an element of their offering with the potential to be packaged as a two-hour programme and include elements indicated above. Attraction managers highlighted the potential of theming such a programme, with the opportunity for Traditionalist visitors to undertake more than one visit to their attraction as a means of connecting a series of visits across several attractions being attractive. Attractions have access to experts to contribute an educational aspect to such events, as sought by this generation (Patterson, 2018). However, it was found that attraction managers considered the organisation and management of such a programme to be vital for its success and that the coordinating responsibility for this should be assumed by one person or organisation. When further explored, the attraction managers who took part in this study were somewhat reticent to assume such a role due to their current job responsibilities and suggested a coordinator external to their organisation who would organise, manage and evaluate the programme.

There are several structured programmes in existence in the visitor attraction area. Common to all of the programmes are an opportunity to socialise and to become part of a particular, often 'hands-on,' activity that encourages engagement with a particular visitor attraction, whilst recognising participants' prior knowledge and experiences, all aspects highlighted as being of relevance to this group in the literature (Skinner et al., 2018; Smiraglia, 2016; Page et al., 2014). Some of these programmes are focussed on groups of visitors who have specific, often health-related, conditions. These include the '*Social*' programme jointly organised between Edinburgh's Royal Botanic Garden, the National Library of Scotland, the National Museum of Scotland and the Scottish National Gallery aimed at those suffering from dementia and their carers; or, programmes aimed at wellbeing, for example, Manchester Museums and Galleries '*Who Cares?*' programme.

The general view held by attraction managers regarding the development of such a programme aimed specifically at the older visitor was positive with all managers suggesting that they would be willing to explore and consider. One manager (B) stated this succinctly:

‘We would be happy to cooperate with other attractions with the aim of developing a programme that would be fun and entertaining, include some form of education and learning and promoting health and wellbeing. After all, good museum experiences are normally a mixture of all three and it would be great to be able to cooperate and formalise a programme for older visitors.’

However, the provision of such experiences is only one part of the process in overcoming barriers and enabling greater engagement with this market. The organisational factors identified by Leask et al. (2013) highlight the concurrent need to address the servicescape environment and personnel factors too, via the implementation of the inclusive design and management practices highlighted as being important to this market in the earlier sections. For example, while many visitor attractions may offer accessible toilets, these often still involve a distance to walk or may not be located close to the experience delivery point, or they may only make accessibility material available online. Visitors commented that accessibility information was not always easy to access, though managers all stated that they had *Access Statements* available online, so perhaps visitor attractions need to make this information more available in a variety of formats. Visitor attractions need to take cognisance of the specific needs of the market and accommodate their requests accordingly. Alongside optimising individual visitor attraction provision, integration of this understanding needs to be destination-wide to enable wider participation in these experiences (Cloquet et al., 2018; Skinner et al., 2018). This concurs with Leask et al.’s (2013) requirement for ‘other service and experience factors’ influencing the visitor experience beyond the individual attraction itself.

Table 5. Features of experiences designed specifically for Traditionalist visitors

Series of events across a set number of VAs to encourage familiarisation and confidence
Intergenerational engagement opportunities e.g. junior guides
Planned, programmed activities linked directly to the visitor attraction
Socialisation aspects of the experience built-in
Hands-on activity to enhance cognitive opportunities
Build on previous knowledge and experience via the involvement of experts and specialist themes
Inclusive design of all aspects of a visit to be clearly communicated in advance

## 5.0 Conclusions

This paper has confirmed the relevance of the visitor attraction sector engaging with older visitors, such as Traditionalists, as established by the literature, the visitors and the managers. However, it was also determined that there is limited data on which managers can base decision-making and a general lack of understanding of the characteristics and needs of the market. These aspects naturally influence the opportunities for and the effectiveness of engagement between visitor attractions and older visitors. In several respects, the ‘organisation’ and ‘consumer’ factors identified in Leask et al. (2013) Audience Development model on engaging with Gen Y are very relevant in identifying the barriers and enablers for enhancing engagement with Traditionalist visitors to visitor attractions. It offers an effective tool to investigate the nature of engagement from this generation’s perspective, though the focus is on individual attractions, rather than destination-wide development.

The barriers to engagement are identified as a range of practical and individual issues, many of which could be overcome by improved planning, design and communication practices on the part of the visitor attraction managers. A key barrier to Traditionalists visiting attractions is their lack of available time, due to ongoing commitments such as caring responsibilities, or competing social and leisure

activities. Visitors also felt there were misconceptions regarding their available time, abilities and needs, indicating a requirement for managers to build their understanding of this cohort and to take cognisance of their individual and cohort requirements.

A key element in enabling engagement with this market lies with managers developing relevant programmes and then clearly communicating the content and associated access information to potential participants. The visitors demonstrated an appetite for specially designed programming aimed specifically at this market, with opportunities for inter-generational visits; socialisation time; and acknowledgement of interests and experience. Specialist training for staff across the visitor attractions is seen to be important in enabling engagement with this market. For example, clearer communication of the specific nature and layout of the visitor attraction in both paper and online form could overcome some of the perceived and actual barriers of physical access that may be relevant to those in this generational cohort. Whilst also relevant to other markets, this detailed information could assist in encouraging engagement via meeting the older visitors' greater desire for pre-planning. As highlighted by Cloquet et al. (2018), these barriers need addressing across the whole visitor journey, with consideration of potential issues pre, during and post-visit.

While sharing some characteristics with other older visitors, the Traditionalists particularly favour the opportunity to learn from experts, to have aspects of hands-on activity as part of the visit and for scheduled social time to engage with other visitors of all ages. They also emphasised the need for integrated planning for visits, including transport and facilities required pre, during and post-visit.

Practical recommendations for visitor attractions wishing to engage with this market include recognition of the fact that they don't need to make significant changes in their existing products aimed at other markets, rather that this requires adjustments in packaging, programming and organisation. The key elements would include recognition of the characteristics of this generational cohort, the development of relevant engaging experiences for them, and the communication of the value of these in such a manner as to appeal to the market. One avenue for this in terms of overcoming associated development, training and other costs might be in working in collaboration with other visitor attractions to set up series of regular events during off-peak times when visitor attractions have spare capacity. As established by Haddouche and Salamone (2018) and Skinner et al. (2018), the development of experiences to engage specific generational audiences requires exploration of the consumer experience of the cohort in question, though experience development should also involve opportunities for inter-generational engagement in the development of relevant experiences. Visitor attraction managers need to view these potential visitors as individuals, to avoid making assumptions regarding their interests and abilities. Collaboration across other aspects of the visitor journey would also be appropriate in supporting greater visitor engagement, for example, transport providers.

Many visitor attractions have an obligation to their local communities and to addressing wider social and economic issues within their destinations. Enhanced engagement with older visitors offers opportunities to contribute to both financial and social aspects of community development and to demonstrate the added value that they offer within a destination. Experiences can be developed to utilise the spare capacity and facilities in visitor attractions to meet the growing needs of this growing generation in terms of greater routes for socialisation and recognition of their clear ability to continue to contribute to and engage with the broader community. As observed by Smiraglia (2016), there is a need to establish the specific needs of this generation, this paper contributes to this topic in terms of establishing the barriers and enablers to engagement between Traditionalist visitors and visitor attractions from both management and visitor perspectives. The results from both managers and visitors demonstrate that engagement can bring a range of benefits to the visitor attraction, the



community and the individual, predominantly in the form of visits to the visitor attraction, but potentially also via outreach and virtual form.

As with much research, this study has some limitations. Key amongst these is that, given the qualitative nature of this enquiry, the results of this study can in no way be generalised and, indeed the authors fully recognise that this study is unable to draw any definitive conclusions due to the limited number of interviews conducted with visitors and visitor attraction managers (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The interpretivist approach adopted in this study allows for the development of several conclusions that contribute to the understanding concerning the Traditionalist visitor (Tracy, 2010). A further limitation was the location, and willingness, of the various visitor attractions and older visitors to become involved in this study will have influenced the findings. The visitor participants were all based in Scotland, with the focus of the discussions relating to local day visitor attraction visits, rather than on tourist experiences. That said, the visitor attraction managers were responding about all older visitors, not specifically day visitors. However, it is suggested that all participating organisations have a potentially significant older consumer and that whilst it might be unwise to apply findings from this study to other attractions and visitors, it is considered that conclusions drawn from this research might influence other visitor attractions when considering the development and supply of experiences and services for this generational cohort.

## 6.0 Future research

Further research to develop a greater understanding of the characteristics and factors that influence older visitors' engagement at visitor attractions would be of value to both the sector and to academics. One mechanism could be to design and deliver a programme of experiences aimed at the Traditionalist visitors, where the engagement on the part of the Traditionalist visitor and the visitor attraction managers in participating in this programme could be evaluated. Further research into the specific characteristics and needs of the Traditionalist cohort of visitors would be of value in seeking to address their specific needs as the ageing population grows, so that visitor attractions can respond accordingly.

WORD COUNT 9793 (not including references and tables)

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## Appendix 1 Research instruments

### Visitor interview structure

Interview questions will relate to the following areas:

1. Do you make visits to Visitor Attractions (museums, galleries, castles)?  
If yes,
  - a. What encourages or motivates you to visit?
  - b. When you visit a Visitor Attraction who do you visit with?If no,
  - a. Why not?
2. What factors would encourage you to visit Visitor Attractions (at all or more frequently).
3. If a Visitor Attraction was designing a new experience for you, what would be of most interest?

### Manager interview structure

Interview questions will relate to the following areas:

1. Visitor Profile
  - a. Current profile
  - b. Key target markets
  - c. Importance of the 'Traditionalists'
2. Current consumer experience
  - a. Products, services and experiences designed specifically for the target market
  - b. Products, services and experiences designed for other markets but appealing to the target market
  - c. Provision for socialising
3. Marketing/promotional activities conducted
  - a. Messaging, imaging
  - b. Importance given to offering value for money and time/effort
  - c. Collaboration
4. Future consumer experience development