

# Considerations on ageing in international tourism

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## Development

The biological stage of the human being called third age, had been identified in different societies, as the end of the active cycle of the individual and the entry of this in a world of staticism, where the being reaches the limit of its possibilities as a social entity.

Obviously, it was very difficult and traumatic for these people to have to accept the indifference and annulment of their potentialities by the rest of society. This situation was tacitly transferred to the conceptions and work projections of our tourist facilities, where the third age was not taken into account as an active client.

Based on the diagnoses and statistical analyses carried out in the world with respect to the increasingly lower birth rate, also recorded in our country and therefore, the dizzying aging of the population, the United Nations (UN) estimates that by 2050 this segment of the population will surpass for the first time the number of children with 32% of the total in the world, therefore different strategies have been outlined for their protection and better quality of life.

For example, in response to the growing demand for lodging from this segment, hotels for the elderly have emerged. This trend is increasing, and in countries such as Brazil and Spain there are already large companies such as Sol Hoteles and Grupo Mayoral in Spain, which increasingly specialize in the area of hotel care for older adults.

Likewise, and according to the new reality, the tourist facilities of the country and particularly in our territory, following this same line of thought have been seen in the urgent need to classify the third age as the most important market segment, given the amazing growth of it.

If this situation has already become reliable and a reason for constant concern for the development of animation, which we have confirmed through the work done as members of the Advisory Group on Animation Management of the School of Hotel Management and Tourism of Santiago de Cuba, we should ask ourselves: why do the tourist animation activities offered in our facilities remain distanced from the real needs of elderly customers and, without yet discovering their true potential to achieve a total activation of these customers, as well as the full satisfaction of their expectations?

To begin to answer us the previous question, we insist in first place, on the necessity to know some of the main characteristics of the leisure type that occupies us, for an effective conception

of the activities of animation to them directed and that next we relate:

- Income: medium - high
- Age: 60 to 90 years old on average
- Sex: averaged
- Social behaviour: predominance of marriages
- Educational level: medium - high
- They prefer to interact with people and make the most of their free time.
- It is an active tourism segment taking into account its own initiatives
- They like comfort and novelty
- Interrelate the tourist activity with the social activity of the selected destination

Secondly, we refer to the pretensions of animation as a safeguard for customer loyalty, and we are of the opinion that this speciality intends:

- Keep customers entertained.
- Encourage them to feel comfortable during their stay at the hotel and wish to return.
- Encourage them to pass on their experiences to family and friends.
- Encourage them to develop facets and skills they don't know about themselves.
- Take advantage of their skills and experiences in the development of different activities.
- Facilitate their interpersonal relationships
- Contribute to improve their quality of life.
- Turn them into promoters of our product.

Taking into account the above and the fact that customers who visited us in previous seasons, today return with a greater cumulus of age, the proposed animation should be thought of in a more intelligent, sensitive and peaceful, without neglecting the physical activity, provided that the exercises to be performed are adjusted to the psychobiological conditions of the same.

Based on our experiences in the facilities of the territory, shared with those of our animators, and as a result of the diagnosis made, we propose in this article some alternatives for the improvement of the quality of the animation directed to the client of the third age:

1. Without neglecting other market segments, reorient the animation towards a more advanced third age.
2. Create customer associations based on affinities, tastes, preferences, abilities, motivations, professional experiences, encouraging the solidification of various groups so that the animator can organize and plan the reunion of them, thus ensuring loyalty.
3. Develop activities that encourage spiritual relaxation and human self-realization such as: contests of manual skills (weaving, embroidery, drawing, painting, sewing, and others).
4. Creative workshops based on their experiences (cooking tricks, mental agility games, how to learn to memorize, tastings, etc.).

5. Tertulias.
6. Activities where artistic manifestations are expressed enhancing the aptitudes of the clients.
7. Stimulate the cognitive zone of customers (comments on films, literary works, habits, customs, religion of the region they visit, logical deduction games, mathematical games, etc.).
8. To offer evening concerts that favour direct interaction with the artists and at the same time the spiritual complacency of the clients.
9. Increase passive games (extended macro board games, puzzles, crossword puzzles)
  
10. Sports activities (gymnastics, Tai Chi, baiolotherapy)
11. Contemplative activities taking advantage of the natural environment

As we can see, to satisfy such a sensitive segment, we do not need large resources and investments, but keep updated information about the leisure of our interest and its changes, and especially creativity in doing and wanting to be.

Definitely, the third age cannot be an area isolated from the tourist advance.

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## Notes

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- Photo of talcahuanofotos via Flickr