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IAUTA Senior's Observatory

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ACTING
FOR LIFE





Introduction

This working paper is intended to describe the strategic context that justifies the creation of a World Observatory of Senior Tourism (WOST) within the International Association of Universities of Third Age (AIUTA). It presents WOST's basic functions and the value propositions.

Point I describes the strategic context for the development of senior tourism observatories; point II briefly describes the role played by AIUTA in developing senior tourism; point III proposes the creation of an AIUTA's "World Observatory of Senior Tourism (WOST)"; point IV presents target market; point V presents WOST's mission statement; point VI describes WOST's structure; point VII refers to WOST's funding; point VIII presents WOST's legal status and founding members; point IX describes WOST's strategic action vectors; finally point XIV presents the main conclusions.



I. The Strategic Context

Senior tourism is gaining importance in the world !

Over time, there has been an ever increasing number of destinations that have recognized the importance of senior tourism and consequently have promoted senior tourism development, turning this tourism segment into a key driver of socio-economic progress through the generation of export revenues, the creation of jobs and firms and infrastructure development and through its integration into the global development strategies of many tourism destinations all over the world.

There is a need of rigorous and up-to-dated information on senior tourism !

The success of tourism destinations in attracting senior tourists has been conventionally measured by seniortourist arrivals and revenues, but today this is not enough to maintain destinations' competitiveness.

Tourism policy makers and tourism firms' managers need accurate information on the complete range of senior tourism impacts in the tourism destinations' economies in order to support their decision-making processes.

Senior Tourism is heterogeneous !

Senior tourism is composed by many different segments. The travel patterns and behaviors of senior citizens are not homogenous and different motivations can influence their choices of tourism activities and tourism destinations.

For example, studies have found substantial differences in senior's choices for food, accommodations, shopping and entertainment, among other experiences (Bai *et al.*, 2001:148, as cited in Alén, E.; Domínguez, T.; Losada, N. (2012) page 155).



Seniors travel motivations are diversified !

Seniors travel for a wide variety of reasons or motivations, which depend on many factors including the following personal factors (Alén, E.; Domínguez, T.; Losada, N. (2012) page 154):

- a) Their socio-cultural context;
- b) Their education;
- c) Their work environment;
- d) Their vision of the world; and
- e) Their personality.

Actually, senior tourists seem to have more heterogeneous preferences and motivations than young travelers (Reece, 2004 as cited in Prayag, 2012).



II. AIUTA AND SENIOR TOURISM

AIUTA is an International Association of Universities of Third Age (U3As) that produces many interesting and important research projects and studies about seniors of the Universities of Third Age and promotes extensive national and international travel and tourism activities among senior students of member universities.

Those tourism trips have an important impact on tourism destinations and, too often, their monitoring and evaluation is never or seldom addressed. This crucial information for destinations tourism planning processes is needed when policy-makers and tourism planners realize that even the baseline information is missing what creates difficulties during the implementation of the plan.



III. AIUTA's "World Observatory of Senior Tourism (WOST)"

Within this broad strategic context, an AIUTA's "World Observatory of Senior Tourism (WOST)" is an ideal structure to monitor, study, inform, train and advise all stakeholders engaged in travel and tourism activities developed by seniors, including senior students of AIUTA's member Universities.

WOST is a pioneer project in the international tourism scene.

The AIUTA's "Observatory of Senior Tourism (WOST)" strategic context implies:

- Providing guidance to the tourism sector players in the destinations all over the world on the adoption of new practices, based on rigorous information and knowledge to attract senior tourists in general, including senior tourists of the U3As;
- Contributing to strengthen the dynamic factors underlying senior tourism growth within AIUTA's member universities;
- Fostering new ways to promote a sustainable tourism development by proposing adequate public policies aimed at senior tourism growth worldwide;
- Using information obtained from statistical data for the correct evaluation of pro-senior tourism measures and policies being implemented at the tourism destinations;
- Developing knowledge based on research about the profile, travel motivations and travel behavior and impacts of senior tourism.



IV. WOST's Target market

WOST has the following target market (who will most likely buy its output):

- a) The governments and their departments;
- b) The national/regional/local public entities with responsibilities in tourism development;
- c) The tourism firms;
- d) The national/regional tourism promotion agencies;
- e) The international tourism agencies;
- f) The universities and research institutions;
- g) The senior tourists.



V. Mission Statement

To monitor, study and provide real-time information about senior tourism, including senior tourism of AIUTA's member universities, in an independent and rigorous way, and give advice to better achieve a sustainable development of senior tourism in tourism destinations worldwide, acting as worldwide institution of reference for the study and promotion of senior tourism in partnership with international, national and regional tourism entities.



VI. WOST's structure

- WOST will be implemented involving the close collaboration of member universities of AIUTA and will function within AIUTA's member universities network. Those universities can host senior tourism research poles contributing to develop common projects and providing important support for the development of WOST's activities and initiatives. Those poles in each member university will have a coordinator who will be responsible for the projects and a local team of researchers and academics dedicated to the projects development.
- The project leaders in each university will work under the coordination of AIUTA's scientific executive board, a body responsible for defining an annual research agenda and priority projects, including senior tourism projects suggested by the research coordinators from each member university, members of AIUTA's scientific board.



VII. WOST's funding

Funding for the WOST's activities and projects must come from:

- a) Fees paid by member institutions;
- b) Fees charged for some activities and outputs;
- c) Funds of the European Union, World Bank, UNEP, and other international entities for tourism projects;
- d) National tourism authorities.



VIII. WOST's Legal Status and founding members

WOST is:

- A non-Profit Private Association with the following founding members:
 - a. AIUTA's Scientific board;
 - b. Azores Tourism Observatory;
 - c. Universities and volunteer U3A members of AIUTA;
 - d. Acting for Life – Tourism and Development Pole (TED).



IX.WOST's Strategic Action Vectors

Strategic Action
Vector I: **Observe to**
Monitor

Strategic Action
Vector II: **Observe to**
Study

Strategic Action
Vector III: **Observe to**
Inform

Strategic Action
Vector IV: **Observe to**
Train

Strategic Action
Vector V: **Observe to**
Advise



Strategic Action Vector I – Observe to Monitor

Observe the needs of a continuous follow up of an ever-changing tourism sector to monitor tourism through opinion surveys, adopting a demand side approach.

Examples of surveys

- Survey about the travel motivations, expectations and satisfaction of the Senior Tourists of U3As.

This WOST project provides a continuous assessment of travel motivations, satisfaction of tourists of the Universities of Third Age regarding the destinations visited and with their trips to the destination, as well as with their expectations before visiting the destination.

The continuous assessment of the satisfaction and expectations of senior tourists, by University and by group, based on representative samples and on the creation of an international senior tourism survey provides useful data to conduct scientific studies on this topic. It is also useful to provide relevant information to Destination Management Offices (DMOs) and other tourism players as well as to international tourism organizations.

WOST will develop a "Senior Tourism Travel Monitor"

Examples of WOST's Senior Tourism Travel Monitor surveys

- Survey to monitor the trips organized by each U3A (University of Third Age) member of AIUTA;
- Survey to monitor the tourism destinations performance in the national and international senior tourism market. This regular survey covers the seniors travel booking behavior and will be implemented with both tour operators and travel agents specialized in senior tourism traveling
- Survey to monitor tourism destinations' performance and competitiveness in the senior tourism market;
- Senior Tourism Barometer to evaluate the expectations of tourism agents regarding the senior tourism segment in the next tourism season.



Strategic Action Vector II – Observe to Study

Observe the needs of a profound and rigorous knowledge about senior tourism, including senior tourism of the Universities of Third Age, in order to produce scientific and technical studies about this important market segment.

Examples of studies:

- Quality Indicator of Tourism Destinations in the perspective of senior tourists of the U3As

This study intends to assess the quality of the tourist experience in tourism destinations in the eyes of senior tourists.

The quality evaluation of relevant attributes of tourism destinations by senior tourists of the Universities of Third Age, with reference to other competing destinations, aims at producing a Global Quality Indicator, which will answer to changes in partial indicators of quality for senior tourists of U3As.

- The Health and Wellness products for Senior Tourists

This study will analyze and assess the needs for specific infrastructures, medical care, skilled health and wellness human resources and the type of specialized training required to serve the needs of tourists of U3As, as well as the needs for auxiliary services, namely at the level of leisure, transport and communications services best suited for senior tourists of the U3As.

- Senior Tourists of The Universities of Third Age Travel Motivations

Use the pull and push methodology, developing a common questionnaire to analyze the travel motivations of the senior tourists of the U3As and their influence on their recommendation and revisit intentions directly or indirectly through their image and satisfaction with the destination;



- Study the senior tourists travel behaviors, including their preferences about variables such as:
 - *Type of trip;*
 - *Type of accommodation;*
 - *Travel companions;*
 - *Travel time preparation;*
 - *Duration of the trip;*
 - *Means of transport;*
 - *Organization of travel;*
 - *Sources of information used;*
 - *revisit intentions;*
 - *Recommendation intentions;*
 - *Main travel expenditure*

Strategic Action Vector III – Observe to Inform

Observe the information needs about senior tourism, including tourism and travel of seniors of the Universities of Third Age, in order to create and develop adequate forms of diffusing relevant information on real time.

Examples of WOST's senior tourism Information channels !

- WOST's magazine: "*Senior Tourism in Observation*"

The publication of a magazine entitled "*Senior Tourism in Observation*" will analyze the main challenges, threats and opportunities faced by senior tourism, including senior tourism of the Universities of Third Age in the world as well as different topics related to senior tourism such as medical tourism, wellness tourism, cultural tourism, residential tourism, accessible destinations for all, slow tourism, among others.

It also will publicize the main senior tourist's destinations and attractions worldwide, as well as senior travel programs and activities developed by U3As and its partners.



This magazine aspires to be recognized as an exemplary theme publication on senior tourism at the international and national levels.

➤ WOST's website

As a primary vehicle of communicating its main activities to the public, WOST will create a website where it will be possible to access to a wide range of information related to the senior tourism market segment and to the tourists of the U3As in particular. This internet portal will be updated with information obtained from secondary sources, such as relevant studies and international publications with restricted access.

Besides, news about regional, national and international tourism will be released on a weekly basis. The most relevant news about senior tourism will be sent to the subscribers of WOST's newsletter.

➤ Social Networks (Facebook)

WOST will create a page in Facebook to interact with the public and to share experiences, stories and photos/videos, as well as suggestions regarding seniors travel and tourism.

A series of international conferences, seminars, workshops and courses will be promoted with the objective of informing and transmitting the main results of the research and applied projects developed by WOST.

The objective is to create a wide international forum for reflection and for sharing the results of new studies conducted by different researchers using innovative approaches to Senior Tourism.

They also diffuse innovative projects in this field.



Examples of Conferences, seminars, workshops!

- International Scientific Conference entitled "*The Present and Future of Senior Tourism in the World*", associated to an international scientific journal's special issue to publish selected papers presented at the conference.
 - Seminars on the topic of "Innovations in Senior Tourism";
 - Public presentation of the studies on Senior Tourism. The main conclusions of the studies on the topic of Senior Tourism, including Senior Tourism of the U3As will be presented during public workshops in different university members of AIUTA.
 - International Summer Course for Senior Tourists of the U3as
- WOST will organize an annual summer course for senior tourists of U3As, with a practical orientation, including several cultural and nature based initiatives and practical workshops and courses, taking place each year in a different AIUTA's member universities campuses.

Strategic Action Vector IV – Observe to Train

Observe the training needs of people working with the senior tourism market and promote seminars, workshops and lectures in order to contribute to the professional training and qualification of all agents operating in this sector and also to promote a pro-senior tourism culture among local residents.

Strategic Action Vector V – Observe to Advise

Observe the need to provide strategic guidance to all tourism destinations' stakeholders, to give advice on the best practices facilitating a sustainable tourism development with the most suitable products and infrastructures to attract senior tourism competitively.



Examples of advice instruments:

- Produce practical manuals with recommendations and practical guidelines to Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) and public tourism authorities to improve their destinations competitiveness in the Senior Tourism market segment, facilitating the adoption of good practices in this field.
- Create WOST's international Awards!
- Create an award to the University that promotes best practices as far as senior tourism is concerned and advise other U3As to use these examples as a benchmarking;
- Create an award to the destination that promotes best practices as far as senior tourism is concerned and advise other destinations to use these examples as a benchmarking.
- Create an award to the hotel that promotes best practices as far as senior tourism is concerned and advise other hotels to use these examples as a benchmarking.
- Create an award to the tour operator that promotes best practices as far as senior tourism is concerned and advise other tour operators to use these examples as a benchmarking.



X. Main Conclusion

The AIUTA's "World Observatory of Senior Tourism (WOST)" is an important example of a good practice of sustainable tourism, since it:

- a) Monitors senior tourism at a world level;
- b) Functions as an aggregator of the relevant information about the tourism activities of U3As;
- c) Provides useful information regarding senior tourism, including senior tourism of the U3As, useful for researchers, universities, tourism players in tourism destinations, tourism authorities and international agencies;
- d) Provides policy guidance for tourism planners of tourism destinations that wish to attract the senior tourists of the U3As;
- e) Diffuses the activities of U3As;
- f) Identifies best practices in senior tourism.

Concluding, there is a window of opportunities and a sound justification to implement this innovative project within AIUTA's network.



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