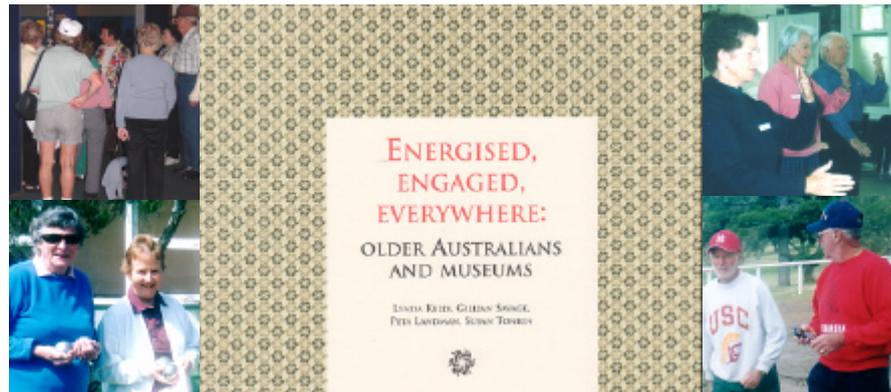




Environmetrics



ENERGISED ENGAGED EVERYWHERE

In 1998 there were 2.3 million Australians over 65 years of age. Today's mature Australians are healthier, wealthier and live longer than any previous generation. By mid-century when the baby boomers swell their ranks, there will be 6 million of them – comprising a quarter of the total population.

Gillian Savage, co-author of a new study about mature Australians, *Energised, Engaged and Everywhere* says, "It is no surprise that marketers have noticed the over-65s and are busily re-focusing products and services for mature markets. But it might surprise many to discover that it is the public sector that is leading the way."

The study, called *Energised, Engaged, Everywhere: Older Australians and Museums*, published by the National Museum of Australia and the Australian Museum, dispels the common view of older people as 'out to pasture' or dependent on family and government services. Instead, they are recognised as independent, busy and organised.

The study shows that older people are committed to helping their family and community in practical ways. They are also keen hobbyists (66%), travellers (40%) and museum/gallery visitors (53%).

Gillian Savage said the research showed that these people have an appetite for life that is rarely dimmed by the challenges they face.

"We're busy people. We don't just enjoy ourselves, we do useful things."

How should museums and other service providers appeal to these markets? The report lists more than 40 things venues can do to attract mature markets.

Recommendations refer to programming, pricing, facilities, layout and design, presentation, access and communication.

Copies of the report can be ordered from: AMARC, 6 College Street, Sydney, NSW 2010.

Contact:

Gillian Savage

Email
gillian@environmetrics.com.au

Tel 61 2 9954 0455
Fax 61 2 9954 9046

Environmetrics Pty Ltd
Locked Bag 2116
North Sydney
NSW 2059
Australia
www.environmetrics.com.au

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Key findings

- Always include a tag line that gives the purpose and scope of your museum. Museums have changed dramatically since many older people visited – even the big museums need to state their purpose.
- A museum visit can be promoted as a day off from regular commitments. Retirees often take on regular commitments and are short of ‘free time’ for visiting museums.
- Promote your museum through local organisations that serve older people or attract older volunteers.
- Link up with other cultural and tourist venues to present a variety of things to see and do.
- Develop exhibitions, programs and activities that:
 - take 1-2 hours
 - focus on one topic
 - fit morning schedules
 - use simple presentation
 - include interactivity (e.g. doing, showing or telling)
 - include a seated activity
 - include some face-to-face
 - foster social exchange
- Topics with special appeal to people over 65 years are:
 - family + local history
 - 20thC domestic history
 - popular culture 1930-60 (music, film, fashion, lifestyles)
 - beautiful and precious objects
 - collecting and collections
 - skills, trades, craftsmanship
 - travel, places, world cultures
- Most people go to museums to have their world view confirmed or gently widened. Museums that present new histories or new perspectives need to acknowledge the prior views that are being displaced. Older visitors have world views that have been developed and supported by experience for six decades or more.
- Recognise that older people have less stamina for standing for long periods. Provide seating for time out and in exhibitions, especially at audio stations or visual screens.
- Recognise that hearing declines with age. Provide amplification for guides and make sure ambient noise levels are low.
- Make your written material extra-easy to see. Wall panels and text labels should allow 5-8 people to read them at the same time without crowding or bending.
- Provide light-weight room notes for visitors to carry around with them.
- Provide a set-down zone at your front door, with sheltered seating nearby, for families to drop members who can't walk far.
- Use a check list to verify whether your museum or exhibition is senior-friendly in operational terms.
- Offer discounts or special packages for seniors.
- Stock your shop with low cost (<\$10) items suitable for the rituals of gift giving. Many seniors don't want more 'stuff' but they do like to express their gratitude and affection to friends and family with interesting gifts.
- Cater for groups by designing exhibitions with multiple pathways, and use systems that avoid queues for tickets, toilets or refreshments.

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