



PILOT IMPLEMENTATION

Testing of the senior friendly rural tourism off-season products



Testing report and pilot evaluation



Project "A bottom-up, stakeholder-driven product for individual senior off-season travel to rural micro – and SMEs, established and managed through corporate agreements" (75/G/ENT/CIP/13/B/N03S01) has been funded with support from the European Commission. The sole responsibility of this publication lies with the author. The European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

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Introduction

This report describes the activities, results and evaluation conclusions from testing of senior friendly rural tourism off-season products (further on - “pilot products”) and their operative system model developed under the project “Seniors Go Rural - Facilitating transnational low season tourism exchanges in Europe encouraging Senior Citizens to travel”.

Evaluation of the pilot implementation was done in 3 aspects:

- Validity of product accreditation guidelines and criteria
- Validity and viability of Operative Systems and the Operative Model as a whole
- Efficiency and effectiveness of promotion and marketing tools and channels used.

Testing subject:

– ***pilot products***

As part of the project, the partners developed accommodation and touring pilot products in Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Belgium according to set criteria and guidelines. The pilot products were aimed at the target audience aged 55+ who would travel off-season and make their own travel arrangements, including bookings directly with the providers of the pilot products in countries other than home country. The testing period was set in Sept-Nov, 2015.

– ***operative system***

The product operative system model is based upon a member card Silver Suitcase granting discounts on accommodation and other rural tourism related products in off-season to card holders aged 55+ (members of organizations representing seniors) and 1 accompanying person. The discounts are guaranteed by an agreement signed between a rural tourism service provider meeting the card accreditation criteria and a marketing or other relevant organization which is the actual owner of the card. Distribution is organized through an agreement between the marketing organization and an organization representing seniors. The latter distributes the Silver Suitcase cards to its members and registers card holders.

- ***promotion and marketing***

The pilot products were promoted to the target audience in Norway and the Netherlands by partners as described further in this testing report, in order to achieve travel of seniors to these products, making use of the given operative system.

1. Preparation of pilot products

The partners did the following to develop the pilot products:

“Lauku ceļotājs”, Latvia:

- Guidelines for a “Senior-friendly” product accreditation “Seniors Go Rural” have been produced in English with contributions from all partners and are translated in Latvian.
- 2 events have been organized: national meeting on 10.03.2015. with participation of 13 participants – RT entrepreneurs; National WS on 25.03.2015 with

participation of 115 participants. The participants agreed on criteria and product definition in Latvia.

- Technical supporting documents have been elaborated – a checklist for self-evaluation for Latvian providers:
http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/news/2015/Anketa_seniori.docx
- Together with P4, 8 rural tourism off-season products (incl. 2 test tours) have been developed in Latvia and Lithuania for testing.
- SenGor product brochure “Seniors go Rural” to promote the SenGor pilot / test products available on (e-versions): EN language
http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/SenGoR/Results/NOF_reisbrochure_A5_EN_24082015.pdf
- Agreements with the testing product suppliers regarding all arrangements (booking, the Silver Suitcase card, discount amount, time of validity etc.) have been made. Testing product suppliers had undertaken to register the required data for monitoring of testing experiences to enable evaluation and conclusions. "Silver Suitcase" guest ID card, to be used during the testing and the recognition sticker for the test places have been produced.
- A specialised web site section for senior rural tourism <http://www.celotajs.lv/seniors> (in LV, DE, RU and EN languages) has been made. The section includes senior friendly accommodations, attractions and tours that accept the Silver Suitcase card.

Belgium:

- Selection of accommodation providers in rural areas based on the needs and expectations of senior travellers. Accommodations were selected with a high level of accessibility and which also offer diner (with local products) for their guests.
- Contact with accommodation providers to convince them to participate in the project and to offer a substantial discount for senior travellers during low season.
- Areas were chosen keeping in mind the touristic offer and fall season: selection of tourism activities suitable for the target group.
- The information was bundled in an overview per region, tourism activities and accommodations.

Lithuanian countryside tourism association

- Guidelines for a “Senior-friendly” product accreditation “Seniors Go Rural” have been produced in Lithuanian language.
- Together with P1, 8 rural tourism off-season products (incl. 2 test tours) have been developed in Latvia and Lithuania for testing.
- The pilot accommodations and the individual holiday itinerary with private transport and guide service were carefully selected to include the highlights of Lithuania and have a good possibility to link it with Latvia making transnational itinerary and product.
- Agreements with the testing product suppliers regarding all arrangements (booking, the Silver Suitcase card, discount amount, time of validity etc.) have been made. Testing product suppliers had undertaken to register the required data for

monitoring of testing experiences to enable evaluation and conclusions. "Silver Suitcase - Seniors Go Rural" guest ID card, to be used during the testing and the recognition sticker for the test places has been produced.

- SenGor product brochure "Seniors go Rural" to promote the SenGor pilot / test products was printed in EN language.
- A specialised web site section for senior rural tourism in Lithuania <http://www.atostogoskaime.lt/seniorai> (in LT, DE, RU and EN languages) has been made. The section includes senior friendly accommodations, and places of interest that accept the Silver Suitcase card.

HANEN, Norway:

- A careful assessment and selection of the members who provide "rural accommodation and activities", considered in relation to needs, wants and expectations of senior travellers.
- Accommodation which are both suitable for elderly and disabled regarding accessibility, and which had additional interesting offers (cultural activities, nature area etc.) were chosen.
- It was taken into account which of providers could gain of travellers during the shoulder season, and therefore be benevolent to offer a solid discount.
- The category called "Senior Travels" <http://www.hanen.no/utforsk/113> was created on the web site, www.hanen.no, where the presentation of the suppliers of the testing products, plus a few more accommodations that are most suitable for senior travellers.

2. Marketing of pilot products

All partners carried out marketing and promotional actions as planned in the project in order to reach target audiences in their countries, special activities were taken by the Netherlands senior organization and Norway partner. Promotional activities were also addressed to the supply side informing rural tourism businesses about their opportunities with the senior friendly products and Silver suitcase card.

"Lauku ceļotājs", Latvia:

- Increased product providers' awareness about senior persons needs, achieved improvements of the service quality according to Silver Suitcase criteria.
- As a result of project dissemination activities "Lauku ceļotājs" received interest in the Silver Suitcase card from Latvian Seniors' Federation. Together with Latvian Seniors' Federation it was possible to introduce the Silver Suitcase card in Latvia. The brochure "Seniors Go Rural" (in Latvian) was produced with general description of senior friendly rural tourism product, the Silver Suitcase discount card and information links to the product: http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/SenGoR/Results/LC_Seniori_BUKLETS.pdf

- “Lauku celotajs” added tourism sites and tours to the product database www.celotajs.lv/seniors in order to make the Silver Suitcase card more attractive and easier to use.

“National Foundation of the Elderly”, The Netherlands:

- Development of brochure: After receiving information and visuals (pictures, logo’s) from participating organisations and accommodations, a 10-page promotion brochure was developed. The brochure included information about the Seniors Go Rural project and Silver Suitcase membership card, an introduction to each of the four countries and information on participating accommodations and their special offers. This brochure was sent out to 10,000 receivers of the organisation’s quarterly magazine Kweek. Receivers of this magazine are highly relevant for the target group, either elderly themselves or interested in topics specially dedicated to elderly. 2600 elderly persons were informed by electronic mailing. About 100 extra brochures were printed to hand out at presentations/events.
- Website: The NFE website (www.ouderfonds.nl/evenementen) also dedicated a section to the special offers under “test een buitenlandse reis” (test a trip abroad). Visitors of the website are typically people who are interested in the Ouderenfonds offers for a day out or sometimes overnight trips specially for elderly.
- Further activities: Furthermore, information on test products were handed out at events where the National Foundation of the Elderly (NFE) were present.

HANEN, Norway

- Produced/translated a test product brochure “Go Rural - Reisebrosjyre for seniorer (+55)” in Norwegian. The brochure (pdf version) was put on web page www.hanen.no:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzJwFgtolXuKRHJqb3RGQ2liTDQ/view>.
- The brochure (pdf) was sent to 19 different senior organizations with additional information about the project - its purpose and meaning, dates for the testing period, the discount, project partners. After the e-mail was sent, HANEN had telephone interviews with twelve of them regarding the e-mail and the brochure.
- The products and the brochure was presented to specific travel agent and his group of about 30 people, both men and women, in the age group of 50-75 years.
- Information was presented in HANEN’s annual summer newsletter (“HANEN Informerer”) to 450 members of the organisation, partners and collaborators.
- The Silver Suitcase products and the concept was presented at three different seminars where rural tourism was on the agenda:
 - NMBU, 20.10.15, “Possibilities and challenges in nature based tourism”
 - Dovre, 29.10.15, “Rural Tourism; its traditions and culture”
 - NMBU, 20.11.15, “The businesses of Rural Tourism”
- A sub-website was produced in www.hanen.no with information on senior travels and links to Silver Suitcase offers in other countries.
- An ad was placed in the senior magazine “Vi over 60”.
- HANEN was prepared to distribute the discount cards to senior organizations upon request.

3. Follow-up and testing feedback.

According to the project plan, the target audience was the seniors in the Netherlands and Norway. After the described product development and marketing activities the partners monitored the reactions of the target audience to assess the interest and get feedback. It was observed that actually no individual bookings occurred during the testing period. In order to find out the reasons, partners contacted the target audience – senior organisations and individuals repeatedly.

“National Foundation of the Elderly”, The Netherlands:

- Mailing: people who received the brochure and called to get more information received extra information on the countries, the accommodations and roundtrips etc. Furthermore, they were informed by phone about the programme, the membership card, the countries etc.
- Website: people who called (~60) or left their email address after reading about the project on the “evenementen” website, received explanation by phone about the programme, membership card, the countries etc. If the email address was known, the extensive brochure with more information about the accommodations, roundtrips, etc. was sent directly to them.
- People who indicated they wanted to receive a Silver Suitcase were sent a card and put on a list of members. 5 people received the Silver Suitcase card.
- Research: Because very few people ended up signing up for a membership card it was decided to carry out research among a sample of the receivers of the information/offer.
- 60 receivers of the brochure were called and asked about their feedback, interest, reasons to participate, attractiveness of the countries etc.
- 33% of respondents indicated not to remember whether they had received the brochure or not. This could indicate low interest in the topic or unattractiveness of the material.
- Of those who did receive and remember the brochure, about half found the brochure/offer attractive and half did not think the material or offer was attractive.
- Those who did not find the offer/material attractive, named as reasons:
 - Don’t travel abroad
 - Time (15 sept – 15 nov) does not suit my planning
 - Don’t like the countries
 - Don’t have money to spend on travelling
- Those who did find the offer/brochure attractive but did not book, named as reasons :
 - Health issues – can’t travel now
 - Time (15 sept – 15 nov) does not suit my planning
 - Don’t like the countries

HANEN, Norway

- Most of the senior organisations who got the brochure called (~15) HANEN for more information on the offers, destinations, practical details regarding booking etc. Some questions were received by e-mail.
- In most cases the response given was that if one is supposed to travel independently, it should be within Norway, or at least Scandinavia.
- The seniors approached regarding the testing products tell that they are skeptical to challenges regarding language and unfamiliar destinations.
- Feedback on the marketing material is that it is a slightly mismatch between the profile and target group (+55). Example given from one of the seniors we talked to: *“The brochure shows pictures of relatively old people that I don’t identify myself with.”*

4. Solutions adopted to get alternative feedback for project results.

As it turned out that no bookings actually happened during the test period, the partners agreed to focus on getting alternative feedback in order to analyse the reasons and draw conclusions.

“Lauku ceļotājs”, Latvia:

- Prolonged test period to the end of the project extending the product range available at www.celotajs.lv/seniors
- Silver Suitcase cards (1000 pieces) have been printed and card usage rules have been elaborated in Latvian to test the interest of Latvian target audience.
- Questionnaire for seniors about Silver Suitcase services has been translated to Latvian, printed in paper version and distributed in the target audience (the Customer Survey).
- Several meetings with the Latvian Senior organization (<http://www.pensionari.lv/>) have been organized and Silver Suitcase cards, card usage rules and questionnaire in order to get feedback have been disseminated.
- Participation with senior Silver Suitcase card and products in travel trade fair Balttour-2016. Questionnaire was distributed to find out opinions of the potential Silver Suitcase users and rural tourism customers.

Belgium:

- The participating accommodation providers were contacted during the end of the testing period. None of them had guests for test period with the Silver Suitcase card. Accommodation providers appointed as possible reason for the absence of guests the NOF-website which is not an actual promotion website.
- Toerisme Vlaams-Brabant and NOF had several contacts by e-mail and telephone to discuss the possibilities of how to reach their senior members. Toerisme Vlaams-Brabant suggested to do an e-mailing on the NOF-member list to highlight the product offer with an online contest. NOF doubted this was a good idea as they already send an e-mailing and were contacting their members by telephonic survey for feedback.

- Feedback from guests who actually stayed in the accommodations (see below “Customer Survey”): some accommodation providers are willing to help with the online questionnaire others gave the contact list for telephonic survey.

Lithuanian countryside tourism association

- Communicated with participating accommodation providers during the testing period as well as after the estimated test end. No one of them had guests with the Silver Suitcase card. Discussed that the possible reason was the offer distribution period was too late in the year, travel dates Sep – Nov a bit too late.
- Questionnaire for seniors about Silver Suitcase services has been made and distributed for pilot test accommodations (see below “Customer Survey”).
- The test period was extended until the end of the project.

HANEN, Norway

- Extended the period for testing the products.
- Newsletter by e-mail to potencial travellers.
- Asked a sample of the senior organizations why they thought the testing products offered were of no interest, and if they had any thoughts on what changes should be done (hence testing period, price, destinations, etc.).
- A sub-website was produced in www.hanen.no with information on senior travels and links to Silver Suitcase offers in other countries where information was updated to include more senior specialized products than just testing ones.
- Made telephone interviews with the seniors staying in rural tourism accommodations (the Customer Survey).

Customer Survey

To get more feedback, partners carried out a survey aimed at senior travellers staying at rural accommodations that were part of the “Silver Suitcase” test products. Even if they did not book within the testing campaign, they are actually using rural tourism services and are in the target age group. The survey was carried out during December 2015 and January 2016 online <http://goo.gl/forms/YPpe5BU2gN> , in telephone and face-to-face interviews. All partners took part in this activity.

5. Feedback results and summary

“Lauku ceļotājs”, Latvia:

- Testing period had to be started 1/2 year earlier (spring time) – that would have changed the test results. The testing took place during a not very favourable period of the year.
- In promotional materials we should stress ambiance, character, attractions, but would not stress technical details which are especially for senior clients. Senior persons do not necessarily want to feel old or somehow to be associated with less able group (although technically they might be).

- Several meetings with Latvian Senior Federation with participation from 20 regional organizations (members of the Latvian Senior organization's Board) was held. Silver Suitcase cards, card usage rules, questionnaire and leaflet “SenGoR - Rural Tourism for Seniors in Europe” (in Latvian) brochure has been distributed. During the meeting participants asked for more detailed information about card usage, possibilities to use the card for senior group tours and possibilities to use the card in other countries. Participants have undertaken to distribute the cards, card usage rules and questionnaire to their local senior organizations. Brief information about Silver Suitcase cards was prepared for publishing in Latvian Senior Federation’s newspaper and webpage <http://pensionari.lv/akt14.html>.
- It has been clarified that in Latvia in 2016 official retirement age is 62 years and 9 month, but senior organizations are open also for younger members, for example 55 years old.
- Cooperation with Latvian Senior Federation allows to reach the target audience, i.e. seniors, which by own efforts would not be so successful.
- The publicity was created large enough to raise interest in different groups (disabled people) that was not the target audience in the beginning.
- Summary of feedback from the meetings with the Latvian Seniors’ organisations and responses during the Balttour has been produced with the following main conclusions:
 - The price is relevant to the product
 - Price description is clear
 - Off-season discounts are reasonable
 - 38% of the respondents pointed out that Silver Suitcase card main benefits is the discount and help in choosing relevant holiday product.

“National Foundation of the Elderly”, The Netherlands:

- Timing: people book about 2-6 months in advance; last-minute offers are not welcomed by our target market. Early promotion of deals allows people to plan better (also financially).
- Offers need to be a really good deal otherwise part of the target group does not have the means/money.
- Arranging these trips independently seems too cumbersome for a lot of elderly (especially to less known locations) - prefer a complete offer including travel, transportation to accommodation etc.
- Fall does not seem to be the best time for “rural” trips. Offers should be valid in spring and summer (too). These are the most popular periods.
- When people have health or mobility issues, they need to be approached differently otherwise they switch off when receiving the brochure.
- Adaptation of marketing material – should be segmented and specific to various target groups, ranging from ‘fit and independent’ to ‘older and physically challenged’. Those who feel fit and independent should be approached with the adventure/different destination concept where we do ensure that accommodations are well suited. Those who feel older or physically less fit should

be approached with the concept of having a complete solution (package deal including attention to accessibility etc) in interesting, attractive rural destinations.

- Membership allows for group-organised and independent travel.

Lithuanian countryside tourism association

- Baltic destination for individual seniors on the individual travel arrangements – is out of beaten track, especially in Sep – Nov period. The promotion of the offer should start in January for the travel in early September – October period.
- Thematic holiday ideas (culture, gardening, music, crafts etc.) might have been more attractive than just a rural accommodation with discount;
- More clear promotion of holiday idea – why Baltics/Norway/Belgium in off season, rather than destination “suitable” for seniors should be better more attractive reason for making decision to travel;
- Organized group travel package on guaranteed departure dates might have been more attractive in the off season;

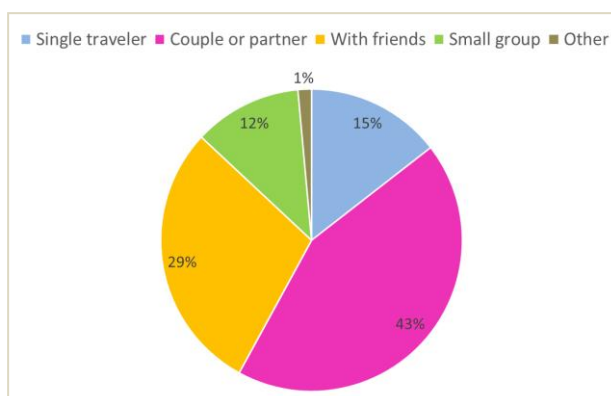
HANEN, Norway

- If Norwegian seniors travel independently then they tend to choose familiar destinations, or at least where the language is not a challenge.
- If going to unfamiliar destinations (abroad), organised trips including transport are more attractive.
- Promotion should start much earlier, probably about 6 months prior to travel period.
- Segmentation of different senior age groups needed as well as between „senior” and „disabled”. Many approached seniors pointed out that they were in good physical condition in spite of that they are a senior.

Customer Survey

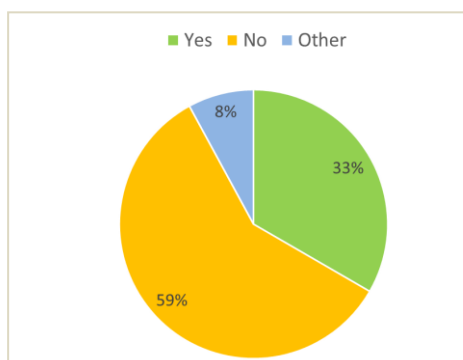
In common partner effort, 76 responses were received from respondents in LV, LT, NO, NL, BE. The survey received the following feedback:

How did you travel?



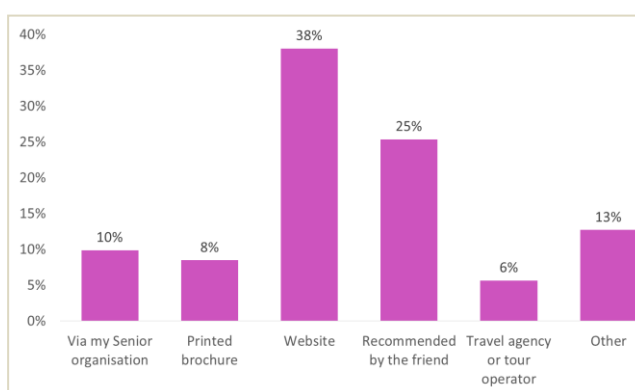
43% of the respondents were travelling with a partners, and 15% were travelling alone. The majority of respondents reflect the target group of the Silver Suitcase product as individual travellers.

Did you recognise the Silver Suitcase logo on accommodations?



Ca 33% recognised the Silver Suitcase logo on accommodations, which is a high achievement, considering the short time allocated for introduction of the Silver Suitcase product.

How did you know about the accommodation?



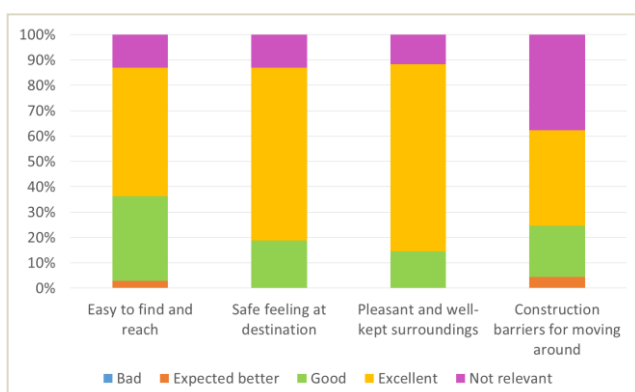
High proportion (38%) admitted that they have found the accommodation via web site (not identified), which means that web marketing is relevant for the target audience of 55+. 25% followed recommendations of friends. The survey shows that Senior Organisations can be considered as a product dissemination channel of high potential.

Helpful services



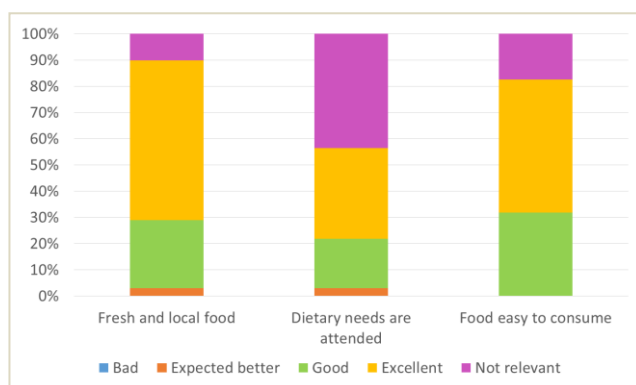
Most respondents found staff language skills important while technical assistance with luggage and first aid were regarded as irrelevant by the majority.

Location, rooms, surroundings



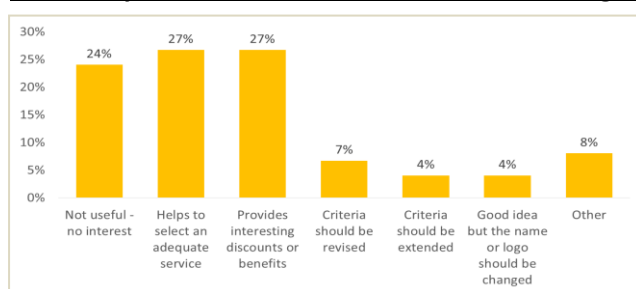
Majority of respondents appreciate safety levels, pleasant surroundings, and recognise that it was easy to find, reach the place. Which means that the product is relevant for seniors and further marketing activities are required to reach wider audience, achieve more sales. Construction barriers for moving around either did not present problems or were regarded as not relevant.

Food and meals



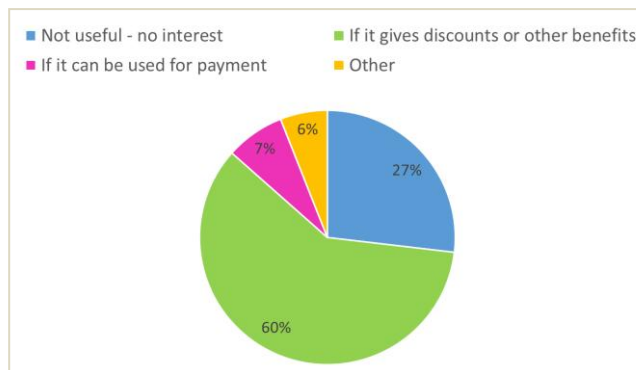
Fresh local food is marked as excellent and good by high percentage of respondents. Dietary need irrelevant for ca 1/3 of respondents.

What do you think about the "Silver Suitcase" logo to indicate age-friendly services



About ¼ of the respondents agree that the Silver Suitcase card and logo help to select adequate services and provides interesting discounts or benefits. Consequently, there is a potential market for Silver Suitcase products and it is necessary to go on with product development and marketing.

Is a "Silver Suitcase" guest ID card of interest?



Majority of the respondents state that the Silver Suitcase card is of interest.

The respondents were given an opportunity to describe their likes and dislikes. The summary is below.

What did you like?

- Hosts, staff, people, hosts' recommendations, services;
- Have already made reservations for this year as well; will definitely go back; We will remember the stay for a long time! New experience;
- Enjoyed the stay, cozy feeling, aura, peace and quiet, feels like a home, atmosphere;
- Location, nature, the surroundings, area, environment, horses;
- Accommodation, rooms, restaurant, place, food, catering, library, cleanliness;
- Walking tours around the hotel, city tours nearby the hotel, interesting excursions, good guide;
- Everything.

What did you not like?

- There was nothing that I disliked, everything was fine;
- Rain, noises;
- Restaurants, expensive prices in the restaurant, few restaurants in the surroundings, breakfast;
- Neighbors next door, too many tourists, dogs;
- Would like some music in the evening, they should put latest photos in their webpage;
- Difficult access in some areas;
- Labeling, information;
- Tap water;
- Holiday was too short.

6. Conclusions

The idea of the seniors' card as such is generally welcomed. However, its usage, rules and marketing needs serious elaboration. Silver Suitcase product range and services need to be much bigger, and explanatory efforts to the public and target groups is necessary at a much larger scale.

Test trips with Dutch and Norwegian seniors travelling to Latvia, Lithuania and Belgium - Vlaams-Brabant did not happen. However, serious research was done to find out the reasons and get feedback about the offer from real visitors belonging to the target age group of 55+. General conclusions on pilot implementation in three assessment areas are presented below.

Validity of product accreditation guidelines and criteria:

- Trips were taken by seniors that belong to the group of "active seniors" with no or very few disabilities. Although we were contacted also by the organization of the disabled people who were interested to obtain cards for their seniors.
- The Silver Suitcase product range that was checked for testing is mostly for quite fit seniors, with only some exceptions where the offer is well adapted also for visitors with medium or high levels of disability or mobility problems. Such visitors only make for a small part of the target age group, and generally the related criteria were considered as „irrelevant" or of little importance. For general mainstream seniors, consideration of mobility and other related aspects can remain at a relatively permissive level.
- Elements that had not been considered in the first draft version of the general Guidelines as prepared in summer 2015, appear now as more relevant for a wider number of clients 55+: possibilities for social interaction, activities, animation, personal attention, contact with local heritage, culture, and population. They were accordingly added to the final version of the Guidelines.
- It is possible to extend the guidelines and assign the label to tour operator packages, individual guides, tourist attraction sites, transport sector etc. This would allow creating a critical mass and major visibility of the whole system.

Validity and viability of Operative Systems and the Operative Model as a whole

- It was not easy to explain that the card is for individual use, not for the group travel, as seniors often want to join in groups.
- Seniors who are members of senior organizations like to travel in groups, as the social aspect is one of their main motives why to join the senior organization. It can be small group (6 – 8 persons) of friends or family members.
- The original idea that seniors will be pleased to make all of their reservations themselves calling service providers directly does not work as a “one-fits-all”-concept across Europe. Seniors prefer an easy and clear booking process, and ready-made travel packages are important for many of them. This however differs considerably between countries and the previous travel experience of clients.
- The fact that the Silver Suitcase card is valid for the card owner plus an accompanying person was much appreciated.
- It seems that seniors are not too much interested to analyse the technical side of the facilities. Experience and attitude of the personnel plays a more important role, as do leisure services that allow for social interaction.
- Discounts and benefits are essential.
- Many persons of the 55+ age group are interested in the Silver Suitcase product but are not interested to be member of any pensioners/seniors organizations. They are physically, economically, and socially active and independent, and do not see any reason or benefit to join such organisations although they may be entitled to do so.
- Discounts for pensioners are already available in many places – tourism attractions, transportation etc. In the testing done in Latvia, these places joined the Silver Suitcase programme providing this discount to Silver Suitcase card holders even when they are not yet pensioners. In some cases extra benefits were added. It is important to coordinate and synchronize all such benefit schemes for seniors and work according the same rules, rather than compete among themselves. This opens new possibilities for the Silver Suitcase system as an umbrella for different independent schemes.
- The use of the card for group tours was organised through allotments – a certain number of places was reserved for Silver Suitcase card holders under special conditions.

Efficiency and effectiveness of promotion and marketing tools and channels used.

- With communication and marketing channels based on senior associations, we were not able to reach those 55+ that are active and already have a habit to travel individually. They are either not members of senior organizations, or they are so experienced travellers that they do not need help, and/or they do not want to be pre-labelled as “seniors”. However, objectively they have the same – or very similar – needs and expectations like less independent travellers of their same age; this fact requires a more subtle way of communication if we want to reach the full target group.
- For individual travel, seniors prefer day trips or with just one overnight stay, mostly within their own country or neighbouring countries. A complete list of available places associated to the Silver Suitcase scheme is adequate to cover this type of travel.

- International trips are prepared by the leader or members of their organization or younger family members. It was suggested to create sample itineraries which include places of Silver Suitcase product providers. That way they can pick one they like and make calls to book the places on that particular route.
- To introduce the card and the connected services, printed promotional materials of Silver Suitcase products are still critical. The ability to use computer and internet varies a lot between countries, and even if 55+ clients increasingly use internet, they still like to flip through the brochures and discuss the travel offers among themselves with paper in hand.
- For a quick introduction of the Silver Suitcase product to a wide number of 55+, the choice to work with senior organizations for distributing the card and at the same time, promote the products proved correct and highly efficient especially at national level. However the promotion and trust in the system takes serious time. Product development, marketing and promotion for the product has to be done by specialists in travel business.
- To get seniors interested and trust to use Silver Suitcase card for foreign travel, the product basket has to be much bigger and cover ideally most European countries or at least one geo-region that includes several countries (Alps, Baltics, Rhine or Danube Valley, etc.) The website at <http://sengor.eurogites.org> is already prepared for this approach.

7. Future needs:

- Incorporate other service providers that already offer benefits for seniors, pensioners, or other similar groups addressed by the Silver Suitcase system.
- Increase the Silver Suitcase product basket extending the range of services to e.g. gastronomy, transport, touristic sites, etc
- Idem extending to more countries
- Offer integrated packages and involve more stakeholders of the travel trade value chain: apart of accommodation and individual tourism services, prepare tour ideas and thematic itineraries, and cooperate with large industry players such as tour operators, transport sector, guides etc.
- Serious promotional work for the card and products is needed locally and internationally.
- Product definition and marketing needs improvement. Segmentation and specific visual materials for different senior target groups with special interests or needs are necessary.
- To generate trust in a new international product, first it should be introduced on the national level.
- Where the cooperation with senior organisations is not feasible or provides insufficient access to the full target group of 55+ , alternative concepts for distributing the Silver Suitcase card (e.g. through the national EuroGites members) need to be considered.
- Extend the Silver Suitcase system to other similar international initiatives, or make them join it, to achieve higher visibility and impact.
- Transform the Silver Suitcase label from a simple trademark into a collective mark. 