

Part One

Research Sheds Light on International Shopping Travelers

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THE LATEST STUDY ON THE INTERNATIONAL SHOPPING TRAVELER, produced by Taubman Centers and Shop America Alliance in partnership with the U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Travel and Tourism Industries, was released in May. Because the results of the study have been widely reported in the media, this two-part article discusses how shopping centers are using the data to improve their tourism marketing programs. This month we will introduce the study and highlight some of the most important findings.

It is no surprise that shopping can influence the decision on where to travel. “With findings from this new study, we can assess the vital importance of shopping as a travel motivator and quantify its impact,” said Karen MacDonald, director of communications for Taubman shopping centers. “We have shared these results with our retailers and hosted roundtable discussions to help them target their tourism efforts to better understand the international shopping travelers and drive sales,” she added.

“The international shopping traveler study will help retailers, destinations and travel companies better understand and attract the shopping traveler,” says Helen Marano, director, Office of Travel and Tourism Industries, US Department of Commerce. “This can go a long way toward boosting tourism. Shopping certainly spurs visitation to and spending in destinations all across the US, which, in turn, has a positive impact on the employment and economic health of those areas.”

How are centers capitalizing on this knowledge?

According to the research, 75% of all inbound US travelers come from Canada, Mexico, the UK, Germany and Japan.

DMOs, attractions and shopping centers are targeting these markets not only by participating in trade shows but also by coordinating sales missions to these top markets. Destinations New York recently coordinated a sales mission to Canada for both attractions and hotels. Participants said how beneficial it was to be able to have face-to-face meetings with the key tour operators in Canada.

Barbara Jackson, owner of Jackson Marketing International, a consulting and representation company in Mexico City, states, “These statistics validate the programs we do for shopping centers and destinations in the US.” Jackson works with the Arizona Office of Tourism (ATO). “Arizona is very conscious of the importance of Mexican shoppers – especially those from the neighboring state of Sonora. Every year the

ATO holds an event the first week of October in Hermosillo, Sonora (Mexico) where they host a dinner/fashion show for 800 society ladies. The models are the society ladies, who wear clothing that the Arizona centers bring down for the event. Eight centers representing three different developers participate. The proceeds from the sale of the tickets go to a charity,” explained Jackson. This event has taken place for the last 12 years and each year tickets sell out several weeks prior to the event.

Similarly, Renée Ward, owner of Direct Tourism, works with tour operators in the UK and other European countries to promote shopping trips to the US. For example, she is presently working on a contest with the French company Voyages Starter, which has offices in the Eastern part of France and the border areas of Switzerland and Germany. The purpose of the contest is to educate the travel agencies about the shopping and dining opportunities at The Seaport in New York City and Faneuil Hall Marketplace in Boston.

“This type of trade promotion is an excellent example of a tactical approach to get the travel agent interested in particular shopping centers and their destination,” explained Ward. Three hundred and fifty travel agencies throughout France will be competing to win a trip to the above destinations. Throughout the competition, a

number of agencies will decorate their storefronts with collateral sent by the shopping venues. The agent that sells the most trips to the destination will win an all-expense-paid trip to New York City and Boston.

One of the most important highlights of the study was that 30% of those surveyed said shopping was a factor in their choice of destinations. Another 23% said it was a key reason for the trip.

This gives renewed validity to the many pre-arrival awareness programs discussed in this series of articles.

“One of the most important goals for us is to develop strategies and tactics that will educate the overseas tour operators on the shopping and dining opportunities available at our tourism destination centers in the US,” said Kathy Anderson, tourism manager of America’s Premier Shopping Places (APSP), the tourism brand for General Growth Properties, Inc.

“For example, we focus much of our attention on developing partnerships with the online travel agencies that offer us the greatest exposure overseas. Additionally, we utilize online PR distribution services that target global travel media such as TravMedia, Press Release Network and ETurboNews, which reaches 17,000 publications and travel journalists and over 250,000 travel professionals worldwide,” she added.

Shopping travelers spend an average of \$1,063 per person per trip just on shopping (out of a total average of \$3,692 spent per total

trip, per person).

Mexican shoppers spend the most, with shopping representing 40% of their expenditures. And 50 percent of international shopping travelers who visited the US in the last 12 months are likely to come again.

Woodfield Mall in Schaumburg, IL, has a special loyalty program to encourage international visitors to return to the mall upon their next visit to the US. “We offer a Passport to Savings to our international

series of articles on tourism every other month and would like to focus on some of the more innovative tourism programs. Please submit your programs to me, either via e-mail at Carolyn@CJFMarketingInternational.com, by fax 732/545-3138 or mail. If possible, include samples of your graphics. Full credit will be given to the person or team responsible for the program. Visit our new website: www.cjfmarketinginternational.com. ■

How the Survey Was Conducted

Research on The International Shopping Traveler from the top five international inbound markets to the U.S. – Canada, Mexico, UK, Germany and Japan, representing 75% of all inbound US travelers – was conducted by Mandala Research via an online survey in January 2009. Survey respondents in each country, 1760 in total, had visited the U.S. in the past 12 months and had shopped.

guests and are able to track their residential and email information,” said MacDonald. Woodfield plans to take this a step further by creating an on-line registration page for international guests to register their upcoming visit and provide them with a redemption coupon for the loyalty program.”

Next month we will cover additional aspects of the study such as the top 25 brands shopped for by the international traveler.

We are continuing this

CJF Marketing International offers a range of services for creating and implementing strategic tourism, economic development and marketing programs for shopping centers, urban entertainment projects, downtown retail districts, communities and commercial properties globally. The firm also offers educational programs and seminars for corporate meeting planners, shopping center developers, communities and re-development agencies. Feimster can be reached at 732/249-6080.

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