

Scottish tourism is out of this world

Dr Ian Yeoman gazes into the future of tourism – with his feet firmly grounded in research.

In 2015 the Gleneagles Lunar Space Station could be the world's most exclusive resort. Catching the Virgin Galactic from Auchterarder, space tourists will fasten their seat belt, hear the rockets roar and feel a sudden power acceleration of 4G. As the spaceship reaches the stratosphere tourists will gaze down on Planet Earth for the most exclusive view in the world. During their stay at the Gleneagles Space Station tourists will take in a round of golf, take the lunar buggy out for a spin and float around the leisure complex. They'll enjoy the best of Scottish cuisine – vacuum packed.

Sound a bit far fetched? Well it isn't. The Virgin Galactic is a real proposition, starting a regular passenger service in 2007. It's an exclusive travel experience, with celebrities and the mega-rich paying \$50,000 for the privilege. But in real terms this is far cheaper than the first scheduled flight to cross the Atlantic in 1939. Then, passengers paid \$75,000 in today's money. Today the average fare across the Atlantic is around \$450. So by 2050 space tourism should be affordable for us all.

If we are to fulfil our ambition to increase the value of Scottish tourism by 50% by 2015, we need to know who the future tourist will be, and what they will do. It is very important for Scottish tourism to be innovative, whilst drawing upon its spectacular scenery and cultural assets.

According to the UN World Tourism Organisation the traditional sun-and-sea 'summer holiday' is changing. Today, destinations must offer a range of diverse experience and activities to the more sophisticated traveller. Some of the key trends that will shape the future include:

As consumer prosperity and confidence rises, the **experience economy** will mature, as consumers seek new meanings through 'self actualisation'. This is a search for a deeper meaning and a sense of worth beyond material possessions. This is what we call **authenticity**, in which purchasing decisions are based upon real perceived value. Something that is real, honest, simple, rooted, human, beautiful and ethical.

The creation of new dynamic **traveller groups** as a result of the changing make-up of the nuclear family. The nuclear family, which once comprised parents, children, grandparents and 'horizontal' relatives such as cousins, aunts and uncles, is being replaced by the 'vertical family', characterised by up to five co-existing generations, stretching from great-grandparents to children. Other emerging markets are the 3rd Age traveller, based upon men and women who retire at 65 and can expect to live for 12 years after retirement, being healthy and active for at least 7 years, or the number

of people looking to travel solo, particularly due to an increasing proportion of society that never marry, fuelling a demand for 'single' travel products.

As the world becomes more educated, this will fuel our hunger for cultural short breaks. But culture will no longer be divided into high or low brow – it will be no brow culture. Visitors will take in a Rolling Stones Heritage Rock Concert (Mick Jagger will still be pulling in the crowds at 86) and go on to listen to Gordon Brown's memoirs at the Edinburgh International Book Festival.

As society gets richer, luxury is about time rather than money. People will want to spend more time with partners, children or pursuing a passion.

Technology will play a greater part in 2015. Future tourists using the latest satellite navigation systems will never get lost. James Bond-style interpretation glasses mean stories and adventures can be created in front of us without the need for guides. Golfers will be able to practise the Old Course on their 6th generation PlayStation before they play the real thing.

However, the future consumer will be more anxious, perhaps concerned for personal safety, or conscious about their mode of travel and its impact on the environment.

Whatever the future, one thing is guaranteed; Scottish tourism is one of those industries that will always be here. It has outlasted shipbuilding and will be here when the oil runs out. The only thing that is uncertain is the exact future for Scotland's tourism industry: only time will tell.

*Dr Ian Yeoman is a Crystal Ball Gazer (or Scenario Planner)
at VisitScotland
ian.yeoman@visitscotland.com*

For more information about the research on which this article is based, try exploring www.scotexchange.net/scenarios

The Future Foundation has worked with VisitScotland on the possible shape of leisure and tourism www.futurefoundation.net/

**What is research but a blind date with knowledge?
*Will Harvey, Silicon Valley entrepreneur***