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By Kate Rice

## Agents advised to sell experiences to wealthy boomers



TW photo by Kate Rice

*Attendees gather before the opening session of Virtuoso's Travel Week.*

LAS VEGAS — Baby boomer expert Ken Dychtwald, president and CEO of Age Wave, told agents at the Virtuoso Week conference that they are on the cusp of "an entirely new era" of the travel industry.

The catalyst? Baby boomers, once again.

Converging forces are giving boomers, whose numbers have changed America at every stage of their development, new freedoms.

One change is the definition of old. Dychtwald noted that the average age of the Rolling Stones is now 70.

"They are older than our Supreme Court," he said. He showed Virtuoso attendees a photo of Sophia Loren, looking as sexy and vibrant as ever, a cover girl at age 65 on the cover of Town and Country magazine.

"The idea of who we become in our mature years, that's the unscripted frontier," he said.

People in their 50s and 60s have most of the money in the world today, Dychtwald said. Boomers who are retired and empty nesters not only have money, they have time.

What do they want to do with that time? They want to travel. A Merrill Lynch survey that asked boomers what they wanted to do more of at this stage of their lives found that 47% wanted to travel. That compared to 42% who wanted to spend more time with family and 41% who wanted to relax and 24% who wanted to do more volunteer work.

And boomers don't travel alone. They bring along the family, Dychtwald said.

Boomers are realizing that experiences are the most important thing in their lives. They want experiences that will be "so fantastic and so exquisite" that they will never forget it.

"There is an appetite for newness, for different experiences that I can taste and feel," Dychtwald said. And they want to share this with their children and grandchildren.



*Ken Dychtwald*

He said that Virtuoso agents have access and connections that can get travelers better deals and richer experiences. He said that Virtuoso clients trust their agents with their vacations, know that they've got backup should anything go awry on a trip.

He stressed the importance of the client-agent relationship and the way agents can see into their client's heads to "sculpt" their vacation for them.

*Follow Kate Rice on Twitter @krtravelweekly.*

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