Why Destination Areas Rise and Fall in Popularity

An Update of a Cornell Quarterly Classic

Travel is more popular than ever, so why should destination managers worry? Because their location's attractiveness may be spinning away even as they watch.

BY STANLEY PLOG

On October 10, 1972, I gave a speech to the Southern California chapter of the Travel Research Association (now the Travel & Tourism Research Association) that examined the underlying causes for why destinations rise and fall in popularity. Based on a psychographic system that we had developed at my first market research company (BASICO), the speech pointed out that destinations appeal to specific types of people and typically follow a relatively predictable pattern of growth and decline in popularity over time. The reasons lie in the fact that the character of most destinations changes as a result of growth and development of tourist-oriented facilities. As destinations change, they lose the audience or market segments that made them popular and appeal instead to an ever-shrinking group of travelers.

Although I had used the concept in our work with travel clients, this was the first public presentation of the ideas to a broad audience. Considering the limited nature of the venue, the response was surprising. Requests for copies of the speech came from around the United States and from countries in Europe and Asia. Apparently someone forwarded the speech to the editors of Cornell Quarterly, because it appeared as an article in 1974.1

Since that time I have further refined the concept and the questions that make up the psychographic scale used to differentiate traveler types. In the second market-research company I founded (Plog Research, Inc., now NFO/Plog Research and a subsidiary of Interpublic Group/IPG), we have probably included the scale in more than 200 studies and consulting assignments, and have reported on it in journals and speeches at conferences.2 Thus, a large experience base supports those early observations about destination development and life-cycle stages. In addition, academic researchers have explored the scale's conceptual base.3


Feature articles on the travel habits of the different travel personalities have appeared in popular magazines (e.g., Conde Nast Traveler, Endless Vacation, Car & Travel, AAA World, Mature Outlook). Various college tourism texts review the concept, and I have explained it further in two travel books I wrote.4

How destinations grow and decline has been part of the advanced training program offered for travel agents for more than 20 years by the Institute of Certified Travel Agents (ICTA), and all trainees must answer questions about psychographics and the tourism life cycle before receiving their Certified Travel Counselor certification. Other training materials for travel agents using the basic ideas include those of Semer-Purzycki and Starr.5 On-line exposure has occurred with training sites established by Harcourt Learning Direct and Education Systems LLC for instance, the Weissmann "Travel Corner" and Puerto Rico's tourism web site for a time allowed consumers to take a shortened version of the test and read their own profiles.

This article reintroduces the psychographic scale and updates what has been learned since my last article appeared in Cornell Quarterly, including how travel has changed and where many destinations currently fit on the destination-life-cycle chart. To review how destinations rise and fall in popularity, it is necessary first to provide a description of the research basis for development of the concept and the relationship between travel personalities and destination selection.

Psychographic Study

A group of 16 travel-industry clients supported the original study, which was initiated in 1967.6 Sponsors included 10 major airlines, the three commercial airframe manufacturers of the day (Boeing, Douglas, and Lockheed), and three large print-media companies (Reader's Digest, Time/Life, and R.I.I. Donnelly). The genesis of the project was the fact that only 27 percent of the population had flown in a commercial airplane at that time. With the jet age just beginning, seat capacity was growing at more than 20 percent per year, while passenger growth was just 8 percent. Thus, the airlines had to encourage more people to fly.

The sponsors' basic questions centered on who does not fly, why they don't fly, and what could be done to get them to fly. All of this is hard to believe today, given that over 80 percent of the population has flown, and about a third take to the skies every year. What a change in a relatively short period of time! Travel has become a huge business, growing from about the twelfth-largest industry at the time of the original research to the largest in the United States and the world, according to the World Tourism Organization (WTO).

The original study provided several research luxuries that are not common in today's fast-paced, skinned-down research environment, and those factors facilitated the development of new ideas. We had the freedom to pursue offbeat ideas, the time and money to be as thorough as we needed in testing concepts, and the opportunity to employ several research approaches to ensure that our conclusions were justified. My associate at the time (Kenneth B. Holden) and I decided that we had to understand the psychology of travel—why some people travel and others do not—to provide recommendations to our travel-industry sponsors on how to get more people into the air. I therefore, we conducted an extensive literature review on what was known about why people don't fly (little, at the time) and investigated a number of psychological theories to determine their applicability to our research needs.

More important, we completed over 60 in-depth, two-hour interviews with people who did not fly but had sufficient income to travel whenever they wished. We explored their life histories from childhood to the present to determine common patterns or psychological characteristics. Then our team monitored 200 telephone calls to airline-reservations centers from naive travelers to learn about the kinds of questions those novices asked of reservations agents. Some of the questions from first-time flyers are humorous in retrospect and showed people's lack of understanding of the dynamics of air travel. For example, they asked: If I feel sick, can I open the window? Are there bathrooms on board? and Do I tip the stewardess? We began to develop a psychological concept from this exploratory re-

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search, along with a psychographic scale that we tested on a nationwide random sample of 1,600 households through intensive in-home interviews.

Based on this 1967 study, we concluded that a constellation of three primary personality characteristics defines the non-flyer personality:

1) **Generalized anxieties.** Classic non-flyers feel a continual low-level feeling of dread that can consume much of their psychic energy. These anxieties play out daily to inhibit these persons from reaching out to explore the world around them with comfort and self-confidence. This is not to be confused with those who suffer from a specific phobia that can be treated through behavioral therapy. When a person has generalized anxieties and non-focused self-doubts, the world seems to be a dangerous place.

2) **Sense of powerlessness.** These individuals usually believe that what happens to them in daily life is largely out of their control. The good that comes to them and the misfortunes encountered result mostly from chance happenings and events. Individuals cannot control their own destinies, they believe.

3) **Territory boundness.** Not only do these persons not travel much as adults, but they did relatively little traveling as children. Their lives have been restricted for decades in a number of ways, and they make no attempt to expand their horizons.

At the time, we called these nonflyers Psychocentrics, to reflect the fact that they lavish so much personal energy on life's small events. These people have little time to face up to and manage the larger problems we all encounter. I've since developed a more user-friendly term, Dependables, since they try to make so much of their daily lives predictable and dependable.

Through a series of follow-on studies, it was possible to outline the personality at the opposite end of the spectrum. These individuals reach out and explore the world in all of its diversity. Self-confident and intellectually exploring, they measure low on all measures of personal anxiety. They make decisions rather quickly and easily, without worrying greatly whether each choice is correct (since life involves taking small risks every day). They have varied interests and a strong intellectual curiosity that leads to a desire to explore the world of ideas and places. Though I originally called them Allocentrics, I have since relabeled them as Venturers. A more complete definition of the personality profile of each is useful since travel patterns flow directly from these characteristics.

**Personality Profiles**

Those labeled as Dependables (originally, Psychocentrics) have a constellation of personality characteristics in common. Granting that no person is a perfect exemplar of any personality type, if one could isolate persons with the archetypal Dependable personality, one would find that typically they:

- **Are somewhat intellectually restricted**, in that they do not seek out new ideas and experiences on a daily basis. Compared to most people, they read less, watch TV more, and restrict the variety of contacts they might have with the world around them. In brief, they are less venturesome and less exploring than most persons.
- **Are cautious and conservative in their daily lives**, preferring to avoid making important decisions rather than confront the choices that face everyone daily.
- **Are restrictive in spending discretionary income.** Uncertain about the future, they don't want to overcommit and become financially stretched. Although frugality is a good habit, they choose it from a basis of fear, rather than being motivated by good planning.
- **Prefer popular, well-known brands of consumer products** because the popularity of such items makes them safe choices. (That is, everyone likes these so they must work, or they wouldn't be so popular.)
- **Face daily life with little self-confidence and low activity levels.** Some might call them more lethargic than other people.
- **Often look to authority figures for guidance and direction in their lives.** Because of uncertainties about their own decision-making abilities, they may follow the advice or imitate the actions of public personalities. Thus, using
The personality scale helps to explain why destinations rise and fall in popularity. In particular, tourists' personality characteristics determine their travel patterns and preferences.

- **Dependables**
  - Passive and non-demanding in their daily lives. They often retreat when encountering problem situations, rather than aggressively taking charge to handle the difficulties.
  - Like structure and routine in their relatively non-varying lifestyles. As a result, they make wonderful, trusted supervisors in many companies because of the predictability and routine nature of the lifestyles they lead. They serve as the flywheels of society, making certain that things run according to plan wherever they work, a good reason to label them as Dependables.
  - Prefer to be surrounded by friends and family, because the warm friendship and support provided in intimate circles make them feel comfortable and secure.
  - Spend discretionary income more readily. They believe that the future will be better than the past and they want to enjoy the fruits of their labors now.
  - Like to choose new products shortly after introduction into the marketplace, rather than stick with the most popular brands. The thrill of discovery overrides disappointments that can come from a new product that doesn't live up to its promise.
  - Face everyday life full of self-confidence and personal energy. They eagerly venture out to investigate what might be new and interesting to learn more about the latest technologies, or explore exciting concepts and ideas with others.
  - Look to their own judgment, rather than authority figures, for guidance and direction in their lives. They are relatively inner-directed and believe they can make the best choices for themselves, rather than relying on the opinions of experts.

- **Venturers**
  - Are intellectually curious about and want to explore the world around them in all of its diversity. They continually seek new experiences and enjoy activity. They watch TV little and prefer what is novel and unusual.
  - Make decisions quickly and easily, since they recognize that life involves risks, regardless of the choices made, and you learn to live with those choices.
  - Spend discretionary income more readily. They believe that the future will be better than the past and they want to enjoy the fruits of their labors now.
  - Like to choose new products shortly after introduction into the marketplace, rather than stick with the most popular brands. The thrill of discovery overrides disappointments that can come from a new product that doesn't live up to its promise.
  - Face everyday life full of self-confidence and personal energy. They eagerly venture out to investigate what might be new and interesting to learn more about the latest technologies, or explore exciting concepts and ideas with others.
  - Look to their own judgment, rather than authority figures, for guidance and direction in their lives. They are relatively inner-directed and believe they can make the best choices for themselves, rather than relying on the opinions of experts.
• Are active and relatively assertive in their daily lives. If something does not go their way (a flight is cancelled at an airport, a product they bought has flaws), they will actively and forcefully attempt to get the wrong corrected.
• Prefer a day filled with varying activities and challenges, rather than routine tasks. Although they can have great new ideas in business or cultural life, they may not be good at implementation since they don't like the tedious detail work that comes with bringing ideas to fruition.
• Often prefer to be alone and somewhat meditative, even though they may appear to be friendly and outgoing. Trusting their own ideas, and often feeling that people around them are somewhat dull and slow thinking, they may avoid social situations and parties.

Personality Distribution
As I said, the archetypes of the two personalities are rare. In national samples, based on the questions developed from the original research, the dimensions of venturesomeness and dependability distribute on a normal curve, with a slight skew to venturesomeness (as shown in Exhibit 1). About 2 1/2 percent of the population can be classified as Dependables and slightly over 4 percent as Venturers. The remainder falls into the groups in between, such as near-Dependables, near-Venturers, or the largest group, Centrics, the extensive middle group comprising people who have a mixture of personality characteristics that may lead an individual one way or the other.

The implications of this distribution are considerable. Parametric statistics can be used in most of the research, and the personality scale helps to explain why destinations rise and fall in popularity, as will be seen. In particular, these personality characteristics determine travel patterns and preferences. Examining the two groups at the opposite ends of the normal curve once more allows an easier explanation of the concept. For Dependables, research over the past three decades points out that (compared to the average person) they:
• Travel less frequently.
• Stay for shorter periods of time when they travel.
• Spend less per capita at a destination.
• Prefer to go by the family car, camper, or SUV, rather than by air, because they can take more things with them, and that makes the trip seem more homey and less anxiety producing.

• Prefer to stay in their mobile homes, with friends and relatives, or in the lowest-cost hotels and motels.
• Prefer highly developed “touristy” spots, on the logic that the popularity of these sites means that they must be great places to visit or else so many people wouldn't go there. Also, heavy development supports fast-food restaurants and convenience stores, which offer the comfort and familiar feeling of what they experience back home.
• Tend to select recreational activities at these destinations that also are familiar—video games for teenagers, and movies and miniature golf for the family.
• Rate sun-and-fun spots high as destinations, because they offer the chance to relax and soak up the warmth on a beach or around a pool, consistent with a preference for low activity levels.
• Typically select well-defined, escorted tours to the best-known places for their infrequent international trips, rather than make independent travel arrangements.
• Purchase plenty of souvenirs, tee-shirts, decals, and other strong visual reminders of where they have been.
• Are likely to return to a destination again and again once they try it because it was a good choice.

Having reviewed what pleases the Dependable personality type, picturing the preferences of their polar opposites is not difficult. Compared to the people in the mid-point of our scale, the Venturers:
• Travel more frequently because travel is an important part of exploring the world around them.
• Take relatively long trips.
• Spend more each day per capita.
• Take to the air more often than do other groups (although they use all modes of travel), because they will pay extra for the convenience of getting there sooner to enjoy a destination longer.
• Strongly prefer unusual, underdeveloped destinations that have retained their native charm. More important, they avoid crowded, touristy places.
• Gladly accept inadequate or unconventional kinds of accommodations because these become an integral part of a unique vacation experience.
• Prefer to participate in local customs and habits and tend to avoid those events that
Most destinations follow a predictable, but uncontrolled development pattern from birth to maturity and finally to old age and decline.

and venturesome character makes them feel comfortable in a wide variety of situations.

• Are active when traveling, spending most of their waking hours exploring and learning about the places they visit, rather than soaking up the sun (or tequila).

• Purchase mostly authentic local arts and crafts, rather than souvenirs. They avoid traditional tourist traps that sell replicas of local cultural artifacts.

• Tend to seek new destinations each year, rather than return to previously visited places, to add to their treasure of rich experiences. Their travel experiences enhance their feelings of self-confidence and self-worth, leading them to take even more unusual trips in future years.

A Destination Life Cycle

Having seen how personality determines travel preferences, it is possible to apply those concepts to the topic of this article—that is, to explain why destination areas rise and fall in popularity. Most destinations follow a predictable, but uncontrolled development pattern from birth to maturity and finally to old age and decline. At each stage, the destination appeals to a different psychographic group of travelers, who determine the destination’s character and success.

As I will explain below, my psychographic study shows that an ideal age or stage exists for most destinations—namely, what might be called young adulthood, which is an early stage of development appealing to Venturer-type travelers. If a destination’s planners understand the psychographic curve, it is possible for them to control development or progress along the curve and to maintain an ideal positioning. Few places do this, however, because local authorities don’t understand the dynamics of what contributes to success and failure. Even if they do, they often lack the power to enforce desirable changes and prevent undesirable changes. Although I suggest maintaining a destination’s appeal to Venturer-type travelers, that positioning is not the only possibility. Destination planners who understand the psychographic curve can intentionally position their destination anywhere along the curve—including the Dependable side. As I will also explain below, that strategy can be successful if the positioning is carefully considered.

The searchers. Just as Venturers are most interested in trying new products and services, they like to seek out new places to visit—the forgotten, the undiscovered, the passed over, and the unknown. Requiring few support services (such as hotels and restaurants, organized sightseeing activities, or “things to do”), Venturers would rather go out on their own and discover what a place has to offer. Whether the destination is primitive or refined doesn’t matter, because they are interested in having a new experience of whatever kind.

When the Venturers return home from a trip, they talk with friends and relatives about the best new spots that they have discovered. Friends and co-workers usually are quite curious about the latest travels of acquaintances who take such interesting vacations. Some of those friends can be classified as near-Venturers, who soon decide that they might like to visit the intriguing places that they have just heard about. Their more venturesome friends also provide tips on how to get there, what to do while there, and generally how to make the trip possible, if not easy.

When near-Venturers visit the destination (in considerably greater numbers than the Venturers), they initiate the destination’s development cycle, because they not only ask for more services than did the Venturers, but they also tell their friends, relatives, and associates about their great experiences in this new place. More people visit the destination, and they are also looking for more services, because near-Venturers don’t like to rough it in quite the manner that Venturers do. Thus, local people develop hotels, restaurants, shops selling “native” items, and other services.

In the middle of this growth-cycle stage, when near-Venturers constitute the majority of tourist arrivals, the travel press also will likely “discover”
the place. Always searching for new material (in part because they have difficulty finding new things to say about back roads in England, in New England, or in Sedona, for that matter), these writers visit the places to see for themselves what they have to offer. Finding the places to be different, they write ecstatically about their new finds.

Having been discovered, the destination soon confronts the pressures arising from rapid growth and development. Not only has the press started to put out the good message, but near-Venturers also talk about their exciting vacations with their mid-Centric friends who have Venturer leanings. These people want to visit, too, especially because the destination now has developed a reasonable infrastructure. Growth rates can be high during this period, since there are far more Centrics with venturer leanings than there are near-Venturers.

Up to this point, everyone seems happy at the destination. Tourism growth continues unabated, property values rise as hotels continue to pop up, more local residents have jobs, tax receipts have increased, some rundown areas have been cleaned up, and most residents believe that they have discovered the perfect industry. No ugly, smoke-belching factories need to be built; unskilled workers find good-paying jobs that require little training in the new hotels and restaurants; and developers are not asking for tax concessions, unlike the situation for manufacturing industries. Local politicians and tourism officials congratulate themselves because they think they are pretty smart to have attracted or created what appears to be a never-ending, expanding business.

Stealthy erosion. The fly in the ointment is that this happy growth picture has rested on the fact that the base of prospective tourists has thus far been steadily increasing. That is, near-Venturers outnumber Venturers, and Centrics with Venturer leanings constitute a much larger group than do the near Venturers. The growth in the prospect base continues until the midpoint of the curve. That growth rests on the fact that the influence direction on Exhibit 1 always moves from right to left and not the other way. Whatever their leanings, Centrics seldom sway the opinions of those who have Venturer blood in their veins.

During this time, development continues almost unabated. Elected officials, who recognize the contributions of tourists to their area and their constituencies, happily proclaim their support of tourism and all of its benefits for their community. So they approve plans for more hotels that will add to the tax base, the larger number of which fall in the mid-price range and a few in the luxury category. Moreover, politicians quickly discover that tourists (and even vacation-home owners) don’t vote locally, so they levy taxes and fees on the lodging, airline, and rental-car industries. Tourist shops, some representing large chains, sprout up around town. Fast-food chains make their appearance and help to make the place seem more like the hometown that the visitors just left. Moreover, with these familiar restaurants, tourists don’t have to guess about what they’re eating.

To deal with the what-to-do issue for those who need activities beyond enjoying the destination itself, video arcades, movie theaters, and other entertainment facilities arise. Gradually the place takes on a more touristic look. Construction either sprawled or high-rise hotels begin to dominate the original architecture—built because land values near the center of the destination have risen so much that only high-density buildings “pencil out” for developers. Local planning to control the spread of tourist sprawl has been woefully inadequate because elected officials have seen no need to regulate a business that they believe is a great benefit to their community. Then, when the realization finally dawns that regulation is necessary, the officials have no experience with such land-use planning. They allow small businesses of all types to spring up around town in an uncontrolled manner (e.g., t-shirt shops, beach or ski shops, pseudo-native stores, bars). The place begins to look like many other overdeveloped destinations, losing its distinctive character along the way.

Seeds of decline. Throughout this entire process, the seeds of the destination’s almost-inevitable decline are already sown in the midst of its success. Just when most people at the destination seem happiest about the success of their efforts to grow the tourism base year after year, unseen forces have started to move against them that will spell trouble in the future. At some point, the type of visitor the destination attracts tilts toward the Dependable side of the curve. With continued favorable publicity and increasing popularity for a destination, Dependables also become interested in taking a trip to this much-talked-about place (especially if it has become part of a package tour). Indeed, the greater its popularity, the more likely Dependables will visit, since they prefer to make safe choices.

The psychographic curve portends several unfortunate consequences. The destination can
Psychographic positions of destinations (1972)

**Psychocentric (Dependable)**

- Coney Island
- Miami Beach
- Most of U.S., Florida, Honolulu, Caribbean

**Near Psychocentric**

- Central Europe
- Great Britain

**Mid-Centric**

- Northern Europe
- Eastern Europe

**Near Allocentric (Venturer)**

- Hawaii
- Central America
- Southern Europe
- South Africa

**Allocentric (Venturer)**

- Japan
- and Asia

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draw only from shrinking segments of the population after its psychographic positioning passes the magical mid-point on the chart. Fewer near-Dependables exist than mid-Centrics with Dependable leanings, and there are fewer Dependables than near-Dependables. Thus, the base of potential tourists is diminishing, as those with Venturer leanings desert this now-tawdry destination for the next new, unspoiled place. Not only are there fewer people in the base, but Dependables travel less than their Venturer counterparts, they stay for shorter periods of time, and they spend less while they are there. Since they prefer to drive rather than fly, Dependables pay fewer taxes (e.g., arrival taxes, rental-car taxes). All of this compounds the misery now felt at the destination. Nothing has changed, the locals believe, so they can't understand why fewer visitors come each year and spend less while they're in town.

**Maintaining Appeal**

Based on the above scenario, the ideal psychographic positioning for most destinations lies somewhere in the middle of the near-Venturer segment. A destination at this point has the broadest positioning appeal possible because it covers the largest portion of the psychographic curve. The destination usually has a reasonable level of development, but it hasn't gotten out of hand. In the early stages of growth at most places, the area has improved much to everyone's delight. The first new hotels that appear in a destination generally attempt to capture the charm of the place (e.g., the former Rockresorts). New wealth has improved the living conditions for many people, especially because tourism causes ancillary businesses to develop that serve tourism workers. Most people feel better off, which is why most people never suspect at this point that tourism growth should be planned and controlled.

Planning and control is, of course, imperative at this stage. Many unplanned destinations face a declining future because uncontrolled growth has discouraged Venturer-type travelers. Discount travel packages abound to lure budget-minded Dependable types, and those packages usually include air and accommodations, possibly meals, and frequently golf privileges. When 30 percent or more of a destination's travel bookings come from reduced-price package vacations, that destination probably will continue to go downhill over the next couple of decades. Confirmation of problems can come from a simple walk around town. The greater the number of fast-food restaurants, video-rental stores, bargain-shopping outlets, and abundant nighttime entertainment, the greater the probability that those will never go away and will continue to contribute to the decline of the area (by discouraging Venturer-type travelers). Store owners pay taxes and vote for local politicians, and they have a vested interest in keeping things the way they are.

**Remaining true.** Proper positioning rests on two pillars, namely; (1) the true qualities of a destination (what it actually offers) and (2) its perception in the eyes of the traveling public. Maximum success usually occurs when local planners recognize that they must protect those features that attracted people to their community in the first place and continue to emphasize those aspects and the destination's other qualities in their marketing and promotional programs, and in their planning efforts. Savvy planners won't allow hotels and other buildings to grow taller than the trees, for instance, and they'll restrict the kinds of businesses that can come in and regulate where those are placed. Such destinations protect and preserve open areas and ensure that local residents participate fairly in the area's financial success. The natives also don't want to lose what they like about where they were born.

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Crowds, traffic congestion, pollution, high prices for just about everything, and a vanishing friendliness among neighbors make the locals want to return to a simpler life. In such a situation, tourism and its ill effects on local culture become a controversial topic of discussion, rather than being viewed as a boon to the area.*

Sea Pines Plantation on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, for instance, has maintained its allure and charm far better than surrounding communities at Hilton Head. By maintaining open spaces, strictly adhering to planning guidelines, and placing restrictions on property use, its planners have retained the resort’s strength as a tourism destination and a second-home area. Bermuda is another destination that continues to draw strong tourism crowds, in spite of being expensive, because of the commitment of local citizens and politicians to preserving its distinctive beauty and culture. Bermuda was one of the first ports to limit the number of cruise ships that can visit, and to select upscale lines to ensure that it gets the kind of crowd that it wants.

A Map of the World
With this in mind, destinations can be placed on the psychographic curve, based on the types of people who visit there the most. Exhibit 2 presents the positioning of some destinations as we analyzed them in 1972, while Exhibit 3 summarizes where various destinations fit today. Placement on the psychographic curve comes from the American Traveler Survey of Plog Research, the annual study of travel habits of over 10,000 households. Exhibit 3, obviously, although more inclusive than the original graph (Exhibit 2), serves only as a representative list since it is impossible to cover all destinations in this article.

In comparing Exhibits 2 and 3, note how various destinations have relocated from their former venturesome spot toward a more dependable positioning. For instance, Miami Beach has moved from a near-Dependable positioning to the Dependable column. Florida now places in the near-Dependable portion of the curve, rather than in the Centric area, and Honolulu has followed a similar path. Portions of the South Pacific currently appeal to near-Venturers, rather than Venturers (a relatively enviable position). Southern Europe has especially slipped, with English and parts of central Europe going in the same direction. The amount of movement typically relates to the degree to which the desti-
nation has become more touristy in character. Not apparent in Exhibit 3 is the diminished proportion of destinations today that can be classified as Venturesome in character. That is because the 1972 chart presented only a limited number of destinations for illustrative purposes only.

**Broadband.** Placement for each destination on the chart is based on its dominant characteristic. An intriguing finding on the present-day graph, however, is that a few destinations have managed to create a broad appeal across the tourist-type spectrum, attracting near-Venturers to near-Dependables. Such places offer a wide range of attractions, from adventurous activities to sitting on a sunny beach; and they have maintained their original character (and popularity) over a long time. Hawaii, Colorado, Ireland, and Scotland are examples of this desirable category.

**Dependable destination.** While an uncontrolled drift across the psychographic spectrum is not usually desirable, a destination can still draw huge tourism crowds even though it appeals mostly to people with Dependable characteristics. Branson, Missouri, conforms to that pattern—and was, in fact, conceived that way by state planner William Boyd. Familiar with the Plog psychographic system, Boyd recognized that Branson’s focus on country music and that its location as a driving destination positioned it solidly on the Dependable side of the curve. Branson does well by being true to itself, even though it fails to follow my general rule that destinations have the greatest chance of success by appealing to near-Venturers.

**Earthquakes**

In a light-hearted (and probably derivative) discussion of the destination life cycle that appeared in *Cornell Quarterly*, long-time hotelier Michael Leven noted that a destination that reaches the end of the cycle needs an “earthquake” to revive its prospects. As an example of an “earthquake,” he cited Atlantic City’s decision to open a boardwalk full of casinos. Two entire travel segments have invoked earthquake-style changes since I began my research more than 30 years ago. Those industries are the cruise business and escorted tours.

**Cruising becomes cool.** At the time of the concept’s original presentation, cruising attracted primarily a Dependable audience. The primary form of cruising consisted of Atlantic crossings on ships featuring activities and an ambiance that seemed stuffy, boring, and non-venturesome to active travelers. Who wants to sit on deck chairs reading books or playing shuffleboard during the daytime, only to be followed night after night by a formal dinner and dance? Those who chose cruise vacations tended to be Dependable types who also had wealth—an extremely narrow market segment. As a result, cruising declined in popularity after WW II until the 1960s.

The market for cruising broadened with the advent of Carnival Cruise Lines. It featured short (three- or four-day), low-cost cruises to the Caribbean from Florida. Carnival’s initial approach, however, reinforced cruising’s Dependable characteristics because the experience it offered was highly structured (trips to Caribbean sun-and-fun spots only, with heavy partying and social events on board). Carnival’s dramatic success in attracting travelers prompted others to enter the market. Some operators copied Carnival’s basic formula, but others expanded into other niches.

Contrary to the usual psychographic movement, cruising was able to broaden its appeal “backward” across the psychographic spectrum to appeal to Centrics and those with Venturer tendencies. Current itineraries take travelers around the world, from remote Asian ports to Africa, Latin America, the mid-East, and the Pacific region. Selections can be made from lines that feature ships with sails (along with scuba diving and adventure activities when they pull into isolated coves), small ships (300 to 500 berths) that can enter small harbors of quaint villages not accessible by large ships, huge vessels (over 2,500-berth capacity), and true adventure vessels that cut through ice floes in the Antarctic or that visit remote regions (e.g., those explored by Darwin). By changing its character, cruising has enjoyed strong single-digit growth rates for most of the past decade. That trend should continue, provided that cruiselines continue to diversify their products even further. The industry has changed from a restricted, dead-end psychographic positioning to one that works well.

**Escorted tours.** With extreme regimentation and fixed schedules, escorted tours have long attracted a Dependable type of traveler. The standard tour was a stereotypical jaunt among European cathedrals and capitals, featuring, say, 8 countries in 11 days. The standard formula moved people in and out of hotels and onto buses daily, zipped them through some beautiful coun-

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trystside in a hurry on the way to the next major city, and provided a quick feeling of the culture with costumed folk dancers or singers at restaurants with stylized décor in the evening. Only novice travelers, however, could like that kind of an introduction to a country.

For a number of years I worked with tour operators to show them how they were limiting their potential markets by using such an inflexible approach. They did not agree with my ideas, however, because until recently most tour companies were run by first-generation entrepreneurs who grew their companies quite successfully with that limited formula. That’s what they knew and that’s what they offered, even in the face of declining numbers of clients each year.

To appeal to travelers with Venturer characteristics, however, I insisted that the tour companies needed to change their products by offering less regimentation in schedules (more free time on the tours, fewer stops at touristy shops along the way), a better class of hotels, and itineraries that include less-popular or less-well-known places. Indeed, some tour companies are doing that now, albeit gradually.

Tour products now include the back roads of the United States, forgotten and overlooked places of Europe, treks through the Himalayas with Sherpa guides (e.g., Snow Lion Adventures), bicycling through New England in the fall or through the wine country of France, and excursions into the Amazon. Some university alumni associations offer particularly interesting excursions. These feature trips to relatively unknown places with professors as lecturers or chartered small ships for adventure travel into places not reachable by land. Thus, tours now have altered their image and have a much broader psychographic appeal than in the past. The tour business as a whole started on a growth curve about 1997, after losing market share for a couple of decades to air-plus-hotel travel packages. As with cruising, the changes in tour packages should mean that growth will continue for the next decade or so.

 Everyone’s Doing It
Perhaps the greatest change in the travel industry in the past 30 years is the overall growth in travel. Leisure travel has changed from being considered an expensive luxury item enjoyed only infrequently by the masses to being a psychological necessity. People are convinced that the pressures and strains of today’s lifestyle lead to a need to recover periodically through the therapy of “getting away from it all.” That means that Dependables, following the leadership of their more venturesome colleagues, travel more today than did their lookalikes of a number of years ago. Part of the reason for this is that so many destinations have been well developed, encouraging Dependables to go to places they wouldn’t previously have considered.

Many unplanned destinations face a declining future because uncontrolled growth has discouraged influential Venturer-type travelers.

Another earthquake. A related complicating element comes from the fact that Venturers and near-Venturers also travel more than in the past—no surprise, because they have been leading this trend for three decades. Venturers still seek unspoiled and unusual locations, but since travel is now so common the search for new kinds of vacation experiences and places to go has become more difficult. As a result Venturer-types take trips that they might not have considered in the past. One beneficiary of this quest, ironically, is the gaming industry. An activity preferred most by Dependable and near-Dependable types, gaming venues now draw visits from those with Venturer leanings. These travelers are not visiting so much to gamble as to look at the new, spectacular hotels and to take in the latest shows in Las Vegas. Chances are they will make it a short trip, owing to their allergy to the touristy elements of the destination. As I related above, cruising and tours also have attracted Venturer types to some degree.

Convergence? If Dependables are traveling more and Venturers are showing up in typical Dependable destinations, one might wonder whether the psychographic segments are somehow converging. I do not find this to be the case. Two factors still distinguish the two personality archetypes—the level of travel and the nature of the travel experience. While today’s Dependables are traveling more than yesterday’s Dependables, they still are no match for today’s Venturer types, who travel even more still. Similarly, although both Venturers and Dependables may purchase cruises, the Dependables limit themselves prima-
rily to visiting well-trodden destinations, such as the Caribbean or Alaska. The Venturers are the ones who are dropping themselves off to dive on the Dry Tortugas or taking cruises to the Antarctic.

Revised and Refined

That is not to say that my organization has not refined the psychographic system that was first devised over 30 years ago. It continues in use to position destinations and various travel products, such as cruise lines, hotel chains, and airlines. It has formed the basis for helping some of the largest travel-agency conglomerates refocus their business strategies to concentrate more heavily on the most important leisure segments. Several travel publications have also changed the way they present themselves to their readers and advertisers based on the psychographic research. This conceptual framework also helps travel suppliers learn how to target specific segments with messages that address their psychological needs, and to select a media mix that will reach their customers more cost effectively. Finally, as should be obvious in reading descriptions of the personality types, these concepts apply to other businesses. Industries as diverse as automobiles (BMW, Saab) and beverages (Molson Breweries of Canada) have used psychographics to reposition their products to capture greater market share or to introduce new brands.

Genesis. The first and most important use of the psychographic concept still relates to explaining why destinations rise and fall in popularity. Using these ideas, destinations around the globe have repositioned themselves to increase their tourism prospects, and some have taken steps to improve the quality of what they offer the traveling public. Among the destinations that have employed the concepts to change the way they are perceived by travelers are Australia, various provinces of Canada, post-handover Hong Kong, southern Portugal and the Estoril Coast, Switzerland, and Tahiti, as well as such U.S. locations as Beverly Hills, Detroit, and Omaha.

With all of this effort, however, I maintain that most destinations' managers don't understand that they continue to shoot themselves in the foot by allowing unfocused development to trample the once-beautiful areas that so delighted the Venturer-type travelers. Destinations can be preserved and still enjoy continued, growing prosperity. The reasons for why this fails to occur are beyond the scope of this article, but I will write about them in a future Cornell Quarterly article. I want to focus an entire article on this matter because I am concerned about the future economic health of an industry I love as it seems to be choosing a path towards self-destruction. Slow though the forces might be, the cumulative impact of tawdry development in so many places will, I fear, turn more of the public away from the strong emphasis they currently place on travel in their lives. If travel ceases to be edifying, people will turn to other outlets—for instance, home entertainment, which continues to grow faster than leisure travel.

The travel product must improve over time, or an increasingly sophisticated public will decide that taking a trip is too expensive in money or time for the experience received—and just isn't all that much fun when you get there. The experience at the destination must make the effort and expenditure of time and money worthwhile. If the golden travel goose dies a slow death, no travel surgeon will be able to revive it. As travel receipts decline, local governments won't be able to afford to tear down overbuilt resorts and replace them with fresh buildings, open spaces, or the natural scenery that was paved over by sprawling development. That scenario is a sad thought, but a real possibility. The travel industry carries responsibility on its shoulders for its success and its problems. Tourism planners need to look no further than the mirror to know who must fix the problems.

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