


Subject: Tourism & Hospitality

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Paper 01: Tourism and Hospitality: Concept, Component, Status and Trends

Module 32: Stanley Plog's Psychographic Model



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ITEMS	DESCRIPTION OF MODULE
Subject Name	Tourism and Hospitality
Paper Name	Tourism and Hospitality: Concept, Component, status and Trends
Module Title	Stanley Plog's Psychographic Model
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Pre- Requisites	Basic knowledge about Stanley Plog's Psychographic Model
Objectives	To study the significance and debate over Stanley Plog's Psychographic Model
Keywords	Psychographic, Plog's Model, Tourist's typologies, Allocentric, Midcentric, Psychocentric

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QUADRANT-I

1. Learning Outcomes

After completing this module students should be able to know:

- i. What is the significance of Stanley Plog's 'Psychographic Model'?
- ii. How did the model originate?
- iii. How does the model describe tourists' typologies and their preferences on the basis of their personality based traits?
- iv. How does the model describe destination's response to tourism according to the Psychographic Positions?
- v. Debates over Stanley Plog's 'Psychographic Model'.

2. Introduction

'Psychographics' have become a popular basis for anticipating consumer behaviour and their preferences. Attitudes, motivation, lifestyle, novelty-seeking, sensation-seeking personality and intra-personal constraints - all these are interconnected dimensions under the common umbrella of 'Psychographics'. 'Personality-based Psychographic Modelling' in tourism is closely associated with Plog's 'Psychographic Model', a seminal tourism model, in which, Stanley Plog has delineated different type of tourists along a continuum i.e. normally distributed curve. This model has been widely accepted by many academicians and marketing agencies and it is acknowledged as one of the best models to understand tourists' typologies, their personality based psychographic traits and how far these traits have impact on tourists' preferences while selecting suitable destination as per their choice.

According to Plog, travelers' psychographics determine their travel patterns and preferences and destinations' popularity rise and fall because they appeal to specific types of tourists over the time and they follow a relatively predictable pattern of growth and decline in popularity. Therefore, the model can be utilized as a useful reference for planning and designing the tourism infrastructure as well as for incorporating appropriate strategy for marketing tourism destinations as from this model one can also predict over the tourists' preference in choosing suitable destination. Although the model does not

really help to forecast where travellers are likely to visit, it is highly effective in suggesting where they would ideally like to visit.

3. Origin of the Model

The core concept was originated in 1967, as the part of a project, assigned to Plog's market-research company BASICO. This project was sponsored by sixteen foreign and domestic airlines, air-frame manufacturers and many magazines over an investigation of why certain travellers did not want to travel by airplane and what kind of people do not want to travel by air to understand the psychology of certain segments of travellers and to visualize the companies' role in broadening the travel market's base, in order to turn more non-flyers into flyers. In this study, 'New Markets for Air Travel', Plog concluded that non-flyer personality can be described by a constellation of following three principal personality characteristics:

1) **Generalized Anxieties:** This is a frequent low-level feeling of apprehension which consume most of the psychic energy from a typical non-flier. These anxieties restrain a traveler to explore the world with utmost self-confidence. Even the people suffering from aviophobia, can be treated by behavioral therapy as, it is nothing but a psychological disorder. But if any person has self-doubts then the world would appear to him / her as a perilous place.

2) **Sense of Powerlessness:** The travelers having this kind of personality characteristic believe that they have no control over their daily day happenings or events or their own destinies.

3) **Territory Boundness:** The travelers having this kind attitude deliberately restrict their lives from making a solid attempt to expand their territories since their childhood days to adulthood.

In 1974, the Plog's Psychographic Model came into light, for the first time when it was published in an article named, "*Why Destination Areas Rise and Fall in Popularity*" in the Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, followed by a conference organized by Southern California Chapter of the Travel Research Association (now it is known as the Travel and Tourism Research Association) in 1972.

4. Psychographic Model in Brief

The model describes:

1. Tourists' typologies and their preferences on the basis of their personality based traits
2. Destination's Response to Tourism according to the Psychographic Positions

4.1. Tourists' Typology According to Their Personality-Based Psychographic Traits

According to the personality based traits, Plog's theory has classified tourists into three major types i.e. (i) Allocentric, (ii) Midcentric, and (iii) Psychocentric and if still ambiguous in decision, it can be further divided down into (iv) Near-Allocentric and (v) Near Psychocentric. In Plog's Theory, each typology has been clearly segregated that can be marked easily.

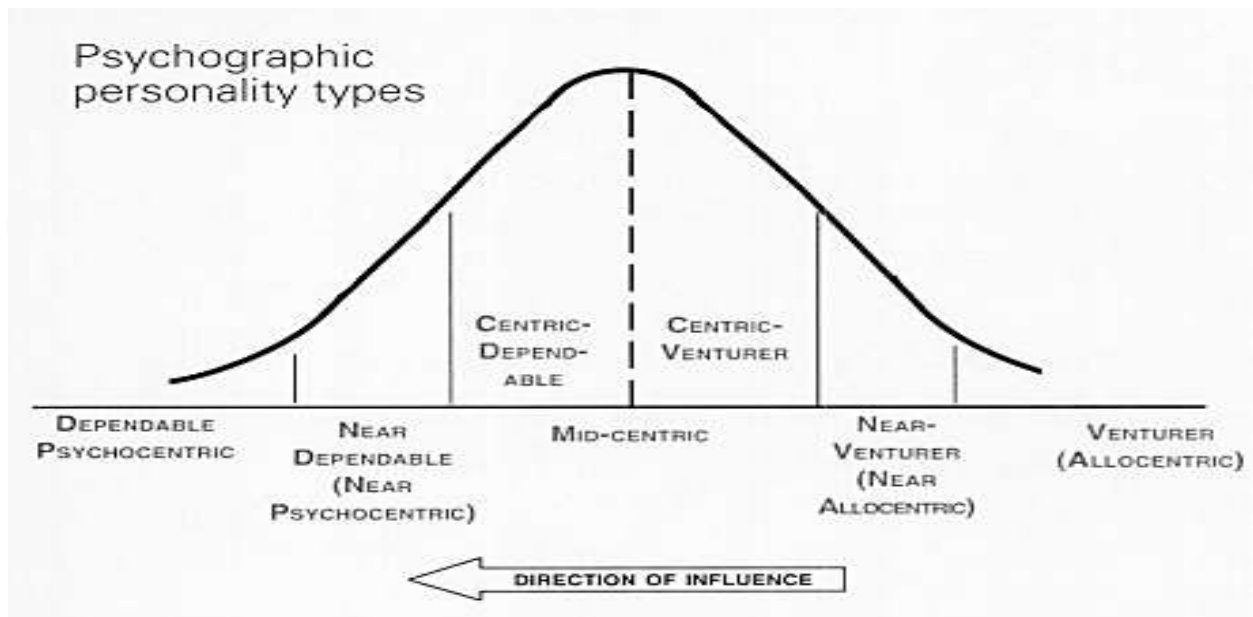


Fig1: Plog's (2001) Model of Venturers versus Dependable

4.1.1. Allocentric / Venturer / Wanderer

The term, 'Allocentric' comes from the root words 'Allo', means 'varied in form' and "Centric" means 'focusing of interest patterns on varied activities'. The Allocentric tourists, often called as 'Ventures', are the individuals who seek new experience, enjoy interacting with people from different cultural background, want to explore the unusual

or little known places, prefer adventure in a wide range of activities and are pretty much comfortable in making choices that involve some degree of variation or risk factors as they have a strong feeling that they can control or manage even the adverse situations whatever they have to face while travelling. Even they are not be committed to a structured itinerary. Rather they like to have the freedom to make their own arrangements and to choose a variety of activities and tourist attractions while exploring an area. Such tourists prefer to fly to the destinations.

The general characteristics of such type of tourists are mentioned below:

a) ***Intellectually Curious:*** Allocentrics are curious by nature and therefore, they always want to explore the diversity of the world around them in its original form. They travel comparatively more than any other types of tourists and also stay longer period of time at a specific destination. Such types of tourists prefer to indulge themselves in unusual and novel things rather than doing mundane things like watching TV.

b) ***Quick Decision Taker:*** Allocentrics are very much well aware of the fact that life involves risks and hazards and 'everything in your life is a reflection of a choice you have made'. Therefore, they take decision without delay.

c) ***Readily Spend Discretionary Income:*** Allocentrics have the firm belief that their future will be far better than their past and this confidence makes them ready to enjoy the fruits of their work in current

d) ***Likely to Choose New Products:*** Allocentrics are enthusiastic to explore exciting place, concepts and ideas. Such types of tourists are always experimental and this type of nature drives them not to stick to some popular brands, rather to move forward to the newly launched product into the marketplace. The thrill to experiment and discovery of new product is too tempting to be resisted that it overrides their regrets even if the new product is not live up to its assurance.

e) ***Self-Confidence and Personal Energy:*** They eager to learn everything whatever they find new and interesting.

f) ***Inner-Directed Figure:*** They have the self-belief of taking the best decision for themselves and therefore, they are relatively inner-directed and rely less on the experts' opinions.

g) **Active and Relatively Assertive:** In their daily lives if something goes wrong, they do not throw their arms. Rather, they actively try to make things proper again.

h) **Prefer Activities and Challenges.** Although allocentrics are great with new ideas but they are not so good in executing the detail works as they prefer challenges rather than dull routine tasks.

i) **Prefer Loneliness.** They prefer solitude, but appear to be friendly and outgoing.

4.1.2. Mid-centric (Combination).

‘Midcentric’ swing between the ‘Allocentric’ and ‘Psychocentric’. Such types of Tourists, located in the middle of the continuum in Plog’s Psychographic Model have a balanced combination of both personality based psychographic traits. They lean in neither the tried-and true direction of the ‘Psychocentrics’ nor the variety-seeking direction of the ‘Allocentrics’.

4.1.3. Psychocentric / Dependable (The Repeater)

Plog (1974) defines the ‘Psychocentric’ as "*self-inhibited, nervous and non-adventuresome; preferring familiarity in vacation-travel destinations*". The term ‘psychocentric’ comes from ‘Psyche’, meaning ‘Self’, and ‘Centric, meaning ‘focusing of interest patterns on varied activities’. Psychocentrics are those dependable who have a firm belief on the fact that whatever happens to them is largely beyond their control, so they often go for safe as well as consistent choices by choosing popular things. Psychocentric tourists are usually non-adventurous. These tourists love to drive to the destinations, often prefer family road trips. They travel less and like to stay shorter period of time at any destination in typical accommodations and usually eat at family-type restaurants. Few general characteristics of such travellers are as follow:

a) **Non-Adventurous or Less Exploring:** Psychocentrics are less venturesome and exploring compared to the normal ones. They always try to restrict themselves from the variety of contacts around them.

b) **Cautious and Rigid:** They are very cautious and possess conservative attitude.

c) **Restrictive in Spending.** They are restrictive in spending keeping in mind the uncertainty of future.

d) ***Give Preference in Popular Brands:*** The habit of making safe choices leads the psychocentrics to choose the popular and familiar products.

e) ***Lack of Self-Confidence:*** They lack confidence and are more lethargic than any other people. They also lack self-decision-making abilities and therefore, follow public personality's advice or imitate their actions.

f) ***Non-Demanding:*** They never take the odd situation in a determined and forceful way to handle the difficulties.

g) ***Non-Varying Lifestyle.*** They Like structured predictable and routine life style.

h) ***Surrounded by Friends and Family:*** They feel more secured and comfortable when they are surrounded by their intimate circles.

4.1.4. Near-Allocentric and Near-psychocentric

In addition, tourists may fall to one direction or the other on the continuum, either as 'Near-Allocentrics' 'Near-psycho-centric', without falling completely into the extreme types of this model. After a destination has been explored by the Allocentrics, Near-Allocentrics are among the first major wave of adopters, while the Near-Psychocentrics are most likely to try a destination that has been visited for several times.

Advantages of Plog's Theory

Plog's theory is defined in three parts Allocentric, Midcentric, and Psychocentric. If still ambiguous in decision then it can be further divided down into Near Allocentric and Near psychocentric in between these three. Each different part is clearly segregated in Plog theory that can be marked easily.

Disadvantages of Plog's theory

Every theory has its own limitation so in Plog. Any tourist cannot stay in the same category throughout its entire life. For example if someone is travelling in their young age with high energy they would definitely fall into the Allocentric category. And when they settle down and have a family they will be more inclined towards travelling to well known holidays destination and comes into the category of psychocentric. As time passes by, different destinations fall into different categories.

4.2. Destinations' Responses to Tourism According to its Psychographic Positions

According to Plog (1991), the destinations also move through the curved, bell shaped continuum and can be classified along the same continuum. The Allocentrics who

like to visit unusual places, are the explorer of non-touristy and unfamiliar destinations. Thereafter, these Allocentrics start talking about their holiday experience to others. This inspires the Near-Allocentrics to visit those places. Gradually these destinations become more popular and more tourist infrastructure development takes place. Now, Mid-centrics start visiting these places and thus the continuous growth in tourists' arrival results into further development as well as increases price of land and consumer's product. At this stage, the Allocentrics stop coming to these destinations as the place loses its virginity, sense of novelty, peaceful atmosphere but even then, some Near-Allocentrics keep visiting the area. When any destination becomes popular, it leads towards the overburdening of mass tourism. At this stage, the number of Near-Allocentrics falls down and the inflow of Near-Psychocentrics increases. The area starts losing its position in the tourism market and the total tourists' arrival decreases over the years and at that time, the destination moves towards the psychocentric end of the continuum. *"As these psychocentrics constitute a very small proportion of the overall tourism market, the destination ends up with fewer visitors than before, losing the popularity it once enjoyed"* (Cruz-Milan, 2016).

- A - Exploration / Venturer
- B - Involvement / Near Venturer
- C - Development / Mid Centric
- D - Consolidation / Mid Centric
- E - Stagnation / Near Dependable
- F - Decline/Rejuvenation / Dependable

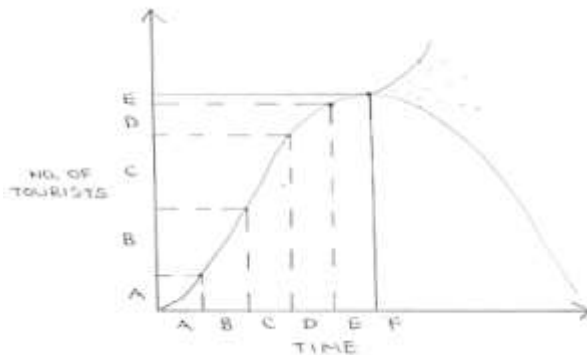


Fig: 2: Model showing Butler's (1980) Tourist Area Life Cycle Model overlaid with Plog's (2001) Model

<i>Stage (Butler, 1980)</i>	<i>Tourist type (Plog, 2001)</i>	<i>Destination responses to tourism</i>
Exploration	Venturer	- some locals may feel uncomfortable with new tourists
Involvement	Near venturer	- locals contribute to developing tourism in the area, by providing facilities
Development	Mid centric	- some locals may be alienated by inclusion of external tourism businesses and foreign investment
Consolidation	Mid centric	- locals may grow tired of the development and increasing tourist numbers
Stagnation	Near dependable	- locals likely to negatively view tourism and tourists in the area, due to peak numbers and large, invasive infrastructure
Decline	Dependable	- locals likely to negatively view tourism and tourists in the area
Rejuvenation	Dependable	- locals likely to negatively view tourism and tourists in the area

Fig: 3: Plog's (2001) Tourist Types and Subsequent Destination Responses to Tourism

Plog in his 1967 study, *New Markets for Air Travel*, concluded that non-flyer personality can be described by a constellation of three principal personality characteristics:

1) **Generalized anxieties:** A typical non-flyer normally feels a frequent low-level feeling of dread which consumes most of their psychic energy. These anxieties among them play out daily to obstruct the traveler from reaching out to the world around them to explore with utmost comfort and self-confidence.

2) **Sense of powerlessness:** These classic non-flyers usually believe that daily life happenings are largely out of their control. They normally feel that the good and the misfortunes that they come across in their daily life are the result of chance happenings and events, and they believe that they have no control over their own destinies.

3) **Territory boundness:** These people have these anxieties from their childhood days and increasing day by day relatively in adulthood also. They have restricted their lives for decades in numerous ways, without making an attempt to expand their territory horizons.

No person is a perfect example of any personality type. We can identify persons with the archetypal Dependable (originally, Psychocentric) personality. Typically they are:

Intellectually restricted: Compared to most people they do not carve for new ideas and experiences on a daily basis. They show tendencies to read less, watch more TV, and restrict themselves from the variety of contacts around them. They are less venturesome and exploring than normal persons.

Cautious and conservative: They prefer to avoid taking important decisions and making the choices in challenges that face everyone daily. They are very cautious and conservative type of person.

Restrictive in spending: Normally they are uncertain about the future. So they do not want to financially stretch themselves and over commit discretionary income. Being economy is a good habit if motivated by good planning rather than choosing it due to a basis of fear.

Prefer well-known brands: The habit of making safe choices leads them choose the popular items as it is safe choices to use such items. As it is very much familiar within everyone it must be working otherwise it wouldn't be so popular.

Little self-confidence: They face their daily life with low confidence and pursuing fewer activities. They are more lethargic than other people.

Look to authority figures: They are unclear about their own decision-making abilities and they follow public personality's advice or imitate their actions. They are more likely to influence by famous movie or television stars and sports or great personalities. They swayed by advertising and promotional materials by these personalities.

Passive and non-demanding: These type of people often pullout from situation when encounter problem in their daily lives. They never take the odd situation aggressively to handle these difficulties.

Non-varying lifestyles: Like structure and routine life style. They are most trusted in their surrounding due the predictability and routine nature of their lifestyles. These people serve as the flywheels of society. Because of these types of people things run according to plan in their environment wherever they work or live.

Surrounded by friends and family: Due to the warm friendship and backing provided by the intimate circles, they feel more comfortable and secure.

For these few reasons they are labeled as Dependable.

Ventures: At the other side of the continuum are the archetypal Ventures. Ventures are:

Intellectually curious: They are curious and want to explore diversity of the world around them in its natural form. They constantly want new experiences and enjoy every activity. They hesitate to do mundane things like watching TV and prefer unusual and novel things.

Quick decisions taker: They take decision very fast and easily. They are aware that life involves risks and you learn to live with those choices you have made.

Readily spend discretionary income: They want to enjoy the fruits of their work in current as they believe the future will be better than their past.

Likely to choose new products: They want to experiment and choose the product shortly introduced into the marketplace. They never stick to particular popular brands. The thrill of new product experiment and discovery overrides regrets of new product if it is not live up to its assurance.

Self-confidence and personal energy: They face everyday life with self-confidence and personal energy. They are eager to learn about the latest technologies and want to investigate what is new and interesting. They are very enthusiastic to explore exciting place, concepts and ideas.

Inner-directed figure: They took their own judgment regarding any problem in their lives, rather than look out for any authority figures for their guidance and direction. They believe that they can take the best decision for themselves and are relatively inner-directed and rely less on the opinions of experts.

Active and relatively assertive: In their daily lives if something goes wrong, they do not throw their arms they actively and forcefully try to get the wrong corrected.

Prefer activities and challenges: They prefer the day filled with various activities and challenges i.e., different from routine tasks. They are sometime not good at implementation as they dislike the boring the detail works entail. They are innovative in bringing in new ideas in business or cultural life.

Prefer loneliness: They prefer to be alone and meditative and avoid social situations and parties, but appears to be friendly and outgoing. They trust their own ideas and feeling for other people as dull and slow thinking.

5. Debate Over Psychographic Model

The main concept of Plog's psychographic segmentation is that the personality scale helps us to understand why destinations' popularity rise and fall, revealing that tourists' personality characteristics determine the travel patterns and their preferences (Plog, 2001).

According to Smith (1990), the allocentric-psychocentric model fails to substantiate the assumption i.e. there is an association between personality types and destination preferences. Litvin (2006) tested Plog's model and from his study he concluded that ideal destination and the most recently visited destination differ from each other. Crossley and Jamieson (1999) opine that *"If a traveler is allocentric in nature, financial or other factors may cause him or her to demonstrate mid-centric or near psychocentric travel patterns"*. Therefore, personal traits are not the only determinants of destination choice. Lowyck, Van Langenhove and Bollaert opines that it may not be possible to place the travellers in a "Single Simple Category" as people are complex by nature.

Moreover, according to Plog's definition (1974), a traveler's psychographics would remain unchanged. However, the literature on psychographic profiles implies that a traveler may move from Allocentric to Psychocentric, depending on his or her experience. Furthermore, there is no guaranty that any tourist would stay in the same category throughout his/her entire life.

6. Summary

Travellers' psychographics is determined by their travel patterns and preferences and destinations' popularity rise and fall because they appeal to specific types of tourists over the time and they follow a relatively predictable pattern of growth and decline in popularity. On the basis of personality-based traits, the tourists have been classified into five different types i.e. (i) Psycho-centric, (ii) Near Psychocentric, (iii) Mid-Centric, (iv) Near Allo-centric, and (v) Allo-centric The Allo-centric tourists, often called as 'Ventures' are the individuals who seek new experience, enjoy interacting with people

from different cultural background, want to explore the unusual or little known places. Whereas Psycho-centrics are those dependable tourists who have a firm belief on the fact that whatever happens to them is largely beyond their control, so they often go for safe as well as consistent choices by choosing popular things. Psychocentric tourists are usually non-adventurous.

