

The travel industry grew remarkably in the past century and became the largest industry in the world. But not all destinations in particular followed that trend. Many destinations who used to be very attractive and successful nowadays struggle to get enough visitors. This article, written by Stanley Plog, talks about the rise and the fall of the popularity of touristic areas and where it comes from. There has already been an article on the same topic from the author, but he sought to refine and revise the concept, because of the importance for the actors in the travel and tourism industry to understand the psychological factors influencing travel behaviour - why some do and others never do travel - to be able to give useful advice to the actors. There are two main concepts which help us to illustrate why this rising and falling happens. Those are the psychographic profile of travelers and the tourism life cycle.

First we need to know about the psychographic profile of travelers. On one side we have the so called Dependables, which are highly psychocentric. On the other side we find the so called Venturers, which are highly allocentric. In short and simplified, the Dependables are the very introverted, safety-seeking, unadventurous travelers. The Venturers are the complete opposite, thus extroverted, risk-taking, adventurous travelers. Dependables generally do travel not at all or much less than their opposing group, the Venturers. Important to mention is the correlation between the type of traveler somebody is and the destination this person chooses.

The destination life-cycle follows the same pattern. Stanley Plog names the main stages in the life cycle as follows: 1. Birth 2. Maturity 3. Old age 4. Decline. The key point is, that these stages correspond to the psychographic groups of travelers. Birth would belong to Venturers and decline to Dependables (in between are the near-Venturers and the near-Dependables). Again, the link and the correlation between these two concepts is the key. In consequence, resorts start to get visited by Venturers and end up declining by being visited by Dependables. The more the popularity rises the more Dependables will come, which will lead to decline. The author says that the challenge for touristic destinations is to try to stay in the early adulthood - somewhere between birth and maturity, somewhere in the middle of the near-Venturer segment- of the life cycle, as this stage attracts the greatest number of near-Venturers and thus is the ideal to achieve.

To achieve that objective, destinations need to try to maintain their appeal by not letting growth get out of hand. Because uncontrolled doesn't attract Venture-type travelers. As time goes on more and more packages will be offered, escorted tours will be organized and so on. This are clearly things that will attract more and more Dependables.

Consequently, destinations need to position themselves properly towards the customers. Two things are needed for that: 1. Stick to the true quality of the destination 2. Perception of the destination by the public. People in charge need to recognize the importance of the things that brought people to their place and continue to invest - not specifically in a monetary way - in those assets and, also in the other qualities with potential.

There are exceptions to this rule, but it is generally very difficult to reverse the life cycle and get away from decline. Thus, in conclusion, the tourism industry as a whole needs to be aware of the two concepts and how they influence each other, to make sure that decline will not be a problem for the industry. We can't be sure that the sector continues growing eternally, if they don't pay attention decline will almost certainly follow.