

## A Three Dimensional Tourist Typology

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### Abstract:

This paper proposes a three dimensional typology of tourists. The Three Dimensional Tourist Typology (TDT) is based upon individuals' venturesomeness, interactiveness, and level of sensation seeking. The model presented in this paper combines Plog's (1974, 2001) Psycho-Allocentric model, Eysenck and Eysenck's (1964) Personality Inventory, and a Sensation Seeking (Eachus 2004; Litvin 2007) dimension. A description of a 'typical' tourist in each of the eight types is presented. Two examples of the potential applications of the TDT include identifying different types of tourists for the food tourism niche market and the medical tourism niche market. Two substantial insights emerge. First the marketing of destinations to target groups of tourist could become more effective with subgroups more easily identifiable providing each tourist destination with the ability to identify the type of tourists their promotions aim to attract, particularly in the case of niche tourism. Secondly, as an empirical tool for further examination of niche tourists' personalities.

**Key words:** Sensation Seeking, Venturesomeness, Extroversion, Psychographics, Niche Tourism



Source: [https://rentini.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/tourists\\_200907161348195481.jpg](https://rentini.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/tourists_200907161348195481.jpg)

## Introduction

This paper proposes a three dimensional typology of tourists. The Three Dimensional Tourist Typology (TDT) is conceptualized around tourists' venturesomeness, interactiveness, and level of sensation seeking. The model presented in this paper adds a third dimension, Sensation Seeking (Eachus, 2004; Litvin, 2007), to Jackson's typology (Jackson, White, and White, 2001; Jackson 2006) that combined Plog's (1974, 2001) Psycho-Allocentric model and Eysenck and Eysenck's (1964) Personality Inventory.

The addition of the sensation seeking scale contributes to the strength in differentiating between individuals and their tourist behavior, particularly in the case of niche tourism. The three scales, venturesome, extroversion, and sensation seeking complement each other thus providing a well-rounded conceptualization of different dimensions of tourist travel behavior. Combining the three scales will provide a clearer picture of potential tourist characteristics, which would be valuable to niche tourism providers.

## Conceptualization

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between the Psycho-Allocentric model developed by Plog and the Personality Inventory developed by Eysenck and Eysenck. Lee-Hoxter and Lester (1988) found a correlation between Plog's allocentrism and Extroversion (Eysenck and Eysenck 1964). Jackson et al (2001) further developed this relationship by conducting a factor analysis of all the items from both Plog and Eysenck and Eysenck's Scales, which resulted in a two factor solution. The two factor solution suggested that the two dimensions are independent of each other. The addition of the sensation seeking scale contributes to the strength in differentiating between

individuals and their tourist behavior. The three scales, venturesome, extroversion, and sensation seeking complement each other in many aspects as each one provides a different dimension of tourist travel behavior. Combining the three scales will provide a clearer picture of potential tourist needs, which would be valuable to tourism providers.

The Sensation Seeking Scale is a personality measure characterized by "the need for varied, novel, and complex sensations and experiences and the willingness to take physical and social risks for the sake of such experiences" (Zuckerman, 1979). The Brief Sensation Seeking Scale or BSSS (Hoyle, Stephenson, Palmgreen, Larch, and Donohew, 2002) addressed many of the deficiencies of the original scale, while also reducing the number of items from forty items to eight.

Eachus (2004) employed the BSSS to predict holiday preferences, and tentatively concluded that the BSSS may have wider applicability than what was originally envisioned. Lepp and Gibson (2008) explored the relationship between sensation seeking scale and Cohen's (1972, 1979) tourist typology. Lepp and Gibson (2008) found that the BSSS accurately accounted for these different types of tourist modes presented by Cohen.

These studies have shown that the BSSS is an important tool capable of predicting tourist's destination selection and to an extent their 'personalities' and activity choice. Even though the original use of the scale was intended for evaluating risky behaviors, the BSSS offers another use for distinguishing how tourists may spend their leisure time, destination choice and activities participated in. The BSSS can provide insight into the internal desires of the tourists as they select a destination that will either peak their interest and stimulate new experiences or leave the

tourist relaxed and calm from familiar surroundings. The venturesome scale developed by Plog (1974) is an seminal conceptualization of tourist consumer behavior.. The scale uses personality indicators to determine the level of arousal desired from a destination. The scale distinguishes between active arousal, typically desired by the allocentrics or venturers, and passive arousal, desired by the psychocentrics or authentics. While Plog's scale was originally designed for the use in the evaluation of destination success and decline, the scale has been effective for establishing tourist typologies. Some examples include (Nickerson and Ellis 1991; Everett and Aitchison, 2008; Ignatov and Smith, 2006; Andreu, Kozak, Avci and Cifter 2006; Litvin 2006; Eachus, 2004).

What makes the venturesome scale so beneficial in the inclusion of the complete Three Dimensional Tourist Typology is that first, like the BSSS, the venturesome scale is also independent of income (Plog 2002) and shows a strong relationship to the number of trips taken within a year. Secondly, the venturesome scale also demonstrates that psychological factors play a primary role in tourist's destination choice as well as in selecting which leisure activities are favored (Plog 2002). The venturesome scale provides insight into the tourist's psyche and suggests what the preferred behavior is for the tourist and what they require from a physical location.

Jackson's (2001) model initially combines Plog's venturesome scale with that of the extrovert/introvert scale. This is a useful combination as when compared to the Big Five personality traits, openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Tupes and Crystal, 1961), a cornerstone in psychology research, the venturesome scale accounts for

both the Conscientiousness and Agreeableness aspects within a tourist experiences. While the Extrovert trait is expanded upon through its separation. What is left over from the comparison from the Big Five personality traits is that of Openness and Neuroticism, both of which can be represented through the sensation seeking scale within the tourist experience. It is important to note that these traits have been found to organize personality at the highest level, and so they are most helpful as a conceptual organization for lower-level personality traits. However, because the Big Five traits are so broad and comprehensive, they are not nearly as powerful in predicting and explaining actual behavior as are lower-level traits. Many studies have confirmed that in predicting actual behavior the more numerous facet or primary level traits are far more effective (Mershon and Gorsuch, 1988; Paunonon and Ashton, 2001).

Understanding how tourists travel and who they travel with not only gives a strong marketability for destinations but also provides an understanding of which destinations are attracting larger groups and why. The scale shows individuals that fall on the extrovert side tend of be energized by being within large groups, are vey assertive, and quite quick to decisions. Where the introvert side is more contemplative about decisions, are energized through personal time separated from the group, and prefer to watch before "jumping" into an activity. Misconceptions about the dimension are that introverts are shy and timid individuals. Many introverts will have a small group of friends but are closely linked to these friends and introverts will also be interested in taking part in dangerous activities as long as there is evidence of a level of safety. The Extrovert scale provides insight into the social interaction desired for the tourist.

## The Typology: Eight travel personality types

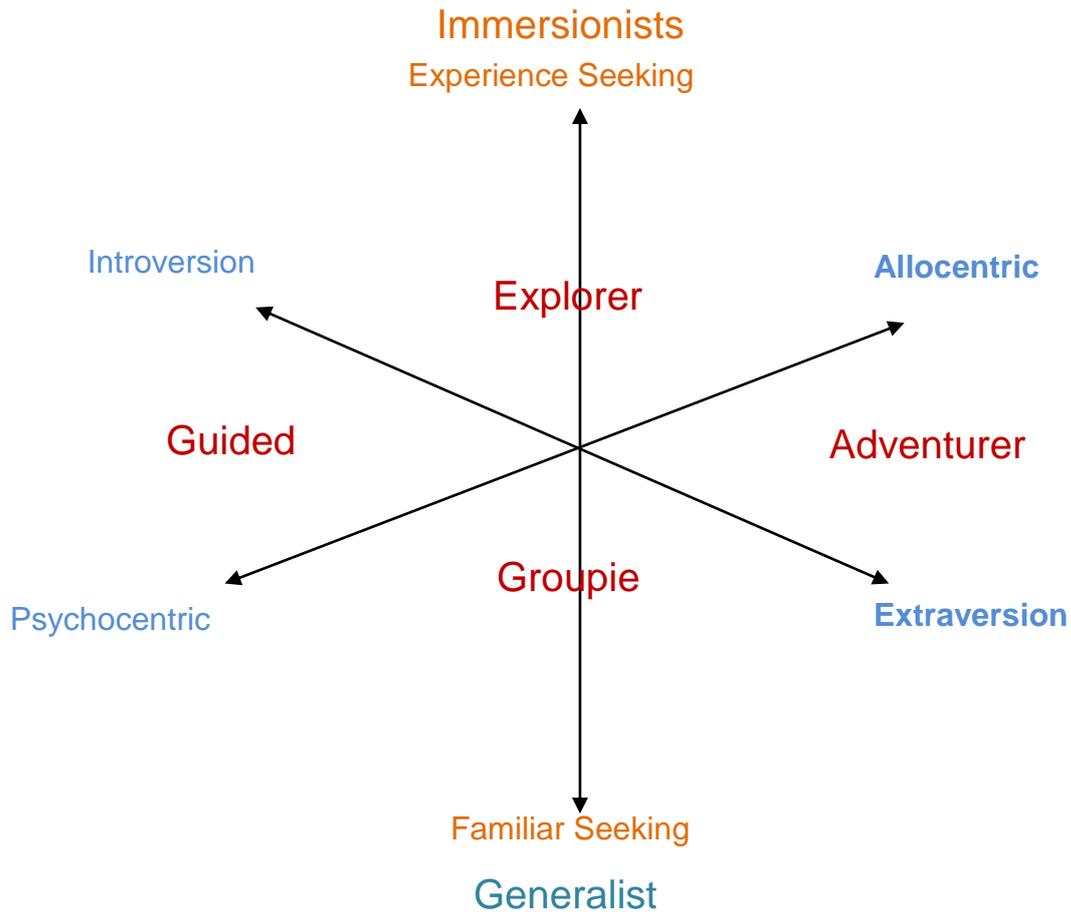


Figure 1. Three Dimensional Tourist Typology

By combining the destination selection predictability of the adventuresome scale with the scale of social interaction and the scale of internal desires of the brief sensation seeking scale the model is able to conceptualize eight distinct tourist personality types that are well established as well as identifying a

predictability pattern. The Three dimensions are illustrated in Figure 1.

Table 1 provides a detailed overview of the eight different types of tourists represented by the typology. For each type, the three dimensional characteristics are noted and a brief description is provided.

**Table 1. The Eight Tourist Types**

Type	Venturesome	Extrovert/ Introvert	Sensation Seeking	Example
<u>Guided Immersionist:</u>	Psychocentric	Introversion	Experience seeking	Tourists that want to experience the culture but are either timid or hire a guide to show them the cultural significant places. Prefer a more one-on-one/personal experience. An example would be a personal guided tour of a popular attraction such as the Taj Mahal.
<u>Explorer Immersionist:</u>	Allocentric	Introversion	Experience seeking	These are the people that enjoy being "air-dropped" into a culture and literally

				leave everything about themselves behind so they can fully integrate themselves into the culture to experience it. Such as traveling to a remote village and joining the village as a member of the society. These individuals seek to escape from tourists.
<u>Adventure Immersionist</u>	Allocentric	Extraversion,	Experience seeking	These groups of people are those that run across Africa together, hike Everest together, and enjoy doing everything the Explorer Immersionist does but chooses safer environments and believes in the 'safety in numbers'. The members of "Running the Sahara" and group voluntourists members would fit into this type.
<u>Groupie Immersionists:</u>	Psychocentric	Extraversion,	Experience seeking	People that enjoy going on group trips and prefer locations that are tourist hot spots, but still would like to see how different cultures are. This group can be thought of as Americans that go to Hawaii to experience the Polynesian culture.
<u>Grouped Generalist</u>	Psychocentric	Extraversion	Familiar seeking	These are the type of tourists that seek out other tourists and popular tourist locations that they themselves are familiar with and travel within a group. Time Square in New York, Las Ramblas in Barcelona and Dubai Mall are type of attractions this type would typically visit.
<u>Guided Generalist:</u>	Psychocentric	Introversion	Familiar seeking	Much like the Grouped Generalist they prefer to travel to familiar environments but are willing to try some new experiences on their own and take calculated risks. Weekend road trips somewhat close to home, but to undetermined destinations would be an illustrative practices for this type.
<u>Explorer Generalist</u>	Allocentric	Introversion	Familiar seeking	Explorer Generalists can be thought of as those tourists that are casual sky divers, scuba divers, and back country skiers. They enjoy challenging themselves but will never over challenge themselves. They consider themselves adventuresome but really prefer to stay in their comfort zone.
<u>Adventure Generalist:</u>	Allocentric	Extraversion	Familiar seeking	These tourists are social and enjoy activities were each individual is involved. A week of mountain biking with colleagues would fall into this category. Adventure Generalists are generally willing to try anything once as long as there is some kind of safety system in place first.

The growth in the tourist niche market groups suggests that previous ways of identifying tourist types may have to be adapted and include more distinctive means of identifying segments of tourists. One of the benefits of the Three Dimensional

Tourist Typology is its customizability. Two examples of the potential capabilities of the TDT include identifying different types of tourists for the food tourism niche market and the medical tourism niche market.

For the food tourism niche market group, the hemispheres of the model can be divided into the northern half “immersionists” being classified as “foodies” and the southern “generalists” as “non-foodies”. To attract more foodies into the destination four categories are established to identify potential tourists; *explorer foodie*, *guided foodie*, *adventurer foodie*, and *groupie foodie*. The *explorers* could chose to stay with locals and eat what they eat at family meals and do not shy away from any culinary opportunities, while the *guided* foodies might ask the front desk or concierge where the best place to get a particular ‘local dish’. The *adventurers* travel outside of the tourist area seeking the ‘hole-in-the-wall’ local restaurants, and the *groupies* seek out restaurants which are famous, important to be seen at, or highlighted in a guidebook were exclusivity and/or reputation is apart of the food experience. Using the TDT model to understand the dimensions of these segments of food tourists could be useful for destinations and business in positioning themselves, understanding the particular market at their locale, and assuring that their market’s needs are met.

For the medical tourism niche market group, the hemispheres can be divided as well but with the southern half “Generalists” identifying tourists as those seeking locations familiar to their home country and style of medicine, i.e. an individual from the United States would look for destinations such as New Zealand, The United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, etc. The northern hemisphere “immersionists” would be individuals seeking out exotic locations and/or treatments.

The next step in the process of the Three Dimensional Tourist Typology Model is to establish multiple destinations and activities that fall into the different categories of the model. This is both a strength and weakness

for the model, since there are destinations that are generally accepted as either a tourist trap or touristy and those accepted as secluded and isolated from the world, there are areas where the perception of the destination varies greatly both within and outside of the host nation. This is the challenge the model faces, how crowded is too crowded? Adventurous compared to what? At what point does something become familiar rather than novel?

Establishing an empirical analysis of the proposed typology would help to standardize the typology but even this undertaking has some challenges. Leisure is thought of very differently from culture to culture and this is the gap in tourism research today. The actual measures used in the scales on which the TDT is conceptualized were mostly developed in a ‘western’ context, and thus any empirical application of the TDT would need to ensure that the items used for measurement are culturally relevant.

The scales are also individually focused, as the individual response to what they want and feel while there is no accountability for the group decision process. While the typology does suggest certain tourists have a desire to be within a group it does not account for individual compromises while in a group. This limitation is most evident in family travel since the goal of the trip itself may just to be around each other and thus not all individual needs and desires may be met, but the trip is still enjoyable.

## Conclusion

The Three Dimensional Tourist Typology model provides a tourist typology based on individuals venturesomeness, interactiveness, and level of sensation seeking. No study to date has combined these dimensions. This study builds upon previous

psychographic typologies developed by combining the typology proposed by Jackson et al (2001) and the Sensation seeking dimension. By combining Jackson's two factor model with the Brief Sensation Seeking Scale the typology could be useful in helping to predict tourist destination choice. The TDT typology is most applicable to helping to theorize about and understand tourist behavior within a niche tourism context.

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