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THE TRAVEL CAREER LADDER

An Appraisal

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Abstract: This paper examines the state of the “travel career ladder” concept. It is argued that the research findings thought to support this concept are contradictory. In a sample of UK holidaymakers, it was found that while motives for taking vacations were consistent among all of the sample, those who had had a history of past tourism experience in a destination, or of similar types of holidays elsewhere, indicated a better match between wants and an ability to meet those desires. It seems that it is not a case of changing psychological needs resulting from past tourism experience as proposed by the “travel career ladder” model but rather a case of better meeting needs. **Keywords:** motivation, experience, satisfaction. © 1998 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Résumé: L'échelle des expériences du tourisme: une évaluation. Cet article examine le concept de l'échelle des expériences. On affirme que les conclusions des recherches à l'appui de ce concept sont contradictoires. D'après une enquête parmi des vacanciers du Royaume-Uni, on a trouvé que, bien que les motivations des vacances soient stables pour tout le sondage, ceux qui avaient déjà voyagé à une destination ou qui avaient eu ailleurs des vacances similaires ont indiqué une meilleure correspondance entre leurs désirs et la satisfaction de ces désirs. Ce n'est pas un cas, semble-t-il, de changer les besoins psychologiques selon les expériences du passé comme on le suggère avec le modèle de «l'échelle des expériences du tourisme» sinon un cas de mieux satisfaire aux besoins. **Mots-clés:** motivation, expérience, satisfaction. © 1998 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

The notion of a “travel career ladder” (TCL) has been much cited since Pearce fully described it in 1988 in his book, *The Ulysses Factor*. Indeed, it has even passed beyond the pages of academic journals to the reports of management consultants. For example, Brian Dermott and Associates, in a presentation to Tourism Council Australia, applied the model to different holiday destinations, arguing that for example Australia's Northern Territory meets the fulfilment motivation as “it excels . . . [it is] the ethos of Australia. This is the ultimate” (1997:1–2). Given this level of adoption by the commercial sector, it might now, a decade after Pearce introduced his theoretical scheme, be pertinent to re-examine its concepts, formulation, and context.

Essentially, the model is based upon Maslow's hierarchy of needs and conceptualizations of psychological maturation towards a goal of

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self-actualization, which may be interpreted as a state of psychological maturity or “good health”. From his writings and notes it is clear that, in the 50s, Maslow (1979) was very concerned about issues of psychological well-being and evil. Thus, the idea of self actualization excited him, not simply as a psychological concept, but also as a moral one. Indeed, he clearly states in the second edition of *Motivation and Personality* that this study

... was not planned as an ordinary research: it was not a social venture but a private one, motivated by my own curiosity and pointed toward the solution of various personal moral, ethical, and scientific problems (Maslow 1970: 149).

The context of Maslow’s model can be explained with reference to other humanistic psychologists and the time of his writing. American Jewry in the 50s faced an intellectual challenge in explaining why it was that ordinary people turned into Concentration Camp Guards. Indeed, many studies of authoritarianism of that period sought to understand why it happened and how others could behave likewise (Adorno 1969; Rokeach 1968). Maslow’s concept also partially equated with the theories of other psychologists like Rogers (1951) who suggested that psychological stress might arise under circumstances where role-fulfilment required a self-conceptualization that was incongruent with a more consistent, deeper, or ideal self-concept. Psychological ill-health resulted not simply from an individual seeking to reconcile role conflict, but also from the difficulties of having to sustain a homeostasis between that conceptualization of self required to fulfil a role and a “true” self.

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From Maslow, Pearce’s model specified that there are five different hierarchical steps affecting tourist behavior (Figure 1), which may be used to explain the TCL concept. Pearce (1996) describes his theory as distinguishing:

... between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation at the four lower levels of the system. The travel career ladder emphasizes all the tourists’ patterns or motives, rather than a single motive for traveling. The five motivational levels described in the scheme are: a concern with biological needs (including relaxation), safety and security needs (or levels of stimulation), relationship development and extension needs, special interest and self development needs, and fulfilment or deep involvement needs (formally defined as self actualization (1996:13).

The model postulates a career goal in tourism behavior, and as tourists become more experienced they increasingly seek satisfaction of higher needs (Pearce 1991).

As Kim (1994:75), following Pearce, observes:

Like a career at work, people may start at different levels and they are likely to change levels during their life cycle. The direction of the change within the TCL is variable, some individuals may “ascend” the ladder pre-

Inner Directed

Outer Directed

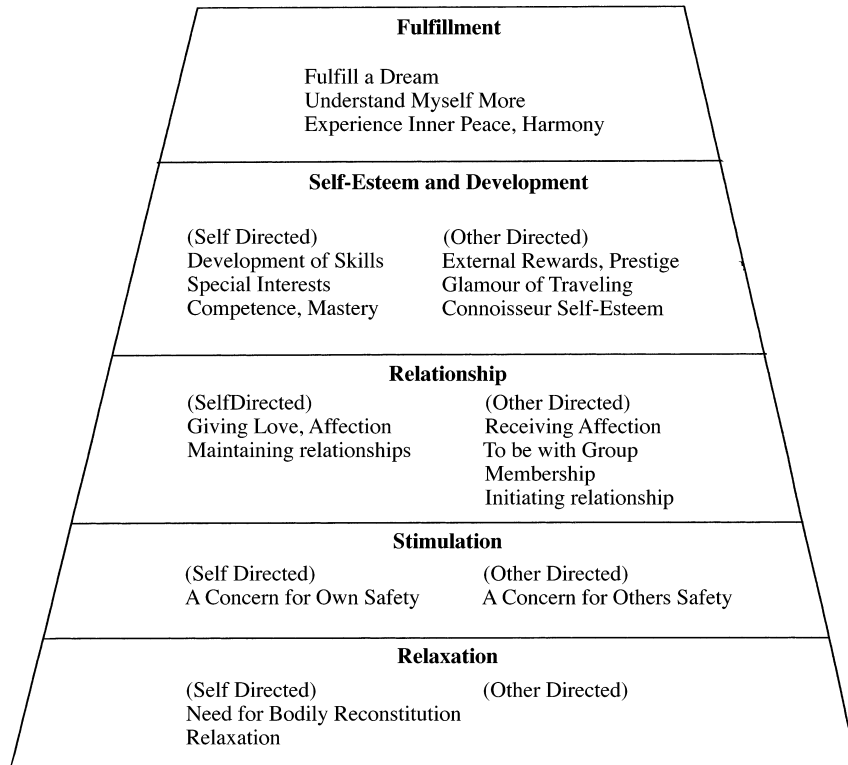


Figure 1. The Travel Career Ladder

dominantly on the left hand side of the system, while others may go through all the steps on both the left and right hand side of the model.

This illustrates the crux of the theoretical framework, namely that it is developmental and dynamic, for as people acquire touristic experiences (a career), so their motivations change. This formulation has an intuitive appeal. Those going abroad for the first time may prefer the security of a package tour, but in time will opt for independent ones as they become more experienced.

If self actualization is equated to a mature self concept, it can be observed that in the field of consumer marketing research a relationship between self concept and consumer behavior has been postulated for some time. For example, Schewe noted that "One's consumption behavior . . . is substantially intertwined with self concept" (1988:63). In stating this Schewe inherited a marketing research tradition described by commentators like Levy (1959), Gardner and Levy (1955), and Landon (1974). Particularly in the United States, in the 60s, a plethora of studies emerged matching self concept and self image with the image of consumer goods, notably cars (Birdwell 1968;

Evans 1959; Evans and Roberts 1963; Jacobson and Kossoff 1963). Essentially, the argument is predicated on the realization that purchasers have a certain view of themselves, and sustain that view by selecting and purchasing those items that are congruent with that self image. For example, Grubb and Stern (1971) found that owners of Mustangs and Volkswagens had different self concepts and perceptions associated with the two types of automobile. Naturally, this idea of consumption being motivated by products sustaining self image has not gone unchallenged on both technical and conceptual grounds. Various measures of self concept have been advanced, and found wanting. Burnkrant and Page (1982), for example, have argued that individuals each have different self concepts, and that the situational context of self concept and its expression is important. Braun and Wicklund (1989) have similarly advanced the notion that social reality is one of four factors that determines conspicuous consumption. What constituted self concept was also closely examined, with writers like Schlenker (1975) and Munson and Spivey (1981) reaching conclusions akin to those of Rogers, albeit from a positivist, quantitative rather than a psychohumanist tradition. Thus, Munson and Spivey concluded:

Theoretically, each person's self conception is a selective working compromise between an ideal image and the images forced upon him by his imperfect behavior in actual situations (1981:598).

Sirgy (1981) argued that self congruity alone was insufficient to explain purchase behaviors—there was also a need to consider functional congruity. Thus, Crompton (1979) argues that both ego and status enhancement are related motivations for holiday behavior. Yet, at the same time, other market researchers were already discussing the very issues that were to become an important part of the thinking of later writers like Urry (1991, 1995), Rojek (1993) and Shields (1991). For example, Holbrook and Hirschman argued that consumption was related to the “semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic aspects of products viewed as signs” (1980:1), thereby reiterating the earlier view of Duesenberry (1949) that the symbolic behavior of consumption may be more important than the tangible benefits derived from it.

It has been noted that Pearce's theory is based upon the humanistic psychology of Maslow. In passing, it may also be observed that Pearce and Moscardo (1985) recognize the work of Hughes (1937), Goffman (1961, 1963), and Becker (1963) as having an influence on the concept's development. However, Pearce was not the first theorist in the field of leisure studies to develop models so derived. Beard and Ragheb, for instance, co-authored a number of articles (Beard and Ragheb 1980, 1983; Ragheb and Beard 1982) which applied Maslow's principles to measures of leisure motivation and satisfaction. Furthermore, they successfully developed a leisure motivation scale—a psychometric scale of 33 items which has been subsequently used by other theorists in leisure and tourism studies in either its full or abbreviated form (Loundsbury and Franz 1990; Loundsbury and Hoopes 1988; Ryan and Glendon 1998; Sefton 1989). Other writers

have also, at least in part, utilized humanistic psychological concepts in explaining reasons for, and pleasures derived from, leisure (Tinsley and Tinsley 1986; Baldwin and Tinsley 1988).

Hence, within the context of consumer behavior theory, Pearce's conceptualization of the TCL concept is a continuation of a tradition which has asserted that consumption can be explained by motivations (i.e., it is purposeful), and by the maturation of personality in a drive towards self actualization. Alternatively stated, consumption of a given product, or experience, is influenced by the ways in which individuals conceive themselves. However, the whole point of Maslow's theorizing was that the self actualized person was qualitatively different from others, being:

relatively spontaneous in behavior and far more spontaneous than that in their inner life, thoughts, impulses, etc. Their behavior is marked by simplicity and naturalness, and by lack of artificiality or straining for effect... His unconventionality is not superficial but essential or internal (1970:157).

It can be argued that, like some of the authors cited above, Pearce has sought to supply a dynamic model designed to explain a context of changing taste and differing behavior while on holiday. Moreover, at least initially, Pearce also tried to make a link between present motivation, the purchase decision, and past experience (i.e., a career) within a specific developmental psychological theory. Additionally, Pearce provided an elaboration of Maslow's original theory by distinguishing between internal and external oriented drives, (Figure 1). Consequently, the theory is based on both humanistic psychology and consumer behavior modeling. However, as discussed later, if the stages towards self fulfilment in Maslow's terms are characterized by a movement towards internalized spontaneity, it has to be asked whether Pearce's questionnaires examine this dimension.

Research Findings and the Ladder Model

The development of Pearce's theory can, with hindsight be traced through his earlier work, either singularly (Pearce 1982), jointly (e.g., Moscardo and Pearce 1986; Pearce and Caltabiano 1983; Pearce and Moscardo 1985) or by through the contributions of others (Kim 1997; Ross 1994). Pearce and Caltabiano (1983) and Pearce and Moscardo (1985) note that a fivefold Maslow-based category of motivations could be discerned from respondents' replies. In addition, it was reported that the two most experienced groups of tourists showed higher scores in self actualization items than the less experienced ones. Other commentators have replicated the finding that, when asked what experiences caused satisfaction or dissatisfaction, the open-ended responses of holidaymakers could be classified by reference to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Furthermore, it has been shown that moments of satisfaction tend to relate to higher needs, while dissatisfaction often refers to physiological discomfort (Ryan 1997; Todd 1997). Additionally researchers from Pearce's James Cook University have sought to use various scales to measure movements along the TCL model in order to obtain differential ratings of the importance

of destination attributes or needs of tourists which seem to correlate with levels of touristic experience. However, it should not be thought that his concept is seen as a “catch all” explanation. For example, in a study of climbers of Ayers Rock, Fielding, Pearce and Hughes (1992) used a more context specific model of motivation that categorized tourists as being either “intrinsically” or “achievement” oriented, a related, but different approach.

Nonetheless, the concept has influenced other researchers. For example, Kim (1997), in his study of Korean visitors to Australia, concluded that: “It was shown that this model was used effectively to describe travel motivation and cross-cultural understanding of international tourists”. Among two conclusions reached by Kim are:

It is likely that Koreans are more motivated to visit Australia by self-directed factors (such as knowledge-seeking) than other directed factors (1994:81)... By using Pearce’s “Travel Career Ladder” concept, the present study examined travel motivations of potential Korean tourists... It was shown that this model was used effectively to describe travel motivation and cross-cultural understanding of international tourists (1997:16).

However, at this point it can be legitimately asked whether these findings provide support for the core concept of changing motivations over time. Neither in the published paper in 1997, nor in the original conference paper of 1994, does Kim actually relate the motives of the Korean visitors to Australia with past tourism experiences. Indeed, it could be argued that the study is but an application of a psychometric scale to motivations, and not a study of change over time. Yet Pearce himself seems to attach considerable weight to this study. Indeed, in 1996 he referred to it as “noteworthy”, and in particular mentioned the finding that: “. . . for the Korean outbound market . . . the cultural interest and self development items were favored more by younger, less experienced Korean travellers” (1996:11). This comment is of conceptual interest because the finding refutes a notion that such items are associated with higher levels of past tourism experience, and indeed Maslow’s very concept of self actualization. Again, to refer back to the originator of Pearce’s concept, Maslow wrote: “I had to conclude that self actualization of the sort I had found in my older subjects perhaps was not possible in our society for young, developing people” (1970:150). Furthermore, in his preface to the second edition of *Motivation and Personality*, Maslow (1970) specifically noted that self-actualization is not possible for the young.

Kim’s conclusions, as already pointed out, are derived from an analysis of a psychometric scale, which, when subjected to factor analysis, are said to reiterate the Pearce and Maslow dimensions of relaxation, stimulation, fulfilment, and self-esteem and development. A number of points can be made about this result. First, as might be expected, the dimensions are not too dissimilar from those identified by Beard and Ragheb (1983). Second, the total scale seems to consist of only 15 items, and the last two dimensions apparently contain but two items each. Given the nature and number of the items, the emergence of the reported principal components is not too unexpected. However, what is obvious from this study is that no correlations

with past tourism experience are reported and it appears from the published material that age is used as a proxy for it. Given the fact that most South Koreans have only been able to go overseas since about the mid-80s, it might be said that a number of complicating factors exist to muddy the conceptual waters. To the extent that past experience is not seemingly directly measured, a distinguishing feature of the Pearce TCL concept has been negated, and for all practical purposes the model has become another psychometric scale. It represents a very different approach from that of Maslow who wrote that “if we were to wait for conventionally reliable data we would have to wait forever” (1970:149). Or are there such reliable data?

To answer this question requires first a step back. A major contribution of Pearce’s concept to an understanding of tourist motivation is the notion that there exists a developmental, psychological motivation of tourists as a result of past tourism experiences, that this is discernible and leads to changing patterns of behavior over time. The theory thus differs from those suggested by other writers like Laing (1987) who argue that the model applies in the sense that holidaymakers seek to optimize the use of limited time, and thus, having learnt what types of holiday destinations will meet their needs, will in fact repeat holiday behaviors. For Laing the constraints of time lead to reiterated acts, not new ones. Nonetheless, Pearce’s model and research has not been without influence. For example, Ross describes the work of Pearce and Caltabiano as “a major contribution to tourism motivation research” (1994:29). Yet it remains pertinent to ask various as yet unanswered questions, including whether the original notion stands on firm empirical ground, and whether subsequent applications of the model successfully capture the developmental nature of tourist choice over time and in relation to past experience. Indeed, Maslow’s own work has not gone without question. For example Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert and Wanhill write that:

While a great deal of tourism demand theory has been built upon Maslow’s approach, it is not clear from his work why he selected five basic needs; why they are ranked as they are; how he could justify his model when he never carried out clinical observation or experiment; and why he never tried to expand the original set of motives (1993:21).

In 1988 Pearce argued that support existed in the leisure literature for his model by citing the study of skiers by Mills (1985). However, Mills was very careful in reporting the results, and stated:

The analysis revealed the existence of a second dimension which produces a “radex”, theoretical structure instead of a simple hierarchy. The two-dimensional radex corresponded to the prior defined mapping sentence. Admittedly, the portrayal of the radex structure in the resulting space diagram was *somewhat weak* due to the marginally significant coefficient of alienation...The smallest space diagram showed evidence of the self centered/non self centered distinction operating for safety needs as well as esteem needs. More than merely being an aspect of one type of need, results of this study indicated that the self centered/non self centered dichotomy constitutes a second dimension which modulates esteem and safety needs. [It is]...suggested this second dimension may also operate for self actu-

alization in the sphere of work . . . The content validity in terms of numbers of items and diversity within some of the operational measures in this study is *admittedly weak*. However, the operational measures are valid in other respects. (1985:197 emphasis added).

Thus, there are weaknesses within the results of this study, which are not reported by Pearce in 1988, but to which Kim refers in his conference paper of 1994. A second piece of evidence is provided by Pearce in a study of 488 visitors to Timbertown theme park in Australia (1988:81). On the basis of seven questions relating to different stages of the Maslow hierarchy, and cross tabulating results with the number of previous visits, Pearce argues that “repeat visitors show more interest in relationship and self-esteem levels” (1988:78). However, it would appear that this association is not at statistically significant levels. With reference to the satisfaction derived from the visit, the reported mean scores vary from 530–583 on a 6-point scale by level of need, and the only statistically significant finding would appear to be “Scheffé *post hoc* comparison indicates that the principal difference in the means lies between the self actualization mean and the family and friends [affiliation] mean” (1988:78).

More recent studies have sought to use the concept. One such paper is that by Kim, Pearce, Morrison and O’Leary (1996) which again examines the Korean outbound market. However, in this case there is no attempt to utilize a Maslowian measure of self-actualization, but rather the study “involved a secondary analysis of data collected by Market facts of Canada as part of the Pleasure Travel Markets Survey . . .” (1996:104). Again there is reference to the “ladder model”, but again the data belie the theory. The authors note that:

For the most part, motives for traveling overseas seemed to be similar for both groups (based on travel experience), except for the “Self Development” motivation. The results indicated that significant differences existed for the “Self-development” level. The less experienced group rated the “Self-development” level more important than the experienced group (1996:107).

Subsequent analysis then showed that the older group of tourists had more overseas experience than the younger respondents. Thus, the older and more experienced seemed to value the “self actualization” type of motivations less than younger respondents. The authors then utilized a multidimensional analysis based on destinations (which are very widely defined like Europe, Asia, and USA) to support the ladder concept. The final conclusion seemed to this author to be contradictory. For example, “Initially, it was expected that tourists might ascend the travel career ladder as they become older and more experienced. However, this was not the case in this study” (Kim, Pearce, Morrison and O’Leary (1996:112). But the next paragraph notes that “In broad terms the results of this study are supportive of the TCL concept”. If a key distinguishing feature of the model is a correlation between travel experience and higher scores on self actualization needs, can this latter conclusion be supported? Additionally, the authors seek to explain away the unlooked for result by, earlier in the

article, referring to social change in Korea as a complicating factor. It thus seems odd to state that results confirm the ladder model.

Another question also arises when considering the original Timbertown study. There the model is said to visualize greater levels of satisfaction for those motivated by self-actualization needs. But why might this be? From the viewpoint of gap analysis (Mansfeld 1995; Parasurman, Zeithaml and Berry 1988) satisfaction, it can be argued, is a function of the congruence of need and perceived experience—that is a need met by an appropriate experience generates satisfaction. Yet, this explanation too may be simplistic. Ryan (1991) sought a linkage between expectation and satisfaction, and stressed the adaptive ability of the tourist:

The interpretation of the travel experience and the nature of the resort area with the personality generates both perceptions of gaps between the resort zone and expectations, and governs the nature of interactions with others, but then certain social and psychological skills also come into play in the sense of being able to perceive authenticity, suspend disbelief when required, and conduct positive sets of relationships. These attributes help shape travel and activity patterns which permit the fulfilment of the original or amended expectations and hence create satisfaction (1991:47–49).

Nevertheless, the Timbertown study represents a significant formulation of the TCL concept in that it is being argued that, not only do the motivations of tourists change as a result of experiences, but the more experienced, and self actualized, obtain higher levels of satisfaction. This relationship occurs because, as Pearce stated “. . . the career level visitors who take less of an interest in the authenticity of the setting and who rate it less positively are the least satisfied of visitors” (1988:81). It is necessary to note that within his book, *The Ulysses Factor*, he is exercised by the importance of authenticity in the experience. The text in his book reflects the earlier analysis of Pearce and Moscardo (1985) in which the relationship between career concept and the search for authenticity was researched with two sample. One was of 189 respondents drawn from two countries, while the second was of 160 Australians. With reference to the first, “weak support for the link between travel careers and authenticity” (Pearce and Moscardo 1985:164) was reported. In the second analysis, it is concluded that “the findings for the variables of satisfaction and independence represent a consistent pattern of relationships linking people at different career levels and their reactions to environments differing in authenticity” (Pearce and Moscardo 1985:172). However, the results are based on a 4 by 9 table, and given the sample size of 160 it is unclear how the sample is distributed over the table. The linkage between authenticity and self-actualization is based on a notion that the self-actualized seek the authentic and thus are disappointed by its absence. Likewise, those not so interested are not satisfied by its presence. This seems to imply a view that the “authentic” is other than the “pseudo-event” of Boorstin (1961), but it might be argued that Maslow’s self-actualized person possesses a sense of spontaneity and fun, and thus may qualitatively enjoy the discord between the reality and pretense of many attractions. There

is little in Maslow's writings to lead to an automatic assumption that authenticity need solely be concerned with accuracy—there is an authenticity in enjoying a social occasion within a pretend environment. The linkages among self-actualization, satisfaction, and authenticity are far from simple, and arguably represent a second stage conceptualization derived from a first stage of a changing relationship between motivation and experience. As the debate on gap models has demonstrated, relationships among motivation, perception, and expectation are far from clear (Taylor 1997; Taylor and Baker 1994).

A Case Study

The nature of this complexity and other problems associated with the ladder model can be illustrated from data derived from a UK study of holidaymakers living in the East Midlands. The sample size was 997 derived from a geo-demographic database maintained by the British market research company, CNN Limited. This database covers all 21.5 million addresses in the United Kingdom, and the sample was constructed based on known holiday-taking behaviors. Two measures of satisfaction were adopted. The first, which is not reported here, was based on a gap analysis between different motivations and an assessment of whether those needs had been met. The second measure of satisfaction, as in this paper, was based on questionnaires used by British tour operators. It asked tourists, by the end of their holiday, to what extent they were satisfied with their accommodation and their holiday area; if they really enjoyed the holiday; whether they believed it was value for money; and whether they would recommend this holiday to close friends who share their interests. On a seven-point Likert type seven represented the most positive value. The items were used singly and in various combinations, but here all items were simply summed, and then divided by five to produce scores on a seven-point scale. This created a scale consistent with that used to measure motivations. Motivations were assessed by use of the Beard and Ragheb leisure motivation scale (1983). As noted, this too is based on Maslow's theory and consists of four dimensions—intellectual, social, mastery-competence, and relaxation needs. The Beard and Ragheb scale also has the advantage of being replicated in other studies (Loundsbury and Franz 1990; Loundsbury and Hoopes 1988; Sefton 1989). For this study, the abbreviated version was used as the questionnaire required respondents to provide information on holiday behaviors, past activities, and sociodemographic information as well as completing motivational and satisfaction scales (Ryan and Glendon 1998). An important check upon the data was also provided by eliciting open-ended responses to questions (discussed later). The questionnaire used an importance-evaluation framework (Vaske, Beaman, Stanley and Grenier 1996). This approach meant that a measure existed of the degree to which respondents had felt able to fulfil their needs, as well as generating a gap analysis between importance and evaluation which could also be analyzed. As previously noted, in addition the questionnaire included items which asked how many

times the holidaymakers had previously visited a destination, and also how often they had previously taken that type of holiday—with type being defined by the respondents answering questions about accommodation used, whether it was a package, and the party composition. Additionally they were asked how frequently they had traveled on holiday in the last 10 years.

Consideration of Pearce's TCL model leads to the formulation of two propositions which are examined by the results shown in Tables 1 and 2. There are two propositions: as tourists become more experienced, levels of satisfaction are likely to increase; and more experienced holidaymakers are likely to score higher on measures of

Table 1. Mean Satisfaction Scores and Standard Deviation by Experience

Question	Mean Satisfaction	Standard Deviation	Number of cases
<i>Number of Times a Similar Type of Holiday has been Taken:</i>			
Never	5.84	1.05	198
1–2 times	5.83	0.92	243
3–5 times	5.87	0.83	280
6 or more	5.90	0.86	386
	$F = 0.29$	$df = 3$	$P = 0.83$
<i>Number of Past Visits to the Destination:</i>			
Never	5.71	0.98	472
1–2 times	5.87	0.87	294
3–5 times	6.08	0.75	164
6 or more	6.13	0.74	156
	$F = 12.14$	$df = 3$	$P < 0.001$

Table 2. The Relationship between Experience and Intellectual Motivation

Question	Mean Intellectual Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Cases
<i>Number of Times a Similar Type of Holiday has been Taken:</i>			
Never	3.73	1.17	198
1–2 times	3.81	1.76	243
3–5 times	3.61	1.13	280
6 or more	3.47	1.23	386
	$F = 2.85$	$df = 3$	$P < 0.05$
<i>Number of Past Visits to the Destination:</i>			
Never	3.63	1.50	472
1–2 times	3.67	1.20	294
3–5 times	3.46	1.21	164
6 or more	3.69	1.21	156
	$F = 0.81$	$df = 3$	$P = 0.49$

intellectual motivation than less experienced tourists. These statements also imply certain second-tier propositions. For example, it may be argued that not all “learner” tourists will have unsatisfactory holiday experiences, if only because some, in spite of their inexperience, will be fortunate in finding holiday locations with attributes that match their needs. Thus, it may be anticipated that the standard deviation of satisfaction scores will be higher among the inexperienced than among the more experienced tourists.

In Tables 1 and 3, as already noted, the satisfaction score shown is an aggregate of the scores on the items listed above, and divided by 5 to reproduce a seven point scale. When the individual measures were used either singly or in other combinations, little significant difference seemed to result. Experience in Table 1 is measured in two ways: the number of times a similar type of holiday has been taken and the number of past visits to a destination. This latter measure was used because Pearce used the same measure in his study of Timbertown respondents. The former was used because in the UK based package holiday industry, it is often observed that Mediterranean locations are very similar. Therefore, a measure of experience based solely on location may not be appropriate. Table 1 generally supports the first contention. When experience is based upon the past number of such types of holidays, the level of satisfaction remains the same ($F = 0.288$, $P = 0.834$), but the standard deviation is, as predicted, higher for the least experienced. However, when assessing experience on the basis of previous visits to the same destination, the standard deviation for satisfaction scores is higher for the least experienced and the differences in total satisfaction are significant ($F = 12.14$, $df = 3$,

Table 3. The Relationship between Satisfaction and Ability to Meet Intellectual Needs

Question	Mean Score of “Met” Intellectual Needs	Standard Deviation	Number of Cases
<i>Number of Times a Similar Type of Holiday has been Taken:</i>			
Never	3.22	1.30	198
1–2 times	3.43	1.46	243
3–5 times	3.57	1.38	280
6 or more	3.69	1.40	386
	$F = 3.43$	$df = 3$	$P < 0.05$
<i>Number of past visits to the Destination:</i>			
Never	2.50	1.03	472
1–2 times	3.91	1.29	294
3–5 times	4.04	1.21	164
6 or more	4.36	1.26	156
	$F = 102.16$	$df = 3$	$P < 0.001$

$P < 0.001$). Indeed, the Scheffé test indicates that the distinction between the most and least experienced is significant at $P < 0.05$. Thus there exists some evidence for Pearce's theory, albeit using different measures of satisfaction.

Table 2 shows the results when the scores from the intellectual components of the Holiday Motivation Scale are used. Two sets of scores are again given. The first relating to the type of holiday, and the second to the number of past visits to a destination where the last holiday was taken. This time the mean score given refers to the items that comprise the measure of intellectual need on the Beard and Ragheb Leisure Motivation Scale. In this instance there is little evidence to support Pearce's concept. Based on past visits to the same destination, there is no increase in the intellectual motivation for travel ($F = 0.81, P = 0.49$), and in the case of an experience of past, similar types of holidays, there is even a significant reduction in the importance of the intellectual need as a motivation for the holiday for the first three groupings of experience. A one-way ANOVA showed $F = 2.85, df = 3, P < 0.05$.

The next step was to examine the relationship between tourism experience and an ability to satisfy the intellectual needs that motivated the holiday. The results are shown in Table 3, which shows that past experience was important in enabling people to meet their needs. Indeed the differences are significant, as shown in Table 4, and the Scheffé test revealed intergroup differences significant at $P < 0.05$. The results can be summarized as showing that, on the whole, the intellectual motivations for holidaying are generally consistent, but that holidaymakers, through experience, get better at meeting those needs. It leads to the question whether Pearce's work at Timbertown, where it is reported that the more experienced frequent tourist has higher intellectual needs, has not actually measured the need as such, but simply the better ability to meet the need. It is to be noted that Pearce's questionnaire did not adopt a multi-attribute format where a distinction was made between importance and perception, but rather simply had, like Kim's work in 1994, a "one pass" on the items.

Another aspect of the ladder concept is that it implies that more experienced tourists will value more highly the intellectual needs

Table 4. The Importance of Past Experience

Question	Mean Score of Importance of Experience in Selecting the Type of Holiday	Number of Cases
<i>Number of Times a Similar Type of holiday has been Taken:</i>		
Never before	1.96	198
1-2 times	4.40	243
3-5 times	5.31	280
6 or more times	5.68	386
Overall average	4.64	
	$F = 179.47$	$P < 0.001$

when compared with the other needs that are located lower on the hierarchy, and it might be argued that the less experienced might score higher on such “lower” needs through inexperience. It has been noted that the Beard and Ragheb scale has a specific social needs dimension. For the UK sample the mean social motivation score was 3.50, compared to the intellectual motivation mean score of 3.65 ($P < 0.05$). However, while this apparently provides some support for Pearce’s position, closer examination showed that the data were unclear. For example, the statement “build friendships with others” proved to be ambiguous when responses to open-ended questions were examined. These responses suggest that the item can be interpreted in at least three ways. First, there was some evidence that younger people interpreted this as building friendships with new acquaintances met while on holiday. Second, others seem to regard the question as meaning sustaining relationships with existing friends. Cross-checking data with age and family status sociodemographic data showed that age was an important variable with reference to “having a good time with friends”. A close analysis showed that if age was held constant and the variables of numbers of past holidays of the same type examined, then this latter variable did not impact upon scores of social need. Third, there was some, but weak evidence, that couples would be interpreting “build friendships with others” as meaning relationships with a partner. The open-ended questions certainly showed couples appreciating the time that was available for sharing, and evidence existed for Crompton’s view that one motivation for holidays was family bonding (Crompton 1979). However, when finally social needs were assessed simply against past experience as measured by past holidays of a given type or numbers of past visits to a destination, no statistically significant relationship emerged. Only in one instance did it seem that past experience was positively correlated with social needs, and that was in the case of those using time-share accommodation.

What the study does support is Pearce’s contention that past experience is important to tourists in making decisions about holiday purchases. Respondents were asked what would influence their decisions as to future holiday choices. These included the role of a partner, price, school holiday periods and the presence of children, available holiday time, and similar variables. Again a seven-point Likert type was selected and “past experience of the type of holiday” had a mean score of 5.13, second only to “the influence of a spouse/partner”. Another similar variable, “had been there before” scored 4.06. It can then be contended that as a holidaymaker becomes more experienced, then a greater value is given to that experience as a factor influencing future vacation choice. Therefore, the importance of past experience should be positively correlated with age. This indeed proved to be the case. For those under the age of 24, the assessment of past experience as a factor in determining holiday choice was 4.2 ($n = 50$), while for those over 65 the score was 5.5 ($n = 79$). For intervening age groups the scores ranged from 4.6–5.3. Differences between the oldest and youngest age groups were significant at $P < 0.05$.

It can also be argued that of greater importance than age is the

number of times someone has been on a holiday of a given type, because direct exposure should inform choice more than general experiences accumulated over time. Analysis of variance lent weight to this proposition as indicated in Table 4. Those who had been on a similar type of holiday more than 3 times assessed the importance of past experience on holiday choice differently from those who had been on only 1 or 2 occasions at $P < 0.05$. From the available data, it can be argued that there is a diminishing rate of satisfaction derived from frequenting the same destination. In the case of having never visited the destination, approximately twice as many were highly satisfied as dissatisfied, whereas the ratio is reversed for those who had paid six or more visits to the same destination. Indeed, it seems that high levels of satisfaction can be maintained until approximately five visits. Experience appears to be an asset which helps to generate satisfaction to a certain point, after which it ceases to help. This implies that the learning process comprises two components: an ability to learn so as to develop more satisfactory holiday experiences and an ability to learn to identify when further, additional visits will cease to generate satisfaction, perhaps because a destination follows Butler's (1970) destination life cycle.

Reconsidering the Ladder Concept

However, before it is concluded that the evidence relating to Pearce's TCL concept is, at best, ambiguous, a number of caveats have to be noted. First, the questionnaire used in this case study, while exploiting similar prompt motivation items derived from Maslovian theory, does not use exactly the same items as used by Pearce, Kim or other researchers dealing with this topic. On the other hand, as already noted, Beard and Ragheb's scale as a fuller one has been replicated in a number of studies and been found to be fairly consistent over a period of time. Indeed, this very consistency of motivation that is discussed by Loundsbury and Hoopes (1988) also implicitly questions the developmental theory described by Pearce. If needs are so constant, where is the evidence that people are progressing on a "ladder" of experience. One problem in both this study and many of those that adopt Pearce's ladder concept is, as Pearce and Caltabiano (1983) noted, that individuals are not being questioned over time. It simply cannot be sustained that length of years is really a suitable proxy for experience, for individuals learn at different rates.

Second, there is a question at the heart of the Maslow hierarchical concept. He argues that people ascend towards self actualization as lower needs become fulfilled. Yet, many do not become "self-actualized". Why is this the case? It is notable that the VALS2 index, which is also based upon Maslow's hierarchy, shows that very few Americans apparently reach the psychologically mature state that is implied by the highest stage of the sequence (named Actualizers-upscale independent intellectuals). Yet, as arguably in Maslow's definition of the self actualized person (1970:157), neither high income nor exceptionally high intellect are precursors of a psychologically

integrated, healthy personality. Third, the data used in the case study were derived from an importance-evaluation questionnaire. While this had the advantage of distinguishing between importance of motive and the extent to which perceived needs are met, such an approach is not without problems. Vaske et al (1996) note that such models over simplify the relationships between the variables and cannot be used to predict outcomes should management action change, for example, a destination attribute in response to importance rankings. Sirakaya, McLellan and Ulysal (1996) found that respondents tend to under-emphasize the importance given to highly important factors, and over-emphasize the importance claimed for low-importance factors. This would imply that the relationship discussed above between satisfaction, past experience, and need achievement may be understated by the data.

It is apparent that in spite of a growing acceptance of the TCL concept by (at least in Australia) management consultants as well as the growing number of references in the tourism literature (Pearce 1995), there remain at least six questions about the concept. First, while based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, it is philosophically not congruent with Maslow's approach. Maslow makes it clear that he was not developing a psychometric scale, that he was concerned with moral issues, and that not everyone became "self actualized". Pearce on the other hand seeks evidence from different psychometric measures. Thus, second, the definitive listing of items to be used for measuring this development process to self actualization by tourists is not identified? As noted, some of the evidence is based upon scales designed for other purposes. Researchers such as Hampden (1971), in other fields have been able to develop scales based on Maslow's work. Notably, in leisure, that of Beard and Ragheb, and theirs have been replicated by other researchers. Researchers, have also developed Maslovian measures of personality. Little reference is made to these studies in the literature dealing with the tourism ladder concept.

A third issue that perhaps needs closer examination is the relationship between that research which has used open-ended responses (e.g., Pearce and Caltabiano 1983; Ryan 1997; Todd 1997) and the data derived from structured questionnaires. Indeed, there are several sub-issues involved. It appears that the classification of motivation derived from the open-ended responses have emerged from frequency counts of categories imposed upon the data by the researcher. This is contrary to a phenomenographic view (see Marton 1986, 1994) in which the categories emerge from the respondent, and which, from this perspective, is the more legitimate research practice. Kim (1994:77) states that his data were derived from "nineteen focus groups consisting of open ended questions" but goes on to note that the "travel motivation questions asked were based on Pearce's TCL model to elicit a variety of simultaneously occurring motives or needs" (1994:77), and apparently these 15 motivation statements were used for factor analysis. The relationship between the respondents' spoken comments data and the resultant items used in psychometric scales appears to be the result of classifications being imposed upon qualitative data.

A fourth issue is that the literature also fails to mention past consumer behavior research. As shown above, this has considered, over several years, relationships among purchase behavior, self concept, and formulations of self concept, and has generally found linkages between self concept and expected purchasing, at best, problematic. It may be argued that holidays are qualitatively different types of purchases from those considered in the marketing literature, but it is contended that the consumer behavior literature is of value, at least at a conceptual level, in teasing out relationships among self concept, attitude, and purchase decisions. Fifth, as Pearce and his colleagues show, the results of their own research have not supported the concept of development motivation. As to the last issue, it may be contended, as shown in the empirical study cited above, that there may be a confusion arising from not distinguishing between an expression of needs and the ability to satisfy those needs.

On the other hand, how strict is Pearce in the concept of a developmental theory? In 1993 he wrote:

Like a career at work, people may start at different levels, they are likely to change levels during their life cycle and can be prevented from moving by money, health and other people. They may also retire from their travel career or not take holidays at all and therefore not be part of the system (1993:126).

Pearce here evokes his call for a flexible theory which is multimotivational but rejects simple fixed trait approaches. His concept is presented as a "dynamic" model, which is different from saying that it is solely a developmental construct. However, as a dynamic model it does not answer important questions. What are the reasons why tourists move backwards and forwards on his career ladder? Indeed it seems that the ladder is not used for ascending alone, but tourists jump from somewhere onto various rungs, and advance up and down the ladder. It is not clear whether there are other rungs not considered on this ladder or whether there are indeed other ladders. The study on the appeal of theme park presented by Pearce (1993:126) seems to show the prevalence of life stage as a determining variable as to which motivation has precedence for use of the theme park. For example, families stress relationship values, and 13–16 year-olds emphasize stimulation motives, especially for rides and thrills. Hence traditional marketing life-stage theory as demonstrated by Bojanic (1991) and Lawson (1991) may be seen as alternative ladders, not to mention Oppermann's (1995) "travel horizon" proposition whereby distance is a factor in tourism motivations.

A central question concerns purpose of the model. While it implies an upward movement on the ladder over time, it cannot be said to be a predictive theory. Pearce (1993) himself discusses this issue when he states that for predictive theories issues arise as to precision and reliability. He notes, for *post-hoc* accounts of behavior "an alarming tendency to be able to bend any theoretical perspective to fit the observed outcome" (1993:119) and argues for a broad ranging *post-hoc* account of tourism motivation derived from summarizing specific instances with reference to a generalized value orientation. This is

arguably what Pearce provides with the ladder model. Unfortunately it is neither predictive nor well grounded if it is confusing abilities to achieve desired motives with the actual motivations themselves. Walle (1997) argues much tourism research has been shallow and sterile, perhaps because of an over-dependence on an etic-positivist tradition. For Walle the “emic fool” derives insight by transcending tradition and embracing the subjective. From this perspective, Pearce’s adoption of Maslow’s insights is valid as the original Pearce and Caltabiano (1983) work demonstrates. The subsequent support for a ladder model utilizing psychometric measures may be interpreted as a wish to obtain quantitative support for what is an emic approach, and perhaps therein lies the problem. Perhaps this is systematic of what Tribe (1997) defines as the indiscipline of tourism as not just one, but two fields of study—business and non-business oriented studies.

CONCLUSION

To debate the statistical veracity of Pearce’s “travel career ladder” theory may be the equivalent to the medieval argument of “how many angels dance on the point of a pin” if the linkages among tourism motivation, purchase decisions, measures of self concept, holiday satisfaction, changing needs while on holiday, adaptive holiday behaviors, suboptimal decisions due to constrained choice, and may other determining, intervening, and moderating variables are taken into account. Certainly there are both empirical and nonempirical reasons for believing that the description provided by Pearce’s TCL concept is simplistic (which is not the same as saying it is a poor model). For example, Todd (1997), using canonical correlation analysis found but weak relationships between Hoelter’s (1985) measure of self concept, clusters of holidaymakers based on desired holiday destination attributes, and a classification of their needs based on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. From the deconstructionist viewpoint, Urry (1991, 1995), Rojek (1993), and Shields (1991) advance a view of the tourist gaze as being shaped by not only social forces but contradictory whims. Gyte (1989) in his study of UK holidaymakers in Mallorca, notes how they specifically designate vacations and associated activities within the same holiday as meeting changing needs. The evidence emerging from studies of the links between health and tourist behavior also reveal that tourists will engage in risky if not foolish behavior (Clift and Page 1996). Hence perhaps it is necessary to consider Crompton’s (1979) advice that to expect motivation to account for a large variance in tourist behavior is probably asking to much, since there may be other inter-related forces operating.

In the final analysis, where does that leave Pearce’s concept? It is an elegant and appealing formulation based on a humanistic interpretation of behavior. This is optimistic in its belief that humans have a capability to achieve a congruent, positive psychological integrity. Pearce is also both positive and optimistic in that he advances a notion that holiday experiences enable people to psychologically mature. To state that the evidence does not support this is perhaps besides the point and not a criticism of a theory, but an indictment of

the nature of holidaymakers. Perhaps, as MacCannell (1996) noted, at best, tourism can only serve as a hospital for societal ills.

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