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The types of inbound travellers

What are the different styles of inbound travel?

What are the differences between a short and long haul traveller?

What are the most common travel styles?

What are the key purposes of travel?

What are the different types of customer segment?

What are the different styles of inbound travel?

A tourist's travel style will influence the choice of tours and activities, styles of accommodation, transport and where and how they make their travel purchases. These choices will be influenced by a number of factors, including the tourist's age, attitudes, budget, cultural background and previous travel experience.

The maturity of the outbound market from the tourist's home country will also influence their preferred style of travel. If you understand the different styles of travel, match and market your product accordingly, you will be on the right path to securing bookings from that type of traveller. For example, a retired American couple will have very different requirements from a French student, or a family from the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

What are the differences between a short and long haul traveller?

Tourist perceptions are influenced by their knowledge of the destination, the distance they need to travel to the destination, media coverage, advertising, the available holiday time and whether it is a first or repeat visit.

In short haul markets, such as Germany, England is a highly achievable destination. Short haul visitors often travel to England more than once and purchase shorter, more frequent trips. They then become more familiar with the destination and gain the confidence to plan their own trips, travel in a less structured way, more independently and beyond the gateways.

In long haul markets such as those in the Asia Pacific region, England is seen as a destination that requires a large commitment of both time and money, and thus may be part of a longer European trip. While the majority of visits to England in 2016 did not include a visit to another country in their travel itinerary, 12% did – or 3.2 million visits.

“Having a clear picture of our customer segments means that we understand not only the booking and travel habits of our customers, but also their motivations. With travel and tourism now being as much about the experience as it is about other influencing factors, knowing our customer segments, what they are looking for from us, and from their trip in general, gives us invaluable insight.”

Bryan Dijk, European Acquisition Controller, P&O

What are the most common travel styles?

Travel styles are constantly evolving and definitions will vary from market to market, however the table below summarises the key styles of which you need to be aware.

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Fully independent travellers (FIT)

- Like the freedom of planning their own arrangements
- Arrange some core holiday components prior to arrival
- Organise the bulk of their itinerary independently without the assistance of a group tour, pre-arranged schedule or other group setting
- Rely heavily on word of mouth, the internet and social media when planning their trip

Partially packaged travellers

- Pre-book “skeleton package” of airfares, transfers and accommodation prior to arrival
- Search for competitive rates
- Optional themed extras such as car hire and tours are offered at the point of sale to appeal to different segments

Group inclusive tour *or* travellers (GIT)

- Pre-purchase the bulk of their holiday before leaving home via distributors
- Prefer structured itineraries
- Have highly organised and pre-booked tour arrangements
- Use distributor’s preferred products
- Common in less mature markets and with certain segments such as educational groups



What are the key purposes of travel?

The style of travel often depends on the purpose of travel. Some of the more specific reasons for travel are outlined below:

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Business travellers

- Include delegates of a large conference or an individual on a business trip
- Often include a component of leisure travel during their visit such as pre and post conference touring
- Include delegates participating in an incentive tour – a specialised business segment which rewards performance with travel experiences
- Offer high yield as the per head spend is often very high

Visiting friends and relatives

- Cite friends and relatives as the primary reason for travel
- Often travel beyond the family base to other destinations
- Likely to stay with friends and relatives as part of their stay
- Rely on the recommendations and advice of their England-based friends and relatives when planning their trip

Study

- Includes short course participants, long term university students, school excursions and exchanges
- Potential for year round visits – less constrained by holiday periods
- More likely to travel off the beaten track, and stay for longer (often more than 21 days)
- High propensity to engage in a variety of activities (e.g. education, adventure, work)

Holiday

- Leisure travellers
- Will be looking to purchase travel, accommodation and activities
- Includes sub-segments such as special interest, and luxury



What are the different types of customer segment?

Beyond the style of travel and reason for travel, it is important to identify the different types of customers. Increasingly this is done based on attitude and experiences.

Why are experiences so important?

Experiences are increasingly important to international travellers, as they are what compels and motivates people to travel from market to market. When travellers start planning a trip, they will generally select a destination that can provide the experiences that they are looking for.

Therefore, always consider what 'experience' your product is offering and focus on this in your target marketing.



VisitBritain/VisitEngland’s global customer segments

VisitBritain/VisitEngland has identified 5 global segments representing the best prospect customers for travel to the UK. These segments have been built around a number of key attitudes and age is then used to further classify each segment.

Key attitudes used to build and differentiate our segments include:	
Image	“I care about the image I portray to others (and opposite)”
Challenge & change	“I always seek out new experiences (and opposite)”
Busy vs quiet	“I’m more of a city person (and opposite)”
New Discoveries	“when I travel abroad, I like to get off the beaten track (and opposite)”
Pace	“I prefer holidays full of action and excitement (and opposite)”
Luxury	“when I travel, I enjoy exclusive or luxury experiences that others might find unaffordable (and opposite)”

Whilst our key customer segments may change over time, they allow us to identify our target markets, and how best to reach them.

BUZZSEEKERS	38%		Younger, 64% aged 18-34 Free spirited and spontaneous, they like to take holidays full of action & excitement
EXPLORERS	23%		Older, 58% aged 55+ Content to enjoy holidays at a more relaxed pace. Nature lovers, enjoy the outdoors as well as must-see sites and enjoy embracing local culture
ADVENTURERS	16%		Older, 67% aged 45+ Enjoy travelling off the beaten track, spending time outdoors in nature and seeking out new experiences
SIGHTSEERS	12%		Older, 57% aged 55+ Like to stay within comfort zone, prefer cities to countryside and seek sensible, well-planned trips
CULTURE BUFFS	12%		Average age 37 years Image and brand conscious, travelling often is a status symbol and they like well-known and safe destinations

It is important to note that the exact characteristics and preferences of each segment are nuanced from market to market. For example, a European buzzseeker will behave differently to an American buzzseeker.



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