Norwegian Cruise Line

Current Guest Experience Journey Map

October 2020

THE ARCHETYPES

CULTIVATORS
Cruise to be with people: friends, family and the shipboard community. They seek connection, quality time and learning from others.

BOOKING CHECKLIST
- Dates
- Budget
- Variety of activities
- All inclusive
- Culture of cruise (Party, Family Fun, Relax)

PIONEERS
Cruise for the destinations. They seek adventure, local experiences, culture and education.

BOOKING CHECKLIST
- Time spent at ports (overnights preferred)
- Ports of call
- Fewer days at sea
- Culture of cruise (child-free)

SEAFARERS
When they consider a vacation, they start with the idea of a cruise. They love the magic of the ocean, and truly feel at home on a ship.

BOOKING CHECKLIST
- All inclusive
- 2+ days at sea
- Ship amenities
- Room with a view
- Culture of cruise (kid-friendly)

Pain point

Signature moment

PRE-CRUISE

CONSIDERATION & BOOKING

When guests consider a cruise, the primary variables are dates, cost, ports of departure, and ports of call. Beyond these however, most guests do a significant amount of research before booking, using both digital and analog tools.

Cultivators look for optimal ways to enjoy group travel. They require a wide range of activities and accommodations on and off the ship in order to fulfill the disparate desires of their group.

Pioneers start with the desire to explore a particular place or group of places. They cruise to see multiple destinations in one trip and for the convenience of unpacking only once.

When they have an opportunity to take a holiday, **Seafarers** start with the idea of a cruise. Decisions around ports and cruise lines come after.

ASK AROUND

Cultivators

Many Cultivators consult with friends, family and other members of their community to determine which cruise line best aligns with their group's goals and values.

It takes effort for **Cultivators** to determine the culture and vibe of the cruise they may book. For inexperienced cruisers who don't think to do that kind of research, the entire cruise can be ruined if it doesn't align with their values.

"All people cared about on the ship was drinking."

CRUISE LINE MATERIALS

Pioneers

Pioneers are less likely to choose popular, "commercial" cruising destinations.

"We found the Caribbean pretty run-of-the-mill."

SOCIAL PLATFORMS

Pioneers

The **Pioneers** are expert travel researchers. They tend to look up other travelers' stories to determine which cruise to take, using non-traditional sources like YouTube, hashtag searches, Yelp reviews and travel blogs.

MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMS
(COSTCO, CASINOS, ETC)

TRAVEL ADVISORS

A number of people take advantage of booking via third-party services. In some cases, this causes confusion around trip-planning specifics, and consolidating total itinerary.

TRIP PREPARATION

For most, planning is integral: a well-planned cruise is a good cruise! Plus, across the board, the vast majority of guests truly enjoy planning; many think of it as the start of their holiday.

Cultivators are natural planners. "Thorough planning helps me relax. There's less to worry about when you get onboard so you can kick your feet up!"

Pioneers research and plan the ports of call extensively. They often extend their trip by further exploring the place of embarkation before or after the cruise.

Seafarers tend to spend less time preparing for a cruise and the ports, preferring to rely on the ship's food, amenities and entertainment to guarantee a good time.

PRE BOOKING EXCURSIONS

Pioneers

Pioneers spend a lot of time researching excursions before the trip. They value local, immersive experiences.

They are more likely to book non-cruise affiliated excursions, for they find the ones offered by the cruise line to be overpriced, crowded and often overly commercial.

"Sometimes the cost is ridiculous."

TRIP EXTRAS & PACKAGES

Guests are sometimes confused about what is and is not included in their reservation. "I need clarification on what is included and not included in my package."

Seafarers **Cultivators**

Seafarers and **Cultivators** are more likely to purchase extras and packages up front in order to take advantage of everything the cruise has to offer.

Pioneers

Pioneers are less likely to pay for the drink package, not prioritizing time on the ship as much.

SHOPPING & PACKING

Many guests purchase clothes and other items, like snorkel gear and an underwater camera, to bring with them on their trip.

"I love to get new outfits for the trip. My first day outfit always includes a floppy hat and sunglasses."

PRE-BOOK RESTAURANTS

Many guests do not know they need to reserve restaurants ahead of time.

GATHER, TRACK AND ORGANIZE ITINERARY

Many older cruisers are actually inclined to use technology and digital tools. They are not limited by technology illiteracy.

"I plan everything and work in a Google document and then transfer and summarize in an Excel spreadsheet and bring all of those things with us."

A big part of the planning process is budgeting. And people do a lot of the calculations for extras and add-ons on their own.

"I like to have things in order beforehand. I will have a binder with a bit of organization about what our day is going to be like and also plan out the budget, so we know how much we have in each day. And then sometimes toward the end of the cruise we can splurge."

Cultivators

Cultivators have a harder time creating a balanced itinerary that includes activities for everyone

THE CRUISE

EMBARKATION

On the first day, the single most consistent emotion among all guests is excitement. The grandness of the vessel ahead paired with the thrill of starting their vacation often overshadow the pains of boarding protocol.

Cultivators who travel with families or friends want to make sure everyone gets aboard on time and gets settled in.

Many **Pioneers** arrive days early to explore the port before going on the ship.

Seafarers are thrilled to get onboard. "I never had any issues on the first day, it's so different than getting on a flight, lots of anxiety then. Cruise ships are all happy, all excitement."

EXPLORING THE SHIP

Cultivators

Cultivators waver between getting everything settled in the room, and exploring the ship. They desire interaction.

LUGGAGE & GETTING TO THE ROOM

People express anxiety about their luggage. "I'm always worried that my luggage won't make it to my room."

TRAVELING TO PORT

There were few complaints on the hassle of traveling from the airport to the port; many simply call an Uber or Lyft.

Pioneers

Pioneers often travel to the port of departure 2-3 days early.

CHECK-IN & SECURITY

Most people are so excited about getting on the cruise ship and starting their trip they don't notice slow or inefficient boarding processes.

"Boarding the ship is always such a fun experience. It's so exciting walking on and seeing the light being ignited, the magic being ignited as you walk in. Of course, there are steps that have to be taken beforehand... I forget about that kind of stuff."

SAIL AWAY

Seafarers

"I love my Sea Days."

ON THE SHIP

Ships offer a vast range of onboard activities and entertainment. This is good, as the interests and needs of guests are equally vast.

For **Cultivators**, the ship is an ideal space to connect with others and maximize time spent with their community. "It's about quality time."

Pioneers get bored after too many days at sea. They prefer using the ship to decompress after exploring a port. "The ports are for excitement. The ship is for peace, rest, and solitude."

The ship is where **Seafarers** shine. "I love my Sea Days." They truly appreciate the amenities and activities onboard. They feel the magic of the ocean. "I was on that basketball court alone, for hours, in the middle of the sea."

FACILITIES
(POOL, SPA, CASINO, GYM, etc)

Everyone dislikes crowded facilities, activities and entertainment. "There are definitely not enough amenities on the ship for the amount of people."

Cultivators

Cruises are for sharing unique, memorable experiences with friends and family. "My favorite moment was when I won a blackjack tournament. My 90-year-old grandmother's hand was on my shoulder, and she was so proud of me. I'm not even that much of a card shark so I didn't expect to win! It was something that could only happen on a cruise."

Pioneers

In general, **Pioneers** prefer small ships, with fewer children.

ROOM ACCOMMODATIONS

Everyone appreciates a nice room. But priorities differ among archetypes.

Cultivators

Cultivators are less likely to spend much time in the rooms, but do care about everyone's cabins being near each other.

Seafarers

Seafarers are more likely to emphasize needing a balcony room. "I always book a balcony room."

INTERNET USAGE

Internet usage and sharing varies from person to person, but one universal truth is that internet onboard ships is considered poor.

ENTERTAINMENT & ACTIVITIES

Cultivators

Cultivators look for fun group photo opportunities. Events and activities are a chance to meet more people. "You get to make instant friendships with people."

They are put out by not having enough to do on board for their entire families.

Pioneers

Pioneers use the ship to decompress after the port. "My main focus on the ship would be the pool and any quiet space where I can read and relax."

Seafarers

Seafarers are specific in their appreciation of onboard activities and entertainment. "The entire cruise was magical, mostly because we had the best cruise director. He was so entertaining, so glowing, he'd sing and dance in the main hall. It was always a party with him."

DINING & MEALS

Many people do not know they need to book restaurant reservations ahead of time and once they are on the ship there is no availability. And the opposite: when an app says no availability in a restaurant that has many open tables.

Many people report that the food on NCL is "really not that great."

Cultivators

Dining is an incredibly important part of the **Cultivator** experience. "We see dinner as the time to come together after doing our own thing during the day."

Pioneers

Local cuisine is very important to **Pioneers**. They are excited when the dining room caters to the port they visit.

GUEST SERVICES

Guests spend a lot of time at guest services getting clarity on what they bought or getting an issue resolved.

If something goes wrong, it takes a long time to submit a complaint. On top of being already frustrated, people have to wait in line.

AT PORT

As with shipboard amenities, the desires of guests at port are varied and far-reaching. Some want to "live like the locals," some want to take in natural beauty, some are passionate about learning the history of the area.

Cultivators enjoy building memories with their friends and family, engaging in port activities that are fun for everyone.

Excursions are the **Pioneers'** reason to cruise. "We like to get off the boat." They prefer immersive excursions with opportunities to fully experience local culture.

Seafarers tend to prefer more relaxing activities at ports. Some opt to stay onboard: "The excursions are nice, but honestly I go for the cruise."

SHOPPING

Pioneers

Pioneers feel it's important to support local shops and finding unique, hand-made items. Bad memory: "we couldn't find any items that we wouldn't find in the States!"

TRANSPORTATION TO & FROM THE SHIP

The primary reason that guests express a desire to take a cruise-sanctioned excursion is the "insurance." "You know the ship won't leave if the bus is stuck in traffic."

However, port transportation can be very uncomfortable.

"They fit us all like sardines back on the bus to get to the ship."

"The drive through mountains was terrifying."

EXCURSIONS

Cultivators

Cultivators are more likely to book structured, cruise-line affiliated excursions that guarantee safety and organization for their group.

Pioneers

Pioneers are more likely than others to want hyper-local, intimate experiences.

"I don't want some cultivated tourist attraction."

"We went into someone's home and cooked a meal."

They are more comfortable exploring ports on their own. Booked excursions are not always what they expect.

"[The excursion] was effectively just a cab ride."

RELAXATION

Pioneers

Few **Pioneers** emphasized relaxing at port, preferring more active or educational activities instead.

Seafarers

Seafarers are likely to spend their time relaxing at the port or even staying on the ship.

RE-BOARDING

Guests often feel anxious about the ship leaving without them.

POST-CRUISE

DISEMBARKATION

For most* guests, disembarkation day tends to feel confusing and rushed. Many guests feel "pressured" to move too quickly. When they're not being rushed, they're waiting in a long line or "meandering around bored" as there isn't much to do or anywhere to go.

*Haven guests have a distinctly different — and considerably better — experience.

Cultivators navigate the stress of disembarking alongside the bittersweet ceremony of final farewells.

Many **Pioneers** do not travel home immediately and stretch their vacation further.

CHECKOUT

Many guests feel unappreciated on their last day.

"You are pressured to get out of your room only to stand in line to check out."

"I don't like finding hidden fees or extra charges when I check out."

"That's when they hand you your bill and you realized how much you spent, like WHAT!?"

LUGGAGE

On the bigger ships, finding your luggage after the trip is "like looking for a needle in a haystack."

FAREWELLS

The final day on board tends to be a bittersweet day for everyone.

Seafarers **Pioneers**

Seafarers and **Pioneers** tend to be sad that the vacation is over.

Cultivators

Cultivators express a readiness to go home.

DISEMBARKING

Guests describe disembarking as either boring or frustrating/chaotic. Many feel rushed to get off the ship.

GETTING HOME

Pioneers

Many **Pioneers** spend additional days at the port after the cruise, or even fly to a new destination.

AFTER THE CRUISE

The post-cruise emotional void affects everyone. For some, post-cruise can feel unnecessarily administrative, especially if they are following up on charges or receipts.

And while guests start sharing memories with friends and family to rekindle the joy from the trip, cruise lines are absent, not doing much to embed themselves into this occasion.

Cultivators express sadness on the last day but also tend to be more reflective and express gratitude for the time spent together. "It's satisfying knowing your family appreciated the time."

Pioneers end their adventure dreaming about the next one. There is sadness but also an energy to commit to travel to new places and have new experiences.

SHARING & REMINISCING

Memories last and are — like all memories — adapted into the best stories. Even negative memories from the journey become the challenges the guest was forced to overcome, and that narrative that often becomes the impetus for taking the next cruise.

Pioneers

Pioneers value unique destinations and are more likely to share those experiences.

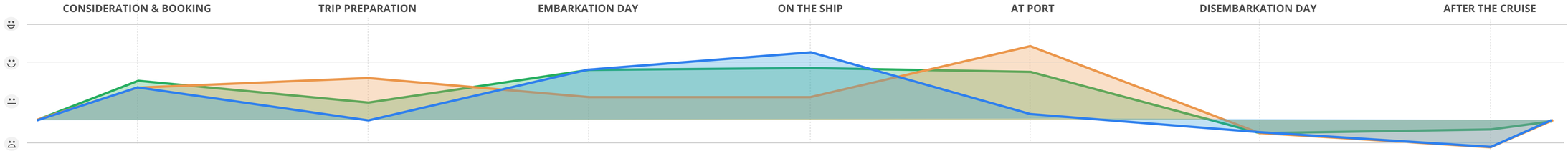
"I don't share or buy much when we do a beach vacation. But I do if it's a cultural destination. When I did a safari we took hundreds of photos!"

TRANSITIONING BACK TO THE REAL WORLD

Universally, people experience a sort of emotional void as they start to mentally transition away from the vacation and "back to the real world."

Pioneers

Many **Pioneers** are already planning or booking their next vacation before this one ends.



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