



What makes a vacation memorable? For the first time ever, scientists have uncovered the factors which influence lasting vacation memories, from the most memorable destinations to the effects of social media use on memory.

About the study

HomeAway partnered with Professor Art Markman and researchers at the University of Texas to design a first-of-its-kind study which investigated factors such as destination type, cost of vacation, group type, work habits, amount of time spent on mobile devices, and social media use to determine their impact on the memorability of vacations.

Methodology

Sample 713 adults from six countries: United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, Italy

Period April – September 2016

Analysis Statistical significance established at the 90% confidence interval

Measured variables Memory recall and emotional memory recall

Study participants reported on vacation plans and demographic characteristics in a pre-vacation survey, reported their feelings and memorable experiences in three in-vacation surveys (on the first, middle, and last days of their trips), and recalled their memories and emotions in a post-vacation survey. A subset of travelers also downloaded an app that tracked the amount of time spent on their devices.

How was memory measured?

Memory Recall: Participants were assessed on how well they could recall experiences they had recorded during their in-vacation surveys one week after returning from their trips. Both visual and written cues were used to assess memory recall ability.

Emotional Memory: Participants were assessed on how accurately they could recall emotions they reported experiencing across the study.

Research Team

Art Markman, Ph.D. (Lead researcher)
University of Texas at Austin researchers
Hanover Market Research
HomeAway

Research Findings

Where should you go?

Mountains are the most memorable destination type.

They were shown to be significantly more memorable (12%) than cities, the least memorable destination, and slightly more memorable than small towns, beaches, and amusement parks.

How much should you spend?

The amount spent on vacation **does not** significantly impact the memorability of vacations. Expenses considered included: airline tickets, lodging, gas, car rentals, dining, entertainment, and more.

The power of photography

Those who took **photos** and selfies using their phones were **40% more likely** to remember their vacations well than those who didn't. Participants who created an online photo album are significantly more likely to recall all trip events than those who did not make such an album. In addition; displaying vacation photos or souvenirs; inviting friends or family to one's home to see vacation photos or videos; and uploading updates, photos, or videos to social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Vine, and Twitter also positively correlate with accurate **emotional recall**.

Facebook or Instagram?

Social media use **does not** have a major impact on trip memorability.

However, use of certain social media sites correlated with better emotional memory. In particular, Instagram users had better emotional memory than users of Facebook and Snapchat: Instagram users were **24% more likely** than Facebook users to have clear memories of how they felt during their vacations.

Uploading photos and videos to social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Vine, and Twitter also positively correlate with accurate **emotional recall**.

Too much of a good thing?

HomeAway's research found that people who use smart phones for certain activities, such as taking photos and finding things to do, actually remembered their vacations **better** than those who don't.

However, this effect reversed at high levels of smart phone usage. Those who used their phones for more than **two hours** each day were **26% more likely** to have trouble remembering their vacations versus those who spent less than two hours on their phones.

Working on vacation

Working while traveling decreases trip memorability. Those who work while on vacation are less likely to recall all of their memorable events than those not working. This effect increases as vacationers spend more time working.

Of those who used devices for work-related activities, just 43% who spent one hour or more working recalled all trip events, while 60% of those who spent less than an hour working recalled all events. Overall, working an hour or more on vacation made participants **43% more likely** to have trouble remembering their trips than those who worked one hour or less.

Those who used **laptops**, versus smart phones or tablets, also had significantly more trouble remembering their vacations.

Who should you travel with?

People who traveled with a mix of family and friends remembered their vacations at least **20% better** than those who traveled with just family, just friends, in a couple, or alone.

Vacationers who traveled for a celebration, such as a birthday, wedding, reunion, or bachelor/ette party, also displayed **69% better** emotional recall of their vacations—they were significantly better at recalling how they felt during important moments of their trip.

Pre-trip emotions = Post-trip memories

Vacationers who reported feeling happy and excited before their vacations were **73% more likely** to have excellent recall of their vacation memories versus those who felt other emotions, including stress, frustration, or calm.

For more information

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