
Volume 4 *Volume 4 Issue 2*

2019

Tourists, Not Industry Experts, Create Memorable Tourists' Experiences!

Helena Williams
Texas Tech University

Jingxue (Jessica) Yuan
Texas Tech University

Follow this and additional works at: https://via.library.depaul.edu/ichrie_rr



Part of the [Tourism and Travel Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Williams, Helena and Yuan, Jingxue (Jessica) (2019) "Tourists, Not Industry Experts, Create Memorable Tourists' Experiences!," *ICHRIE Research Reports*: Vol. 4 , Article 2.
Available at: https://via.library.depaul.edu/ichrie_rr/vol4/iss2/2

This article is brought to you for free and open access by the International Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education (ICHRIE). It has been accepted for inclusion in *ICHRIE Research Reports* by an authorized editor of DePaul University School of Hospitality Leadership. For more information, please contact rr@depaul.edu. The compilation of the journal issue is copyrighted by ICHRIE, but authors retain the copyright for their article.

Tourists, Not Industry Experts, Create Memorable Tourists' Experiences!

Experiential Tourism

The way we do or think about tourism is changing. Today's tourists do not want to just look, watch, or relax while traveling. More tourists of all generations and incomes are seeking experiential memorable travel opportunities. The destinations and activities that individual tourists choose are very dependent upon unique interests and personal idiosyncrasies. This research study confirms that the destination selections and subsequent satisfaction that leads to favorable Word-of-Mouth/Mouse (WOMM) marketing depends upon the level of individualized engagement promised to and experienced by the tourists themselves. Businesses and destinations increasingly need to be designed and targeted to individuals who are interested in memorable experiential tourism activities.

This study clarifies the tourists' memorability-forming process that can be used by academicians and industry practitioners to align tourism opportunities with emotion-triggering elements that tourists find memorable.

The Memory Process of Tourists' Experience

This Research Report presents the results of a study that analyzed over 1,300 responses that describe how tourists navigate different types of tourist activities. The process that these tourists followed as they created memorable experiences was documented. Their memory process begins by identifying the *personal reasons* that prompted why a trip or excursion was undertaken. Was the trip a deliberately planned vacation or was it a desire for a quick break? Was it intended to provide intense relaxation or powerful social, cultural and/or learning interactions¹?

Next, the *specialized interests and idiosyncrasies* that surround each individual tourist become memory triggers. Over 80% of this study's identified interests/idiosyncrasies could be clustered into categories. Some of the categories include curious, joy seeking, relaxation seeking, learning, exploring, image enhancing, being entertained, having fun, being social/romantic,

seeking authentic food/drink, and being fulfilled/contented/indulged. Other powerful categories that were not readily generalizable to a larger group but were nonetheless powerful in the formation of individualized memories include such things as hobbies, collections, memberships, specific loyalties, and unique interests.

Finally, when *emotions* are experienced during any phase of a memorable experiential tourism activity, the moments associated with the emotion, which can be positive or negative, kick-start individual physiological memory-making. Memory synapses that carry no emotions get pruned away while those that are attached to emotions are stored in the long-term memory-retrieval areas of the brain. Hence, the emotions that individuals experience during a tourism activity is the key to tourists' long-term memorability.

How Tourism Hosts Can Foster Memorability and WOMM

Owners/managers of grass-roots tourism enterprises, local destination management/marketing organizations (DMOs), travel agencies, and tourism groups/ministries can follow the memory process as they develop and promote tourism products. When experiences are memorable to a tourist, they are talked about, blogged about, and shared in reviews. This generally results in increased UGC (user generated content) and WOMM. Hosts interested in further fostering positive tourists' memorability creation should consider providing multiple social interactive verbal and kinetic experiences (movement and/or hands-on activities) that are meaningful enough to elicit emotions. The closer the tourism product and tourism host connect with each tourist in a personal way, and the more interactive moments the individual experiences, the greater likelihood that the offered activity will elicit emotions that make the experience memorable².

Learning if an experience was memorable and what made it so, helps tourism business leaders and marketers design and promote the unique opportunities that today's tourists' value and remember. Individual descriptions of past tourists' memorable experiences become the blueprints for changes that support shifts to this experiential approach.

References

Williams, H., Yuan, J., & Williams, R. L. (2018). Attributes of memorable gastro-tourists' experiences. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*. First published October 7, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348018804621>

²Williams, H., Yuan, J., & Williams, R. L. (2018). Characteristics and practices of gastro-tourists: Application for a 6+ gastro-cluster destination development model. *Journal of Gastronomy & Tourism*, 3(3).