



No regrets: The 3 things driving the research-obsessed consumer

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Google's VP of Marketing for the Americas Lisa Gevelber explains how more and more people are using search to optimize their real-world experiences.

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Are you a restaurant obsessive? Do you know someone who is? You know what I mean. You've got a group dinner coming up. After back and forth about time and location and type of cuisine, you all agree on a restaurant and make a reservation. Most of you likely leave it at that.

But there seems to be one in every group who goes to the restaurant website and scours the menu. They hit multiple review sites, social feeds, and turn to search to find every scrap of information available. Maybe they're just trying to get a jump on the ordering process. Maybe they want to see prices. Maybe they want to see photos of the food or which dish is considered the house specialty. Maybe they want to be a helpful hero, crafting the best possible experience for everyone else.

Not only do they want to be prepared, but they find the preparation emotionally rewarding.

Today, people can—and do—optimize their lives. Whether it's taking a vacation or going out to dinner, people curate their experiences before they go. It helps them get excited, lets them feel more confident and less anxious, and makes them feel like they're getting the most out of every moment.

People use search to optimize their lives. It lets them feel more confident and less anxious.

At Google, we're research obsessed ourselves, continually talking to people and looking for search trends that help us understand what people are doing and why they're doing it, so we can better assist them. From this research, we've identified three reasons why people are so intent to know before they go.

It helps them get excited

“The sooner I know what I’ll be eating, the better,” one person told us. It “helps with my dining experience and gets me excited.”

For curious consumers, getting excited often means getting a preview of what’s to come. In the months, days, or moments leading up to an experience, many are looking for a sneak peek.

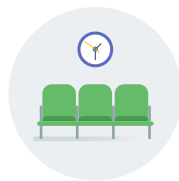
For example, when planning a dinner out, people search for the “best thing to eat at a restaurant” or to find a “restaurant with good desserts.” Or when planning a vacation, they want to find and understand the experience before they take part in it themselves, searching for “things to do in Maui” or “reviews of the train to Machu Picchu.”

In other words, the research process becomes part of the experience itself, helping to build anticipation before they even step foot out the door.

It helps them feel more confident

“I guess I just don’t like looking or feeling lost. It just gives me anxiety,” one person told us.

The time and money consumers have to dedicate to enjoying themselves is rare, and precious. They want to get the most out of a trip, whether it’s to a local cafe, the ballpark, or halfway around the world. Working out the details in advance—prices, maps, schedules—reduces anxiety and allows people more time to enjoy themselves once they arrive.



↑ 120% +

growth in mobile searches for “wait times” in the last two years.

"I try to look up information beforehand because it really helps save time and you're much more confident when you're going to a particular place knowing where, exactly, you're heading," another person told us. "I make the most of the time and I can hit all the places I'm trying to visit."

That's likely one reason we've seen mobile searches for "wait times" grow over 170% in the last two years.¹ Whether they're going to the gym or out for dinner, people want to know what they're getting into.

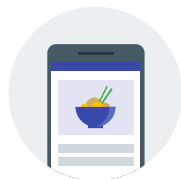
We can also see that people try to work out costs or save money ahead of time. People are looking for information related to what they'll be spending, from "How much is the dollar in Mexico" to "Do you tip in Italy," so they avoid any big surprises.

"I like to know down to the penny what I'm spending. I don't do that because I'm cheap, I just like to be well prepared for my trip so I don't worry about running out of money," yet another person said.

It helps them create the best experience

"I feel like I need to research so that we don't miss anything big, and so we can find those hidden gems that make a trip special," one person told us.

Ultimately, all this research is meant to create the best experience possible. They want to squeeze out every last drop of goodness, making sure they don't miss anything along the way. Consumers feel pressure to do research—otherwise they'll feel remorseful if they have a negative experience they believe could have been avoided.



↑ 55% +

growth in mobile searches for "menus" in the past two years.

This is where we find our menu-obsessed friend. “I knew everything would be good but I really wanted to try the best of the best,” another person told us. “I like to see what ‘must haves’ I should order.” And we see this in our search data, too, as mobile searches for “menus” have grown over 85% in the past two years.²

One person boiled it down to one simple, powerful statement: “I wanted to research so I wouldn't have regrets.”

What marketers should know

For marketers, understanding the different moments and mindsets of your customers as they're planning an experience presents a great opportunity to become a part of their consideration set early on in their decision making process.

- Offer up ways to easily organize their experiences so they feel confident— and not overwhelmed—by the decisions they make. For example, offering a trip planner tool or pre-built suggested packing lists can help put people at ease.
- Make it simple, fast, and easy to plan their days, save time, or plan on a budget. For example, find ways to let people tell you what's important to them—beach vs. island view, classic or modern, budget or luxury—and then suggest matches that fit those needs.

If you can play to the research-obsessed person's needs, you can be assistive in a way that gets them excited, relieves their anxiety, and pulls them into your experience so they don't choose another.

Sources

- 1 Google Trends, June 2015 vs. June 2017, Canada.
- 2 Google Data, Jan-June 2015, U.S. vs. Jan-June 2017, Canada.



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