

Vacation Adventure Versus Relaxation: Revitalization or Exhaustion

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This paper focuses on how a vacationer's activity intention influences possible feelings of rest and relaxation at the end of a typical vacation. Following previous research by the author examining vacationers from a sample of United States vacationers (Hill, 2016), two new concepts are proposed: activity intention and vacation restoration. The findings suggest these two concepts are clearly associated; specifically, the greater the level of planned activities, the less rested travelers feel at the end of a vacation. Additionally, the relationships of individual travel factors (gender, age, and education) and vacation style determinants (distance, group size, vacation length, tropical vacation choice) found support within the proposed activity intention-vacation restoration model.

Keywords: vacationer's activity intention, vacation restoration, individual travel factors, vacation style

INTRODUCTION

The goal of finding leisure time for enjoyment can certainly be traced to long ago. Yet, while leisure activities have changed, most agree the opportunities for the vacations we enjoy today found its roots in the industrial revolution of western culture. As mass production drew individuals off the farm and into the factories, economies of scale decreased individual work time from around 3000 to 3600 work hours per year in 1840 to about 1800 to 2000 work hours per year today (McLean et. Al., 2017). Indeed, as McLean, Hurd, and Anderson explain in their research examining recreation and leisure in the modern age, the worktime phenomenon resulting from industrialization, made possible the “repackaging of leisure hours”—creating pockets of free-time that helped fuel modern notions like “free evenings, the weekend, and paid summer vacations, as well as a lengthy childhood and retirement (Cross, 1990)” for many. Moreover, we know well that the present-day vacations of the modern age were spurred too by increased wealth and innovations in transportation. For the latter, transportation infrastructure feats like the building of the U.S. transcontinental railroad (Ambrose, 2000), the “Route 66” highway (Krim, 2014), and the Interstate road system (Lewis, 2013) all have “paved the way” for the vacation travel opportunities we now enjoy. Even the idea of vacationing without travel has been exemplified through the idea of the “stay vacation” (Wixon, 2009). Regardless of how we have arrived at the modern-day vacation experience, it is clear the economic impacts are remarkable. In fact, in 2019, total domestic and international inbound spending in the United States reached \$1.1 trillion a year (U.S Travel Association, 2019), giving credence to the importance for marketing research devoted to this major economic area.

In this paper, we delve into specific components for the modern vacation we enjoy today, probing into what respondents report they plan to do on a typical vacation. Building on research by the author in this area (Hill, 2016), exploring planning practices of participants on the typical vacation, we elicit the definition of vacation as a guide. The term “vacation” is defined as “a period of suspension of work, study, or other activity, usually used for rest, recreation, or travel; recess or holiday” (Dictionary.com, 2017). Following the themes of this definition, it is clear that, for some, a vacation means time off for rest and relaxation, while for others, it means free time for recreation. Thus, from this perspective, this research explores the influence of vacation activity choices on the ultimate feelings of rest at the end of the vacation. We also capture the effect of vacation travel determinants and individual travel factors on the activity intention—vacation restoration relationship. These discussions are addressed next.

VACATION ACTIVITY INTENTION AND VACATION RESTORATION

This research introduces two new constructs: vacation activity intention and vacation restoration. *Vacation activity intention* is defined as the vacationer’s expected level and scale of the tasks planned for a typical vacation. *Vacation restoration* represents the vacationer’s reported level of revitalization at the end of a typical vacation. The rationale for the association between these constructs, vacation style determinants, and individual travel factors, are disentangled next.

Vacation Activity Intention → Vacation Restoration

The boldness of the pursuits planned by an individual for a vacation would clearly seem to be a good indicator of the scope of events anticipated during a vacation. We know from our own experiences that some vacationers live on the edge while others simply hope to relax. It only makes sense that the extent of planned activities, particularly if carried out, will play a role in how the vacationer feels at the end of the vacation. Further, the more challenging and the greater the number of events, the more likely the traveler could become fatigued, both physical and mentally. For this reason, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Vacation activity intention has a negative effect on vacation restoration.

Vacation Style Determinants → Vacation Restoration

Vacation style determinants (Hill, 2016) are travel characteristics considered influential to vacation decisions, based on the travel boundaries of the individual. Key vacation determinants that are suggested to relate to the feelings of renewal at the end of a vacation are travel distance, group size, length of vacation, and the tropical vacation type.

For travel distance, it would be reasonable to expect that the distance traveled by the leisure traveler over the course of the vacation will have some effect on the individual’s physical and mental comfort, and the greater the travel distance, the greater the wear on the individual. Similarly, for group size, one might expect larger groups would take a toll on each individual traveler. That is, catering to the needs of a larger group and trying to find agreement, could increase the overall activity and stress of the traveler. The effect of vacation length might be different. A longer vacation would allow more time to participate in activities, perhaps reducing the “rushed feeling” vacationers might experience with shorter vacations. Indeed, with shorter vacations, the traveler may expend more physical and cognitive energy per day to complete the same number of tasks. With respect to the choice of a tropical vacation, opting for a trip of this nature is a clear signal that travelers are planning to enjoy the sunshine and are not likely to have extensive activities planned. As such, the choice of a tropical vacation and the goal of rest and relaxation may indeed be related in some way. With these thoughts in mind, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: Distance traveled on vacations has a negative effect on vacation restoration.

H3: Travel group size on vacations has a negative effect on vacation restoration.

H4: *Vacation length has a positive effect on vacation restoration.*

H5: *Choosing a tropical vacation has a positive effect on vacation restoration.*

Individual Travel Factors → Vacation Restoration

Individual travel factors (Hill, 2016) are specific traits about the individual traveler that influence the vacation choices ultimately made. The Individual travel factors associated with vacation restoration are proposed to be gender, age, and education level. With gender, women may be doing more work on vacations than men—particularly when traveling in groups. In fact, it is reported that women more often make the vacation decisions for the family (Novakova, 2018). In one study, up to 25% of men reported that they like their female travel mate making the decisions because they felt that women are pickier about vacation choices than men (Elliott, 2013). Thus, since women are often the leaders for vacations and, at a minimum, may be more invested, they may feel the stress of vacations more than men by the end of the vacation.

Relative to age and vacation restoration, it is anticipated that vacation restoration perhaps counterintuitively actually increases with age. Although older travelers might expect to be more fatigued from travel, old travelers may be less likely to overextend themselves on the trip. They would expect to benefit from the knowledge of previous vacations, and consequently know what types of vacations they enjoy. That knowledge and contentment may provide more serenity than experienced by young travelers “on-the-go” foraging new adventures as they travel. Relative to the relationship of education level on vacation restoration, there is a sense that more highly educated individuals enjoy traveling, because it’s an educational experience, and they may be bolder and more adventurous in their vacation destinations. Because of this suggested enthusiasm, they may also be more drained from their vacations than their less educated counterparts. These thoughts are summarized in the following hypotheses:

H6: *Female vacationers exhibit a negative effect on vacation restoration.*

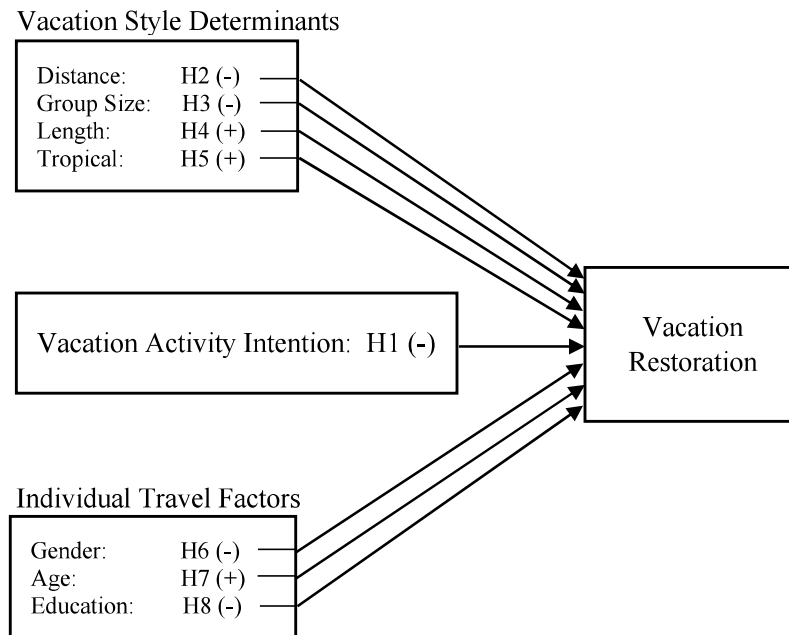
H7: *Age has a positive effect on vacation restoration.*

H8: *Education level has a negative effect on vacation restoration*

PROPOSED MODEL AND RELATIONSHIPS

The model shown in Figure 1 exhibits the proposed integration of the three hypothesized areas: (1) the activity intention to vacation restoration relationship, (2) the vacation style determinants to vacation restoration relationship, and (3) the individual travel factor to vacation restoration relationship. The methodology and ultimate findings relative to the proposed model illustrated in Figure 1 are discussed next.

FIGURE 1
VACATION ACTIVITY INTENTION-VACATION RESTORATION MODEL



METHODOLOGY

This study targeted respondents in the United States. Respondents were asked to think about their most typical vacations, and then answer questions about that vacation experience.

Survey, Sample Collection, and Target Respondent

The data collection phase first involved designing an online survey. Business students in the classroom were asked as part of a voluntary assignment for extra credit, to contact ten respondents in the United States. The business students were also asked to tell each of the individuals they contacted to share the link for survey participation. Using this word-of-mouth (WOM) campaign, sharing the survey link on social media and by email, respondents from across the United States completed the online web-based survey instrument (surveymonkey.com). The data was aggregated into EXCEL, and ultimately imported into SPSS for analyses. The initial sample consisted of 908 inquiries. With the subsequent elimination of data due to missing values, data entry errors, etc., the final sample consisted of 861 respondents. The geographic breakdown of those who participated consisted of individuals more heavily from southeastern, Atlantic coast, and the Midwest regions of the United States. The greatest density of respondents (40%) came from the Mississippi-Alabama region. Figure 2 provides a visual image of the respondent region represented in the dataset.

FIGURE 2
RESPONDENT REGION*



*Maptive.com (2019)

FINDINGS

The findings for this study are reported in two sections—descriptive data summary and model relationship results. The details of the study’s findings are offered next.

Descriptive Data Summary

The descriptive data for the three variables associated with vacation style determinants (distance, group size, vacation length, tropical vacation choice) and the four variables associated with individual travel factors (gender, age, and education) are listed in Table 1. Distance, group size, vacation length, age, and education were all measured with ordinal scales. Gender (male/female) and Tropical choice of vacation (yes/no) were measures as dichotomous variables. Number of respondents (n), mean (M), standard deviation (SD), and frequency distribution are shown for each variable. Shown in Table 2 are the construct measurement statistics for the two new constructs, vacation activity intention ($\alpha=.64$) and vacation restoration ($\alpha=.76$). Both the vacation activity intention and vacation restoration constructs included a reverse item measure, and subsequently, each construct was adjusted prior to calculation of the construct statistics.

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE DATA STATISTICS

Vacation Style Determinant Characteristics	Frequency	Percent	Individual Travel Factor Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Distance (miles); n=853, M=496, SD=308			Gender; n=858		
100 or less	111	13.0	Male	360	42.0
101 to 300	312	36.6	Female	498	58.0
301 to 500	185	21.7	Age (years); n=858, M=39.5, SD=12.2		
501 to 700	77	8.3	18-24	73	15.0
701 to 900	66	6.0	25-31	117	24.1
1000 or greater	33	6.8	32-38	65	13.4
Size (number); n=860, M=3.8, SD=1.8			39-45	58	11.9
1 person	28	3.3	46-52	81	16.7
2 people	244	28.4	53-59	48	9.9
3 to 4 people	328	38.1	60-66	29	6.0
5 to 6 people	159	18.8	67 or greater	15	3.1
7 or greater	101	11.7	Education (yrs); n=854, M=7.5, SD=2.3		
Length (days); n=861, M=4.9, SD=2.1			Some high school	6	1.4
1 to 2 nights	81	9.4	High school degree or GED	39	7.4
3 to 4 nights	346	40.2	Some college	109	21.8
5 to 6 nights	257	29.8	2-Year Associate degree	67	12.9
7 to 8 nights	111	12.9	4-Year Bachelor's degree	145	32.8
9 or greater	66	7.7	Graduate Master's degree	90	17.9
Vacation Type; n=861			Professional or Doctorate	29	5.8
Non-Tropical	527	61.2			
Tropical (Beach)	334	38.8			

TABLE 2
CONSTRUCT MEASUREMENTS

Constructs	Item Measures	n	M	SD	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Source
Activity Intentions (Likert Scale 1-5)	On my typical vacations...	853	3.5	.89	α =.64	Hill (2020)
	I want to do as many activities as I can I want to do as little as possible (reverse)					
Vacation Restoration (Likert Scale 1-5)	On my typical vacations...	856	2.6	.92	α =.76	Hill (2020)
	I am very rested when I return home. I need to rest when I return home. (reverse)					

Model Results

The correlation matrix for the nine variables proposed in Figure 1 are displayed in Table 3. The correlation coefficients are shown with significant associations noted at the 0.1, 0.05, and 0.01 levels. The strong associations evident would seem to be a good indicator of the soundness of the relationships proposed in Figure 1, while offering perspective on the level at which the variables interrelate.

TABLE 3
CORRELATION MATRIX

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Vacation Activity Intention (Likert 1-5)	---								
2. Distance (miles)	.026	---							
3. Group Size (number)	-.016	-.122***	---						
4. Length (days)	.000	.556***	.069**	---					
5. Tropical (no=0; yes=1)	-.235***	-.236***	.173***	-.027	---				
6. Gender (male=1; female=2)	.047	-.054	.062*	-.018	-.011	---			
7. Age (years)	-.067*	.082**	-.123***	.176***	-.042	.028	---		
8. Education (years)	-.070**	.091***	-.118***	.057*	.000	-.062*	.068*	---	
9. Vacation Restoration (Likert 1-5)	-.169***	.031	-.047	.134***	.189***	-.101***	.132***	-.037	---

* $p < .10$ (Significant at the 0.10 level)
** $p < .05$ (Significant at the 0.05 level)
*** $p < .01$ (Significant at the 0.01 level)

The statistics for the multiple regression model ($F=11.4$, $df=8$, $R^2=.10$) displayed in Figure 1 are shown in Table 4. Seven of the eight hypothesized relationships were supported. For hypothesis 1, the proposed negative relationship for vacation activity intention on vacation restoration was supported ($p<.01$). Thus, the level of activities planned could be a good indicator of how rested the vacationer is at the end of the vacation. For hypothesis 2, the proposed negative relationship for vacation travel distance on vacation restoration was not supported. While not expected, perhaps the types of modes of travel and/or the number of modes used might be more indicative of the wear vacationers may feel when going through the grind of traveling.

For hypothesis 3, the proposed negative relationship for group size on vacation restoration was supported ($p<.05$), thus, suggesting the complexity of traveling with a larger group could put a strain on possible feelings of being restored after a vacation. For hypothesis 4, the proposed positive relationship for vacation length on vacation restoration was supported ($p<.01$). Thus, longer vacations, may, in fact, suggest less activities per day, and a more rejuvenated feeling after the vacation is over. Similarly, and perhaps related, for hypothesis 5, the proposed positive relationship for the choice of a tropical vacation on vacation restoration was supported ($p<.01$). Indeed, while it is evident several variables may be interrelated, such as vacation choice and vacation length, it is hard to argue that selecting a tropical vacation suggests the likelihood and plans for travelers feeling rested by vacation's end.

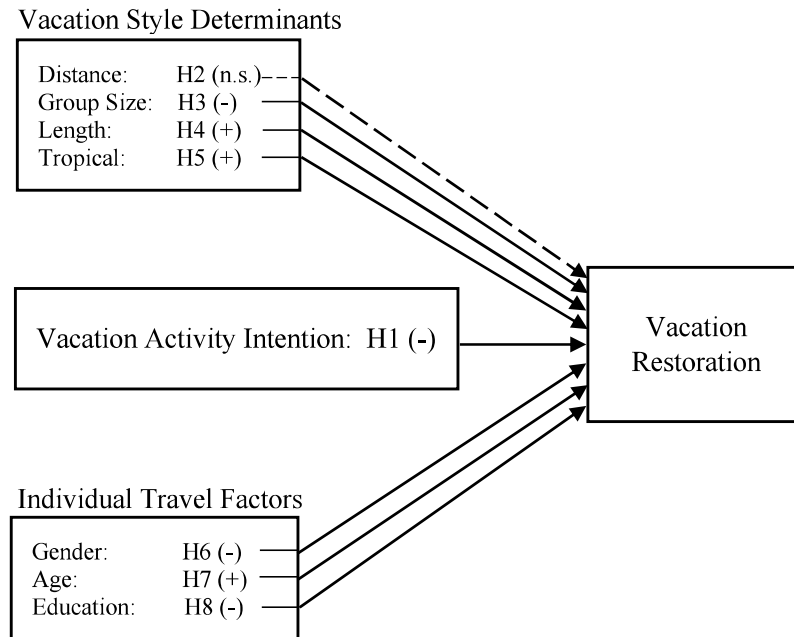
For hypothesis 6, the proposed negative relationship for females was supported ($p<.01$). Indeed, as suggested, females may feel the brunt of the heavy planning and the decisions involved with typical vacations and may feel less rested at the end of the vacation. For hypothesis 7, the proposed positive relationship for age on vacation restoration was supported ($p<.01$). Clearly, although there may be, for instance, interrelationships between age, vacation choice, vacation activity intention, and vacation restoration, support for the positive effect of age on vacation restoration was evident. Perhaps too, older vacations are more likely to be retired from their careers and therefore might not be carrying the burden of getting back to a job. Further, since there may be a relationship between older vacationers and traveling in small groups (see Table 3), this may explain why older vacationers reported a greater level of vacation restoration.

For hypothesis 8, the proposed negative relationship for education level on vacation restoration was supported ($p<.05$). Thus, if more educated vacationers are bolder in their vacations, this could explain why educated travelers reported feelings of less rest. Finally, Figure 3 displays the final model highlighting the supported and non-supported relationships.

**TABLE 4
MODEL RESULTS**

Hypotheses	Structural Path	Parameter Estimates		
		Est.	t-value	Support
H1	Vacation Activity Intention → Vacation Restoration	-.121	-3.43**	Yes
H2	Distance → Vacation Restoration	-.000	-.434	No
H3	Group Size → Vacation Restoration	-.045	-2.59*	Yes
H4	Length → Vacation Restoration	.058	3.23**	Yes
H5	Tropical → Vacation Restoration	.321	4.79**	Yes
H6	Gender (male=1; female=2) → Vacation Restoration	-.178	-2.88**	Yes
H7	Age → Vacation Restoration	.050	3.23**	Yes
H8	Education → Vacation Restoration	-.028	-2.09*	Yes
* $p<.05$ (Significant at the 0.05 level)				
** $p<.01$ (Significant at the 0.01 level)				

FIGURE 3
VACATION ACTIVITY INTENTION-VACATION RESTORATION MODEL



CONCLUSIONS

In summary, two new concepts relative vacation planning and outcomes were proposed for this literature stream--(1) vacation activity intention and (2) vacation restoration. The findings suggest the two concepts are clearly associated. Specifically, the greater the level of planned activities, the less rested travelers feel at the end of a vacation. Additionally, characteristics about the type of vacation and the traits about the individual vacationer were also shown to have an influence on the activity intention-vacation restoration relationship. Interestingly, the findings do not necessarily suggest that vacationers plan activities based on their desire to feel rested or not. That could be true at some level, but this research did not address that question. Clearly, it is an excellent area for forthcoming studies. Similarly, future research should be devoted to understanding overall importance of vacation restoration to the vacationer.

Other future opportunities should seek to understand the influences of vacation activity intention. At what level do vacationers plan? Do they seek to complete all intended activities? Do they achieve their anticipated goals? If not, at what level are activity intentions fulfilled? Finally, researchers may want to explore the psychological effects of vacation planning on feelings of well-being. Does the stress of vacation planning influence the feeling of restoration at trip's end?

Ultimately, this study makes a meaningful contribution on the vacation activity planning research stream and uniquely examines how vacationers feel at the end of a vacation. There is much to explore both in the vacation activity intention and vacation restoration construct areas.

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