A Field Guide to the
US Digital Travel
Booking Journey

September 2016

facebook IQ

Anticipating travel is a pleasure, but planning it can be a challenge.

Today's average US travel research and booking process lasts at least 1–2 months and includes 56 visits to digital travel-related touchpoints.[*][1]

To find out what shapes travelers' routes, Facebook IQ analyzed Facebook and Instagram data and commissioned GfK to survey 2,400 people ages 18–64 in the US who had booked a business or leisure trip in the last three months. GfK also recorded data on how 97 people used digital devices before booking a leisure trip to get an even more accurate picture of the process.

What we learned is that thanks to increasing mobile adoption, planning is getting more convenient. Mobile devices now serve as travelers' new compass, guiding them from inspiration to booking. In fact, Facebook data shows that mobile booking is increasing and steady across weekdays and weekends.[2]

* Digital touchpoints include travel-related searches and visits to travel-related sites or apps made on a smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop.

1. "Passive Digital Travel Research Journey" by GfK (Facebook-commissioned passive observation of digital browsing, search and app behavior of 97 people in the US ages 18–64 during the three-month period before they booked a trip), Nov 2015–May 2016. A trip was defined as leisure travel involving a flight, hotel or cruise.
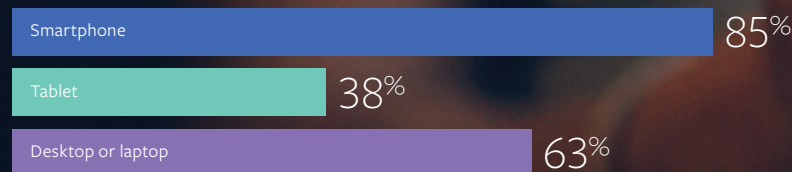
2. Facebook data, US only, Jan–Jun 2016. Analysis of conversion pixel data for travel ads shown to people ages 18+ on Facebook.
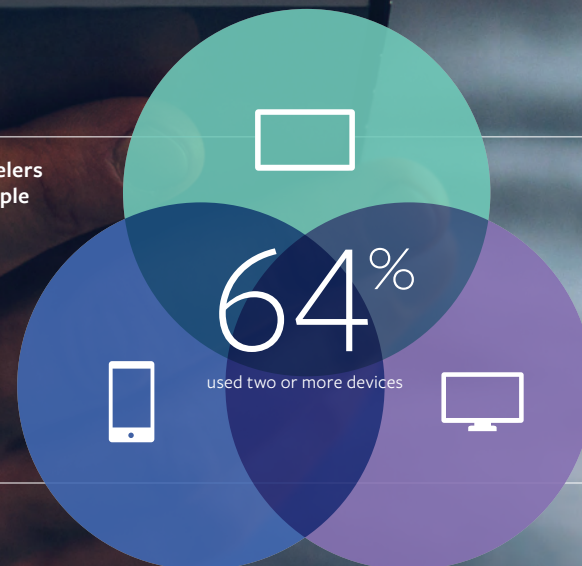
Contents

Mobile fuels the planning process

When planning their last trip, travelers used a ...[1]

Smartphone	85%
Tablet	38%
Desktop or laptop	63%

Many travelers used multiple devices[1]

64%

used two or more devices

And travelers surveyed are more likely to book with providers who make it easy to buy across devices[2]

49%
of all travelers

61%
of self-identified African Americans

62%
of self-identified US Hispanics

Charge up your mobile presence and offer a seamless cross-device experience

Reach the right audience at the right time by tracking signals of intent across devices and serving ads accordingly. For example, a Las Vegas hotel brand might target desktop ads to travelers whose mobile actions indicate they're interested in visiting the Strip, or vice versa.

1. "Passive Digital Travel Research Journey" by GfK (Facebook-commissioned passive observation of digital browsing, search and app behavior of 97 people in the US ages 18–64 during the three-month period before they booked a trip), Nov 2015–May 2016. A trip was defined as leisure travel involving a flight, hotel or cruise.
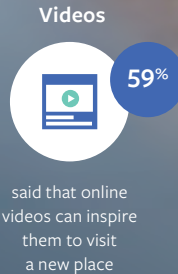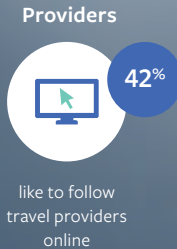
2. "Digital Travel Research Journey" by GfK (Facebook-commissioned survey of 2,400 people in the US ages 18–64 who had booked a business or leisure trip in the previous three months including 399 who self-identified as African American, 400 who self-identified as Asian American and 400 who self-identified as US Hispanic), Nov 2015–May 2016. A trip was defined as booking accommodation and/or transportation for leisure or business purposes and staying at least one night at a location other than one's home.

Travelers welcome inspiration

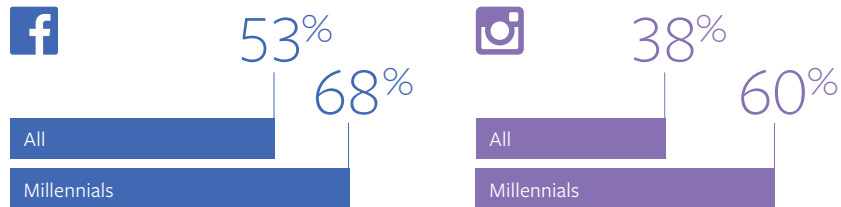**Though 66% of travelers surveyed claim to be loyal customers, when starting research for their last trip …**

50% were open to the destination

61% were open to booking with a new provider

Travelers surveyed draw inspiration from …

Peers
40% said their last trip was inspired by hearing travel stories from other people

Providers
42% like to follow travel providers online

Videos
59% said that online videos can inspire them to visit a new place

Content shared on the Facebook family of apps and services sparks ideas

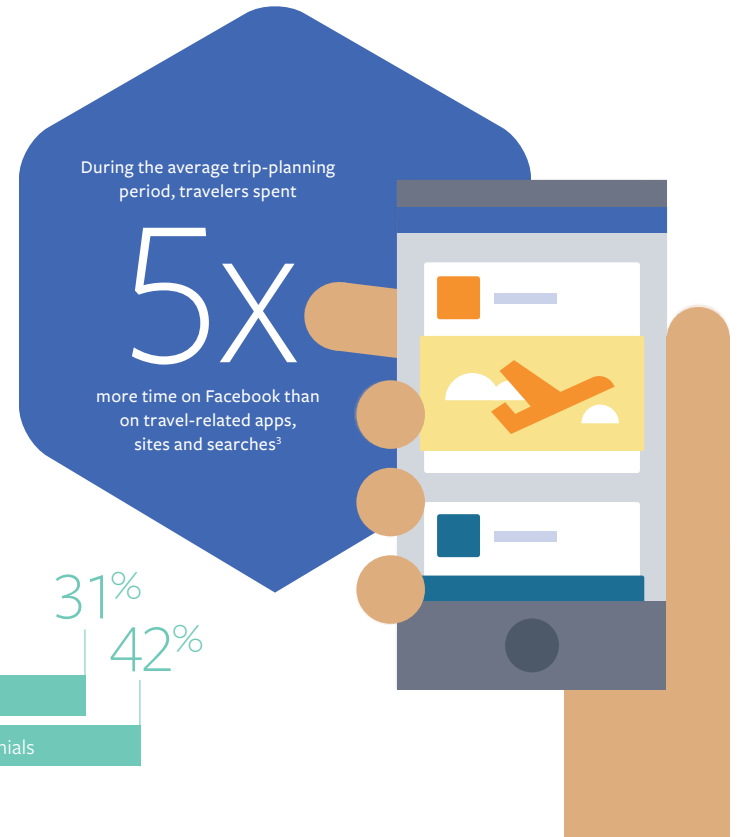## Inspired Travelers* surveyed found ideas for their more recent trip on ...[1]

f

53%
68%

All

Millennials

Instagram

38%
60%

All

Millennials

Messenger

31%
42%

All

Millennials

During the average trip-planning period, travelers spent

5x

more time on Facebook than on travel-related apps, sites and searches[3]

On average, people in the US who posted with the hashtag #travel in July 2016 visit Instagram ...[2]

#travel
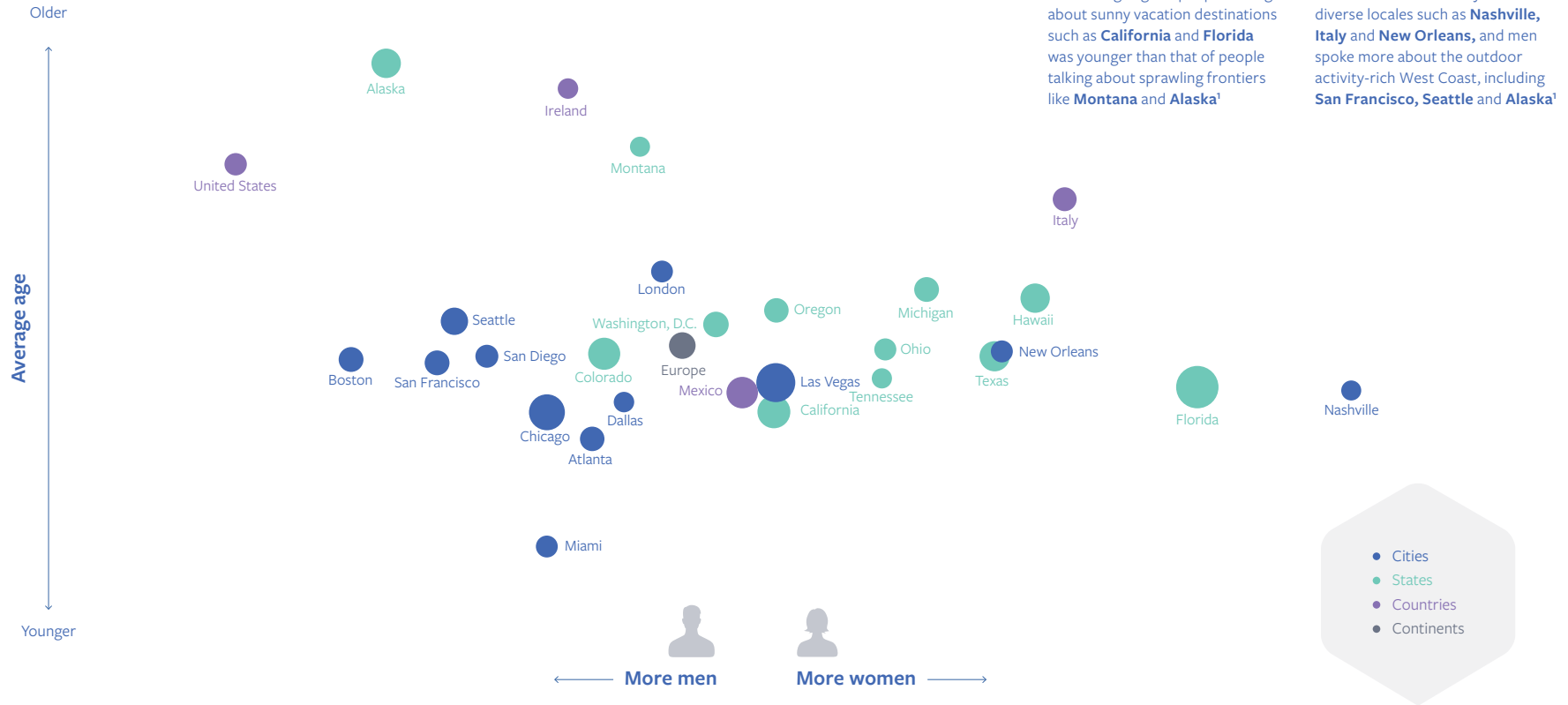
20x per day

+

7 days a week

Consider where travelers find inspiration, and join the conversation

Influence travelers' decisions by tapping into their travel dreams and terminology and sharing lively, relevant content—including video.

Most-mentioned places in US Facebook travel-related conversations, July and August 2016[1]

The average age of people talking about sunny vacation destinations such as **California** and **Florida** was younger than that of people talking about sprawling frontiers like **Montana** and **Alaska**[1]

Women were more likely to discuss diverse locales such as **Nashville, Italy** and **New Orleans,** and men spoke more about the outdoor activity-rich West Coast, including **San Francisco, Seattle** and **Alaska**[1]

Older

Average age

Alaska
Ireland
United States
Montana
Italy
London
Seattle
Oregon
Michigan
Hawaii
Washington, D.C.
San Diego
Ohio
New Orleans
Boston
San Francisco
Colorado
Europe
Las Vegas
Texas
Mexico
Tennessee
Dallas
California
Nashville
Chicago
Atlanta
Florida

Miami

Younger

◄── **More men**   **More women** ──►

- ● Cities
- ● States
- ● Countries
- ● Continents

The top travel-related hashtags in the US on Instagram in July and August 2016 included ...[2]
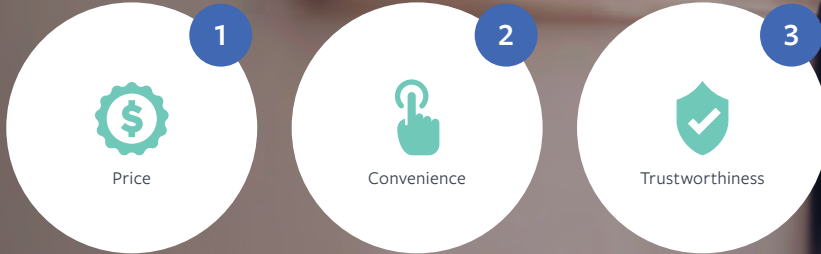
1. Facebook data, Jul 14–Aug 13 2016. Accessed Aug 16, 2016.
Data is based on people in the US ages 18–70 who posted in English.

2. Instagram data, US only, Jul and Aug 2016. Accessed Aug 16, 2016.
Data is based on people in the US ages 18+.

#explore   **#wanderlust**   **#travelgram**   **#california**   **#vacation**   **#ocean**
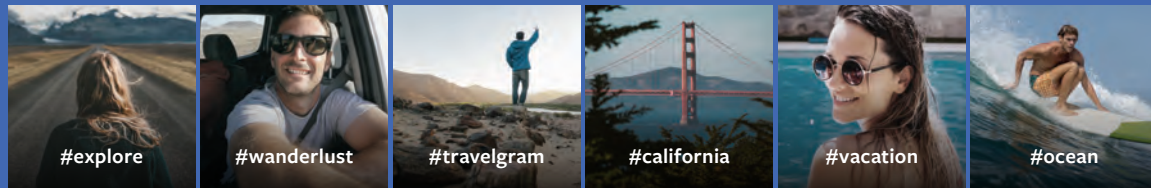
Price and convenience are paramount, but trustworthiness also matters

83%

of travelers surveyed prefer to book with providers with whom they've had a good experience

When booking, travelers surveyed said their top three priorities are

1 Price

2 Convenience

3 Trustworthiness

Keep your old customers, and woo new ones

Engage existing customers to build loyalty, and retarget people who have recently visited your site with ads that emphasize price and convenience.

Source: "Digital Travel Research Journey" by GfK (Facebook-commissioned survey of 2,400 people in the US ages 18–64 who had booked a business or leisure trip in the previous three months including 399 who self-identified as African American, 400 who self-identified as Asian American and 400 who self-identified as US Hispanic), Nov 2015–May 2016. A trip was defined as booking accommodation and/or transportation for leisure or business purposes and staying at least one night at a location other than one's home.

Interest in mobile booking is taking off

Of travelers who researched their last trip on mobile,

38%

also booked it on mobile[1]

Multicultural travelers are especially likely to book on mobile[2]

Compared with people on Facebook who are not in their respective affinity clusters*

People in the US Hispanic affinity cluster on Facebook are

1.68x more likely to book on mobile

People in the African American affinity cluster on Facebook are

1.95x more likely to book on mobile

Booking apps appeal, but for different reasons[3]

Why travelers surveyed used an app to book their last trip

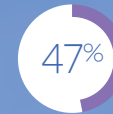|	All travelers	US Hispanics	African Americans	Asian Americans
Speed	38%	29%	46%	44%
The ability to save personal info between uses	36%	41%	55%	12%
Access to exclusive deals	27%	21%	32%	33%

Understand why apps appeal to various consumer segments, and play up those factors

If you're looking to increase app installs, emphasize the points that matter most to your audience, such as speed or special deals.

Travelers want more personal, mobile-centric communication from providers

Travelers surveyed say personalized ads save them time and effort

47% — All travelers

55% — African Americans

58% — US Hispanics

Most agree providers can improve the way they communicate

52% — All travelers

61% — African Americans

61% — US Hispanics

Mobile messaging offers one possible solution

43% of travelers would prefer to interact with a travel provider via mobile messaging than over the phone

30% of travelers said that they could make their travel decisions entirely with messaging apps

Share personalized offers and communicate in a more personal way

Share more personalized offers by tracking travelers' intent signals, and meet their growing expectation for real-time communication before, during and after travel with mobile messaging.

Multicultural travelers are leading the move to mobile

People surveyed who self-identified as US Hispanic, Asian American or African American were significantly more likely than those who did not to agree that it takes too much time and effort to book travel online.

To make the process easier, these travelers head to mobile. All three groups were more likely than others to say they use travel apps and to call mobile messaging a convenient way to communicate with providers.

US Hispanics also try to simplify by booking transportation and accommodations at the same time.

US Hispanics surveyed were

1.34x

more likely than non-US Hispanics surveyed to book their most recent trip as a package

Win multicultural travelers' business by keeping their preferences in mind

Multicultural travelers make up a large part of your audience. Consider what types of content interest them most, and optimize this information for mobile.

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