

# Reigniting consumer emotions: Why are some experiences better the second time?

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Why do people reread books, watch movies multiple times, or visit places again? According to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, many people find that repeating experiences "reignites" their emotions.

"Even though people are already familiar with the stories or the places, re-consuming brings new or renewed appreciation of both the object of consumption and their self," write authors Cristel Antonia Russell (American University) and Sidney J. Levy (University of Arizona and Northwestern University). "By doing it again, people get more out of it."

Through in-depth interviews with participants in the United States and [New Zealand](#), the authors found an [array](#) of underlying reasons for re-consumption. Generally, people do it to enrich their [emotional](#) lives and increase self-knowledge. "The re-experience allows them not only to refresh their memory of the past experience but the recollection is accompanied by the discovery of new details. Therefore, the experience is different, even though it is repeated," the authors explain.

Previous research has focused on the kinds of repeat [experiences](#) that are habitual, addictive, or ritualistic, not experiences that people actively and consciously choose to repeat. In their study, the authors found a variety of motivations for re-consumption. Some participants desired to return to a former state and wanted to affirm—or sometimes invalidate—the impression left by previous experiences. Others wanted to refresh or reconstruct the memory, and some wanted to share the experience with

new people.

Although some participants worried they would be considered odd for repeating [consumption](#), many reported that repeat experiences led to heightened awareness and pleasure. "Given the immense benefits for growth and self-reflexivity, re-consuming actually appears to offer many mental health benefits," the authors write. "People should not hesitate to go back and re-read or re-view what they have already done. A once in a lifetime experience can easily appeal to people again."

**More information:** Cristel Antonia Russell and Sidney J. Levy. "The Temporal and Focal Dynamics of Volitional Re-Consumption: A Phenomenological Investigation of Repeated Hedonic Experiences" *Journal of Consumer Research*: August 2012 (published online October 28, 2011). [ejcr.org/](http://ejcr.org/)

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