

ROUTLEDGE ADVANCES IN TOURISM

Tourist Experience and Self-fulfilment

Insights from positive psychology

Edited by
Sebastian Filep and Philip Pearce

Tourist Experience and Fulfilment

What makes life worth living? Many people would argue that it is fulfilling experiences. These experiences are characterised by feelings of joy and pleasure, positive relationships and a sense of engagement, meaning and achievement. Tourism is arguably one of the largest self-initiated commercial interventions to promote well-being and happiness on the global scale but yet there is absence in the literature on the topic of fulfilling tourist experiences from psychological perspectives.

Drawing on insights and theories from the research field of positive psychology (the study of well-being), this is the first edited book to evaluate tourist experiences from positive psychology perspectives. The volume addresses the important topic of fulfilment through the lens of the world's largest social global phenomenon, tourism. In doing so, the book refreshes and challenges some aspects of tourist behaviour research.

The chapters are grouped under three broad parts which reflect a range of positive psychological outcomes that personal holiday experiences can produce, namely: happiness and humour, meaning and self-actualisation, and health and restoration. The book critically explores these fulfilling experiences from interdisciplinary perspectives and includes research studies from a wide range of geographical regions. By analysing the contemporary fulfilling tourist experiences the book will provide further understanding of tourist behaviour and experience.

Written by leading academics, this significant volume will appeal to those interested in tourism and positive psychology.

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- 31 Tourist Experience and Fulfilment**
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Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	ix
<i>List of contributors</i>	x
<i>Foreword</i>	xii
MIHALY CSIKSZENTMIHALYI	
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiii
1 Introducing tourist experience and fulfilment research	1
SEBASTIAN FILEP AND PHILIP PEARCE	
PART I	
Happiness and humour	15
2 Humour, tourism and positive psychology	17
PHILIP PEARCE AND ANJA PABEL	
3 Walking the talk: positive effects of work-related travel on tourism academics	37
MIEKE WITSEL	
4 Travel as a factor of happiness in Hungary	54
TAMARA RÁTZ AND GÁBOR MICHALKÓ	
5 Tourism, wellness and feeling good: reviewing and studying Asian spa experiences	72
JENNY PANCHAL	

PART II

Meaning and self-actualisation 89

- 6 Meaning making, life transitional experiences and personal well-being within the contexts of religious and spiritual travel** 91

GLENN ROSS

- 7 Experiencing flamenco: an examination of a spiritual journey** 110

XAVIER MATTEUCCI

- 8 Personal transformation through long-distance walking** 127

ROB SAUNDERS, JENNIFER LAING AND BETTY WEILER

- 9 The development of self through volunteer tourism** 147

ZOË ALEXANDER AND ALI BAKIR

PART III

Health and restoration 165

- 10 How does a vacation from work affect tourists' health and well-being?** 167

JESSICA DE BLOOM, SABINE GEURTS AND MICHIEL KOMPIER

- 11 Anticipating a flourishing future with tourism experiences** 186

CHRISTINA HAGGER AND DUNCAN MURRAY

- 12 Visitors' restorative experiences in museum and botanic garden environments** 202

JAN PACKER

- 13 A blueprint for tourist experience and fulfilment research** 223

SEBASTIAN FILEP AND PHILIP PEARCE

- Index* 233

Illustrations

Figures

2.1	Comparison of researcher's ratings with the mean ratings of the judging panel	25
4.1	The happiness-inducing role of life events and situations in Hungary, 2008	58
4.2	Carefreeness	62
4.3	Venice is the dream destination for many travellers	66
7.1	Dimensions of the spiritual experience of flamenco	122
8.1	Transformative effects of long-distance walking	142
9.1	A diagrammatic representation of Engagement Theory in volunteer tourism	153
10.1	Mean levels of health and well-being across four types of vacations	174
12.1	Environments, restorative attributes and restorative effects	205

Tables

2.1	Select instances of humour provided for tourists	23
5.1	The flow experience – spa activity vs other physical activities	81
7.1	Respondents' spiritual experiences	112
9.1	Summary: the percentage of time we would expect to obtain these results	151
10.1	Partial correlations of health and well-being during (<i>Inter</i>) and after vacation (<i>Post 1, Post 2, Post 3, Post 4</i>) with vacation activities and experiences controlled for health and well-being before vacation (<i>Pre</i>)	175
12.1	Semi-structured interview questions	204

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Foreword

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

Psychologists who study what makes life worthwhile are lucky: they are exposed to some of the most exciting and invigorating aspects of existence. Among them, those who study tourism are among the most fortunate: the various activities that comprise what we call ‘tourism’ are unusually rewarding. And not only is tourism a rich and enriching part of life, but it is also one that can be changed and improved with relative ease; thus it lends itself to a variety of ‘interventions’ that might add a great deal to the overall quality of life.

It is therefore difficult to understand why we do not have a stronger presence of tourism research in the field of positive psychology. Or more precisely, why we did not have one. Because now Sebastian Filep and Philip Pearce, who have contributed a great deal to what we know about tourism from a positive psychological perspective, have brought together a volume that will become an invaluable benchmark for many years to come.

Tourism, in one form or another, has been a way to enrich life for as long as humans have left a record of their actions. Herodotus used his travels to learn about the various strange people and unknown lands that surrounded Greece, and wrote down what he saw and experienced. Others have travelled to relax from stress, to recover from illness, to complete their education, to gain points for a pleasant eternal life by visiting shrines, and many, many other reasons. And they still do.

Despite the availability of information that electronics has put at our disposal, visiting the alleys of an Arab city with its unique sights, sounds, smells; and to look the inhabitants in the eye, see their frowns and their smiles, is an experience that no book, movie or video can begin to duplicate. A food market in China, the view of the Alps at sunrise, mingling with the neighbourhood families gossiping in the marble splendour of a Venetian square – are some of the thousands of memories that at the end of life one might return to with a feeling of gratitude for the privilege of having been alive.

Now that travelling is no longer a luxury for the few, it is important that we learn more about how tourism – which like everything else, can be a trivial waste of time if it is not done well – can help people to open up their lives to all sorts of new dimensions. For all of us, this volume can lead to richer and more meaningful experiences.

Claremont, CA, 2012

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