



LEISURE TRAVEL AND HAPPINESS

*An empirical study into the effect of
holiday trips on individuals' subjective wellbeing*

Jeroen Nawijn

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Vakantiereizen en geluk

*Een empirisch onderzoek naar het effect van
vakanties op subjectief welbevinden*

Leisure travel and happiness

*An empirical study into the effect of
holiday trips on individuals' subjective wellbeing*

Proefschrift

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Table of contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	11
CHAPTER 0: AN INTRODUCTION TO LEISURE AND HAPPINESS	13
0.1 A brief history of happiness	13
0.2 What is happiness?	13
0.2.1 What quality of life?	14
0.2.2 What kind of satisfaction?	15
0.2.3 Components of life satisfaction	15
0.2.4 Measures of happiness	15
0.3 Leisure	16
0.4 Theories of happiness	16
0.4.1 Set-point theory	16
0.4.2 Comparison theory	17
0.4.3 Goal theory	17
0.4.4 Livability theory	17
0.5 Research findings on leisure and happiness	18
0.5.1 Types of leisure and happiness	18
0.5.2 Leisure travel and happiness	21
0.5.3 Leisure satisfaction and happiness	22
0.6 Possible causal paths	22
0.7 Gaps in existing research on happiness and leisure	24
0.7.1 Gaps in research	24
0.7.2 Focus of this dissertation	24
0.8 Plan of this dissertation	25
CHAPTER 1: THE EFFECT OF LEISURE ACTIVITIES ON LIFE SATISFACTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF HOLIDAY TRIPS	31
1.1 Introduction	31
1.1.1 The problem	31
1.1.2 Research on happiness and leisure	31
1.1.3 Aim of this paper	33
1.2 Method	33
1.2.1 Data	33
1.2.2 Variables	33
1.2.3 Analytic approach	34

1.3 Results	35
1.3.1 Same-time zero-order correlations	35
1.3.2 Same-time partial correlations	36
1.3.3 Over-time correlations	36
1.4 Discussion	37
1.4.1 Do holiday trips boost happiness?	37
1.4.2 Why no effect of other leisure activities?	38
1.4.3 Limitations	38
1.4.4 Further study	38
1.5 Conclusion	39
CHAPTER 2: VACATIONERS HAPPIER, BUT MOST NOT HAPPIER AFTER A HOLIDAY	47
2.1 Introduction	47
2.1.1 Tourism	47
2.1.2 Happiness	48
2.1.3 Tourism and happiness	48
2.1.4 Questions	49
2.2 Method	49
2.2.1 Respondents	49
2.2.2 Variables	50
2.3 Results	51
2.3.1 Are vacationers happier?	51
2.3.2 Does a holiday trip boost happiness?	52
2.4 Discussion	53
2.4.1 Vacationers are happier	53
2.4.2 Holidays briefly boost post-trip happiness	53
2.4.3 Explanations	53
2.4.4 Implications	54
2.4.5 Future research	54
2.5 Conclusions	55
CHAPTER 3: THE HOLIDAY HAPPINESS CURVE: A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION INTO MOOD DURING A HOLIDAY ABROAD	59
3.1 Introduction	59
3.1.1 Holiday misery	59
3.1.2 Earlier research	60
3.1.3 Questions	61
3.2 Method	61
3.2.1 Respondents	61
3.2.2 Concepts	61
3.2.3 Variables	62

3.3 Results	63
3.3.1 Average mood during the holiday	63
3.3.2 Mood of the day over the days	65
3.4 Discussion	67
3.4.1 Holiday misery a myth?	67
3.4.2 Limitations	68
3.4.3 Implications	68
3.4.4 Future research	68
3.5 Conclusions	69
CHAPTER 4: DETERMINANTS OF DAILY HAPPINESS ON VACATION	73
4.1 Introduction	73
4.1.1 The desire for a happy holiday	73
4.1.2 Daily happiness	74
4.2 Method	75
4.2.1 Respondents	75
4.2.2 Variables	75
4.3 Results	76
4.3.1 Daily feelings on vacation	76
4.3.2 Possible causes of these feelings	77
4.3.3 Comparison to everyday life	78
4.4 Conclusion and discussion	78
4.4.1 Implications	79
4.4.2 Limitations and suggestions for future research	80
CHAPTER 5: HAPPINESS THROUGH VACATIONING: JUST A TEMPORARY BOOST OR LONG-TERM BENEFITS?	85
5.1 Introduction	85
5.1.1 Happiness	85
5.1.2 Tourism	86
5.1.3 Earlier research on tourism and happiness	86
5.1.4 Questions	87
5.2 Method	87
5.2.1 Respondents	87
5.2.2 Variables	87
5.2.3 Analysis	88
5.3 Results	89
5.3.1 Are vacationers happier than non-vacationers?	89
5.3.2 Do vacationers become happier if they take more trips?	90
5.3.3 Does happiness predict vacationing?	91
5.3.4 Does a change in trip frequency affect happiness?	91
5.3.5 Does valuing vacationing matter?	93

5.4 Discussion	94
5.4.1 Findings	94
5.4.2 Explanations	94
5.4.3 Implications	95
5.4.4 Limitations	95
5.4.5 Future research	95
5.5 Conclusions	96

CHAPTER 6: TRAVELING 'GREEN': IS TOURISTS' HAPPINESS AT STAKE? 101

6.1 Introduction	101
6.1.1 The need for sustainability	101
6.1.2 Behavioral change and mitigation policies	102
6.1.3 Happiness and holiday trips	103
6.1.4 Study objective	104
6.2 Method	104
6.2.1 Data	104
6.2.2 Variables	104
6.3 Results	106
6.3.1 Happiness and holiday trips	106
6.3.2 Determinants of tourists' happiness	106
6.4 Discussion	107
6.4.1 What is the strongest determinant of happiness?	107
6.4.2 Involuntary green travel	107
6.4.3 Implications	108
6.4.4 Limitations	109
6.4.5 Future research	109
6.5 Conclusions	109

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS ABOUT VACATIONING AND HAPPINESS 113

7.1 The question	113
7.1.1 Why vacationing may add to happiness	113
7.1.2 Direct and indirect effects	114
7.1.3 Phases	114
7.2 Does vacationing add to happiness?	114
7.2.1 Earlier empirical findings	114
7.2.2 This study's findings	114
7.3 Explanations	115
7.3.1 Gratification of needs	116
7.3.2 Realization of wants	116
7.3.3 Poor tourism product	117
7.4 Implications	117
7.4.1 The individual consumer	117
7.4.2 The tourism industry	117

7.5 Limitations	118
7.5.1 <i>Cross-sectional vs. longitudinal</i>	118
7.5.2 <i>Retrospective life satisfaction</i>	119
7.5.3 <i>General effect instead of specification</i>	119
7.6 Suggestions for future research	119
7.6.1 <i>More longitudinal studies</i>	119
7.6.2 <i>Experience sampling method</i>	119
7.6.3 <i>Specification</i>	120
7.6.4 <i>Leisure travel: the host community</i>	120
7.6.5 <i>Recuperation</i>	120
7.6.6 <i>Project-based leisure and serious leisure</i>	120
 DUTCH SUMMARY VAKANTIEREIZEN EN GELUK	 124
 CURRICULUM VITAE	 128

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Jeroen Nawijn

Chapter 0

An introduction to leisure and happiness¹

0.1 A brief history of happiness

Most people want to be happy and seek ways to become happier than they are, probably more so than ever in today's multiple-choice society (cf. Schwartz, 2004). Happiness depends partly on how we spend our time. Choice in that matter is limited in various ways, much of our time being occupied by obligations such as work and childcare. Yet we have more control over what we do in leisure time. Hence, it is worth knowing how leisure affects happiness.

Contemplation about happiness began hundreds of years ago. The ancient Greeks in particular were interested in happiness. Aristotle thought of happiness as 'living according to reason'. In his view, leading a happy life meant leading a virtuous life (McMahon, 2006).

Since the 1960s happiness has become a subject of empirical research in the social sciences. The concept of happiness in these empirical studies is different from Aristotle's view. Rather than leading a *morally good* life, happiness is regarded as leading a *satisfying* life. In this dissertation I focus on that latter meaning of the word 'happiness'.

A life can be made more satisfying by strengthening life skills. Happiness training programs have developed since the 1960s. Recently, interventionists and researchers joined forces in the Positive Psychology movement. Several positive interventions have been developed, some of which are more successful than others (cf. Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). Another strand in this movement focuses not so much on training and soul searching, but gathers objective information on determinants of happiness, with the purpose of enabling people to make better informed choices; that is, minimize discrepancies between expected and experienced utility (Kahneman, Wakker, & Sarin, 1997). This dissertation fits the latter strand.

Striving for happiness is not futile; apart from feeling good, being happy has several other advantages. One benefit is that happiness lengthens life (Danner, Snowdon, & Friesen, 2001), because happiness protects against becoming ill (Veenhoven, 2008). Longitudinal studies found that happiness also fosters intimate relationships and adds to productivity at work in various ways (Lyubomirsky & King, 2005).

In this Introductory Chapter I discuss the relation between leisure and happiness. First, the concepts of happiness and leisure are defined. Next, I explain how leisure could affect happiness. I end this chapter with an explanation of the structure of the dissertation, which will address the role of a specific type of leisure, leisure travel.

0.2 What is happiness?

We use a variety of words to describe how well we are doing. Commonly used terms are 'well-being', 'quality of life' or 'happiness'. All of these have different - but sometimes overlapping - meanings. Veenhoven (2000) proposed a classification of meanings by distinguishing different qualities of life.

¹ This text is based on: Nawijn, J., & Veenhoven, R. (in press). Happiness through Leisure. In T. Freire (Ed.), *Positive Leisure Science: From Subjective Experience to Social Contexts*: Springer.

His classification is based on two bipartitions; life ‘chances’ and life ‘results’ versus ‘outer’ and ‘inner’ qualities (see Scheme 1).

Scheme 1: The four qualities of life

	<i>Outer qualities</i>	<i>Inner qualities</i>
<i>Life chances</i>	Livability of the environment	Life-ability of the person
<i>Life results</i>	Utility of life	Satisfaction

(Veenhoven, 2000)

0.2.1 What quality of life?

The upper half of Scheme 1 presents two variants of potential quality of human life. The outer qualities address the opportunities in one’s environment, whereas the inner qualities refer to the ability to exploit these. Veenhoven denotes the environmental chances by the term ‘livability’ and the personal capacities by ‘life-ability’.

Livability of the environment represents good living conditions. Quality of life, well-being or welfare are commonly used terms for this top left part of the quadrant. According to Veenhoven (2000, p. 6), “‘livability’ is a better word, because it refers explicitly to a characteristic of the environment and does not have the limited connotation of material conditions.”

Life-ability of the person denotes how well individuals are equipped to cope with their life. Besides being referred to as well-being or quality of life, this top-right quadrant of Scheme 1 is also denoted as adaptive potential, health, efficacy or potency. Life-ability is the main focus of Positive Psychological interventions.

The lower half of Scheme 1 addresses the quality of life with respect to its outcomes. Veenhoven named the external worth of life ‘utility of life’, whereas the inner valuation is termed ‘appreciation of life’.

Utility of life presumes higher values. It “represents the notion that a good life must be good for something more than itself” (Veenhoven, 2000, p. 7).

Satisfaction is about the inner outcomes of life, by which is meant the subjective appreciation of life. This has also been referred to as subjective well-being, life satisfaction and happiness.

The focus of this dissertation is on satisfaction. Four kinds of satisfaction can be distinguished (see Scheme 2).

Scheme 2: The four kinds of satisfaction

	<i>Passing</i>	<i>Enduring</i>
<i>Part of life</i>	Pleasure	Part satisfaction
<i>Life as a whole</i>	Peak experience	Life satisfaction

(Veenhoven, 2010)

0.2.2 What kind of satisfaction?

The word 'satisfaction' is also used with differing meanings. The four-fold taxonomy presented in Scheme 2 helps us understand these differences.

A passing satisfaction with a part of life is what we call a *pleasure*; for instance, the enjoyment derived from reading a good book or drinking a cold glass of beer.

An enduring kind of satisfaction related to a part of one's life is referred to as a *part satisfaction*, which can be satisfaction with a 'domain' of life, such as leisure, or an 'aspect' of life, such as the variety of one's quotidian experiences.

A passing kind of satisfaction relating to one's life as a whole is extasis, an intense experience, that is called *peak experience*.

Finally, life satisfaction (or happiness) is enduring satisfaction with life as a whole (Veenhoven, 2010). Life satisfaction consists of two components, which are discussed in the following section.

The kinds of satisfaction addressed in this dissertation are passing and enduring kinds of satisfaction. I study pleasurable effects of leisure travel and endurable effects of leisure travel on life satisfaction in Chapters 1 to 6. More specifically, I address potential enduring effects in Chapters 1, 5 and 6. Potential pleasurable effects are addressed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

I address part satisfaction (i.e. leisure satisfaction) in this Introductory Chapter. I do not address peak experiences.

0.2.3 Components of life satisfaction

When estimating their satisfaction with life as a whole, people draw on two sources of information: how well they feel most of the time and to what extent their life meets their wants. Veenhoven (2009) refers to these appraisals as, respectively, the 'affective' and 'cognitive' components of happiness. He considers these as sub-totals in the inclusive evaluation of life, which he calls 'overall happiness'. These appraisals do not necessarily coincide. For instance, one can feel good most of the time but still judge that life falls short of one's aspirations.

Feelings - in terms of emotions, affect and mood - belong to the affective component of happiness, which is called *hedonic level of affect*.

Contentment is the term used to describe the cognitive component of happiness. Contentment designates "the degree to which an individual perceives that his aspirations are being met" (Veenhoven, 1984, p. 27).

In this dissertation, I address overall happiness and hedonic level of affect. I do not deal with contentment. I address pleasurable (i.e. daily and weekly) feelings in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, whereas I address general feelings in Chapter 5. Overall happiness is addressed in Chapters 1, 5 and 6.

0.2.4 Measures of happiness

Over the years, several methods of assessing happiness have been used. According to Layard (2005), the most 'objective' method of measuring happiness is by means of a brain scan. For rather obvious financial and logistical reasons this is not a very practical method for studying leisure travelers. Since happiness is something people explicitly contemplate, it can also be measured using self-reports. The responses to self-report questions on happiness are generally prompt, non-response is low and temporal stability is high (see Veenhoven, 1984, 1991b, 2011a). An overview of all acceptable happiness measures is presented in the collection of happiness measures in the World Database of Happiness (Veenhoven, 2011a).

Single and multiple moments. Happiness is measured in a single moment or at multiple moments in time. The Experience Sampling Method (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1987) is a multiple-moment assessment method where participants are 'beeped' on a PDA or cell phone and are asked to record where they are, what they are doing, and how they feel at that moment. Such assessments are made at multiple moments throughout a day, typically during one or more weeks. Another example of such a study is the Day Reconstruction Method (DRM; Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2004), in which respondents assess the previous day in its entirety. Questionnaires are typically used for single moment measurements.

Single and multiple questions. Questionnaires could use either single item questions on happiness (Abdel-Khalek, 2006) or scales. Examples of the latter are the Positive And Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) and the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Pavot & Diener, 1993). The PANAS and DRM measure the affective component of life satisfaction, whereas the SHS and SWLS are overall measures of happiness.

0.3 Leisure

I define leisure as free time which is defined as "time away from unpleasant obligation" (Stebbins, 2001, p. 4). Stebbins (2001) distinguishes three types of leisure: serious leisure, casual leisure and project-based leisure. Serious leisure constitutes three kinds: career volunteering, hobbyist activities and amateur pursuits. Casual leisure is fleeting and offers no 'leisure career'. Project-based leisure is free time dedicated to a leisure project. This type of leisure is fixed in time, unlike a hobby.

The leisure domain also includes a fourth domain, that of leisure travel (i.e. tourism). Leisure travel takes place outside one's normal environment. It includes at least one overnight stay elsewhere (UNWTO, 1995). Although leisure and tourism were seen as rather distinct subjects in the past, they can be conceptualized in such a way that a synthesized behavioral understanding of the two disciplines can be conceived (see Moore, Cushman, & Simmons, 1995). In fact, tourism should be regarded as a specific form of leisure as the distinction between tourism and everyday life is not as apparent as it perhaps once was. Experiences that were once confined solely to tourism are now accessible in everyday life (Lash & Urry, 1994). As a result, tourism has very much become an integral part of life (Larsen, 2008; McCabe, 2002).

This dissertation focuses on this fourth domain of leisure (i.e. leisure travel). The reasons for this are explained in section 0.7.

0.4 Theories of happiness

Four theories offer an explanation of how leisure could affect happiness. In this section I address these four theories of happiness.

0.4.1 Set-point theory

Some theories hold that happiness cannot be changed. For instance, *homeostatic set-point theory* or *trait theory* argues that happiness is a rather stable 'trait' and that whatever we do, we cannot change our happiness. In this view, particular experiences can at best provide a temporary uplift, after which we return to our set-point (Cummins, 2005). In that view leisure cannot make us any happier.

However, the empirical support for this theory is minimal. A research synthesis by Veenhoven (1994) showed that happiness is somewhat stable in the short run, but certainly not over the life-time. Furthermore, happiness is not insensitive to fortune or adversity. More recently, Headey (2008, 2010) showed that set point theory overstates the stability of happiness; some groups of people at least experience substantial permanent upward or downward changes in life satisfaction.

0.4.2 Comparison theory

A cognitive theory of happiness is *comparison theory*, which holds that we base our happiness on the estimation of the gap between the realities of our lives and common standards of the good life. Standards of comparison are deemed to be variable rather than fixed and subjective evaluation of life is considered unrelated to the 'objective' quality of life (Veenhoven & Ehrhardt, 1995). Comparison theory disregards the affective component (Veenhoven, 1991a; Veenhoven & Ehrhardt, 1995).

Cross-national research has failed to find evidence supporting the assumptions of comparison theory (Veenhoven & Ehrhardt, 1995), whereas research between groups of individuals (happy versus unhappy) has found evidence that supports comparison theory (Lyubomirsky & Ross, 1997).

Comparison theory allows for an effect of leisure on happiness. Different aspects of leisure can be used for comparisons. These are mainly how one spends their leisure time and how much leisure time one has.

0.4.3 Goal theory

Other cognitive happiness theories, such as *goal theory*, also imply that leisure can influence happiness. Consumer behavior is predominantly goal-directed. A goal focuses on a specific outcome, but is not limited to such an outcome. Goals also encompass experiences and sequences of events (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999).

Several studies in the field of happiness have shown that pursuit of personal goals and progress on (important) goals are strong predictors of happiness (Brunstein, 1993; Emmons, 1986, 1992; Omodei & Wearing, 1990; Palys & Little, 1983). However, people may adopt certain goals which are not congruent with their needs (Diener, 2000). Striving for such goals will not increase happiness. Similarly, Kasser and Ryan (1993) found that happiness does not increase when people make progress on certain goals, such as 'making money'. Their interpretation is that certain goals meet intrinsic needs and those affect happiness, whereas others meet extrinsic needs and do not affect happiness. Additionally, McGregor and Little (1998) found that perceived efficacy is related to happiness. Low expectations of success are associated with negative affect (Emmons, 1986).

Thus, in the case of leisure, striving for leisure goals which are congruent to an individual's needs and wants should increase happiness. Like other cognitive happiness theories, goal theory ignores the affective component of happiness.

0.4.4 Livability theory

Need theory or *livability theory* is an affective theory of happiness which posits that the subjective appreciation of life is based on the 'objective' quality of life. Livability theory focuses on absolute quality of living conditions, whereas comparison theory focuses on the relative difference. Thus, according to livability theory, people are happier in good living conditions, compared to bad living conditions, even if they know that others are better off (Veenhoven & Ehrhardt, 1995). This theory presumes that there are basic human needs and that happiness increases when these needs are met (Diener & Lucas, 2000). In this view, happiness mirrors the degree to which innate needs are met (Veenhoven, 2009).

Cross-national research supports the assumptions of livability theory (Veenhoven & Ehrhardt, 1995), particularly the relation between economic growth and its influence on years lived happily (Veenhoven & Hagerty, 2006).

In this view, leisure can contribute to happiness if it is instrumental in meeting human needs. If so, people will be happier in societies that have cultivated leisure compared to societies that have not.

0.5 Research findings on leisure and happiness

All the available research results on happiness and leisure are gathered in the World Database of Happiness (Veenhoven, 2011b). The complete literature on this subject can be found in its Bibliography of Happiness (Veenhoven, 2011c), subject section Happiness and Leisure (code Le). By the end of 2011, there were 105 publications in this category (Veenhoven, 2011d). Findings yielded by studies that used acceptable measures of happiness are presented in the collection of Correlational Findings (WDH-CF; Veenhoven, 2011e). One of the reports in this collection, 'Happiness and Leisure' (code L3), contains the majority findings on the relationship between leisure and happiness (see Veenhoven, 2011f). Subsections of A2, C11, F6, M13, P10, S6, S7 and S12 in the WDH-CF also include findings on leisure and happiness. (See Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 for the specific subsections and their subject matters.) Some findings on leisure and happiness are placed under several codes. To prevent multiple inclusions, I included each finding once.

Most of the observed correlations between leisure and happiness are positive (60%), although a large part is not significant (38%). Just 2% of the findings on leisure and happiness are negative associations. Positive associations between leisure and happiness are typically observed in studies that use the affective component of happiness, whereas insignificant correlations stem more often from studies that use more cognitive measures of happiness. There is no difference between positive and non-significant findings in terms of sample size or populations studied.

Next I summarize the main findings.

0.5.1 Types of leisure and happiness

Casual leisure

The World Database of Happiness involves 435 correlational findings on the relation between *casual leisure* and happiness. (For a description of *casual leisure* and other types of leisure, see section 0.3.) An overview is provided in Table 1. In this section, I discuss these findings.

Table 1: Findings on casual leisure and happiness

Code in WDH-CF	Subject matter	Observed association with happiness		
		Negative	None	Positive
Activities: What one does				
A2.3.5	Leisure activity	1	5	8
Cultural participation				
C11.2	Current cultural participation		2	1
C11.2.1	Passive participation		0	5
C11.2.2	Active participation		21	13
Friendship				
F6.3	Current contact with friends	2	28	47
F6.3.1	Visit to friends		5	18
F6.3.2	Telephone calls with friends	1		2
F6.3.3	Attendance of parties			3
Lifestyle				
L3.3.2.2	Eating/drinking out			6
L3.3.2.3	Gaming		1	
L3.3.2.4	Gardening			1
L3.3.2.6	Internet		6	3
L3.3.2.7	Reading		10	21
L3.3.2.8	Shopping			2
L3.3.2.9	Theater/movies			2
L3.3.2.11	TV watching, radio listening	8	10	20
L3.3.2.13	Music listening	1	11	
Sports				
S12.2	Current involvement in sports		2	1
S12.2.1	Active involvement in sports		9	17
S12.2.2	Passive involvement in sports		2	11
Social participation				
S6.2	Current contacts	5	39	37
S7.2	Current organizational participation		10	6
S7.2.2	Attendance to meetings		15	17

Source: World Database of Happiness, Collection Correlational Findings (Veenhoven, 2011e)

Most of the associations are positive (241). 176 correlates are not significant. Just 18 negative associations between *casual leisure* and happiness exist.

Frequency of participation in leisure activities (under lifestyle; see Table 1) is generally associated positively with happiness. However, participants are not necessarily happier overall compared to non-participants, which explains the non-significant findings. TV watching and radio listening make up the bulk of the negative associations. In contrast, cultural participation and sports have no negative findings at all.

Involvement in sports, whether active or passive, is mainly positively associated with happiness. Social participation and cultural participation is more often not associated with happiness, in comparison to sports or activities that have to do with keeping up friendships.

Project-based leisure

The relationship of this kind of leisure to happiness has not been studied as yet. Thus, the World Database of Happiness (Veenhoven, 2011b) does not contain any findings on that matter.

Serious leisure

This kind of leisure concerns mostly hobbies and volunteering. 49 correlates on that matter exist (see Table 2).

Almost all correlates are positive associations between *serious leisure* and happiness. The data suggest that people who have a hobby are happier than those who do not. Volunteering is positively associated with happiness. Happy individuals are more active in volunteering and additionally, volunteering adds to their happiness. Thus, there is evidence that there exists a positive cycle of selection and social causation processes (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001).

Membership of a volunteer organization does not constitute active volunteering, therefore all correlates of membership of voluntary organizations (code S7.2.1) are excluded from Table 2. Findings under code S12.2.4 (kind of sport practiced) all concern professional athletes and are therefore also excluded from Table 2.

Table 2: Findings on serious leisure and happiness

Code in WDHC-F	Subject matter	Observed association with happiness		
		Negative	None	Positive
Lifestyle				
L3.3.2.12	Voluntary work			3
L3.3.2.5	Hobbies			6
L3.4.2	Leisure aspirations		1	
Social participation				
S7.2.3	Voluntary work		7	30
Sports				
S12.2.3	Skilledness in sports			2

Source: World Database of Happiness, Collection Correlational Findings (Veenhoven, 2011e)

0.5.2 Leisure travel and happiness

Findings on leisure travel and happiness can be found under code L3 and L9 in the World Database of Happiness. The sub-codes depend on the aspect of travel that was assessed. 20 correlates are included (see Tables 3 and 4). Cross sectional studies inform us about the association between two variables, while follow-up studies inform us of the causality.

Cross sectional studies

Most associations between leisure travel and happiness are positive (10; see Table 3). Significant positive associations between frequency of leisure travel and happiness are reported by Bradburn & Caplovitz (1965) and Boelhouwer & Stoop (1999). Gilbert & Abdullah (2004) find that vacationers are generally happier than non-vacationers. These observations could mean that happy people travel more and/or that leisure travel makes vacationers happier. For getting a view on the direction of causality we need follow-up studies.

Table 3: Findings from cross-sectional studies on leisure travel and happiness

Code in WDH-CF	Subject matter	Observed association with happiness		
		Negative	None	Positive
L3.1.4	Later leisure		2	1
L3.3.2	Specific leisure activities			3
L3.3.2.10	Traveling		1	2
L9.2.2.5	Travel			4

Source: World Database of Happiness, Collection Correlational Findings (Veenhoven, 2011e)

Follow-up studies

Findings of the few available follow-up studies are presented in Table 4. These data show that leisure travel has mostly a positive effect on happiness.

Three studies compared pre-trip life satisfaction to post-trip life satisfaction (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Hoopes & Lounsbury, 1989; Milman, 1998). One of these studies (Milan, 1998), which used a small sample of mostly retired older Americans on a short group tour, found no increase in life satisfaction after vacation. This particular study collected the pre-trip data at the start of the tour, instead of before. The other two studies, that did use actual pre-trip measurements, find that life satisfaction increases after vacation. However, the effect of the holiday trip on life satisfaction is small and it is unclear how long the effect lasts. Overall, the findings from the follow-up studies suggest that leisure travel can indeed make people happier, as the cross-sectional findings already implied.

Table 4: Findings from follow-up studies on leisure travel and happiness

Code in WDH-CF	Subject matter	Observed association with happiness		
		Negative	None	Positive
L3.1.1.1	Earlier travel		1	
L3.1.4	Later leisure			2
L9.2.2.5	Travel			4

Source: World Database of Happiness, Collection Correlational Findings (Veenhoven, 2011e)

0.5.3 Leisure satisfaction and happiness

Leisure satisfaction is considered a part satisfaction (see top-right quadrant Scheme 2). Ateca-Amestoy et al. (2008, p. 65) define leisure satisfaction as follows [based on Beard & Ragheb (1980)]: “positive perceptions or feelings that an individual forms, elicits, or gains as a result of engaging in leisure activities and choices. It is the degree to which one is presently content or pleased with one’s general leisure experiences and situations. This positive feeling of pleasure results from the satisfaction of felt or unmet needs of the individual.”

252 findings on leisure satisfaction and happiness are included in the World Database of Happiness (see Table 5). Specific sub-satisfactions of leisure satisfaction, such as satisfactions with friends (code F6.6.2) or satisfaction with sports (code S12.3.2), are not included in Table 5. Furthermore, findings related to feelings instead of satisfaction are excluded (code M13.4.2). Finally, findings that concern differences between several life domains are also excluded (codes L4.4.2.1, L4.4.2.2, L4.4.2.3).

The vast majority of associations between leisure satisfaction and happiness are positive (184). No negative associations exist. This is not surprising as satisfaction with particular parts of life generally correlates positively with satisfaction with life as a whole (cf. Ateca-Amestoy, Serrano-del-Rosal, & Vera-Toscano, 2008; Lloyd & Auld, 2002; Van Praag & Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2004; Van Praag, Frijters, & Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2003). Satisfaction with leisure is among the strongest correlates, together with satisfaction with finance, health and work (Van Praag, et al., 2003).

Findings on the part satisfaction for vacations (i.e. vacation satisfaction) are based on two studies (Hoopes & Lounsbury, 1989; Neal, Sirgy, Uysal, 1999) that both find fairly strong correlations between vacation satisfaction and happiness.

Table 5: Findings on leisure satisfaction and happiness

Code in WDHC-F	Subject matter	Observed association with happiness		
		Negative	None	Positive
L3.1.2.2	Change in specific leisure activities		2	7
L3.1.2.3	Change in satisfaction with leisure			4
L3.3	Current leisure activity		19	13
L3.4.1	Concern about leisure		5	8
L3.4.3	Satisfaction with leisure		18	68
L3.4.3.1	Satisfaction with time for leisure		3	17
L3.4.3.2	Satisfaction with leisure activities		8	50
L10.4.2.4	Satisfaction with local recreation		13	17

Source: World Database of Happiness, Collection Correlational Findings (Veenhoven, 2011e)

0.6 Possible causal paths

Since the focus of the dissertation is on the effect of leisure travel on happiness, I will now review the possible causal paths.

Direct effects for tourists. A tourist may enjoy feelings of anticipation when looking forward to an upcoming trip. At the same time a tourist may experience stress when packing for the trip or making

sure things are taken care of at work. During the trip itself people are expected to enjoy activities, but individuals may also be confronted with stressors. For example, tourists experience culture shock, as reported in an early study by Pearce (1981). In addition, homesickness may affect a tourists' happiness directly (Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, Van Heck, & Kirschbaum, 1996). Finally, trips can also be savored through photographs and memories years after the trip took place.

Indirect effects for tourists. Indirect effects may also occur for a tourist. Mental and physical relaxation takes place. Furthermore, tourists may have learned new skills, such as a language, or may have grown fond of a specific culture. Finally, seeing other places, meeting new people and experiencing other cultures may enhance one's world view.

Effects on the host community. Impacts of tourism on a host community have been subject of study since the 1970s, ever since Doxey developed his well-known Irridex model, which describes the different phases of resident attitudes towards tourism (Doxey, 1975). Butler (1980) later build on Doxey's work in his Tourism Area Life Cycle model. The different socio-cultural, economic and environmental impacts that were proposed in these models have been studied at a variety of tourist destinations (e.g., Aref, 2010; Belisle & Hoy, 1980; Perdue, Long, & Allen, 1990; Ryan & Montgomery, 1994; Sheldon & Abenoja, 2001; Sirakaya, Teye, & Sönmez, 2002; Smith & Krannich, 1998; Upchurch & Teivane, 2000). Although indicators of life satisfaction have been part of multi-item scales in studies on residents' quality of life (cf. Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Cecil, Fu, Wang, & Avgoustis, 2010; Puckó & Smith, 2011), these have not been studied as a single dependent variable. Potential effects of tourism on hosts can be derived from the large number of aforementioned studies on tourism impacts. These impacts include direct effects of pollution, crowding and income. Indirect effects may stem from economic impacts through creation of jobs, migration related to job opportunities in the tourism industry, environmental impacts (e.g., deterioration of natural areas, loss of biodiversity, water shortage), climate change, loss of culture through inauthentic representations of (sub)cultures and a changed world view due to continuous interactions with tourists.

The different types of (potential) determinants of happiness, its way (direct vs. indirect) and the person involved (host vs. guest) are represented in Scheme 3.

Scheme 3: Potential effects of leisure travel on happiness

	Guest	Host
<i>Direct</i>	Anticipation Homesickness Stress Culture shock Savoring Social bonding	Income Pollution Crowding
<i>Indirect</i>	Skills learned World view Mental and physical relaxation Health	Economic benefits World view Migration Deterioration of natural areas Loss of biodiversity Climate change (Loss of) culture Preservation of nature

0.7 Gaps in existing research on happiness and leisure

0.7.1 Gaps in research

There is little research on project-based leisure and serious leisure. Very few studies address serious leisure, and studies on project-based leisure and their effect on happiness are non-existent.

There is also a lack of research that assesses which type of leisure activity is best suited for which type of person (i.e. personality). Personality traits not only influence happiness, but also have an influence on how individuals make use of their leisure time (Hills & Argyle, 1998; Kraaykamp & Van Eijck, 2005; Melamed, Meir, & Samson, 1995). As personality partially influences how leisure time is spent, it may make people happier to find leisure activities which are congruent with one's personality. Yet this hypothesis remains untested.

Work, leisure and happiness are interrelated (Haworth, 1997). Leisure is used by individuals as an opportunity to cope with work stress (Trenberth, Dewe, & Walkey, 1999) and working conditions influence leisure satisfaction (Near, 1984). The passive aspects of leisure seem well suited to cope with work stress (Trenberth, et al., 1999), but we do not know whether this is reality as accurate measures of happiness are missing from current research. Thus, there is also a lack of research on leisure as a tool for recuperation.

Finally, there is a research gap on the effect of leisure travel on both the host as well as the guest. The potential direct and indirect effects of leisure travel on the happiness of the host community (see Scheme 3) is completely unknown.

We also do not know how leisure travelers feel during a trip. There is no information on potential causes of these feelings, nor how these feelings change over the course of the trip. Furthermore, we do not know how long (potential) effects of vacationing last after the trip and why that is. Additionally, besides frequency of travel, we have no information on other correlates of leisure travel and happiness. Last, we lack insight into potential long-term effects of vacationing on happiness and other correlates besides frequency of travel.

0.7.2 Focus of this dissertation

I am unable to address all these gaps. I focus on a part of the gap in research on the (potential) effects of leisure travel on individuals' happiness (left quadrants Scheme 3). Thus, by 'individual' I refer to the perspective of the vacationer (i.e. the guest). I will address the (potential) direct and indirect effects of vacationing on satisfaction (lower-right quadrant Scheme 1).

Leisure travel is a particularly interesting field to study because of the expectation that leisure travel is becoming increasingly more important in society. The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) reports an average long-term growth rate of 4% in international tourist arrivals and predicts 1.6 billion international arrivals by the year 2020 (UNWTO, 2008). These numbers exclude domestic trips, which outnumber international trips by more than a factor of five (Peeters & Dubois, 2010). Furthermore, there are some contradictive findings on leisure travel as indicated at section 0.5.3. Additionally, no study on leisure travel addressed how happy tourists are during the actual trip. The studies on leisure travel in the World Database of Happiness either assess differences between vacationers and non-vacationers or focus on the post-trip phase. As a consequence, there is nothing known about changes of happiness during vacation and no information on determinants of happiness during vacation. Moreover, there is little explanation for the observed differences in happiness in the post-trip phase, nor is there an accurate indication of the duration of a (potential) effect on happiness. Finally, information on the (potential) long-term indirect effects of vacationing is also lacking.

0.8 Plan of this dissertation

This dissertation continues with a chapter that analyzes the effect of frequency of participation in leisure activities on happiness. From then on, the focus of this dissertation is solely on leisure travel. The second chapter addresses the pre- and post-trip phases by analyzing differences in mood between vacationers and non-vacationers. The third chapter describes and explains fluctuations in mood over the course of a holiday trip. In chapter four, the variance in daily mood on vacation is explained. The fifth chapter focuses on long-term effects of vacationing on mood as well as life satisfaction. In the sixth chapter the association between several holiday trip variables and life satisfaction is assessed. The final chapter explains how leisure travel affects happiness, discusses implications and contains suggestions for future research.

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Chapter 1

The effect of leisure activities on life satisfaction: The importance of holiday trips²

ABSTRACT

Does active leisure make life more satisfying? If so, what kind of leisure activity is the greatest contributor to happiness? These questions are answered by means of data from four waves of a large-scale continuous study of the general public in Germany. Cross-sectional analysis does not show much of a relationship between happiness and last year's leisure activities, with the exception of holiday trips. People who took one or more holiday trips appeared to be significantly happier, even when income, health and personality were controlled for. Over-time analysis suggests that the correlation is due to an effect of holiday trips on happiness rather than an effect of happiness on holiday tripping. If holiday trips boost happiness, the effect is short-lived. This is not to say that the effect is trivial. Holiday trips accounted for about 2% of the variance in happiness, which is comparable to observed effects of some happiness training programs and financial windfalls.

KEY WORDS: happiness, leisure, longitudinal, tourism

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The problem

In recent years, the phenomenon of happiness has been receiving increased interest. People want to know what can possibly make them happier. Generally speaking, there are two ways to improve your happiness, one is to change your *view* on life and the other is to change your *way* of life. The latter way is promising since approximately 40% of variance in happiness is attributable to intentional activity (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005). Still, there is a lack of knowledge of what ways of life are the most satisfying and, in particular, about the happiness revenues of different leisure activities.

1.1.2 Research on happiness and leisure

Happiness researchers are quite knowledgeable on the subject of work. The World Database of Happiness currently lists 585 correlations between work and happiness, and 91 correlations between leisure activities and happiness (Veenhoven, 2008). Thus, the effect of work on happiness is a well-explored area of research, but far less is known about how participating in leisure activities affects happiness. Work, leisure and happiness are interrelated (Haworth, 1997). For example, the number of working hours has a strong negative effect on leisure satisfaction, whereas the effect of the number

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of hours spent on leisure has only a small positive effect on leisure satisfaction (Van Praag, Frijters, & Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2003).

Happiness and leisure satisfaction

The subjective evaluation of different aspects of life is known to correlate fairly strongly with life satisfaction (Ateca-Amestoy, Serrano-del-Rosal, & Vera-Toscano, 2008; Lloyd & Auld, 2002; Van Praag & Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2004; Van Praag, et al., 2003). Evaluations of finance, health and job satisfaction, together with leisure satisfaction are the four most important correlates (Van Praag, et al., 2003). Ateca-Amestoy et al. (2008) and Spiers and Walker (2009) find positive associations between leisure satisfaction and life satisfaction. Neal et al. (1999) constructed a model based on the assumption that "life satisfaction is functionally related to satisfaction with all of life's domains and subdomains" (Neal, Sirgy, & Uysal, 1999, p. 154). In 2004, Neal and Sirgy (2004) further validated this model by demonstrating that there is a correlation between satisfaction with leisure life and satisfaction with life in general. A similar model was developed by Sirgy et al. (2000), whose model includes leisure as part of the 'Global satisfaction with other life domains' (Sirgy & Cornwell, 2001; Sirgy, Rahtz, Cicic, & Underwood, 2000).

Happiness and leisure activities

Increased satisfaction with leisure and higher frequency of participation in leisure activities positively correlate with life satisfaction (Lloyd & Auld, 2002). Others also find that participating in leisure activities has a positive correlation with life satisfaction (Baldwin & Tinsley, 1988; Dowall, Bolter, Flett, & Kammann, 1988; Wankel & Berger, 1990). Research efforts to date tend to focus on the total frequency of a group of leisure activities on either happiness, or leisure satisfaction. However, not enough attention has been paid to the effect of specific leisure activities on happiness. Whenever a happiness study does address leisure activities, it usually involves one specific leisure activity, such as listening to music (Laukka, 2007) or watching television (Bruni & Stanca, 2006, 2008; Della Fave & Bassi, 2003; Frey, Benesch, & Strutzer, 2005).

The majority of leisure studies are cross-sectional; therefore it is difficult to determine cause and effect.

Happiness and tourism

Specifically addressing the component of holiday trips, several studies have examined its correlation with happiness (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2002, 2004; Milman, 1998; Neal, 2000; Neal & Sirgy, 2004; Neal, et al., 1999). Milman's study, based on a sample of senior citizens, shows that holiday trippers are not happier after their holiday (Milman, 1998). Nawijn finds a low, but positive, correlation between holiday trips and happiness (Nawijn, 2007). His findings confirm those of Gilbert and Abdullah (2004) and Neal and Sirgy (2004), who conclude that holiday trips positively influence the sense of well-being of tourists. On the other hand, not every study finds only positive consequences of holiday tripping. High job stress, caused by work not being done during the vacation for instance, is associated with poorer well-being (Strauss-Blasche, Ekmekcioglu, & Marktl, 2002). Returning to work where one finds more work piled up compared to the pre-vacation period results in higher levels of stress.

None of the aforementioned studies measured both happiness and tourism over a long period of time. Thus, cause and effect are not always clear.

1.1.3 Aim of this paper

In this paper we try to disentangle cause and effect in the relationship between happiness and leisure activity and seek an answer to the following questions: What is the effect of leisure activities on happiness? Do holiday trips have a bigger impact than other leisure activities? And finally, does everyone benefit from these activities?

The purpose of this paper is to determine the effect of leisure activities on happiness in terms of strength, and cause and effect. This study clarifies which leisure activities increase happiness. Over-time correlations were calculated, to be certain that happy people did not participate more in leisure activities in general. Additionally, to further determine the cause-and-effect relationship, all effects were controlled for by demographic variables and personality.

1.2 Method

These questions are answered by means of data of the German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP), which were made available to us by SOEP at the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW Berlin). Four waves of that study involved questions about leisure activities. The longitudinal design allows the separation of cause and effect and rich background variables allow a check for possible spurious correlation.

1.2.1 Data

SOEP is a large-scale representative panel of private households, which exists since 1984. Participants are interviewed once a year. Leisure activities are not automatically included in the questionnaires, but were included in the waves of 1990, 1995, 1998 and 2003. The wave of 1990 consists of approximately 9,500 West Germans and 4,300 East Germans. The 1995 wave holds approximately 13,600 people, the 1998 wave approximately 14,500 people and the 2003 wave approximately 22,400. The panel consists of Germans living in the former eastern and western part, foreigners and recent immigrants to Germany. SOEP contains 18 main topics including 'Health', 'Education and qualification', 'Job market and occupation' and 'Socialization'. The topic of 'Basic orientation, participation and integration' includes measures of subjective well-being.

1.2.2 Variables

Dependent variable: life satisfaction

The dependent variable of the present study is *life satisfaction*, which we define as 'the overall appreciation of one's life as a whole'. This concept is delineated in more detail in Veenhoven (1984) and is also labeled as 'happiness'. The focus of this paper is on *present* satisfaction with life.

Life satisfaction is measured using a self-report on a single question: "And finally, we would like to ask you about your satisfaction with your life in general. Please answer by using the following scale, in which 0 means totally unhappy, and 10 means totally happy." The exact question was phrased as: "How satisfied are you at present with your life as a whole?" This question is in SOEP's core questionnaire and responses are therefore available for all respondents in all years.

Independent variable: leisure activities

The 1990 wave of the SOEP study included the following leisure activities: *go out to eat or drink, visit neighbors, visit family member, play card and board games, participate in local politics, perform*

volunteer work, attend church or other religious events, watch television, video, read non-fiction and fiction, engage in artistic & musical activities, perform handicraft & home repairs, participate in sports, attend sports event, attend cinema, pop, jazz concerts and attend cultural events. The East German data did not contain the variable of *holiday trips*, but included two different activities: *attend community events* and *attend social gatherings*. The 1990 data for East Germany contain only a small range of leisure activities (6 out of the 15) which were used in the West German sample. For this reason, the East German data were excluded from analysis. The 1995 wave included the same leisure activities as the 1990 West German wave. The 1998 wave omits *play card and board games*, *engage in artistic & musical activities*, *perform handicraft & home repairs* and *read non-fiction and fiction*. The 1998 wave contained some new activities, namely *private personal computer use*, *tinkering & garden work*, *car repairs* and *attend opera/ classical concerts & theatre*. The 2003 activities were almost the same as those of 1998, with just one addition: *Private internet usage*. The focus of this paper is on *holiday trips*, that is, daytrips and short holidays. This independent variable was part of the SOEP study in 1990 (West Germany), 1995, 1998 and 2003. The wording of the questions and answers slightly varies over the years. In 1990 and 1995 the following phrasing was used: "Now some questions about your free time. How frequently do you undertake the following activities?" Then several items were listed, among which outings or short trips. This variable contained the following responses: "daily, once a week, once a month, less than once a month, never". In 1995, instead of asking how frequently one participated in the activities, the question was as follows: "Please indicate how often you engage in the following activities: daily, at least once a week, at least once a month, less often or never?" The responses were equal to the ones pointed out in the question itself. The name of the variable had 'excursions' added to it: outings, excursions, short trips. Again, in 2003, some minor changes were made. The question was rephrased as: "Please indicate how often you take part in each activity: daily, at least once a week, at least once a month, seldom or never?", with corresponding answers. Finally, the variable was renamed: go on a trip or short holiday.

Control variables

To ensure that correlations between leisure activities and happiness are not driven by a common third variable, personality, health and socio-demographic variables are used as control variables.

Personality. The 'big five' most important personality traits are: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to Experience (McCrae & John, 1992, p. 175). The SOEP study includes measures of these five dimensions (Dehne & Schupp, 2007). As personality traits are deemed fairly stable (Costa & McCrae, 1994; Gustavsson, Weinryb, Göransson, Pedersen, & Åsberg, 1997; Hampson & Goldberg, 2006; McCrae & Costa, 2003; Terraciano, Costa, & McCrae, 2006), the 2005 measurement is used for each year of analysis.

Health. Health is measured as the total number of doctor visits in the past three months.

Socio-demographic variables: Age, sex, marriage, education, work and income are the socio-demographic variables used in this study. *Income* is defined as the average gross amount of salary.

1.2.3 Analytic approach

We started with a same-time analysis to see whether happiness and leisure activity are related. Next we did an over-time comparison to get an idea about cause and effect.

The same-time analysis was done using Pearson correlations. First we computed simple zero-order correlations for assessing to what extent happiness goes together with leisure activities. To check

whether these same-time correlations are spurious, we also computed partial correlations. Over-time correlations were used to gain an insight into cause and effect, and to determine the duration of effects. Again we computed both zero-order and partial correlations. Missing values were deleted list-wise. Each wave contained approximately 500 cases with missing values, the final wave ($n = 22,400$) had more missing values, namely approximately 2,000 cases.

1.3 Results

Correlations for each of the four waves are presented in the appendices to this paper. Table 1 presents the average correlation across all four waves. These averages were computed as a weighted mean, whereby the weights were equal to the inverse variance of each wave's effect estimator.

1.3.1 Same-time zero-order correlations

Just five leisure activities (LAs) have significant correlations with life satisfaction (LS). The LAs with significant correlations are *holiday trips*, *attending church*, *handicrafts*, *home repairs* and *attending cultural events*.

The leisure activity with the largest correlation each year is *holiday trips* (shown in appendix 1). The waves of 1990, 1995, 1998 and 2003 have effect sizes of + .15 ($p < .01$), + .15 ($p < .01$), + .18 ($p < .01$) and + .19 ($p < .01$) respectively. Thus, the effect sizes are rather similar each wave. On top of that, *holiday trips* is the only leisure activity which has a significant effect each year. Three of the other activities do not have a significant effect each year, but their mean effects are significant. The leisure activities that have significant mean zero-order correlations are *holiday trips*, *attending church*, *handicraft*, *home repairs* and *attend cultural events*.

Table 1: Leisure activities and life satisfaction

	Same-time correlations		Over-time correlations	
	Zero order	Partial	LS -> LA	LA -> LS
Holiday trips	+ 0.18**	+ 0.14**	- 0.01	+ 0.01
Eating & drinking	+ 0.05	- 0.01	+ 0.02	+ 0.01
Visiting neighbours	+ 0.06	+ 0.01	+ 0.01	- 0.01
Visiting family	+ 0.04	+ 0.01	0.00	0.00
Card and board games	+ 0.03	+ 0.02	- 0.03	- 0.01
Local politics	- 0.19	- 0.01	- 0.02	0.00
Volunteer work	+ 0.02	- 0.01	+ 0.03	0.00
Attend church	+ 0.03*	+ 0.01	+ 0.01	0.00
Watch television, video	0.00	+ 0.01	+ 0.01	0.00
Private computer use	0.00	- 0.01	0.00	- 0.01
Private internet use	0.00	- 0.01	- 0.01	- 0.01
Reading	+ 0.03	0.00	- 0.01	- 0.02
Artistic, musical activities	+ 0.02	+ 0.01	+ 0.01	- 0.02

	Same-time correlations		Over-time correlations	
	Zero order	Partial	LS -> LA	LA -> LS
Tinkering & garden work	- 0.02	- 0.01	+ 0.02	0.00
Car repairs	- 0.01	- 0.01	+ 0.01	+ 0.01
Handicraft, home repairs	+ 0.03**	+ 0.01	- 0.02	- 0.02
Participate in sports	+ 0.03	0.00	- 0.01	- 0.02
Attend sports events	+ 0.02	- 0.01	+ 0.01	- 0.01
Attend cinema, concerts	+ 0.02	0.00	+ 0.01	- 0.02
Attend opera, theater	+ 0.01	- 0.02	+ 0.01	0.00
Attend cultural events	+ 0.02*	0.00	- 0.00	- 0.03

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Partial correlations are controlled for age, sex, marriage, education, work, income, personality and health

LS = life satisfaction

LA = leisure activities

1.3.2 Same-time partial correlations

When examining the mean partial correlations (shown in Table 1, column 3), it is immediately obvious that, out of the four significant mean zero-order effects, just one remains significant. Beyond any doubt, *holiday trips* is the most important leisure activity with mean partial effect sizes of + 0.11 ($p < .01$), + 0.09 ($p < .01$), + 0.19 ($p < .01$) and + 0.16 ($p < .01$). *Holiday trips* is the only leisure activity that has an independent effect on happiness; all the other mean zero-order correlations are no longer significant after controlling for *age, sex, marriage, education, work, income, personality and health*. The size of the correlation is small but considerable, *holiday trips* accounts for approximately 2% of the variance in life satisfaction.

1.3.3 Over-time correlations

This leaves us with the question of cause and effect: do holidays trips make us happier or does happiness make that we take holiday trips. To answer this question we did an across-time comparison. Since the SOEP study involves annual interviews, the minimal period we can use is one year.

Does life satisfaction predict leisure activity one year later?

Could it be that happiness is the cause, happy people being more open to fun? This does not seem to be the case, as life satisfaction scores do not predict leisure activity scores one year later. The correlation is in fact negative, suggesting that it is unhappiness that predisposes people to take a holiday trip. See column 4 in Table 1 and the detail in appendix 2. No leisure activity has a consistent significant over-time correlation with the preceding life satisfaction score.

Does leisure activity predict life satisfaction one year later?

Is the same-time correlation due to an effect of holiday trips on happiness? The over-time correlation is positive (+ 0.01), but does not reach statistical significance. So if there is an effect of holiday trips on happiness it is apparently short-lived and hardly visible anymore after a year. None of the leisure activities have consistent significant correlations with life satisfaction in the following year. (See column 5 in Table 1 and the detail in appendix 3.)

1.4 Discussion

1.4.1 Do holiday trips boost happiness?

Probably, but not certainly. People who did a trip in a year appear to be somewhat happier in that year and this applies to all kinds of people; whether working or not, whether an extrovert or an introvert, whether healthy or sick, rich or poor, married or single and old or young. Still, it is not established that this correlation is due to an effect of holiday trips on happiness or an effect of happiness on holiday-taking. None of these effects is reflected in significant correlations after one year, but these correlations of earlier trips on later happiness is positive, while the correlation of earlier happiness on later trip tends to the negative.

Suppose that the effect of holiday trips on happiness is the main driver of the same-year correlation. Holiday trips then have a short-lived effect on happiness. Is this effect big enough to be important? The answer to that question should be 'yes'. A 2% increase in happiness may not seem like a lot as such, but it is comparable to other methods to increase happiness (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). Unlike this study, Seligman et al.'s study included people who were eager to improve their happiness. Even so, some of their techniques were less successful. Their positive intervention of gratitude visits had an effect size of + .06 after one month (Seligman, et al., 2005, p. 417), which is lower than the + .14 effect size of holiday trips. Otake et al. (2006) conducted a study on counting kindness, among women. Their counting kindness intervention increased happiness by + .44 on a 7 point scale (Otake, Shimai, Tanaka-Matsumi, Otsui, & Fredrickson, 2006), which is equal to a + .06 effect size, much lower than the + .14 of holiday trips. Apart from the smaller effect, women are also more attuned to kindness (Baskerville, et al., 2000). The 'identifying signature strengths' intervention technique (Seligman, et al., 2005) has an effect size of + .25 at the immediate post-test, which is higher than the effect size of holiday trips, but its effect is short-lived as there is only immediate gratification (one week post-tests were not significantly different from the control group).

These positive interventions were intentional activities. What if we compare the importance of holiday trips to an unintentional event? According to Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) unintentional activity makes up about 10% of happiness. One unintentional event may be a 'medium-sized' lottery win of £50,000. Such a financial windfall increases happiness by approximately 3% (Gardner & Oswald, 2001, p. 7). (When dividing Gardner and Oswald's 1.09 point increase on their 36-point scale.) We should compare this to the uncontrolled effect of holiday trips, as Gardner and Oswald did not control their effect either. When doing so, we discover that winning £50,000 is less beneficial than going on a few holiday trips in a year. Additionally, the effect of the lottery win does not even have immediate gratification; it takes two years to take full effect. It seems that going on a holiday trip several times a year has a much bigger effect than winning £50,000 in the lottery, with the additional benefit of getting an immediate reward instead of having to wait for two years.

We argue that going on holiday trips is more beneficial for one's happiness in terms of intensity and duration compared to techniques such as 'identifying signature strengths', 'counting kindness' and 'gratitude visits', especially as these studies involved people more attuned to the measurement (Otake, et al., 2006), or more eager to increase their happiness (Seligman, et al., 2005). Going on a holiday is just as beneficial, or even more so, than some positive intervention techniques (Seligman, et al., 2005) and financial windfalls (Gardner & Oswald, 2001).

1.4.2 Why no effect of other leisure activities?

This study finds that out of all leisure activities, only *holiday trips* boost happiness. None of the other leisure activities have a significant effect on happiness. This finding partly contradicts previous findings by others (Brown, Frankel, & Fennell, 1991; Hills & Argyle, 1998; Suh & Diener, 1996). The cause of this probably lies in that fact that the leisure activities all seem to fall into the category of casual leisure (Stebbins, 2007). Two other categories, project-based leisure and serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007), which may be more beneficial to one's happiness, particularly if used purposefully (Winefield, Tigermann, & Winefield, 1992) and in congruence to their personality (Melamed, Meir, & Samson, 1995), are not included in the data. Additionally, the measurement level is likely to be the cause of some of the non-significant correlations, for instance with watching TV. Other studies (Bruni & Stanca, 2006, 2008; Della Fave & Bassi, 2003; Frey, et al., 2005) found that watching TV negatively influences happiness. As most people watch TV daily, no distinction could be made between heavy users and regular viewers. This most likely explains the absence of significant correlations regarding watching TV in this study.

1.4.3 Limitations

The SOEP data have some limitations. The biggest limitation is that leisure activities are not measured every year. When measured, they are measured just once a year. Furthermore, the measurement level of the leisure activities is ordinal, and the categories are not very well chosen. This may have caused inaccurate reports as certain answers are not possible (e.g. twice a month). Future studies should incorporate more accurate methods of measuring leisure behavior. Another point of criticism is the choice of leisure activities. Some activities seem illogically combined into one variable (*attend cinema, pop, jazz concerts*) whereas others appear to have been excluded completely (*playing computer games* or *visiting museums*).

1.4.4 Further study

Short-term follow-up

If holiday trips have a causal effect on happiness, that effect is apparently shorter than one year. To capture the short-lived effect we need follow-up studies at shorter intervals, preferably every month. It is in the interest of the travel industry to fund such research.

Optimal tourist lifestyle

The interesting thing about holiday trips is that you start enjoying the experience before it actually starts. There is clearly an anticipation effect (Ryan, 1991). In that sense, it is quite a different experience from some of the aforementioned intervention techniques. Also, the findings presented in this study are based on current behavior. Further work needs to be done to establish whether this current behavior is optimal, in the sense that it maximizes the potential happiness boost it generates. Future research should therefore focus on finding out what an optimal tourist lifestyle could be. Taking short holiday trips may be particularly favorable when more evenly spread over the year. Further analysis of different tourist lifestyles is a must. Finally, future research needs to determine the exact duration of the effect of holiday trips.

1.5 Conclusion

Happy people report more holiday trips in the past year, probably because holiday trips boost happiness. Though the effect is short-lived, it is substantial, accounting for about 2% of the variance in happiness. Holiday trips affect happiness more than other leisure activities.

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Appendix 1

Same time correlations of leisure activities and life satisfaction

Leisure activities	Zero-order			
	1990	1995	1998	2003
Holiday trips	+ 0.15**	+ 0.15**	+ 0.18**	+ 0.19**
Eating & drinking	+ 0.08**	0.00	+ 0.04**	+ 0.05**
Visiting neighbors	+ 0.07**	+ 0.02	+ 0.03**	+ 0.02**
Visiting family	+ 0.05**	+ 0.01	- 0.01	0.00
Card and board games	+ 0.06**	- 0.01	-	-
Local politics	+ 0.03**	0.00	- 0.01	+ 0.01
Volunteer work	+ 0.06**	- 0.02**	+ 0.02*	+ 0.02**
Attend church	+ 0.05**	- 0.02	+ 0.06**	+ 0.04**
Watch television, video	+ 0.02**	+ 0.01	- 0.02*	- 0.01*
Private computer use	-	-	0.00	+ 0.03**
Private internet use	-	-	-	+ 0.03**
Reading	+ 0.07**	- 0.01	-	-
Artistic, musical activities	+ 0.07**	- 0.02*	-	+ 0.03**
Tinkering & garden work	-	-	- 0.02*	- 0.01
Car repairs	-	-	- 0.01	- 0.01*
Handicraft, home repairs	+ 0.07**	- 0.03**	-	-
Participate in sports	+ 0.12**	- 0.01	0.00	+ 0.03**
Attend sports events	+ 0.07**	- 0.01	+ 0.01	+ 0.02*
Attend cinema, concerts	+ 0.07**	0.00	- 0.01	+ 0.01
Attend opera, theater	-	-	0.00	+ 0.04**
Attend cultural events	+ 0.07**	- 0.02*	0.00	-

Leisure activities	Partial			
	1990	1995	1998	2003
Holiday trips	+ 0.11**	+ 0.09**	+ 0.19**	+ 0.16**
Eating & drinking	+ 0.01	0.00	- 0.03	- 0.02
Visiting neighbors	+ 0.06**	+ 0.01	- 0.01	- 0.02
Visiting family	+ 0.03	0.00	+ 0.01	- 0.03
Card and board games	+ 0.05**	- 0.02	-	-
Local politics	+ 0.01	0.00	- 0.02	- 0.02
Volunteer work	+ 0.01	- 0.03	+ 0.01	- 0.02
Attend church	+ 0.06**	- 0.04**	0.00	+ 0.02
Watch television, video	+ 0.04*	+ 0.01	- 0.01	+ 0.01
Private computer use	-	-	- 0.01	- 0.01

Private internet use	-	-	-	-0.01
Reading	+ 0.02	- 0.02	-	-
Artistic, musical activities	+ 0.05**	- 0.02	-	+ 0.01
Tinkering & garden work	-	-	- 0.02	- 0.01
Car repairs	-	-	0.00	- 0.02
Handicraft, home repairs	+ 0.04*	- 0.02	-	-
Participate in sports	+ 0.05**	- 0.02	0.00	- 0.03
Attend sports events	+ 0.02	0.00	- 0.01	- 0.03
Attend cinema, concerts	+ 0.01	+ 0.02	0.00	- 0.02
Attend opera, theater	-	-	- 0.03	- 0.01
Attend cultural events	+ 0.02	- 0.01	0.00	-

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Partial correlations are controlled for age, sex, marriage, education, work, income, personality and health

'-' = no measurement

Appendix 2

Over-time partial correlations earlier life satisfaction and later leisure activities

Leisure activities	1989–1990	1994–1995	1997–1998	2002–2003
Holiday trips	+ 0.02	– 0.01	0.00	– 0.01
Eating & drinking	– 0.03*	– 0.01	+ 0.01	+ 0.01
Visiting neighbors	– 0.02	0.00	0.00	– 0.01
Visiting family	+ 0.02	– 0.02	+ 0.01	0.00
Card and board games	– 0.01	– 0.02	–	–
Local politics	0.00	– 0.01	+ 0.01	+ 0.01
Volunteer work	– 0.01	+ 0.01	+ 0.01	– 0.01
Attend church	+ 0.01	0.00	– 0.01	0.00
Watch television, video	0.00	+ 0.01	– 0.02	+ 0.02
Private computer use	–	–	0.00	– 0.01
Private internet use	–	–	–	– 0.01
Reading	0.00	– 0.04**	–	–
Artistic, musical activities	– 0.03	– 0.05**	–	– 0.01
Tinkering & garden work	–	–	0.00	+ 0.01
Car repairs	–	–	+ 0.01	+ 0.01
Handicraft, home repairs	– 0.03	0.00	–	–
Participate in sports	– 0.05**	– 0.03*	0.00	– 0.01
Attend sports events	– 0.03	– 0.01	0.00	– 0.01
Attend cinema, concerts	– 0.03	– 0.04**	– 0.01	0.00
Attend opera, theater	–	–	– 0.01	0.00
Attend cultural events	– 0.02	– 0.04	+ .01	–

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Partial correlations are controlled for age, sex, marriage, education, work, income, personality and health

‘–’ = no measurement

Appendix 3

Over-time partial correlations of earlier leisure activities and later life satisfaction

Leisure activities	1990–1991	1995–1996	1998–1999	2003–2004
Holiday trips	0.00	+ 0.04*	– 0.01	0.00
Eating & drinking	0.00	+ 0.04*	+ 0.02	0.00
Visiting neighbors	– 0.01	+ 0.05*	– 0.02	0.00
Visiting family	– 0.01	+ 0.02	0.00	0.00
Card and board games	– 0.03	– 0.03	–	–
Local politics	– 0.03	0.00	– 0.04*	– 0.02
Volunteer work	– 0.01	+ 0.02	– 0.01	+ 0.01
Attend church	– 0.01	+ 0.03	+ 0.01	+ 0.01
Watch television, video	+ 0.01	0.00	0.00	+ 0.02
Private computer use	–	–	0.00	0.00
Private internet use	–	–	–	– 0.01
Reading	– 0.01	0.00	–	–
Artistic, musical activities	0.00	+ 0.03	–	+ 0.01
Tinkering & garden work	–	–	+ 0.02	+ 0.02
Car repairs	–	–	+ 0.03	+ 0.01
Handicraft, home repairs	– 0.01	– 0.04*	–	–
Participate in sports	0.00	– 0.03	+ 0.01	– 0.02
Attend sports events	– 0.01	+ 0.02	+ 0.01	+ 0.01
Attend cinema, concerts	+ 0.01	0.00	+ 0.02	0.00
Attend opera, theater	–	–	+ 0.01	+ 0.02
Attend cultural events	0.00	– 0.01	0.00	–

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Partial correlations are controlled for age, sex, marriage, education, work, income, personality and health

'–' = no measurement

Chapter 2:

Vacationers happier, but most not happier after a holiday³

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to obtain a greater insight into the association between vacations and happiness. We examined whether vacationers differ in happiness, compared to those not going on holiday, and if a holiday trip boosts post-trip happiness. These questions were addressed in a pre-test/post-test design study among 1,530 Dutch individuals. 974 vacationers answered questions about their happiness before and after a holiday trip. Vacationers reported a higher degree of pre-trip happiness, compared to non-vacationers, possibly because they are anticipating their holiday. Only a very relaxed holiday trip boosts vacationers' happiness further after return. Generally, there is no difference between vacationers' and non-vacationers' post-trip happiness. The findings are explained in the light of set-point theory, need theory and comparison theory.

KEY WORDS: *happiness, holiday stress, quality of life, subjective well-being, tourism*

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Tourism

A characteristic of post-industrial societies is that the majority of people in them practice tourism (Bell, 1973). Tourism is evolving into one of the most important industries worldwide. The percentage of vacationers is ever increasing; the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) predicts 1.6 billion international arrivals by the year 2020 (UNWTO, 2008). In addition, trip frequency has increased considerably over people's lifespan (Opperman, 1995) and there is a trend to take more than one holiday per year.

Vacationers who have a history of past tourism experiences in a certain destination, or who take similar types of holidays regularly, are better capable of matching their wants to their needs (Ryan, 1998). This implies that tourists may become increasingly able to derive benefit from their holidays in terms of fulfillment, enjoyment and happiness.

Tourism is generally regarded as an activity which allows for an escape from the routine of daily life (Prentice, 2004). Gross (1961) argued that tourists' escape is a time-out, much needed for healthy functioning in society. Thus, Gross regards holiday trips as an experience needed to cope with daily life after a holiday trip. Boorstin (1964) and MacCannell (1976) argued that people generally live alienated inauthentic lives, and that *during* their holiday trip they strive to escape to a more satisfying life. These views seem outdated nowadays and have been replaced by more postmodern views of tourism (Uriely, 2005). The distinction between tourism and everyday life is not as clear anymore as it perhaps once was. Leisure, tourism and everyday life have become a much more integral part of life (J. Larsen,

3 This study uses data from the CentERpanel. Originally published as: Nawijn, J., Marchand, M., Veenhoven, R., & Vingerhoets, A. (2010). Vacationers Happier, but Most Not Happier after a Holiday. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 5(1), 35-47.

2008; McCabe, 2002) because experiences that were once confined to tourism, are now accessible in everyday life (Lash & Urry, 1994).

2.1.2 Happiness

The subject of happiness has been a “playground for speculative philosophy” for hundreds of years (Veenhoven, 2009, p. 45), but is currently also being studied empirically by the social sciences. This type of research took off in the 1970s and has been thriving recently, partly due to the popularity of positive psychology. These studies conclude that life is getting better (Veenhoven & Hagerty, 2006) and that most people are happy in modern society (Diener & Diener, 1996). However, not all changes in society imply progress in terms of happiness. For instance, increased consumption does not automatically lead to greater happiness and may even reduce happiness through demoralization of society (Myers, 2000), stress and income differences (Easterbrook, 2003), over-consumption (Easterbrook, 2003; Schor, 1998) and over-worked or burnt-out employees (Easterbrook, 2003; Schor, 1991).

Several quality of life theories offer insight into happiness. Comparison theory states that we judge the quality of our lives mainly by estimating the gap between the realities of our lives and common standards of the good. In this view, happiness largely involves keeping up with the Joneses. Set-point theory argues that happiness is a rather stable ‘trait’ and that whatever we do, we cannot change our happiness much. In this view, particular experiences can at best provide a temporary uplift, after which we return to our set-point (Cummins, 2005; Veenhoven, 2006). Finally, need theory emphasizes that happiness is more a reflection of how we generally feel and an indicator of whether certain needs are gratified (Veenhoven, 2006). In this view, experiences add to happiness only if they involve need gratification.

The findings of the current study may contribute to an explanation of how vacationing adds to greater happiness of individuals, in the light of the above-mentioned quality of life theories.

2.1.3 Tourism and happiness

Previous studies have provided data about the effect of holiday trips on happiness, including the role of length of stay.

Holiday trips

A few cross-sectional studies find weak positive associations between holiday trips and happiness (Kemp, Burt, & Furneaux, 2008; Milman, 1998; Neal, 2000). Three pre-test/post-test design studies (Hoopes & Lounsbury, 1989; Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1986; Strauss-Blasche, Ekmekcioglu, & Marktl, 2000) analyzed the impact of time off from work, which may, or may not have, included a holiday trip. Just one pre-test/post-test design study focused exclusively on holiday trips. It measured the impact of a holiday trip on tourists’ post-trip happiness (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004). Generally, the impact of a holiday on post-trip life satisfaction is small (De Bloom, et al., 2009).

Positive effects of a holiday do not last very long. Westman and Eden (1997) and Westman and Etzion (2001) found that people who suffer from burnout returned to pre-vacation levels by the time of their second measurement, three (Westman & Eden, 1997) to four weeks (Westman & Etzion, 2001) after the respite from work had ended. Another study (Strauss-Blasche, et al., 2000) reported that improvement in mood and quality of sleep lasted only up to five weeks. Gilbert and Abdullah’s (2004) post-trip assessment period spanned a period of two to six months. They found that vacationers, compared to non-vacationers, experienced a higher amount of pleasant feelings after their holidays, but found no differences in post-trip happiness between the three periods they distinguished.

Holiday stress

Holiday trips are not merely pleasant experiences. Quite a few studies report a series of health problems, such as homesickness, associated with vacationing (Kop, Vingerhoets, Kruihof, & Gottdiener, 2003; Pearce, 1981; Van Heck & Vingerhoets, 2007; Vingerhoets, Sanders, & Kuper, 1997). In addition to health problems, vacationers report many worries during their holiday (S. Larsen, Brun, & Ogaard, 2009) and some experience relational problems (Ryan, 1991) or a culture shock (Pearce, 1981). However, the association between holiday stress and post-trip happiness has not been investigated yet. Intuitively, it is plausible that when one experiences a holiday with a lot of stress, this would lead to lower feelings of happiness.

Length of stay

The role of length of stay is not yet clear at this time. Neal (2000) concludes that length of stay moderates several of the relationships in her model. A follow-up study by Neal and Sirgy (2004) finds a moderating effect of length of stay between holiday satisfaction and happiness. However, Gilbert and Abdullah (2004), Lounsbury and Hoopes (1986) and Kemp et al. (2008) found no association between length of stay and post-trip happiness.

2.1.4 Questions

In conclusion, a literature review reveals many positive feelings to be associated with holiday trips, but does not inform us whether vacationers are happier in general. Research findings until now suggest that a time off from work does not boost happiness much afterwards. We currently do not know whether this is the case for holiday trips; the single study on post-trip happiness, until now, used rather crude time intervals (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004). Finally, studies to date have yielded inconsistent empirical evidence concerning the importance of the factor length of stay.

This study adds to this literature by attempting to answer the following questions:

(1) Are vacationers happier compared to non-vacationers? (2) Does a holiday trip boost happiness? (3) If a holiday trip boosts happiness, then for how long does this effect last? and (4) What are the roles of length of stay and holiday stress?

2.2 Method

2.2.1 Respondents

The sample consists of 1,530 respondents. 52% are men. Mean age is 50 ($SD = 16$) and mean monthly net income is €2,420 ($SD = 1,810$). Most respondents hold a graduate or undergraduate degree (35%), have a paid job (51%) or are retired (21%). 74% is either married or cohabiting.

All respondents are members of the CentERdata Databank, who made the data for this study available to us. CentERdata is a research institute, which is part of Tilburg University in the Netherlands.

The CentERpanel is composed of well over 2,000 households, completing online questionnaires at home every week, and this panel is considered a representative sample of the Dutch-speaking population. Households without Internet access are given a device called a Net.Box, which allows them to enter data on the Internet, using their televisions as screens. We make use of 2006 data from the health monitor, which is a questionnaire that is administered to CentERpanel members every eight weeks.

The questionnaire of week 35 of that year contained questions about respondents' holiday trip, if they had made any. The day of departure and day of return differed. The holiday trip began at some point

in time between week 27 and week 35. The questionnaires of week 11, 19 and 43 were also available to us.

2.2.2 Variables

Happiness

Our focus was on 'hedonic level of affect', which Veenhoven (1984) considers the 'affective dimension' of happiness. Hedonic level of affect can be measured using an Affect Balance Score (ABS), such as PANAS (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), which has also been applied previously in several tourism studies (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2002, 2004; Milman, 1998). The ABS used in this study was derived from responses to three questions, one positively formulated item and two negative ones. The mean score of the two negative items was deducted from the positive item. The positive item measured whether respondents had recently 'enjoyed their daily tasks'. The two negative statements evaluated whether respondents had recently felt 'unhappy', and 'gloomy and dejected'. Possible answers were "never", "almost never", "sometimes", "very often" and "always".

Type of holiday

Two groups were distinguished of, respectively, non-vacationers and vacationers. The first group ($n = 556$) did not go on a holiday, they continued their everyday life. The second group ($n = 974$) consisted of vacationers who started their holiday trip between week 27 and week 35. A holiday trip is defined as a trip where people are traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for no longer than one year and specifically for leisure purposes (UNWTO, 2002).

Length of stay

To determine how long a holiday trip had lasted, respondents had to answer the following question: "How long did your holiday last?" The response alternatives were "less than 5 days", "5 to 8 days", "9 to 14 days", "15 to 21 days" and "more than 21 days".

Holiday stress

A question on the respondents' level of experienced stress during their holiday trip was included in the questionnaire. The exact question was: "How did you experience your holiday elsewhere?" The response alternatives were "very stressful", "stressful", "neutral", "relaxed" and "very relaxed".

Days passed after having returned

The questionnaire also included a question on how many days had passed since the respondent had returned from his/her holiday trip. The response alternatives were "I am still on holiday", "less than one week", "less than two weeks", "less than three weeks", "less than four weeks", "less than six weeks" and "less than eight weeks".

Socio-demographic variables

Educational level, net household income, employment status, age, and sex were all assessed.

Health status

Respondents' health status was measured by the number of sick days in the past month. Possible responses were "0 days", "1 or 2 days", "3 to 5 days", "5 to 10 days" and "more than 10 days".

Extraversion

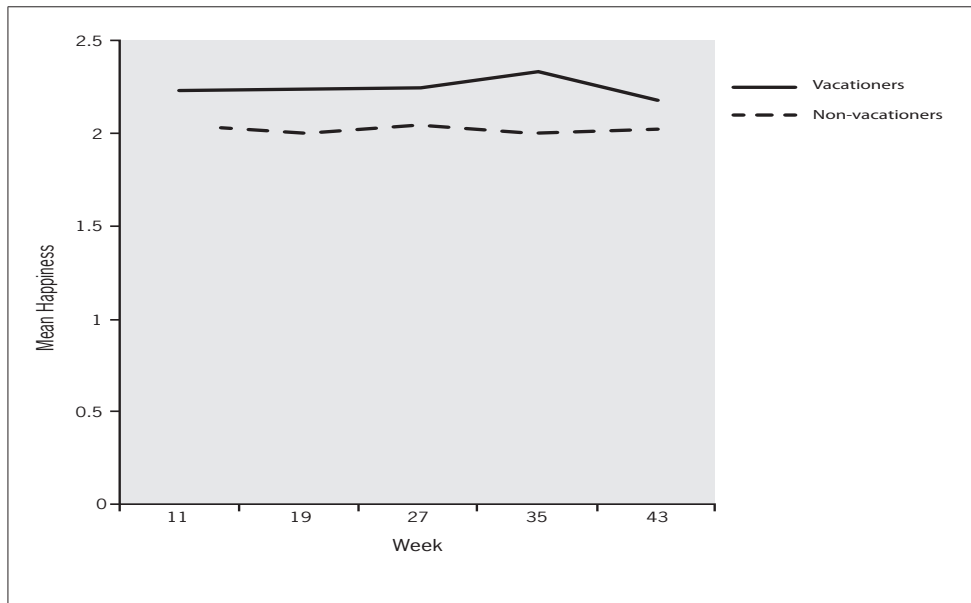
A particular personality trait (McCrae & John, 1992) which is moderately positively associated with happiness is extraversion (Diener, Sandvik, Pavot, & Fujita, 1992; Pavot, Diener, & Fujita, 1990). Extraverts have an active leisure life (Brandstätter, 1994), which may be associated with greater happiness (Brown, Frankel, & Fennell, 1991). We had information on the respondents' level of extraversion, which was measured in 2007 on a five-point scale. Even though this personality assessment took place a year later than the measured variables in this study, it was appropriate to use since personality traits are deemed to be relatively stable (Costa & McCrae, 1994; Gustavsson, Weinryb, Göransson, Pedersen, & Åsberg, 1997; Hampson & Goldberg, 2006; McCrae & Costa, 2003; Terraciano, Costa, & McCrae, 2006). Our assumption is that extraverts are likely to take different types of holidays, compared to other individuals. Since we had no information on 'type of holiday', we controlled for extraversion.

2.3 Results

2.3.1 Are vacationers happier?

Figure 1 shows the happiness scores of vacationers ($n = 974$) and non-vacationers over time ($n = 556$). Vacationers display a higher degree of pre-trip as well as post-trip happiness.

Figure 1: Happiness of vacationers and non-vacationers over-time



To test whether this difference in happiness is significant, we performed two one-way between groups multivariate analyses of covariance.

Pre-trip happiness

To determine the possible pre-trip happiness difference, three dependent variables were used: happiness levels of week 11, 19 and 27. As covariates we used socio-demographics, health status and extraversion. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity, with no serious violations noted. There was a statistically significant difference between vacationers and those staying at home, $F(3, 531) = 3.39, p = .018$; Wilks' Lambda = .98; $\eta^2 = .02$. Vacationers have a significantly higher pre-trip happiness score ($M = 2.25, SD = .08$) compared to those not going on a holiday trip ($M = 2.07, SD = .09$).

Post-trip happiness

Post-trip happiness comprised of two dependent variables, namely the happiness scores of week 35 and week 43. Again, preliminary assumption testing was conducted, with no violations noted. Vacationers still on holiday in week 35 ($n = 142$) were excluded from the analysis. This time we found no statistically significant difference in happiness between both groups, $F(2, 783) = 2.00, ns$.

2.3.2 Does a holiday trip boost happiness?

Post-trip happiness boost

A three-way between-groups multivariate analysis of covariance was performed to investigate differences in happiness. Happiness levels of week 35 and week 43 were the dependent variables. The independent variables were holiday stress, length of stay and *days passed after having returned*. None of the vacationers considered their holiday to be very stressful. Only 14 considered theirs stressful and 67 neutral. We grouped these two response categories and labeled this combined category 'stressful or neutral'. Socio-demographics, health status and extraversion were used as covariates and vacationers still on holiday in week 35 were again excluded from the analysis. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity. Since Box's test of equality of variances was significant, we used Pillai's Trace Criterion instead of Wilks' Lambda. No other violations were observed. We found a statistically significant main effect of holiday stress on the combined post-trip happiness variable, $F(4, 718) = 9.24, p < .001$; Pillai's Trace = .10; $\eta^2 = .05$. An inspection of the mean happiness scores indicated that vacationers who rated their holiday very relaxed ($M = 2.64, SD = .10$) or relaxed ($M = 2.16, SD = .09$) are happier than vacationers who rated their holiday as stressful or neutral ($M = 1.07, SD = .22$). We found no significant main effect for length of stay, $F(8, 718) = 1.59, ns$. There was also no significant main effect for *days passed after having returned*, $F(10, 718) = .90, ns$. The interaction effect between holiday stress and length of stay, $F(16, 718) = 1.08, ns$, and holiday stress and *days passed after having returned*, $F(20, 718) = 1.19, ns$, were both not statistically significant. Thus, holiday stress is negatively associated with post-trip happiness, whereas length of stay and the number of *days passed after having returned* fail to have a significant impact on it.

Fade-out

Happiness for the 'relaxed' group ($n = 521$) in week 27 is 2.27 ($SD = 1.08$). Their post-holiday happiness scores were all very similar to their happiness level in week 27, and did not significantly fluctuate. The 'very relaxed' group had a pre-trip mean happiness score of 2.48 ($SD = 1.26$). This happiness level of this group slowly, but gradually, decreased, until it reached their pre-trip level at eight

weeks after return, with significant higher post-trip happiness levels in the first two weeks of return. The subgroups for the stressful or neutral category were too small to draw any meaningful conclusions.

2.4 Discussion

2.4.1 Vacationers are happier

Our study demonstrated that vacationers generally displayed greater pre-trip happiness than non-vacationers, although the differences were small. In contrast, post-trip happiness did not differ between vacationers and non-vacationers. Possibly, anticipation played an important role in explaining the observed differences in pre-trip happiness between vacationers and non-vacationers. Holiday trips are experiences which people look forward to (Miller, Rathouse, Scarles, Holmes, & Tribe, 2007). For most, the enjoyment starts weeks, even months before the holiday actually begins.

Remarkably, post-trip happiness is generally not different for vacationers and non-vacationers. However, holiday stress is associated with post-trip happiness.

2.4.2 Holidays briefly boost post-trip happiness

The benefits of a 'very relaxed' holiday trip last maximally for two weeks. A relaxed holiday without stress is not only good for one's health (Gump & Matthews, 2000; Vingerhoets, et al., 1997; Westman & Etzion, 2001), but is also important in terms of post-trip happiness. However, the relaxed group of vacationers does not draw any post-trip happiness benefits, which suggests a holiday has to be very relaxing in order to draw post-trip benefits, in terms of post-trip happiness.

Our study finds a similar fade-out gradient for happiness as De Bloom et al. (2009) reported in their meta-analysis on post-trip health. It is not surprising that a holiday trip does not have a prolonged effect on happiness, since most vacationers have to return to work or other daily tasks and consequently fall back into their normal routine fairly quickly.

Additionally, this study demonstrates that length of stay is not associated with post-trip happiness. This contradicts Neal (2000) and Neal and Sirgy's (2004) findings, but supports the findings of Gilbert and Abdullah (2004), Lounsbury and Hoopes (1986) and Kemp et al. (2008). Our data confirm that returning home involves a swift return to pre-trip happiness levels, independent of the duration of the trip. As long as the holiday trip itself provides sufficient opportunity to relax and reduce stress, there should be no reason for any differences in post-trip happiness, regardless of how many days are spent on holiday.

2.4.3 Explanations

How do these findings fit the three theories of quality of life, as mentioned in the introduction section? Set-point theory cannot explain the pre-trip high very well, but adequately predicts that the holiday uplift is short-lived or even absent. Need theory can explain the pre-trip high if one assumes that we have an innate need for wandering, possibly a leftover of our hunter-gatherer past and that this need can already be partially gratified by anticipation. In this theory, the absence of a post-trip boost could be due to saturation. Another possible explanation is that the non-vacationers, or their travel partner(s), feel temporarily less happy and therefore do not have the need for a holiday. However, this does not explain the absence of differences in post-trip happiness between vacationers and non-vacationers very well. The need for status could possibly explain our findings also. Comparison theory would suggest that social comparison is involved and that people who anticipate a holiday feel to be better off than those who intend to stay at home. The absence of a post-trip happiness difference between vacationers and

non-vacationers can be explained from a comparison theory perspective as well. The holiday is over and vacationers are no longer different from non-vacationers, which would explain the similar happiness levels.

2.4.4 Implications

The findings of our study suggest several managerial, policy and individual implications. From an individual point of view, vacationing is something which is looked forward to. However, the length of such a vacation does not matter in terms of post-trip happiness. This suggests that people derive more happiness from two or more short breaks spread throughout the year, than from having just a single longer holiday once a year.

This brings us to the policy implications. In order for families to stagger their holiday time throughout the year, the school system would have to become more flexible. Some countries have rather lengthy summer holidays, leaving little time for short additional vacations in the rest of the year. This poses a constraint to families with school-going children in particular. However, as Butler (2001) suggests, changing the long summer school holiday may not have the desired effect; tourists for example attach much value to the weather condition and in addition, host communities may not be so keen to have tourists all year round.

From a managerial perspective we would advise tourism managers to provide holiday products, with a minimum amount of stress-inducing aspects. Obviously, companies do not purposely create stressful holiday services. However, certain experiences may enhance stress and should be avoided as much as possible. An example of such a stressful experience is waiting in line at a theme park or cuing at the entrance to a museum. These clearly are examples of rather mildly stressful experiences. Nonetheless, when waiting in line for attractions at a theme park, in the heat, accompanied by impatient young children, such mildly stressful experiences could easily evolve into much more stressful events. Several methods to reduce the negative effects of waiting lines exist (Kostecki, 1996); the tourism industry should use these approaches to greater extent. Another example of a stress-inducing aspect of certain holidays is long haul air travel. Several aspects of air travel contribute to stress (Stokes & Kite, 1994). Jet lag is an all too familiar phenomenon among air travelers. Long haul air travel may also cause health problems, such as a cold, which could turn into a painful and stressful experience at high altitudes (Vingerhoets, et al., 1997). However, information on how to reduce jet lag or prevent other health issues is not always clearly communicated by airlines and tour operators.

Specific stress-factors aside, managers should generally go out of their way to create holiday packages which are very relaxing, as very relaxed holidays boost post-trip happiness. The increased attention for spa, health and wellness tourism (Smith & Puckó, 2009) may be a sign that the tourism industry is already attending to this increasing need.

2.4.5 Future research

We had no information about the type of holidays, or the type of activities these vacationers engaged in during their trip. Even though we know that 'very relaxed' holidays are the most favorable in terms of post-trip happiness, we do not know whether certain types of holidays or certain types of holiday activities are considered 'very relaxed' more so than others. If stressful holidays do not increase post-trip happiness, then why are there still so many active holiday packages being purchased? The answer probably lies in finding the right person-environment fit. Sensation-seekers and extraverts could benefit from vacationing in different ways than other vacationers. These matters should be explored in future research.

From the point of view of comparison theory, vacationing may possibly lower post-trip happiness when vacationers encounter richer tourists at exclusive, expensive resorts and luxurious hotels. Vacationers may also be confronted with extreme poverty in more exotic, but poor, destinations. Future research is needed to assess how frequently such confrontations take place and if they affect vacationers' post-trip happiness.

Post-trip, the possible effect of holiday satisfaction (Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1986; Westman & Eden, 1997) and its relation to holiday stress as a moderator of post-trip happiness requires further investigation.

Specific attention must be paid to the recollection phase of a holiday trip (Clawson & Knetsch, 1966), which involves savoring the holiday experience (Bryant & Veroff, 2007) through reminiscing of past holiday events (Morgan & Xu, 2009). Selective retention, selective recall (Hickson III & Beck, 2008) and a rosy view (Mitchell, Thompson, Peterson, & Cronk, 1997) can potentially enhance the positive effects of a holiday trip. These processes could add to greater happiness of vacationers. More research is needed to address these phenomena.

Finally, additional research is also needed to further assess the impact of anticipation of a holiday trip (Parrinello, 1993) on vacationers' pre-trip happiness. Moreover, the duration of such a possible uplift in pre-trip happiness needs to be assessed. Holiday expectation (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2002; Gnoth, 1997) and homesickness (Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, Van Heck, & Kirschbaum, 1996) could be assessed for possible moderating effects.

2.5 Conclusions

This study demonstrates that vacationers are happier, compared to non-vacationers, but a holiday trip does not add much to their happiness. Generally, there were no differences between vacationers' and non-vacationers' post-trip happiness. Only vacationers on a 'very relaxed' holiday trip benefit in terms of post-trip happiness. The pre-trip happiness difference between vacationers and non-vacationers could be an indication of vacationers looking forward to their holiday.

We tried to explain these findings in the light of the three quality of life theories, as mentioned in the introduction section. Comparison theory and need theory explain our findings best. Comparison theory explains the pre-trip difference well, assuming that social comparison is involved and that people who anticipate a vacation, feel better off than non-vacationers. Generally, once the holiday is over, vacationers are no happier than non-vacationers because the holiday is over and vacationers are, in that sense, equal to non-vacationers. If one assumes that we have an innate need for wandering, and that this need is fulfilled by taking a holiday trip, then need theory explains the pre-trip difference rather well. Furthermore, assuming that saturation takes place, need theory would also explain the absence of a post-trip happiness boost for most tourists.

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Chapter 3:

The holiday happiness curve: A preliminary investigation into mood during a holiday abroad⁴

ABSTRACT

We take holidays for pleasure, but how well do we actually feel during our holiday? This question was addressed in a study of 481 international tourists in the Netherlands, who answered questions about their mood of the day and about their satisfaction with life in general. Average mood appears to be high. Mood was somewhat lower among people who were in the first 'travel phase' of about 10% of the holiday duration. Mood was highest during the 'core phase', which covers about 70% of the holiday time. Mood then declines slightly, but increases during the last part of the holiday.

KEY WORDS: length of stay, life satisfaction, mood of the day, tourist experiences

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Holiday misery

We expect to have a good time when on holiday and it is along this line that Smith and Puckó (2009, p. 42) depict holidays as "a state of temporary happiness in which we are on a short-lived 'high'". Yet there are also reports of 'holiday misery'.

Horror stories of rape and murder make the headlines in the popular press around the summer holiday period. We also read about many other unpleasant things that occur while on holiday abroad, such as homesickness, jet lag (Lewy, Ahmed, & Sack, 1996), stress (Vingerhoets, Sanders, & Kuper, 1997), worries about crime (Larsen, Brun, & Ogaard, 2009) and lost luggage. Even love is said to be at risk during holidays, being around each other 24 hours a day putting "too high a strain upon a marriage" (Ryan, 1991, p. 26).

In addition to such more 'anecdotal' reports of holiday misery there is also science-based evidence that tourists are not 'having the time of their lives'. For instance, there are people who never enjoy a holiday trip. They suffer from a condition termed 'leisure sickness'. These people develop health complaints like headaches, migraines, muscle pains, fatigue, colds, fever and flu-like symptoms, with viral infections being predominantly present in the first days of a holiday trip (Van Heck & Vingerhoets, 2007; Vingerhoets, Van Huijgevoort, & Van Heck, 2002). Actually, the first few days of a holiday trip appear to be particularly unpleasant, even dangerous. Research has shown that in the first two days more myocardial infarctions occur (Kop, Vingerhoets, Kruithof, & Gottdiener, 2003) and more cases of travelers' diarrhea commence (Cartwright, 1992). In the first three days more people report health problems (Pearce, 1981) and there are even indications that more people die during the first days of a holiday trip abroad (Van Lijstelaar, 1997).

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What would be the reason for tourists not to enjoy their trip? Perhaps we are still caught up in a boring consumption economy, which offers tourists mainly package deals or all-in trips. Just because tourists purchase these products does not mean they enjoy them (Scitovsky, 1992). Tourism products may not meet the needs of tourism consumers. This might be true as the tourism industry seems to have little interest in product development. Certainly the distribution of tourism packages has changed immensely over the years, but the product itself seems to hold still in its development, despite increasing attention for the 'experience economy' (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

Does this mean that we typically overestimate the pleasure of a holiday? Not necessarily so. Holiday misery can be an exception rather than the rule. So the question is how much most people actually enjoy holiday trips.

3.1.2 Earlier research

The word 'mood' is used to refer to how tourists feel during their holidays. Quite surprisingly, tourism research has paid little attention to tourists' moods during holiday trips. The focus of tourism research is on 'customer satisfaction', that is, an overall appraisal afterwards (González, Comesaña, & Brea, 2007; Heo, Jogaratnam, & Buchanan, 2004; Kim, Ma, & Kim, 2006; Nash, Thyne, & Davies, 2006; Oh & Parks, 1997; Weiermair & Fuchs, 1999; Wu, 2007). Mood is only considered to the extent that it affects the post-hoc appraisal (De Rojas & Camarero, 2008; Gountas & Gountas, 2004; Sirakaya, Petrick, & Choi, 2004).

Mood is more central in the new 'positive psychology' that focuses on ways to improve the happiness of mentally healthy people. Leisure and tourism are evidently good ways for boosting happiness and consequently this emerging field of psychology has received some attention in tourism and leisure literature. In leisure literature, Stebbins has linked positive psychology with his serious leisure perspective (Stebbins, 2007) and in tourism literature, Ryan (1997) already addressed the concept of life satisfaction (Veenhoven, 1984), discussing its relationship with holiday satisfaction by arguing that "those who feel good are those who are satisfied because they have a preponderance of positive experiences in their lives and in their holidays" (Ryan, 1997, p. 55).

Mood during holidays

Little is known about tourists' average mood *level* during a holiday trip. Kemp et al. (2008) find that their participants are happier during their holidays compared to their normal lives. Negative moods are more frequent on the second and third day of a holiday trip (Pearce, 1981).

We know even less of mood *changes* during holiday trips. A study of outdoor recreation found that mood is lower at the beginning of the activity, and again lower at the end. During the main activity itself mood is highest. Traveling back has a higher score compared to traveling to the site (Hammit, 1980). Perhaps a similar mood pattern exists during holiday trips.

Effects of holiday trips on life satisfaction

Good mood during a holiday may add to life satisfaction as a whole. Ryan (1997, p. 55) asserted that "those who feel good are those who are satisfied". Taking a holiday trip indeed increases life satisfaction afterwards. In addition to several cross-sectional studies which report small positive associations between holiday trips and happiness (Kemp, Burt, & Furneaux, 2008; Milman, 1998; Neal, 2000), one pretest-posttest design study found that a holiday trip increases life satisfaction (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004). A small average effect size ($d = +0.27$) is reported (De Bloom, et al., 2009). Gilbert and Abdullah conclude that holidays change the sense of well-being of those participating in them.

Their interpretation is that holidays provide satisfaction which generates positive moods. Even though these positive moods during a holiday may not last very long (Strauss-Blasche, Muhry, Lehofer, Moser, & Marktl, 2004).

3.1.3 Questions

In this paper the following questions are addressed: (1) How well do people feel during a holiday trip? (2) Does mood change during the trip? (3) Does average mood differ across different kinds of holidays, activities of the day and length of stay? (4) Are the effects different for different kinds of people? Answers to these questions will be conducive to product improvement in the tourism industry.

3.2 Method

3.2.1 Respondents

Data were collected on different days of the week at different tourism locations in the Netherlands during 19 days in the spring of 2008. These locations included popular international tourism venues in Amsterdam city center, locations such as the Keukenhof, Volendam, Maastricht, Valkenburg, Amsterdam airport and the Amsterdam cruise terminal. The choice of these locations was based on a list of the 20 most visited attractions in the Netherlands (Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions, 2006). The entertainment parks and zoos, known to be visited mostly by Dutch people, were not chosen as a location for data collection. 549 international tourists filled in a self-report questionnaire; business travelers and day trippers ($n = 68$) were excluded from analyses. The final sample, consisting of 481 tourists, includes 68 nationalities. Of the respondents 29.6% were between 18 and 24 years of age. Men made up 46.4% of the sample.

3.2.2 Concepts

To clarify the distinction between several terms related to happiness, these are all briefly discussed here.

Well-being is a concept frequently used to refer to personal health status. Well-being can be measured rather 'objectively'. A person's heart rate or the 'number of sick days within a month' are examples of well-being indicators. The term well-being is also used to describe objective living standards within a certain country, incorporating issues such as poverty, crime rates or pollution. The latter interpretation is also referred to as the 'external quality of life' (Veenhoven, 2000).

Subjective well-being addresses the 'internal quality of life', which focuses on how a person appreciates his or her life (Veenhoven, 2000). Happiness and subjective well-being are synonymous.

Satisfaction has two general applications. First, it may address how a person evaluates a certain aspect of a product or service; this is known as customer satisfaction. The second application falls into the internal quality of life category and is used to assess how satisfied a person is with their life (Veenhoven, 2000).

Wellness is a multi-dimensional concept, incorporating elements of objective as well as subjective well-being. The wellness industry offers products that ought to balance body, mind and soul (Smith & Puckó, 2009).

In this paper the term *mood* is used as a synonym for happiness of the day and expresses the balance of positive and negative affects during the day (Veenhoven, 1984). 'Good' mood means that one felt mostly positive. The term *life satisfaction* is used for the overall appreciation of one's life as a whole (Veenhoven, 1984). One can be in a good mood on a particular day, without being satisfied with one's life as a whole and vice versa. The term *happiness* is used as a generic term for both *life satisfaction* and *mood*.

3.2.3 Variables

Type of holiday trip

Respondents had to state what type of holiday trip they had booked. The answers comprised a cultural holiday, a nature holiday, a city trip, a beach holiday, a cruise, an event holiday, a tour, or some other type of holiday. Additionally, respondents had to state their main activity of that day.

Part of the trip

To determine length of stay tourists were asked how long their trip would last in days. They also reported which day of the trip it was at that moment. The part of the trip was calculated by setting day one to '0', and the final day to 'n-1', and consequently dividing the day of the trip by length of stay, which was also set to 'n-1'.

Mood

Mood was measured using a single question: "How are you feeling today?" Answers ranged from 1 (terrible) to 10 (excellent). Respondents were not asked about their mood for previous days of the holiday trip, since Kemp et al. (2008) found that there is frequent inconsistency in what people recall of their previous feelings.

Life satisfaction

Life satisfaction was measured by asking: "On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = terrible, 10 = excellent) how do you rate your life as a whole?" The questions measuring mood and life satisfaction were put first in the questionnaire, in order to prevent 'focusing illusion' effects (the tendency of respondents to exaggerate the importance of a factor) (Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2006).

Nationality

Respondents also reported their nationality and that information was used to distinguish between tourists coming from individualistic or collectivistic cultures. For that purpose, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (1997) ranking of individualism in nations was used.

Socio-demographic variables

As respondents originated from many different countries, income was measured as being 'average', 'above average', or 'below average' in comparison to the modal income within the country of residence. Age, marital status and gender were also assessed.

Temperature

The mean outside temperature of the day was included as a variable, as it is known that temperature affects mood (Keller, et al., 2005). Mean temperature scores were obtained from the website of the Royal Dutch Meteorological Institute.

3.3 Results

3.3.1 Average mood during the holiday

Level high

The mean mood level during the holiday trip is high. The mean score for mood is 8.2 ($SD = 1.36$); the frequency of mood scores is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency of mood

Mood	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Frequency	0	2	2	8	8	19	66	179	115	82

The mode is 8, which is also high. A small segment of the respondents (4.2%) rate their mood lower than a 6. Extremely high scores are rated quite often, a 9 was given 115 times and the highest score possible (a 10) was given 82 times.

No reflection of general life satisfaction

The distribution of mood and life satisfaction scores is rather similar. Life satisfaction has a mean score of 8.24 ($SD = 1.22$), with 2.5% of the scores lower than 6. However, the correlation between mood during holidays and general life satisfaction is fairly small ($r = +.28$, $p < 0.01$); this indicates that enjoyment of a holiday trip is not just an echo of general satisfaction, but something brought about by the holiday experience.

Similar across types of holiday

Average mood did not differ with the different kinds of holidays, such as city trips, cruises and beach holidays, as tested through a one-way between groups analysis of variance.

Similar across activities of the day

Responses to the open question about the main activity of the day were grouped into seven categories: 'sightseeing', 'museum visit', 'drinking & drugs', 'shopping', 'historical sites', 'relaxing' and 'travel'. A one-way between groups analysis of variance shows no significant differences in mood scores for these groups. There is a difference between travel as a main activity and the remaining activities ($p < .05$). Tourists who perceived 'travel' to be their main activity of the day have significantly lower mood scores ($M = 6.92$, $n = 24$, $SD = 1.69$). (Note that tourists who travel on a given day may not necessarily view it as their main activity of the day.) Tourists who report a non-travel main activity have an 8.27 mean mood score ($n = 378$, $SD = 1.32$).

The tourists in the sample used different modes of transport to reach the Netherlands. The mood scores per travel mode on the first day are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Mood scores per mode of transport on day 1

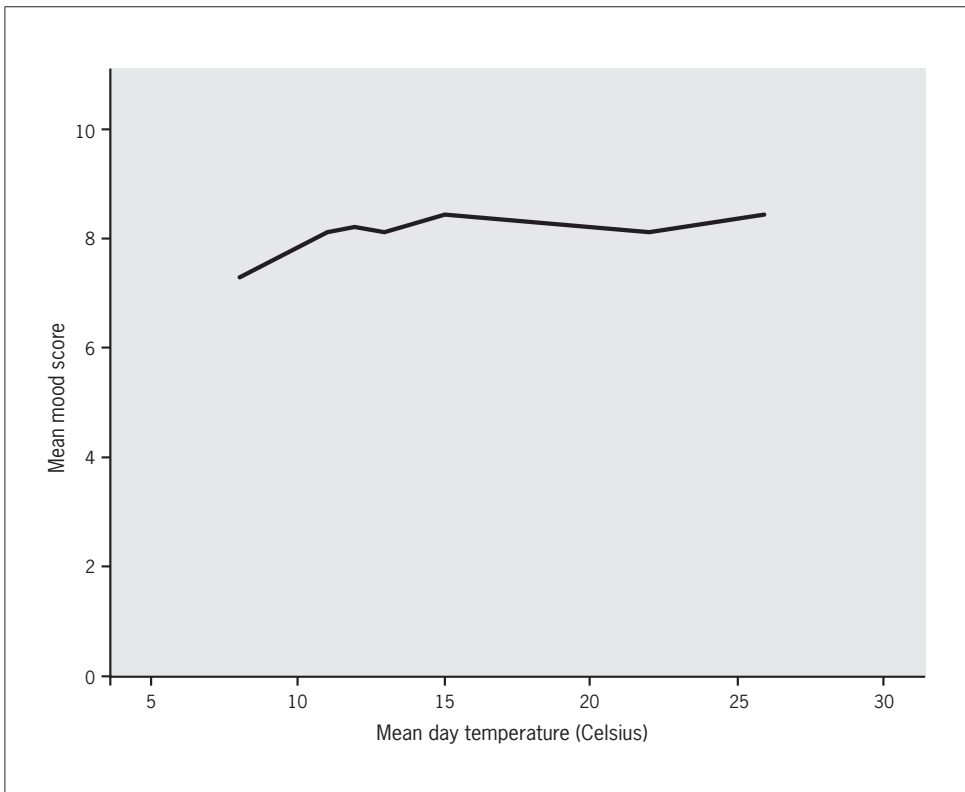
Mode of transport	Mean score	SD	n
Air	7.35	1.96	31
Bus	8.33	2.07	6
Car	8.00	1.00	3
Train	7.33	1.92	12
Other	8.00	0.82	4

Approximately half of the tourists flew, others arrived by car, bus, train or other mode of transportation. Mood scores for air travel and train are lower, but not significantly, than the average score of bus, car or other mode of transport.

Warm weather: better mood

As shown in Figure 1, mood tends to be better on warm days, the correlation between mood and temperature being $+0.10$ ($p < 0.01$).

Figure 1: Relation temperature and mood



Similar across culture and social categories

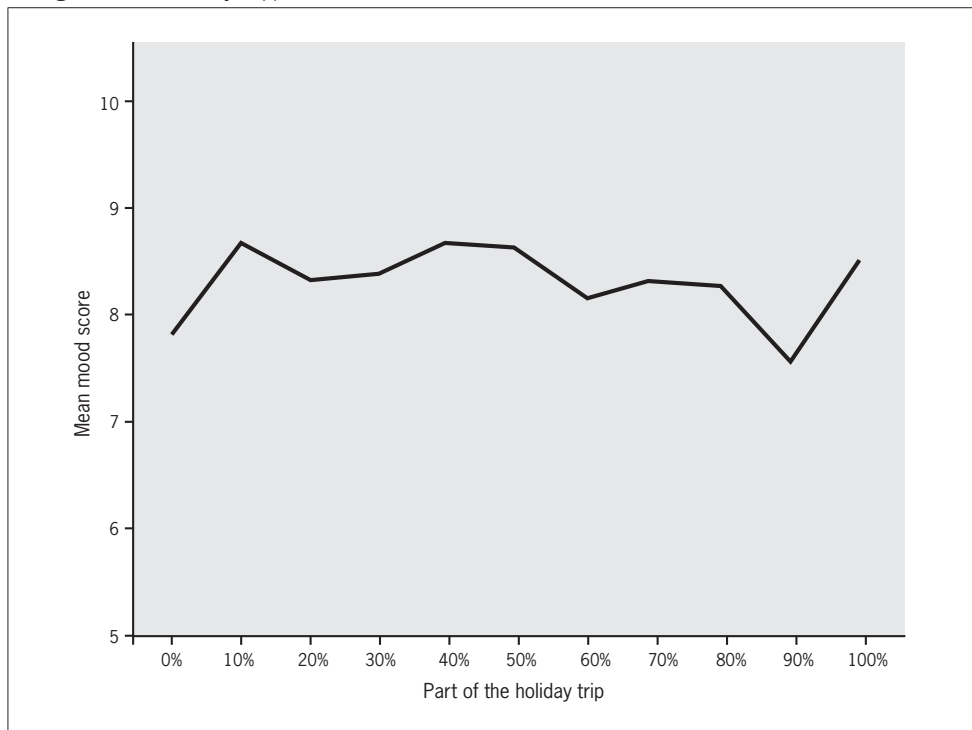
Mood during holiday does not differ between tourists coming from individualistic or collectivistic cultures. It does not differ either across age, marital status, gender and income categories.

3.3.2 Mood of the day over the days

Phases

As shown in Figure 2, mood scores are relatively low on the first day(s) of a holiday trip. The 'part of the holiday trip' is grouped into bins of 10%.

Figure 2: The holiday happiness curve



A downward trend results in a low score just before traveling back home (at 90%). Finally, at the end of the trip, mood increases again. Average temperature of the day does not cause a spurious relationship on the holiday happiness curve.

The mean score for mood on day one is 7.54 ($n = 56$, $SD = 1.85$). The second last day has a mean mood score of 8.19 ($n = 83$, $SD = 1.53$). The last day of the trip has a mean mood score of 8.40 ($n = 55$, $SD = 1.18$). The remaining days have a mean score of 8.29 for mood ($n = 286$, $SD = 1.18$).

Length of stay

Length of stay ranged from two up to 365 days. 80% of the tourists were on a trip of 17 days or less.

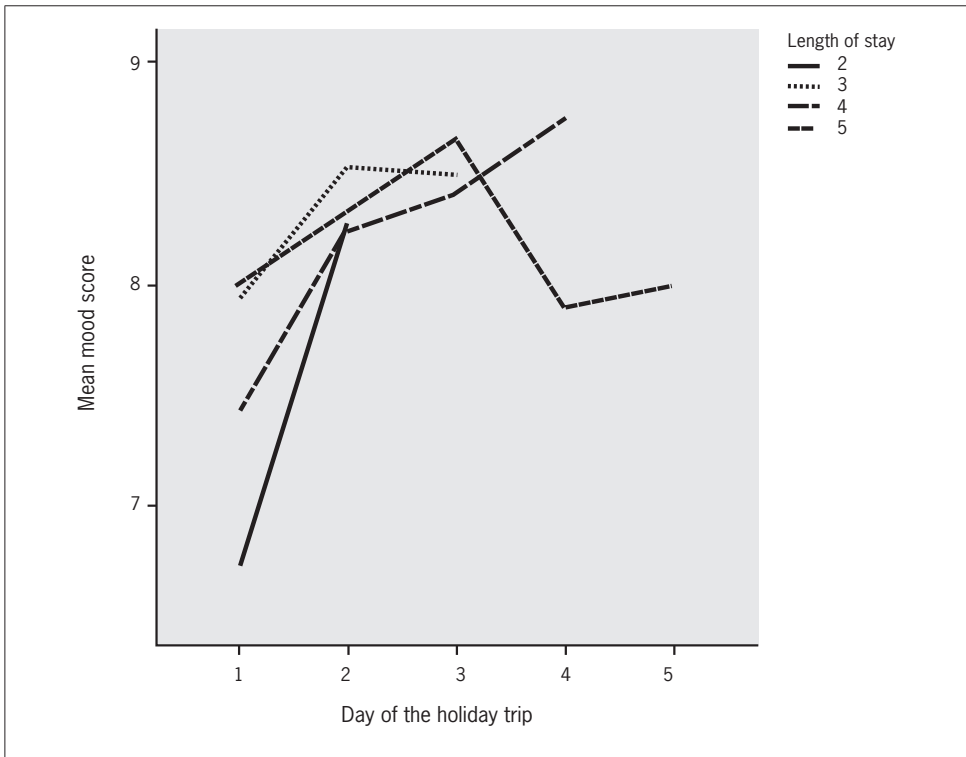
Table 3: Mood scores per length of stay

	Mean mood	SD	n
2-day trip	7.50	2.02	22
3-day trip	8.37	1.31	70
4-day trip	8.29	1.19	62
5-day trip	8.28	1.26	57
6-day trip	8.12	1.24	25
7-day trip	8.16	1.17	16
8-day trip or longer	8.19	1.40	207

There are no significant differences in mood scores for different lengths of stay, as displayed in Table 3.

Figure 3 shows the happiness curves for different lengths of stay (two up to five days). Curves for other lengths of stay are not shown; those curves are all rather similar to the five-day curve. Noticeably, the dent at 90%, which is evident on the general curve displayed in Figure 2, is not evident on trips of two to four days. This is not surprising as a two-, three-, or four-day trip does not leave much time for a full experience of these different holiday phases. Several phases may even blend together.

Figure 3: Happiness curves for different lengths of stay



Mean mood scores are higher than mean life satisfaction scores on trips with a length of stay between three to six days (mean difference = +.25, $n = 212$), which suggests some advantage of short trips. A two-day trip produces a relatively lower mean mood (compared to life satisfaction), just like trips with a length of stay of seven days or more (mean difference = -.29, $n = 263$).

3.4 Discussion

3.4.1 *Holiday misery a myth?*

People feel generally good during their holiday trip. Little over 4% of tourists report low mood scores during their holidays. Even though this is slightly more than during everyday life (2.5% reported life satisfaction scores lower than a 6), it is apparent that the media loves to exploit holiday misery. In a time when there is not much else going on, a good holiday horror story draws the attention of most people, as they are about to go on holiday themselves.

Why does mood change throughout the holiday?

The holiday happiness curve, as described in this paper, displays several phases of the tourist experience in terms of mood. The first is the 'travel phase', which occurs between 0-10% of the holiday, resulting in (relatively) low mood scores, probably due to travel. The second phase is much longer and ranges from 10% up to 80% of the holiday. This is the 'core phase' with consistently high mood levels. The third phase is a 'decline phase' in which mood drops to the lowest point of the holiday trip. This phase is between 80% and 90% into the holiday trip. Why is that? Qualitative research by Fred Bryant provides some clues....

Fred Bryant points out some qualitative findings on enjoyment reducing experiences during a vacation (Bryant & Veroff, 2007), which could account for the lower mood levels in this phase. Among the things mentioned by respondents are "thinking of going home" and "I thought about how fast the days went by" (2007, p. 89). Such thoughts could account for lower mood scores in the 'decline phase'. The final phase is defined as the 'rejuvenation phase' (between 90-100%), in which tourists are possibly glad to go back home and leave behind the worries of the previous phase. The travel-to mood score is lower than the travel-back score, which is in accordance with a previous study on outdoor recreation (Hammit, 1980). Whether mood patterns in general are similar to such a one-day activity is difficult to assess as more measurements per day and, for short trips, per part of the day are needed to allow for accurate comparison.

Short stays more satisfying?

Two previous studies found contradicting results in terms of the role of length of stay. Kemp et al. (2008) found that length of stay does not play a role, whereas in an earlier study by Neal (2000), it was found that a length of stay of seven days or fewer (indirectly) negatively affects happiness, and a stay of eight days or more positively affects happiness afterwards. Both studies have some restrictions. Kemp et al.'s findings are based on a small sample of 49 respondents, with lengths of stay ranging from four to just fourteen days. Neal's sample was much larger, but the correlations she found were both close to zero. Inconsistent with the work of both Neal (2000) and Kemp et al. (2008) the present study finds that, compared to a long holiday, a short holiday is more beneficial to happiness.

Mood scores are generally lower than life satisfaction scores for two-day trips and trips lasting more than six days. Thus, on a holiday trip lasting between three to six days happiness of the day (mood) is higher than everyday happiness (life satisfaction). This seems to correspond well with the latest trend

of taking several short trips per year instead of one longer one. Possibly a two- to six-day holiday trip is long enough to enjoy (unlike a two-day trip), but short enough to minimize arguments with partner, family or friends.

Everyone enjoys a holiday trip

A holiday trip is about everyone having a good time. Generally speaking, different types of people are all in a good mood on holiday. No matter where they come from, how much money they make, how old they are, or whether they are male or female, everyone enjoys their holidays. It also does not matter what activities tourists engage in during their holiday trip; mood does not differ across different types of holiday or different activities of the day. This suggests that enjoying a holiday trip is a universal phenomenon.

3.4.2 Limitations

The outcome of this study should be treated with some caution. The holiday happiness curve is based on lengths of stay varying from just two, up to 365 days. As shown in Figure 3, the curves for different lengths of stay can be quite different from one another. The curves for a length of stay of two, three and four days are different from curves for longer stays. There is just not enough time on such short trips to experience the four different phases found for longer trips. Or perhaps they do have the same pattern, but due to the limited time, some phases occur on the same day, for which this survey's resolution was too short. In this study, respondents rated their mood just once, on one day of their trip. The development of mood was therefore based on different respondents' statements and some sub-samples were relatively small. It would be interesting to have each respondent rate their mood on every day of their trip, possibly even several times per day, specifically for short trips. A final limitation is that we do not know anything about the respondents' mood levels in everyday life. Even though their general life satisfaction does not seem to influence holiday mood much, it could be that these respondents have a high mood in general.

3.4.3 Implications

The tourism industry needs to pay more attention to the first few days of a holiday trip. Mood is particularly low in that phase of the holiday trip. Specific attention has to be paid to make the travel process from the tourist's home to the holiday destination more enjoyable. People who regard travel as their main activity of the day report lower mood. Traveling back home is seemingly of lesser importance, as the general holiday happiness curve goes up and tourists seem to be more interested in getting back home than they are in worrying about their travels.

3.4.4 Future research

Regarding mood phases, future research should make explicit the exact magnitude and duration of (possible) mood phases before and after a holiday trip. It is likely that travel does not affect mood scores only on day one of the holiday trip; it could also affect mood scores right before leaving, perhaps in the same manner as could be seen in the rejuvenation phase. In addition to measuring these fluctuations, there is a need for further assessment of exactly which elements cause mood fluctuations during a holiday trip. Qualitative research methods would be suitable to determine exactly which factors cause a three- to six-day trip to be more beneficial in terms of happiness. Is it true that a two-day trip is too short to enjoy and a seven-day trip (or longer) gives more room for arguments with spouses?

Furthermore, different methods could be applied. For instance, the experience sampling method (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1987), where participants are 'beeped' on a PDA and asked to record where they are, what they do, and how they feel at multiple moments throughout a day. This would be ideal for measuring mood, although challenging to apply in a tourism setting. Another useful method is the day reconstruction method (Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2004). Both methods require quite some effort from respondents, but detailed information would become available on many different aspects of the service offer, as time and activity are reported and mood is measured simultaneously. Additionally, possible memory discrepancies would be avoided, knowing that people tend to romanticize their holiday experience (Mitchell, Thompson, Peterson, & Cronk, 1997) and report inaccurate accounts of happiness afterwards (Kemp, et al., 2008).

Finally, instead of just focusing on tourists' mood, future research should also examine locals' mood, particularly during high season. Taking holiday trips may be beneficial for the mood of tourists, but how does it affect the local community? These challenging questions call for additional research.

3.5 Conclusions

Holiday misery is a myth. Holiday trips are an enjoyable experience for most tourists, regardless of their socio-demographic status. People feel typically good during a holiday trip and feel typically best during the core phase and at the very end. This pattern is similar across different kinds of holidays and across different kinds of people. The 'holiday feel' is not merely a reflection of general life satisfaction, but seems mostly instigated by the holiday itself.

Holiday activities do not influence happiness of the day. This may come as a surprise to those who believe we live in an experience economy (Pine II & Gilmore, 1999), but makes sense from the perspective of extraordinary tourist experiences (Morgan & Xu, 2009); few of which appear to include holiday activities as offered by tour operators. It may also be a sign of the experience economy not having entered the tourism market yet (Morgan, Elbe, & De Esteban Curiel, 2009).

Furthermore, findings indicate that short – but not too short – holidays may be more beneficial, in terms of happiness, than longer holidays. A short holiday possibly has several advantages over a long holiday. First, the travel time to the holiday destination is likely to be shorter as tourists may not want to waste a large part of their holiday by traveling from A to B, and back. Second, unlike a long holiday, quarrels with one's travel party are less likely to occur during a short trip.

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Chapter 4:

Determinants of daily happiness on vacation⁵

ABSTRACT

How happy are tourists during a day of their holiday and what makes them happy? These questions were addressed in a study of 466 international tourists in the Netherlands. While on vacation, tourists are generally high on hedonic level of affect, with positive affect exceeding negative affect almost fourfold. Affect balance is higher than generally observed in everyday life, whereas tourists' life satisfaction is not significantly different compared to life satisfaction in their everyday life. Vacationers' socio-economic backgrounds and life satisfaction only partially explain their affective state of the day. Most of the variance is explained by factors associated with the holiday trip itself. During a holiday, holiday stress and attitude towards the travel party are the most important determinants of daily affect balance. These findings imply that, on the whole, the tourism industry is doing a good job. The industry could probably do better with more research on experiences during the holiday.

KEY WORDS: affect, emotions, happiness, subjective well-being, tourist experience

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The desire for a happy holiday

Tourists take holidays for pleasure and when doing so, they implicitly assume that vacationing makes them feel happier. Recent research reveals that individuals indeed benefit from vacationing in terms of happiness. Anticipation of a holiday trip leads to higher feelings of happiness (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2002; Hagger & Murray, 2009; Nawijn, Marchand, Veenhoven, & Vingerhoets, 2010), while post-trip, tourists experience less stress and are in generally better health, although these positive effects are short-lived (De Bloom, et al., 2009). When returned home, happiness is only significantly higher for those who had a very relaxed holiday experience (Nawijn, et al., 2010).

It looks as if this post-trip phase is tourism management's main focus. Tourism managers have a range of tools available, which inform them about customer behavior and attitude. For instance, image research informs managers how customers view a company or a holiday destination. Furthermore, customer loyalty programs, such as clubs, frequent flyer programs or online communities are also frequently used in the tourism industry. An even more often used tool for tourism management information is customer satisfaction research. This frequently and elaborately studied area (Alegre & Garau, 2010; Bigné, Andreu, & Gnoth, 2005; González, Comesaña, & Brea, 2007; Heo, Jogaratnam, & Buchanan, 2004; Kim, Ma, & Kim, 2006; Nash, Thyne, & Davies, 2006; Neal & Gursoy, 2008; Oh & Parks, 1997; Weiermair & Fuchs, 1999; Wu, 2007) concentrates mostly on the post-hoc appraisal of tourism products and services. It often does not provide any information on how tourists actually

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felt during their holiday trip. If such feelings are taken into account, these are generally studied as independent variables and used to assess how current mood or affective elements of customer satisfaction are related to overall satisfaction (De Rojas & Camarero, 2008; Del Bosque & San Martin, 2009; Gountas & Gountas, 2004; Sirakaya, Petrick, & Choi, 2004; Zins, 2002). Empirical data on the psychological aspects of the tourist experience (Larsen, 2007) appear to be almost non-existent. Even the existing happiness studies on emotions during a trip focus on post-hoc assessment of emotional experiences (Sirgy, Kruger, Lee, & Yu, 2010) or on comparisons of pre- and post-trip appraisals (Besser & Priel, 2006; Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Nawijn, et al., 2010).

The post-trip/recollection phase of a holiday trip (Clawson & Knetsch, 1966) involves savoring the holiday experience (Bryant & Veroff, 2007), but such recollections are deemed somewhat unreliable (Braun-LaTour, Grinley, & Loftus, 2006; Kemp, Burt, & Furneaux, 2008). Although the memories in itself are real, they are not an accurate summary of the actual experiences; much 'reconstruction' is taking place (Kemp, et al., 2008). Thus, while these unreliable recollections may add to wider happiness of vacationers in their everyday lives, this rosy view (Mitchell, Thompson, Peterson, & Cronk, 1997) affects holiday memories and thus tourism managers do not have genuine insight into the actual experience of a holiday trip as it is taking place. In the light of the experience economy, however, such insight is crucial. It would allow management to enhance the quality of their product, create competitive advantages and eventually generate higher profits. Pine II and Gilmore emphasized that managers "must focus on the experience customers have while *using* their goods" (Pine II & Gilmore, 1999, p. 15). Tourism management is currently lacking such an insight. Moreover, tourists do not have such information either. If holidays mostly do not bring about a post-trip happiness boost (Nawijn, et al., 2010), perhaps consumers are better off spending their money on things other than holidays.

4.1.2 Daily happiness

The word 'happiness' is used both for the evaluation of one's life as a whole and for mood of the day, which is considered a momentary state of happiness (Eid & Diener, 2004). In this paper the term is used in the latter meaning and the word 'life satisfaction' in the former. Research on daily mood has taught us several things. For instance, individuals generally report higher levels of positive affect than negative affect (Egloff, Tausch, Kohlmann, & Krohne, 1995; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Being in the company of peers and participating in freely chosen activities also raises happiness levels. Higher levels of affect are present when individuals are engaged in passive leisure activities or social activities, whereas school activities have below average scores (Csikszentmihalyi & Hunter, 2003). Perceived stress is related to decreases in happiness (Schiffirin & Nelson, 2010); stress is associated with low mood during the day, but stress does not negatively influence affect a day later (DeLongis, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1988).

Mood is higher on weekends (Stone, Hedges, Neale, & Satin, 1985), as weekends tend to have less unpleasant events compared to weekdays (Stone, 1987). Due to the relatively structured nature of weekdays in everyday life (e.g., fixed lunch hours, work hours, etc.), time of day is associated with levels of affect (Csikszentmihalyi & Hunter, 2003; Egloff, et al., 1995; Stone, Smyth, Pickering, & Schwartz, 2006) and differences are observed in levels of affect between different days of the week as well (Csikszentmihalyi & Hunter, 2003; Egloff, et al., 1995).

Virtually nothing is known about individuals' levels of positive and negative affect during a holiday trip. We do know that tourists tend to feel generally good during their holiday trip (Nawijn, 2010), but slightly worse at the start of their holiday (Nawijn, 2010; Pearce, 1981), which is when tourists report more health problems compared to other days of their trip (Cartwright, 1992; Kop, Vingerhoets, Kruithof,

& Gottdiener, 2003). This paper adds to the existing literature by addressing the following research questions: (1) How do tourists feel during a day of their holiday trip? (2) What causes these feelings? (3) Do they feel better on holiday compared to their everyday lives?

4.2 Method

4.2.1 Respondents

Data were collected on different days of the week at 12 different tourism locations in the Netherlands during 13 days in the months of April, May and June of 2009. These locations included popular international tourism venues in Amsterdam city center, locations such as the Keukenhof, Delft, Scheveningen, Maastricht and Valkenburg. The choice of these locations was based on a list of the 20 most visited attractions in the Netherlands (Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions, 2006). The entertainment parks and zoos, known to be visited mostly by Dutch people, were not chosen as a location for data collection. 466 international leisure travelers filled in a self-report questionnaire. Respondents originated from 51 countries. The sample was relatively young; 60% were between 18 and 29 years of age. Men made up 50% of the sample.

4.2.2 Variables

The dependent variable of this study is 'hedonic level of affect', which Veenhoven (1984) sees as the 'affective dimension' of happiness. Hedonic level of affect can be measured using an Affect Balance Scale (ABS), such as the PANAS 'to day' variant (Watson, et al., 1988). Affect balance is the difference between the amount of positive and negative feelings experienced. This study assessed 12 affects taken from Kahneman et al. (2004); four positive affects: *happy*, *competent/capable*, *warm/friendly* and *enjoying myself*, and eight negative ones: *impatient*, *frustrated/annoyed*, *depressed/blue*, *hassled/pushed around*, *angry/hostile*, *worried/anxious*, *criticized/put down* and *tired*. Respondents stated how they felt on the day they filled in the questionnaire, using a 7 step rating scale for each affect ranging from "not at all" to "very much". For each respondent average positive affect and average negative affect were computed and subsequently the latter was subtracted from the former. The possible range of the resulting scale is -6 (average positive 1, negative 7) to +6 (average positive 7, negative 1). Additionally, the questionnaire had an open response box for respondents to give explanatory remarks as to why they felt the way they did. Life satisfaction (Veenhoven, 1984), was used to compare respondents' mood of the day to their appreciation of life as a whole. Using the same 11-point scale, respondents stated their satisfaction with life 'now' and 'in general'. Even though these were both single item scales, it is deemed a valid method for measuring life satisfaction (Abdel-Khalek, 2006).

Several questions related to the trip itself. Respondents had to state what type of holiday trip they had booked. The response alternatives comprised a cultural holiday, a nature holiday, a city trip, a beach holiday, a cruise, an event holiday, a tour, or some other type of holiday. Furthermore, an open-ended question was included; respondents could state their most important activity of the day. These were later grouped, according to Nawijn's (2010) division, into *tour*, *museum visit*, *travel*, *sightseeing*, *going out*, *relaxing* or *other* type of activity. Also, the number of people in the travel party, attitude towards the travel party on a 5-point scale and type of travel party (alone, partner, relatives, friends, colleagues, other) were all assessed. Respondents were also asked to state how stressed they felt on a 7-point scale.

Additionally, several 'background' variables were assessed. Given the fact that the day of the week and length of trip are both associated with daily happiness on vacation (Nawijn, 2010), both were

assessed. Furthermore, the hour of the day in which respondents filled in the questionnaire was registered, because, in everyday life, time of day tends to be associated with affect (Csikszentmihalyi & Hunter, 2003; Egloff, et al., 1995; Stone, et al., 2006). The mean outside temperature of the day was included as a variable, as it is known that temperature affects how people feel in their everyday lives (Keller, et al., 2005) and during their holidays (Nawijn, 2010). Mean temperature scores were obtained from the website of the Royal Dutch Meteorological Institute. Socio-demographics, such as age, income, marital status and gender were all assessed.

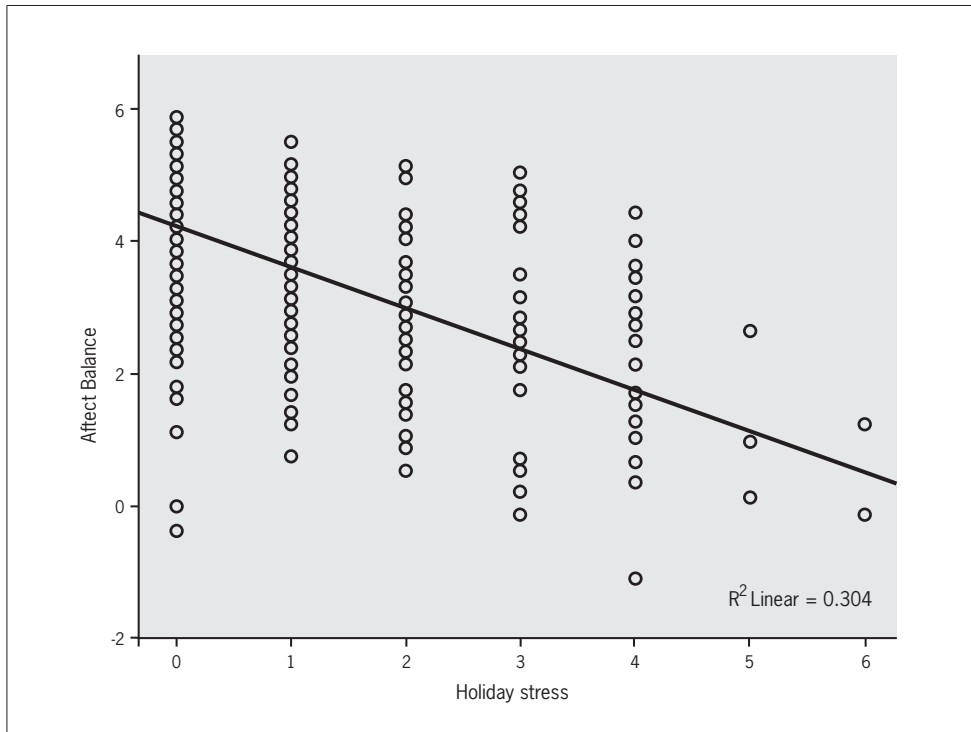
4.3 Results

4.3.1 Daily feelings on vacation

Average positive affect ($M = 4.74$, $SD = .81$, $n = 445$) was much higher than average negative affect ($M = 1.09$, $SD = .84$, $n = 426$), resulting in a mean score of 3.67 on the ABS ($SD = 1.36$, $n = 419$). The ABS was significantly associated with life satisfaction ($r = +.26$, $p < .01$, $n = 419$), age ($r = +.25$, $p < .01$, $n = 418$), income ($r = +.27$, $p < .01$, $n = 413$), holiday stress ($r = -.55$, $p < .01$, $n = 419$) and attitude towards the travel party ($r = +.31$, $p < .01$, $n = 395$). The association of the ABS with holiday stress is displayed in Figure 1.

The variables temperature, day of the trip, length of stay, time of day and number of people in travel party were not significantly associated with affect balance, although a higher number of persons in a travel party was associated positively with positive affect ($r = +.12$, $p < .05$, $n = 440$). One-way analyses of variance indicated no significant differences in affect balance between different activities of the day (tour, museum visit, travel, sightseeing, going out, relaxing, other type of activity) or type of holiday (cultural holiday, nature holiday, city trip, beach holiday, cruise, event holiday, tour, other type of holiday). Levels of affect balance did not differ in men or women either. Another one-way between groups analysis of variance did identify significant differences in affect balance between types of travel party, $F(5, 411) = 5.4$, $p < .01$. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean ABS for colleagues as travel party was significantly lower than other types of travel party. Married people had somewhat higher affect balance levels than non-married individuals, but this difference was not significant.

Figure 1: The association between the ABS and holiday stress



4.3.2 Possible causes of these feelings

To assess how much of the variance in the ABS was explained by holiday stress, attitude towards the travel party, number of people in travel party, type of travel party, main activity of the day, type of holiday and temperature, a hierarchical multiple regression was performed. This technique clarifies which independent variables are really statistically associated with the dependent variable, as it removes overlapping effects of the independent variables and allows to control for other variables. Preliminary analyses ensured no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity. To control for the effects of time of day, day of the trip, length of stay, life satisfaction, age, gender, income and marital status, these variables were all entered as covariates at step 1. Categorical variables were entered as dummies. After entering all the aforementioned independent variables at step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 47.5%, $F(34, 360) = 10.14, p < .0001$. The independent variables accounted for an additional 28.7% of the variance in affect balance, $R^2 \text{ change} = .43, F \text{ change}(23, 360) = .29, p < .0001$. In the final model, five independent variables were statistically significant. Holiday stress ($\beta = -.46, p < .001$) had the strongest association with the ABS. Smaller associations were observed for attitude towards travel party ($\beta = +.19, p < .001$), colleagues as travel party ($\beta = -.15, p < .005$) and other type of holiday ($\beta = +.10, p < .05$).

Explanations given by respondents

As mentioned previously, respondents had the opportunity to give an explanation of their feelings in an open response box. 413 respondents gave such an explanation and these remarks lent additional insight into which factors influence daily affect balance. A selection of these responses is discussed here.

Holiday stressors are mentioned by several respondents, mostly referring to travel aspects of the holiday. One respondent stated that *“the trip is too hectic, we spent too much time on a coach”*. Another tourist referred to the travel-back phase of the trip by mentioning that she is *“not looking forward to the journey home”*, whereas other tourists mentioned the travel-to phase: *“I just got off a 16 hour train from Copenhagen”*, *“flew in from south-east Asia today”* and *“just arrived from Tucson Arizona, we had no sleep for 24 hours”*.

Frustration as a cause of stress also seems to play a role as one respondent indicated that he *“flew for eleven hours and the hotel is not ready yet”*. Another respondent, who was in the middle of a four-month bike tour, addressed holiday stress, but also emphasized positive aspects of the trip, the weather and the travel party as follows: *“I have just had my girlfriend and a friend join me on my tour. I do get stressed and am really tired a lot. The weather is also a big factor – being able to be outside in the sun”*. One's travel party may have a negative influence on daily feelings as well, as a male tourist stated *“my girlfriend is angry with me”*.

Holiday stress, frustration and tiredness aside, most tourists are very happy during their holiday trip, which is illustrated by several striking quotes from tourists showcasing high levels of positive affect: *“Having a great time traveling with friends”*, *“feeling relaxed and overall fine”*, *“love it!”*, *“fabulous trip”*, *“the sights are amazing! Nice place and good company”* and *“this is the best day of my life!”*.

4.3.3 Comparison to everyday life

To assess whether happiness of the day was different from satisfaction with life as a whole, first the general life satisfaction score was compared to the life satisfaction score of the day. A paired samples t-test indicated no statistical difference between general life satisfaction ($M = 8.13$, $SD = 1.25$) and life satisfaction of the day ($M = 8.14$, $SD = 1.45$).

Nawijn (2010) found significantly higher life satisfaction scores for those on three to six-day trips. The findings of the current study reflect the same differences, with life satisfaction of the day ($M = 8.15$, $SD = 1.44$, $n = 261$) being higher than general life satisfaction ($M = 8.06$, $SD = 1.13$, $n = 261$) for those on three- to-six day trips, and daily life satisfaction being lower than general life satisfaction for those on a two-day trip or trips of seven or more days. However, these differences were not significant.

Next, the affective dimension of happiness was analyzed. The mean ABS of the current study was compared to average ABS in everyday life. The latter score was derived from the World Database of Happiness. The mean ABS in everyday life was calculated by using data on all 40 countries listed in that particular section of the database (Veenhoven, 2010). Since these scores are on a 0-10 range, linear scale transformation had to be used on the current study's ABS to allow for accurate comparison of mean scores. The mean ABS while on holiday ($M = 8.06$) is significantly higher ($p < .01$) than the mean score observed in everyday life ($M = 6.30$).

4.4 Conclusion and discussion

The current study finds that tourists are generally in good spirits during a day of their trip. This corroborates recent research (De Bloom, et al., 2010; Nawijn, 2010), which found that tourists

feel generally happy during their holiday. Although general life satisfaction on holiday is not different from everyday life satisfaction, affect balance while on vacation is significantly higher than generally observed in everyday life. Thus, tourists feel generally better on holiday compared to everyday life. Positive emotions are much more frequent than negative emotions, which is in line with earlier findings by Zins (2002) and Hosany and Gilbert (2009).

Most of the variance is explained by variables associated with the holiday trip itself. Holiday stress and attitude towards the travel party are the most important determinants of tourists' feelings during a day of their holiday trip. Many of the stress-related comments refer to travel aspects of the holiday trip. This was, however, not substantiated by the statistical analysis, where travel was included as an activity. A possible explanation for this discrepancy is that tourists may not view travel as their most important activity of the day, even though it may have an effect on their affective state. In general, the explanations reported by tourists were confirmed by the statistical analyses. Many tourists point out stressors or mention their travel party. The importance of holiday stress was already acknowledged in a recent study by Nawijn et al. (2010). Their study found that holiday stress affects vacationers post-trip happiness. The current study shows that holiday stress is also detrimental to happiness during the holiday itself. Tourists' daily affect balance during the holiday is only partially determined by their socio-demographic backgrounds and their general life satisfaction. Although 48% of the variance in daily happiness was explained, 52% is still unaccounted for. A possible explanation could lie in personality. Approximately 50% of an individual's happiness is pre-determined through heredity (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005), which is likely caused by highly heritable personality traits (McCrae & John, 1992; Tellegen, et al., 1988). Two of the five personality traits are often linked with happiness. Individuals high on neuroticism are generally less happy (Diener & Lucas, 1999) and persons high on extraversion are generally happier individuals (Diener, Sandvik, Pavot, & Fujita, 1992; Pavot, Diener, & Fujita, 1990). Personality has been linked to leisure (Hills & Argyle, 1998; Kraaykamp & Van Eijck, 2005; Melamed, Meir, & Samson, 1995), but to date, information on the relation between personality and tourism behavior, as far as the author is aware, remains limited to a single study by Fred and Shaw (1999). Overall, the findings of the present study extend current literature on the psychological aspects of the tourist experience by finding that hedonic level of affect, while on vacation, is generally higher, compared to everyday life, and by identifying several potential determinants of daily happiness on vacation.

4.4.1 Implications

This study has several implications. One the whole, it appears that tourism managers are generally doing a good job, as most tourists feel good during their holiday trip. Management could further enhance the psychological experience of a holiday trip by trying to reduce holiday stress. Long travel periods are apparent stressors. However, reducing the length of travel will most likely be difficult with most trips. Jet lag (Stokes & Kite, 1994) and health problems related to air travel may also cause holiday stress (Vingerhoets, Sanders, & Kuper, 1997). Airlines or tour operators could provide better information on how to prevent jet lag or other health issues. The current study also shows that more research is needed on emotions during a holiday trip. The tourism industry should include more affective components in their questionnaires, as post-hoc customer satisfaction studies do not provide a genuine insight into the consumer experience while it is taking place. The explanatory remarks given by tourists in this study suggest that travel is a universal stressor, especially when travel takes long and comfort is lacking. Where possible, tourists should try to avoid such situations. Furthermore, they

need to think about whom they want to go on holiday with. Finding the right travel party could greatly enhance their tourist experience.

4.4.2 Limitations and suggestions for future research

The present study has a number of limitations. The current study focused mostly on between-person differences, as opposed to within-person differences. For practical reasons it was not possible to question respondents several times throughout the day or in their everyday lives. Adopting such an approach may produce somewhat different results. Also, many of the independent variables were assessed using single item scales. This was done to limit the length of the questionnaire. Ideally, multi item scales should be used. Furthermore, although life satisfaction was controlled for in the regression analysis, we may not exclude the possibility that happy individuals, who are high on affect-balance, may be more likely to appreciate the company of their travel party and experience less stress in general. There may also be a variable which was not included in this study that may have caused a spurious association. An experimental design would be necessary to eliminate these potential limitations. More research is also needed on the causes of holiday stress. Depending on the individual, certain events are deemed more stressful than others (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983; Lazarus, 1999). Future research should assess the extent to which certain aspects of holiday trips or certain types of trips are deemed more stressful than others and on finding the right person-environment fit. Specific attention could be paid to things tourists worry about (Larsen, Brun, & Ogaard, 2009). Additional work needs to be done to further explore the relation between real-time affect balance and post-hoc feelings, and the willingness to purchase tourism products in the future. Research among vacationers who were on holiday showed that consumption emotions are linked to loyalty and willingness to pay more (Bigné & Andreu, 2004; Bigné, et al., 2005). Another study, on spring break vacations, found that remembered experience, compared to predicted experience and actual experience, is a stronger predictor of the desire to repeat a vacation (Wirtz, Kruger, Scollon, & Diener, 2003). The importance of holiday stress during a trip, as found in this study, and its influence on post-trip affect scores, as found in another study (Nawijn, et al., 2010), suggests a possible connection between holiday stress and intention to consume. Further research is required to establish this potential link. Also, tourists who want to increase their happiness by means of vacationing, may be interested in applying several positive psychological techniques (Pearce, 2009), such as mindfulness (Brown & Kasser, 2005; Brown & Ryan, 2003) or set leisure travel goals for themselves and pursue these (Sirgy, 2009). Such techniques could enable tourists to enjoy the present more, and consequently increase their happiness of the day. Preliminary research is needed to explore the effect of these techniques, while on holiday. Furthermore, certain type of trips are worthy of further investigation as they could be particularly beneficial to tourists' happiness. For instance, the emerging market for wellness tourism (Smith & Puckó, 2009), which is aimed at relaxation of body and mind, or slow travel holidays, where people travel more slowly and travel less distance (Dickinson, Robbins, & Lumsdon, 2010).

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Chapter 5:

Happiness through vacationing: Just a temporary boost or long-term benefits?⁶

ABSTRACT

Does vacationing add to our happiness in the long run? This question was addressed in a study of 3,650 Dutch citizens who reported their leisure travel every three months during two years and rated their happiness at the end of each year. Participants who had been on vacation appeared to be marginally happier, in terms of hedonic level of affect, than those who had not. This difference in Affect Balance between vacationers and non-vacationers is probably due to a very minor causal effect of vacationing on hedonic level of affect. Possibly, vacationing is positively reminisced and these memories allow for the prevalence of more positive affect in people's lives. Happiness did not predict vacationing. The effect of holiday trips on vacationers' happiness is mostly short-lived; among vacationers, happiness was unrelated to the number of trips and days spent on vacation. A separate analysis of vacationers, who value vacationing most, yielded the same results. Implications for future research are discussed.

KEY WORDS: affect, holiday trips, longitudinal, subjective well-being, tourism

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Happiness

Happiness is a highly valued matter, with a few exceptions all humans want to be happy and many people try to get happier than they are. Generally speaking, individuals control only approximately 40% of their happiness. Some 50% of the differences among people's happiness levels are accounted for by their genetically determined set points, while 10% is accounted for by unintentional activity (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005).

Individuals can improve their happiness by changing their actions (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). People can invest time in (social) relationships (Diener & Seligman, 2002) or actively participate in positive psychological programs such as life-coaching (Green, Oades, & Grant, 2006), using signature strengths (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005) or mindfulness (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Furthermore, individuals can try to change their state of mind, through cultivating optimism (Seligman, 1990) or avoiding social comparisons (Lyubomirsky, 2008; Swinyard, Kau, & Phua, 2001).

Activities in general (Csikszentmihalyi & Hunter, 2003; Csikszentmihalyi & Wong, 1991; Kelly, Steinkamp, & Kelly, 1987), and specific activities, such as active participation in sports (Hills & Argyle, 1998) or music (Laukka, 2007), tend to increase happiness. The leisure domain seems to be an appropriate domain to improve one's sense of well-being (Ateca-Amestoy, Serrano-del-Rosal, & Vera-Toscano, 2008; Spiers & Walker, 2009).

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5.1.2 Tourism

Modern-day society pushes individuals to consume and work more (Easterbrook, 2003; Schor, 1991, 1998). Because of this, we have become increasingly demanding of our leisure time. The activities we undertake in our free time are an important escape from work, making the leisure domain a setting in which to relax and de-stress. More so, individuals have the need to enjoy rather mundane activities, such as grocery shopping; even ordinary activities seem to be turned into 'experiences' (Pine II & Gilmore, 1999). Less frequently enjoyed experiences, such as holiday experiences, are becoming more and more accessible to people worldwide; trip frequency has been rising for years (Opperman, 1995) and tourist arrivals are also expected to rise further over the next decade (UNWTO, 2008).

The tourism industry lets us believe that vacationing makes us happier. Advertisements depict smiling faces, sunny beaches and people having a good time. The question is whether this is really true. Do we actually become happier by going on holiday? Vacationing may be just another focusing illusion, in the sense that we think we become happier by going on holiday, while in reality we do not become any happier than we were before (Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2006).

Tourism experiences may add to individuals' happiness in two ways. First, through direct effects of the holiday trip itself, wherein three phases can be distinguished: (1) pre-trip (through anticipation), inter-trip (through experience) and post-trip (through afterglow). Second, tourism experiences may contribute to happiness in everyday life through more indirect mechanisms, such as reminiscing of holiday experiences through memories (S. Larsen, 2007; Morgan & Xu, 2009), enforced by physical objects such as photographs and souvenirs, mental storage through affections, impressions and new meanings, and enrichment through social networks (Aho, 2001). Also, holidays may strengthen family bonds which in turn could increase satisfaction with family life. Recent research has shown that positive and negative affect generated from trip experiences is associated with satisfaction from several life domains, such as love life, family life and social life (Sirgy, Kruger, Lee, & Yu, 2010).

5.1.3 Earlier research on tourism and happiness

Several cross-sectional studies have found small, but positive, associations between a holiday trip and happiness (Kemp, Burt, & Furneaux, 2008; Neal, 2000). Others found (positive) associations between certain aspects of a holiday trip and happiness (Milman, 1998). For instance, vacationers who participate in many trip-related activities are happier than vacationers who undertake fewer activities (Milman, 1998).

Individuals savor (Bryant & Veroff, 2007) holidays through anticipating forthcoming trips. Those anticipating a trip are happier than those not anticipating a trip (Hagger & Murray, 2009). People enjoy having something to look forward to, and holidays are typically something that people look forward to. For this reason, it is argued that people tend to prefer short breaks over longer holidays (Miller, Rathouse, Scarles, Holmes, & Tribe, 2007); this would allow them more trips to look forward to during the year. However, most studies find no association between length of stay and post-trip happiness (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Kemp, et al., 2008; Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1986). Only Neal and Sirgy (2004) found a moderating effect of length of stay between holiday satisfaction and happiness. Furthermore, not everyone enjoys the anticipation of a holiday trip. For some, anticipating a holiday evokes feelings of homesickness (Vingerhoets, Sanders, & Kuper, 1997) and stress, especially for those who have difficulty to let go of their everyday routines (Vingerhoets, Van Huijgevoort, & Van Heck, 2002).

Holiday satisfaction may lead to higher post-trip happiness levels; satisfaction with a holiday is positively associated with post-trip happiness (Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1986; Westman & Eden, 1997). A number of pre-test/post-test design studies have found higher levels of happiness (Gilbert

& Abdullah, 2004; Nawijn, Marchand, Veenhoven, & Vingerhoets, 2010) and other positive effects, such as decreased levels of stress and generally better health, after a holiday trip (Strauss-Blasche, Ekmekcioglu, & Marktl, 2000; Westman & Eden, 1997; Westman & Etzion, 2001), although these effects fade out rather quickly (De Bloom, et al., 2009).

Thus, holidays boost pre-trip happiness through anticipation and post-trip happiness through afterglow effects. Whether there is a selection effect, in the sense that happy individuals take more holiday trips, is unknown; this may be the case as there is evidence suggesting that vacationers are generally happier than non-vacationers (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Nawijn, et al., 2010). In addition, holiday trips are reminisced and savored long after the holiday took place. Holiday trips may boost happiness in the long run as more trips or more vacation days per year could be associated with higher happiness, as happiness is about the frequency of positive affect, not the intensity (Diener, Sandvik, & Pavot, 1990). However, as far as the author is aware, no study on the long-term effects of vacationing on happiness exists.

5.1.4 Questions

This paper adds to the current literature on holiday trips and subjective well-being by seeking an answer to the following questions: (1) Are vacationers happier than non-vacationers? (2) Do vacationers become happier if they take more trips and less happy with less trips? (3) Does vacationing add to everyone's happiness or only to the happiness of people who value vacationing?

5.2 Method

5.2.1 Respondents

This study makes use of data from the GfK Leisure and Tourism panel, which were made available to the author by GfK Panel Services. This panel is representative of the Dutch-speaking population. Panel members fill in questionnaires four times per year, reporting detailed accounts of their leisure travel. This study makes use of the 2007 and 2008 travel data and the assessment of panel members' subjective well-being, which took place for the first time in December 2007 and was followed-up by a second measurement in December 2008. The original 2007 sample consisted of an initial 5,700 respondents.

The second measurement of happiness, which took place at the end of 2008, was conducted only among the vacationers of 2008. Furthermore, individuals who were within a month of departure or return date were excluded from the sample, as otherwise anticipation or afterglow effects would interfere. Therefore, the final sample was smaller than the initial sample and consists of approximately 3,650 individuals, 33% of which are men. Since women are overrepresented in the sample, all analyses are weighed for sex, creating a 50/50 division of men and women. Mean age is 45 ($SD = 15$) and modal monthly net household income is €2200. Most have a paid job (59%), or are retired (13%). The majority holds a high school degree (35%) or a graduate or undergraduate degree (35%).

5.2.2 Variables

Happiness

Following Veenhoven (1984), happiness is defined as 'the overall appreciation of one's life as a whole'. Another word for this matter is 'life satisfaction'. Veenhoven assumes that the overall appraisal of life draws on two sources of information: how well we feel generally and how well life fits our wants.

He refers to these sub-appraisals as 'components' of happiness, the affective component is termed *hedonic level* and the cognitive component is referred to as *contentment*. The dataset used in the present study includes measures of both life satisfaction and hedonic level, but not of contentment.

Life satisfaction

Overall appreciation of life is measured using reported agreement to the statement: "I am satisfied with my life". The responses to this statement were measured on a 5-point scale, with responses ranging from "totally disagree" to "totally agree". Mean life satisfaction in 2007 was 3.87 ($SD = .78$) and 3.97 in 2008 ($SD = .76$).

Hedonic level

How well people feel can be measured using an Affect balance scale, such as the PANAS (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) or the ABS (Bradburn, 1969). The Affect balance used in the current study is derived from responses to six questions about how one generally felt and consisted of three positively formulated items and three negative ones. The positive items were 'enthusiastic', 'free, loose, relaxed' and 'cheerful'; the negative items were 'depressed', 'tense' and 'impatient'. The responses were measured on a 5-point scale, with the following response alternatives: "never", "seldom", "sometimes", "often" and "constantly". Affect balance is the degree to which positive experiences outweigh negative ones and is computed by subtracting the sum of the negative scores from the sum of the positive scores. The possible range of the resulting scale is -12 (average positive 3, negative 15) to +12 (average positive 15, negative 3). The mean score of the Affect balance in 2007 was 3.78 ($SD = 3.05$) and 3.51 ($SD = 3.13$) in 2008.

Vacationing

The frequency of holiday trips in 2007 and 2008 was measured in numbers. A holiday trip was considered a trip where one was 'traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for more than one night, but not more than one consecutive year, for leisure purposes' (UNWTO, 1995). The mean number of trips over 2007 and 2008 was 2.21 ($SD = 1.47$), with the majority taking up to 3 trips. The maximum number of trips was 17.

The number of vacation days of 2007 and 2008 were also assessed. The mean number of days spent on holiday was 29.50 ($SD = 19.99$).

Importance of vacationing

Respondents indicated the importance of vacationing for them as an individual as "not important", "neutral" or "important". 31% of the sample considered vacationing unimportant, 29% were neutral and 40% considered vacationing important.

Socio-demographic variables

Educational level, net household income, employment status, age and sex were all assessed.

5.2.3 Analysis

The data analysis is both cross sectional as well as longitudinal. The cross-sectional analyses focus on assessing happiness differences between vacationers and non-vacationers and are used to assess whether happiness at the end of the year is related to vacationing earlier in that year. The longitudinal

analyses focus on whether a change in vacationing is followed by similar change in happiness and whether happiness predicts vacationing.

5.3 Results

5.3.1 Are vacationers happier than non-vacationers?

To test whether vacationers are generally happier than non-vacationers, the scores on the Affect balance and the life satisfaction question in 2007 were compared to the travel data of 2007, by means of two one way analyses of covariance. The independent variable indicated whether the respondent had at least one holiday trip in 2007, or none at all. As covariates, the continuous socio-demographics were used. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity, with no serious violations noted.

Figure 1: Vacationers and non-vacationers' life satisfaction

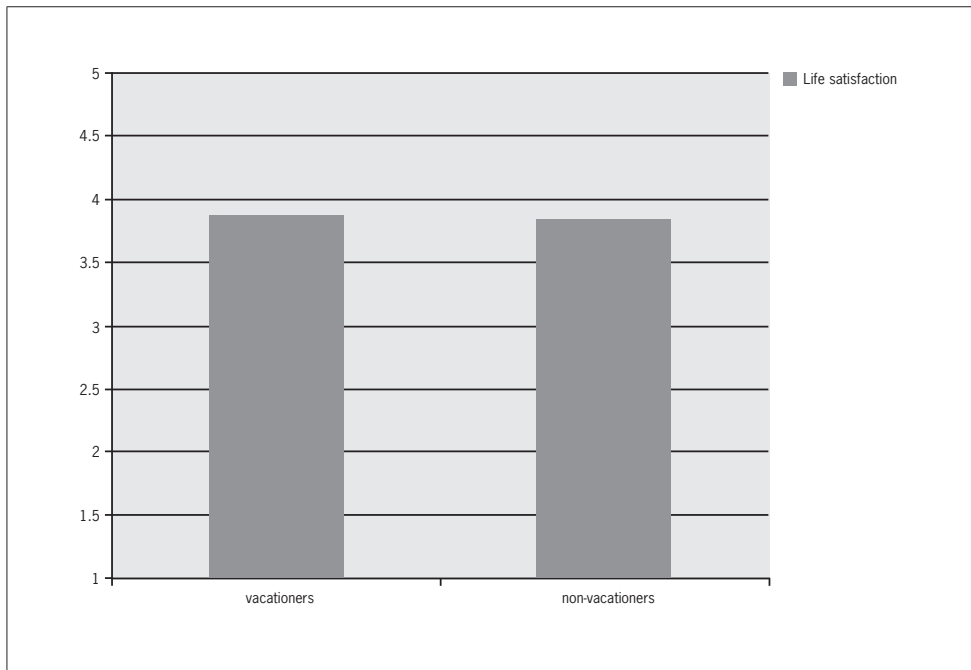
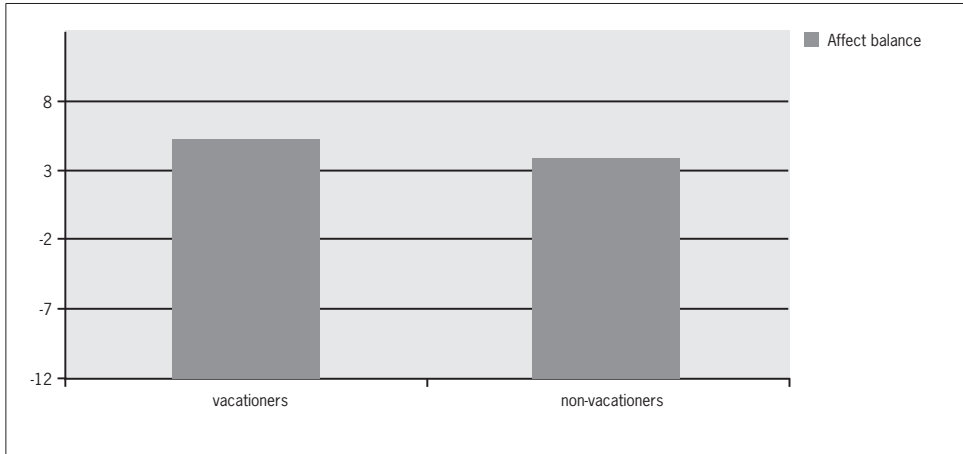


Figure 2: Vacationers and non-vacationers' Affect balance



As seen in Figure 2, vacationers had a slightly higher score on the Affect balance ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 3.03$, $n = 2,057$) than non-vacationers ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 2.88$, $n = 988$) and this difference was statistically significant, $F(1, 3040) = 12.79$, $p < .001$. The effect size, as indicated by a partial eta squared of .004, is small. Life satisfaction scores were also slightly higher among vacationers ($M = 3.87$, $SD = .79$, $n = 2,057$) than they were among non-vacationers ($M = 3.83$, $SD = .84$, $n = 988$), which was not a significant difference, $F(1, 3040) = .45$, $p = ns$ (see Figure 1). Thus, people who had a holiday trip in the last year are marginally happier than those who had not.

The question is whether this marginal difference is causal. To test the possible causality three methods were used. First, the partial correlations were calculated. The 2008 partial correlations were controlled for the happiness measures of 2007, which was a first attempt to assess the possible cause/effect relation. And, adding to that analysis, I assessed whether the non-vacationers of 2007 increased their happiness by vacationing in 2008. Next, I tested if happiness predicted vacationing (in number of days and number of trips). Finally, it was assessed whether a *change* in trip frequency or number of vacation days affected happiness.

5.3.2 Do vacationers become happier if they take more trips?

To test whether the frequency of holiday trips was associated with happiness, partial correlations were performed between the 2007 and 2008 happiness scores and their corresponding trip frequencies/number of days spent on vacation. The continuous socio-demographical variables were used as covariates. The 2008 scores were also controlled for the happiness scores of 2007. All associations (as displayed in Table 1) were not significant.

Table 1: Partial correlations of vacationing and happiness

Year	Happiness	Number of trips	<i>n</i>	Number of days	<i>n</i>	sig.
2007	Affect balance	$r = +.01$	2,957	$r = +.01$	2,377	ns
	Life satisfaction	$r = +.01$	2,957	$r = -.00$	2,377	ns
2008	Affect balance	$r = +.02$	2,955	$r = -.02$	2,955	ns
	Life satisfaction	$r = +.02$	2,955	$r = .00$	2,955	ns

Next, the analyses focused on the differences in happiness between 2007 and 2008. As mentioned under 'method', the 2008 data contained only vacationers. Therefore, it was possible to distinguish two groups: those who were non-vacationers in 2007 and became vacationers in 2008, and those who were vacationers in both 2007 and 2008. For these two groups the mean happiness scores were compared and it was tested whether these mean scores differed significantly. The outcome is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean happiness differences 2007-2008

Had a vacation in the year	Happiness	<i>M</i> (2007)	<i>M</i> (2008)	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	sig.
2008 only	Affect balance	3.64	3.51	+ 0.93	1033	ns
	Life satisfaction	3.85	3.96	- 3.30	1033	.01
2007 and 2008	Affect balance	3.86	3.52	+ 3.96	2620	.001
	Life satisfaction	3.88	3.98	- 4.73	2620	.001

As can be seen in Table 2, vacationers' life satisfaction increased significantly, but their Affect balance decreased significantly. Non-vacationers' life satisfaction also increased significantly and their Affect balance decreased as well, but not significantly.

5.3.3 Does happiness predict vacationing?

People who had a vacation in the last year are slightly happier than those who had not. Is that because the trip(s) had made them happier, or were they happier to begin with and their happiness made them more willing to take a trip? Since vacationers' life satisfaction scores were significantly higher than non-vacationers' life satisfaction scores, it was assessed whether life satisfaction in 2007 predicted trip frequency in 2008. Again, the correlations were controlled for the socio-demographics. Life satisfaction scores did not 'predict' future trip frequency. Pearson correlation indicated zero as a value ($n = 2,957$). Although no differences were observed between vacationers' and non-vacationers affect scores, a partial correlation between trip frequency and the Affect balance was also calculated. The results were exactly the same as those for life satisfaction ($r = .00$, $p = ns$, $n = 2,957$). Similarly, the Affect balance ($r = +.01$, $p = ns$, $n = 2,448$) and life satisfaction of 2007 ($r = .00$, $p = ns$, $n = 2,448$) did not predict number of days spent on holiday in 2008.

5.3.4 Does a change in trip frequency affect happiness?

To answer the question whether vacationing has an effect in the long run, it was assessed how a change in trip frequency from 2007 to 2008 affected happiness scores at the end of 2008. The underlying assumption was that an increase in trips (e.g., going from two trips in 2007 to four trips in 2008) would positively affect happiness scores, and that the opposite effect would take place when a decrease in trip frequency had occurred. The earlier happiness measurements and socio-demographics

were used as covariates. The associations between the changes in trip frequency and days spent on vacation and the Affect balance scores are displayed in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

Figure 3: The Affect balance and a change in trip frequency

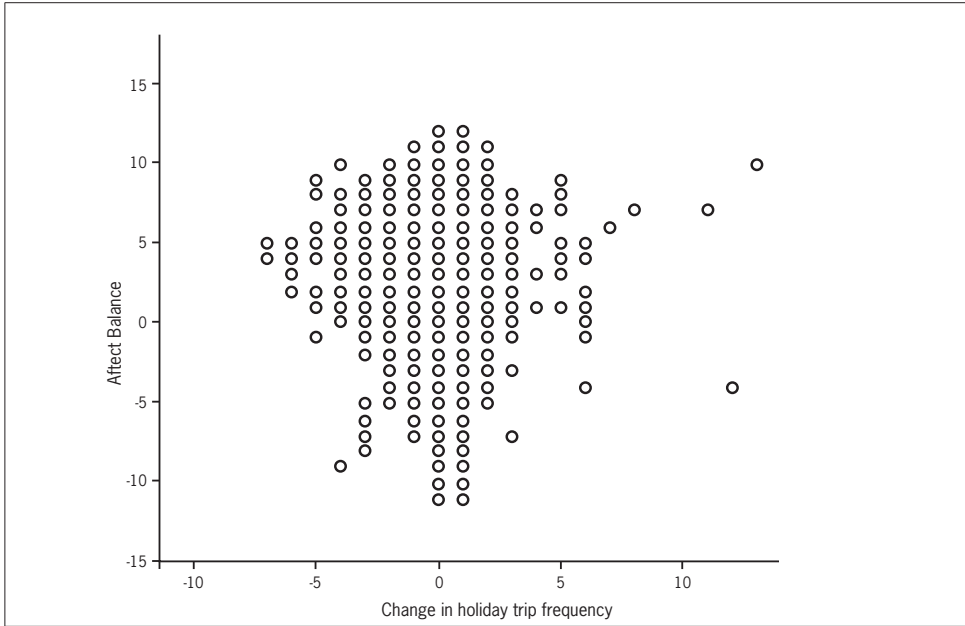
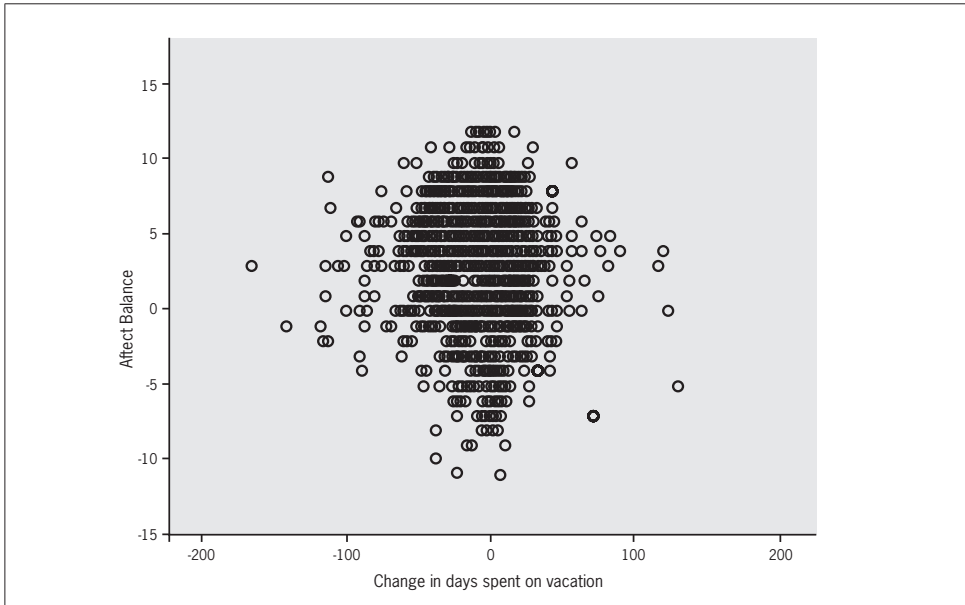


Figure 4: The Affect balance and a change in days spent on vacation



No significant associations were observed between a change in trip frequency and the Affect balance ($r = +.02$, $p = ns$, $n = 2,059$) and in the same way, life satisfaction was not associated with a change in trip frequency either ($r = +.03$, $p = ns$, $n = 2,059$). Similarly, a change in the number of days spent on holiday between 2007 and 2008 was neither associated with the Affect balance ($r = .00$, $p = ns$, $n = 2,060$) nor life satisfaction ($r = -.01$, $p = ns$, $n = 2,060$).

5.3.5 Does valuing vacationing matter?

The previous analysis showed that a change in trip frequency or a change in vacation days did not influence happiness. A possible explanation is that the findings were blurred by a group of respondents who did not consider vacationing important. If one does not care for vacationing, it is unlikely that it would affect one's happiness. Thus finally, it was assessed whether those who value vacationing would benefit from vacationing, more so than those who do not value vacationing. Again, socio-demographical variables were used as covariates.

Table 3: Mean happiness differences split by importance of vacationing

Had a vacation in the year	Important	Happiness	M (2007)	M (2008)	t	df	sig.
2008 only	Yes	Affect balance	3.71	3.73	-0.07	388	ns
		Life satisfaction	3.85	3.97	-2.21	388	.05
	No	Affect balance	3.64	3.31	+ 1.34	300	ns
		Life satisfaction	3.87	3.97	-1.43	300	ns
2007 and 2008	Yes	Affect balance	3.89	3.57	+ 1.93	717	ns
		Life satisfaction	3.87	4.00	- 3.10	717	.005
	No	Affect balance	3.90	3.52	+ 2.07	534	.05
		Life satisfaction	3.93	3.96	-0.55	534	ns

The Affect balance and life satisfaction were both not significantly associated with trip frequency or the number of vacation days. A change in trip frequency ($r = +.02$, $p = ns$, $n = 823$) or a change in number of days spent on vacation ($r = +.02$, $p = ns$, $n = 823$) was not associated with life satisfaction either. Furthermore, the Affect balance was also not significantly associated with a change in number of days spent on holiday ($r = +.02$, $p = ns$, $n = 823$), nor with a change in trip frequency ($r = +.03$, $p = ns$, $n = 823$).

Finally, to test whether mean happiness had significantly increased or decreased from 2007 to 2008 several t-tests were performed; using the same groups as presented earlier in Table 2, but this time these groups were split by whether they deemed vacationing important or not.

Logically, non-vacationers of 2007 who became vacationers in 2008 were expected to have the strongest increase in happiness. This was not the case. Although that particular group increased their life satisfaction significantly (a +.12 increase; from 3.85 to 3.97), this was not any different from vacationers of 2007, who valued vacationing and were also vacationers in 2008 (+.13 increase). Even the non-vacationers who did not value vacationing increased their life satisfaction by +.10, albeit not significantly. The Affect balance decreased for all groups, except for the non-vacationers who valued vacationing (+.02 increase, not significant). However, the only significant decrease in Affect balance was for the vacationers who did not value vacationing.

5.4 Discussion

5.4.1 Findings

Vacationers hardly happier

This study demonstrated that individuals who vacationed in the last year are marginally happier, in terms of affect balance, than those who did not go on a holiday trip all year. The Affect balance decreased from 2007 to 2008, possibly due to an exogenous variable, but the 2007 non-vacationers, who all vacationed in 2008, did not significantly decrease their hedonic level of affect. Furthermore, the non-vacationers who valued vacationing even increased their affect balance mildly, although not significantly. This further supports the assumption that the difference in affect balance between vacationers and non-vacationers is probably due to a very minor causal effect of vacationing on hedonic level of affect.

In terms of life satisfaction, vacationers are not significantly different from non-vacationers. This partly confirms findings by Gilbert and Abdullah (2004), who found that vacationers are generally happier, in terms of both affect, as well as life satisfaction. The reason for the slightly different findings of the current study may be due to the fact that Gilbert and Abdullah did not exclude the anticipation and afterglow phases from their analyses.

Trip frequency does not matter

The current study also demonstrated that more trips are not necessarily better for happiness. Although vacationers are slightly happier in terms of affect compared to non-vacationers, individuals who increased their trip frequency, or number of days spent on holiday, from 2007 to 2008, or reduced the number of trips and/or days, did not significantly change their happiness. This even applied to those who valued vacationing.

Furthermore, happiness did not predict the frequency of holiday trips in the subsequent year either. In that sense, this study did not find a selection effect; happier people do not take more holiday trips.

Thus, vacationers' happiness does not increase their sense of well-being in the long run. The effect of holiday trips on vacationers' happiness is only short-lived. Anticipation boosts vacationers' pre-trip happiness (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2002; Hagger & Murray, 2009); inter-trip, vacationers are generally in good spirits (De Bloom, et al., 2010; Nawijn, 2010) and they benefit afterwards, if their holiday was stress-free (Nawijn, et al., 2010). However, these positive effects do not last for long and do not have a sustained effect on vacationers' general happiness.

5.4.2 Explanations

Vacationing has a very small positive effect on hedonic level of affect. A possible explanation of this finding is that vacationing is positively reminisced and these memories allow for the prevalence of more positive affect in people's lives. Additionally, a spillover effect of holiday travel may be present. Affect related to vacationing may add to affect in different life domains, which consequently influences general Affect balance (Sirgy, et al., 2010).

However, hedonic level of affect does not increase more by taking more trips. A possible reason for the absence of such an effect of vacationing on happiness is that tourism experiences are not considered 'special' any more. In Western societies, tourism has become a much more integral part of life (J. Larsen, 2008; McCabe, 2002) and experiences that were once confined to tourism are now accessible in everyday life (Lash & Urry, 1994).

The finding that vacationing in terms of frequency of trips and number of days on holiday is not significantly associated with life satisfaction or hedonic level of affect, coincides well with homeostatic set-point theory, which argues that happiness is a rather stable 'trait' (Cummins, 2005). Set-point theory holds that, whatever we do, we cannot change our happiness much. In this view, particular experiences, such as holiday trips, can at best provide a temporary uplift, after which we return to our set-point. Yet set-point theory does not account for enduring changes in happiness following major changes in life such as unemployment and widowhood (e.g., Headey, 2006; Veenhoven, 1994) and in that context the interpretation should rather be that a few vacation days or trips more or less is too trivial to affect happiness.

The effect of vacationing on contentment was not assessed in the current study. Possibly, vacationing has a small negative long-term effect on contentment, which would explain the absence of a long-term effect of vacationing on life satisfaction. A reason for this potential small negative effect could be that vacationers compare their everyday lives to their holiday experience, a period when they are generally very happy (De Bloom, et al., 2010; Nawijn, 2010). Such a comparison may lower vacationers' contentment with their everyday lives.

5.4.3 Implications

The positive effects which vacationing has on happiness are mostly limited to the duration of the holiday trip itself (De Bloom, et al., 2010; Nawijn, 2010) and a brief phase of anticipation (Nawijn, et al., 2010) and afterglow (De Bloom, et al., 2009; Nawijn, et al., 2010). It seems fair to say that holiday trips offer mostly an uplift in mood and the kind of satisfaction which Veenhoven (2010) would regard as a pleasure, a passing kind of satisfaction related to a part of life. If one wants to boost their happiness by means of vacationing, one has to take many holidays, in order to enjoy many short-lived periods of increased happiness.

This conclusion is not necessarily bad news for the tourism industry. In fact, it is probably good news, as this means that people are best off by booking many trips and consequently experiencing many brief happiness boosts.

5.4.4 Limitations

A limitation of the current study but a rather obvious one is that it was not possible to restrict or expand travel for certain individuals. Offering people free trips or paying people not to take a vacation may have resulted in different findings as there are signs that restricting travel would affect tourists' happiness (Nawijn & Peeters, 2010). However, an objection to such experiments is that these are costly and involve loss of self-control, which is important to happiness (Eriksson, Rice, & Goodin, 2007; Larson, 1989). Some ethical issues might arise also.

Furthermore, the extent to which respondents anticipate or reminisce tourism experiences was not assessed. It is possible that those who anticipate or reminisce such experiences more than others, benefit more in terms of happiness.

Additionally, we have to keep in mind that this study drew on a sample of Dutch citizens. The Dutch are generally well-traveled and perhaps this has led to a certain amount of adaptation or routine (Bargeman & Van Der Poel, 2006). It is plausible that individuals from other, poorer and less well-traveled, nations may benefit differently from vacationing in terms of happiness.

5.4.5 Future research

Although the long-term effect of vacationing on happiness is limited, it may have a more profound effect, in a positive or negative manner, on the happiness of locals living and/or working in holiday destinations. Studies on the effects of tourism on the local population have focused mostly on economic effects (Hall, 2007), but should also include subjective criteria, such as happiness. Up to date, only a single study on locals' happiness has been performed (Becchetti, Castriota, & Solferino, 2009). That particular study focused on Peruvian fair trade producers and found that producers from the poor area benefited more from taking part in the development program, in terms of happiness, compared to the relatively more affluent area. Also, it would be particularly interesting to apply a different research method and assess whether people who cannot afford a holiday, and are paid to take one through social tourism projects (McCabe, 2009), benefit from such a vacation, in the long run, in terms of happiness.

Furthermore, following the aforementioned reasoning that tourism experiences are not considered 'special' any more, future research should assess the potential effect vacationing has for individuals from less well-traveled countries.

Along the same line, it is recommended that more studies are undertaken on the meaning of a vacation for individuals. This could be done in both a qualitative or quantitative manner, or a combination of the two. If one were to ask respondents about their most happy experiences in their life, it would not be surprising to see a vacation make it to the top ten list, as a major peak experience.

Bryant and Veroff (2007) and Tugade and Fredrickson (2007) argue that anticipation and/or savoring of a vacation could prolong the duration of positive emotional experiences. More research is needed on whether anticipation and/or savoring of a holiday trip-regardless of when it is taking place-affects individuals' sense of well-being.

Additionally, a longer follow-up study will be necessary to further analyze the effects of vacationing on happiness. Vacationing ought to be considered as part of a leisure lifestyle, incorporating various aspects of leisure life, social life, family life and work life.

Finally, future research ought to assess which type of people benefit most from which type of holidays. Certain aspects of holiday trips, or certain types of trips, may be better suited to a certain type of personality (Frew & Shaw, 1999). Detailed information on the link between personality, behavior and happiness in a tourism context would enable the tourism industry to develop improved products, which match the needs and wants of their customers to a larger extent. The key is finding the right person-environment fit.

5.5 Conclusions

Vacationing works out positively on happiness. The effect is small and mostly short-lived however; in the year after a trip, vacationers are only marginally happier. Among vacationers, and even among those who value vacationing, happiness was unrelated to the number of trips and days spent on vacation.

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Chapter 6:

Traveling 'green': Is tourists' happiness at stake?⁷

ABSTRACT

Several Western governments have implemented environmental policies which increase the cost of air travel. Such policies aim to reduce the impact of air travel on climate change, but at the same time they restrict tourists in their travels. This study examines the extent to which the average tourist's happiness is affected by 'involuntary green travel', defined as reduced CO₂ emission travel imposed by government regulations. This issue was addressed in a study among 588 Dutch citizens who completed a self-report questionnaire containing questions about their happiness. The strongest determinant of tourists' happiness is freedom in choosing a destination. Any policy measure that interferes with tourists' freedom in destination choice will negatively affect tourists' happiness. Six percent of their happiness is at stake and potentially 17% of all holiday trips are affected. The number of tourists involved is possibly much smaller. The best options for governments are to impose taxes on long-haul destinations, which affect only a small share of all tourists, and air routes which can also be travelled by a variety of alternative modes of transport and thus less limiting to destination choice within this market segment.

KEY WORDS: air travel , climate change, happiness, sustainability, subjective well-being

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 The need for sustainability

A more sustainable holiday lifestyle is necessary to mitigate the impact of holiday travel on climate change. Global tourism's contribution to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions amounted to between five percent and eight percent in 2005 (UNWTO-UNEP-WMO, 2008). Some 40% (CO₂ only) and 75% (maximum estimate) for radiative forcing including non-CO₂ impacts (Sausen, et al., 2005) of the total contribution to climate change is caused by the 17% of global tourist trips by air transport. The total GHG emissions are expected to increase by 123% between 2005 and 2035, while total number of tourist nights will gain 56% (UNWTO-UNEP-WMO, 2008). A change in temperature of over two degrees Celsius is considered to be a 'dangerous' level, meaning it may seriously destabilize the climate system (Hansen, et al., 2006; Schellnhuber, Cramer, Nakicenovic, Wigley, & Yohe, 2006). Temperature rise projections for 2100 range from 1.5° C to as much as 6.4° C. To avoid 'dangerous' climate change, current emissions will have to be reduced by three (Hansen, et al., 2006; Parry, Palutikof, Hanson, & Lowe, 2008) to six percent per year from 2015 onwards (Parry, Lowe, & Hanson, 2008). The strong growth of total (unchecked) tourism emissions within about 50 years from now will exceed the 100% share of sustainable global emissions (Bows, Anderson, & Peeters, 2009). The main drivers of the growth of tourism emissions are the increasing shares of long-haul trips and air transport (UNWTO-UNEP-WMO, 2008).

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The trend towards a higher share of long-haul travel is problematic as the GHG emissions of an average long-haul trip are 320 kg CO₂ (for transport only), while an average long-haul trip generates 1990 kg of CO₂ (UNWTO-UNEP-WMO, 2008). So every single short-haul trip replaced by a long-haul trip multiplies, on average, the transport emissions of this trip by a factor six. A recent report on the 2005 carbon footprint of Dutch tourists (De Bruijn, Dirven, Eijgelaar, & Peeters, 2009) confirms that some of the 'worst' types of holidays are trips made by airplane and international trips.

Technological improvements have the potential to reduce GHG emissions. This potential is theoretically a fuel consumption per seat-kilometer reduction in the order of 50%-60% with respect state-of-the-art technology in 2000, however, realistically it is more likely to be less than 25% by 2040-2050 (Peeters, Gössling, & Becken, 2006; Peeters & Middel, 2006). Furthermore, it has been shown that total aviation emissions will consume the total amount of sustainable emissions for the EU by 2050 (Bows, et al., 2009), thus a technological fix will fail to compensate for the growth in aviation-related emissions. And this means behavioral change will be necessary to reduce emissions within sustainable limits.

6.1.2 Behavioral change and mitigation policies

Behavioral change may be induced by environmental awareness or by government interventions or policies aimed at reducing emissions. The phenomenon of environmental awareness has been a topic of discussion in tourism academia for quite some time. This academic interest in climate change related to tourism stems from the fact that climate change is the main external cost of tourism (Peeters, Szimba, & Duijnsveld, 2007). Since Al Gore's film 'An Inconvenient Truth' the general public also seems to be more aware of climate change. Before the film premiered, only 12% of tourists believed that their tourism behavior caused the climate to change (Becken, 2004). In 2007, 82% of travelers acknowledged that flying contributes to climate change (Gössling, Haglund, Kallgren, Revahl, & Hultman, 2009). Even though environmental awareness among the general public has indeed increased, it seems very unlikely that tourists will change their holiday lifestyle. In fact, climate change is not considered at all by most tourists when planning a holiday trip (Hares, 2009). Most of them believe that climate change poses serious risks but also that immediate action is not absolutely necessary. They believe that reductions in GHG emissions sufficient to stabilize atmospheric GHG concentrations can be postponed (Sterman & Sweeney, 2007), and meanwhile try to justify why they should not act to mitigate climate change (Stoll-Kleemann, O'Riordan, & Jaeger, 2001). Consumers value their freedom to travel and consider limiting their travels unacceptable (Becken, 2007). This reluctance to act is reflected in voluntary carbon offsetting, which has to increase by a factor 400 to have a significant impact on aviation emissions (Gössling, et al., 2007).

As the majority of tourists do not voluntarily change their holiday lifestyle to one of a more sustainable nature, governments will most probably have to take action, 'forcing' tourists to change their behavior by implementing climate policies. Such policies can be divided into regulatory, market-based and voluntary measures (Daley & Preston, 2009). Regulatory measures may be directed at fuel efficiency requirements (energy or emissions per seat-kilometer), or at global caps for the air transport sector. Market based approaches aim at giving economic incentives/disincentives for particular activities. Generally, these approaches will assign a price to emissions. Examples are emission taxes, fuel taxes, subsidies on more environmentally friendly alternatives to air transport and emission trading schemes like the European Union Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS). These measures generally change the cost structure of the sector by increasing the cost of the higher polluting alternatives (e.g. air transport and specifically long-haul air transport).

Some governments have already taken action by introducing taxations. In July 2008 the Dutch government introduced a ticket tax of about €11 per ticket for flights within Europe and €44 for longer flights (Veldhuis, 2009). Due to large pressures from the sector the government abolished the measure by 1 July 2009. The United Kingdom raised its existing taxes on 1 February 2007 to £10 for an economy class ticket within the UK or Europe (£20 for business class) and £40 for long-haul economy routes (£80 for business class) (BBC News, 2007). France levies a tax of €3.92 per passenger for flights to destinations within the European Union, Switzerland, or within other signatory states of the European Economic Area Agreement and €7.04 for other states (Direction Générale de l'Aviation Civile, 2008). These taxes are all value-added taxes. Other forms of taxation are emission taxes or fuel taxes. Fuel taxes are common among other modes of transport, but aviation is mostly exempted due to international agreements like the Chicago Convention (Piket, 2009). Yet another form of increasing the cost of emissions is by way 'cap-and-trade' systems. By 2012 airlines flying within or to and from the Europe Union will be included into the EU ETS (European Commission, 2008). Trading emissions does not necessarily lessen the number of flights, as aviation related GHG emissions may be traded with sectors that can reduce their emissions at low cost, which would affect air transport cost and thus volume only slightly.

6.1.3 Happiness and holiday trips

Although happiness is often considered subjective, many similarities can be found in the reasons behind people's happiness and in how they become happier. It is held that human happiness is largely based on shared universal human needs (Gullone & Cummins, 2002; Veenhoven, 2008a). Approximately 50% of the differences among people's happiness levels are accounted for by their genetically determined set points, while 40% of the variance is explained by intentional activity, and just 10% by unintentional activity (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005). The findings of a large-scale twin study show that socio-economic status, educational attainment, family income, marital status and religion only account for about 3% of the variance in happiness (Lykken & Tellegen, 1996).

Holiday trips boost happiness through anticipation of the holiday trip (Parrinello, 1993) and fond memories afterwards, even if a trip was not very pleasurable (Mitchell, Thompson, Peterson, & Cronk, 1997). Several cross-sectional studies have identified positive associations between holiday trips and happiness (Kemp, Burt, & Furneaux, 2008; Milman, 1998; Neal, 2000). Three pre-test/post-test design studies (Hoopes & Lounsbury, 1989; Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1986; Strauss-Blasche, Ekmekcioglu, & Marktl, 2000) found that time-off from work (including holiday trips) has a positive effect on happiness. A more recent pre-test/post-test design study confirmed that holiday trips indeed boost happiness (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004).

Several factors may potentially influence tourists' happiness. The total number of holiday trips over a certain period of time is an obvious one. If holiday trips boost happiness (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Hoopes & Lounsbury, 1989; Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1986; Strauss-Blasche, et al., 2000), more trips will likely boost tourists' happiness even more. Another factor is the length of stay of holiday trips. Two studies (Kemp, et al., 2008; Neal & Sirgy, 2004) produced somewhat contradictory results in terms of length of stay. Kemp et al. (2008) find that length of stay does not moderate happiness scores. Neal and Sirgy (2004) find an indirect effect of length of stay, as moderator between holiday satisfaction and happiness; the longer a holiday trip lasts, the happier a tourists becomes. Personal travel preferences will probably affect tourists' happiness as well. Although no empirical data exist, it makes sense, intuitively, that going to one's preferred holiday destination is more likely to have a more positive effect on happiness than staying at a holiday destination which is not preferred. A final potential factor is the

travel distance related to holiday trips. Short (long-haul) breaks are one of the latest trends (McCarthy, 2006). These destinations are said to appeal to tourists because of their geographical location, remote from the tourist's place of residence.

6.1.4 Study objective

The objective of this study is to assess the extent to which 'involuntary green travel' may affect tourists' happiness by analyzing which aspects of holiday trips affect the average tourist's happiness the most. 'Involuntary green travel' is defined as reduced CO2 emission travel imposed by government regulations. Such 'green travel' is forced upon tourists by governmental taxation, as voluntary behavioral change in travel is not to be expected (Becken, 2007; Sterman & Sweeney, 2007; Stoll-Kleemann, et al., 2001).

6.2 Method

6.2.1 Data

The Dutch Continuous Holiday Survey (CHS) is a survey which is administered to panel members of NBTC*NIPO Research four times per year (March, June, September and December). Panel members report detailed accounts of their leisure travel of the past three months. This online panel consists of 6,500 Dutch citizens and is representative of the Dutch-speaking population. Third parties may pay to supply additional questions to the panel and receive answers to their questions in combination with the data regarding respondents' travel behavior from the CHS (ContinuVakantieOnderzoek, 2007). We made use of this option. For the purpose of this study, a random sample of 588 respondents was taken from the CHS panel. The response to questions on happiness, travel preferences and the control variables were obtained additionally. These questions were answered by respondents in March 2006. The remaining data originate from the existing CHS database for the selected 588 respondents, comprising of 14 waves, from December 2002 up to March 2006. Thus, the CHS travel data contain respondents' leisure travel behavior between October 2002 and March 2006.

Men make up 51.2% of the sample. Most of the respondents are between 26 and 65 years of age (86.6%), and a large share of them is married (62.2%). The majority holds a paid job (60.1%) or is retired (25%).

6.2.2 Variables

Happiness

Happiness is defined in terms of *life satisfaction*, which is defined as 'the overall appreciation of one's life as a whole' (Veenhoven, 1984). The Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) was used to measure happiness. Sonja Lyubomirsky developed the SHS, which consists of four items with a seven-point scale, and reflects a broader view of the respondents' subjective happiness. The first two items are: '*In general, I consider myself*' and '*Compared to most of my peers I consider myself*'. The answer options range from one (not a very happy person) to seven (a very happy person). Items three and four are: '*Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization describe you?*' and '*Some people are generally not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterization describe you?*' The answer options range from one (not at all) to seven (a great deal). The SHS was validated properly (14 studies with a total of 2,732

participants). Test-retest and self-peer correlations suggested good to excellent reliability. Construct validation studies of convergent and discriminant validity confirmed the use of this scale in measuring the construct of happiness (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). Translation of happiness statements did not cause insuperable problems (Layard, 2005). Therefore, the SHS was translated into Dutch.

Holiday trips

The definition of the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has been adapted, focusing on leisure tourists. The definition of a holiday trip in this study is a trip where people are *'travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure purposes'* (UNWTO, 2002).

Total number of holiday trips

All holiday trips undertaken between October 2001 and March 2006 amount to the *total number of holiday trips*.

Length of stay

The length of stay of each holiday trip was measured in days.

Travel distance

The distance from the tourist's country of residence (the Netherlands) to the reported destinations was calculated by multiplying the great-circle distance (the shortest distance between two locations on earth as calculated with (WebFlyer MileMarker, 2006)) by a 'detour' factor of 1.15 for flights within Europe and 1.05 for flights outside Europe (Peeters, Williams, & Gössling, 2007). As the point of departure, the largest airport in the Netherlands was taken (Schiphol Amsterdam Airport). The main airport nearest to the most popular tourist destination of a certain country was designated as the destination within that country. For some large countries the distance was calculated by weighing the distance to several different airports across the country.

Modes of transport

These included as each trip's main transportation mode were *airplane, train, car, bus, motorbike, bicycle* and *other* means of transportation.

Holiday travel preferences

To assess whether respondents' current holiday travel behavior matched their preferred behavior, four questions were incorporated into the questionnaire. We assessed whether people wanted to go *farther away* on holiday. Respondents indicated whether, in the future, they wanted to travel 'less far', travel 'farther away', or if they did not want to change their current travel pattern. A second variable included was *holiday trip importance*. Respondents could express their degree of agreement with the statement 'a holiday trip is important to me' by means of a five-point Likert scale. A third variable was *holiday destination limitation*. The possible answers to the statement 'I feel limited in my holiday destination choice' were 'yes', 'no', or 'I do not know'. The fourth and final variable had to do with travel party. We assessed who the respondents would like to travel with the most, and compared this to their usual travel party. If these differed we coded them as 'different', if they matched we coded them as 'similar'. We named this variable *preferred type of travel party*.

Control variables

To prevent spurious correlations, control variables were used. Happiness was controlled for possible effects of recent *child birth* or *child expectancy* (Clark, Diener, Georgellis, & Lucas, 2008; Hallgren, Kihlgren, Norberg, & Forslin, 1995; Suh & Diener, 1996). Effects of marriage, divorce and widowhood, and their duration according to Clark et al. (2008), were included in the variable *marital status*.

Age, marital status, employment status, religion, sex, educational level and *income* were assessed. *Income* is defined as gross household income. Certain socio-demographic variables are known to correlate with happiness. Unemployed people are known to be less happy (Clark, et al., 2008; Winkelmann & Winkelmann, 1998). People with high income are generally slightly more satisfied with their lives (Schyns, 2003).

6.3 Results

6.3.1 Happiness and holiday trips

Most respondents are fairly happy, 78.6% score higher than a four or more on the SHS ($M = 4.79$, $n = 588$, $SD = 1.11$). The mean *total number of holiday trips* is 11.32 ($n = 588$, $SD = 10.15$). In total, respondents had 90.44 days of holidays ($n = 555$, $SD = 71.63$). Their mean *total travel distance* is 18,285 km ($n = 555$, $SD = 21,405$), average return distance per trip is 1,615 km. The most frequently used mode of transport is the car (74%), followed by airplane (16%), train (4%) and bus (4%). The remaining two percent made use of a bicycle, motorbike, or other mode of transportation. 24% of the respondents feel limited in their holiday destination choice. Mean *holiday trip importance* is 3.22 ($SD = 1.02$) on a scale of one to five. 26.5% want to go on holiday less far away; 15% want to go farther away. Most people regard their current travel party as their preferred travel party (78%).

6.3.2 Determinants of tourists' happiness

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the impact of *length of stay, travel distance, total number of holiday trips, preferred type of travel party, farther away, holiday trip importance, holiday destination limitation, airplane, boat, train, bus, motorbike, bicycle* and *other* mode of transport on *happiness* after controlling for the influence of *child birth, child expectancy, age, marital status, employment status, religion, sex, educational level* and *income*.

This technique allows for statistical control for the effects of variables entered at 'Step one'. The other independent variables are entered at 'Step two'. The possible effects of the control variables are 'removed' and it will show what is still explained by the variables entered at Step two.

Table 1: Hierarchical multiple regression – model summary

Model	R	R square	R square change	F change	Df1	Df2	Sig. F change
1	.265	.070	.070	3.149	9	376	.001
2	.408	.166	.096	2.985	14	362	.000

Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity. We found that the independent variables showed some correlation with the dependent variable, but not strongly with each other, which means no violation of multicollinearity. To assess normality, linearity and homoscedasticity we analyzed the normal probability plot of the regression standardized residual and the scatterplot of the standardized residuals. We found

a reasonably straight diagonal line. In the scatterplot we also did not find a clear or systematic pattern to the residuals. This all suggested no major deviations from normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity.

Child birth, child expectancy, age, marital status, employment status, religion, sex, educational level and income were entered at Step one, explaining seven percent of the variance in *happiness*. After entry of the holiday variables at Step two the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 16.6%, $F(23, 362) = 3.374, p < .001$. Thus, the 'holiday variables' explained 9.6% of the variance in *happiness*, after controlling for *child birth, child expectancy, age, marital status, employment status, religion, sex, educational level and income*, $R^2 \text{ change} = .096, F \text{ change}(14, 362) = 2.985, p < .001$.

Table 2: *Holiday variables correlated to happiness*

Variables	Beta value	Significance	Part correlation
<i>Holiday destination limitation</i>	+ .234	< .001	+ .245
<i>Preferred type of travel party</i>	+ .126	< .05	+ .108

(non-significant associations not displayed)

In the final model (see Table 2), only *preferred type of travel party* and *holiday destination limitation* were statistically significant. *Holiday destination limitation* explains approximately six percent of *happiness* and *preferred type of travel party* explains approximately 1.2% of *happiness*.

Finally, to analyze possible differences in *holiday destination limitation* between low- and high-income earners, we created two income groups. The low-income group contains respondents with an annual gross household income of up to €34,000. The low-income group holds 215 respondents. The high-income group, who earned more than €34,000 annually, comprises 274 respondents. A Chi-square test for independence (with Yates Continuity Correction) indicates no significant association between *income* and *holiday destination limitation*, $\chi^2(1, n = 489) = .59, p = .44, \phi = .04$.

6.4 Discussion

6.4.1 What is the strongest determinant of happiness?

This study supports the theory that holiday trips have an effect on happiness (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Hoopes & Lounsbury, 1989; Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1986; Strauss-Blasche, et al., 2000). Almost ten percent of the variance in happiness is explained by travel behavior variables. The feeling of being limited in choosing their holiday destination, is the strongest predictor of tourists' happiness. It explains close to six percent of the variance in happiness. This may not seem much in itself, but taking into consideration that all assessed socio-demographic variables explain seven percent, and that only as much as 40% of happiness is normally explained by intentional activity (Lyubomirsky, et al., 2005), it is certainly a relevant finding.

6.4.2 Involuntary green travel

Governmental intervention aiming at reducing the CO2 emissions of air transport by way of measures like taxation or emission trading schemes with tight global or sectoral caps affecting the cost of air travel may limit tourists in their destination choice. Low-income as well as high-income households will be equally affected. A shift towards more sustainable consumption patterns would involve a possible

minor and temporary reduction in happiness (Veenhoven, 2008b); holiday trips will be part of such a reduction, as close to six percent of happiness will be affected by any limitation in holiday destination choice. This is particularly relevant for holiday destinations that can be accessed only by air. Of all holiday trips, 17% involves air travel (UNWTO-UNEP-WMO, 2008); 45% of international trips include air travel (UNWTO, 2008). Alternative modes of transport are not always available to reach these holiday destinations. Thus, limiting air travel would certainly reduce GHG emissions, but at the same time may affect part of the 17% of all holiday trips now made by air transport, some of which probably without any reasonable alternative mode of transport available. Whether another mode of transport is required remains to be seen, as it seems unlikely that tourists will stop flying altogether (Brons, Pels, Nijkamp, & Rietveld, 2002).

The extent to which individual tourists' happiness is affected by government imposed (economic) limitations of air transport, is dependent on where these tourists live, and where they want to go or need to go to have their preferred kind of holiday. If good alternative modes of transport are available, happiness does not have to be at stake. In other situations it may be more problematic. Transatlantic air travel, for instance, is not easily substituted by another form of transport. Residents of islands, such as Ireland and the United Kingdom, will also have more difficulty in finding good alternative modes of transport for international trips. Another point of issue are upcoming markets, such as parts of Asia and former Eastern Europe, where consumers are, for the first time, presented with the opportunity of air travel. Consumers in such countries may be more sensitive to government imposed limitations to air travel. Another option of behavioral change for long-haul destinations might be to choose another, less far away, destination. For that behavioral option the impact on happiness will depend much on the purpose of the holiday trip and the suitability of destinations nearby to fulfill this purpose.

The projected decline in happiness may be just a temporary phenomenon (Veenhoven, 2008b). Even if suitable alternative modes of transport would not become available for all holiday destinations, tourists may go through a process referred to as the 'hedonic treadmill', which suggests that people's happiness is only briefly affected by good and bad events (Brickman & Campbell, 1971). People generally return to a more positive baseline after a positive event (Headey & Wearing, 1989; Lucas, Clark, Georgellis, & Diener, 2003). The adaptation effect of negative events shows that people eventually adapt to the new situation and return to their baseline happiness (Lucas, et al., 2003; Wu, 2001). Additionally, following government intervention causing e.g. a price increase in airfares, tourists are less likely to change their behavior immediately (Brons, et al., 2002), which may coincide with a return to baseline happiness, meaning tourists may not experience a change in happiness at all.

6.4.3 Implications

Technological improvements and voluntary behavioral change (Becken, 2007; Sterman & Sweeney, 2007; Stoll-Kleemann, et al., 2001) will not reduce GHG emissions sufficiently. Governments will have to levy taxes on air travel. When governments want to reduce climate change through reducing air travel, and at the same time want to avoid affecting happiness negatively, the findings of this study indicate that it would be best to first direct interventions mainly on flight routes that can be travelled by a variety of alternative modes of transport. In this way, the average tourist will not be confronted with additional holiday destination limitations and happiness will not be at stake. Additionally, interventions may be directed on flight routes to long-haul destinations, as they are frequented by a small proportion of tourists (UNWTO, 2008), while at the same time affecting a relatively large share of total emissions.

6.4.4 Limitations

This study focuses on leisure travel only. Business travelers are less price sensitive compared to leisure travelers (Brons, et al., 2002). Taxation will thus have a much smaller effect on the travel behavior of business travelers.

6.4.5 Future research

More research is needed to establish the impact of eco-taxes or other similar policy measures on travel behavior. Particular attention has to be paid to replacing one form of transport by another.

6.5 Conclusions

Our study finds that 'involuntary green travel' may affect six percent of tourists' happiness. The data show that 9.6% of happiness is explained by holiday travel of which six percent is accounted for by possible destination limitations. Thus 3.6% of the variance in happiness is explained by the remaining variables (*length of stay, travel distance, total number of holiday trips, preferred type of travel party, farther away, holiday trip importance* and all modes of transport). Not all of these affect GHG emissions. The two variables affecting GHG emissions the most strongly are *travel distance* and *airplane* (Peeters, Williams, et al., 2007; Sausen, et al., 2005). We found that *holiday destination limitation* and *preferred type of travel party* are the most important in terms of happiness.

Involuntary green travel has an adverse effect on tourists' happiness. Six percent of the happiness of affected tourists is potentially at stake. A total of just 17% of all holiday trips may be affected by 'involuntary green travel'. The percentage of tourists involved will likely be much smaller (Peeters, et al., 2006), as tourists with a hyper-mobile lifestyle (Shaw & Thomas, 2006) will be affected more than others. It is also unlikely that tourists will react immediately to a price increase of air travel (Brons, et al., 2002), thus delaying the impact of government measures. At the same time tourists involuntarily changing their behavior may go through an adaptation process and return to baseline happiness in the (near) future.

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Chapter 7:

Conclusions about vacationing and happiness⁸

In this final chapter, I present an overview of the empirical findings from the dissertation. I explain these findings in relation to happiness theories. I mention implications for the individual leisure traveler and for the tourism industry. Finally I discuss the limitations of the presented studies and present suggestions for future research.

7.1 The question

Today's society allows individuals more choice than ever in human history and is therefore characterized as a 'multiple choice society' (Schwartz, 2004). The life choices an individual makes have an impact on their happiness and that of others. To make thought-out decisions, modern citizens need to be informed about the probable consequences of these decisions on their happiness.

Life-choices typically involve decisions on time use and, hence, there is need for information about the effects of time use on happiness. Although some information was at hand (e.g., Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008; Lyubomirsky, 2008; Otake, Shimai, Tanaka-Matsumi, Otsui, & Fredrickson, 2006), it was rather limited. Thus, there was a need for more research on the way in which time is spent in relation to happiness.

In that context, this dissertation investigated how the allocation of leisure time affects one's happiness. The use of leisure time offers a good case to examine, since this is something over which individuals have much control. The specific focus of this dissertation was on leisure travel. Its findings allow for better-informed consumers and improved products supply by the tourism industry.

7.1.1 Why vacationing may add to happiness

There were three possibilities. Leisure travel would either add positively to happiness, negatively, or it would not have any effect. The possibility of a negative effect is based on the finding that vacationing makes some of us sick (leisure sickness; Vingerhoets, Van Huijgevoort, & Van Heck, 2002). However, if vacationing makes one sick, then why do these people vacation in the first place? The answer is that wanting a vacation does not equal enjoying a vacation; 'wanting' and 'liking' are separate neurological processes (cf. K. S. Smith & Berridge, 2005; Wyvell & Berridge, 2000), which explains why expected utility is often not the same as experienced utility (see Kahneman, 2003). In other words, we may want something we do not like. Consequently, there may exist a false promise of happiness, enforced by the advertising of the tourism industry and the desire of people to 'keep up with the Joneses', which leads people to believe that they can make themselves happier by vacationing.

On the other hand, it is often assumed that vacationing makes a person happy. The prevalent notion seems to be that vacations are generally fun, resulting in fond memories once returned home, which enables us to anticipate future trips (Wirtz, Kruger, Scollon, & Diener, 2003) and allows us to recuperate so we can cope with everyday life again. Thus, there may be no effect or a positive effect of leisure

⁸ Parts of this text are based on: Nawijn, J., & Veenhoven, R. (in press). Happiness through Leisure. In T. Freire (Ed.), *Positive Leisure Science: From Subjective Experience to Social Contexts*: Springer.

travel on happiness. Perhaps slogans used by the tourism industry (e.g., 'a state of happiness' [Center Parcs] and 'here is happiness' [Club Med]) have some merit after all.

7.1.2 Direct and indirect effects

Vacationing was reasoned to have both direct and indirect effects on one's happiness. Vacation time is considered a time when families bond, creating memories for the future (McCabe, 2009). Additionally, mental and physical recuperation takes place during a trip as well. Individuals may also learn skills while on vacation, learn a language, or make new friends. (See also section 0.5 of the Introductory Chapter for an extensive overview of potential effects of leisure travel on happiness.)

7.1.3 Phases

Vacationing could affect tourists' happiness during the period of the vacation trip and its adjacent pre-trip and post-trip phases. Recollecting past trips or actively anticipating future trips is not limited to the pre-trip and post-trip periods, but may also take place in everyday life. One can actively recollect a trip from one's childhood. Similarly, a trip can be anticipated even if it may never take place (cf. Carter & Gilovich, 2010).

7.2 Does vacationing add to happiness?

In the previous sections I addressed the potential effects of leisure travel on happiness. Let us now have a look at the existing empirical findings.

7.2.1 Earlier empirical findings

There is some empirical support (see section 0.5.2) for the expectation that vacationing would affect happiness.

Most cross-sectional findings indicate a positive effect of leisure travel on happiness. Only a few findings were not significant, but none were negative. The data show that there is a relation between frequency of leisure travel and happiness. Furthermore, vacationers are happier than non-vacationers.

Follow-up studies that assessed pre-trip and post-trip levels of happiness mostly find that leisure travel positively affects happiness. For how long this effect lasts is unknown.

7.2.2 This study's findings

The findings of this dissertation confirm that vacationers are slightly happier than non-vacationers, but only in terms of mood. Vacationing mostly boosts vacationers' mood, but has no lasting effect on one's life satisfaction (see Chapters 3, 4 and 5). The main effect on mood occurs in the inter-trip phase. Vacationers who rated their trip as 'very relaxed' benefit for two weeks from an uplift in mood.

Short-term effects

Vacationing seems to boost mood in the short term, although not all expectations about short-term effects are supported by the data.

Pre-trip phase: Anticipation likely boosts pre-trip happiness. Vacationers have a significantly higher pre-trip mood score compared to non-vacationers (see Chapter 2). However, the effect size is small to moderate at best.

Inter-trip phase: The most enjoyable phase of the holiday experience is the inter-trip phase, when one is actually on holiday. As I have shown in Chapters 3 and 4, vacationers feel generally happy. The positive to negative affect ratio exceeds 4-to-1 (see Chapter 4), whereas 2-to-1 is generally experienced in everyday life (cf. Fredrickson, 2009; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005; Zelenski & Larsen, 2000) and a ratio of 3-to-1 is, according to Fredrickson (2009), the tipping point between languishing and flourishing.

Holiday stress and attitude towards travel party are significantly associated with inter-trip happiness. Important stressors are caused by travel, which results in a lack of sleep, frustration and tiredness (see Chapter 4). The latter confirms findings from an earlier study (Steyn, et al., 2004) that found tight schedules, too much travel from A to B and too little personal time to be detrimental to mood. A positive influence on the vacation experience is – generally speaking – one's travel party (see Chapters 4 and 6).

I also found, in Chapter 3, that *length of stay* is not associated with happiness, except for very short trips (two days). This contradicts findings by Neal (2000) and Neal and Sirgy (2004), but confirms studies by others (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Kemp, Burt, & Furneaux, 2008; Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1986). The first day(s) of a trip are a little less pleasant compared to the other day(s) (see Chapter 3). As long as the length of the vacation allows for sufficient time to relax, length of stay should have little effect on one's happiness.

Post-trip phase: People who have recently had a vacation trip feel a bit happier than those who did not (Boelhouwer & Stoop, 1999). However, as discussed in the second chapter, a post-trip happiness boost in mood is only present for those who experienced a 'very relaxed' holiday and lasts no more than two weeks. Thus, vacationing is a good way to boost happiness, albeit briefly.

No long-term effect

A long-term effect of vacationing on happiness is virtually non-existent and certainly unrelated to a change in the number of trips or days spent on vacation (see Chapter 5). Vacationers are happier than non-vacationers (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Michalkó, Kiss, Balázs, & Sulyok, 2009), however my study in Chapter 5 found that, when eliminating the pre-trip and post-trip periods, the difference is extremely small (2% difference in the affective component of life satisfaction between vacationers and non-vacationers). Still, vacationers are slightly happier than non-vacationers, which may be caused by active anticipation or recollection of trips (Carter & Gilovich, 2010; Hagger, 2009; Sirgy, Kruger, Lee, & Yu, 2011) or by more indirect effects, such as improved health (see also section 0.6).

7.3 Explanations

In the Introductory Chapter of this dissertation I discussed four theories of happiness. As I did not assess goal striving and contentment, I am unable to explain my findings from a *goal theory* perspective (see section 0.4.3). Although my findings indicate that the effect of vacationing is mostly short-lived, which would fit *set-point theory*, the theory itself is flawed (see section 0.4.1) and therefore I do not explain my findings from that perspective either. Instead I focus on *livability theory* and *comparison theory*. In the following sections I address how the findings on leisure travel and happiness can be placed in these views and I offer a third explanation for the findings.

7.3.1 Gratification of needs

Maslow (1943, 1954, 1970) distinguishes two basic types of needs, namely deficiency needs and growth needs. Deficiency needs rank lowest in his hierarchy and include, from low to high: *physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love, and esteem*. The latter is divided into high- and low-esteem needs. Low-esteem needs include the needs for status, fame, prestige, recognition and attention. High-esteem needs include needs for strength, competence, mastery, independence, freedom and self-confidence. The highest needs are growth needs, which mainly consist of the need for *self-actualization*. This concerns the need for individuals to be the best they can be - using their full potential. Empirical testing (see Sheldon, Elliot, Kim, & Kasser, 2001) supports Maslow's distinction between deficiency and growth needs.

The short happiness boost caused by vacationing can be explained by a fulfillment of basic human needs as described by Maslow (1943, 1954). Several needs can be involved. Vacations are often social events; Van Boven and Gilovich (2003) argue that (vacation) experiences have greater social value as they foster social relationships, which are associated with happiness (Diener & Seligman, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). This was also reflected in the importance of the travel party during the inter-trip phase, as described in Chapter 4. Thus, vacations are linked to a satisfaction of deficiency needs, specifically the need for *belongingness and love*.

Leisure travel also satisfies the higher *esteem* needs of independence, freedom and self-confidence. Human beings are curious by nature and tend to explore their environment. Vacation trips are, for most people, a perfect way to explore the world.

Finally, vacations have the potential to satisfy the need for *self-actualization*. For some individuals, leisure travel may involve working towards personal goals, which should bring a person closer to their full potential (Sirgy, 2010; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). However, my studies suggest that leisure travel is mostly about 'having a good time' and the need for *self-actualization* is likely fulfilled to a greater extent and for a longer period of time by other activities that individuals undertake, such as serious leisure (e.g., hobbies). Adding to that, those who stay at home may fulfill their needs by such activities. This could explain the minimal difference between vacationers' and non-vacationers' happiness.

7.3.2 Realization of wants

A second explanation of the reported findings is that vacationing realizes certain wants and in particular the want to live up to common standards of the good life. Vacationing is quite common in present day affluent society. People try to live up to the standard of living of their friends, family and neighbors. This phenomenon has to do with achieving a certain status and is also referred to as 'keeping up with the Joneses' (Schor, 1991, 1998). As vacations are deemed important, people (1) tend to compare whether one is vacationing and (2) where one vacations. The former comparison is supported by the fact that vacationers are happier than non-vacationers, as discussed in Chapter 2. The latter form of comparison is supported by a psychological experiment which suggests that the most exotic vacation has the strongest effect on happiness (Carter & Gilovich, 2010).

The difference between vacationers' and non-vacationers' happiness is small (see Chapters 2 and 5). This difference can also be explained through a realization of wants. The choice to go on vacation can be made by virtually anyone in affluent societies, as the means are available to do so. As a consequence, vacation trips are not considered special enough to serve as a strong point of reference for comparison. Coincidentally, comparison theory – a cognitive happiness theory – argues that the prevalent happiness level is around neutral. Thus, theoretically, people are expected to benefit only

briefly from comparisons, which fits the findings of my studies. However, it should be noted that due to the absence of measures of contentment, it was not fully possible to test comparison theory.

7.3.3 Poor tourism product

A third and final explanation for the observed limited effects of leisure travel on happiness may lie in the vacation product itself. Possibly, the current tourism products on offer are sub-optimal. The focus of tourism service providers seems to be limited mostly to the phase of the actual holiday trip. Indeed, the findings of my studies show that individuals generally have a good time on vacation, which seems to indicate that the tourism industry is doing a good job in that regard (see Chapters 3 and 4). However, the post-trip benefits are minimal, disappear quickly and apply only to a select group of people who experienced a very relaxed holiday trip. The latter suggests that the actual trip should be improved and that the post-trip phase is currently neglected by the tourism industry. Addressing the former, Scitovsky (1992, p. 280) comments on the concept of mass-produced package holidays and the importance of freedom of choice by stating that “to make use of that freedom knowingly one must be aware of the alternatives, which people afraid of abandoning the security and comfort of packaged tours often are not.” Thus, the mass produced holiday products are mainly about *safety needs*, which are rank low in Maslow’s hierarchy (see section 7.3.1). Furthermore, customer contact in the post-trip phase is mostly limited to a customer satisfaction survey, a newsletter or an offer to book another trip. Real interaction with customers is still rather limited, although social media provide an excellent opportunity for the tourism industry to interact with their clients. Unfortunately, most tour operators do not use this medium to its full potential yet. It seems as if each company is waiting to see what the competition does, resulting in a state of ‘doing nothing’.

7.4 Implications

Are these findings of any use? Next, I discuss implications for consumers as well as producers of vacations.

7.4.1 The individual consumer

The findings of my studies indicate that the inter-trip phase of the holiday experience brings about the most pleasure (see Chapters 3 and 4). As long-term effects are extremely small, individuals are best off trying to enjoy the moment itself, the actual holiday. In other words, a vacation buys several enjoyable days, but not lasting happiness.

Additionally, vacations likely induce positive mood through anticipation of an upcoming holiday trip. Although post-trip effects on mood are mostly non-existent, these effects are certainly not negative (see Chapter 2). This entails that it is beneficial to spread vacation days over the year and take several short trips instead of a single long trip; this would maximize potential anticipation effects on mood.

7.4.2 The tourism industry

Implications for the tourism industry are threefold. First, in terms of marketing, the industry should focus mostly on the actual holiday trip. Individuals enjoy this phase the most and should have positive associations when confronted with images of vacationers on holiday.

Second, from an operational management viewpoint, the findings of this dissertation indicate that more attention has to be paid to tourism product as a whole and the first days of the trip in particular. The beginning of a vacation is deemed less enjoyable due to travel from A to B. Efforts should be made

to improve the experience of travel. This may include a variety of measures, such as comfortable seating, improved access to travel information, faster check-in procedures, entertainment and a reduction in points of transit. Additionally, as the social aspect of holiday trips is important, the industry should pay specific attention to group tours, where vacationers do not know each other beforehand. Measures may include pre-trip meetings and a better match of groups based on personality, interests and/or socio-demographic backgrounds.

The tourism product as a whole requires attention too. Research efforts seem to focus mostly on customer satisfaction. Although customer satisfaction studies are useful to monitor the existing service offer, they provide little basis for substantial product improvements or expansion. People can be satisfied with things that do not add to their later happiness. Happiness studies inform companies about their clients. Experience sampling (see section 0.2.4) during the trip would greatly enhance a company's knowledge of the on-site experiences of their customer and how to further improve the clients' holiday experience. Customer satisfaction studies only inform them about their existing products. Their products are not what brings in the money, the clients do. A happy client is likely a loyal client.

Dutch tour operators appear to neglect the need for substantial improvement of their service offer. Several reasons for this apply. For instance, it is relatively easy for competitors to copy a package holiday. This lowers the desire to improve existing products. Furthermore, many tour operators are small and medium enterprises. To create knowledge and to be able to do good research, they require (research) support from a larger organization, such as the Dutch government. However, this support is often lacking as there is not one ministry responsible for the tourism industry in the Netherlands. Rather, several ministries deal with tourism and leisure. This leaves the Dutch tourism industry in a difficult situation. The industry should participate in recent research endeavors of the Dutch Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators, which focus on subjective well-being.

Finally, recent research has found that focusing on 'the present' is more beneficial to happiness than thinking of something else, even if it is a positive thought (Killingsworth & Gilbert, 2010). Exercises exist which are geared towards enhancing the experience of the present. Therefore, I suggest developing similar 'positive interventions'. These could be tested in a vacation setting. Such intervention techniques could include savoring exercises, as suggested by Bryant and Veroff (2007), to possibly further enhance the experience of the present. These positive interventions could be tested in each of the phases of leisure travel.

7.5 Limitations

This dissertation has several limitations that suggest an agenda for future research. Several limitations related to each particular study were discussed at the end of each chapter. Below I discuss three main limitations.

7.5.1 Cross-sectional vs. longitudinal

In this dissertation, findings from both cross-sectional data and longitudinal data were presented. Cross sectional data, as used in Chapters 3 and 4, only allow us to observe associations between certain variables. Thus, it is impossible to distinguish cause from effect. Although life satisfaction was used as a control variable in the analysis (see Chapter 4), a selection effect may still have occurred. This may mean that happy people are more likely to vacation than unhappy people. This limitation applies only to Chapter 4.

7.5.2 Retrospective life satisfaction

Related to the issue of cross-sectional studies, life satisfaction was sometimes measured retrospectively instead of 'in the moment' (see Chapters 3 and 4). Such retrospective judgments may be biased, as people tend to reconstruct events, filling in gaps with assumptions of what likely happened (cf. Braun-LaTour, Grinley, & Loftus, 2006; Kemp, et al., 2008). It is likely that these retrospective assessments are somewhat more positive than current assessments (see Mitchell, Thompson, Peterson & Cronk, 1997).

7.5.3 General effect instead of specification

This dissertation has focused on general effects, rather than effects of vacationing for specific publics or effects of specific types of trips. The reason for this is that, from my point of view, it is preferred to first study the (potential) general effect of a certain phenomenon on happiness before assessing specific effects.

7.6 Suggestions for future research

The previous discussion of limitations leads to the following agenda for future research.

7.6.1 More longitudinal studies

The cause/effect relation is not always clear, as most studies are cross-sectional. I therefore propose more longitudinal studies of the relation between leisure, vacationing and happiness.

More specifically, the pre-trip phase requires further investigation. People may anticipate their vacation trip and increase their happiness that way. However, if this is the case, the findings presented in Chapter 2 suggest that the effect is moderate at best.

Finally, longitudinal research should also take away the need to assess life satisfaction retrospectively and will answer the question whether vacationers are happier than non-vacationers because of comparison or because of a selection effect. Longitudinal studies with monthly measurements are preferred. As observed in Chapter 5, pre-trip and post-trip effects last no more than a month, which makes monthly measurements ideal.

As addressed in the Introductory Chapter, experience sampling is one way to measure happiness. Although informative, the current use of experience sampling (ESM or DRM) requires a great deal of effort from respondents and the duration of such studies is often short. Thus we are again inadequately informed about causality. There is some research on the effects of leisure preferences and behavior on happiness (see section 0.5). However, we are largely in the dark about causal mechanisms of these effects. Follow-up studies, preferably long-term follow-up studies, that also involve personal characteristics such as personality and health are needed. Since such follow-up studies are very expensive, it is wise to join forces with existing panels, such as the Happiness Monitor (Oerlemans, 2009). This makes it possible to have background data on a large number of individuals in combination with day-to-day information about behavior and its outcomes.

7.6.2 Experience sampling method

The Experience Sampling Method (ESM) is a perfect method for assessing happiness in-the-moment (see section 0.2.4). It is needed to assess happiness frequently during vacation without interfering too much with the clients' holiday experience. The ESM is well-suited for that task.

My studies indicated that the current tourism product on offer may be sub-optimal (see section 7.3.3). The ESM would provide much needed data on clients' happiness and its potential causes. The data collected through the ESM would allow the tourism industry to greatly enhance their current product offer and provide a truly wonderful holiday experience for its customers.

7.6.3 Specification

Certain types of trips may be more beneficial to others and people may benefit from vacationing differentially. Of particular importance is one's personality, as personality is linked to both leisure behavior (Hills & Argyle, 1998; Kraaykamp & Van Eijck, 2005; Melamed, Meir, & Samson, 1995) and happiness (Argyle & Lu, 1990; Diener, Larsen, & Emmons, 1984; Diener, Sandvik, Pavot, & Fujita, 1992; Moskowitz & Cote, 1995; Pavot, Diener, & Fujita, 1990).

Finally, certain types of trips are aimed at relaxation of mind and body, such as wellness trips or slow travel (see Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010; M. Smith & Puckó, 2009). These types of trips may be more beneficial to an individual's sense of well-being compared to other types of trips. The issue here is not so much *whether* leisure travel adds to happiness, but *what kinds* of people benefit most from *what kinds* of leisure travel. Effects of leisure travel are probably not the same for the young and the old or for singles and couples. Specific information is not only of interest to the tourism industry, but it is also in the interest of consumers. It has escaped the attention of marketers, probably because large samples and different populations are a necessity to study such specific effects. In this context, I also note that the available data mainly draw on samples in wealthy countries. Little is known about the importance of leisure and the allocation of free time in less developed countries and its relation to happiness.

7.6.4 Leisure travel: the host community

As addressed in the Introductory Chapter, the effects of leisure travel on the host community is an under-studied area of research. Potential direct and indirect effects of pollution, crowding, economic gains, direct income, preservation of nature, migration and loss of culture on locals' happiness are an interesting and important area for future studies.

7.6.5 Recuperation

Work and leisure are inter-related. Leisure seems an excellent way to cope with work stress, but empirical evidence is scarce. Studies on leisure travel as a tool for recuperation show mostly minor increases, which do not last very long (De Bloom, et al., 2010; De Bloom, et al., 2009). Furthermore, most studies in this area include rather general measures of well-being and satisfaction. More attention should be paid to including indicators of happiness as described in the World Database of Happiness (Veenhoven, 2011). Indicators of contentment could be used to assess how leisure goals (through serious leisure or project-based leisure) may interfere with work goals. Indicators of hedonic level of affect are useful too. The circumplex model of affect (Russell, 1980) has been used recently in a study on happiness in organizations (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2011) and it would be good to expand such studies by looking outside of the organization and address the relation between leisure and work.

7.6.6 Project-based leisure and serious leisure

Very few studies addressed the domains of project-based leisure and serious leisure (see Introductory Chapter). Stebbins (2001) regards these domains as superior to casual leisure and it is therefore

surprising how few studies addressed these potentially important domains. Further research on serious leisure and project-based leisure is much needed.

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DUTCH SUMMARY:

Vakantiereizen en geluk

We leven tegenwoordig in een meerkeuzemaatschappij. Mensen hebben steeds meer keuzevrijheid. Geluk is afhankelijk van veel factoren, maar voor een groot deel wordt geluk bepaald hoe we onze tijd besteden. De hoeveelheid tijd is echter beperkt. Zo wordt een groot deel van onze tijd in beslag genomen door verplichtingen als werk en de zorg voor kinderen. We hebben meer controle over wat we doen in onze vrije tijd. Daarom is het goed om te weten *hoe* besteding van vrije tijd geluk beïnvloedt. Vakanties lijken van groot belang.

Mogelijke effecten van vakantie op geluk

Een vakantie kan zowel directe als indirecte effecten op het geluk van het individu hebben. Veel mensen verheugen zich op een vakantiereis. Tevens kan mentale en fysieke ontspanning tijdens de reis een 'afterglow' effect veroorzaken. Daarentegen wordt mogelijk stress ervaren door bijvoorbeeld het reizen van A naar B, het last hebben van heimwee of het krijgen van gezondheidsproblemen.

Definitie van geluk

Geluk is gedefinieerd als levensvoldoening. Bij het inschatten van hun tevredenheid met het leven als geheel, putten mensen uit twee bronnen van informatie: hoe goed ze zich voelen en in welke mate hun leven aan hun wensen voldoet. Deze taxaties worden aangeduid als de 'affectieve' en 'cognitieve' componenten van geluk en zijn subtotaal in de evaluatie van het leven. Gevoelens, in termen van emoties, affect en stemming, behoren tot de affectieve component van geluk, genaamd 'hedonische mate van affect'. Tevredenheid is de term die wordt gebruikt om de cognitieve component van geluk te duiden. De term levensvoldoening wordt in dit proefschrift gebruikt voor de waardering van het eigen leven als geheel. De term 'stemming' wordt gebruikt voor de affectieve component van geluk. De cognitieve component wordt niet onderzocht in de studies waarvan deze dissertatie verslag doet.

Benadering van het proefschrift

Dit proefschrift bestudeert het effect van vakantiereizen op iemands geluk. Dit mogelijke effect is onderzocht door een onderverdeling te maken in drie fases: de pre-trip fase, de inter-trip fase en de post-trip fase. Alle empirische studies in dit proefschrift zijn van kwantitatieve aard. De oorsprong van de datasets wordt hieronder besproken.

Data

Dit proefschrift maakt gebruik van steekproeven uit de Nederlandse bevolking, de Duitse bevolking en internationale toeristen in Nederland. Zowel cross-sectionele als longitudinale studies worden gebruikt. Cross-sectionele studies stellen ons in staat om correlaten van vakantie en geluk te vinden. Longitudinale studies stellen ons in staat om oorzaak en gevolg te scheiden.

Resultaten

Het op vakantie gaan is de enige vrijetijdsbesteding (in termen van de frequentie van participatie) die significant is geassocieerd met het geluk van individuen. Mensen die vaak op vakantie gaan zijn iets gelukkiger dan mensen die dat niet doen.

Pre-trip fase

Vakantiegangers zijn dus een klein beetje gelukkiger dan niet-vakantiegangers, maar waarom is niet helemaal duidelijk. Mogelijk kijken vakantiegangers uit naar hun reis, waardoor hun geluk toeneemt in de weken voor de reis.

Inter-trip fase

Vakantiegangers voelen zich over het algemeen goed tijdens een vakantie. Mensen voelen zich iets slechter aan het begin van een reis, hetgeen waarschijnlijk wordt veroorzaakt door de negatieve effecten van het reizen zelf. Vakantiestress heeft een negatief effect op de stemming van vakantiegangers tijdens de reis. Reizen van A naar B werd genoemd als een bron van vakantiestress. Het reisgezelschap is ook een belangrijke determinant van geluk tijdens de vakantie. Vakantiegangers zijn gelukkiger tijdens de vakantie zelf, in vergelijking tot hun dagelijks leven.

Post-trip fase

Vakantiegangers die een 'zeer ontspannen' vakantie genoten profiteren nog van de vakantie in de twee weken na thuiskomst. Andere vakantiegangers keren onmiddellijk terug naar hun geluksniveau van voor de vakantie. De verblijfsduur speelt hierin geen rol. Een vakantie koopt dus een aantal leuke dagen, maar geen blijvend geluk.

Effect op lange termijn

Lange termijn effecten van vakantie op iemands geluksgevoel zijn er amper. Er is een klein, maar significant, verschil van 2% in de affectieve component van geluk tussen vakantiegangers en niet-vakantiegangers.

Verklaringen voor het kortstondige effect

Uit mijn studies blijkt dat mensen zich goed voelen tijdens de vakantie. Echter, de effecten na de vakantie zijn minimaal, verdwijnen snel en de meeste mensen hebben überhaupt geen hoger geluk na de vakantie dan voor de vakantie. Alleen mensen met een zeer ontspannen vakantie genieten nog na. Dit geringe effect kan verklaard worden op drie manieren. Ten eerste door een falend toeristisch product. Ten tweede door de bevrediging van behoeften en ten slotte door realisatie van wensen.

Product

Een falend toeristisch product zou mijn bevindingen kunnen verklaren. De toeristische sector lijkt zich vooral om de toerist te bekommeren tijdens de vakantie zelf en niet zozeer voor of na de vakantie. Klantcontact lijkt vooral gericht te zijn op het verkopen. In de post-trip fase is het contact veelal beperkt tot een klanttevredenheidsenquête, een nieuwsbrief of een aanbieding om opnieuw te boeken. Echte interactie met klanten is er amper, alhoewel social media een uitstekende mogelijkheid biedt om dergelijk contact op een zinvolle manier aan te gaan. Dit kan al beginnen in de pre-trip fase, waarbij het verheugen op de vakantie vergroot kan worden door het verheugen op de vakantie te triggeren met foto's of video's van de te bezoeken bestemming.

Behoefte

De mate waarin menselijke behoeften voorzien worden hangt samen met geluk. De bevindingen van dit proefschrift passen bij deze redenatie. Vakanties lijken voornamelijk betrekking te hebben op Maslow's behoefte van 'onafhankelijkheid en vrijheid'. De mens is van nature nieuwsgierig en mensen

hebben de neiging om hun omgeving te verkennen. Vakantiereizen zijn, voor de meeste mensen, de perfecte manier om de wereld te verkennen, terwijl ze tegelijkertijd het gezelschap van dierbaren kunnen ervaren. Vakanties zijn gekoppeld aan een bevrediging van deficiëntiebehoeften, met name de behoefte aan geborgenheid en liefde. Sociale relaties worden versterkt tijdens de vakantie. Tot slot bieden vakanties enigszins de mogelijkheid om de behoefte aan zelfactualisatie te bevredigen. Voor sommigen kan een vakantie een manier zijn om te werken aan persoonlijke doelen.

Echter, het lijkt er op dat vakantie vooral gaat over 'het hebben van een leuke tijd' en dat aan de behoefte naar autonomie en verbondenheid slechts tijdelijk wordt voldaan. Een vakantie duurt immers niet eeuwig. De behoefte aan zelfactualisatie kan waarschijnlijk sterker voldaan worden, en voor een langere periode, door deel te nemen aan andere activiteiten. Dit laatste kan ook verklaren waarom thuisblijvers niet zo veel verschillen in geluk ten opzichte van vakantiegangers. Thuisblijvers vervullen behoeftes op andere manieren dan door op vakantie te gaan.

Verlangens

Een derde verklaring is dat het op vakantie gaan een zekere wens realiseert. De hedendaagse welvaartsmaatschappij biedt individuen de mogelijkheid om op vakantie te gaan. Het huidige toeristisch product zou wel eens alleen de wens kunnen vervullen, maar niet de behoefte.

Vakanties worden belangrijk geacht en niet op vakantie gaan is inmiddels een uitzondering. Vergelijking van welvaart is een mogelijke verklaring voor verschillen in geluk. Echter, de keuze om op vakantie te gaan kan worden gemaakt door vrijwel iedereen in welvarende samenlevingen, omdat de middelen beschikbaar zijn om dat te doen. Als gevolg hiervan zijn vakanties niet bijzonder genoeg meer om elkaar mee te vergelijken. De theorie over vergelijkingen stelt dat het geluksniveau ongeveer neutraal is. Dus, in theorie, zouden mensen naar verwachting slechts kort genieten van vergelijkingen. Mijn bevindingen passen bij deze redenering.

Implicaties

De individuele consument

De bevindingen van mijn proefschrift geven aan dat de inter-trip fase van de vakantieperiode veel plezier oplevert. Lange termijn effecten zijn zeer klein en dus zijn individuen het beste af zoveel mogelijk te genieten van het moment van de vakantie zelf.

De toeristische sector

Gevolgen voor de toeristische sector zijn drieledig. Ten eerste, in termen van marketing, moet de industrie zich vooral richten op de eigenlijke vakantie. Mensen genieten van deze fase het meest en moeten positieve associaties hebben wanneer ze geconfronteerd worden met beelden van de vakantiegangers op vakantie.

Ten tweede, uit het oogpunt van bedrijfsvoering, geven de resultaten van dit proefschrift aan dat er meer aandacht moet worden besteed aan het gehele toeristische product en specifiek aan de eerste dag van de reis. Het begin van een vakantie is minder leuk, als gevolg van het reizen van A naar B. Er moet meer inspanning worden verricht om de ervaring van het reizen te verbeteren. Dit kan bereikt worden door een scala aan maatregelen, zoals comfortabele stoelen, verbeterde toegang tot reisinformatie, snellere check-in procedures, meer aanbod van entertainment en een vermindering van punten van doorvoer. Gezien het belang van het sociale aspect van vakantiereizen moet de sector bovendien bijzondere aandacht besteden aan groepsreizen, met name wanneer vakantiegangers

elkaar op voorhand niet kennen. Maatregelen kunnen omvatten: bijeenkomsten voorafgaand aan de vakantie en een betere afstemming van de groepen op basis van persoonlijkheid, interesses en / of sociaaldemografische achtergronden. Het toeristisch product behoeft ook de nodige aandacht.

De Nederlandse reisbranche doet te weinig onderzoek. De vraag die eigenlijk gesteld moet worden is waarom de Nederlandse reisbranche zo weinig onderzoek doet. Er zijn verschillende redenen hiervoor aan te dragen. Zo zijn veel toeristische producten eenvoudig na te maken, denk aan een pakketreis. Dit vermindert de behoefte tot het doen van onderzoek. Daarnaast zijn veel toeristische bedrijven klein, waardoor ze de mensen en middelen ontberen voor het doen van goed onderzoek. De sector zou hulp kunnen gebruiken van de Nederlandse overheid. Die hulp blijft echter veelal achterwege, omdat de toeristische sector niet één aanspreekpunt bij de overheid heeft. De verantwoordelijkheid voor het toerisme in Nederland ligt bij meerdere ministeries. De toeristische sector in Nederland zou zich sterk in moeten zetten voor initiatieven tot gemeenschappelijk onderzoek, via bijvoorbeeld de brancheorganisatie, de Algemene Nederlandse Vereniging van Reisonderningen.

Tot slot stel ik voor om 'positieve interventies' te ontwikkelen om de ervaring van het heden te verbeteren. Deze kunnen worden getest in een vakantiesetting.

Conclusie

Vakantie heeft vooral invloed op de stemming van mensen, maar heeft geen effect op de algemene levensvoldoening. Het voornaamste effect is op stemming in de inter-trip fase.

Curriculum vitae

Bio

Jeroen Nawijn (1977) received his master degree in Leisure Studies from Tilburg University in 2001. He works as a Senior lecturer in Tourism at NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences since October 2001 and as a Senior researcher for the Centre for Sustainable Tourism and Transport as of 2004. His main interests are subjective well-being, sustainable tourism, positive psychology and quality of life.

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Today's society allows individuals more choice than ever in human history and is therefore characterized as a 'multiple choice society'. The life-choices an individual makes have an impact on their happiness and that of others. To make thought-out decisions, modern citizens need to be informed about the probable consequences of these decisions on their happiness. Life choices typically involve decisions on time use and, hence, there is need for information about the effects of time use on happiness. This dissertation investigated how the allocation of leisure time affects one's happiness. The use of leisure time offers a good case to examine, since this is something over which individuals have much control. The specific focus of this dissertation was on leisure travel. Its findings allow for better-informed consumers and an improved product offer by the tourism industry.

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