1 Introducing tourist experience and fulfilment research

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Our research problem

Towards the end of 2012 the United Nations World Tourism Organisation provided a press release signifying that one billion tourists had crossed international borders during the year (UNWTO, 2012). Undoubtedly this figure will be quoted and re-quoted by tourism students and scholars as they use it to justify, albeit indirectly, the significance of their work. The attention to the statistic of one billion tourists at the start of this book is much more circumspect. It is difficult to provide coherent generalisations about even one million tourists, let alone one billion, even when they are from the same demographic segments and from the same country. It is therefore appropriate to identify our interests in the topic of tourist experience and fulfilment as consistently localised and specific. Our broad intention in this book is to highlight the way well-defined groups of tourists travelling in particular ways to specific kinds of tourist places develop their sense of well-being.

This sense of purpose is not apologetic or necessarily limiting for the scope of the work. A persistent and mindful appreciation however that each chapter describes a component part of the total tourism jigsaw is important. A prevailing awareness that each study and treatment of tourist experience and fulfilment is specific might prevent the problem of researchers seeing contradictions across studies where none really exist. A focus on the context and an awareness of tourism as a variegated phenomenon is also a healthy reminder that many tourist groups remain to be studied as we apply the concepts of positive psychology to tourists’ personal growth and well-being. Couch surfing tourists and those who volunteer their time for altruistic purposes are a part of the jigsaw of fulfilment opportunities but so too and in different ways are the package tourists emerging from the growth tourism markets of India and China.

In the following chapters the multiple personal benefits which people may realise through tourism are considered. Insights from the theories and methods of positive psychology help define the special contribution of the work (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The book seeks to complement the vast body of knowledge on health and wellness in tourism (Voigt and Pforr, 2013). The work reported in the following chapters also complements emerging traditions of
research on transformative travel (Reisinger, 2013) and experience economy perspectives on personally enriching consumption processes (Gilmore and Pine, 2002; Morgan et al., 2010). In these contributions, however, authors often do not access the core literature in psychology that underpins this volume (Pearce and Packer, 2012). As such, we aim to enrich investigations of quality of life and tourist behaviour from psychological standpoints such as those offered by Neal et al. (2007) and contemporary work in leisure studies on accentuating the positive value of leisure behaviour (Stebbins, 2011; Freire, 2013). Drawing on insights and theories from the research field of positive psychology, this edited volume presents 12 original research chapters investigating fulfilling tourist experiences. The work has a positive, optimistic and potentially personally rewarding tone. It forms a contrast to the more extensive research into so-called ‘dark tourist’ experiences, such as those involving visits to battlegrounds and places of genocide (Dann, 1998; Stone and Sharpley, 2008; Institute for Dark Tourism Research, 2013).

According to the Oxford dictionary, fulfilment is ‘the achievement of something desired, promised, or predicted’ or a ‘satisfaction or happiness as a result of fully developing one’s potential’. It is further defined as the meeting of a requirement, condition or need (Oxford Dictionaries, 2013). Fulfilment is therefore a broad term that encompasses diverse aspects of well-being and this broad definition fits the labels of the part titles in this book. The happiness and humour, and meaning and self-actualisation parts respectively resemble the hedonic and the eudaimonic conception of well-being, suggesting that tourist experiences are clearly not just about hedonism, but a sense of achievement, meaning and purpose in life. The health and restoration parts fit the physical well-being dimension of fulfilment. Before we outline the book structure in more detail, we address research challenges which need to be considered in empirical examinations of tourist experience and fulfilment through the lenses of positive psychology.

**Our research challenges**

First, there is the challenge of defining key terms, such as happiness – a subject of one of the part headings in our volume. Holt (2006) in his review of McMahon’s book, *Happiness: A History*, argues in jest that the history of the idea of happiness could be thought of in terms of a series of bumper stickers: happiness – luck (Homeric era), happiness – virtue (Classical era), happiness – heaven (Medieval era), happiness – pleasure (Enlightenment era) and happiness – warm puppy (Contemporary era). He argues that in each era societies have had their own interpretation of happiness. The reality of clearly defining happiness is a far more intricate process than the bumper stickers would suggest and the nature of happiness has puzzled Western and non-Western philosophers for more than two millennia (Tatarkiewicz, 1976).

Kesebir and Diener (2008) suggest, however, that while modern psychologists cannot hope to define happiness to everyone’s satisfaction, they have...
uncovered coherent and separate components of subjective well-being. These components include life satisfaction (global judgements of one’s life), satisfaction with important life domains (satisfaction with one’s work, health, marriage, etc.), positive affect (prevalence of positive emotions and moods) and low levels of negative affect (prevalence of unpleasant emotions and moods). There are also more prescriptive and less subjective theories that specify certain needs that have to be fulfilled (such as self-acceptance and mastery) as a prerequisite of happiness. These theories, such as Ryff and Singer’s (1996) concept of psychological well-being, and Ryan and Deci’s (2001) self-determination theory are more akin to the eudaemonist flourishing theories of happiness of the classical era, like those of Aristotle (Tiberius, 2006). Both conceptions of happiness – the subjective well-being conception and the eudaemonist conception – have been utilised by researchers to help define happiness of tourists (Nawijn, 2011; Filep, 2012). Any academic attempts at defining happiness in the context of tourist experiences, hence must take into account these theories of happiness. Therefore while a formulaic definition of happiness may not exist and while we recognise the complexity of the term, we rest on the shoulders of the subjective well-being and the eudaemonist theories (e.g. Ryan and Deci, 2001; Seligman, 2011). Happiness is mostly, if not entirely, a conscious state of mind (Veenhoven, 2000). A consistent approach in this volume from the authors has been to address research challenge of defining happiness by referring to the theories of happiness from modern psychology.

The second challenge we faced in this empirical examination related to the variability of tourist experiences. Sharpley and Stone (2012, p. 7) argue:

the tourism-happiness equation is infinitely variable; people consume tourism in numerous different ways and for a multitude of different reasons, whilst the source of happiness or contentedness undoubtedly varies significantly from one person to another. Therefore, there is no simple answer to the question: is to experience tourism to experience happiness?

We have addressed this second research challenge of variability by recognising that tourist experiences are diverse but also by recognising that we are able to imperfectly bring together our empirical contributions under a single umbrella of tourist experience and fulfilment. Much of tourist behaviour is indeed complex and variable, yet our colleagues have over the years developed many conceptual schemes and theoretical models to study the tourist experience (Ryan, 2002; Morgan et al., 2010). Research on the complex state of flow (optimal state of meeting a challenge) has received much empirical focus in tourism and leisure (Ryan, 1995; Han et al., 2005), yet we know flow is a deeply subjective state, comprising immediate conscious dimensions such as time transformation or unambiguous feedback (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). So while the experience of happiness might include a strong degree of subjectivity which would make it variable and hard to study empirically, the tourism research problem is not very different to that characterising the studies on leisure and flow. Sharpley and
Stone (2012) highlight the perspective that people consume tourism for a multitude of different reasons and in numerous ways. Their argument effectively implies that we cannot study such variable systems. It is our argument that it is possible to respect diversity and to study diversity. Some guidance here for studies of fulfilment reside in the study of motivation. Certainly tourists vary in their motives but there are patterns of motives which can be identified for coherent clusters of tourists (Pearce, 2005, 2011). Certainly we have persevered with the study of tourist motivation for decades despite the challenges (Harrill and Potts, 2002; Hsu and Huang, 2008). The infinite variability argument need not be a permanent impediment to the study of human experiences. Social scientists have studied the complexities of variable human behaviour for centuries and have been able to develop insights in many complex topic areas. It is the contention of this volume that contexts do matter and variability must be recognised but tourist experience and happiness or fulfilment studies can be assembled in ways which provide some coherent overviews of the forces involved. An overview of key themes the editors see as emerging from the research chapters will be presented in the concluding chapter.

A third research challenge also shapes the style of work in this volume. A persistent challenge lies in reconciling the relationship between tourism as a commercial phenomenon and greater well-being of those who travel. Some would argue tourist experiences are about consumption and consumption has been linked to depression – not happiness or greater fulfilment (DeLeire and Kalil, 2010). While we agree that consumption is an often inescapable part of tourism (as reported in Tourists, Tourism and the Good Life; Pearce et al., 2011) we are hesitant to suggest the totality of tourism leads to depression because materialism is linked to depression (Kasser, 2002). It will be noted in several of the research chapters that the tourist experience often leads to higher subjective well-being levels compared to non-tourist experiences. Occasionally holidays result in enhanced levels of eudaimonic well-being. It is useful here to distinguish tourism from other forms of consumption and perhaps part of the reason for this paradox about tourism is that while most people may trade in an old vehicle for a better vehicle, many may be hesitant to trade in their holiday memories. Tourist experiences are simply not commercial commodities like bars of soap or old vehicles even though many tourist experiences may involve shopping for tangible goods.

The fourth research challenge is sometimes raised by critical tourism scholars (Higgins-Desbiolles and Whyte, 2013). The argument is that tourism is an activity that is simply outside the reach of many people, so why should we worry about the well-being of those privileged few who can afford to travel? There are, in research terms, always other problems and topics which might be seen as more valuable or ethical areas of endeavour that are seen to matter more than others (Becher and Trowler, 2001; Thouless, 1938). We can however report that there can be direct and indirect benefits to studying the well-being of tourists. A better understanding of what makes certain groups of tourists value their experiences may lead to a more complete understanding of the inadequacies as well as
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the strengths of current tourism practices. There are then consequences here not just for tourists but for communities, business and the very heart of positive health and sustainability. As editors we have addressed one component of this challenge by asking contributors to report on a diverse set of tourist experiences in this volume. We do not advocate expensive, environmentally destructive or indulgent long-haul travel. Packer’s research chapter for example reports on benefits of tourist experiences in parks and gardens – experiences that are arguably affordable and accessible to a diverse cohort of individuals. Positive psychology is not a psychology of luxury whose benefits accrue to the rich and the untroubled but is for everyone (Seligman, 2011). We have also recently commenced a research initiative that examines well-being derived from tourist experiences by underprivileged minority groups (Filep and Bereded-Samuel, 2012). In fact Sharpley and Stone (2012) highlight that the cost of holiday may not be related to the level of happiness it generates; subsequently, a cheap holiday may in fact lead to considerable happiness.

Sharpley and Stone (2012) also suggest people may travel out of habit and they question if habit can be equated to happiness. For us a more important question here is what kind of behaviours do people engage in when they habitually travel? Clearly some tourist habits are destructive as they are personally addictive and bad for the environment – for example ‘binge flying’ or travelling frequently and to many different destinations (Cohen et al., 2011). There are, however, many potentially beneficial tourist habits which have received limited empirical focus, such as the use of humour with travel companions (Mitas et al., 2012) or acts of kindness, generosity and gratitude in numerous cross cultural tourist-host situations (Duckworth et al., 2005). The view that tourists can learn to cultivate positive habits should not be dismissed as necessarily naïve optimism or a defence of the commercial tourism business. Some ‘habits’ that characterise some of the positive tourist experiences have changed in recent years, consumer consciousness towards pro-environment actions are an example, and some are documented in this volume. A biochemist turned Buddhist monk, Matthieu Ricard, argues we can train our minds in habits of well-being to generate a sense of fulfilment (TED, 2012); we therefore reiterate the comments made by Csikszentmihalyi in the foreword, that tourism lends itself to a variety of interventions that might add a great deal to the overall quality of life.

Our research team

Our team includes a growing international team of scholars who study tourist experiences from a positive psychology perspective. As editors we have tried to incorporate contributions by senior as well as emerging scholars, male and female researchers and from various countries. Our friends and colleagues – authors of this volume are: Dr Mieke Witsel, Ms Zoë Alexander, Dr Ali Bakir, Ms Anja Pabel, Dr Jenny Panchal, Dr Jan Packer, Dr Xavier Matteucci, Dr Christina Hagger, Dr Duncan Murray, Mr Rob Saunders, Dr Jennifer Laing, Professor Betty Weiler, Dr Jessica de Bloom, Professor Sabine Geurts, Professor
Michael Kompier, Professor Gábor Michalkó, Professor Tamara Rátz and Professor Glenn Ross. The following outlines biographical statements of each author to better introduce the contributors to the readers.

Dr Mieke Witsel, PhD (SCU), MA (University of Amsterdam) is an academic with the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management at Southern Cross University in Australia. With an international background in sociology, language and culture and social psychology, she has been teaching and lecturing in intercultural, interpersonal and business communication, and tourism and leisure for more than 20 years. She has worked in Australia and Europe, at various levels of education, ranging from undergraduate to postgraduate and corporate levels. Mieke’s research focuses on tourism education, intercultural communication, sustainability and interpersonal competence. Mieke is a member of Centre for Tourism Leisure and Work (CTLW), the International Positive Psychology Association (IPPA), the Council for Australasian University Tourism and Hospitality Educators (CAUTHE) and the Academy of Hope.

Zoë Alexander is a PhD student at the Faculty of Design, Media and Management, School of Travel and Aviation, Buckinghamshire New University, UK. Her research interest is in ‘the self’ (the tourist) and the impact that tourism has on the individual. Recent publications on this subject include: an investigation into the impact of vacation travel on the tourist in the International Journal of Tourism Research and a chapter titled ‘Understanding voluntourism: a Glaserian grounded theory study’, in Volunteer Tourism: Theoretical Framework to Practical Applications, edited by Angela M. Benson. Her research is undertaken at Buckinghamshire New University, UK, under the guidance of Dr Ali Bakir and Dr Eugenia Wickens. Her academic background is psychology, a subject she taught in Adult Education. In 2007, she completed her MSc in Tourism Management and Development to support her tourism business in Cape Town and Scotland. Her commercial background is Project Management and she has worked for a large retailer in the UK. Her interests lie in the development of self, horses and hiking.

Dr Ali Bakir, PhD, lectures on Strategy and Marketing in Sport, Leisure, Tourism and Music at Buckinghamshire New University, UK. He also leads the School’s sports management postgraduate programme. Ali’s research interests lie in interpretive studies in strategy and the creative and cultural industries. He is Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Crowd Safety and Security Management (JCSSM); member of the Editorial Board of The London Journal of Tourism, Sport and Creative Industries (LJTSCI); and creative industries expert reviewer to Emerald Group Publishing. He is a regular reviewer of a number of academic journals in Tourism and Management, and is frequently called upon to serve as member of scientific committees of tourism conferences. Ali graduated from the University of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne with BSc (Hons) in Geology and Chemistry and MSc in Rock Mechanics and Engineering Geology; obtained the PGCE from the Institute of Education, University of London; and was awarded an MBA and a PhD in Strategy from the University of Essex.

Anja Pabel is currently a PhD student at the School of Business, James Cook University in Australia. She holds a Bachelor of Business with Honours majoring
in tourism management. Her Honours research project examined how certified scuba divers perceive their Great Barrier Reef experience compared to other reef destinations. Her PhD investigates the role of humour in the tourism setting. As part of this research project humour is considered from the perspective of positive psychology where it is regarded as one of the virtues or character strengths that can lead to life satisfaction. The research project will assess whether humour can be used to create more enjoyable tourism experiences.

Jenny H. Panchal completed her Masters in Tourism Management at the Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) in New Zealand. She was a PhD student at the School of Business, James Cook University in Townsville, Australia, at the time of writing the book chapter. Her doctoral thesis focused on Asian spa experiences, tourist behaviour and positive psychology. She investigated spa-going motivations of tourists while travelling in Asia. She incorporated positive psychology concepts in her project by identifying flow experiences resulting from spa activities. She explored the extent to which spa experiences contribute to holistic wellness.

Dr Jan Packer, PhD, has a BA with Honours in Psychology (University of Queensland, 1976) and a PhD in Education (QUT, 2004). Her research in the area of positive psychology and tourism has focused on visitors’ perceptions of the nature, value and benefits of museum experiences (Packer, 2008), museums as restorative environments (Packer and Bond, 2010) and the impact of music festival attendance on young people’s psychological and social well-being (Packer and Ballantyne, 2011). This research has contributed to theoretical understandings in the field and introduced new ways of conceptualising the nature and outcomes of visitor experiences. Her most recent study has focused on ‘capturing’ the visitor experience at cultural attractions, activities and events using an innovative adjective checklist approach. Since 2005, Dr Packer has been the Chief Editor of the international academic journal Visitor Studies, which is published by Routledge in the United States.

Dr Xavier Matteucci is an external academic at the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management at MODUL University, Vienna, Austria. His main research interests lie in the areas of travel experiences, transformative travel, cultural tourism and sustainability. Xavier’s doctoral research examined external and personal factors that influence the tourist experience of intangible heritage with a particular view to understand the role that the body and senses play in that experience. Xavier’s work has been published in both French and English in the form of conference and refereed journal articles.

Dr Christina Hagger, PhD, is a Research Fellow in the Joanna Briggs Institute in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Adelaide where she focuses on the synthesis of qualitative research. She has a professional background in both health and tourism policy and this underpins her research which is situated within a context of positive ageing. Her research focuses on understanding the psychological benefits of tourism for a healthy retired population who have lost the sense of meaning associated with their former employment role. Christina is interested in the translation of evidence into advice for
policymakers and, in particular, the potential to more broadly introduce an adapted version of the Social Tourism model for retirees.

Dr Duncan Murray, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer in Sport and Recreation Management, in the School of Management at the University of South Australia. He is founding member of the Centre for Tourism and Leisure Management. His research focuses on understanding the psychology behind volitional behaviour, including participation and involvement in fitness, sport and tourism, service quality in sport and tourism settings, physical appearance and consumer behaviour, and issues of life satisfaction and personality. He has published over 20 journal articles as well as numerous refereed conference papers and is internationally recognised for his work in consumer behaviour research. Duncan’s recent work has included a focus on reconceptualising the future and how leisure and tourism patterns may be seen as reflective of wider generational and social cycles. He is particularly interested in how leisure and tourism will face the next 20 years of generational change.

Rob Saunders is a PhD candidate at Monash University. Before beginning his PhD journey, Rob worked in national park management in Victoria and Tasmania for 30 years. His responsibilities included visitor interpretation and communication, park policy and planning, visitor research, and risk management. A life-long passion for walking as a means of exploring natural and cultural values in a variety of countries stimulated Rob’s interest in the cultural history and meanings of walking, and led to his research on the psychological benefits of long-distance walking. His qualifications include a Master of Environmental Science from Monash University.

Dr Jennifer Laing, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Marketing and Tourism and Hospitality, La Trobe University, and has a law and marketing background. Her research interests include travel narratives, the role of myth in tourism and extraordinary tourist experiences. Her PhD focused on motivations for travelling to frontier regions. Jennifer has published in journals such as *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Tourism Analysis* and *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. She was the recipient of the 2010 Council for Australian Tourism and Hospitality Education (CAUTHE) Fellows Award for Tourism and Hospitality Research, and was recently appointed a convenor of the International Tourism and Media Conference.

Professor Betty Weiler, PhD, is Professor in the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management at Southern Cross University. Her research has focused on ecotourism, nature and heritage interpretation, tour guiding, persuasive communication with tourists, and the tourist experience and has published widely in these areas. She has also managed numerous national and international research projects, many focused on enhancing the quality of the tourist experience. Known for her collaborative approach to research, Betty has worked to produce practical research products and tools in partnership with industry.

Dr Jessica de Bloom was a PhD student at the Department of Work and Organisational Psychology at the Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, at the time of writing the book chapter. Jessica studied psychology at the
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University of Twente in the Netherlands. She specialised in Safety and Health Psychology in her Bachelor degree and Work and Organisational Psychology in her Masters degree. During the four years Jessica was working in Nijmegen, she conducted a meta-analysis and several longitudinal field studies on the effects of vacations on health, well-being, work performance and creativity. She focused on the impact of vacation activities and experiences on health and well-being changes during and after vacation. She communicated the results of these studies in several empirical papers published in academic journals in the field of occupational health psychology.

Professor Sabine Geurts, PhD, is a Professor in Work and Organisational Psychology. Since 2000 Sabine has worked as an Associate Professor at the Department of Work and Organisational Psychology at the Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. In 2000 she earned an Aspasia grant from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) for her research qualifications. Her expertise as a senior researcher and lecturer is in the field of occupational health psychology. Her scientific work covers a broad area with special interests in effort, stress and recovery, work–home interaction, workplace absenteeism and work disability. Sabine has published over 70 papers and book chapters in these areas, serves as a reviewer for various national and international scientific journals, and works as a Consulting Editor for the journal *Work and Stress*. She participates as a full member in the KNW acknowledged Behavioral Science Institute (BSI), and is a member of the BSI Scientific Committee.

Professor Michiel Kompier, PhD, is head of the Department of Work and Organisational Psychology at the Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands. His research concentrates on the research field of work, stress and health. He has published many (inter)national articles, books and book chapters on topics such as work stress, the psychosocial work environment, work motivation, job design, mental work load, sickness absenteeism, work disability, work and health, productivity, overtime work, work–home interaction and working conditions policies. In his studies the emphasis is on the psychological and behavioural mechanisms between work characteristics and health and performance, prevention and intervention studies in organisations and applied research methodology. Michiel is Associate-Editor of the *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment and Health*, member of the international advisory board of the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* and member of the editorial boards of *Work and Stress* and the *International Journal of Stress and Health*.

Dr Tamara Rátz, PhD, is a Professor of Tourism and Head of the Tourism Department at the Kodolányi János University of Applied Sciences in Hungary. She is also a Visiting Lecturer at HAMK University of Applied Sciences in Finland. She is the author or co-author of seven books and more than 120 book chapters or journal papers. Her current research interests include the complex relationship between tourism and quality of life, and cultural and heritage tourism development. Her latest major research projects include tourism as a catalyst in the European integration process (2006–2009, supported by the
Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) and health tourism and quality of life (2007–2011, supported by the Hungarian National Scientific Fund, with Gábor Michalkó).

Dr Glenn Ross, PhD, is Adjunct Professor of Tourism at James Cook University. He is a Fellow of the International Academy for the Study of Tourism, a Member of the Australian Psychological Society (MAPS), a Member of the Division of Research and Teaching within the Australian Psychological Society, an Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society (AFBPsS), a Member of the Divisions of Teachers and Researchers in Psychology within the British Psychological Society, a Member of the Association of Psychological Science (formerly the American Psychological Society) and he has a Chartered Status within the British Psychological Society (CPsychol). His research interests are primarily tourism ethics, tourist behaviour and senior tourism. Dr Ross’s recent award includes the winner of the 2005 Elsevier/International Journal of Hospitality Management Prize for the Best Paper in 2004.

Dr Gábor Michalkó, PhD, DSc, is Scientific Advisor at the Geographical Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and Professor of Tourism at the Kodolányi János University of Applied Sciences, Hungary. He graduated from the University of Debrecen, Hungary, in 1993 with a Master degree in Geography and History. He also received a BA in Tourism from the Budapest Business School in 2000. He was awarded a PhD in Geography by the University of Debrecen in 1998, and a DSc in Geography by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 2009. He has published five books and more than 100 scientific articles in different languages. His recent research interests include urban tourism, shopping tourism, human ecology of tourism and the relationship between tourism and quality of life. His latest major research projects include the happiness-inducing role of tourism (2006–2009, supported by the Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) and health tourism and quality of life (2007–2011, supported by the Hungarian National Scientific Fund, with Tamara Rátz).

Our book structure

The chapters by the contributors are grouped under three broad areas or parts: (1) happiness and humour; (2) meaning and self-actualisation, and (3) health and restoration. The part headings reflect a range of positive psychological outcomes that personal holiday experiences can produce.

The first part broadly covers the topic of happiness and humour. First, Pearce and Pabel explore the role of humour in tourism. They provide a framework depicting the links between humour and tourism, both as an integrating device linking key facets of the topic and as a guide to stimulating further inquiry. Witsel then analyses a subset of business travellers and provides a qualitative analysis of teaching in multicultural and transnational contexts leading to happiness outcomes. Rátz and Michalkó’s chapter follows. In their Hungarian based study, happiness inducing benefits of tourism are explored. The analysis of the
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Interviews describing the respondents’ travel-related happiness experiences showed that most of the experiences reflect the presence of both cognitive benefits (e.g. mindfulness, total concentration) and affective benefits (e.g. relaxation, tranquillity). Finally, Jenny Panchal’s chapter ends this part on happiness and humour. She examines flow experiences of spa tourists to highlight the personal benefits achieved through these experiences in tourism. The findings presented in this chapter were extracted from an on-site survey of tourist spa goers in India, Thailand and the Philippines. The research study shows that while the changing phases of tourist behaviour can be truly stimulating, exciting, puzzling and perplexing at the same time, spa experiences can increase tourists’ happiness.

A part on meaning and self-actualisation follows and explores the eudaimonic dimensions of fulfilment. This part opens with a chapter by Ross who provides an overview of the research area of religious travel, highlighting the various contributions that draw an association between religious expression and well-being. Matteucci then follows in this part with a chapter that is concerned with how tourists in Spain experience intangible heritage, taking the example of flamenco as an art form. The data revealed a number of themes which represent the tourist experience as a spiritual journey. An essential aspect of the spiritual experience is the active involvement of individuals in intrinsically motivated activities. This study also suggests that the multi-sensory and kinaesthetic experience of music leads to spiritual, eudaimonic, fulfilment. Saunders, Laing and Weiler’s chapter then investigates how long-distance walking can help people make positive changes in their lives. In-depth interviews with 20 long-distance walkers were completed. The interviewees reported many personally significant benefits of long-distance walking. Among other findings, results from in-depth interviews highlight that long-distance walking provides an environment conducive to eudaimonia. In the final chapter of this part, Alexander and Bakir employ in-depth interviews to gain insight into the volunteering tourist experiences in South Africa and any resulting changes in the volunteers’ day-to-day lives. The findings point to significant positive changes in seven traits, including some eudaimonic outcomes, such as increases in adventurousness, trust and artistic interests.

The third and the final part of the book covers health and restoration benefits of tourist experiences in two chapters. The part addresses the physical health aspects of fulfilment from a positive psychology perspective. De Bloom, Geurts and Kompier’s chapter reports on an investigation that shows that health and well-being (H&W) improved during various types of vacations they studied. The increase in H&W during vacation supports the idea that the absence of work demands during vacation enables psychobiological systems to return to baseline, reduces work-load effects and replenishes depleted resources, which in turn enhances basic H&W (McEwen, 1998; Hobfoll, 1989). Consequently, a holiday from work constitutes a powerful opportunity to recover from work demands. The evidence from their research however also suggests that positive vacation effects on basic H&W are generally short-lived: they fade out within the first week after resuming work, independent from the type and duration of the holiday. De Bloom, Geurts and Kompier’s chapter is followed by a chapter on
healthy ageing and life satisfaction by Hagger and Murray. Hagger and Murray’s study aimed to investigate whether multiple tourism experiences by Australian retirees lead to greater life satisfaction. Findings demonstrate that tourism facilitates healthy ageing by increasing overall life satisfaction. The authors argue that there are implications for health and tourism government policies based on their results. Last, Packer’s chapter on health and restoration explores tourist experiences in museums and botanic gardens. The aim of her study was to explore, from the perspective of visitors, the circumstances that facilitate and enhance restorative experiences in tourism and leisure contexts, and the ways in which visitors experience the restorative processes. Visitors’ comments illustrate the ways in which the unique environments encountered at museums and botanic gardens facilitate restorative processes. Visitors experienced fascination by being engaged in cognitive experiences (especially at the museum) and sensory experiences (especially at the gardens).

A conclusion by the editors offers a synthesis of the key contributions. As readers can notice, this is a research intensive edited book. We required each chapter to report on at least one research study that contributes to a better understanding of tourist experience and fulfilment. We hope that readers will enjoy this volume as much as we enjoyed reviewing the submissions.

References


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