Tourist Experience and Fulfilment

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

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

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

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

Sebastian Filep, PhD, is Honorary Research Fellow, Victoria University, Australia and Lecturer at the Department of Tourism, University of Otago, New Zealand. Dr Filep is a co-author of Tourists, Tourism and the Good Life (Routledge, 2011) and a co-author of Vacation Rules, a popular market e-book.

Philip Pearce, PhD, is Foundation Professor of Tourism at James Cook University, Australia. He has published a number of books in tourism including two sole author works on tourist behaviour in 2005 and 2011.
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Contributors

Zoë Alexander, PhD candidate, Faculty of Design, Media and Management, School of Travel and Aviation, Buckinghamshire New University, United Kingdom.

Ali Bakir, PhD, Principal Lecturer (Research), Sport, Leisure, Tourism and Music, Buckinghamshire New University, United Kingdom.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, PhD, Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Management, Claremont Graduate University, United States of America.

Jessica de Bloom, PhD, Department of Work and Organisational Psychology, Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands; current affiliation: University of Tampere, Finland.

Sebastian Filep, PhD, Lecturer, Department of Tourism, University of Otago, New Zealand; Honorary Research Fellow, Victoria University, Australia.

Sabine Geurts, PhD, Professor, Work and Organisational Psychology, Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands.

Christina Hagger, PhD, Research Fellow, Joanna Briggs Institute, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Adelaide, Australia.

Michiel Kompier, PhD, Head of the Department of Work and Organisational Psychology, Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands.

Jennifer Laing, PhD, Senior Lecturer, Department of Marketing and Tourism and Hospitality, La Trobe University, Australia.

Xavier Matteucci, PhD, External Researcher and Lecturer, Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, MODUL University, Vienna, Austria.

Gábor Michalkó, PhD, DSc, Professor of Tourism, Kodolányi János University of Applied Sciences, Hungary.

Duncan Murray, PhD, Senior Lecturer, School of Management, University of South Australia, Australia.

Anja Pabel, PhD candidate, School of Business, James Cook University, Australia.
Jan Packer, PhD, Senior Research Fellow, School of Tourism, University of Queensland, Australia.

Jenny Panchal, PhD, School of Business, James Cook University, Australia.

Philip Pearce, PhD, Foundation Professor, School of Business, James Cook University, Australia.

Tamara Rátz, PhD, Professor of Tourism, Head of Tourism Department, Kodolányi János University of Applied Sciences, Hungary.

Glenn Ross, PhD, Adjunct Professor of Tourism, James Cook University, Australia.

Rob Saunders, PhD candidate, Monash University, Australia.

Betty Weiler, PhD, Professor, School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Southern Cross University, Australia.

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

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

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

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

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

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