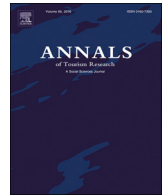


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Annals of Tourism Research

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/annals

Research Note

Measuring eudaimonic travel experiences

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ARTICLE INFO

Associate editor: Sara Dolnicar

Introduction

Eudaimonia has received much attention in positive psychology, where it is defined variously as the orientations, behaviors, experiences, or functioning that allow human flourishing and fulfillment of basic, intrinsic motives (Huta & Waterman, 2014). Consistent across this literature is self-reflection and personal meaning as the two topmost features of eudaimonia (see Huta & Waterman, 2014). Attention to eudaimonia among tourism scholars has grown in parallel (e.g. Filep & Pearce, 2013; Sirgy & Uysal, 2016; Voigt, 2017), including recent debates in *Annals of Tourism Research* (Filep, 2016; Nawijn, 2016; Nawijn & Filep, 2016), although tourism scholars have generally studied eudaimonia as overall psychological wellbeing or quality of life (Sirgy & Uysal, 2016). *In situ* reflection and meaning during travel itself can also serve as catalysts of personal growth and broader pro-social or pro-environmental outcomes (Ballantyne & Packer, 2011; Kirillova, Lehto, & Cai, 2017).

While, in contrast to the limited attention that eudaimonia has received in the tourism literature, hedonia has received considerable attention in the context of travel (Nawijn, 2016). In the past, psychologists have viewed hedonia—defined as the seeking of pleasure and avoidance of pain—as diametrically opposed to the concept of eudaimonia (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2008). In recent years, however, there is growing recognition that both forms of positive experiences are important and distinct influences on human flourishing (see Henderson & Knight, 2012, for a review; Waterman, 2008), including in the context of tourism (Nawijn & Filep, 2016). On the one hand activities can be experienced as simultaneously eudaimonic (i.e., personally meaningful) and hedonic (i.e., pleasurable; Henderson & Knight, 2012). On the other hand, there are activities that are more often experienced as purely eudaimonic (e.g., the visitation of concentration camps) or purely hedonic (e.g., going to an amusement park; Henderson & Knight, 2012). Consequently, researchers continue to emphasize the importance of simultaneously measuring and distinguishing between the eudaimonia and hedonia (e.g., Henderson & Knight, 2012; Waterman, 2008).

Given (1) growing interest in eudaimonia in tourism, (2) recognition of the influence of *in situ* eudaimonic reflection and personal meaning during travel experiences, and (3) calls for further quantitative studies on eudaimonia in tourism (e.g. Nawijn & Filep, 2016), we developed a quantitative measure of the two core psychological features of eudaimonia—meaning and reflection—within the context of a travel experience. Furthermore, this measure distinguishes eudaimonic experiences from hedonic experiences to provide a more nuanced understanding of positive tourist experiences.

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E-mail address: cahunt@psu.edu (C.A. Hunt).<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2018.05.002>Received 27 December 2017; Received in revised form 2 May 2018; Accepted 3 May 2018
Available online 11 May 2018

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Table 1
Descriptive statistics and CFA with a nested two-factor structure.

	Mean (SD)		Alpha		Loading (SE)	
	S1	S2	S1	S2	S1	S2
Hedonic Experiences¹	1.19	(0.62)	1.00	(0.63)	0.78	0.80
<i>Pleasure²</i>	0.70	(0.42)	0.59	(0.46)	0.89	0.95
I had many laughs on this trip	0.68	(0.47)	0.58	(0.50)	0.84	(0.03)
This trip was entertaining	0.68	(0.47)	0.64	(0.48)	0.84	(0.30)
This trip made me happy	0.74	(0.44)	0.56	(0.50)	0.89	(0.30)
<i>Avoid³</i>	1.68	(1.00)	1.41	(0.96)	0.80	0.77
This trip helped me forget the problems in the world	1.46	(1.16)	1.28	(1.14)	0.71	(0.09)
This trip helped me get away from negative news in the papers, TV, internet postings, etc.	1.78	(1.17)	1.38	(1.18)	0.77	(0.10)
This trip allowed me to live like I did not have a care in the world	1.81	(1.21)	1.56	(1.17)	0.79	(0.11)
Eudaimonic Experiences	0.68	(1.29)	0.40	(1.25)	0.91	0.90
<i>Personal Meaning⁴</i>	0.55	(1.50)	0.14	(1.57)	0.91	0.92
This trip helped me think about my true potentials	0.49	(1.67)	0.13	(1.69)	0.99	(20.75)
This trip helped me grow as a person	0.87	(1.59)	0.30	(1.66)	0.84	(0.71)
This trip gave me a sense of purpose in my life	0.29	(1.64)	-0.02	(1.72)	0.88	(0.76)
<i>Self-Reflection⁴</i>	0.81	(1.31)	0.66	(1.19)	0.87	0.84
I experienced times where I could self-reflect	1.16	(1.34)	0.93	(1.26)	0.80	(0.11)
I thought about the meaning of life on this trip	0.56	(1.53)	0.44	(1.50)	0.85	(0.12)
I was able to think deeply about topics I care about	0.7	(1.49)	0.61	(1.35)	0.85	(0.12)

¹ Mean represents the average of the pleasure and avoidance subscales, possible values: 0–3. Reliabilities are for the six items that compose the measure.

² The mean is the sum of the three pleasure items, possible values: 0–3. Reliabilities are from the three items.

³ Possible values: 0–3.

⁴ Possible values: –3 to 3. Italicized loadings are the loadings of those nested factors onto the eudaimonic and hedonic factors.

Measure

Two samples of undergraduate psychology students ($N = 372$ & 193) completed online measures. To discriminate between both forms of positive experiences, we developed items to assess eudaimonic (e.g., personal meaning and self-reflection) and hedonic (e.g., seeking pleasure and avoiding pain; Huta & Waterman, 2014) travel experiences. To develop the final scale we adopted the Churchill approach, which we felt was most appropriate for the constructs under investigation (see Rigdon et al., 2011). Items for the four subscales were derived from qualitative accounts of inspiring tourist experiences and theoretical accounts of eudaimonia and hedonia (Huta & Waterman, 2014).

Seven items assessed how much *personal meaning* respondents gained from the trip and nine items assessed how much they *self-reflected* on their vacation (eudaimonic). Eleven items assessed how *pleasurable* their vacation was and seven items assessed how much they *avoided* unpleasant thoughts (hedonic). All items were initially assessed on seven-point scales from “Strongly Disagree” (–3) to “Strongly Agree (3).” Responses to hedonic items were skewed, especially the “pleasure” items. Hence, pleasure items were dichotomized to “strongly agree” (1) versus all other responses (0). Avoidance items were recoded such that 0 corresponded to all disagreement as well as neither agreeing or disagreeing, and 1, 2 and 3 corresponded to “slightly”, “moderately” and “strongly” agree, respectively.

Results

Sample 1 (S1) analyses validated the intended factor structures. Scree plots and eigenvalues from exploratory factor analyses indicated that each of the sub-scales represented a single factor. Hayes (2005) alpha max program was used to select three items from each subscale that would produce the highest reliability to produce more practical measures (see Table 1).

The shortened sets of items were used in confirmatory factor analyses (CFA). We tested three models using robust weighted least squares (WLSMV in *lavaan*) because pleasure items were categorical (see Table 2 for fit statistics). A two-factor model representing

Table 2
CFA on measures of affective vacation experiences (S1).

Model	χ^2	df	p	RMSEA	CFI
Two-factors (Hedonic vs. Eudaimonic)	278.34	53	< .001	0.11	0.79
Nested two-factor	94.61	49	< .001	0.05	0.96
Four-factors representing subscales	97.17	48	< .001	0.05	0.95

hedonic and eudaimonic experiences fit the data poorly. A two-factor model nesting pleasure and avoidance within a hedonic factor and personal meaning and self-reflection within a eudaimonic factor fit the data well and better than the two-factor model. A four-factor model separating the four sub-measures also fit the data well. This model fit better than the two-factor model but not the nested model. The fit suggests one could use the four sub-measures separately. The analyses were replicated in Sample 2 (S2). For example, the fit for the nested two-factor model was exceptional, $X^2(49) = 49.14$, $p = .47$, $RMSEA < 0.01$, $CFI = 1.00$.

Participants indicated whether their trip included elements that would increase the likelihood of eudaimonic experiences. S1 respondents completed a single item measure of whether the trip took them out of their comfort zone and a four-item measure of the presence of guides, tour operators, scientists, and cultural experts ($\alpha = 0.69$). Eudaimonic scores were positively associated with these measures, $r(359) = 0.30$, $r(370) = 0.21$, respectively; $ps < .001$, whereas hedonic scores were not, $r(359) = -0.02$, $r(370) = -0.04$; $ps > .45$. S2 respondents who indicated their trip was a University sponsored, mission, or other form of educational trip had higher eudaimonic scores ($M = 1.53$, $SD = 1.59$) than those who had not ($M = 0.32$, $SD = 1.19$), $t(191) = 3.44$, $p < .001$, but hedonic scores were no different, $t(191) = 0.08$, $p = .936$.

Conclusion

This research note presents a validated quantitative tool assessing eudaimonic features of travel experiences that accounts for two dimensions of eudaimonic travel experiences. These empirical distinctions of the eudaimonic aspects of in situ travel experiences expands existing understanding of travel as contributing to one's overall wellbeing and quality of life. This tool also distinguishes eudaimonic and hedonic aspects of the travel experience, thus enabling scholars to better discriminate between these two components of wellbeing. These measures will facilitate further empirical tests and comparisons of how eudaimonic experiences independently influence other outcomes across numerous forms of travel.

Acknowledgements

Funding to support the research on which this Research Note is based was provided by the Alchemy Fund of the Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management at The Pennsylvania State University.

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