

TOURISM AS A MEANS OF HAPPINESS AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING FOR OLDER TRAVELERS

EL TURISMO COMO MEDIO DE FELICIDAD Y BIENESTAR SUBJETIVO PARA LOS VIAJEROS MAYORES

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Abstract:

A number of studies have investigated the impact of tourism experiences on health and well-being; however, very little is known about the underlying psychological factors and the mechanisms involved. Several researchers have suggested that happiness and tourism activities are strongly linked, but relatively little research has looked at potential connections between tourism and happiness, subjective well-being (SWB) and quality of life, especially for older travelers in an ageing world. Psychologically, tourism provides the greatest benefits for older travelers, as tourism provides the means by which many older adults are able to seek happiness and positive feelings related to their well-being and quality of life. This is because it helps improve mood while creating a positive outlook, feelings of well-being, and cheerfulness for older tourists. This conceptual paper focuses on how travel contributes to older tourists' feelings of happiness and well-being. The findings will provide a deeper understanding of the potential relationship between tourism and mental health, to determine if tourism can positively affect people's lives and make them feel happy.

Keywords: travel; happiness; subjective well-being; aging; quality of life (QOL).

Resumen

Varios estudios han investigado el impacto de las experiencias turísticas en la salud y el bienestar, pero se sabe muy poco sobre los factores psicológicos subyacentes y los mecanismos implicados. Varios investigadores han sugerido que la felicidad y las actividades turísticas están estrechamente vinculadas, pero se ha investigado relativamente poco sobre las posibles conexiones entre el turismo y la felicidad, el bienestar subjetivo (BS) y la calidad de vida, especialmente en el caso de los viajeros de más edad en un mundo que envejece. Desde el punto de vista psicológico, el turismo aporta los mayores beneficios a los viajeros de más edad, ya que el turismo proporciona los medios por los que los adultos mayores pueden buscar la felicidad y sentimientos positivos relacionados con su bienestar y calidad de vida. Esto se debe a que ayuda a mejorar el estado de ánimo, crea una perspectiva positiva y sentimientos positivos de bienestar y alegría para los turistas mayores. Este artículo conceptual se centrará en cómo los viajes contribuyen a los sentimientos de felicidad y bienestar de los turistas de más edad. Las conclusiones proporcionarán una comprensión más profunda de la posible relación entre el turismo y la salud mental, para determinar si el turismo puede afectar positivamente a la vida de las personas, su bienestar y hacer que se sientan felices.

Palabras clave: viajar; felicidad; bienestar subjetivo; envejecimiento; calidad de vida (CV)

1. Introduction

One of the most significant socioeconomic changes of the 21st century is predicted to be population ageing (United Nations, 2015). The tourism industry encourages us to believe that going on a holiday makes us feel happier. Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) often promote ‘of ‘sun, sea and sand’ and depict smiling faces, sunny beaches and people having a good time. However, the question that needs to be answered is whether this description is accurate? The pleasant anticipation that travellers have before, during, and after the trip experience is generally regarded in the study literature to contribute to their sentiments of happiness and enjoyment. Hobson and Dietrich (1995) argued that there is an “underlying assumption in our society that tourism is a mentally and physically healthy pursuit to follow in our leisure time” (p. 23). The voice of Alley Avery (2018) writing in *Odyssey* expressed these positive kinds of feelings, “Traveling is my source of happiness. Traveling brings me this joy by pushing my boundaries, bringing me insight through the amount of experience I am gaining. All this travel gives me incredible stories to share with others...The happiness I gain from traveling is not short term. The pictures I take on these amazing adventures continue to revive my happiness each time I see them. The memories I have of travel never fail to make me smile.”

Few research studies have looked at how travel experiences affect happiness, and little is understood about the underlying psychological elements and the mechanisms at play. Dann (2012) described the research findings of the motivations for tourism and life satisfaction as, ‘idiosyncratic and disjointed’ (p. 285). More research is needed to determine the effects of tourism on visitors’ psychological wellbeing (Han, Huang, et al. 2022).

In contrast, some studies have noted unfavourable outcomes of travel, such as homesickness, while others have noted worries about crime and accidents, terrorism, or conflict, being lost, or coming across a foreign culture while on vacation (Larsen, Brun, et al. 2009). Additionally, travellers have mentioned developing health issues like headaches, migraines, nagging muscular aches and pains, extreme tiredness, nausea, and, particularly in the first few days of a vacation, viral infections that result in colds, fever, and flu-like symptoms (Van Heck & Vingerhoets, 2007).

As previously mentioned, there is insufficient evidence to support the notion that vacations are a way to feel happy or to explain how tourists can experience happiness at various points along the travel adventure, especially for older travellers.

It is crucial to look at how global factors like tourism might improve people’s lives and make them feel happy. This is because happiness research contributes to a fuller understanding of the possible relationship between such tourism and mental health.

2. Methods

This conceptual paper links tourism with hedonic happiness and wellbeing, highlighting travel for older travelers. Following Gilson and Goldberg (2015, p 128), a conceptual paper “seeks to bridge existing theories in interesting ways, link work across disciplines, provide multi-level insights, and broaden the scope of our thinking”. In an attempt to link existing theories and findings, this paper identifies a number of sources that include an iterative search in multiple literature databases: Web of Science, Scopus, Researchgate and Google Scholar.

This conceptual paper will concentrate on the integration of the research literature and propose new relationships between constructs that support the significance of tourism as a means of promoting healthy lifestyles and encouraging older travelers to experience positive feelings of happiness and well-being. The objectives of this conceptual paper are a) to comprehend the extent to which travel enhances older tourists' happiness and wellbeing; and b) to increase support for the idea that travel enhances older adults' quality of life in addition to promoting active and healthy aging.

Because this study aimed to synthesize and analyze the body of knowledge regarding the contribution and offer recommendations for future research using a systematic review, a four-stage process (Lin and Fu, 2020) was used. These phases comprised:

1. defining research objectives for data collection
2. differentiating searched keywords, databases, and selection criteria of the literature
3. searching literature in databases according to the selection criteria.

And

4. Extracting pertinent materials from qualified sources.

Databases were searched using a predetermined set of keywords, which were modified to reflect their findings and to ensure their relevance to this research. 54 qualified research studies published between 1984 and 2022 on older individuals, tourism, happiness, and wellbeing were identified, retrieved, and analyzed to identify research gaps and research development on the topic. The purpose of the classification was to provide an organized conceptual framework of tourism, happiness, and wellbeing in older travelers and to highlight the areas of interest and findings of different researchers. Each of the published articles that were selected used a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methods and each of the variables was scrutinized through an in-depth analysis.

3. Discussion and synthesis of findings

3.1 What is happiness?

Since the dawn of time, happiness is a philosophical and sociological concern, and its research has extended over time to different disciplines (Sanagustin-Fons et al., 2019). According to some definitions, happiness is the degree to which a person has a positive opinion of the overall caliber of his or her current life. In other words, happiness is more of a reflection of how someone feels in general and a gauge of whether or not particular requirements are met (Veenhoven, 2006). A broad, introspective assessment of a person's life as a whole is what is meant by the definition of happiness, which also includes the combination of happy feelings and life satisfaction (Diener, 1984). According to Myers (1992) and Seligman (2002), happiness is a general term that incorporates all hedonic characteristics and is associated with the emotions of pleasure or contentment. Thus, hedonic happiness is seen as an emotional state that provides temporary or short-term happiness and pleasure, as it can come and go and is based on various situations that people face in their lives.

The terms happiness and quality of life are often equated with one another. This conceptual connection is implied in the use of words. The phrase 'quality of life' suggests that life is good in all aspects: 'such a good life must be a happy life'. When

discussing this emotional state brought on by having happy emotions, having needs met, and achieving personal goals, psychologists and other social scientists have also used the term “subjective well-being” (Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999).

Happiness is frequently used by psychologists to refer to wellbeing (Nawijn, Mitas, et al., 2012).

Positive affective components including happiness, euphoria, contentment, and ecstasy are included in subjective well-being measures (Diener, 2000). Positive emotions have been described by Fredrickson (1998) as the “broaden-and-build theory” that includes joy, interest, contentment, and love. A key proposition of this theory is that positive emotions broaden an individual’s momentary thought-action repertoire: joy sparks the urge to play, interest sparks the urge to explore, contentment sparks the urge to savor and integrate, and love sparks a recurring cycle of each of these urges within safe, close relationships. Cohn, Fredrickson et al. (2009) further suggested that people’s daily experiences of positive emotions compound over time to help them to build a variety of lasting personal resources that increases both resilience and life satisfaction.

In this paper we are mainly concerned with the concept of hedonic happiness. Hedonic well-being was first attributed to Aristippus, a Greek philosopher from the 4th Century B.C., who taught that the goal of life was to experience the maximum amount of pleasure and that happiness is the totality of one’s hedonic moments (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Since this ancient time, psychologists such as Kahneman, et al. (1999) have defined hedonic psychology as the study of what makes experiences and life pleasant and unpleasant, and that the terms well-being and hedonism are seen as essentially equivalent. Most of the research within hedonic psychology have used the assessment of subjective well-being (SWB) (Diener, Suh, et al. 1999). SWB was seen to consist of the following components: life satisfaction, the presence of positive mood; the absence of negative mood which has often been referred to as ‘happiness’.

Positive psychology is another term that has been used to describe the positive emotions which contributes to feelings of happiness and positive well-being. Positive psychology is also about how individuals achieve happiness and well-being as they age. These feelings are derived from positive emotions and pleasure that come from such senses as relaxation, thrills, and fun and are often derived from absorption and engagement in leisure activities (Seligman, 2002). Seligman (2011) argued that authentic happiness can be analyzed through three distinct elements (positive emotion, commitment and meaning), allowing the individual to increase the amount of happiness in his/her life. According to Peterson, Park, et al. (2005), these three components—each of which is a predictor of life satisfaction—are the cornerstones of wellbeing (Seligman, 2019). With the rise of the “positive aging” movement, which emphasizes personal responsibility for life satisfaction and pleasure in old age, positive psychology has been applied to the subject of gerontology (Hill, 2005).

3.2. Hedonic happiness and tourism

According to the World Happiness Report (2022, p.9), <https://happiness-report.s3.amazonaws.com/2022/WHR+22.pdf> “interest in happiness and subjective well-being has risen sharply, whether measured by the frequency of these words in books in multiple global languages, or by the scale of published research, or by the number of government measurement initiatives”.

Research has established that tourism, quality of life (QOL), and subjective well-being (SWB) are all positively correlated (Kim, Woo et al., 2015; Patterson, Balderas et al.,

2021). Tourists are said to be in a state of well-being when they feel love, interest, joy, and satisfaction, a sense of involvement in the activity, and significance from tourism activities, according to Seligman's (2002) theoretical framework of authentic well-being. Uysal, Sirgy, et al. (2016) concluded that most of these studies have found that tourism experiences and activities significantly affect tourists' happiness, positive wellbeing, and long-term life satisfaction (McCabe & Johnson, 2013). Additionally, the type of tourism and the activities done at the destination affect how happy one is as a result of traveling. According to Vada (2019), travel and tourism significantly contribute to people prioritizing their physical, social, and psychological health since they give people the chance to escape the stress and problems of their regular life at home and at work.

Chen, Fu, et al. (2016) conducted a survey of 302 Chinese visitors and found that trip reflections, satisfaction with travel/tourism services, satisfaction with travel experiences, and the favorable impact of pleasant travel experiences on SWB were all positively correlated. Schmiedeberg and Schröder (2016) used longitudinal data from Germany to show that life satisfaction was positively correlated with spending time with friends, engaging in sports, and taking vacations, but adversely related with personal internet use and TV consumption.

Existing research on the relationship between happiness and travel experiences has produced a pattern that is largely consistent; that it creates positive feelings of happiness for tourists. Happiness has also been described as subjective well-being in most of the research that has been conducted on tourism experiences, because it refers to how people experience and evaluate their lives and the specific domains and activities in their lives (Stone & Mackie, 2013). As a result, tourism researchers have adopted in their studies on happiness an emphasis on pleasure (or feeling good), that is made up of cognitive and emotional components compared to negative feelings that relate to differing mood states.

Positive travel-related emotions tend to make people happier since they lift their spirits and increase life satisfaction. Due to the novelty that it offers; traveling is also a pleasurable experience for many people. According to Mitas and Bastiaansen (2018), novelty as a favourable emotion is a key mechanism for the satisfaction that comes from travel experiences. Positive attitude, well-being, and cheerfulness were the happiness categories that are most influenced by travel, according to Carneiro and Eusebio's research (2019) on the impact of tourism on happiness.

Chen, Zou and Pedrick (2020) surveyed a sample of 500 Taiwanese tourists over two weeks in 2013. The participants were asked 17 questions about how important was travel to their lives. Their findings revealed that frequent travel enhanced their level of life satisfaction (which included the happiness domain). They further stated that rather than how frequently someone took vacations, the frequency of satisfying travel had a greater impact on life satisfaction from travel. The study also discovered that those who thought travel was very essential tended to travel more frequently, as a result of their increased reading of travel-related material and increased frequency of travel-related conversation. Additionally, respondents in their study who stated that they frequently traveled at least 75 miles from home, also said they were 7% happier overall than respondents who said they traveled extremely infrequently or not at all.

Kawakubo and Oguchi (2022) investigated into how a winter vacation affected people's wellbeing. A total of 507 Japanese participants completed three questionnaires at three distinct times, including 255 men and 252 women. In addition to assessing how their wellbeing had changed, the surveys included demographic questions

and psychological assessments. The findings indicated that frequent travelers had greater subjective wellbeing than non-travelers. This suggested that it was crucial for people to regularly take vacations and to savor recovery experiences whilst off work. Experiencing new and challenging events during a vacation was the most significant predictor of the vacationer's subsequent wellbeing.

A further study by researchers at New York University (Nature Neuroscience, 18th May, 2020) found similar results: that new and diverse experiences (such as tourist activities) were linked to enhanced happiness, and this relationship was associated with greater brain activity. The researchers were interested in answering the following question: Is diversity in humans' daily experiences associated with more positive emotional states? They conducted GPS tracking of participants in New York and Miami for three to four months, asking subjects by text message to report their positive and negative emotional states during this period. The results showed that on days when people had more variability in their physical location such as visiting more locations in a day, they reported feeling more positive with comments such as "happy," "excited," "strong," "relaxed," and/or "attentive." The scientists also sought to determine if this link between exploration and positive emotion had a connection with brain activity. To do this, half of the subjects underwent MRI scans. The MRI results showed that people for whom this effect was the strongest - those whose exposure to diverse experiences was more strongly associated with positive feeling ("affect"), were found to have a stronger correlation between brain activity in the hippocampus and the striatum. That is, these are the brain regions that are associated, respectively, with the processing of novelty and reward which have been deemed beneficial for subjective positive experiences.

In summary, the research evidence shows that travel is important as it produces positive feelings that has been commonly described as happiness, boosts mood state, creates a positive outlook, and feelings of well-being and cheerfulness for tourists. It also has a positive effect on overall life satisfaction.

3.3. The trip experiences

Filep and Deery (2010) defined a tourist's happiness as a state in which the tourist feels positive emotions that are gained through the direct effects of the vacation itself, and they demonstrated how travel motivations, experiences while traveling, and reflections on those experiences are linked to the components of genuine happiness, such as positive emotions, engagement, and meaning.

Filep et al (2010) distinguished three points of pleasure peaks: (1) The anticipation of the trip, (2) The experience of the trip itself, and (3) The post-trip after-glow. Indirect elements such as recalling of memories through photos or souvenirs, impressions, and new meanings through social networks can also create 'sparks' of pleasure and nostalgia. These have all contributed to an increased hedonic level of affect and each stage will be discussed below.

3.3.1 Anticipation of the trip (Pre trip)

Anticipation is important, as those who more strongly anticipate their holiday/vacation (e.g., thought about it, researched, planned, and prepared) have higher levels of happiness than those who anticipate it to a lesser degree. Hagger and Murray (2009) found that those anticipating a trip were happier than those not anticipating a trip because people enjoy having something to look forward to.

Gilbert and Abdullah (2004) investigated the practice of traveling to see if it had an effect on the subjective well-being of persons who had a holiday. They compared a group of people who took vacations with a control group who did not take vacations, and their findings validated their prediction that the former felt better about themselves before and after their travels than the latter. They came to the conclusion that vacationing had the ability to raise people's levels of happiness. However, two weeks after coming home, that happiness boost started to decline, indicating that the influence on happiness may only be a temporary state.

Nawijn, Marchand et al. (2010) used a sample of 974 Dutch vacationers to report that, despite slight variations, they showed higher levels of pre-trip enjoyment than non-vacationers. This was linked to the anticipation-related variations in pre-trip satisfaction between vacationers and non-vacationers, which were crucial in explaining the findings. In general, people view vacations as experiences that they look forward to (Miller, Rathouse, et al. 2010). For the majority, the fun begins months or even weeks before the holiday itself.

3.3.2. During the trip (On site)

People were found to be happier than in their everyday lives and the greatest increase in happiness tended to occur during the trip. Nawijn (2011) surveyed a total of 466 international tourists in the Netherlands. His results found that while on vacation, tourists achieved higher scores on the hedonic level of affect, with positive affect exceeding negative affect by almost fourfold, and with most of the variance was explained by factors associated with the holiday trip itself.

3.3.3. After trip feelings (Post trip)

Enjoying a vacation through recollections may have an "afterglow" effect that raises hedonic affect levels after the trip. However, Nawijn, Marchand et al. (2010) showed that there was generally no difference in post-trip enjoyment between vacationers and non-vacationers. The amount of tension or relaxation a traveller encountered while away also appeared to have an impact on their level of enjoyment after their trip. Only those vacationers who reported feeling "extremely calm" throughout their trip reported an improvement in satisfaction after returning home. The vacation pleasure boost among those individuals only persisted for two weeks following the trip before reverting back to baseline levels. Since most tourists have to go back to work or complete other daily duties, Nawijn et al. (2010) came to the conclusion that it was not surprising that a vacation had a prolonged effect on happiness although people rapidly returned to their regular routine afterward.

De Bloom, Kompier, et al. (2009) discovered comparable outcomes. They looked into whether vacations have a favorable impact on health and well-being using a meta-analysis. According to this research, taking a vacation has a good impact on one's health and well-being (small effect, $d = +0.43$), but these effects quickly disappeared once work is resumed (small effect, $d = -0.38$). They came to the conclusion that a vacation had little effect on post-trip life satisfaction. In their investigation on the impact of travel during a summer vacation on feelings of subjective happiness, Kawakubo and Oguchi (2021) discovered more positive findings, particularly in regard to the importance of vacation memories and the recall of these experiences. Two online surveys that study participants filled out allowed them to express their level of subjective happiness. The findings of the study showed that there was no direct relationship, but rather vacation satisfaction acted as a mediator. Kawakubo

and Oguchi (2021) came to the conclusion that their research had demonstrated the positive effects of holiday memories on feelings of happiness and wellbeing.

In summary, these studies have suggested that an increased hedonic well-being effect occurs because of the happiness that results from the anticipation of going on a vacation, as well as the actual trip experience and the memories derived from it.

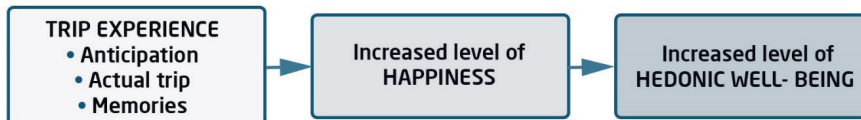


Figure 1. The relationship between the trip experience, level of happiness and hedonic well-being.

3.4. The older tourist market

Senior tourism is predicted to become the fastest-growing and most significant potential driving factor in the tourism and hospitality industry in the future, accounting for a sizeable portion of all holiday spending (Patterson, 2018; Stonikait, 2022). This is a result of global aging. By 2050, there will be 1.6 billion older people worldwide, up from the current 617 million (He, Goodkind, & Kowal, 2016). The United Nations stated in its World Population Ageing Report (2019) that ageing is a global phenomenon and that by 2050, 1:6 people or 16% will be over the age of 65, which has risen from 1:11 or 9% in 2019. Low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) will account for 85% of the older population growth, putting greater strain on the less developed health systems. In addition, the covid-19 pandemic has exposed fundamental shortcomings in the ability of global health systems to protect and provide care for older adults.

Despite ageism in Covid-19, recent demographic shifts and the introduction of the successful aging model are ushering in a new era for the tourism industry (Stonikait, 2022). The World Health Organization (WHO) is the initiative's lead organization, and 2022 marks the second year of the UN's Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030), which aims to foster global action and cross-sectoral collaboration to support "healthy ageing." According to the research, society has to stop viewing healthy aging as the absence of disease and instead place an emphasis on supporting functional capacity, which enables older people to continue doing the things they love.

One of these necessities is the ability to travel and take advantage of the psychological advantages brought on by joyful and contented feelings. As a result, the older aged segment is now seen as a significant, yet often misunderstood and ignored sector of the tourism and hospitality industries (Otoo, Kim, Agrusa, & Lema, 2021). This older healthy consumer segment of the market has the resources and time to undertake leisure travel trips and the desire to visit new and exotic destinations. As a result, many older travelers spend much of their discretionary time travelling and engaging in physical activities (e.g., fitness and recreation) (Silverstein & Parker, 2002). They are now regarded as a key market for tourism providers, marketers, governments, and other stakeholders because of their size and increased purchasing power (Patterson & Balderas, 2018).

More recently, researchers have become interested in answering the following question: Does travelling in later life strengthen and make older people happier or place increased pressures on them in line with the paradigm of successful aging? Thus, it is crucial that tourism marketers fully understand the key psychological drivers of engagement for older market segments they seek to serve, in an era of significant business disruption due to COVID. This global pandemic has laid bare fundamental

shortcomings in the ability of global health systems to protect and provide care for older adults. Thus, the UN's Decade of Healthy Ageing Report goes on to state that it is imperative to promote healthy ageing... "to generate and implement innovative, inclusive solutions requires a life-course, whole-of-society approach."

3.5. Older tourists, hedonic happiness and well being

Mogilnar, Sepandar, et al., (2011) found that the older the participant, the greater the difference in happiness levels were reduced, between they tended to regard extraordinary experiences as simply ordinary ones. As a result, ordinary experiences were found to bring greater happiness for older participants than for younger ones. In other words, as a person got older, they were less likely to identify happiness as "excitement" and more likely to define it as "quiet satisfaction." This was explained by the researchers' discovery that elderly people find greater contentment in everyday experiences and less importance on money the shorter they believe they have left to live. As a result, older people are more likely to seek out those experiences that bring them more feelings of contentment rather than excitement.

Few studies have looked at how elder travelers' experiences or activities affect psychological characteristics like happiness, well-being, or quality of life in the tourism business (Bai, Hu, et al, 2009). This might be the case because, in contrast to younger tourists, elder travelers tend not to overtly display or express their joy during and after their travels, as Mogilnar et al. (2011) found in their research.

One of the early attempts to determine whether there was a relationship between tourism and quality of life was Wei and Milman's (2002) study, which focused on the linkages between older tourists' engagement in activities, general happiness with travel experiences, and quality of life. On different 7-day North American escorted tour itineraries, data were gathered from a sample of more than 300 senior travelers, 60.5% of whom were older than 70 years. Wei et al. (2002) found that a positive and significant relationship existed between senior travellers' participation in leisure activities, their overall satisfaction with the travel experience and level of psychological well-being. Mitas, Yarnal, et al. (2012) also examined the positive emotional development of 25 mature adult participants on a daily basis before, during, and after two leisure travel experiences. They found that positive emotions such as joy and interest increased before leisure travel began and declined after the trip was over.

A total of 200 Koreans over the age of 60 were polled by Lee and Tideswell (2005) to better understand their unique travel habits. More than 90% of respondents thought that travel increased their quality of life by introducing them to new interests. Travel was regarded as a means of maintaining mental activity and preventing them from going through the stages of sadness or depression due to boredom. The researchers came to the conclusion that leisure travel improved people's quality of life, maintained their happiness and health, and exposed them to novel ideas. Kim, Woo, and Uysal (2015) also examined the travel behaviour of elderly Korean tourists and found that involvement had a positive influence on perceived values and satisfaction with their trip experience. In fact, they found that the higher the level of involvement, the larger the likelihood that perceived value and satisfaction was increased. They concluded that the travel experience plays an important role that improves older people's physical and mental health and leads to greater life satisfaction.

Tourism has been found to induce positive emotions that transcend the self, improve mental state, and enhance subjective well-being of older travelers (Moal-Ulvoas, 2017). Moal-Ulvoas (2017) explored the potential of travel to generate self-transcendent

positive emotions and contribute to the spirituality of experienced older travellers aged between 60 and 85 years. Her research showed that experiencing new places led to feelings of awe at three different types of transcendental beauty: the beauty of nature and Man's harmonious relationship with it; the beauty of man-made art and cultural heritage; and the beauty of other people and their appreciation of kindness. Additionally, respondents discussed how traveling helped them find new meaning in their lives and foster insights on inner contentment.

4. Conclusion

Happiness is a difficult concept to define, as it generally comes and goes in people's lives and is dependent upon changes in people's live conditions. Several psychologists (Diener, 1984; Myers 1992) have defined happiness as a broad comprehensive term that is seen as a combination of positive emotions that encompasses hedonic characteristics that are equated with short-term or temporary feelings of pleasure or contentment. Most of the studies of hedonic happiness also equate it to the term 'subjective well-being' when they talk about the emotional state resulting from experiencing positive emotions, the fulfillment of various needs, and the achievement of personal goals. Positive psychology (Seligman, 2002) is another term that has been used to describe how individuals achieve happiness and well-being as they age. These feelings are derived from positive emotions and pleasure that originate from such senses as relaxation, thrills, and fun, and are often achieved through the absorption and engagement in leisure related activities (i.e., tourism). Several studies have suggested that traveling also creates a pleasant mood due to the novelty that it provides which is an important mechanism for the enjoyment that occurs in tourism experiences. Concurring with Aziz et al., (2020), researchers in the field of tourism agree that leisure and tourism are among the areas of life that can make people happy and hence increase their life satisfaction.

A recent study by researchers at New York University that was published in *Nature Neuroscience* (2020) also found that new and diverse experiences (such as tourist activities) were linked to enhanced happiness, and this relationship was associated with greater brain activity. This was strongly associated with positive feeling ("affect") and was found to have a strong correlation between brain activity in the hippocampus and the striatum, and which was respectively responsible with the processing of novelty and reward. There is also a small body of research to suggest that tourism and travel contributes to the health, happiness, and wellbeing of older adults.

Population ageing is set to become one of the most profound societal shifts of the twenty-first century, affecting practically every aspect of society (United Nations, 2015). As the world's population ages, it is foreseeable that older travellers will be recognized as one of the most significant groups of people by the tourism industry, and this trend is likely to continue in the future. Tourism has been connected to feelings of happiness and subjective wellbeing (SWB) that has been linked to a positive quality of life. Psychologically, tourism provides the greatest benefits for older travelers, as tourism provides the means by which older adults are able to seek happiness and positive feelings related to their well-being and quality of life. This is because it helps to boost mood state, creates a positive outlook and positive feelings of well-being and cheerfulness for older tourists.

There are many practical implications for different stakeholders as marketers, the hospitality industry and destination management organizations (DMOs). First and

foremost, it is critical to be aware of the market segment's potential, and second, it is crucial to have the flexibility to adapt and innovate through a variety of programs in order to provide experiences to a heterogeneous market segment. In this sense, personalization and micro segmentation will also be essential. Regarding destination management organizations (DMOs), they need to promote and plan 'memorable experiences' (Kim, 2017) for older tourists that emphasize the psychological benefits of tourism; to stress the importance of happiness and positive emotions in their publicity on the actual trip experience, so as to help reduce negative feelings of boredom in their everyday life and especially during retirement. International action and cross-sectoral collaboration to support 'healthy ageing' is vital.

One of the main limitations of this conceptual study was that there has been a lack of recent studies that have investigated the happiness and well-being of older tourists, particularly since 2016. Most of the studies have used samples of tourists generally and have not researched older tourists to any large extent. Only when we can conclude that tourism have made a significant impact on both tourists' happiness and subjective well-being that contributes to their quality of life, can we make more definitive statements about the importance of tourism in older tourist's lives.

Author contributions

Conceptualization: Adela Balderas and Ian Patterson; Methodology: Adela Balderas and Ian Patterson; Formal analysis and investigation: Ian Patterson; Writing, original draft preparation: Ian Patterson and Adela Balderas. Review and final edition: Ian Patterson

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