

Happiness and Tourism

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Abstract

The goal of all human being's efforts lies in the gain of happiness. Psychology lays particular emphasis on well-being about the study of happiness. This article is to make a brief review on happiness from the perspective of positive psychology and Chinese traditional culture; then combined with the tourist motivation, to find out the relationship between happiness and tourism. Through previous research findings, we can see that tourism and happiness are related. But some studies have suggested that the effect, for the promotion of happiness, is mostly short-lived.

Key words: Happiness; Well-being; Tourism; Relationship

Introduction

In recent years, both academia and journalism are very concerned about happiness. "Are you happy?" once became a hot topic in China. It's theoretically and physically vital for us to understand what happiness is. While tourism, as one of the ways for people to relax, has been more and more popular, and has an increasing impact on people's daily life. To figure out the relationship between tourism and happiness is very important.

Happiness

Based on different philosophical tradition, there are two kinds of happiness research paradigms from the perspective of positive psychology: subjective well-being (hedonia) and psychological well-being (eudaimonia). Subjective well-being (SWB) is dealing with happiness; psychological well-being (PWB) is dealing with human potential (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Diener et al. offer the following: "Subjective well-being is a broad category of phenomena that includes people's emotional responses, domain satisfactions and global judgments of life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1999)." The primary components of SWB include life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect. SWB tends to be stable over time and is strongly related to personality traits (Steel, 2008). PWB is based on eudaimonic. It is the inheritance of Aristotle's theory of happiness. This kind of happiness consists of meaning; self-actualization and personal growth (Ryff, 1989). In recent years, there are more and more integrated frameworks come up to redefine happiness.

According to Martin Seligman (2002), there are three "pathways to happiness": pleasure, engagement, and meaning, corresponding to three different kinds of happy lives. Compared with pleasure, engagement and meaning seem to be more important (Peterson et al., 2005). Fave (2011) says happiness may include more than hedonic components, eudaimonic aspects may also be important constituents. By these integrated analyses, we can have a better understanding of happiness. In Chinese traditional culture, Le is the closest concept to happiness. Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism all have the descriptions of Le (ZHANG Xiaoming, 2011). They all expressed people's apperception and pursuit of happiness. Confucian "Delightfulness of kong-yan" reflected in harmony with ourselves, others and nature. For Confucians, there are two kinds of Le. One is perceptual, with the satisfaction of primary needs; the other is rational, without the satisfaction of primary needs. Taoist "Uppermost happiness" means we should obey nature and pursue inner detachment. It is not a feeling of pleasure, but a mental epiphany and other worldliness. Buddhist "The joy of nirvana" describes a kind of happiness without desire. It is a kind of realm, which is far away from desire, competition and anxious. Le derives from an inner affection experience after the spiritual realm has been constantly promoted (ZHANG Xiaoming, 2011). Spiritual realm performs an important role in Le.

This conception of happiness provides another kind of paradigm for people to pursue happiness. Through personal accomplishment and beliefs, individuals go beyond the physical needs, interests, and gain more fundamental and lasting happiness. This concept of happiness can help those who lack the spirit of faith and indulge in sensual pleasure (ZENG Hong, 2012).

Tourism from the perspective of tourist motivation

With the development of economy, people earn more and have more leisure time; tourism has become a kind of fashion. But what's the driving force behind this kind of phenomenon. There are many reasons for people to travel, but the main motivations could be summed up as the following: escapism, physical and mental relaxation, together with the family and friends, visiting the cultural and historical attractions, discovering something new and different, growth of knowledge, attachments to new people, adventure, and etc. These motivations can be classified into two categories. The first is more concerned with escapism and hedonism, the second is related more to adventure, self-development.

There are two related theoretical basis which can exactly explain these two types of motivations, rite of passage theory and Kolb's experiential learning style theory (YU Zhiyuan, 2012). (1) Rites of passage. Nelson Graburn (1983) says that the tourism is sacred, from the perspective of anthropology of tourism. He put the tourism as a ritual, which can separate the sacred and the secular. Through travelling, people can temporarily escape from the secular world. In a sense, it is a kind of escapism. (2) Kolb's experiential learning style theory. It is typically represented by a four stage learning cycle: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). Individuals can increase their knowledge and expand their horizon through travelling. Individuals may also benefit from impressions or skills learned while on vacation (Jeroen, 2013). This is related to the motivation of self-development.

The relationship between tourism and happiness

There are two kinds of well-being and two types of tourism motivation as well. The first type is based on SWB view of good life, the second is based on PWB view. Therefore there are two kinds of approach to understanding tourist happiness (Filep, 2012). No matter what motivate people to travel, the ultimate goal is the pursuit of happiness.

Recent research has mostly proved tourism can increase individuals' happiness (Hallab, 2006; Sirgy, 2008; De Bloom et al., 2010; Nawijn, 2010; Nawijn, 2011a). Many tourism-linked (Dann, 1991) factors have been analyzed to enhanced levels of well-being. But according to Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade (2005), approximately 50% of an individual's happiness is predetermined through heredity, 10% is determined by circumstances, and 40% is affected by intentional activity. This theory makes it possible for individual to increase happiness through tourism activity, although just 40% of the happiness can control.

How much does tourism contribute to individuals' happiness? Hedonic level of affect last only for 2 weeks. The long-term effect of vacationing on overall happiness and hedonic level of effect is virtually nonexistent (Nawijn, 2011b). Keyes (2002) also says the effect of tourism on individuals' happiness is mostly short-lived; this kind of happiness is unrelated to the frequency and duration of tourism.

However, maybe these kinds of happiness can contribute to long-term satisfaction if they are repeated often enough (Puczkó, 2012). The anticipation of trips and relived memories can prolong the positive effect of travel (Neal et al. 1999).

Related theories

There are several theories that have been used to explain the relationship between leisure experiences and happiness. Sirgy (2012) says these include physiology and genetics theory, social motivation theory, effectance motivation theory, intrinsic motivation and flow theory, telic versus paratelic states theory, sensation-seeking theory, activity theory, and bottom-up spillover theory. Tourism as a way of leisure should be suitable for the above theories.

Physiology and genetics theory

Hedonism is a major function of tourism. Through a variety of tourism activities, individuals can achieve physical and mental relaxation. These can have a positive influence on individuals, it also plays an important role in improving individual happiness.

While individual well-being is affected by the genetic, in other words, the individual happiness is partly genetically determined.

Social motivation theory

As is previously mentioned, tourist motivations include individuals together with the family and friends, meeting new people and so on. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, tourism can satisfy people some social needs, such as identity, sense of belonging and respect from others.

Effectance Motivation

Argyle (1987,2001) has argued that leisure satisfaction contributes to happiness through the satisfaction of effectance or efficacy needs.

Intrinsic Motivation and Flow

Intrinsic motivation refers to motivation that comes from inside an individual rather than from any external or outside rewards. Individuals take part in various tourism activities for its own sake. Flow is the mental state of operation in which a person performing an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity. A study (Chen et al., 2010) showed that flow does contribute to life satisfaction through satisfaction with the leisure event.

Telic Versus Paratelic States

Compared to telic activities, paratelic activities were found to reflect social needs, involve less skill and challenge, and seem to be more enjoyable.

Sensation Seeking

There are many tourism activities, some exciting included. Such as white-water rafting, scuba diving, racing, bungee jumping, etc. By participating in these activities, people can get special experiences.

Activity

Varieties of needs are satisfied through tourism activities. Participation in tourism activities contributes to the sense of well-being.

Bottom-Up Spillover

Leisure SWB can lead to enhanced global SWB through a bottom-up theory of SWB. Newman et al. (2013) try to address the conceptual gaps by establishing a psychological model that links leisure to SWB in general through a bottom-up approach.

Summary

With the further development of positive psychology, researches of SWB and PWB appeared the trend of integration. How to get authentic happiness is the challenge researchers need to deal with. Meanwhile with the growing prosperity of tourism, more and more attention is paid to the effect of tourism on individual. Through the research on the relationship between tourism and happiness, we can find that tourism and happiness are related. But some studies have suggested that the effect, for the promotion of happiness, is mostly short-lived. But with the continuous development of the tourism industry, tourism will have a greater influence on individual. This requires us to make further studies on the connotation and denotation of tourism. Combined with the further study of happiness, new research findings will appear.

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