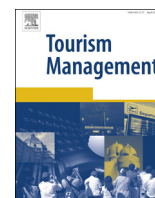




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Holiday recovery experiences, tourism satisfaction and life satisfaction – Is there a relationship?



Chun-Chu Chen ^{a,*}, Wei-Jue Huang ^b, James F. Petrick ^c

^a University of Idaho, Department of Movement Sciences, Moscow, ID, USA

^b The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, School of Hotel & Tourism Management, 17 Science Museum Road, TST East, Kowloon, Hong Kong

^c Texas A&M University, Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences, TAMU 2261, College Station, TX 77843, USA

HIGHLIGHTS

- Holiday experiences help people relieve job stress.
- Holiday experiences have positive effects on tourism satisfaction and overall life satisfaction.
- The effects of holiday experiences are present regardless of the level of work strain people experience daily.

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the relationships between holiday recovery experiences and life satisfaction through mediating variables of tourism satisfaction. Derived from a sample of 777 American respondents, it was found that individuals who were able to control what they want to do, feel relaxed and detached from work, and have new and challenging experiences during a holiday vacation were more likely to be satisfied with their holiday experiences and their life in general. The paper concludes with recommendations for the success of tourism businesses as well as the enhancement of tourists' senses of well-being.

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1. Introduction

Tourism satisfaction has received considerable attention from tourism scholars. There are two streams of research regarding tourism satisfaction. The first stream mainly focuses on how to build customer satisfaction for business success. For example, multiple studies have demonstrated that satisfied tourists are more likely to repurchase the product or recommend it to others (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Chi & Qu, 2008; Gallarza & Saura, 2006; Petrick, 2004; Williams & Soutar, 2009), while several determinants of tourism satisfaction have been identified, including: perceived value and quality (e.g., Gallarza & Saura, 2006; Petrick & Backman,

2002; Williams & Soutar, 2009), service recovery (e.g., Akamavi, Mohamed, Pellmann, & Xu, 2015; Cano & Garcia, 2008; Kim, Kim, & Kim, 2009), motivation (e.g., Devesa, Laguna, & Palacios, 2010; Yoon & Uysal, 2005), and destination image (e.g., Chi & Qu, 2008).

The second stream of research has examined tourism satisfaction from the perspective that leisure travel can contribute to tourists' psychological wellness (Neal, Sirgy, & Uysal, 1999; Neal, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2007; Sirgy, 2010; Sirgy, Kruger, Lee, & Yu, 2011). Specifically, Neal and colleagues (Neal et al., 1999, 2007; Sirgy et al., 2011) have proposed that positive holiday experiences have spill-over effects on how individuals evaluate various life domains (such as health, work, leisure, and family) as well as their overall satisfaction with life. These studies have demonstrated the effects of tourism satisfaction on overall life satisfaction.

This research attempts to integrate two streams of research by examining the relationship between holiday experiences associated with psychological recovery and life satisfaction through

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: bchen@uidaho.edu (C.-C. Chen), sabrina.huang@polyu.edu.hk (W.-J. Huang), jpetrick@tamu.edu (J.F. Petrick).

mediating variables of tourism satisfaction. Building on the literatures of stress relief (Hobfoll, 1998; Meijman & Mulder, 1998) and leisure studies (Caldwell, 2005; Waters & Moore, 2002), this research has three purposes: (1) examining how holiday experiences associated with recovery affect life satisfaction after a leisure travel; (2) assessing whether the effect of holiday recovery experiences on life satisfaction are mediated by tourism satisfaction; and, (3) assessing whether the effects of holiday recovery experiences and tourism satisfaction on overall life satisfaction are moderated by tourists' daily work strain.

Arguably, the current investigation can offer insights into how holiday experiences can contribute to tourism satisfaction and overall life satisfaction. In particular, this research focuses on the recovery dimension of tourism experiences, which has been absent in the tourism literature (Chen, Petrick, & Shahvali, 2014). Moreover, this research hypothesized that holiday recovery experiences should have positive effects on tourism satisfaction as well as life satisfaction. If the hypothesized relationships are supported, this would suggest that tourism practitioners can make efforts towards the wellness of tourists and the success of tourism businesses by helping tourists relieve stress during their vacations.

2. Literature review

2.1. Tourism satisfaction and post-purchase behavior

Oliver (1997, p. 13), defined satisfaction as “the consumer's fulfillment response” and “a judgment that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provides a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment”. Although customer satisfaction is one of the most basic concepts in consumer and marketing research, it can be operationalized in different ways, resulting in considerable debate in its meaning and application (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2013). Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1994) distinguished between customer satisfaction and service quality by suggesting that satisfaction occurs after a particular service episode, while quality is a long-term evaluation of a product/service after multiple experiences. Olsen and Johnson (2003), however, considered both temporary and cumulative perceptions as satisfaction, but they also recognized the difference between “transaction-specific satisfaction” towards a specific service encounter and customer's “cumulative satisfaction” with the overall performance of a service provider.

Within the field of leisure and tourism, Crompton and Love (1995) analyzed alternative conceptualizations of quality and satisfaction. They differentiated between “quality of opportunity” and “quality of experience,” and considered satisfaction to be the latter. Similarly, Baker and Crompton (2000) argued that quality of opportunity refers to the product attributes that are performed by tourism providers, while quality of experience refers to the tourists' state of mind after experiencing such performances.

Satisfaction has also been considered cognitively as a post consumption evaluation through the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm (Oliver, 1980), and affectively as an emotional response to a consumption experience (Spreng, MacKenzie, & Olshavsky, 1996). Although previous scholars vary in their definition of and distinction between quality and satisfaction, it is evident that satisfaction involves more than just customers' opinions towards a product/service/firm, and includes their feelings during and after the experience.

The concept of satisfaction has sustained the interest of both researchers and practitioners because of its many positive outcomes, such as profits, loyalty, and future purchases (Brady & Robertson, 2001; Yu & Dean, 2001; Zeithaml et al., 2013). Within tourism research, tourist satisfaction has also been a topic of

interest as it has been found to lead to positive post-purchase behaviors and the overall success of a destination (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Specifically, previous studies have identified satisfaction as a determinant of destination loyalty (e.g., Chi & Qu, 2008; Gallarza & Saura, 2006; Hernández-Lobato, Solís-Radilla, Moliner-Tena, & Sánchez-García, 2006; McDowall, 2010; Sun, Chi, & Xu, 2013; Yoon & Uysal, 2005), intention to revisit or repurchase (e.g., Alegre & Garau, 2010; Petrick, 2004; Prayag, 2009; Rittichainuwat, Qu, & Mongknonvanit, 2002), and positive word-of-mouth (e.g., Hui, Wan, & Ho, 2007; Prebensen, Skallerud, & Chen, 2010; Wang & Hsu, 2010; Williams & Soutar, 2009).

2.2. Tourism satisfaction and life satisfaction

In addition to post-purchase behavioral intentions, tourism satisfaction has also been identified as a determinant of overall life satisfaction. It is not surprising that vacations, holidays, and other forms of leisure travel can make people happy (Nawijn, 2011). Gilbert and Abdullah (2004) found that people who go on holidays experienced higher life satisfaction than those who didn't, both before and after their trips, and the gap between the traveling and non-traveling groups increased post travel.

Leisure travel does not only increase individual happiness, but has also been found to improve tourists' subjective well-being and the overall quality of life of a community (McCabe & Johnson, 2013). Oppermann and Cooper (1999) also argued that airline price wars could improve quality of life because the public has more destination choices when they travel. More recently, Sirgy et al. (2011) examined how positive and negative affects associated with travel experiences influence tourists' satisfaction with different domains in life (e.g., family, work, social life), and how it then influences their overall sense of well-being.

Dolnicar, Yanamandram, and Cliff (2012) also found vacations to be a life domain that contributed to quality of life. While vacations were not found to be as important as health, money and family, its importance was comparable to leisure and people. They thus argued that vacations should not be considered as a sub-category of leisure.

Although vacations have many positive outcomes, it should not be assumed that leisure travel *always* improves one's happiness and/or life satisfaction. Nawijn (2011) found that although people were generally happier when they were on vacation than in everyday life, factors such as attitude and holiday stress can influence their daily levels of happiness, and overall they found no significant improvement in their respondents' life satisfaction.

Also investigating the relationship between vacations and well-being, Chen, Lehto, and Cai (2013) found that vacation-taking had an immediate yet temporary positive effect on Chinese tourists' occasion-specific subjective well-being, while their chronic subjective well-being did not improve after the trip. Therefore, while leisure travel may contribute to tourists' psychological well-being and quality of life, its impact would vary depending on different factors, such as satisfaction with travel services, trip reflections, different phases of the trip (Neal et al., 1999), length of stay (Neal, Sirgy, & Uysal, 2004; Neal et al., 2007), and leisure travel goals (Sirgy, 2010).

Neal et al. (1999) developed a scale to measure leisure travel satisfaction and examine how it relates to life satisfaction. Using a hierarchy model to explain how satisfaction with leisure could vertically spill over to overall life satisfaction, they found that both trip reflections and satisfaction with travel services have a direct impact on life satisfaction. Neal et al. (2007) further explored the moderation effect of length of stay on the relationship between satisfaction with tourism services and quality of life. They found

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