



Hedonic and eudaimonic well-being: A psycholinguistic view

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ABSTRACT

Well-being as an intangible, philosophical, and multi-faceted phenomenon is hard to measure. By taking a psycholinguistic expression of well-being, we measure how tourists' experiencing holiday destinations affects their well-being states. The well-being state includes increases or decreases in Hedonia and Eudaimonia as a result of destination experiences. We apply text topic modelling to analyse big Web 2.0 datasets. These include tourists' self-reports of their experiences during their visit to destination countries collected from Travelblog.org weblog. The findings from a Global sample, New Zealand, and France are compared to generalise Hedonia and Eudaimonia conceptualisations across these destinations. The outputs also characterise experiences with maximum well-being and ill-being that include both Hedonia and Eudaimonia. Managerial implications include how a destination image may be managed according to desired well-being states. This also helps tourists make informed decisions about their holiday destinations.

1. Introduction

Well-being is an intangible, multi-faceted, complex, and sociological phenomenon (Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012; Kay Smith & Diekmann, 2017). Hence, there is also no general agreement on the definition and measurement of well-being (Huta & Waterman, 2014). Researchers mainly believe two main concepts of Hedonia and Eudaimonia together constitute overall well-being (Dodge et al., 2012; Huta & Ryan, 2010). While the former relates to immediate sensory pleasure, happiness and enjoyment, the latter relates to the consequences of self-growth and self-actualization as a meaning-related aspect of well-being (Huta & Waterman, 2014; Ryff, 1989; Waterman, 1993). Due to its complexity and multi-disciplinary nature, and despite an increasing number of publications, researchers report there are still no fresh theoretical and empirical ideas about overall well-being that include both Hedonia and Eudaimonia (Huta & Waterman, 2014; Kay Smith & Diekmann, 2017), nor unified and universal measurements of well-being (Dodge et al., 2012; Kay Smith & Diekmann, 2017). Particularly, studying well-being in the context of destinations is of high importance as destination image associates with well-being (Chen & Li, 2018). To address this gap, the current study applies an innovative methodology introduced by Rahmani, Gnoth, and Mather (2017) to empirically generalise well-being states as the output of tourists' experiences across destination countries.

Well-being is the individual's response to the experiences they would have liked to make and/or did have (Kay Smith & Diekmann, 2017; Nawijn, Mitas, Lin, & Kerstetter, 2013). Experience is a

subjective-objective phenomenon that relates to a direct encounter between the tourist and the world. While researchers can only observe experiences in the empirical reality, for tourists themselves, the experience is also defined by subjective feelings and cognitions (Haeckel, Carbone, & Berry, 2003; Otto & Ritchie, 1996). These are representations of how tourists perceive, process, and retain environmental stimuli, objects and events around themselves (Gnoth & Matteucci, 2014) and to which they ascribe meanings (Uriely, 2005). We thus study how tourists' processed feelings and cognitions to determine their well-being state (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Knobloch, Robertson, & Aitken, 2016).

One of the theories that looks at the meaning level of experiences is Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum (1957)'s Semantic Differential model (Rahmani, Gnoth, & Mather, 2018; Rahmani et al., 2017). This model distinguishes between three bipolar dimensions of meaning as it is perceived by the tourist and expressed in language: Activity, Potency, and Evaluation. Activity shows the level of physical engagement of the tourist, Potency reflects the destination's level of energy or attractiveness, or how it affects the tourist; and Evaluation reveals the tourist's positive or negative evaluation of the object, or the experience, as it unfolds or as a whole. Well-being (an increase in Hedonia and Eudaimonia) and ill-being (a decrease in Hedonia and Eudaimonia) states are therefore consequences of these meaning modes which are subject to the destination (Huta & Ryan, 2010).

Many tourists document their experiences online which are freely accessible to everyone as a result of Web 2.0 development. Tourists' online narratives here are a medium that store tourists' experiences and consequently expresses their well-being state. The methodology

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employs text topic modelling to explore semantic themes found in large Web 2.0 datasets (Rahmani et al., 2017, 2018). When mining for the modes of meaning in tourists' experiences, our methodology filters out tourists' well-being states, by analysing large amounts of text with machine learning algorithms, and by investigating the semantic relationships of words in the textual discourse. Although each blog is subjective, the aggregated data reveals the average experience in destination countries. Hence, well-being and ill-being, including both Hedonia and Eudaimonia are extracted from the semantics of experience reports.

The study is thus an extraction of psycholinguistic expressions of well-being. The content that we study are: the most likely experiences, the most likely modes of meaning, and the most likely well-being states that tourists experience at destinations. We generalise the data across three datasets; a Global sample including tourists' experiences in 10 countries, New Zealand and France. The results can help managers in developing their destinations according to the desired well-being state they are most likely to create for their customers and according to their tourists' self-proclaimed reports, reflections and observations (Kay Smith & Diekmann, 2017). The study, therefore, adds to both empirical and conceptual areas of well-being research, as well as applying an alternative methodology to quantitatively study well-being.

2. Well-being

Mainstream research defines well-being via two central concepts, Hedonia and Eudaimonia (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Kay Smith & Diekmann, 2017). These concepts might overlap in some situations yet are two distinguishable aspects of overall well-being (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Waterman, 1993). Hedonia, as the pleasure-aspect of well-being, relates to tourists' emotions. It is thus defined as having more pleasure, fun, enjoyment, and happiness, and fewer negative emotions, and life satisfaction (Ed, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Emotion as a mental state of readiness is a direct response to environmental stimuli (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999), comprising objects, events, or other people (Cohen & Areni, 1991). In general, two types of stimuli trigger a person's senses leading to Hedonia (Huta & Ryan, 2010): (1) relaxation and comfort, or the physical and psychological state of felt energy; and (2) pleasure in experiencing positively perceived activities. The Hedonia state thus relates also to both the activity level and the amount of energy the tourist expends. In essence, people always experience some levels of emotions depending on stimuli around them (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003). Emotions are therefore the most useful target for studying the tourism experience (Nawijn et al., 2013) because they reflect tourists' being: by what and how they are affected by the destination, and how they interpret it as feelings (Gnoth & Matteucci, 2014).

However, this subjective emotion of happiness cannot be the only for final goal. Hence, eudaimonic well-being (Ryff, 1989; Waterman, 1993) focuses on personal-level outcomes of well-being and relates to activities that lead to self-actualization, human development, personal goals, virtue, and the degree to which a person is fully functioning (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Eudaimonia as a meaning related outcome (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Steger, Kashdan, & Oishi, 2008) has long-term enduring outputs (Kay Smith & Diekmann, 2017; Steger et al., 2008), and associates with both positive and negative affect (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Knobloch et al., 2016). It has recently gained much attention in tourism research (Matteucci & Filep, 2017). MacCannell (1976) discusses Eudaimonia as a major purpose of tourism when tourists search for authenticity as a way of gaining self-consciousness, to know more about the self, the world, and tourists' place in the world (Laing & Frost, 2017).

There are several theories explaining eudaimonic well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001): personal expressiveness (PE) (Waterman, 1993); psychological well-being (PWB) (Ryff & Keyes, 1995); and self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). There is also substantial

overlap between the Aristotelian notion of Eudaimonia as a consequence of virtuousness, and the Chinese concept of 'Le' in the Confucian reading of Eudaimonia (Zeng & Guo, 2012). We here define eudaimonic well-being according to the SDT model, which has gained extensive attention (Kay Smith & Diekmann, 2017). It relates eudaimonic well-being to three universal innate psychological needs of *competence*, *autonomy*, and *relatedness* (Deci & Ryan, 1985). *Competence* relates to self-efficacy. *Autonomy* relates to the feeling of volition and having freedom of choice, which can accompany any act regardless of being dependent or independent, collectivist or individualist. *Relatedness* is a feeling of belongingness and a connection with others (Deci & Ryan, 1985). According to SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000), the "fulfilment of these needs [competence, autonomy, and relatedness] is essential for psychological growth (e.g. intrinsic motivation), integrity (e.g. internalization and assimilation of cultural practices), and well-being (e.g. life satisfaction and psychological health), as well as the experiences of 'subjective vitality' and self-congruence." (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 146). If not sufficiently felt, unfulfilling experiences lead to a decrease in well-being or an increase in ill-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

These well-being states are consequences of tourists' experiences. Here, we utilise Osgood et al. (1957)'s model to extract tourists' feelings (i.e., feeling as meaning-making expressed in words) they hold about their experiences across destination countries. The assumption to be tested here is that these feelings obtained at different destinations lead to different states of well-being (Chen & Li, 2018; Kirillova & Lehto, 2015).

3. Bipolar modes of meaning

Osgood et al. (1957)'s model as the most prominent Semantic Differential (SD) model (Hollis & Westbury, 2016) has been extensively used to study individuals' experiences, behaviours and worldviews in different fields (Carroll, 1959; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Osgood et al., 1957). It has thus been proven to be a valid and reliable model (Verhagen, Van Den Hooff, & Meents, 2015). More recent studies have investigated its application in social psychology (Kervyn, Fiske, & Yzerbyt, 2013) and tourism experiences (Rahmani et al., 2017, 2018). The latter successfully apply the model to predict tourists' positive and negative evaluations in their travel to New Zealand.

By taking a psycholinguistic view towards human attitudes, Osgood et al. (1957) identify three universal semantic dimensions, each containing two polar ends. Every one of these dimensions has its own set of words (lexicon) that characterise it. First is the 'Evaluative' dimension's lexicon relating to words with 'Positive' or 'Negative' tendencies towards an object or the self, the polar ends of which are named 'Positive Evaluation' (PE), and 'Negative Evaluation' (NE). The second dimension's lexicon, 'Activity', identifies how 'Active' or 'Passive' the subject or the object is in the interactions that the tourist experiences. The dimension shows the tourists' level of physical or mental engagement in the experience. Tourists might actively engage (Active Activity: AA), or passively (Passive Activity: PA) consume experiences (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Finally, the 'Potency' dimension's lexicon shows how 'Strong' or 'Weak' the object of contemplation is, or how 'Strong' or 'Weak' the subject is pulled towards the object, including the extent to which they are affected by it. The words denoting Potency also reflect the amount of energy that is spent in the interaction between subject and object, 'Strong Potency' (SP) versus 'Weak Potency' (WP).

Following these six opposites (PE and NE; AA and PA; SP and WP), an experience can be expressed by one to six polar modes of meaning (Rahmani et al., 2017, 2018). Our study seeks to show that experience and well-being can be quantified and directly compared across destination countries using an appropriate methodology and conceptualisation of Osgood et al. (1957)'s model to express how people experience.

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