

Life is an Adventure: The Benefits of Travelling to New and Exciting Places

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Abstract

Many individuals believe that travelling to exotic new places increases their happiness and makes them feel refreshed and renewed. The present study examined the overall benefits of travel and investigated if the benefits effect overall well-being. It was found that positive emotions play a very large role in developing coping mechanisms, increasing personal growth, and improving overall satisfaction of life. During a travel experience, individuals feel a plethora of positive emotions. These emotions are felt in three different stages: before, during, and after the vacation. The positive emotions felt highly increases overall happiness in one's life and therefore increases life satisfaction. Other benefits of travel are also examined including the impact of vacationing on relationships, overall health and wellness, and education. It was concluded that travelling greatly increases well-being and life satisfaction.

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Thousands of people travel every year all around the globe. Some of the most common things that one may hear from an individual who has recently travelled is how relaxed they feel, how much fun they had during their vacation, or how happy they have been since they returned. Feelings of happiness and well-being are essential to overall health and satisfaction of an individual, which promotes their ability to overcome difficulties and achieve in life. Positive emotions such as joy and love which one may feel during a vacation or travel experience benefits personal growth and development, contributing to overall life satisfaction. The anticipation of going somewhere new and intriguing as well the happiness and excitement felt during an excursion to a foreign place provides individuals an adventure like no other. The benefits of travel are countless, especially for one's psychological health. The focus of this study is to examine the overall benefits of travel and investigate if these benefits effect overall well-being. First, the benefits of emotions in general will be discussed. Second, positive emotions and the countless emotions experienced during travel will be explained. Finally, other important benefits of travel including its effect on overall life satisfaction is examined.

The Importance of Positive Emotions

Positive emotions are the satisfying emotions felt by individuals. Fredrickson (1998) identified and examined four different positive emotions: joy, interest, contentment, and love. These four positive emotions were found to be capable of enhancing personal growth and skill development. For example, joy triggers an individual to participate in various types of play which contributes to specific skill development. Feeling an excess of positive emotions frequently increases the happiness in one's life which is associated with numerous psychological benefits. While positive emotions are beneficial for personal growth, they also contribute to a

person's well-being and life satisfaction and one's ability to deal with negative experiences (Fredrickson, 1998; Fredrickson, Brown, Mikels, & Conway, 2009; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007). Individuals who experience an abundance of positive emotions have reported to experience higher life satisfaction (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007).

A major benefit of frequent positive emotions is related to resilience. Cohn and colleagues (2009) conducted a study to assess if positive emotions increase life satisfaction and they also examined the relationship between positive emotions and resilience. They recruited university students to participate in a questionnaire and depression measurement. What they found was individuals who experience positive emotions on a regular basis develop strategies that assist in coping with stress and adversity.

This resilience which an individual builds is extremely advantageous when dealing with negative experiences (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007). While experiencing something negative, for example stress, the individual who has developed resilience will use their coping skills to successfully solve the problems they are faced with and they become more able to cope with it effectively. One way to do this is with the use of positive emotions. Positive emotions help in recovering from negative experiences. Thinking with an optimistic attitude during a negative situation allows a person to refrain from dwelling on the situation. Thinking in this way enables a person to recover effectively from the experience. This is especially true when considering workplace stress. Stress is a very destructive emotion which can cause a lot of negative feelings towards the job and life in general.

Emotions in the Workplace and Travel Benefits for Employees

Individuals often pay a lot of attention to the negative emotions which they experience. They are extremely aware when they are upset or stressed and it can be very consuming. For

example, experiencing a work overload can be exceptionally stressful to an individual. The number of negative emotions which an individual feels outnumber the number of positive emotions experienced (Fredrickson, 1998). Positive emotions are the emotions a person experiences which make them feel good. In the run of a day, a person may feel significantly more negative emotions than positive. There may be several experiences of stress, adversity, or anger throughout the day, but only few incidences of happiness or amusement. However, the positive emotions that a person feels on a daily basis enhances the overall satisfaction of their life (Fredrickson, 1998).

Emotions in the Workplace. Emotions which individuals feel in the work environment plays a significant role on overall wellbeing. Employees spend a significant amount of their time at work. Emotions in the workplace are essential to the overall production of an organization. Positive emotions in the workplace such as happiness, excitement, and enthusiasm are beneficial to employee achievement and enables them to be better equipped to do their job successfully (Bloom et al., 2011). Experiencing negative emotions, on the other hand, can be detrimental to task completion and employee relationships in a workplace. These negative emotions can be caused by outside forces, but are often caused by issues within the workplace such as work overload and conflict within the organization (Westman & Eden, 1997).

Wong, Tschan, Messerli, and Semmer (2013) conducted a study to analyze the emotions in the workplace and the effects on goal attainment. They found that feelings of positive emotions at work is highly related to reaching ones goals. In other words, experiencing positive emotions in the workplace is extremely beneficial by enabling individuals to feel good and work hard.

The Benefits of Travelling for Employees. One of the many benefits of travelling to new and exciting places is the impact it has on employees. De Bloom and colleagues (2011) were interested in how travelling affects employees. They argued that the stress and adversity experienced at work can be extremely detrimental to employee's health and well-being. They found that sixty percent of the working individuals examined in their study witnessed an increase in health and wellness. In other words, a positive vacation experience helped employees regenerate and feel good during the vacation.

From this, we can conclude that individuals who have high stress jobs can benefit from a vacation through the restorative effects of travel (Bloom et al., 2011; Westman & Eden, 1997). Taking time to relax on a beach or in a foreign country without work or school interruptions can aid in mental rehabilitation and increase well-being (Bloom et al., 2011). Taking vacation time from work and not participating in any work-related activities during the vacation significantly enhances wellbeing and satisfaction. Not only does vacationing benefit individuals from escaping the hustle and bustle of work life or family life, it also increases overall happiness of an individual through positive emotions. During travel, a great amount of positive emotions are felt which is very valuable for the traveller's psychological health and increases the development of resilience.

Emotions Experienced During Travel

Travellers often feel an overwhelming amount of emotion when travelling. Both positive and negative emotions can be experienced during a vacation. Negative emotions may be felt when a vacation goes bad. For example, if you travel to a sunny destination and break your ankle while walking by the pool, one would associate this with many intense negative feelings towards the travel experience. More often than not when vacations occur without issue, travelling for fun

increases happiness and other powerful positive emotions (Mitas, Adamns, & Ram, 2012; Nawijn, 2010, Nawijn, 2011).

Mitas, Adamns, and Ram (2012) identified three different parts of the travel experience where an individual feels strong positive emotions. The three stages of the high emotions felt during a travel experience include: planning, the vacation itself, and post-vacation reminiscing. Preparing to go on vacation and travelling can be extremely exciting due to the anticipation one feels. It has been found that the actual vacation experience is when an individual experiences the highest amount of positive emotions (Mitas et al., 2012; Nawijn, 2010). One may feel strong positive emotions while experiencing a new culture, relaxing on a beach, or exploring a historical city. The different positive emotions that travellers feel can vary and change throughout the vacation (Lin, Kerstetter, Nawijn, & Mitas, 2014). At one moment they can feel excitement and happiness, while moment later they may feel love and interest. Normally, negative emotions have been found to be very low during a holiday (Lin et al., 2014). Mitas, Adamns, and Ram (2012) identified returning from the vacation as the final stage of the emotional experience. They argued that reflecting upon memories from the vacation also elicits high positive emotions.

Nawijn (2010) examined how good individuals actually feel during a vacation. They analyzed this through examining the moods of tourists travelling in the Netherlands through self-report questionnaires. They found that in total, participants reported a very high average mood level during the vacation. Throughout the vacation, while moods often changed from day-to-day, they still remained very high. The average mood score for participants was 8.29 out of 10. This means that taking vacations generally make individuals feel extremely well.

Benefits of Positive Emotions during Travel. As said before, an individual's daily life can be so hectic and busy with work, school, children, and many other responsibilities. People

begin to appreciate their free time which allows them to relax and de-stress. Travelling for fun is a satisfying way for individuals to withdraw from work life and help them with the relaxation process (Nawijn, 2011). Some believe that vacationing and not thinking about work or any other responsibilities helps one to stop feeling the effects of stress. Travel boosts positive emotions in many ways including the actual vacation itself, or the memories that one makes during the experience which they may reminisce on post-vacation (Nawijn, 2011). While happiness of vacations eventually ends, it can benefit individuals in the long-term by helping build resilience due to the plethora of positive emotions involved (Kuhnel & Sonnentag, 2011; Mitas et al., 2012).

Other Important Benefits of Travel

Positive emotions felt during a holiday are very important to psychological health and well-being. These emotions have other advantages to travellers as well. Studies have found that vacations also benefit relationships, health and wellness, and education (Petrick & Heuther, 2013). Travel has been known to increase happiness in intimate relationships as well as strengthen family bonds (Petrick & Heuther, 2013). Taking a holiday to an unfamiliar place and experiencing the vast amount of happiness and excitement with one another creates stronger connections between people. Looking at health and wellness, Gump and Matthews (2000) found that while holidays increase psychological well-being, travelling more often is related to less cardiovascular events (as cited in Chen & Petrick, 2013). Academic performance in children has also been found to be improved after taking a holiday (Petrick & Heuther, 2013). Travelling may elicit a desire to learn in children who experience the world.

Bottom-up Spillover Theory. Sirgy and colleagues (2011) found that satisfaction with travel also increases satisfaction with other life domains such as family life and social life. This

was suggested through the bottom-up spillover theory. This theory states that happiness in a specific domain of life builds up so high that excess satisfaction spills over to other domains. For example, a tourist who has travelled somewhere exotic and thrilling may become extremely happy due to the travel experience, and that happiness may overflow into other domains increasing his overall life satisfaction. Sirgy and colleagues (2011) also found that experiencing positive emotions during a holiday is associated with high levels of well-being.

Does Travelling Affect Life Satisfaction?

There are obviously many benefits to the positive emotions felt during a vacation experience and to travelling itself. Travelling increases the amount of happiness and other positive emotions in a person's life, even if only for a short time. It is known that travelling increases happiness in individuals, but it has also been found that travelling affects overall satisfaction with life and well-being (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Neal, Sirgy, & Uysal, 1999; Neal, Sirgy, & Uysal, 2004; Sirgy et al., 2011).

The Role of Leisure Activities in Life Satisfaction. Leisure activities in general are a great escape from the hustle of everyday life. People often escape their extremely stressful, busy lives through leisure activities and experience satisfaction within them (Neal, Sirgy, & Uysal, 1999). Individuals spend a lot of time trying to escape the stress and other negative feelings experienced throughout the day from work or school. Leisure activities are used as an escape mechanism to achieve this (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Neal et al., 1999). Some examples of day-to-day leisure activities are reading, watching television, knitting, and playing a musical instrument. Some argue that because travel is an advanced form of leisure, it enhances life satisfaction through its leisure components (Dolnicar, Yanamandram, & Cliff, 2012). Travelling for fun is a type of leisure which people experience more rarely than other types. The leisure

activities which people participate in during daily life are different than leisure that takes place away from home, such as travel (Dolnicar et al., 2012). All leisure activities provide a sense of freedom and may help individuals relax (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004). Travelling increases overall life satisfaction due to its leisure components, and the sense of escape that individuals feel while experiencing it.

The Absence of Negative Experiences. One of the many theories explaining why travelling is exceptionally beneficial to overall life satisfaction revolves around the absence of negative experiences (Sirgy et al., 2011). Sirgy and colleagues (2011) were interested in the effects of travel on life satisfaction. They examined the positive and negative feelings experienced during travel and how it benefits overall well-being. Their results showed that the positive and negative feelings experienced during a vacation do benefit overall life satisfaction in certain domains of life. These domains of life included: social life, family life, love life, work life, and many more. One of the explanations they suggested towards the increase of life satisfaction was the fact that nothing terrible occurred during the vacation. For example, tourists may be satisfied that, while the vacation was relaxing and recharging, one did not experience any sickness or illness during the holiday (Sirgy et al., 2011).

Life Satisfaction and Travel. Dolnicar and colleagues (2012) conducted a study to assess travelling and how it impacted overall quality of life. They distributed a questionnaire to Australian participants that examined the importance of vacations to individuals and their opinion on the impact of the travel experience. When participants in the study were asked if travel increased overall quality of life, 90% agreed wholeheartedly. Individuals truly believe that travelling benefits their satisfaction of life.

Vacationing impacts several areas of a person's life, including physical and emotional aspects. One feels an abundance of positive emotions during vacations in several of the life domains (Dolnicar et al., 2011). Because of this, life satisfaction as a whole is enhanced. It has been found that people who go on vacation experience more life satisfaction and higher amounts of wellbeing than those who do not vacation (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004).

Summary

Many people do not understand the various benefits in travelling. Some believe that it is a complete waste of money, there are no benefits, and that it is more of a hassle than what it is worth. Why go through the trouble of travelling when there is still so much to love about the place you live?

Travelling is much more than going to a new place for a visit. It is about the numerous experiences you are undertake, the beautiful memories you make, the interesting people you meet, and the fascinating landscape you behold. One can watch a glorious sunset with a friend or loved one over the Pacific Ocean in Hawaii, or witness the Aurora Borealis in the great Alaskan skies. The wide array of positive emotions felt during such experiences are not only an amazing feeling during the vacation, but they are beneficial in the long-term.

As individuals, we spend a very large amount of time working and dealing with high amounts of stress and adversity in our daily lives. Working long hours day on end can be extremely exhausting. Experiencing too many negative emotions is extremely harmful not only to one's psychological health, but also one's physical health. Individuals need high amount of positive emotions to feel good about oneself and one's life. Feeling a high amount of positive emotions aids in personal growth, enhances life satisfaction and overall wellbeing, and helps in

one's ability to cope with negative experiences (Fredrickson, 1998; Fredrickson, Brown, Mikels, & Conway, 2009; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007).

Positive emotions are very numerous while on vacation. The anticipation of going on a vacation, experiencing the vacation itself, or reminiscing on the vacation afterwards can all elicit a high amount of positive emotions. Picture yourself standing at the Cliffs of Moher in Ireland, or sitting on a beach listening to the waves roll into the shore, even thinking about the experience can make individuals happy.

People who travel and take vacations have higher life satisfaction than those who do not (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004). Overall, they are more satisfied with life and rate higher on scores of wellbeing. Many domains of life are part of a vacation experience, and satisfaction in some or all of these domains leads to higher overall life satisfaction (Dolnicer et al., 2012; Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004).

While some may believe that travel is not beneficial, it truly is. Take a vacation, make some glorious memories, and bask in the happiness and excitement of travelling, because it will make you a happier and more satisfied person.

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