

Tourist's Happiness

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Abstract

Holiday trips are supposed to have beneficial effects for the travelers (customer values). These effects may be (quite) long lasting like *recreation*, *improved health*, *knowledge*, or more on a "here & now" base like *thrill* or *happiness*. Short term benefits may lead to longer lasting effects later. This paper introduces an empirical research project on tourists' happiness focusing on short term emotions ("golden moments") based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The aim is pointing a path to a better understanding of the psychological effects of holiday travel. Some preliminary results are presented and discussed with respect to further research activities as well as to possible practical implications.

The quantitative survey was done in Germany as a source market study. In a survey in January 2015 ["Reiseanalyse 2015" (= travel analysis), yearly survey since 1970, random sample with n = 7,500 face-to-face interviews] we have studied German tourists' trips and the perceived effects of these trips in different dimensions, covering e.g. recreation, health, and happiness. A considerable number of tourists report having experienced happy golden moments. We find such happiness in all demographic groups and in all tourist behavior segments. But not everybody experiences happy golden moments ("only" 44%). Preliminary results point out that the incidence of golden moments varies with personal factors (e.g. age) and trip characteristics (e.g. distance).

In addition to the quantitative approach, we try to get deeper insights into the role of happiness (or other potential benefits) for holiday tourists with the help of small exploratory, qualitative studies (semi-structured interviews) in Germany and other European countries. The central research questions in these qualitative parts of the project aim at understanding golden moments: Results will offer ideas on what constitutes happy moments (phenomenology), the feelings associated, and the situations in which happiness occurs.

According to our respondents, golden moments often arise in rather specific situations, e.g. when admiring natural beauty (maybe a waterfall), but there is no fixed relationship (not everybody experiences happiness at the waterfall, and not every time). Thus, there must be additional factors. We assume that in addition to the trigger and its time and place the social environment and personal factors like readiness play an important role.

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