

**ESTER DO CARMO MARQUES CÂMARA**

**MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES IN A TOURISM CONTEXT:  
CONCEPTUALISING AND TESTING A PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**



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FACULTY OF HUMAN AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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**ESTER DO CARMO MARQUES CÂMARA**

**MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES IN A TOURISM CONTEXT:  
CONCEPTUALISING AND TESTING A PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

Thesis for obtaining the degree of Doctor in Psychology

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**Faculdade de Ciências Humanas e Sociais**

**2024**

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**TÍTULO**

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## **Abstract**

Tourism experiences are multidimensional and subjective, encompassing individuals' sensations, expectations, and needs. In this context, psychology and tourism are a successful partnership to develop meaningful experiences considering tourists' needs, desires, and expectations. This interconnection is observed through applying positive psychology in the context of meaningful tourist experiences. This approach comprises adequate indicators to explore the tourism field from the perspective of individuals' well-being.

This investigation analyses and explores the concept of meaningful tourism experiences and their antecedents and outcomes. Specifically, it was intended to obtain a psychological framework on the motivations that lead individuals to choose determined places, considering their initial expectations on how that place can fulfil determined requirements, according to one's characteristics, and the outcomes associated with the meaning attached to the experience, in terms on tourists' well-being, satisfaction with life, and subjective happiness. Seven complementary studies were undertaken to fulfil these objectives, each assigned to a different document chapter.

The results evidence the holistic character of meaningful experiences in tourism in terms of personal, emotional, well-being, relational and behavioural dimensions that enable a better conceptualisation of the construct. Additionally, the emergence of six domains associated with the attribution of meaning to the tourist experience has given a different perspective on the motivations associated with the thriven of meaning: a) self-care; b) nature and disconnect; c) refreshment and rest associated with meditation and mindfulness; d) learning about well-being; e) meaning and its roots; f) emotional intensity and its development. Finally, the results highlight a strong between the motivations associated with the meaning attached to the experience and the psychological outcomes of well-being (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment), satisfaction with life (the degree to which individuals feel satisfied with their life characteristics after getting through a meaningful tourism experience), and subjective happiness (feelings of joy, pleasure, and excitement after the experience took place).

*Key-words:* Meaningful tourism experiences; Positive Psychology; Satisfaction with life; Subjective happiness; Well-being;

## **Resumo**

As experiências turísticas são multidimensionais e subjetivas, englobando as sensações, expectativas e necessidades dos indivíduos. O seu caráter complexo torna o turismo uma atividade rica para estudos que envolvam diferentes áreas do conhecimento, como a psicologia. No cenário atual, observa-se uma parceria promissora entre psicologia e turismo, que busca desenvolver experiências mais significativas ao considerar as necessidades, desejos e expectativas dos turistas. Essa interligação é particularmente evidente na aplicação da psicologia positiva, uma abordagem que visa explorar o bem-estar dos indivíduos no contexto das viagens e vivências turísticas.

A psicologia positiva, focada em dimensões como felicidade, realização pessoal e relacionamentos saudáveis, é essencial para compreender o impacto das experiências turísticas no bem-estar. Este campo da psicologia permite a identificação de indicadores adequados para analisar como os turistas percebem as suas experiências e os elementos que contribuem para as tornar, progressivamente, mais significativas e enriquecedoras. Assim, as viagens passam a ser vistas não apenas como momentos de lazer, mas como oportunidades de crescimento pessoal e emocional, promovendo transformações significativas

A presente investigação procurou explorar o conceito de experiências turísticas significativas, analisando os seus antecedentes e resultados. Isso implica compreender as motivações que levam as pessoas a escolher determinados destinos, as expectativas que sobre como estes podem atender às suas necessidades e o impacto dessas experiências no bem-estar, na satisfação com a vida e na felicidade subjetiva. Com o intuito de responder a estes objetivos, sete estudos complementares foram realizados.

Os resultados da presente investigação salientam que as motivações para viajar são diversas e variam de acordo com as características individuais e contextuais. Algumas pessoas procuram aventuras em lugares exóticos, ao passo que outras preferem destinos tranquilos para relaxar. Estas escolhas refletem expectativas iniciais sobre como a viagem pode satisfazer determinados requisitos emocionais, sociais ou culturais. Ainda, este trabalho destaca que a relação entre as motivações e os resultados psicológicos da experiência é mediada pela atribuição de significado à experiência, querendo isto dizer que a percepção de que a experiência foi valiosa ou transformadora contribui diretamente para os sentimentos de bem-estar e felicidade.

Além disso, a análise dos resultados revelou que as experiências turísticas significativas têm um caráter holístico, abrangendo diversas dimensões pessoais, emocionais, relacionais e comportamentais, permitindo uma melhor conceptualização do constructo.

Os resultados denotaram, ainda, a emergência de seis domínios principais associados à atribuição de significado às experiências turísticas, fornecendo uma nova perspectiva sobre as motivações que impulsionam o crescimento pessoal e emocional dos turistas, nomeadamente: 1) autocuidado: práticas e vivências que ajudam os indivíduos a se conectarem consigo mesmos, promovendo o descanso, o relaxamento e o alívio de sintomatologia negativa (e.g., spas, retiros de saúde ou lugares isolados); 2) natureza e desconexão: a procura por ambientes naturais e a desconexão do cotidiano tecnológico são motivações poderosas, pois promovem uma sensação de paz e reconexão com o essencial, contribuindo para uma experiência mais significativa (e.g., paisagens naturais, como montanhas, florestas e praias); 3) relaxamento e descanso associados à meditação e *mindfulness*: importância de atividades que promovem o equilíbrio mental e emocional, ajudando os turistas a encontrar clareza mental e renovação emocional (e.g., meditação e práticas de *mindfulness*); 4) Aprender sobre bem-estar: oportunidade para adquirir novos conhecimentos e habilidades relacionadas ao bem-estar (e.g., participação em workshops sobre alimentação saudável, yoga ou práticas de autocuidado); 5) Significado: procura por experiências que ajudem os indivíduos a se perceber melhor e ao seu lugar no mundo, estabelecendo um equilíbrio com as suas origens culturais, espirituais ou familiares; 6) intensidade emocional: emergência de emoções profundas e intensas, percebidas como transformadoras. Momentos de admiração, alegria ou introspeção profunda são frequentemente lembrados como os mais marcantes de uma viagem.

Os resultados da investigação destacam uma forte correlação entre as motivações associadas ao significado atribuído às experiências turísticas e os resultados psicológicos. Esses resultados podem ser categorizados em três dimensões principais: a) Bem-estar psicológico: Experiências turísticas significativas promovem emoções positivas, maior envolvimento, relacionamentos mais profundos, maior significado e autorrealização; b) Satisfação com a vida: turistas que vivenciam experiências significativas relatam maior satisfação com as suas vidas como um todo. Isso ocorre porque essas experiências ajudam a reafirmar valores pessoais, fortalecer conexões emocionais e criar memórias valiosas; c) Felicidade subjetiva: Sentimentos de alegria, prazer e excitação após uma experiência turística significativa são frequentemente citados como indicadores de felicidade subjetiva, pois têm um efeito duradouro, contribuindo para uma percepção mais positiva da vida.

Os resultados deste trabalho apresentam implicações práticas importantes para o setor de turismo. Compreender as dimensões e domínios que tornam as experiências significativas permite que profissionais do turismo desenvolvam estratégias mais eficazes para atender às expectativas dos turistas. Além disso, ao promover atividades e serviços que apoiem o bem-estar e a felicidade, as empresas turísticas podem criar experiências que não apenas atendam às necessidades imediatas dos visitantes, mas também tenham um impacto duradouro nas suas vidas. Por exemplo, os destinos podem investir em infraestrutura que facilitem o autocuidado, como spa's ou trilhos para caminhadas, ou criar pacotes voltados à desconexão tecnológica. Simultaneamente, *workshops* culturais ou programas educativos relacionados ao bem-estar podem atrair um público interessado em experiências que combinam aprendizagem e lazer.

Por fim, saliente-se que as experiências turísticas não são meramente atividades de lazer; elas têm o potencial de transformar vidas, proporcionando momentos de reflexão, crescimento pessoal e felicidade. Ao adotar uma abordagem centrada no bem-estar, é possível criar experiências que sejam não apenas prazerosas, mas também significativas e enriquecedoras. Assim, o turismo torna-se uma ferramenta poderosa para o desenvolvimento humano, ajudando as pessoas a se conectarem consigo próprias, com os outros e com o mundo ao seu redor. O desafio para o setor, agora, é traduzir estes *insights* em práticas e políticas que maximizem os benefícios psicológicos e emocionais das experiências turísticas. Desta forma, será possível transformar o simples ato de viajar numa jornada de autodescoberta e realização pessoal.

**Palavras-chave:** Experiências turísticas significativas; Psicologia Positiva; Satisfação com a vida; Felicidade subjetiva; Bem-estar;

# 1. CHAPTER ONE

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Research background and overview

Tourism is going through a very challenging time considering the psychological impact of the worldwide coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which began in 2019. Wang and colleagues (2020) recognised that in China, the psychological impacts were evaluated as moderate or severe (53.8%), characterised by intense anxiety symptoms (28.8%) and moderate to extreme stress levels (8.1%). A Portuguese study (Agência Lusa, 2020) concluded that 24.0% of the sample reported anxiety and sadness, and 82.0% felt at least one adverse mental health effect. Focusing on what makes life worth living is imperative to understanding what makes experiences meaningful.

Some studies emphasise the connection between positive psychology and well-being in a tourism context (e.g., Filep, 2016; Filep & Laing, 2019; Garcês et al., 2018; Vada et al., 2020; Hao & Xiao, 2021). However, the literature suggests that more is needed to help to understand how stakeholders perceive a tourist experience as meaningful in terms of both their triggers (antecedents) and their results in the short, medium, and long term (outcomes) (e.g., Chen & Yoon, 2019; Garcês et al., 2018). Also, the literature focuses on the immediate well-being results of the experiences (hedonic perspective) (see Nawijn, 2015; Voigt, 2017; Filep & Laing, 2019; Hao & Xiao, 2021), leaving behind the long-term results that have a substantial impact on individuals' lives.

Filep (2016) appeals to individuals' emotions, cognitions, and feelings to address the whole meaning of an experience, starting with the motivations before the experience occurs, the on-site phase and the several impacts on the general aspects of individuals' lives.

Despite the apparent relationship between the theoretical approaches, the literature advises carefully analysing their interconnections further to support the rationale of future studies. The literature review also allowed examples of knowledge gaps that can shed light of future avenues for research on meaningful tourist experiences to be identified. Some of these research gaps are highlighted in this section. Garcês and colleagues (2018) explored the role of positive psychology in tourism. They highlighted the need to adopt a holistic view of stakeholders' well-being through the involvement of different populations in analysing this phenomenon. The relevance of addressing residents, host communities, and workers was also

stressed in the systematic review conducted by Vada and colleagues (2020). The findings showed minimal focus on these stakeholders in the literature reviewed. The authors approached the relationship between positive psychology, tourism, and tourists' well-being. On the one hand, the review indicates that positive psychological variables, such as happiness, character strengths, gratitude, and humour, influence tourists' well-being. On the other hand, mindfulness was advanced as an antecedent of tourists' well-being. The study reveals the need to explore tourists' interactions with social and natural environments related to self-consciousness (e.g., wellness tourism, yoga tourism, volunteer tourism). Skavronskaya et al. (2018) focused on describing the emotional consequences of experiences. However, there is a lack of understanding of the affective responses elicited by specific stimuli, raising some underestimated perspectives that lead to a new pathway: What other constructs can be considered predictors of this relationship?

Applied psychology in tourism investigates how travel experiences influence well-being and how tourists connect with destinations and their identities. Filep (2016) introduced the subfield of positive tourism to focus on the positive psychological outcomes of tourism. Positive tourism emphasises fostering deep connections between tourists and the destinations they visit, mainly through meaningful interactions with local communities.

Research by Filep et al. (2017) emphasises that encounters marked by gratitude and kindness enhance trust and authenticity. These interactions often lead to transformative experiences, promoting personal growth and strengthening tourists' identity. Beyond relaxation, tourism has the potential to enrich personality and self-perception. Travellers can develop greater empathy, adaptability, and a deeper understanding of themselves by connecting with diverse cultures and perspectives.

This growing focus on the psychological dimensions of tourism offers valuable insights for both tourism practitioners and researchers. Creating environments that encourage authentic, kind, and gratitude-filled exchanges can enhance the overall experience for practitioners. For researchers, it opens pathways to explore how these interactions shape long-term well-being and personal development. As such, tourism contributes to well-being by offering both hedonic (pleasure-driven) and eudaimonic (purposeful and growth-oriented) benefits. This distinction highlights how travel can be more than just a leisure activity—it can be a source of meaningful personal development (Filep et al., 2017).

Transformative tourism stands out as a compelling paradigm within the broader field of tourism studies, particularly for its focus on personal growth and well-being. At its core, transformative tourism aims to help individuals achieve "existential authenticity," where

travellers reconnect with their true selves. This involves engaging in meaningful experiences that foster self-discovery and re-evaluating one's priorities (Kirillova et al., 2017; Reisinger, 2013).

Cultural immersion and disconnection from daily routines, typical of transformative tourism settings, are recognised for their ability to effect long-term behavioural and attitudinal changes in travellers. By stepping into unfamiliar cultural landscapes, travellers encounter diverse worldviews that challenge their existing beliefs and broaden their perspectives. These moments of cultural engagement often act as catalysts for introspection and growth. Transformative tourism allows individuals to break free from ingrained thinking and behaviour patterns by escaping habitual environments and routines. This detachment creates space for reflection, fostering the potential for long-term behavioural and attitudinal shifts. (Kirillova et al., 2017; Reisinger, 2013).

Transformative tourism goes beyond the immediate pleasure of a trip. Instead, it seeks to leave a lasting imprint on travellers by promoting elevated levels of well-being through the realisation of personal aspirations, new perspectives, and an enhanced sense of purpose. For destinations and tourism providers, designing transformative experiences requires intentionality. This may involve curating opportunities for meaningful cultural exchange, offering activities that challenge participants physically or emotionally, and ensuring spaces for introspection, such as retreats or workshops (Kirillova et al., 2017; Reisinger, 2013).

In summary, tourism represents an environment conducive to human flourishing, offering unique opportunities to explore, relax, and seek meaning. Tourist well-being is a complex, multidimensional construct where elements of immediate happiness and lasting growth coexist. The quality and evaluation of the experiences directly impact the psychological and social effects on travellers (Vada et al., 2019). As transformative tourism advances and the demand for meaningful experiences grows, understanding well-being and happiness concepts becomes essential for implementing tourism practices and policies that promote relaxation and personal and social enrichment.

Positive psychology emerged as a field focused on understanding the strengths and virtues that foster happiness and human flourishing, initially proposed by Seligman (2002). Rather than emphasising the treatment of ailments, this approach seeks to enhance well-being and help individuals and communities thrive. Positive psychology is multifaceted, encompassing mood, gratitude, love, optimism, and generally positive emotions like joy and pride, which are central to well-being (Fredrickson, 2001; Garcês et al., 2020).

Specifically, Fredrickson (2001) proposed the "broaden-and-build" theory, which describes how positive emotions expand individuals' action repertoires, strengthen their personal and social resources, and thus promote resilience and personal growth. Fredrickson (2001) posited that positive emotions such as joy, interest, contentment, and love serve a uniquely adaptive function beyond immediate responses to the environment. Unlike negative emotions, which narrow focus and elicit specific responses to threats, positive emotions broaden the range of thoughts and actions available to individuals. For instance, joy may inspire exploration and play, while interest fosters curiosity and learning. Simultaneously, these emotions build enduring resources that benefit individuals over time. These resources may include a) physical: Energy and health derived from engaging in stimulating activities; b) social: Stronger relationships cultivated through positive interactions; c) psychological: Emotional resilience and optimism; d) Intellectual: Enhanced creativity and problem-solving skills.

Tourism is a potent platform for experiencing the positive emotions outlined in the broaden-and-build theory, as it often involves scenarios that elicit feelings of discovery, joy, and connection. In a novel destination, for instance, travellers may feel curious and engaged, broadening their mental scope and fostering the creation of meaningful memories. Additionally, positive tourism experiences frequently contribute to building resources, such as enhanced interactions with local communities and fellow tourists, overcoming travel challenges, or finding meaning in diverse landscapes and cultures.

Fredrickson (2001) also argued that positive emotions can counteract the adverse effects of negative emotions. In tourism, this can be observed when travel helps individuals relieve stress and restore emotional balance.

By providing opportunities that broaden travellers' perspectives and build personal resources, tourism fosters not only immediate happiness (hedonia) but also supports personal growth and a sense of purpose (eudaimonia). Moreover, the emotions generated during travel can have lasting impacts, shaping how tourists perceive their lives and interact with the world after their experiences (Fredrickson, 2001).

Well-being is one of the most significant concepts in positive psychology and, within tourism, is perceived as a primary goal for travellers. Tourism provides a unique context for applying well-being models, as tourist experiences often evoke both hedonic and eudaimonic emotions. Seligman's (2011) PERMA model is frequently utilised to analyze how elements of well-being, such as positive emotions and purpose, enrich travel experiences. Alternatively, the DRAMMA model by Newman et al. (2014) offers a more leisure-centred approach, encompassing dimensions such as Autonomy, Mastery, and Affiliation to understand better the

psychological and social processes triggered during leisure activities. Additionally, the HOPE model (Garcês et al., 2017) expands upon these elements by introducing spirituality, optimism, and creativity, offering a broader perspective on tourism experiences as enrichers of human potential. This model is particularly relevant in wellness and transformative tourism, where experiences focusing on spirituality and personal connection are highly valued.

The Broaden-and-Build theory (Fredrickson, 2001) complements approaches such as the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011), which also identifies positive emotions as a crucial component of well-being, and the DRAMMA model (Newman et al., 2014), which integrates dimensions like mastery and affiliation. Together, these theories provide a broad overview of how tourism can be designed to maximize individuals' well-being, contributing to both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being.

Two central concepts shape the study of well-being: hedonia and eudaimonia. Hedonia, as developed by Greek philosophers and modern psychologists, focuses on pleasure and the pursuit of momentary happiness, often linked to subjective well-being (Waterman, 2011; Voigt, 2017).

In contrast, eudaimonia, rooted in Aristotelian philosophy, considers true happiness as the result of developing and expressing an individual's best potential, achieved through life purpose fulfilment and virtuous living. Ryff (1989) described eudaimonia across six fundamental dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, life purpose, and personal growth, establishing a robust framework for assessing eudaimonic well-being.

Current research (Huta & Waterman, 2014) highlights that these two models are not mutually exclusive but complementary, helping to explain immediate well-being and long-term growth. Fredrickson (2001) suggests that while hedonia is linked to instant happiness and short-term satisfaction, eudaimonia provides a more enduring sense of achievement and purpose.

Tourism is increasingly recognised as a means of promoting well-being and happiness. Filep (2016) describes tourist happiness as a state of psychological satisfaction and well-being experienced across three phases: anticipation, the experience itself, and subsequent reflection. This process involves varying levels of emotional engagement and meaning, reflecting a desire for self-exploration, discovery, and connection with the environment and others. Analysing happiness in tourism encompasses not only momentary pleasure (hedonia) but also the development of lasting meaning (eudaimonia), whether through relaxation, exploration, or cultural immersion.

Models such as the Travel Career Ladder (Pearce, 1988) and the Travel Motivation Matrix (Csikszentmihalyi & Coffey, 2017) examine how tourist motivations evolve, influenced by past experiences and personal goals. These frameworks analyse the complexity of human motivations for travel and their distinct impacts on travellers' psychological well-being.

Motivation is a critical psychological factor that drives individuals to seek new experiences and adventures, particularly in tourism. It serves as a driving force, guided by theories such as Gutman's (1982) Means-End Chain Theory and Dann's (1977) Push-Pull Model, which explain tourist decision-making as influenced by both internal needs (push factors, such as relaxation and self-discovery) and external factors (pull factors, such as destination appeal or experiences).

The Means-End Chain Theory operates on the premise that tourists choose destinations or experiences based on the means (attributes) they believe will lead to end goals (desired values). These "means" are the functional aspects of tourism, such as destination features, activities, or accommodations, which tourists expect will fulfil their deeper values, such as relaxation, social interaction, or personal growth (Gutman, 1982).

As for Push-Pull Model, it combines push factors, which are internal motivations driving a person to seek travel (e.g., the desire for escape, adventure, or novelty), with pull factors, which are external attractions that draw tourists to specific destinations (e.g., the natural beauty of a place, the cultural offerings, or economic factors like affordability). Push factors reflect psychological needs, like escaping daily stress or seeking new experiences, while pull factors focus on the external characteristics of destinations that satisfy those needs (Dann, 1977).

These theories highlight the multidimensional and dynamic nature of travel motivations. For instance, Pearce's (1988) Travel Career Pattern (TCP) model suggests that motivations evolve as individuals gain travel experience, with initial interests focused on relaxation and discovery, eventually shifting toward self-awareness and cultural connection motivations. In wellness tourism, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations converge to meet needs for relaxation, personal growth, and physical and mental health improvement (Csikszentmihalyi & Coffey, 2017; Kessler et al., 2020).

The interconnections between Gutman's (1982) Means-End Chain Theory and Dann's (1977) Push-Pull Model in tourism can be understood in how they explain the motivations behind travel and the decisions tourists make. In summary, Gutman's Means-End Chain Theory helps to identify the deeper motivations (values and goals) that tourists seek to fulfil through their choices. At the same time, Dann's Push-Pull Model provides the framework to understand the psychological (push) and external (pull) factors that influence the decisions leading to those

choices. For example, the push factors (internal motivations) in Dann's model, such as the need for relaxation or self-improvement, can be seen as the personal values or end goals identified in Gutman's Means-End Chain Theory; the pull factors in Dann's model, like the scenic beauty or specific activities a destination offers, are the attributes or means that tourists believe will help them achieve these values. Together, the two theories complement each other in illustrating how individuals weigh both their internal desires and the external opportunities a destination provides to fulfil those desires.

Life satisfaction, a key component of subjective well-being, reflects how individuals evaluate their lives regarding fulfillment and enjoyment. It is influenced by various factors, such as personal achievements, social relationships, and the ability to balance the demands of daily life. In tourism, life satisfaction is often enhanced through experiences promoting relaxation, personal growth, and social connection. Tourism allows people to step away from their everyday routines, engage in new and exciting activities, and achieve personal goals, all contributing to greater well-being (Filep & Deery, 2010).

Research indicates that both planning and experiencing travel can significantly increase life satisfaction. Planning a trip is frequently accompanied by excitement and anticipation, providing individuals with a sense of purpose and pleasure even before the trip begins. This preparation period allows travellers to imagine the potential joy of new experiences—whether those involve relaxation, adventure, or cultural exploration. The actual trip allows one to disconnect from daily responsibilities and immerse oneself in activities often outside the ordinary, leading to a rejuvenating experience. These breaks from daily life help individuals recharge, promoting feelings of contentment and satisfaction upon returning to their regular routines (Filep & Deery, 2010).

In addition to the physical rest that travel provides, tourism offers opportunities for personal growth and self-discovery, which are strongly linked to life satisfaction. Engaging in new experiences, discovering unfamiliar destinations, and meeting new people allow individuals to learn more about themselves and the world. Whether it's overcoming challenges while travelling or gaining insights through different cultural experiences, tourism facilitates personal development that contributes to greater life satisfaction. The pursuit and achievement of personal goals—whether related to leisure, adventure, or self-improvement—play a key role in enhancing one's well-being, and tourism offers an avenue for realising these aspirations (Filep & Deery, 2010)

The role of tourism in life satisfaction is also connected to social interactions. Travelling often involves spending time with family and friends or even meeting new people. These social

bonds and shared experiences are essential to life satisfaction, as solid social relationships are among the most important predictors of happiness. Travel allows people to create lasting memories and deepen relationships, contributing to a more fulfilling life. Shared experiences in a travel setting often create a sense of connection and understanding that can enhance one's sense of belonging and overall happiness (Filep & Deery, 2010).

Tools such as the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) developed by Diener et al. (1985) are commonly used to measure tourism's impact on life satisfaction. This scale assesses individuals' overall life satisfaction, providing a framework for understanding how travel and other experiences contribute to subjective well-being. Studies using the SWLS and similar measures have consistently found that tourism positively impacts life satisfaction, reinforcing that travel can significantly improve an individual's quality of life. These findings support the view that tourism is a source of enjoyment and essential to long-term happiness.

In conclusion, tourism has a significant influence on life satisfaction. Through both the anticipation and experience of travel, individuals can achieve relaxation, personal growth, and social connection, all of which are critical components of subjective well-being. Travel also allows people to fulfil personal aspirations and achieve goals, contributing to happiness. Studies that use tools like the Satisfaction with Life Scale provide valuable evidence of the positive relationship between tourism and life satisfaction, demonstrating that tourism plays a vital role in enhancing an individual's quality of life (Filep & Deery, 2010; Diener et al., 1985).

Subjective happiness, in the context of tourism, refers to the emotional state where individuals feel content, satisfied, and fulfilled by their life experiences. This state is particularly evident in the tourism process, which spans three key phases: anticipation, the actual travel experience, and reflection after the trip (Larsen, 2007). These phases are not merely periods but emotional milestones, each generating unique feelings contributing to the overall sense of happiness derived from travel. According to Filep and Deery (2010), these phases form distinct emotional experiences, from the excitement and joy before the journey begins through the pleasure of engaging with new surroundings to the satisfaction of reflecting on the trip after returning home.

The happiness experienced in tourism is deeply linked to three main dimensions: positive emotions, engagement, and meaning (Seligman, 2002). Positive emotions, such as joy, enthusiasm, and excitement, are central to the tourism experience. They arise when tourists anticipate the adventure ahead, immerse themselves in enjoyable activities, and relive the highlights of their trip after returning. These emotions are the foundation for happiness, creating a sense of delight and fulfilment. For instance, the mere thought of a vacation can trigger

positive feelings. At the same time, the experiences—whether a scenic view, a cultural encounter, or a thrilling activity—continue to generate joy during the trip.

Engagement, the second essential dimension of happiness in tourism, refers to the extent to which individuals are fully immersed in their travel activities. When people are deeply engaged in an experience, they often enter a state of "flow," where they are so absorbed in the moment that they lose track of time. This complete immersion in the environment or the activity itself is a crucial aspect of what makes travel so fulfilling. Whether exploring a new city, hiking through nature, or participating in a local tradition, engagement heightens the enjoyment and emotional satisfaction of the experience. The more engaged tourists are with the destination, the more likely they will report higher happiness levels during and after their travels (Seligman, 2002).

The third dimension, meaning, involves the personal connection and a sense of purpose that travellers derive from their trips. This could be a spiritual connection to a place, a sense of accomplishment from overcoming challenges, or personal growth from new experiences. When individuals find meaning in their travels, their happiness transcends beyond momentary enjoyment and becomes tied to deeper emotional and psychological fulfilment. For example, visiting a historical site might evoke feelings of reflection and a personal connection to the past. At the same time, a volunteer trip may inspire feelings of purpose and contribution to a more significant cause (Seligman, 2002).

The Authentic Happiness Model, developed by Seligman (2002), highlights that tourism can be a powerful source of subjective happiness by combining these three dimensions. Positive emotions, engagement, and meaning are essential components that foster immediate happiness and long-term personal growth. Filep (2016) and Filep and Deery (2010) emphasise that tourism offers more than just a temporary escape from daily life. It allows individuals to experience profound emotional well-being by stimulating joy, creating deep engagement with new environments, and fostering a sense of purpose. These aspects of tourism contribute to an enriched and meaningful life, making travel an enduring source of subjective happiness for many people.

In conclusion, the subjective happiness experienced through tourism is a multifaceted and dynamic phenomenon. Tourists can achieve a deep sense of fulfilment by engaging with positive emotions, being immersed in travel activities, and finding meaning in their experiences. This emotional journey, from anticipation to reflection, illustrates how travel can be a source of short-term enjoyment and lasting personal growth and happiness.

However, there needs to be more understanding of what turns a tourist experience into a meaningful one: What are the elements underlying a meaningful experience? Which results are more expressive and, thus, lead to a higher meaning? Psychology is the science of human behaviour and its factors and processes. Therefore, meaningful experience is a concept that falls within the psychology research field applied to tourism. People are motivated by the meaning associated with the things they find, the people they meet and their experiences. Different concepts have been used to define experiences in tourism, such as extraordinary, memorable, authentic, and transformational. However, there needs to be more consensus about the elements involved in evoking meaning. This reflection stresses the need to conceptualise meaningful experiences and explore the associated psychological impacts.

## **1.2. Research aims and objectives**

The main objective of this work is to understand the dimensions associated with the concept of meaningful tourism experience, their antecedents, and outcomes to specify a psychological framework on how tourists thrive and meaning from their experiences. To answer the general objective, the studies undertaken were divided into two categories: theoretical studies (**Studies 1, 2, and 3**) and empirical studies (**studies 4, 5, 6, and 7**).

Concerning the theoretical studies, the main intention was to define specific boundaries concerning meaningful experiences, distinguishing them between memorable and transformational experiences. Additionally, the theoretical exploitation intended to explore psychological fields of action that better cope with the meaning attached to tourist experiences.

Regarding the empirical studies, the specific objectives were to explore the motivations under the choice for a specific tourist destination in terms of the expectancies attached to them, explore the emotional intensity attached to each dimension of meaningful tourism experiences, and explore the impact of each dimension of meaningful tourism experiences on tourists' well-being, subjective happiness, and life satisfaction on a long-term basis. Supported by quantitative research, this thesis uses surveys for data collection and statistical data analysis methods to generate empirical evidence. Empirical studies apply structural equation models to test the hypothesis, and the results will be transcribed and presented in three studies. In sum, the thesis aims to:

1. Define specific boundaries concerning the concept of meaningful experiences, distinguishing them between memorable and transformational experiences (Study 1);

2. Explore psychological fields of action that better cope with the meaning attached to tourist experiences (Study 2);
3. Systematically explore the concept of meaningful experiences, their antecedents, and outcomes (Study 3);
4. Refine and validate a scale to measure the construct of meaningful tourism experiences (Study 4);
5. Explore the motivations under the choice for a specific tourist destination in terms of the expectancies attached to them (Study 5);
6. Explore the emotional intensity attached to each dimension of meaningful tourism experiences (Study 6);
7. Explore the impact of each dimension of meaningful tourism experiences on tourists' well-being, subjective happiness, and life satisfaction on a long-term basis (Study 7);

### **1.3. Significance of the study**

Considering the misunderstanding of the conceptualisation of the meaning attached to the experiences, this research contributes to the literature on meaningful experiences, introducing a better understanding of the differences between this concept and similar ones (e.g., transformational, memorable, authentic, extraordinary). This is achieved by introducing a psychological framework on the psychological antecedents and outcomes related to higher meanings in tourism experiences, incorporating additional dimensions - precisely, emotional intensity - while streamlining the current dimensions to alleviate the burden on respondents. Concurrently, this approach underscores the scale's theoretical consistency and ability to predict outcomes within the context of Portugal.

Furthermore, this research substantially contributes to theory and practice by investigating the interconnection between motivation, well-being, meaningful experiences, life satisfaction, subjective happiness, and tourism, considering that motivation is the initial driver propelling individuals toward tourism experiences. In contrast, well-being reflects the enduring impact of these encounters. Thus, by understanding the relationship between the aforementioned dimensions, the acknowledgement that meaningful experiences provide the context for individuals to achieve life satisfaction and subjective happiness, mainly through engaging in activities that generate pleasure and self-discovery, is better consolidated.

Moreover, by examining how meaningful tourism experiences impact individuals' happiness and life satisfaction, this research corroborates the existing literature on the benefits of tourism for tourists' hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. These concepts complement and reinforce one another, culminating in a tourism experience promoting relaxation and leisure, personal purpose fulfilment, and exploring new perspectives. A detailed analysis of these elements helps better understand how tourism catalyses well-being and human development, allowing individuals to return to daily life with a renewed sense of self and a broader worldview.

Tourism experiences are a multidimensional and highly subjective domain that involves individuals' sensations, expectations, and needs. They represent a change in routine that leads to a personal reflection about the trip itself and themselves, based on the emotional impact attached and what it represents for individuals' way of being.

From the literature review, different concepts are associated with positive and enduring outcomes for tourists. The concept of meaningful experiences is the most underexplored, considering the difficulty of finding information about experiences to which the meaning is attached.

Thus, a meaningful tourism experience promotes interdependence between experience and pleasure and a strong relationship between local people and places. The better the emotional state, the better the evaluation of authenticity, social intimacy, reciprocity, sense of togetherness, and cooperation between tourists and residents. The proposal focuses on the "Tourism, Leisure, and Society" topic of the Research Centre for Tourism, Sustainability and Well-being (CinTurs), responsible for "(...) study of the host communities' attitudes and behaviours towards the tourism phenomena, i.e., residents' well-being, since tourism can affect their lives, positively or negatively." (Marques & Cruz, n.d.).

Considering the previous relationships highlighted in the theoretical chapter, this proposal explores how meaningful experiences are created, which psychological mechanisms are involved as antecedents and outcomes, and how to promote these experiences on touristic destinations.

#### **1.4. Study design**

Articles organise this thesis, each assigned to a different objective (see Figure 1). All studies are grounded on the positive psychology paradigm. **Studies 1, 2, and 3 – theoretical studies** – were grounded on an extensive literature review on the concepts surrounding meaningful tourism experiences. Data analysis procedures involved a strong interrelation

between concepts and intervention with the supervisors to obtain a robust theoretical framework. Furthermore, the package bibliometrix from the software R was used in study 3, to introduce a higher scientific criterion on the results obtained from the systematic literature review.

Moreover, data was collected from Portuguese tourists regarding their most meaningful tourism experience. This decision is supported by literature, which has introduced the idea that at least once, all individuals have been tourists; thus, using a general sample might be a good strategy to obtain a broader perspective. The target population for this study included 308 Portuguese tourists. The research instrument used to collect the data was a questionnaire, refined and validated for the Portuguese population under a robust procedure including translation, content validation, and a pilot study within 12 Portuguese individuals. The questionnaire is available online on the EUSurvey platform. This sampling scheme was chosen considering that data started at the end of 2020, in a post-covid era. This method is applied in **Studies 4, 5, 6, and 7 – empirical studies**. Data analysis is performed using the softwares IBM SPSS Statistics v27, IBM AMOS v28, and SmartPLS v4.2. Statistical analysis included descriptive statistics, Exploratory Factorial Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA), and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). In addition, several goodness of model fit measures and statistical tests are also used.

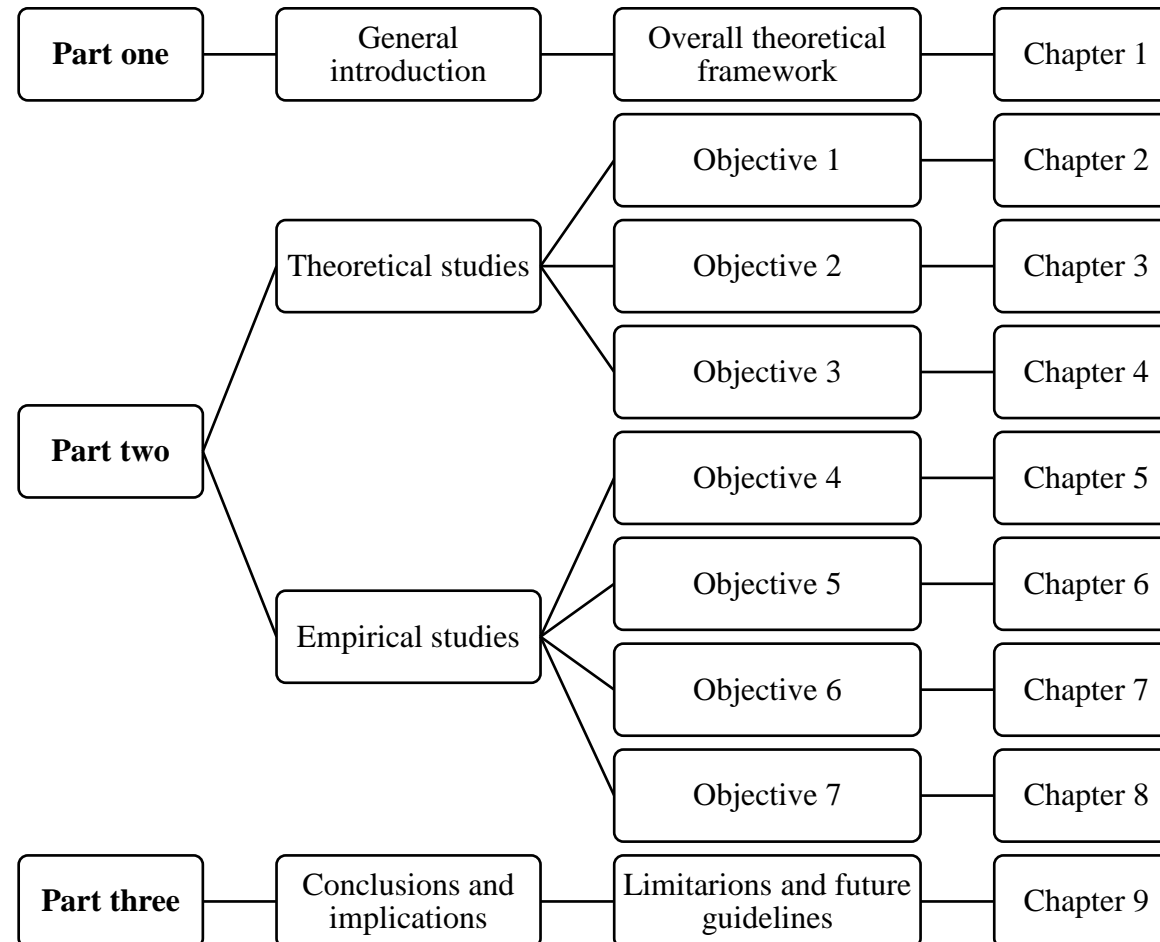
### **1.5. Outline of the thesis**

As seen in figure 1, the thesis is organised in three parts. Part one is dedicated to the theoretical framework, exploring the different empirical variables: positive psychology, well-being, satisfaction with life, subjective happiness, motivations, and meaningful tourism experiences. Still, the study's objectives, significance, and design are discussed.

Part two comprised seven research studies – **three theoretical studies and four empirical studies** – presented from chapters two to seven, developed to attain the seven specific objectives of the thesis. On these studies, it was explored the systematisation of the concept of meaningful tourism experiences, as well as the impact of the motivations on the attribution of meaning to a tourism experience, and finally, how the motivations affect the different dimensions of well-being, satisfaction with life, and subjective happiness.

Finally, part three presents the general conclusions of the thesis and its practical and theoretical implications, followed by the limitations and future guidelines.

**Figure 1.** Outline of the thesis



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## 2. CHAPTER TWO

### **STUDY 1: MEANINGFUL, MEMORABLE, AND TRANSFORMATIONAL EXPERIENCES: HOW SIMILAR, HOW DIFFERENT?**

Câmara, E., Pocinho, M., Agapito, D. and Jesus, S.N. (2021). Meaningful, Memorable, and Transformational Experiences: How Similar, How Different? In M. Milcu, M. Stevens, & S. N. Jesus (2021), *Rethinking Applied Psychology: Research Paradigms vs. Practical Approaches* (-----). Bucureste: Editura Universitară.  
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## **Meaningful, memorable, and transformational experiences: How similar, how different?**

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**Abstract:** Tourist experiences are multidimensional and subjective, considering individuals' sensations, expectations, and needs. They represent a change in routine through the engagement in something new and simultaneously gratifying and significant. Therefore, promoting unique and unforgettable experiences is the core objective, motivated by the need to make tourists feel more than just visitors; instead, they should feel like they belong to the community, with its specificities and values. However, the literature about the constructs used to evaluate these experiences is not unanimous. This chapter presents a clear distinction of constructs under the foundations of psychology. The focus is on exploring three concepts that represent the core universe of tourist experiences' evaluation: meaningful, memorable, and transformational experiences, as well as the elements that, conceptually, differentiate them. Therefore, some conclusions will be undertaken, associated with the role each one plays in the universe of tourists' experiences.

**Key-words:** Meaningful experiences; Memorable experiences; Transformational experiences; tourism; psychology

## 2.1. Introduction

Tourism experiences represent a movement of change and innovation in the routine through the engagement in something new, something unusual that enables individuals to learn and grow over time. The final result of this process usually leads individuals to a personal reflection about the trip itself and themselves, based on the emotional impact attached to them and what it represents for their way of being (Brown, 2013). Overall, tourists seek a full experience of the chosen destination and experience themselves in that destination (Bosangit et al., 2015), as if they were different people seeking self-knowledge. So, tourism experiences have the strong potential to become extraordinary, pure, peak, cathartic, meaningful and memorable (Kirillova et al., 2017b).

Considering it, the promotion of unique and unforgettable moments is the core objective of researchers in this field to actively contribute to the promotion of experiences that are part of the tourists' way of being, making them feel more than just a visitor, welcomed by the community; instead, tourists should feel like they belong to the community, with its specificities and values (Garcês, 2020).

Considering that people make experiences and having in mind that individuals are unique, complex beings, psychology has here a decisive role, and research is becoming strong on the association of psychology foundations and tourism once they complement each other on the consideration of the individual as someone with unique emotions, sensations, and perceptions. Thus, understanding how these characteristics can contribute to developing tourism experiences coherent with tourists' needs and objectives is a goal to pursue.

In sum, the key factors involved in the conception of an experience are psychological in nature, meaning that this social science can be helpful in the study of tourist experiences. However, the literature about the constructs used to evaluate the experiences is not unanimous. On this behalf, this paper intends to present a clear distinction of conceptualisations under the foundations of psychology. The focus will be placed on three concepts that constitute the core elements and conceptualisations of tourist experiences and how they are interpreted: meaningful experiences, memorable experiences, and transformational experiences. For each, a significant reflection and deepening will be made to discover similarities and differences, contributing to a more distinct nomenclature. Also, other concepts will be approached since literature assumes that they can follow the same path as the core construct suggests (e.g. peak experiences, enlightened state, optimal experiences, elevating experiences, awakening

experiences, transformative experiences) (Aho, 2001; Chan, 2019; Csikzentmihalyi, 1991; Huta & Ryan, 2010; Reisinger, 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Sheldon, 2020; Tiberghien et al., 2017; Willson et al., 2013). This methodical categorisation relies on this chapter's valuable conceptual contribution, considering that this kind of work is the crucial element that enables the improvement of interdisciplinary experience-design-related research and practice, with important practical implications (Duerden et al., 2018).

After exploring and systematising the previously mentioned three concepts, some conclusions will be made, which will help establish a research line on the antecedents and outcomes of that particular kind of experience through a psychological lens.

## **2.2. Literature review**

### *2.2.1. Meaningful experiences*

The search for meaning is a path that is always constructed in the daily life of every single human being. We are moved by what is meaningful and what gives our lives a purpose to improve continuously. This is the same as saying that meaning is the core contribution to happiness and pleasure through the pursuit of life satisfaction, well-being, and positive affect, which is itself an individual process, considering individuals' needs, motivations and characteristics, i.e., individual's identity and life purpose and the meaning of each one's actions (Packer & Gill, 2017; Seligman, 2011).

Therefore, people are the result of their meaningful experiences. Laing (1967) posted that during the evaluation of their experiences, people attribute meanings based on four pillars: 1) belonging (the relationship developed with others); 2) purpose (perception about their life purpose); 3) storytelling (the way they evaluate their current situation); 4) transcendence (the level in which they feel a connection to something bigger than themselves).

Another similar perspective emerges with Baumeister and Vohs (2002). The authors consider that the search for meaning intends to fulfil four needs: the need for purpose (present events have a strong connection with future events, from which individuals draw meaning, both for simple goals or fulfillments), the need for values (a factor that leads individuals to take the right decisions, based on the right or wrong evaluation of actions), the need for a sense of efficacy (leading individuals to believe in their power to make the difference), and the need for a basis for self-worth (seek for reasons to believe they are excellent and worthy).

According to Duerden *et al.* (2018), a meaningful experience is characterised by the efficiency of its elements, which means that it is concerned with the level of attraction and

holdness of these objective elements on individuals' attention to producing subjective reactions once the same experience can evoke different outcomes on different individuals (Larsen, 2007). It is an experience where the objective elements attract and hold individuals' attention and produce subjective reactions involving strong emotions and the discovery of significant and personally relevant insights, as well as the formation of a significant opinion and memory concerning the experience; once people always remember the relevant and meaningful experiences they live (Kim, 2014).

As the previous definition suggested, meaningful experiences involve both emotion and knowledge since the way the experience is lived can be emotionally intense, associated with the discovery of something new not just from the experience itself but from the way it is interpreted, considering their impact on individuals' life (Duerden et al., 2018).

For Packer and Gill (2017), a meaningful experience results from an interpretation, narration and transformation based on the activities, events and environments in which people engage that are further interpreted and evaluated in terms of meaning based on its impact and other past experiences. The researchers developed a study with 77 participants. They concluded that through meaningful experiences, individuals feel proud due to overcoming personal challenges, self-sufficiency in dealing and negotiating with those plans, and an expression of identity. In addition, holidays represented an opportunity for individuals to reflect on their priorities in life and organise them according to essential criteria.

This definition suggests that the value of a meaningful experience can be emotional and social but also associated with a learning process since there is a component of personal discovery. In other words, meaningful experiences go beyond the unique idea of an emotional outcome, as they have the potential to predispose the individual to a process of self-reflection and overcoming of personal barriers (Duerden et al., 2018; Godovykh & Tasci, 2020).

This learning process can be intra or extra-personal, depending on the individual's interaction with the environment and the quality and intensity of his/her self-reflection. It is called fractional sublimation and is defined as how people develop new insight and new information based on reflecting on the experience and how it can be integrated into past cognitive structures (Taniguchi et al., 2005). People are (informally) invited to compare the knowledge before and after the experience and construct a new reality based on the discovery and, based on the reflections developed, attribute a new meaning to those experiences. As such, meaningful experiences are a *continuum* in time, considering that the search for meaning has an integrative potential since it draws on individuals' backgrounds to integrate them into the present moment, expanding the meaning of the experience.

In tourism assets, it is crucial to incorporate meaningful experiences into tourists' plans to guarantee their attention and willingness to revisit. A tourist experience has a high potential to be meaningful, considering there is a strong focus on the impact of the experience on the tourist, which is evaluated as emotional (Larsen, 2007).

In so doing, a meaningful tourist experience is characterised by pleasure and how tourists find their holidays personally meaningful (Filep, 2016).

A meaningful tourist experience is a sum of the experience, its evaluation and all the contextual and environmental contingencies around it. More than the experience itself, everyone's interpretation makes the experience meaningful (Duerden et al., 2018). Tung and Ritchie (2011) argue that substantial impacts of meaningful experience are attached to memory through a process of consequentiality, so meaningful experiences can encourage the development of different perspectives about life and how it should be lived.

Literature has frequently pointed out the similar construct of extraordinary experiences to relate to meaningful experiences.

For Larsen (2007), extraordinary experiences are characterised by a strong attraction to their specific elements, which hold individuals' attention and produce intensely subjective reactions involving a heavy set of emotions associated with discovery and change. It can be described in a few words related to their impact on individuals' lives: challenge, novelty, intensity, accomplishment, strengthening social connections, spontaneity, reflection, and emotional intensity.

Also, Turner (2008) refers to extraordinary experiences as meaningful ones, considering they enable positive and collaborative interactions based on common goals, reduce status differences, and, due to this, develop a sense of community, referred to as "*communitas*", i.e., the development of a shared community, moved by common goals, fellowship, sharing, trust and respect where members undress from their regular roles and statuses (Turner, 2008).

So, meaningful experiences and extraordinary experiences can be related, judging by the similar concepts associated. For example, both kinds of experiences include elements such as attention, emotions, reflections, strong impact, discovery,, and another concept that introduces a difference between the previous constructs: social interaction. In other words, the more meaningful the relationship established with others during the experience, the higher the probability of developing a meaningful experience.

Another core construct, when relating meaningful experiences and tourism, is the association of the previous with wellbeing. Living meaningful experiences and expressing

social and identity motivations are essential for well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Garcês et al., 2018, 2020).

From a simplistic and mechanical view of tourism, individuals are looking for an opportunity to live something personally valuable and meaningful. As the literature shows, this is precisely the true essence of well-being, as well: looking for and developing something that leads to pleasant activities and feelings of happiness (hedonia) but is also associated with less pleasant activities in the beginning, but with positive long-term results, concerning significant actions (eudaimonia) (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Smith & Diekmann, 2017).

Thus, meaning is, *per se*, a component of well-being (Newman et al., 2014; Ryff, 1989), and meaningful leisure activities are the ones that lead to positive emotions, which are the markers of optimal well-being (Fredrickson, 2001; Newman et al., 2014).

In sum, this topic ends with the presentation of some psychometric scales that, through time, have been developed to evaluate this specific kind of experience. Simultaneously, this is a brainstorm of the principal characteristics that compose meaningful experiences to provide a simple structure to readers, enabling them to gain a better and easier understanding of the foundations of meaningful experiences. Garcês *et al.* (2020) developed the Tourism Wellbeing Scale (TWS), which, among other dimensions, relates to meaningful experiences: relationships, meaning, and positive emotions.

Also, Diener and colleagues (2010) were responsible for the development and validation of two instruments, aiming to assess different dimensions of meaningful experiences and wellbeing, from which the following ones are presented: positive relationships, meaning and purpose in life, and wellbeing – Flourishing Scale (FS) – positive and negative experiences and feelings – Scale of Positive and Negative Experiences. This last dimension is also an object of study of Positive and Negative Affect Scales – PANAS (Watson et al., 1988) and Subjective Happiness Scale – SHS (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999).

Ryff (1989) developed the Psychological Wellbeing Scale (PWBS), which is responsible for studying the dimensions associated with well-being from a psychological perspective. From the dimensions analysed, the following ones are associated with the foundations of meaningful experiences and their impact on individuals: positive relations, personal growth, and purpose in life.

Then, dimensions like feelings of personal expressiveness, flow experiences, and self-realisation values are the core elements of Personally Expressive Activities Questionnaires – PEAQ (Waterman, 1993).

Finally, the Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Wellbeing (QEWB), developed by Waterman *et al.* (2010), is responsible for evaluating the most meaningful and timeless dimension of well-being, the eudaimonic one. This is precisely the same dimension associated with meaning. Thus, the dimensions of meaningful experiences, assessed by this scale, are related to self-discovery, a sense of purpose and meaning in life, and enjoyment of activities as personally expressive.

In sum, meaningful experiences are multi-context, considering the personal solid dimensions and benefits, but also the social dimension, associated with the impact of the relationships with others, as well as the emotional component, really exacerbated in this kind of experience, considering the close partnership between emotions and meaning.

### 2.2.2. *Memorable Tourism Experiences*

This construct has gained its expression in tourism as the most suitable construct to describe tourist experiences. As such, this concept usually appears on literature as Memorable Tourist Experience (MTE) (Bigne *et al.*, 2020; Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013, 2015; Duerden *et al.*, 2018; Godovykh & Tasci, 2020; Kim, 2014; Kim *et al.*, 2012; Sheldon, 2020; Skavronskaya *et al.*, 2020; Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Vada *et al.*, 2020).

Individuals who develop positive memories about their tourist experience are the ones with a higher probability of returning. However, the investigation has been carried out outside the field of tourism to understand the processes included in how people develop memories during their experiences, which will ultimately contribute to immersive, memorable experiences (Duerden *et al.*, 2018).

Kim *et al.* (2012) state that the destination promotes quality experiences focused on amenities and facilities. Nowadays, tourists seek something more than satisfaction and quality. Looking for reasons why a travelling experience is so rewarding and represents one of the highest moments of individuals' lives is still a process with a more challenging focus on the literature (Csikszentmihalyi & Coffey, 2017).

The choices individuals make are based on personal backgrounds associated with motivations. This scenario is even more evident when travelling, considering that motivations vary among different categories and are not limited to a single factor (Csikszentmihalyi & Coffey, 2017).

A memorable tourist experience includes the objective elements that attract individuals' attention to generate a set of strong emotions (Duerden *et al.*, 2018). Working with this assumption leads businesses to develop and design memorable experiences (Chandralal &

Valenzuela, 2013) to captivate tourists' emotions, time, and money and conquer a more recommended destination. It is noteworthy that memorable experiences are the core economic and sustainable activity in tourism, contributing to this industry positively (Bulencea & Egger, 2015).

Coelho et al. (2018) defend that different kinds of travel can be considered memorable due to the long-lasting memories they activate, such as leisure, business, exchange programs, ordinary life daily experiences, pedagogical, educational and health trips. More than the type of experience, it is their potential to represent a meaningful moment that makes them memorable. It may be positive or negative and, sequentially, gives room to evoke inward emotions that affect the consumer more intrinsically. This definition emphasises that human beings are constructors of their own significant and memorable experiences, which can result in personal transformation, well-being, learning, eudaimonia, satisfaction, and behavioural intention.

Chandralal and Valenzuela (2013, 2015) suggest that a memorable tourist experience is a very significant travel experience, interpreted as highly exclusive, extreme, or very special. The authors suggest that these experiences are strongly linked to positive emotions (e.g., pleasure, excitement), which are the kinds of emotions that make up the affective component of the experiences and shape how the cognitive component interprets them.

Kim and colleagues (2012) define a memorable tourism experience as an experience which is "(...) positively remembered and recalled after the event has occurred." (p. 13) due to its strong emotional content. It is constructed based on the individuals' evaluation of the experience, allowing the development of pleasant memories that can be recollected whenever the individual accesses those memories and the emotions provided (Kim, 2014; Tung & Ritchie, 2011). A great outcome of the research developed by Kim and colleagues (2012) is the development of a psychometric instrument which characterises the most important dimensions of a memorable tourist experience through these authors' lenses: hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge; involvement; novelty. Some developments to the scale have been made, with the increment of other dimensions, that different authors proved related to memorable tourist experiences. For example, Chandralal and Valenzuela (2013, 2015) used the scale to assess memorable tourist experiences, concluding that the scale must have ten factors instead of the previously seven developed: authentic local experiences; self-beneficial experiences, professional local guides, and tour operators; local hospitality; affective emotions; perceived significance; social interactions with people; serendipitous and surprising experiences; fulfilment of personal travel interest.

Kim (2014) studied the factors that genesis the creation of memorable experiences, assuming that memorable experiences have a central element that must be considered: the creation of memories. The most crucial element of memorable experiences is the focus on creating positive memories about the experiences, which can benefit from the help of the destination itself.

Kim (2018) was responsible for studying the indirect impact of memorable tourism experiences on behavioural intentions through destination image and overall satisfaction, as well as examining the relationship between these variables and behavioural intentions (i.e. revisit intention and word of mouth). With a sample composed of 301 international tourists, visitors from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, Japan, South Korea and the United States, the author found that memorable tourist experiences were the best predictor of behavioural intentions, confirming that memorable tourism experiences have a crucial role on the development of a sense of loyalty to the destination.

Memorable tourism experiences can strongly influence future destination choices, contributing to this kind of experience is crucial for the destinations' competitiveness and sustainability. Zhang *et al.* (2018) developed a causal relationship model among perceived images, memorable tourist experiences and revisited intention in Huangshan City, China, with the help of a sample consisting of 261 tourists. The authors concluded that the perceived image influences behavioural intentions, and memorable tourist experiences mediate this relation. The higher the evaluation, the better the probability of living a memorable tourist experience, which directly influences the intention to revisit a determined destination.

Memorable experiences are planned under great expectation, associated with different feelings that give space to consider the outcomes and further evaluate their impact, promoting the recollection of these experiences (Zhang *et al.*, 2018).

So, these experiences have two major components: affection (hedonism, refreshment, involvement, novelty) and cognition (local culture, meaningfulness) that, together, have a powerful impact on the connection between tourists and the destinations. Overall, tourists' perceptions about the ability of the destinations to meet their expectations are the core indicators of destination attractiveness, which promotes a more robust maintenance of those destinations and experiences on tourists' memory (Larsen, 2007; Willson *et al.*, 2013; Zhang *et al.*, 2018).

Finally, memorable experiences may contribute to the development of joyful and pleasant sensations, leading individuals to the creation of memories associated with what makes life worth living (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). They are a product of the planning procedures of

the experience (expectations), the moment of the experience itself (events) and the tourists' memorability of the events (memories) (Larsen, 2007).

In sum, memorable experiences affect individuals' memory by developing a positive mood and feelings of well-being and happiness (Kim et al., 2012).

In a brief brainstorming, considering the information previously analysed, memorable experiences use individuals' expectations and personal backgrounds to develop positive, pleasant, and long-lasting memories and emotions. In other words, the impact of the experience is strongly related to the memories created, meaning that the higher the impact, the more substantial and rooted the memory will be. In so doing, guaranteeing that the experiences reach individuals' needs and objectives may contribute to more memorable experiences.

### *2.2.3. Transformational Tourism Experiences*

Transformational experiences have been approached in the literature in a very polysemic way, considering the number of concepts describing the phenomenon of a rare, emotionally loaded moment of extreme happiness and fulfilment between individuals and the universe that goes beyond individuals' identity. Despite the different nomenclature, they share similar assumptions on the same phenomenon (e.g., peak experiences, enlightened state, optimal experiences, elevating experiences, awakening experiences, transformative experiences) (Aho, 2001; Chan, 2019; Csikzentmihalyi, 1991; Huta & Ryan, 2010; Kirillova et al., 2017b; Reisinger, 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Sheldon, 2020; Tiberghien et al., 2017; Willson et al., 2013).

For many years, transformational experiences were associated with spiritual or religious journeys, also known as pilgrimages. These contexts were previously restricted to physical sites (e.g., churches, temples, sacred landscapes, or sacred cultural events). On the other hand, there was also the notion that pilgrimages were associated with new, strange, and challenging places. In both cases, the outcome was the search for meaning and greater awareness of themselves (Sheldon, 2020).

According to the evolution in definitions and the dissemination of tourism practices, the focus has been placed not on the physical features but on inner experiences as opportunities to live spiritual encounters coherent with individuals' vulnerabilities. Despite the context, travel to a determined destination is always a transformative experience (Reisinger, 2015; Sheldon, 2020), associated with the opportunity to engage in a deeper self-realisation and self-exploration.

A generic definition considers transformational experiences as “(...) characterised by intrinsically motivated, enduring changes in self-perception and behaviour (...)” (Duerden et al., 2018, p. 208).

In addition, transformational experiences are concerned with the activities and their impacts on the present moment when the action is happening. In tourism, this is materialised on a set of experiences with very little planning; tourists travel to explore the unknown, moved by what happens in a particular moment. The motivations to engage in a determined activity and the results of the experiences are secondary compared to the potentiality of the unpredictable. Tourists live more thoroughly in the moment and are less concerned about the past and the future. They travel differently, are less constrained by schedules, and prefer to react now to attractions, people, and events of interest (Sheldon, 2020).

In this particular kind of experience, specific elements attract individuals’ attention and trigger a set of reactions that involve strong and inspiring emotions, development of significant and impactful insights related to the personal challenges in beliefs, intentions or self-perceptions (Duerden et al., 2018; Willson et al., 2013) also known as serendipity (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013, 2015; Kirillova et al., 2017b; Tiberghien et al., 2020). Another critical issue that can lead individuals to thrive a spiritual meaning from their experiences is associated with previous life events, considering that they strongly impact how individuals evaluate their experiences as transformative or spiritual (Willson et al., 2013).

The attributes and values of this new consciousness are described as 1) living with compassion and other higher human values as an integral part of the transformative journey with the predominance of positive and enlightened outcomes (empathy, awakening, honesty, courage, forgiveness, kindness, gratitude, generosity, non-violence, tolerance, compassion, integrity, service, responsibility, humility, justice, wisdom and truth); 2) self-transcendence, related with personal care and a sense of a greater good to the society; 3) sense of unity with people and nature. This outcome is related to harmony and unity consciousness as interdependence of a common goal; 4) contribution to others and the environment, with a higher sense of greatness in the greater good, based on generosity, happiness and fulfilment; 5) self-inquiry, involving the reflection about one’s true inner nature; 6) simplification and authenticity, considering the need to focus on one’s path and value the little advances; 7) inner peace, as a sense of tranquillity, serenity, emotional maturity, lightness and joy; 8) mindfulness, involving the assumption of living the present moment, associated with a higher spontaneity and intuition (Sheldon, 2020).

For Kirillova et al. (2017b), one of the many designations of transformational experiences is the extraordinary experiences, along with peak experiences and transcendent experiences.

Arnould and Price (1993) conclude that extraordinary experiences, peak experiences, and transcendent experiences, despite their slight differences, share the same characteristic: the ability to transform. An extraordinary experience is characterised by three distinct but interrelated elements: a strong connection with a physical environment, a profound relationship with travel companions, personal growth, and renewal.

For Jefferies and Lepp (2012), an extraordinary experience is an emotionally charged experience associated with a high memorable potential and a very special evaluation which allows individuals to engage in several life changes.

As previously addressed, flow experiences are characterised by a total absorption state in a determined activity, with the power to motivate individuals and their communities and contribute to their psychological well-being through intense, focused involvement in the mastery of an activity. These kinds of experiences are also referred to as optimal experiences, where transformation occurs through the full engagement of individuals in the activities they are perfectly aware of (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). Also, these experiences are the ones where individuals “(...) feel a sense of exhilaration, a deep sense of enjoyment that is long cherished, does not come through passive, receptive, relaxing times.” (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1990, pp. 2). It produces a sense of transcendence, suspension of reality, separation from the mundane, and unity with a higher force of experience. Flow experiences are momentaneous and transitory. However, when characterised by challenge, skill and focus, the flow experience is similar to a loop, with individuals repeatedly engaging in this kind of sensation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Schouten et al., 2007).

Another term currently associated with transformational experiences is transcendent experience. It is described as a subjective experience characterised by intense happiness, awareness, freedom and a sense of harmony with the world (Williams & Harvey, 2001).

On the other hand, Schouten and colleagues (2007) engage in a different conceptualisation. While for Duerden and colleagues (2018), an extraordinary experience is a separate kind of experience, for Schouten and colleagues (2007), extraordinary experiences are used as a synonym for transcendental customer experiences (TCEs). This concept uses foundations and constructs from two other kinds of experiences, flow and peak experiences, to explain how consumption can strengthen individuals' commitment to a brand. It is a construct applied to marketing industries to improve the conditions of the services offered to individuals.

TCEs group a series of peak and flow experiences, which can lead individuals to experience positive outcomes, such as enjoyment, focus, self-transformation, newness of experience and emotional intensity. They elevate the importance and value of the objects, activities, symbols, and people associated with them (Schouten et al., 2007).

Transcendental customer experiences (TCEs) involve considering emotional information, like high personal involvement, spontaneity, meaningfulness, and value (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Schouten et al., 2007). There might be associations between TCEs and situational and dispositional factors like individual differences in openness to experiences, showing that this personality characteristic is critical for the relationship between emotional intelligence and TCEs once it is defined as the ability to think and experience life with a deep intention, extending the boundaries of life experiences to self-direction and stimulation domains (Dollinger, 2012; Sukhu et al., 2018).

Consumers' emotional intelligence influences these experiences and individuals' relationships with nature, places, service providers and other consumers (Sukhu et al., 2018). How emotional information is interpreted will impact how individuals relate to every element of the experience (Schouten et al., 2007).

In a study by Sukhu and colleagues (2018), the authors concluded that TCEs evoked higher loyalty, willingness to pay, and word of mouth. Finally, individuals with a higher openness to experience and a high ability made a less interpretation of the transcendence characteristic of their experience.

Another study found that TCEs can enhance the consumer's relationship with the brand, with a strong probability of improving brand loyalty. When the changes in customer relationship with the product, other owners, and the brand community are positive, TCEs have a strong impact on the prediction of brand loyalty, which proves that this kind of experience contributes to the greater impact on customer-product and customer-customer relationships. In this study, individuals experiencing transcendence when consuming a determined event or product have a high probability of developing a strong emotional bond with individuals, products and institutions that, somehow, will facilitate the experience, enhancing the ability of customers to create a flow experience (Schouten et al., 2007).

In sum, the long-lasting the effects of subjective levels of beliefs and attitudes, the stronger the supreme joyful experiences to which individuals become attached and loyal (Schouten et al., 2007; Sukhu et al., 2018).

As for peak experiences, they are defined as potentially transformative experiences with a very short duration, an epiphany characterised by intense emotional responses while

experiencing rare triggering episodes, and consider the interrelation of three sources of information to define these experiences as stimulating (cognition), intensively emotional (emotion) and sensorially magnificent (sensation) (Kirillova et al., 2017a, 2017b; Reisinger, 2013; Schouten et al., 2007; Sheldon, 2020; Soulard et al., 2019).

Peak experiences are frequently associated with a sense of awe, wonder, and self-exploration, with positive outcomes related to strong emotions, greater perception, appreciation of beauty, acceptance, connection and harmony with the world. Individuals engaging in these experiences change the belief of feeling insignificant to embrace a feeling of identifying with something greater than themselves (Schouten et al., 2007; Sheldon, 2020; Soulard et al., 2019).

In addition, Maslow (1968) defended that these experiences are related to the highest moments of happiness and fulfilment of the experience, where individuals experience a true state of consciousness, called the cognition of being (b-cognition), and are more perceptive and self-controlled. It involves a moment of disorientation in time and space, always associated with positive occurrences. These experiences are lived as a whole, acting as the goal of living: a process of individual change related to the view of themselves, others, and the world (Kirillova et al., 2017a). This knowledge of the meaning of the triggering experience is the vehicle for the peak experiences to become transformative by recognising that individuals are ready to face the unknown (Kirillova et al., 2017a, 2017b).

In sum, peak experiences can shake travellers from their comfort zones, cause questioning of intrinsic values, and begin a more profound awakening to a new way of being in the world (Soulard et al., 2019). They are emotionally intensive, sensorially impressive and cognitively stimulating (Kirilova et al., 2017a, 2017b).

It can also come from deep cultural immersion, and human interaction transformation tends to occur when tourists “(...) can engage with the unknown; with unfamiliar places, people and their activities” (Reisinger, 2013, pp. 28).

Transformational experiences can also be related to a state of enlightenment, unity, and transcendental consciousness, “(...) where the egoic self-drops away leaving the practitioner in a new and permanent state of enlightenment (...)” (Sheldon, 2020, pp.1). When considering the experience of transformation, it is accurate that this respect to an inner process that involves deep connectivity in cultural and natural settings, a movement of self-inquiry, self-reflection, self-knowledge, learning and creativity and, finally, an engaged contribution to the destination by tourists. Inner transformations commonly experienced in tourism are increased mindfulness, a shift in values and beliefs, a redefinition of life, a transcendence of the small self, a connection with a greater power, and a sense of unity with all creation. To permanently live these

transformations takes time, and methods of assisting tourists to integrate them more permanently are essential (Sheldon, 2020).

There is also another term that is associated with transformational experiences, which is a process of awakening. In so being, awakening of experiences is the crucial element of the process responsible for the decision-making and, then, the touristic experience itself. It is named the orientation stage, which will lead individuals to get attached to a destination based on the strong interest that the destination represents. This phase englobes the decision and the process of preparing the trip, considering the expectations that, ultimately, contribute to the quality of the trip evaluation based on general satisfaction (Aho, 2001; Sheldon, 2020).

As for Huta and Ryan (2010) and Schouten and colleagues (2007), transformational experiences are approached as elevating experiences once they have the effect of elevating the importance and value of the objects, activities, symbols, and people associated with them (Schouten et al., 2007). An elevating experience reflects energy, aliveness, inspiration, awe and transcendence in connecting with a greater whole (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991) and a broader level of functioning (Huta & Ryan, 2010).

After an exhaustive search of the literature, Kirilova and colleagues (2017b) prepared a list of seven categories of triggers: introspection, unity with nature, unity with others, spontaneity, novelty, aesthetic experience, and self-development. Other studies suggested other triggers, such as fascination, novelty and compatibility, associated with the facilitation of transcendence experiences (Williams & Harvey, 2001), accomplishing individuals' goals, spontaneity, outdoors, cross-cultural experiences and reflection, concerning the development of extraordinary experiences (Jefferies & Lepp, 2012), sense of spontaneity, freedom, and naturalness, associated with the absorption at the moment and the surroundings (Maslow, 1968), hardship, wilderness, solitude, and wildlife, on the genesis of peak experiences (Williams & Harvey, 2001; Kirillova et al., 2017b).

The experiences resulting from travelling are documented in the investigation as strongly transformational (e.g., Kirillova et al., 2017a, 2017b). Tourism represents a transformative asset for individuals to engage in genuinely impactful experiences, where transformation is seen as a long yet satisfying and meaningful process (Kirillova et al., 2017b).

Nevertheless, and regarding any of the previous assumptions, the essential elements of these experiences are the triggers and meanings associated with the transformative power of the experience (Kirillova et al., 2017b).

In sum, all the definitions converge in the same idea: the assumption of a transformative, aware and spiritual experience, where individuals engage in a transcendental journey of self-

discovery and unity with greater power and others, characterised by an enlightenment and awareness state, that leads individuals to the development of a genuine sense of absorption, associated with self-exploration, self-transformation, and self-realisation.

### **2.3. Conclusions**

“Experiences are how individuals engage with the world” (Duerden et al., 2018, pp. 212). Every action we engage in has a purpose; the impact will be intense depending on the meaning attached.

It is coherent that the tourist experience is a world of change, meaning, and transformation, attached to the development of strong emotions and memories that, ultimately, influence tourists’ way of thinking, being and behaving. In so being, by looking for a meaning and a life purpose through travel, people consider three aspects: a search for self and identity, self-empowerment, and connectedness with other citizens. The combination of these three is an important insight into the way people withdraw meaning from the things they do (Laing & Frost, 2017; Willson et al., 2013; Wang, 2020).

Following this thought, tourists must be guided in designing their experiences to meet their internal needs (Jiang, 2017).

In sum, despite the remarkable similarity among these three concepts, they can be associated with different antecedents and outcomes concerning their focus and how researchers approach them.

Summarising their main differences, memorable tourism experiences are associated with the development of strong emotions, which leads to a vital insight into their impact on individuals’ lives. After a process of solid reflection, those experiences are retained in tourists’ memories, becoming memorable ones.

As for meaningful experiences, despite the similarities with the previous ones, the focus is placed on the attribution of meaning, which will determine the impact of the experiences on tourists’ lives, as well as the way they will be craved in individuals’ minds, influencing the process of memorability.

Finally, transformational experiences – as the name proposes – are associated with the individuals’ inner transformation regarding values, beliefs, intentions, and self-perceptions. As researchers, it is accurate to affirm that these last kinds of experiences are the ones with the most robust probability of evoking a change in individuals’ routines, associated with the intense emotional impact (Jiang, 2017) and the way they influence tourists’ way of being and behaving

(Duerden et al., 2018). Altogether, we can say that they are not three separate concepts, but complementing concepts once the crescent pattern on the degree of complexity and personal involvement is evident. and personal impact through the three concepts.

Even though literature is starting to study the concepts and elements of these experiences, there still needs to be an association on how those elements can be related to psychological fields and outcomes, considering the intense focus on marketing, tourism, management, and other economic fields. So, further research should analyse how these concepts can be practically identified, meaning what the antecedents and outcomes associated with each one. Another topic of interest that both three kinds of experiences have in common is the emotional impact. Literature has focused on describing the emotional consequences of a particular experience. However, there needs to be more understanding of why these are the affective responses elicited by specific stimuli and not others (Skavronskaya et al., 2017).

Despite the coherent and complete literature concerning the role of emotions on tourism significant experiences, some perspectives are underestimated, which can lead to a new pathway of interest: More than “What” and “Why” do people feel this way about these experiences? What other constructs can be considered predictors of this relationship? (e.g., memorability, destination image, place attachment, novelty, and familiarity)?

More than tourist destinations, the individual is the most crucial criterion for creating a tourist experience (Larsen, 2007). We should seek an equilibrium between the individual, with his personal characteristics, motivations, expectations and behaviours, and the destination and its components (Vada et al., 2019) to create a thriving holistic product, considering that places are not responsible for attracting people or push them away (Larsen, 2007), but rather the individual, with his needs, expectations, and motivations.

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### 3. CHAPTER THREE

#### **STUDY 2: POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY, WELL-BEING, AND MINDFULNESS: A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEANINGFUL TOURISM EXPERIENCES**

Câmara, E., Pocinho, M., Agapito, D., & Jesus, S. N. (2022). Positive Psychology, Well-Being, and Mindfulness: A Successful Partnership Towards the Development of Meaningful Tourist Experiences. *Journal of Tourism, Sustainability, and Well-being*, 10(1), 21-38.  
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**Positive psychology, well-being, and mindfulness: A successful partnership towards the development of meaningful tourist experiences**

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## **Positive psychology, well-being, and mindfulness: A successful partnership towards the development of meaningful tourist experiences**

**Abstract:** Tourism is going through its most challenging phase due to the pandemic. In this context, psychology and tourism are a successful partnership to develop meaningful experiences considering tourists' needs, desires, and expectations. This interconnection is observed through applying positive psychology in the context of meaningful tourist experiences. This approach comprises adequate indicators to explore the tourism field from the perspective of individuals' well-being. Positive psychology, positive tourism, well-being, and mindfulness constitute the theoretical foundations of this article, which intends to understand how they are intertwined to fulfil one goal: developing meaningful tourist experiences. This article reflects on the connections between the referred theoretical foundations. In so doing, it proposes a preliminary diagram illustrating the theoretical links observed in the literature, which acts as a first step towards designing a systematic literature review on the antecedents and outcomes of meaningful tourist experiences.

**Keywords:** Meaningful experiences, Positive psychology, Well-being, Mindfulness, Positive tourism.

**JEL Classification Code(s):** I31

### 3.1. Introduction

Tourism is going through its most challenging times, considering the psychological outbreak impact of the worldwide 2019 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). Wang and colleagues (2020) recognised that, in China, the psychological impacts were evaluated as moderate or severe (53.8%), characterised by intense anxiety symptoms (28.8%) and moderate to extreme stress levels (8.1%). A Portuguese study (Agência Lusa, 2020) concluded that 24.0% of the sample reported anxiety and sadness, and 82.0% felt at least one adverse mental health effect. Focusing on what makes life worth living is imperative by understanding what makes experiences meaningful.

This article intends to explore further a new path in tourism that acknowledges the potential of positive psychology, well-being, positive tourism, and mindfulness on the development of tourist experiences associated with the development of meaningful tourist experiences thus contributing to the reflection on this research topic. This theoretical discussion represents a first step towards designing a systematic literature review on the antecedents and outcomes of meaningful tourist experiences. Some studies emphasise the connection between positive psychology and well-being in a tourism context (e.g., Filep, 2016; Filep & Laing, 2019; Garcês et al., 2018; Hao & Xiao, 2021; Vada et al., 2020). However, the literature suggests that more is needed to help to understand how stakeholders perceive a tourist experience as meaningful, either in terms of their triggers (antecedents) and their results in the short, medium, and long time (outcomes) (e.g., Chen & Yoon, 2019; Garcês et al., 2018). Also, the literature focuses on the immediate well-being results of the experiences (hedonic perspective) (see Filep & Laing, 2019; Hao & Xiao, 2021; Nawijn, 2015; Voigt, 2017), leaving behind the long-term results that have a substantial impact on individuals' life. Finally, some research has shown the potential of mindfulness for meaningful tourist experiences (e.g., Chen et al., 2017; Dutt & Ninov, 2016; Park et al., 2019; Tiberghien et al., 2020). Nevertheless, research on the relationships between the abovementioned theoretical approaches is still scarce.

The article is organised into three main chapters. Chapter two is dedicated to the literature review, exploring meaningful tourist experiences, positive psychology, positive tourism, well-being, and mindfulness. Chapter three explores the interrelated aspects of the analysed theoretical concepts that contribute to promoting meaningful tourist experiences, the instruments already developed to assess them, and the research gaps and future directions. The final chapter includes the theoretical and managerial implications and the main conclusions. Some future research directions are discussed according to the main gaps found.

## 3.2. Literature review

### 3.2.1. *Meaningful tourist experiences*

Meaningful experiences are related to the interpretation, narration, and transformation based on the activities, events, and environments in which people engage (Packer & Gill, 2017), characterised by the level of attraction and impact on individuals' attention. They represent a sum of the experience, its evaluation, and all the contextual and environmental contingencies involving emotions and knowledge. Therefore, interpreting an experience makes it meaningful, involving solid emotions that predispose the individual to self-reflection (Duerden et al., 2018).

In tourism, meaningful experiences are characterised by pleasure and how personally meaningful tourists find their holiday activities (Filep, 2014), leading to solid emotions, relevant insights, significant opinions and memories, and knowledge (Duerden et al., 2018). Simultaneously, they represent a path to overcoming physical challenges and self-sufficiency in dealing and negotiating with those challenges as an opportunity to express individuals' identity (Packer & Gill, 2017), enabling positive and collaborative interactions. Additionally, meaningful experiences allow the development of a feeling of community, moved by attention, emotion, reflections, and discovery (Fredrickson, 2001; Newman et al., 2014).

Through travelling, people discover several things that make everyday life meaningful, such as relationships with others, encounters with nature and recreational activities, and an opportunity to think about oneself and personal growth (Packer & Gill, 2017). Travelling offers meaning, mainly when individuals use it to mark a significant life event or a great change. So, not only does an activity hold on to its meaning associated with its impact, but it adds a personal meaning related to a sense of reward, recovery, or an indelible marker of a turning point in people's lives (Packer & Gill, 2017).

During the evaluation of the experiences, four pillars help to explain how individuals develop meaning: 1) belonging (relationship developed with others); 2) purpose (perception about life purpose); 3) storytelling (how the situation is evaluated); 4) transcendence (connection to something bigger) (Laing, 1967). For Baumeister and Vohs (2002), the search for meaning fulfils four needs: 1) purpose, 2) values, 3) sense of efficacy, and 4) self-worth.

To understand how meaningful experiences are expressed, several instruments have been developed that address some aspects preconised by literature associated with meaningful experiences, even though they do not fully assess the construct. Examples are 1) emotional component - Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) (Watson et al., 1988); Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999); Scale of Positive and Negative

Experiences (SPANE) (Diener et al., 2010) – 2) positive relationships, purpose in life, well-being, self-discovery – Flourishing Scale (FS) (Diener et al., 2010); Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Wellbeing (QEWB) (Waterman et al., 2010); Tourism Wellbeing Scale (TWS) (Garcês et al., 2020) – 3) personal expressiveness, flow experiences, and self-realisation – Personally Expressive Activities and Questionnaires (PEAQ) (Waterman, 1993) – 4) meaningfulness – Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) Scale (Kim et al., 2012; Staphit & Coudounaris, 2018)

Meaningful experiences are a complex concept focused on the self and the social, relational, and emotional dimensions. As such, what other theoretical foundations introduce an essential complement to the correct evaluation of meaningful experiences? The following sections introduce theoretical foundations that research has proven to be closely related to meaningful experiences, but also with each other, giving strength to a possible new path of investigation.

### 3.2.2. *Positive psychology*

Seligman (2002) founded Positive Psychology as the study of individuals' and communities' strengths, characteristics, and actions that explain the positive and significant results of their experiences (Garcês et al., 2020).

As the movement of perseverance, strengths, and virtues, positive psychology encourages individuals to overcome challenges and develop a sense of independence that will lead to self-sufficiency and, thus, compete for a sense of reward and independence (Packer & Gill, 2017). Thus, positive psychology induces in people the need to exacerbate their virtues and strengths (Seligman, 2002). Peterson and Seligman (2004) established the existence of six cross-cultural virtues, each one with their strengths (in parenthesis): 1) Wisdom and knowledge (creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective); 2) Courage (bravery, persistence, integrity, vitality); 3) Humanity (love, kindness, social intelligence); 4) Justice (citizenship, fairness, leadership); 5) Temperance (forgiveness, modesty, prudence, self-regulation); 6) Transcendence (appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humour, spirituality).

Positive psychology has three pillars: 1) positive emotions, placed in time, as a *continuum*; in this perspective, positive emotions related to the past (e.g., satisfaction, contentment, fulfilment, pride, serenity), present (e.g., joy, ecstasy, calm, zest, ebullience, pleasure, flow, happiness), and future (optimism, hope, faith, trust); 2) positive individual traits, like subjective well-being, optimism, happiness, and self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2001);

3) positive institutions, like responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic (Seligman, 2002). The outcomes are associated with well-being, happiness, optimism, and life satisfaction (Garcês et al., 2020).

Positive psychology aims to understand the factors that lead individuals, communities, and societies to flourish. Emotions are elicited through the interpretation, evaluation, and appraisal of a determined individual experience, meaning that different people appraise the same stimuli in various manners, producing different emotional reactions (Scott et al., 2017). Positive emotions play a fundamental role in this process, considering they will trigger individuals to optimise their well-being in favourable conditions due to their mediator role between psychological growth and improved well-being over time (Fredrickson, 2001).

One of the contexts where positive psychology has been applied is tourism (Filep et al., 2017; Garcês et al., 2018, 2019; Vada et al., 2020; Volo, 2021). Travelling is an experience that since the beginning is attached to a strong meaning: it starts with the recognition of the need to satisfy something that is currently missing, the development of expectations, and destination choice (anticipation phase; the tourist experience itself, where individuals develop emotions, meanings, feelings, and memories (on-site phase); and the evaluation of the experience (reflexive phase) (Larsen, 2007).

Tourism experiences are subjective once people are not predictable in their actions, thoughts and expectations, affecting the process of planning, interpreting, and storing the experiences. This has an essential role in the emotions associated with it. Considering that an experience to be remarkable must be associated with powerful emotions (Volo, 2021), the tourist experience is a product of the past. These travel-related events evoke extreme and powerful emotions (Larsen, 2007). As such, increasing knowledge about the triggers (antecedents) of an experience can be a successful element in promoting meaningful tourist experiences associated with powerful personalised outcomes.

From the previous foundations, another vital characteristic of positive psychology emerges from the search for meaning and purpose in life, once it is the core contribution to happiness and pleasure through the pursuit of life satisfaction. The construction of meaning is central in positive psychology, considering its close relation with well-being, life satisfaction, and positive affect. The search for meaning is a daily construction, considering that individuals seek the meaningful component of their experiences, which gives life a purpose (Packer & Gill, 2017).

Finally, the third component of positive psychology is related to life satisfaction, connected to the seek for what makes life worth living and, thus, represents a decisive

dimension for positive psychology since it is an individual process that involves individuals' needs, motivations, and characteristics, life purpose, and the meaning of each one's actions (Packer & Gill, 2017).

Overall, positive psychology is one of the most significant contributors to the development and engagement of individuals in meaningful experiences, considering its focus on promoting resilience and the search for meaning. One of the first attempts to join positive psychology and tourism was suggested by Filep (2016), proposing a sub-field called positive tourism.

### 3.2.3. *Positive Psychology and Tourism: Positive Tourism*

Positive tourism focusses on the hedonic and eudaimonic human well-being components, with the primary objective to understand tourists', local communities, and tourism workers' flourishing, depending on the characteristics of meaningful tourist experiences, the relationship between tourists and local community, and the kind of interactions between tourism industries and tourists, aiming to promote well-being, through three pillars: 1) *positive tourism experiences*, which offers opportunities for social interactions, personal growth, identity development, and reflection about the purpose of life (Packer & Gill, 2017); 2) *positive host communities*, characterised by emotional commitment, feelings of moral obligation, interest in the welfare of others, and reduced uncertainty about the other's likely behaviour (Glover & Filep, 2017); 3) *positive tourism workers*, responsible for the emotional engagement with clients, guiding roles that mediate experiences and facilitate life changes, helping tourists achieve their goals, grow and develop themselves. In turn, this gives tourism workers a sense of meaning in life by transforming other peoples' lives (Saunders et al., 2017).

A vital characteristic of positive tourism is searching for meaning in individuals' activities. The vacations are considered a source of meaning that serves three purposes: 1) milestone markers, by introducing something that never happened before; 2) remedy or reward, considering individuals' need to restore their strengths and face vacations as a positive reinforcement of all their commitment; 3) change of life (Packer & Gill, 2017), related to the development of positive and more meaningful memories, positive emotions and pleasant sensations (Filep & Deery, 2010), and a higher sense of relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In sum, looking at tourism in a positive, humanist-inspired way enables host communities to flourish, encourages workers to thrive and enhances the quality of the experiences (Filep et al., 2017), leading to the development of a strong relationship between tourism, psychology, experiences, and well-being (Filep, 2014, 2016; Filep & Deery, 2010).

#### 3.2.4. *Well-being*

Well-being is the core element of positive psychology (Garcês et al., 2020; Seligman, 2002). Applied to tourism, positive psychology promotes well-being for tourists, resident communities, and workers (Garcês et al., 2018; Voigt, 2017), which points out the need for industries and entrepreneurs to be aware of the characteristics associated with meaningful tourist experiences (Smith & Diekmann, 2017), turning well-being into the Pandora box of tourism industries (Garcês et al., 2020). Well-being is one of the strongest predictors for people to develop an emotional bond with a particular destination. From a broader perspective, tourist well-being promotes tourist health, enhancing one's inner self and belongingness to a social world and reinforcing the ability to cope with the stress of everyday life. (Vada et al., 2020). However, disagreements exist on the correct definition of well-being and how to measure it, resulting from the confluence of different disciplines (Voigt, 2017), leading to the development of several perspectives (Garcês et al., 2019). The results point to one of the most crucial well-being perspectives that have served as the foundations of positive psychology: the search for meaning under the immediate outcomes of the experiences – hedonic well-being – versus a broader perspective related to long-term benefits – eudaimonic well-being (Packer & Gill, 2017; Vada et al., 2020; Voigt, 2017).

#### 3.2.5. *Hedonic and eudaimonic well-being*

The Greek Aristippus of Cyrene used the foundations of philosophy to express and examine feelings of “hedone” (“pleasure” in Greek) as the supreme good in life (Voigt, 2017), pursue happiness and avoid painful experiences. Hedonia is the immediate perspective of well-being, related to the pursuit of happiness (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999; Packer & Gill, 2017; Voigt, 2017), development of positive and negative emotions (Bradburn, 1969; Diener et al., 2010; Packer & Gill, 2017; Voigt, 2017; Waterman, 1993; Watson et al., 1988), search for enjoyment, pleasure, fun, relaxation, and escape (Voigt, 2017), and sensory stimulation (Voigt, 2017).

Eudaimonia is characterised by excellence (Waterman, 2011), using individuals' virtues and strengths to undertake the best choices and actions (Laing & Frost, 2017). Discovering the true self is the central core of eudaimonia, meaning that the authentic eudaimonic experience presupposes the achievement of equilibrium between individuals' potential and the activities they engage in (Voigt, 2017). Eudaimonia is defined as a process of personal expressiveness,

considering how people should live and the positive-cognitive-affective subjective condition (Waterman, 2011).

Huta and Waterman (2014) adopted four central eudaimonic perspectives: 1) Growth (self-actualisation and personal goals); 2) Meaning (purpose of life); 3) Excellence (higher standards of individuals' behaviours); and 4) Authenticity (connection with our inner selves).

To Ryff (1989), eudaimonia assesses six dimensions: 1) self-acceptance (self-actualisation and optimal functioning); 2) Positive relations with others (trust, empathy, identification with others, and intimacy); 3) Autonomy (self-determination, independence, and regulation of behaviour); 4) Environmental mastery (create environments that suit one is psychic and mental conditions); 5) Purpose in life (comprehension of life purpose and goals); 6) Personal Growth (ability to grow, actualisation, and openness to experience).

Csikszentmihalyi (1991) developed the flow theory, which compares flow to an optimal, transformational experience in which individuals engage with their full awareness. The best condition to induce a full sensation of flow is the full engagement in challenging activities, allied with the individuals' skills, which gives rise to an optimal flow experience (Waterman, 2011).

Waterman *et al.* (2010) also emphasised the intense involvement in activities. They developed a study where eudaimonia and other categories emerged, such as self-discovery, perceived development, purpose and meaning of life, and enjoyment of activities as personally expressive.

Comparing the two perspectives, hedonia is oriented to the present, whilst eudaimonia is for the future. Hedonia is a function of self-regulation of emotions, which helps people regulate affect. On the other hand, eudaimonic activities develop a cumulative effect on positive affect and decrease distress. It can be associated with developing objectives that drive away from the absorption of negative affect and coping skills to deal with this adverse outcome. In sum, hedonia is related to purely affective outcomes, whilst eudaimonia leads to cognitive-affective feelings of significance and appreciation, a connection to the whole experience, and long-term outcomes.

Another perspective is born with Seligman (2011), the PERMA model of flourishing.

### 3.2.6. PERMA model (Seligman, 2011)

The PERMA model is a valuable resource for positive psychology, as it is a solid theoretical framework that promotes well-being holistically (Garcês et al., 2019). It is based on

the Authentic Happiness Theory (2002), which considers that authentic happiness is related to being cheerful and is measured by life satisfaction (Seligman, 2011).

Seligman (2011) defends that other elements, together with hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, deliver a better and more complete definition of well-being. These elements are (PERMA):

- Positive emotions (e.g., amusement, awe, compassion, contentment, gratitude, hope, interest, joy, love, and pride);
- Engagement (lead to flow experiences when individuals' highest strengths match the challenges);
- Relationships (developing strong ties is a skill that leads to individuals' well-being and health improvement)
- Meaning (belonging and believe in something bigger than oneself);
- Accomplishment (achievement, mastery, competence)

Each of these elements is pursued by individuals, contributing to the overall experience of well-being. The benefits of this approach are related to assumptions from eudaimonic well-being perspectives, such as self-acceptance, positive relations with other people, personal growth, and finding a purpose in life (Seligman, 2011).

As Filep (2016) acknowledged, the outcomes of PERMA have been highly protruding on tourism experiences in different phases of the trip. Filep and Deery (2010) considered that positive emotions could reach higher values when individuals imagine their travel and what they expect to find based on information searched or received through the advice of someone. This process promotes a more robust engagement with the travel experience and the development of meaning and purpose.

### 3.2.7. *DRAMMA model (Newman et al., 2014)*

After the PERMA model, Newman and colleagues (2014) developed a new approach to subjective well-being. The authors defend that fulfilling determinant psychological experiences is the key to enhancing subjective well-being in leisure. The authors tried to understand how leisure affects subjective well-being in all its components – satisfaction, positive, and negative feelings – considering that the more positive psychological processes occur, the more subjective well-being can be approached (Newman et al., 2014).

The psychological components of this approach are Detachment-Recovery, Autonomy, Mastery, Meaning, and Affiliation (DRAMMA). Each is essential in mediating the relationship

between leisure and subjective well-being, considering its interrelated components (satisfaction, positive, and negative feelings) and their impact on this relationship (Newman et al., 2014).

Detachment-Recovery is related to satisfying basic needs, such as relaxation and recovery from daily life efforts. Detachment relates to giving up certain troubling or harmful elements of life. Recovery refers to the attempt to recover some aspects of life, which involves the trigger from high arousal or physically challenging forms of leisure. Through the first attempt of detachment and avoidance of something painful, individuals restore themselves to fulfil their identity authentically, allowing them to engage in a further process of recovery, increasing satisfaction with life, enhancing positive emotions, and decreasing negative emotions, which is crucial for the recovery (Newman et al., 2014).

Autonomy is a prerequisite to understanding how people develop and seek well-being (e.g., self-determination theory, from Ryan and Deci, 2001). Through constant participation in the same leisure activities, individuals restore their perception of control and freedom, leading to subjective well-being (Newman et al., 2014). Autonomy of subjective well-being can be included through intrinsic and autonomous motivation in leisure. Intrinsic motivation is linked to activities that match peoples' interests, leading to higher life enjoyment, psychological well-being, and a great sensation of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). Autonomous motivation relates to activities that do not match individuals' motivations and willingness.

Mastery focuses on introducing the right skills into a leisure activity, achieving a new level of success, or overcoming challenges. Several associations confirm the relationship between mastery, subjective well-being, and flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991) since absorption is a challenging activity that demands mastery and increases satisfaction with life, self-actualisation, self-enrichment, renewal, and a sense of accomplishment (Newman et al., 2014).

Meaning is related to positive emotions and life satisfaction and strongly correlates with the flow and severe leisure, considering that strong commitment and meaningful engagement are two critical requisites for serious leisure (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Newman et al., 2014). This link between meaning and subjective well-being can be improved through engagement with life and close relationships (Fredrickson, 2001; Newman et al., 2014).

Affiliation proposes that social activities are related to the affiliative need for socialisation and the development of relationships with others once they represent a sense of belonging and connection with others and activities (Newman et al., 2014).

Finally, the DRAMMA model is also applied to tourism settings. Different psychological mechanisms emerge from tourist trips, explaining peak mood levels and

emotions through travel (Nawijn & Biran, 2019). Individuals are more likely to engage in self-congruent activities to their needs, goals, and personalities to enhance subjective well-being (Newman et al., 2014).

### 3.2.8. *PERMA and DRAMMA: Similarities and Differences*

Compared to PERMA, DRAMMA proposes similar dimensions. However, DRAMMA attempts to address both hedonic and eudaimonic outcomes (Laing & Frost, 2017). Both models share the same construct of meaning, associated with seeking a purpose, a talent for living most intensely, and belonging to some social commitment (Newman et al., 2014). Through the dimensions of affiliation (DRAMMA) and relationships (PERMA), associated with the same outcomes, it can be observed that the latter is strongly related to eudaimonic well-being (Huta & Waterman, 2014) and finding love to a more hedonic outcome (Laing & Frost, 2017).

An equal relation is found between mastery (DRAMMA) and achievement (PERMA), considering that both are related to an autonomous attitude of conquering something meaningful, once that mastery challenge lies in dealing with different cultures or learning something new about them (Laing & Frost, 2017). Both components might involve the learning of new skills or a deeper understanding of different issues (Seligman, 2011), and an opportunity to develop and grow (Laing & Frost, 2017).

DRAMMA's autonomy is strictly linked with PERMA's engagement, considering that engaging in new activities presupposes an independent attitude and a sense of future control. PERMA's positive emotions are absent in the DRAMMA model (Newman et al., 2014). However, research has shown that this dimension is transversal to all the dimensions of DRAMMA (Newman et al., 2014).

Finally, the most expressive difference between these models is the context where the DRAMMA model was developed, i.e., a leisure context, making this model particularly attractive in understanding tourists' well-being (Laing & Frost, 2017).

### 3.2.9. *Mindfulness*

Mindfulness has been defined as a state of mind where individuals experience strong attention and awareness of what happens in the moment (Chan, 2019), which gives individuals the opportunity to be implicitly aware of the context and content of the information, notice new details, and feel sensitive to context. Considered the consciousness property with the highest relation to well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003), mindfulness involves an openness to novelty, self-acknowledgement, and self-regulation (Langer, 2000), helping individuals be conscious of

awareness through scanning the physical sensations of the body, thoughts, feelings, or emotions, and exploring what surrounds them (Brown & Ryan, 2003). As for its benefits, mindfulness increases individuals' competence, decrease accidents, improve memory, creativity, positive affect, longevity, and reduce stress (Langer, 2000).

Chen and colleagues (2017) examined the relationship between mindfulness and tourist experiences by exploring the role of mindful mental states on the genesis of experiential outcomes. Their framework is divided into antecedents (triggers of meditative mindfulness), episodes (constructs related to mindful experience), and consequences (positive outcomes of meditative mindfulness). The themes and constructs are 1) paying attention to the experience (sensory awareness and relaxed attention); 2) living in the present (being aware of the moment and interacting with the surroundings); 3) non-elaborative awareness (cognitive processes occurring on meditative mindfulness experiences).

Dutt and Ninov (2016) studied the role of mindfulness in helping tourists remember the interactions established with tourism businesses. The results confirmed that mindfulness influenced tourists' positive memories through unique experiences, features, and a variety of facilities and services offered, showing the strong potential of this movement on tourists' memories about the destination. The framework divided the factors involved in this process into individual (interest, perception and mindset, people, and interpersonal relationship), site factors (people and interpersonal relationships, experience, aesthetics, safety, control), and the benefits into hard (word of mouth, satisfaction), and soft benefits (understanding, history, culture and heritage, environment, difference, and infrastructure).

Tourism has been a crucial context where mindfulness applies. Individuals develop a sense of self-awareness, resulting in an authentic experience and a feeling of *communitas*. The spiritual dimension of tourism involves people, places, relationships, and emotions and is influenced by cultural background, personal goals, motivations, expectations, pre-conceived knowledge of the destination, and local people (Tiberghien et al., 2020). The social interaction during the experience is crucial in evaluating the role of mindfulness in meaningful experiences. It can be constructed between tourists who travel together and local communities, promoting the attractiveness of destinations (Park et al., 2019).

In sum, key main characteristics related to mindfulness are 1) Transcendence (Chen et al., 2017); 2) Self-acceptance (Chen et al., 2017); 3) Awareness (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Chan, 2019; Chen et al., 2017; Dutt & Ninov, 2016; Langer, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Tiberghien et al., 2020); 4) Meaning of life and beliefs (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Tiberghien et al., 2020); 5) Spirituality (Chang et al., 2021).

### *3.2.10. Positive psychology, positive tourism, well-being, and mindfulness: Synergies*

Meaningful experiences represent a change in the routine, with important social, personal, and emotional components of individuals' lives. Positive psychology, positive tourism, well-being, and mindfulness mediate this process of increasing personal consciousness, providing enhanced experiences. As such, tourism experiences have the strong potential to become extraordinary and meaningful (Kirillova et al., 2017). Many studies relating meaningful tourist experiences with positive psychology, well-being, mindfulness, and other psychological constructs (e.g., emotions, memory, place attachment, destination image, authenticity) present the motivations that lead tourists to engage in these meaningful experiences. Considering the complementary theoretical foundations reflected in this manuscript, what are the potential synergies between positive psychology, positive tourism, well-being, and mindfulness with meaningful tourist experiences?

### *3.2.11. Positive psychology and positive tourism*

Positive tourism aligns the foundations of positive psychology to tourism, enhancing the potential to promote meaningful tourism experiences, considering positive host communities and positive tourism workers (Filep et al., 2017). Studies corroborate these assumptions, centring on the antecedents and consequences of these topics. There are different motivations to engage in meaningful experiences, considering that individuals seek an inner construction based on beliefs and perspectives (Reisinger, 2013). Positive psychology and positive tourism corroborate this motivation, considering that both focus on fulfilling a purpose and positive significance. Filep (2014) acknowledged that individuals develop a sense of gratitude throughout their meaningful tourist experiences that leads to the development of a feeling for the visited place (Reisinger, 2013). Positive psychology, as the driver of positive emotions (Seligman, 2002), and positive tourism compete for the same goal: to develop positive emotions through engagement in significant positive experiences.

In sum, meaningful experiences are a personal and, simultaneously, a social process, considering individuals' motivations and expectations, and the relationship between tourists and the local community (Filep et al., 2017).

### *3.2.12. Positive psychology and well-being*

Through the lens of positive psychology and well-being, the main motivations to engage in meaningful experiences are the search for self and identity, the quest for self-

empowerment (Steger et al., 2006), and seeking for positive emotions (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013; Wilson et al., 2013). As for the outcomes, they relate to the development of strong emotions and feelings (excitement, pleasure, enjoyment) (Packer & Gill, 2017), pleasant sensations (Csikzentmihalyi, 1991; Larsen, 2007; Wilson et al., 2013), sense of being (Packer & Gill, 2017), and happiness (Seligman, 2002). As both movements are related to positive emotions, personal growth, the search for meaning, and life purpose (Laing, 1967; Newman et al., 2014; Packer & Gill, 2017; Ryff, 1989; Seligman, 2002, 2011; Voigt, 2017), they have the potential to develop meaningful experiences.

### *3.2.13. Positive tourism and well-being*

Positive tourism is related to well-being, as both focus on developing positive relationships between individuals and the visited place, competing to develop meaningful experiences (Filep et al., 2017; Glover & Filep, 2017; Saunders et al., 2017). Both positive tourism and well-being focus on the social component of meaningful experiences, which can dictate the success or unsuccess of the experiences, considering the critical role of the host communities and tourism workers in promoting their destinations as meaningful (Filep et al., 2017).

### *3.2.14. Mindfulness, positive psychology, positive tourism, and well-being*

Mindfulness influences positive psychological experiences and well-being. Consciousness is related to several well-being dimensions, like positive affectivity, vitality, life satisfaction, self-esteem, optimism, self-actualisation, autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Also, mindfulness is responsible for developing self-awareness, influencing positive emotional states, and decreasing mood disturbance and stress (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Mindfulness, positive psychology, positive tourism, and well-being strongly value relationships. Individuals seek authentic and robust relationships, characterised by intimacy, experiencing a social change in their relationships with themselves, others, the world, or a higher power or force. The same applies to positive psychology and well-being, where the social component is crucial to understanding the meaning of individuals' experiences (Tiberghien et al., 2020).

Tiberghien et al. (2020) and Deb and Lomo-David (2021) highlighted the contribution of the local community and the importance of having a good plan for tourist activities, as both can generate positive feelings, personal enrichment, and authentic tourist experiences.

Another common topic is the promotion of self-acceptance and the search for meaning and purpose (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013), leading to an emotional reaction during the

experience. Eudaimonic perspective is also a common characteristic, considering that transcendental, optimal, and inner experiences produce self-knowledge, realisation, self-actualisation, self-awareness, and development (Maslow, 1968; Park et al., 2019; Tiberghien et al., 2020).

In addition, mindfulness relates to positive psychology and well-being through the *flow moments* and the feeling of self-immersion (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991) that integrates individuals' optimal emotional level (Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987) competing for the ultimate authentic tourist experiences (Tiberghien et al., 2020), intellectual enhancement, and self-actualisation (Maslow, 1968).

Finally, the presence of emotions in mindful awareness is another common topic since the better the emotional state, the better the evaluation of authenticity (Tiberghien et al., 2020).

### *3.2.15. How to assess relevant constructs?*

Table 3.1 presents some examples of instruments used to assess relevant constructs considering the synergies between positive psychology, positive tourism, well-being, and mindfulness concerning meaningful tourist experiences.

Ryff's (1989) Psychological Wellbeing Scale assesses eudaimonic well-being through Self-acceptance (self-actualisation, optimal functioning, and self-acceptance), positive relations with others (empathy, affection, intimacy, and generativity), autonomy (self-determination, independence, and regulation of behaviour), environmental mastery (manipulate and control complex environments), purpose in life (comprehension of life purpose and goals, and intentions), and personal growth (development of one's potential, openness to experience, and self-realisation). Considering the dimensions assessed, besides eudaimonic well-being, positive psychology (positive relationships, purpose in life, personal growth) and mindfulness (self-acceptance; purpose in life) can also be assessed.

Then, the Flourishing Scale (FS) (Diener et al., 2010) assesses psychological flourishing and feelings, focusing on positive human functioning through positive relationships, competence, meaning, purpose in life, and engagement with daily activities. This resource is helpful in the assessment of eudaimonia (personal relationships, self-esteem, meaning and purpose in life), positive psychology (positive relationships, meaning and purpose in life), mindfulness (meaning and purpose in life), and positive tourism (personal relationships, positive relationships).

Positive psychology and eudaimonia can also be evaluated through the Basic Need Satisfaction Scale (Ryan & Deci, 2000), considering the dimensions of competence, autonomy (Eudaimonia) and supportive relationships (Eudaimonia and Positive psychology).

Kim and colleagues (2012) developed the Memorable Tourist Experience Scale (MTES), which includes seven domains: Hedonism (excitement and enjoyment); Novelty (Uniqueness); Local culture (Immersion in local culture and local people); Refreshment (Sense of freedom); Meaningfulness (Self-knowledge); Involvement (Willingness for engagement), Knowledge (Learn something new). These dimensions allow the assessment of hedonia (hedonism, refreshment), eudaimonia (meaningfulness, involvement), positive psychology (meaningfulness) and positive tourism (local culture). Later, Chandralal and Valenzuela (2013) reached different dimensions from the original ones: a) Authentic local experiences; b) Self-beneficial experiences; c) Professional local guides and tour operators; d) Local hospitality; e) Affective emotions; f) Perceived significance; g) Social interactions with people; h) Serendipitous and incredible experiences; i) Fulfilment of personal travel interests. These dimensions can also be involved in the assessment of hedonia (Affective emotions, Serendipitous, Surprising experiences), eudaimonia (Social interactions with people, fulfilment of personal travel interests), positive psychology (Self-beneficial experiences, Affective emotions, Perceived significance, Social interactions with people; Fulfilment of personal travel interests), and positive tourism (Professional local guides and tour operators; local hospitality; social interactions with people).

Hedonia and positive psychology share an essential dimension: emotions and their role on the improvement of individuals' well-being. As such, several instruments can be useful on the evaluation of this dimension: the Destination Emotion Scale (DES) (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010), which assesses three basic emotions: joy, love, and positive surprises; Life Satisfaction Index Scale (LSI) (Neugarten et al., 1961) under the dimensions zest vs apathy; mood tone (hedonia); Positive self-concept (Positive psychology); Resolution and fortitude; Congruence between desired and achieved goals; Positive and Negative Experience Scale (SPANES) (Diener et al., 2010) and Positive and Negative Affect Scales (PANAS) (Watson et al., 1988), both focused on positive and negative emotions; Subjective Well-being Scale (SHS) (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), focused on the information about relationships, happy and unhappy situations.

The Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-being (QEWB) (Waterman et al., 2010) measures eudaimonia through a) Self-discovery, b) Perceived development of one's best potentials, c) sense of purpose and meaning-in-life, d) Investment of significant effort in the pursuit of excellence; e) Intense involvement in activities; f) Enjoyment of activities as

personally expressive. Considering these dimensions, positive psychology can also be assessed through the "sense of purpose and meaning in life" category.

The Hedonic and Eudaimonic Motives for Activities (HEMA) (Huta & Ryan, 2010) deepens the study of hedonic – seeking pleasure and comfort – and eudaimonic well-being – use and develop the best in oneself – since it appraises general motivational tendencies of an activity.

The Personally Expressive Activities Questionnaire (PEAQ) (Waterman, 1993) assesses functioning through self-defining activities in which individuals engage and self-realisation values. It evaluates eudaimonic (personal expressiveness) and hedonic well-being (e.g., hedonic enjoyment).

Voigt et al. (2011) developed the Benefits of Wellness Tourism Scale (BWTS), which measures benefits sought with wellness tourist experiences under six dimensions: a) Transcendence; b) Physical health and appearance; c) Escape and relaxation; d) Important others and novelty; e) re-establish self-esteem; f) Indulgence. These dimensions have the potential to assess positive psychology (Important others and novelty; transcendence), hedonia (physical health and appearance; Escape and relaxation), eudaimonia (Important others and novelty; re-established self-esteem), and mindfulness (Transcendence).

Tourism Wellbeing Scale (TWS) (Garcês et al., 2020) addresses global well-being through optimism (positive side of situations), meaning (giving meaning to life), positive emotions (having fun), creativity (uniqueness, originality), engagement (participate on the community activities), accomplishment (the best result from an experience), spirituality (connection with something higher; awareness of the surroundings), and positive relationships (development of new relationships). Since the rationale of this scale is PERMA (Seligman, 2011) and HOPE models (Human Optimal Psychological Experiences) (Garcês et al., 2017), hedonia (positive emotions), eudaimonia (engagement, meaning, accomplishment), positive psychology (positive emotions, meaning, recovery, relationship, optimism, creativity), mindfulness (spirituality), and positive tourism (relationships) can be analysed.

Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) (Brown & Ryan, 2003) explores the cognitive, emotional, physical, interpersonal, and general domains of awareness of the present. The instrument was never applied to tourism settings. The focus on mindful dimensions of the experience is also a priority for Pinto and Pais-Ribeiro (2007), who developed the Spirituality Scale. In particular, the scale is divided into two factors: meaning of life/beliefs and optimistic life perspective/hope. The first one is related to mindfulness.

Finally, Chang and colleagues (2021) developed the Experience Scale for Pilgrimage Tourists, which assesses tourists' pilgrimage experience through five dimensions: a) Spirituality, b) Learning, c) Physicality, d) Help, and e) Unpleasantness. The dimensions of Learning and Unpleasantness can help assess positive psychology, while spirituality is a mindfulness component.

**Table 3.1. Examples of instruments used to assess relevant concepts**

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Components analysed</b>
Neugarten et al., (1961)	Life Satisfaction Index Scale (LSI)	-Zest vs. Apathy; -Mood tone; -Positive self-concept; -Resolution and fortitude; -Congruence between desired and achieved goals;
Watson et al. (1988)	Positive and Negative Affect Scales (PANAS)	-Positive emotions; -Negative emotions;
Ryff (1989)	Psychological Wellbeing Scale	-Self-acceptance; -Positive relations with others; -Autonomy; -Environmental mastery; -Purpose in life; -Personal growth;
Waterman, (1993)	Personally Expressive Activities Questionnaire (PEAQ)	-Self-defining activities; -Self-realization values from the activities.
Lyubomirsky & lepper (1999)	Subjective well-being scale (SHS)	-Information about the relationship established; -Happy/unhappy situations;
Ryan & Deci (2000)	Basic need satisfaction scale	-Competence; -Autonomy; -Supportive relationships;
Brown & Ryan (2003)	Mindful attention awareness scale (MAAS)	-Awareness to the present;
Pinto & Pais-Ribeiro (2007)	Spirituality scale	-Meaning of life/beliefs; -Positive life perspective/hope
Diener et al. (2010)	Flourishing Scale (FS)	-Positive relationships; -Feelings of competence; -Meaning and purpose in life; -Engagement in daily activities;
	Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE)	-Positive emotions; -Negative emotions;
Hosany & Gilbert (2010)	Destination Emotion Scale (DES)	-Three basic emotions: joy, love, and positive surprises.
Huta & Ryan (2010)	Hedonic and Eudaimonic Motives for Activities (HEMA)	-General motivational tendencies;
Waterman et al. (2010)	Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-being (QEWB)	-Self-discovery; -Perceived development of one's best potentials; -Sense of purpose and meaning-in-life; -Investment of significant effort in the pursuit of excellence; -Intense involvement in activities; -Enjoyment of activities as personally expressive;

Voigt et al. (2011)	Benefits of Wellness Tourism Scale (BWTS)	-Transcendence; -Physical health and appearance; -Escape and relaxation; -Important others and novelty; -Re-establish self-esteem; -Indulgence.
Kim et al. (2012)	Memorable Tourist Experience Scale (MTES)	-Hedonism; -Novelty; -Local culture; -Refreshment; -Meaningfulness; -Involvement; -Knowledge;
Chandralal & Valenzuela (2013)	Memorable tourist experience scale (MTES)	-Authentic local experiences; -Self-beneficial experiences; -Professional local guides and tour operators; -Local hospitality; -Affective emotions; -Perceived significance; -Social interactions with people; -Serendipitous and surprising experiences; -Fulfilment of personal travel interests.
Garcês et al. (2020)	Tourism Wellbeing Scale (TWS)	-Optimism; -Meaning; -Positive emotions; -Creativity; -Engagement; -Accomplishment; -Spirituality; -Positive relationships;
Chang et al. (2021)	Experience Scale for Pilgrimage Tourists	-Spirituality; -Learning; -Physicality; -Help; -Unpleasantness

(Source: Own elaboration, 2021)

### 3.2.16. Knowledge gaps in the literature and preliminary framework

Despite the apparent relationship between the theoretical approaches, the literature advises carefully analysing their interconnections further to support future studies' rationale. The literature review also allowed us to identify examples of knowledge gaps that can shed light on future avenues for research on meaningful tourist experiences. Some of these research gaps are highlighted in this section.

Garcês and colleagues (2018) explored the role of positive psychology in tourism. They highlighted the need to adopt a holistic view of stakeholder's well-being through the involvement of different populations in analysing this phenomenon. The relevance of addressing residents, host communities and workers was also stressed in the systematic review conducted by Vada and colleagues (2020). The findings showed minimal focus on these

stakeholders in the reviewed literature. The authors approached the relationship between positive psychology, tourism, and tourists' well-being. On the one hand, the review indicates that tourists' well-being is influenced by positive psychological variables such as happiness, character strengths, gratitude, and humour. On the other hand, mindfulness was advanced as an antecedent of tourists' well-being. The study reveals the need to explore tourists' interaction with social and natural environments related to self-consciousness (e.g., wellness tourism, yoga tourism, volunteer tourism). Skavronskaya *et al.* (2018) focused on the description of the emotional consequences of the experiences. However, there is a lack of understanding of the affective responses elicited by specific stimuli, raising some underestimated perspectives that lead to a new pathway: What other constructs can be considered predictors of this relationship?

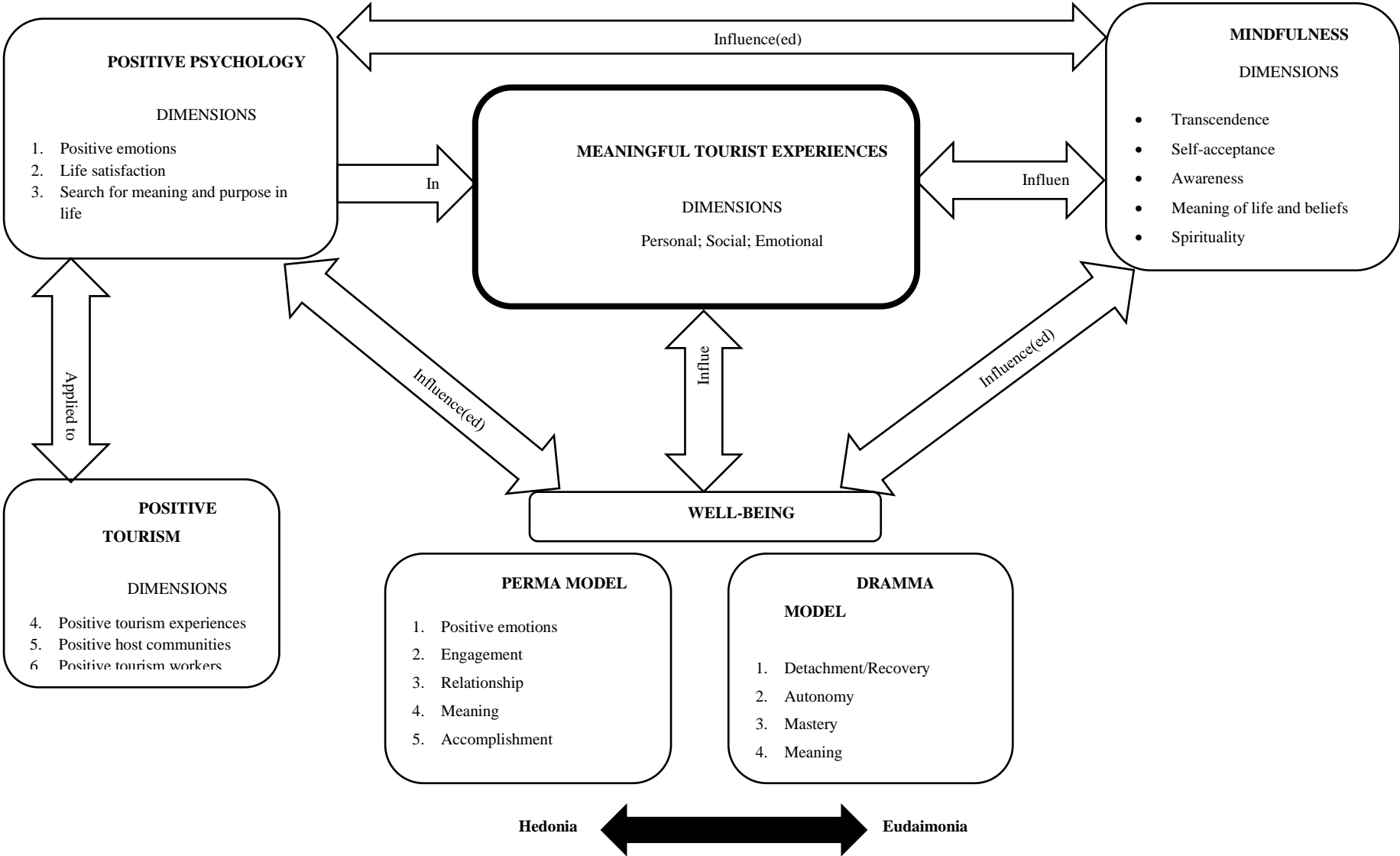
Based on identified knowledge gaps, literature advances some research opportunities focused on meaningful experiences related to individuals 'cultural differences (Filep *et al.*, 2017), positive and negative emotional changes during the experience (Vada *et al.*, 2020; Volo, 2021), centre the research in tourism and psychology on the processes (Filep & Laing, 2019), the relationship between tourists and residents (Volo, 2021), eudaimonia and positive tourism (Voigt, 2017), authenticity and emotional attachment (Deb & Lomo-David, 2021), hedonia, eudaimonia, and emotional attachment (Vada *et al.*, 2020), intensity, durability, and nature of eudaimonic experiences (Filep & Laing, 2019; Voigt, 2017), positive psychology, well-being, happiness, positive emotions, character strengths, gratitude, humour, and authenticity (Vada *et al.*, 2020).

Suppose the studies show that positive psychology, well-being, mindfulness, and positive tourism are complementary areas in the study of meaning in tourism. What are the future directions for the theoretical deepening of these experiences? What leads individuals to engage in specific activities? What comes from those experiences associated with the foundations of the psychological constructs under study? Furthering the knowledge of the antecedents of meaningful experiences will allow us to enhance the perceived experiences and resulting outcomes. It is imperative to introduce a new lens on the promotion of meaningful tourist experiences that considers not only the individuals and their needs, expectations, and preferences but also the potential of the experiences and the places where they emerge (Chen & Yoon, 2019; Garcês *et al.*, 2018; Garcês *et al.*, 2020; Staphit & Coudounaris, 2018).

The preliminary diagram (Figure 3.1) illustrates the interconnections between positive psychology, positive tourism, well-being, and mindfulness as a psychological framework around meaningful tourist experiences derived from the literature review conducted in this

research. This diagram can assist future research as a first step of systematic and empirical studies exploring antecedents and outcomes of meaningful experiences.

**Figure 3.1.** Preliminary framework - Positive psychology, positive tourism, well-being, and mindfulness: How they interrelate?



### 3.3. Conclusions

This article provided a theoretical reflection on the connections between positive psychology, positive tourism, well-being, and mindfulness to develop meaningful tourist experiences. In so doing, this research proposes a preliminary diagram illustrating the theoretical links observed in the literature, which acts as a first step towards designing a systematic literature review on the antecedents and outcomes of meaningful tourist experiences. This reflection can, thus, also contribute to future empirical research focused on empirically testing potential relationships among constructs. The resulting preliminary diagram (Figure 1) suggests that the synergies between positive psychology, positive tourism, well-being, and mindfulness enable a greater understanding of meaningful tourist experiences, which can contribute to establishing a psychological framework on this topic.

#### 3.3.1. *Theoretical implications*

The study represents a first step towards designing a systematic literature review on the antecedents and outcomes of meaningful tourist experiences, considering different theoretical foundations and the role of each one in promoting meaningful experiences.

First, despite the importance of considering different levels of well-being, in tourism, well-being is mainly assessed through the general outcome level. In so doing, PERMA and DRAMMA models represent a good start for studying well-being, considering the different dimensions approached (Seligman, 2018). The present study highlights the need to continue researching this topic because tourist experiences must favour individuals' meaningful and long-term motivations and outcomes (Laing & Frost, 2017).

This study lies beneath the importance of considering both the reflexive and the anticipatory phase of the trip (Filep & Laing, 2019) through the focus on the antecedents and outcomes of meaningful tourist experiences to understand what personal, emotional, social, or environmental reasons leads to the involvement on a particular experience. So, by studying antecedents and outcomes of meaningful tourist experiences, it is possible to develop a set of meaningful activities and, thus, improve stakeholders' well-being and marketing strategies (Chen & Yoon, 2019; Garcês et al., 2020).

Despite the different instruments already developed, there is a need to carefully analyse and adapt some of these tools to understand better meaningful tourist experiences (Packer &

Gill, 2017). As such, an important theoretical implication consists of improving the existing instruments that assess the psychological variables under study.

The diagram above (Figure 4.1) represents an exploratory framework that supports the development of a systematic literature review on the antecedents and outcomes of meaningful tourist experiences, considering the foundations of positive psychology, well-being, mindfulness, and positive tourism. The conclusions gathered through the chapters are a result of the investigation that highlights their strong interrelation with tourism and meaningful experiences (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013; Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Deb & Lomo-David, 2021; Filep, 2014; Filep et al., 2017; Glover & Filep, 2017; Huta & Waterman, 2014; Laing, 1967; Larsen, 2007; Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987; Maslow, 1968; Newman et al., 2014; Packer & Gill, 2017; Park et al., 2019; Reisinger, 2013; Ryff, 1989; Saunders et al., 2017; Seligman, 2002; Steger et al., 2006; Tiberghien et al., 2020; Voigt, 2017; Wilson et al., 2013). As such, the priority is to introduce a richer perspective on promoting these experiences with a holistic lens and proceed to develop or improve new or existing tools to address them better and contribute to a better understanding of meaningful tourist experiences.

This theoretical approach is still preliminary and must be improved to allow a better tourism management decision, especially during these difficult times, where resilience and persistence are on testing. As such, the study offers a theoretical reflection on the connections between the referred theoretical foundations, proposed on a preliminary diagram illustrating the theoretical links observed, that acts as a first step towards designing a systematic literature review on the antecedents and outcomes of meaningful tourist experiences. The advantages of this method include the fact that it allows the focus on the critical subjects to invest in future research through the demonstration of significant research gaps that will help to better design and justify the research (Pickering & Byrne, 2014).

### *3.3.2. Managerial implications*

COVID-19 has been the wake-up call for tourism industries to reflect on the current problems and develop new strategies that enable a more compassionate and meaningful tourism practice. In so doing, finding alternatives to innovate the offer and increase safety are two priorities.

The studies on tourism and well-being focus mainly on the hedonic perspective (Filep et al., 2019; Hao & Xiao, 2021; Nawijn, 2015). A comprehensive perspective of the meaningful tourist experience from tourism industries requires the consideration of hedonic and eudaimonic

well-being (Nawijn, 2015; Smith & Diekmann, 2017; Voigt, 2017). As such, the theoretical investigation and destination managers must explore the eudaimonic perspective and its synergy with positive psychology on the development of positive, meaningful tourist experiences, allowing for the emergence of other psychological components, such as meaning and purpose in life, life satisfaction, accomplishment, mastery, and affiliation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Filep, 2016; Filep & Deery, 2010; Fredrickson, 2001; Garcês et al., 2019; Nawijn & Biran, 2019; Newman et al, 2014; Seligman, 2018).

Consequently, managers and tourism industries should invest in the emotional, psychological, and social reactions that contribute to the relational component of the experiences, considering the characteristics of the experiences but also the intrinsic characteristics of stakeholders and their contribution to the development of meaningful tourist experiences (Staphit & Coudounaris, 2018).

Even though literature argues the applicability of positive psychology interventions to enhance tourists' well-being, they have not been too much developed. So, knowledge about the potential of positive psychology for the promotion of well-being can be a powerful tool in the design of travel experiences (Nawijn, 2015), which is another alerting idea for tourism industries: to innovate and captivate.

Finally, research stresses the need to improve the participation of other people, which is essential for promoting well-being. This research aims to ensure that all stakeholders' needs are equally considered. As such, tourism industries can be responsible for exploring if the quality of life and satisfaction of the host community is not threatened by tourism, to achieve positive well-being outcomes and help host communities and tourism workers to flourish, contributing to the optimisation of the experience and the improvement of well-being (Filep & Laing, 2019).

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#### **4. CHAPTER FOUR**

##### **STUDY 3: MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES IN TOURISM: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTS**

Câmara, E., Pocinho, M., Agapito, D. and Jesus, S.N. (2023). Meaningful experiences in tourism: A systematic review of psychological constructs. *European Journal of Tourism Research*, 34, 3403. <https://doi.org/10.54055/ejtr.v34i.2964>

## Meaningful experiences in tourism: A systematic review of psychological constructs

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**Abstract:** This study explored the components of meaningful tourist experiences and their antecedents and outcomes according to a framework of positive psychology and tourism. The theoretical rationale of this systematic literature review was chosen to clarify the synergies between these constructs, well-being and mindfulness, to understand how tourists derive meaning from their experiences. The scientific platforms Scopus and Web of Science were selected to search for journal articles. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the final sample comprised 70 articles. The results evidence the holistic character of meaningful experiences in tourism in terms of personal, emotional, well-being, relational, and behavioural dimensions that enable a better conceptualisation of the construct. These experiences were significantly assessed regarding life satisfaction, meaning and purpose, emotions, authenticity, and mindfulness. This review highlights the potential of positive psychology to maximise tourists' well-being through their experiences. It represents an opportunity for the tourism and hospitality industry and other entities, such as researchers, psychologists, resident communities, and universities, to enhance tourists' experiences. Therefore, this study contributes to future research to better assess meaningful tourist experiences and tourism companies so they can manage enhanced experiences, considering the multidimensional nature of the construct from a positive psychology perspective.

**Keywords:** Authenticity; meaningful experiences; mindfulness; positive psychology; tourism; wellbeing

## 4.1. Introduction

Tourist experiences are multidimensional and subjective as they encompass individuals' sensations, expectations, and needs (Jelinčić & Matečić, 2021).

Several studies have addressed the topic of tourism experiences associated with psychological variables. For example, Garcês *et al.* (2018) conducted a systematic literature review outlining the relationship between positive psychology and tourism. They concluded that tourism is a vehicle for promoting the well-being of residents and tourists. Vada and colleagues (2020) examined the state of research on wellbeing in tourism under the foundations of positive psychology. The study highlighted the potential synergies between positive psychology and tourists' well-being, which can be a future direction for developing practical strategies to improve tourists' experiences. Iacob and colleagues (2021) analysed mindfulness's role in tourism and concluded that mindfulness effectively improves positive travel experiences, satisfaction, loyalty, happiness, well-being, and psychological and physical benefits. Finally, Hosany *et al.* (2022) published a systematic literature review on memorable tourism experiences. The authors concluded that this topic is focused on Kim *et al.*'s (2012) definition of a memorable tourism experience as “(...)positively remembered and recalled after the event has occurred (...) involved hedonism, refreshment, social interaction, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement, and novelty (...)” (Hosany *et al.*, 2022, p. 6).

However, there is a lack of understanding of what turns a tourist experience into a meaningful one: What are the elements underlying a meaningful experience? Which results are more expressive and, thus, lead to a higher meaning? Psychology is the science of human behaviour and its factors and processes. Therefore, meaningful experience is a concept that falls within the psychology research field applied to tourism. People are motivated by the meaning associated with the things they find, the people they meet and their experiences. Different concepts have been used to define experiences in tourism, such as extraordinary, memorable, authentic, and transformational. However, there is a lack of consensus about the elements involved in evoking meaning. This reflection stresses the need to conceptualise meaningful experiences and explore the associated psychological impacts.

Having in mind the multiplicity of constructs already used to assess similar phenomena, the review protocol considers constructs that have been related to meaningful experiences in the literature: positive psychology (e.g., Seligman, 2011), well-being (e.g., Filep, 2014), mindfulness (e.g., Brown & Ryan, 2003), memorable experience (e.g., Kim *et al.*, 2012),

transformational experience (e.g., Sheldon, 2020), extraordinary experience (e.g., Goolaup & Nunkoo, 2022) and authentic experience (e.g., Wang, 1999).

This research contributes to enhancing the literature related to three interconnected premises. First, the research maps out and synthesizes studies that follow an approach based on the synergies between the mentioned constructs. Second, it answers the following research questions: What is a meaningful tourist experience and what are its components under the lens of positive psychology? How have meaningful tourist experiences been measured and defined? What are the psychological antecedents and consequences of meaningful tourist experiences associated with positive psychology, well-being, and mindfulness? Third, this research advances the literature by acknowledging what makes up a meaningful tourist experience through a positive psychology lens.

This research may also be of benefit to a variety of parties: (a) tourism industries and their workers who are involved through the acquisition of theoretical tools to improve their touristic offers and adjust them to tourists' needs and expectations (e.g., Garcês *et al.*, 2018; Vada *et al.*, 2019b); (b) the resident community that has the opportunity to engage in their place as a touristic one and, thus, immerse in the political and practical policies associated with the tourism sector (e.g., Tregua *et al.*, 2020); (c) psychologists and researchers in tourism psychology since interest in this field is progressively increasing and higher knowledge represents a higher potential for continuous growth in the field (e.g., Garcês *et al.*, 2018); and (d) universities, given the importance of educating for tourism and hospitality and of enabling graduates to improve tourists' experiences so that they feel welcomed (Saner *et al.*, 2016).

## **4.2. Literature review**

### *4.2.1. Positive psychology*

Positive psychology studies the strengths, characteristics and actions of individuals and communities that explain their positive and significant overcoming of difficulties (Garcês *et al.*, 2020; Seligman, 2002). Positive psychology maximises the contribution of tourism experiences to tourists' well-being (Chen & Yoon, 2019; Coghlan, 2015) and places great importance on virtues and strengths, overcoming challenges, and developing a sense of independence that will lead to self-sufficiency (Packer & Gill, 2017). A vital characteristic of positive psychology is the development of positive emotions (e.g., satisfaction, fulfilment, joy, calmness, pleasure, flow, happiness, optimism, hope, faith, and trust; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Seligman, 2002). Another characteristic is the search for meaning and purpose, the core contribution to happiness and

pleasure. The third component is life satisfaction, which seeks what makes life worth living and involves individuals' needs, motivations, life purposes and the meaning of actions (Packer & Gill, 2017). One of the first attempts to join positive psychology and tourism was Filep's (2016) proposal for a positive tourism subfield. The primary purpose of the positive tourism movement is to understand how tourists, local communities and tourism workers flourish as well as to promote well-being through three pillars: 1) positive tourism experiences (Packer & Gill, 2017); 2) positive host communities (Glover & Filep, 2017); and 3) positive tourism workers (Saunders et al., 2017).

#### 4.2.2. *Well-being*

Wellbeing is a crucial element in tourism industries (Garcês et al., 2020) and has been pointed out as one of the most vital outcomes of tourists' experiences (Vada *et al.*, 2020). Literature highlights the confluence of several well-being perspectives and their intertwining role in the promotion of meaningful experiences in tourism: hedonic and eudaimonic (Packer & Gill, 2017; Vada et al., 2020; Voigt, 2017), the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011), subjective wellbeing (Diener et al., 1999) and the DRAMMA model (Newman *et al.*, 2014).

Hedonic well-being is related to the supreme good in life, the pursuit of happiness and the avoidance of painful experiences and positive emotions. Eudaimonic well-being is associated with seeking excellence, self-discovery, growth, and authenticity (Huta & Waterman, 2014; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999; Packer & Gill, 2017; Voigt, 2017; Waterman, 2011).

The PERMA (Positive emotions; Engagement, Relationships Meaning, Accomplishment) model is based on the Authentic Happiness Theory (Seligman, 2002). It considers that a complete definition of well-being involves positive emotions (e.g., awe, compassion, contentment, gratitude, hope, joy, and love); engagement (the match between individuals' most vital strengths and the challenges they face); relationships (the development of strong ties); meaning (belonging to and believing in something more significant); and accomplishment (achievement, mastery and competence; Seligman, 2011).

Subjective well-being relates to the pure seeking of happy moments. Filep (2016) defended two main limitations to the conceptualisation of wellbeing through this perspective: the difficulties of explaining meaningful holiday experiences and how individuals engage in on-site experiences. A fulfilling tourist experience is characterised by seeking pleasure based on how personally meaningful tourists evaluate their experiences (Filep, 2016).

Newman et al. (2014) developed the DRAMMA (Detachment-Recovery; Autonomy; Mastery; Meaning; Affiliation) model and advocated that the fulfilment of specific psychological domains is the key to enhancing subjective well-being in leisure: (a) detachment–recovery (giving up on harmful elements and regaining control over life, respectively); (b) autonomy (restoration of control and freedom); (c) mastery (attribution of the right skills to challenges); (d) meaning (positive emotions, life satisfaction, commitment, positive relationships and engagement); and (e) affiliation (socialisation and relationships with others).

The previous perspectives share these common elements:

1. The impact of social components on individual relationships (e.g., Filep & Laing, 2019; Wilson & Harris, 2006);
2. The effect of cognition on the recollection and attribution of meaning (e.g., Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Wilson *et al.*, 2013);
3. Personal development and self-growth (e.g., Buzinde, 2020; Smith & Diekmann, 2017; Vada *et al.*, 2019b);
4. Fulfilment of positive emotions (e.g., Filep, 2014; Filep & Deery, 2010; Filep *et al.*, 2013).

#### 4.2.3. *Mindfulness*

Mindfulness represents an essential dimension of an individual's consciousness and strongly relates to well-being; an openness to activities or situations mainly characterises it. Individuals capture the properties of consciousness marked by the vividness of their everyday experience and functioning, directly impacting happiness and well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003). In tourism, mindfulness explores how individuals derive meaning from tourist experiences by constructing personal narratives (Moscardo, 2009). The focus is on orientation, in which every outcome results from a process that makes individuals feel better about themselves (Langer, 1990). The primary characteristics related to mindfulness are (a) transcendence (Chen *et al.*, 2017), (b) self-acceptance (Chen *et al.*, 2017); (c) awareness (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Langer, 1990; Ryan & Deci, 2001), (d) meaning of life and beliefs (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Tiberghien *et al.*, 2020); and (e) spirituality (Tiberghien *et al.*, 2020).

#### 4.2.4. *Meaningful experiences and related constructs*

A meaningful experience goes beyond the unique idea of an emotional outcome, potentially predisposing the individual to self-reflection (Bosangit *et al.*, 2015; Lyu *et al.*, 2018; Wilson & Harris, 2006). The focus is placed on the attribution of meaning and discovery, which

determine the impact of the experiences on tourists' lives. Meaningful travel is a unique and essential way of building a sense of self, confidence, and empowerment (Wilson & Harris, 2006). Travel enables the discovery of what makes everyday life meaningful (e.g., social relationships, encounters with nature, an opportunity to think about oneself, and personal growth Packer & Gill, 2017). Nevertheless, a lack of understanding of what makes a tourist experience meaningful persists due to the intertwined use of similar constructs: authentic, extraordinary, memorable, and transformational.

Authentic experiences have been studied since the 1970s. MacCannell (1973) was the first to examine this topic, acknowledging tourists' motivations and experiences and considering that they seek to satisfy their desires through genuine, timeless, unchanged experiences. Authenticity refers to the existential condition of being, living, obeying a system of rules, and trying to get the maximum out of these. As such, an individual is simultaneously seen as unique, with expectations, needs and values, and as a social being who engages in solid relationships that elicit a variety of emotional responses and increase the probability of the experience becoming authentic (Wang, 1999). Wang (1999) focused on the existence of four different authenticity perspectives: 1) objective (the physical qualities of originality); 2) constructive (the socially-constructed character of authenticity, focusing on tourists' perceptions); 3) postmodern (the fantasy simulacra and hyperreality and how they enable the significance of authenticity); and 4) existential authenticity (the experience of the authentic self through the interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions of authenticity; Rickly, 2022; Wang, 1999).

In a systematic literature review, Rickly (2022) highlighted different approaches to the study of authenticity, and the most expressive ones were performative authenticity (social belonging, emotional connection, and audience participation) and psychoanalytic authenticity (Knudsen et al., 2016; Rickly, 2022). Specifically, the psychoanalytic perspective of authenticity highlights the role of alienation – the driver of tourists (MacCannell, 1973) – allowing for the fantasy of authenticity to emerge and attenuate the negative impacts of anxiety (Kirillova et al., 2017; Knudsen et al., 2016). Thus, authenticity is seen as a fantasy with a vital role in tourism that allows a deeper understanding of the desires and fantasies that are part of the development of our motivations to pursue something meaningful (Knudsen et al., 2016).

Rickly (2022) also acknowledged that existential authenticity was the most prominent area of research and allowed for a better examination of embodied emotions, social interactions, identity, and host-guest relationships. A strong relationship was found between authenticity, happiness, mindfulness (e.g., Yu et al., 2020) and anxiety (e.g., Kirillova et al., 2017), representing a powerful opportunity to understand the synergies between these topics and the

promotion of tourism experiences associated with meaning. Future research should clarify the role of authenticity in mindfulness, well-being, ethics, or happiness and how to deal with their negative impacts. Similarly, a strong relationship was found between authenticity and satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioural intentions (e.g., revisit, repurchase and recommendation, e.g., Yi et al., 2017; Yi et al., 2018), thereby allowing for some reflection on the way authenticity promotes good experiences that are worthy of a tourists' destination loyalty. An authentic tourism experience promotes a joyful connection between knowledge, emotions, motivations, and pleasure.

Extraordinary experiences were first defined by Arnould and Price (1993) as positively intense, intrinsically enjoyable, and transformative. A recent study described them as “(...) the positive co-existence of the ordinary and the non-ordinary. An intrinsically enjoyable, emotionally positive experience encompasses collaborative interactions and conflict-easing situations by setting boundaries” (Goolaup & Nunkoo, 2022, p. 10).

A memorable tourism experience (MTE) is an important event stored in the memory and recalled after it has occurred. These experiences are associated with the development of intense emotions that influence individuals' lives. After a solid reflection, they are retained in tourists' memories, becoming memorable (Duerden et al., 2018) and helping to reinforce the recollection of pleasurable episodes experienced by tourists (Kim *et al.*, 2012).

Finally, transformational experiences are associated with self-realisation and self-exploration (Sheldon, 2020) that lead to an individual's inner transformation in values, beliefs, intentions, and self-perceptions (Duerden et al., 2018; Willson et al., 2013). Transformative tourism experiences involve the emergence of a disorienting or challenging situation that leads individuals to self-reflection to understand the whole situation (Kirillova et al., 2017). These experiences have the most robust probability of evoking a change in an individual's routines associated with the intense emotional impact (Jiang, 2017), and they influence a tourist's way of being and behaviour (Duerden et al., 2018). Overall, the search for meaning and greater awareness of oneself is the outcome of transformational experiences (Sheldon, 2020).

The previously mentioned constructs have some common elements: 1) a focus on the social dimension, 2) the search for well-being, 3) the personal dimension, and 4) emotional development. For this reason, they were included in the research protocol.

### **4.3. Methodology**

#### *4.3.1. Planning and conducting the review*

The methodological approach adopted was a systematic literature review. This method intends to make sense of a significant amount of information about a subject to contribute to improving the literature on that topic by providing specific answers to questions. The ultimate objective of this method is to map out areas with little or no relevant research to identify the needed studies (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006).

As a preliminary stage, Câmara *et al.* (2022) developed a theoretical exploration of the links between positive psychology, well-being, positive tourism, and mindfulness. Despite their clear interrelation, the literature fails to explain their specific roles in meaningful tourist experiences. The present study took place between February and May 2022, including the preliminary scope of the literature and definition of the research objectives, inclusion, and exclusion criteria.

#### 4.3.2. *Research questions*

The present study intends to answer the following questions: 1) What are a meaningful tourist experience and its components under the lens of positive psychology? 2) How have meaningful tourist experiences been measured and defined? 3) What are the psychological antecedents and consequences of meaningful tourist experiences associated with positive psychology, well-being, and mindfulness?

#### 4.3.3. *Searching*

The chosen databases were Web of Science clarivate, SCOPUS and APA Psychinfo. WoS and SCOPUS stand out for their international reach and the high-quality standards required by the Relative Quality Indices, the JCR InCites Journal Citation Report (WoS) and the SJR Scimago Journal Rank (SCOPUS; Harzing & Alakangas, 2016). APA PsycInfo covers a full spectrum of miscellaneous psychological records (American Psychological Association, n.d.). The terms were simultaneously searched in the databases by linking the strings with the Boolean operators ‘AND’ and ‘OR’, as well as the truncation elements " "and \* to restrict the specific term or to guarantee that all the words with the same radical were included, respectively. The co-authors were consistently consulted to reduce research biases (Transfield *et al.*, 2003). The research protocol was:

1. SCOPUS – TITLE-ABS-KEY ([‘Touris\* experience’] AND TITLE-ABS-KEY [memorable OR meaningful OR transformation\* OR authentic OR extraordinary OR well-being OR well-being OR mindful\*]).

2. Web of Science and APA PsychInfo – TS = ([‘Touris\* experience’] AND [meaningful OR memorable OR transformation\* OR authentic OR extraordinary OR well-being OR well-being OR mindful\*])

#### 4.3.4. *Inclusion and exclusion criteria*

The following inclusion criteria were carefully considered for each article: (a) it was published in a peer-reviewed journal; (b) the language was English; (c) it included concepts or elements related to positive psychology foundations; and (d) it was developed in the tourism context. An article was excluded if one of the following criteria was met: (a) it was not published in a peer-reviewed journal; (b) it was in a language other than English; (c) it did not include concepts or elements related to positive psychology foundations, even if they were in the title, abstract or keywords; (d) the study was developed outside the tourism context; and (e) the study had poor theoretical support or research procedures that lacked foundation.

#### 4.3.5. *Conducting the review*

The first author applied the inclusion and exclusion criteria through the scope of titles, abstracts, and keywords for each record. Data extraction was performed through an Excel spreadsheet, and two main types of information were detailed: i) metadata (authors, year, country, topic, methods, results, journal); and ii) specific relevant data to answer the previously defined research questions (concepts from positive psychology, emerging psychological definitions, and components of meaningful experiences in tourism, instruments that measure this construct, antecedents, and outcomes).

The preliminary search found 854 records from WoS, SCOPUS and PsychInfo. After the first removal due to duplicates and other reasons (e.g., articles unavailable), 564 records were screened from WoS and SCOPUS, considering all the APA PsychInfo records had been simultaneously found in the previous databases. Therefore, results from APA PsychInfo were removed.

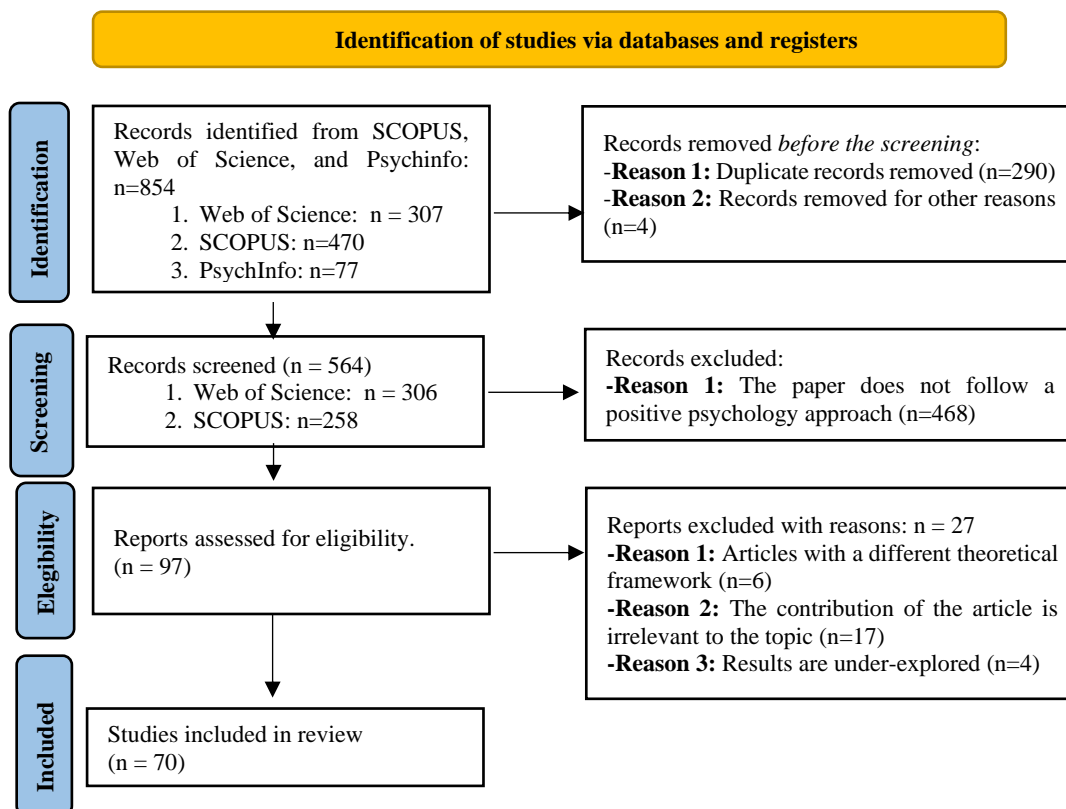
After a first screening of the research terms used in the protocol, the first author searched for characteristics or terms of positive psychology following Seligman (2002) and Filep *et al.*'s (2017) definitions of positive psychology and well-being (e.g., emotions, positive emotions, happiness, hedonia, eudaimonia, character strengths, virtues, and positive tourism).

The abstracts that did not refer to any of the characteristics were excluded. Second, the remaining research team reviewed the selection and confirmed that the articles selected in the first place resulted from a high-quality procedure.

Therefore, 468 records were excluded because they did not follow a positive psychology perspective and were focused on other theoretical dimensions (e.g., cognitive psychology, economics, neuropsychology), a process that reduced the sample to 97 articles. The final step involved a complete analysis of all eligible articles, and 27 articles were excluded because they used different theoretical frameworks (n=7), were irrelevant to the research (n=17) or had underexplored results (n=3), meaning the studies did not fully explore positive psychology foundations and, thus, did not allow for a complete understanding of the impact of the study concerning the research objectives. The final sample was comprised of 70 peer-reviewed articles. The definitions were carefully extracted, and the antecedents and outcomes were assigned to different domains.

Figure 4.1. presents the PRISMA flow diagram, which visually represents the methodological process to enable a more straightforward interpretation.

**Figure 4.1.** PRISMA flow diagram (PRISMA, 2020)



#### 4.3.6. Data analysis

Data were analysed using several techniques.

First, a qualitative content analysis approach was used to integrate a review of the texts and their specific content. This approach was followed because the most crucial task was to

examine the meanings, themes and patterns presented in the studies (Shava et al., 2021). To do so, a direct content analysis was followed, allowing themes to emerge from the data, thereby helping the team find relationships among the variables (Mayring, 2000).

An Excel spreadsheet was then developed to register the following data: abstract, keywords, research objectives, the context of the study, research destination, primary constructs analysed, theoretical foundation, positive psychology concepts and constructs, variables measured, methodologies used, data analysis techniques, data collection instrument, measurement scale, items measured, type of participants, sample size, main research results, limitations, and future research proposals.

Second, a quantitative analysis was conducted, using frequencies to explore articles by year of publication, theories applied, research region and publication journal.

Third, Bibliometrix (Biblioshiny) software from 'R package' was used to explore the most relevant sources, the co-occurrence analysis by authors' keywords and the country scientific production and collaboration map (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

## 4.4. Results

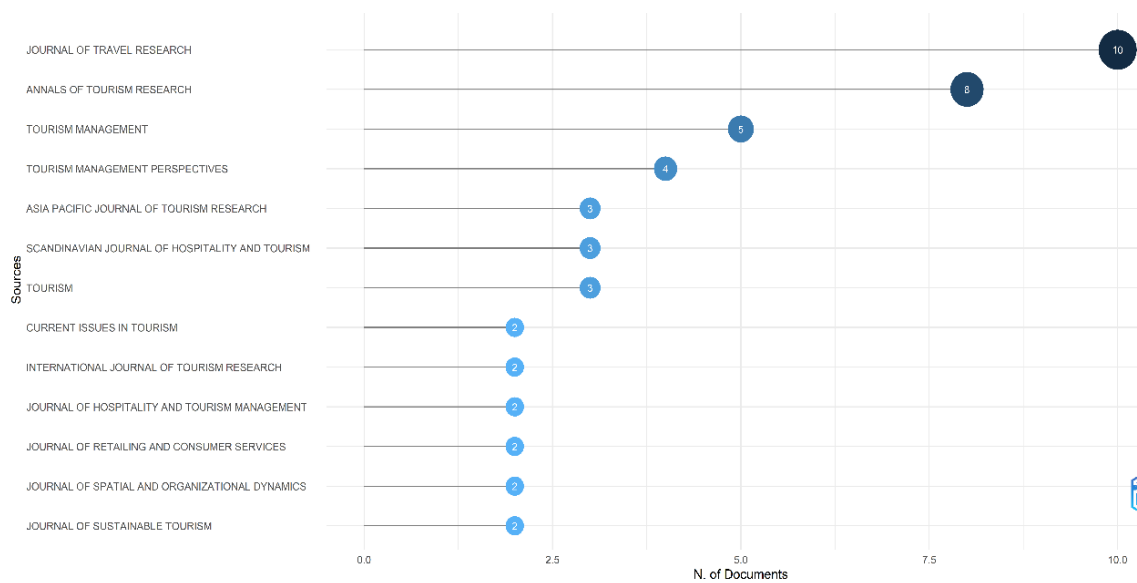
### 4.4.1. Descriptive characteristics

**Table 4.1.** Peer-reviewed articles per year of publication (Source: Own elaboration)

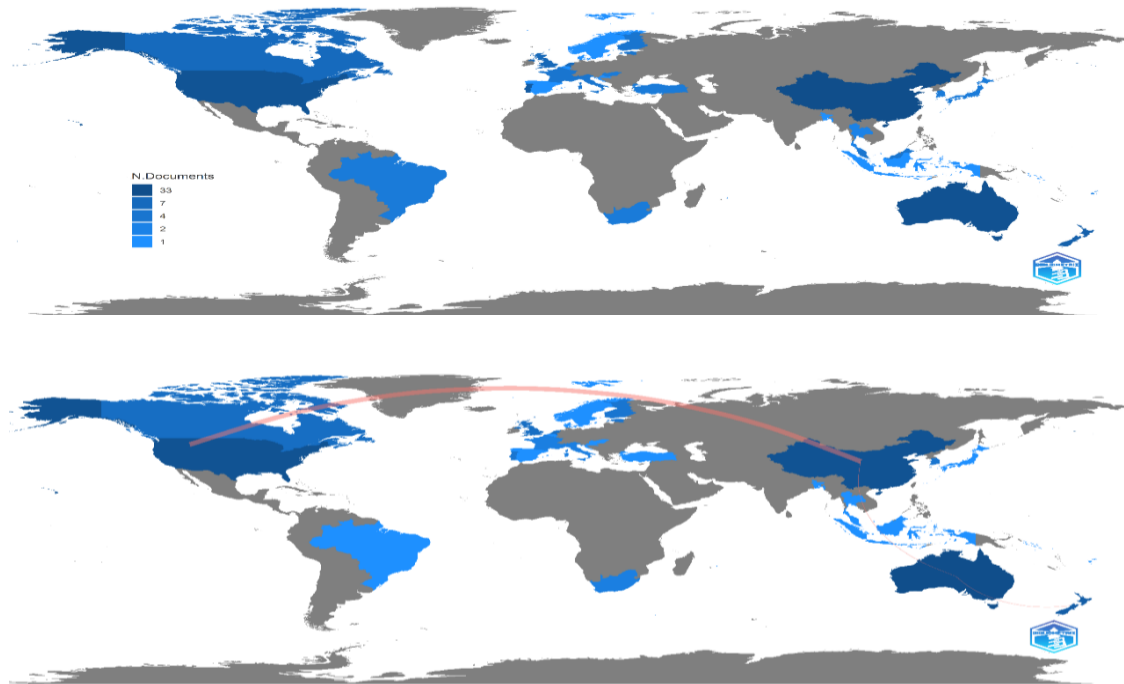
Year	# of articles	Reference
2006	3	Pernecky (2006); Wilson & Harris (2006); Zhara (2006);
2010	2	Filep & Deery (2010); Voigt et al. (2010);
2011	2	Nawijn (2011); Sirgy et al. (2011);
2012	1	Kim et al. (2012);
2013	2	Filep et al. (2013); Willson et al. (2013);
2014	2	Filep (2014); Lin et al. (2014);
2015	3	Bosangit et al. (2015); Coghlan (2015); Pabel & Pearce (2015);
2016	2	Bosnjak et al. (2016); Servidio & Ruffolo (2016);
2017	6	Chen et al. (2017); Coudounaris & Sthapit (2017); Frochot et al. (2017); Knobloch et al. (2017); Laing & Frost (2017); Smith & Diekmann (2017);
2018	7	Coelho & Gosling (2018); Gao & Kerstetter (2018); Lee et al. (2018); Lyu, Mao, & Hu (2018); Pabel & Pearce (2018); Rahmani et al. (2018); Sthapit & Coudounaris (2018);
2019	10	Baloglu et al. (2019); Chen & Yoon (2019); Kim & Kim (2019); Loureiro et al. (2019); Rivera et al. (2019); Sthapit (2019); Vada et al. (2019a); Vada et al. (2019b) Wei et al. (2019); Yan & Halpenny (2019);
2020	13	Aydin & Omuris (2020); Buzinde (2020); Cai et al. (2020); Farkić et al. (2020); Garcês et al. (2020); Sheldon (2020); Huang et al. (2020); Li et al. (2020); Pung & Del Chiappa (2020); Tan et al. (2020); Wang et al. (2020); Yin et al. (2020); Ying et al. (2020);
2021	12	Chen et al. (2021); Chen et al. (2021); Dillette et al. (2021); Gibson et al. (2021); Gillovic et al. (2021); Jelinčić & Matečić (2021); Mendonça-Pedro et al. (2021); Pourfakhimi et al. (2021); Sie et al. (2021); van Iwaarden & Nawijn (2021); Wang et al. (2021); Yu et al. (2021);

Table 4.1 shows that most of the articles were published between 2019 and 2022 (39), with the remaining 31 distributed before 2019, showing a growing investigation on this topic. The oldest articles were published in 2006 and focussed on the New Age tourists in New Zealand (Pernecky, 2006), the relationship between the volunteer tourist experience and the long-lasting spiritual experience (Wilson & Harris, 2006) and the role of independent travel on the development of spiritual tourism experiences (Zhara, 2006). The latest ones were developed in 2022 and were aimed to examine the concept of craft-beer tourism in Thailand and the meanings attached to it (Chirakranont & Sakdiyakorn, 2022), how tourist-perceived authenticity influences memorability in heritage tourism (Yi et al., 2022), the development of a theoretical perspective about tourists' extraordinary experiences (Goolaup & Nunkoo, 2022) and the benefits of family tourism for parents' and children's wellbeing (Miyakawa & Oguchi, 2022).

**Figure 4.2.** *Most relevant sources (Source: Biblioshiny)*



**Figure 4.3.** *Country Scientific Production and Collaboration Map* (Source: Biblioshiny)



The articles were published in 37 top-ranking journals, including the *Journal of Travel Research* (10), *Annals of Tourism Research* (8), *Tourism Management* (5) and *Tourism Management Perspectives* (4; see Figure 4.2). Only one article (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017) was published in a psychology journal (*Psychology & Marketing*).

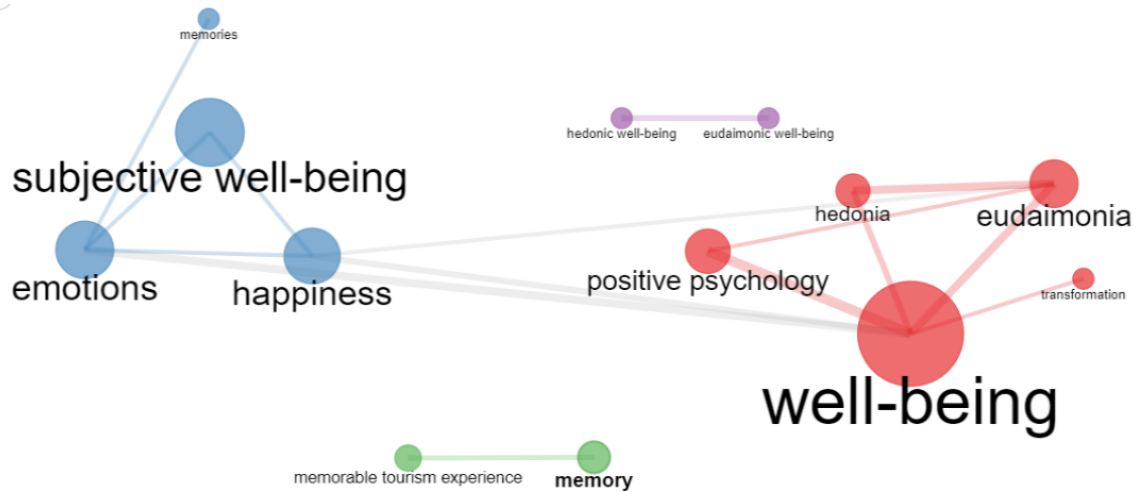
Figure 4.3. shows the prevalence of the investigation in Australia and Oceania and on the North American and Asian continents. As for the collaboration map, the research on this topic is multicultural, evidenced by the worldwide partnerships between countries, such as the United States and China, and between China, Australia, and New Zealand.

The supremacy of studies with tourists' samples was impressive (33). Only three studies used a sample of residents (Chen & Yoon, 2019; Gibson et al., 2021) or workers in tourism (Gibson et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2018).

Thirty-five theoretical frameworks emerged, primarily in the psychological field (24). The most cited was Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), followed by the Subjective Wellbeing Theory (Diener et al., 1999, 2002), the Broaden-and-Build Theory of Emotions (Fredrickson, 2001) and the Authentic Happiness Theory (Seligman, 2002). The other theoretical frameworks were related to different research paths of general psychology – for example, the stimuli-organism-response model (Chen et al., 2020) – and other fields of research, such as the economy – the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) – or

marketing – experiential marketing (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Farber & Hall, 2007; Mossberg, 2007; Pullman & Gross, 2004).

**Figure 4.4.** *Co-occurrence network of authors' keywords (Source: Biblioshiny)*



An analysis of the authors' keywords showed four patterns (see Figure 4.4). First, authors relate subjective well-being to emotions, happiness, and memories. Second, the study of wellbeing is highly associated with hedonic, eudaimonic, positive psychology and transformation. Third, memory is highly related to memorable tourism experiences, and fourth, hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being are frequently studied together in the literature.

#### 4.4.2. *Meaningful tourism experiences: Conceptualisation in the literature*

Other constructs have been used as synonyms of meaningful experiences: authentic experiences (e.g., Pourfakhimi et al., 2021), consumer experiences (e.g., Frochot et al., 2017), individual tourist experiences (e.g., Knobloch et al., 2017), memorable tourism experiences (e.g., Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017), travel experiences (e.g., Lyu et al., 2018), rural tourism experiences (e.g., Loureiro et al., 2019), spiritual tourism experiences (e.g., Buzinde, 2020), therapeutic experiences (e.g., Yin et al., 2020), restorative personal, meaningful travel experiences (e.g., Sie et al., 2021), creative tourism experiences (e.g., Garcês et al., 2020), wellness tourism experiences (e.g., Dillette et al., 2021), cultural tourism experiences (e.g., Jelinčić & Matečić, 2021), heritage tourism experiences (e.g., Yi et al., 2022) and pilgrimage experiences (e.g., van Iwaarden & Nawijn, 2021).

Only four studies adopted a clear definition of meaningful tourism experience (Bosangit et al., 2015; Chirakranont & Sakdiyakorn, 2022; Sie et al., 2021; Wilson & Harris, 2006) as a unique path to building tourists' sense of self, confidence, empowerment, and transformation

(Willson & Harris, 2006). Meaning is assigned to the experiences that enable self-reflection, self-identity, and emotions (Bosangit et al., 2015), as well as to the opportunity for learning, flexibility and excitement (Sie et al., 2021). Finally, meaningful experiences are related to creative thinking, tourists' characteristics, and motivations (Chirakranont & Sakdiyakorn, 2022).

#### *4.4.3. Assessment tools and techniques*

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985) has been widely used to assess life satisfaction, which, in some studies, is seen as the cognitive component of subjective well-being or a part of hedonic well-being.

The Memorable Tourism Experience Scale developed by Kim (2010) and improved by Kim et al. (2012) was frequently used to assess memorable tourism experiences through hedonism, local culture, novelty, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement, and knowledge. Several studies discovered different dimensions, such as environment, relationship with companions, relationship with tourists, relationship with local agents, dreams, emotion (Coelho & Gosling, 2018), social interaction, serendipity (Wei et al., 2019), religious tourism experience, emotional connection, and personal values (Kim & Kim, 2019). Kim's (2014) Scale of Tourism Experience evaluates the experience through self-determination, self-improvement, interaction with nature and social exchange. The Motivation Scale (Voigt et al., 2010) and the ten experience measurement items (Oh et al., 2007) focus on memory, escapism, and education.

Another example is the Scale of the Rural Tourism Experience (Loureiro, 2014; Oh et al., 2007), which involves four dimensions: entertainment, escapism, aesthetics, and education. Ali et al.'s (2016) scale measures tourists' perception of creative experiences through five dimensions: escape, recognition, relaxation, interactivity, and learning.

The Meaning in Life Scale (Steger et al., 2006) was used by Aydin and Omuris (2020) to explore the presence of meaning and the subjective view of experiences (MLQ-P) and the search for meaning (MLQ-S).

Wellbeing has been assessed through a wide variety of instruments:

1. PERMA profiler (Butler & Kern, 2016), which assesses eudaimonic and hedonic wellbeing based on positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaningfulness and achievement (PERMA);

2. Psychological Wellbeing Scale (Ryff, 1989), which assesses psychological well-being through self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth.

3. Flourishing Scale (Diener et al., 2010) to reach eudaimonic well-being.
4. Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), used to assess the subjective well-being dimension of happiness (Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2017).
5. McCabe and Johnson's Emotional Wellbeing Scale (2013) assesses well-being through happiness, positive feelings about oneself and emotional well-being.
6. Tourism Wellbeing Scale (Garcês et al., 2020) focuses on well-being through creativity, optimism, and spirituality.
7. Short Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS; Michaelson et al., 2012) to assess subjective well-being.
8. UK's Office for National Statistics (ONS) Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire that measures subjective wellbeing through well-functioning, positive feelings, and life evaluation.
9. A survey of Tourism Wellbeing (Sirgy et al., 2011), focused on the emotional evaluation of well-being.
10. Player Experience of Need Satisfaction (Ryan et al., 2006; Tamborini et al., 2011) assesses eudaimonic well-being through autonomy, competence, and relatedness.
11. Ryan and Deci's Studies (2000) measure the presence of positive emotions and absence of negative emotions (hedonic well-being).

The same happens with emotions:

1. Positive and Negative Affect Scale (Watson et al., 1988) assesses the emotions felt on ten positive and ten negative experiences.
2. The Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (Diener et al., 2010) evaluates general positive feelings – good, positive, pleasant, joy, happy, contented – and negative feelings – negative, bad, unpleasant, sad, angry and afraid.
3. The Affect Balance Scale (Kahneman et al., 2004) evaluates the hedonic level of affect and life satisfaction.
4. Modified Differential Emotions Scale (Cohn et al., 2009; Mitas et al., 2013) uses positive and negative emotions subscales.
5. Psychological Needs Scale (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010; Nawijn, 2011; Prayag et al., 2017) assesses positive emotions.
6. Wheel of emotions (Plutchik, 1991) evaluates joy, sadness, acceptance, disgust, fear, anger, surprise, and anticipation.
7. Three-dimension emotional Scale (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010) focuses on tourists' perceptions of joy, love, and positive surprise.

8. Lanciano's (2021) emotional questionnaire assesses six basic emotions – disgust, happiness, fear, anger, surprise, and sadness).

9. Tronvoll (2011) has items on adverse feelings: anger, frustration, and embarrassment perception.

Authenticity is one of the newest domains associated with meaningful experiences. Zatori et al.'s (2018) Scale of Authenticity was used to measure tourists' authentic states of existence, self-making, and self-discovery. Yi et al.'s (2017) Scale of Authenticity was also used to assess perceived authenticity (perceived architecture, site's overall layout and environment, stories and legends, souvenirs, garden/landscape, and paintings/inscriptions; Yi et al., 2022). Studies by Yi et al. (2022), Wang (1999), Steiner and Reisinger (2006) and Yi et al. (2017) assessed intra- and interpersonal authenticity.

Mindfulness has been studied as another dimension of meaningful experiences regarding communication factors (uses of questions, multisensory media) and visitor factors (high level of interest, pre-visualisation; Moscardo, 1996, 1999). Additionally, the Frauman and Norman Scale (2004) assessed mindfulness through attention, curiosity, exploration, and involvement, while the Langer Mindfulness Scale (LMS; Langer, 2004) is comprised of novelty-seeking, engagement, novelty-producing and flexibility.

The studies evoked other dimensions that are also related to meaningful experiences, despite being much less explicit: (a) travel preferences (e.g., questionnaire adapted from Szucs, 2001); (b) motivations (e.g., 22 Self-Determined Motivations items from Pelletier et al., 1996; Guay et al., 2000; Vallerand et al., 1992); (c) goals (e.g., Consumer Motivation Scale by Barbopoulos & Johansson, 2017; Adaptation Index from Kasser & Ryan, 1996); (d) familiarity (Prentice, 2004); (e) behavioural intentions (e.g., Zeithaml et al., 1996; Scales of Meng and Han, 2018; Place Attachment Inventory [PAI] from Williams & Vaske, 2003; Ma et al. 2017); (f) memory (e.g., Autobiographical Memory Scale from Sheen et al., 2001); (g) perceived benefits (e.g., Learning Outcomes Scale from Ballantyne et al., 2011; Psychological Benefits Measures of Bond, 2013); and (h) senses/sensorial attributes (e.g., Scale of Haase and Wiedmann, 2018).

Altogether, the main categories assessed to measure meaningful experiences were grouped as: (a) life satisfaction, (b) meaning in life, (c) wellbeing, (d) emotions, (e) nature of the experience, (f) authenticity, (g) mindfulness, (h) travel preferences, (i) motivation, (j) familiarity, (k) behavioural intentions, (l) memorability, and (m) perceived benefits.

#### 4.4.4. Data analysis techniques

**Table 4.2.** Peer-reviewed articles per data analysis techniques (Source: Own elaboration)

Research methods	Number of publications	Percentage
Quantitative		
1. Statistical instruments: Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA); Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA); Structural Equation Modeling (SEM); Pearson's Correlation; Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis; Latent Growth Models (LGM); Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM); Repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA); Regression analysis	34	49
Qualitative		
1. Thematic analysis	8	
2. Content analysis	5	
3. Phenomenological analysis	2	
4. Grounded theory	1	
5. Netnography	1	34
6. Constant comparative analysis	1	
7. Hermeneutic method	1	
8. Autoethnography	1	
1. Other methods (e.g., Creswell and Poth's (2018) five-step spiral concept	4	
Mixed methods	3	4
Theoretical papers	8	11

Most research on meaningful experiences used quantitative methodologies and established scales (34), followed by qualitative, mixed, or theoretical studies (see Table 4.2). The main procedures undertaken in quantitative studies were related to the reliability, internal consistency, and validation of the instruments (Exploratory Factor Analysis, Confirmatory Factor Analysis, and Structural Equation Models), highlighting that most of the investigation still focuses on the generalisation property of data instead of a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and what it represents for the people involved. As for qualitative studies, data analysis mainly relies on thematic and content analysis. The theoretical studies reflect a specific topic and its evolution in different contexts.

The studies evidenced a few limitations that constitute methodological directions for future investigations. First, there is a need to adopt a mixed methodological approach because the results might be better explored if quantitative and qualitative measures were employed in the same methodological plan (e.g., inductive mixed methods such as focus groups, interviews, surveys and participant observation; e.g., Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Filep, 2014; Goolaup & Nunkoo, 2022; Huang et al., 2020; Laing & Frost, 2017; Sthapit, 2019; Vada et al., 2019a, 2019b).

Second, longitudinal research should be conducted to uncover all the stages of the experience and monitor the outcomes throughout a period (e.g., Bosnjak et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2017; Coghlan, 2015; Miyakawa & Oguchi, 2022; Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2017; Vada et al., 2019a, 2019b; Yi et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2021).

Following the previous limitations, some studies also focused on the need to undertake more experimental design approaches that will help to validate the testing hypothesis and increase the external validity of the results (Bosnjak et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2020; Lyu et al., 2018; Nawijn, 2011).

A cross-cultural approach is a fourth major research limitation focused on the analysed studies (Chen et al., 2021; Coelho & Gosling, 2018; Dillette et al., 2021; Filep & Laing, 2019; Garcês et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2021; Jelincic & Matecic, 2021; Lee et al., 2018; Miyakawa & Oguchi, 2022; Pernecky, 2006; Pourfakhimi et al., 2021; Sie et al., 2021; Sthapit, 2019; van Iwaarden & Nawijn, 2021)

Finally, there is a research methodology opportunity for the validation and replication of the studies using more extensive and more representative samples to increase the robustness of the investigation and give other perspectives on the data (Baloglu et al., 2019; Knobloch et al., 2017; Servidio & Ruffolo, 2016; Sthapit, 2019).

#### 4.4.5. Antecedents and outcomes of meaningful tourism experiences

**Table 4.3.** Antecedents and outcomes of meaningful tourism experiences (Source: own elaboration)

Dimension	Sub-dimension	Reference
<b>Personal</b>	Spiritual	Aydin & Omuris, 2020; Baloglu et al., 2019; Bosangit et al., 2015; Bosnjak et al., 2016;
	Cognitive	Buzinde (2020); Chen & Yoon, 2019; Chirakranont & Sakdiyakorn, 2022; Coelho &
	Meaning	Gosling, 2018; Coghlan (2015); Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Filep (2014); Filep &
	Motivational	Deery (2010); Frochot et al., 2017; Goolaup & Nunkoo, 2022; Huang et al., 2020; Kim &
	Development of the self	Kim & Kim, 2019; Li et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2014; Loureiro et al., 2019; Miyakawa & Oguchi, 2022; Pernecky (2006); Pourfakhimi et al., 2021; Rivera et al., 2019; Servidio & Ruffolo, 2016; Sie et al., 2021; Smith & Diekmann (2017); Sthapit (2019); Sthapit & Coudounaris (2017); Tan et al., 2020; Vada et al., 2019b; Wang et al., 2020; Wei et al., 2019; Wilson & Harris, 2006; Wilson et al., 2013; Yan & Halpenny, 2019; Yin et al., 2020; Ying et al., 2020;
<b>Emotional</b>	Emodiversity	Coelho & Gosling (2018); Coghlan, 2015; Filep (2014); Filep et al., 2013; Frochot et al., 2017; Gao & Kerstetter, 2018; Gibson et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2020; Knobloch et al., 2017; Loureiro et al., 2019; Lin et al., 2014; Mendonca-Pedro et al., 2021; Miyakawa & Oguchi, 2022; Nawijn, 2011; Pabel & Pearce, 2015, 2018; Servidio & Ruffolo, 2016; Sie et al., 2021; Sirgy et al., 2011; Smith & Diekmann, 2017; Sthapit,

2019; Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2017; Wang et al., 2021; Wei et al., 2019; Yan & Halpenny, 2019

Emotional  
regulation

<b>Well-being</b>	Hedonia	Aydin & Omuris, 2020; Baloglu et al., 2019; Buzinde, 2020; Cai et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021; Coghlan, 2015; Dillette et al., 2021; Farkic et al., 2020; Garcês et al., 2020;
	Eudaimonia	Huang et al., 2020; Jelinčić & Matečić, 2021; Knobloch et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2018;
	Social	Lyu et al., 2018; Miyakawa & Oguchi, 2022; Nawijn, 2011; Pourfakhimi et al., 2021;
	Subjective	Pung & Del Chiappa, 2020; Rahmani et al., 2018; Smith & Diekmann, 2017; Vada et al., 2019b; van Iwaarden & Nawijn, 2021; Voigt et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2021; Yi et al., 2022;
	Psychological	
	Emotional	
<b>Behavioural</b>	Behavioural intentions	Baloglu et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2021; Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Sthapit (2019); Vada et al., 2019b; Yan & Halpenny, 2019; Ying et al., 2020;
<b>Relational</b>	Positive relationships between individuals	Buzinde (2020); Filep (2014);
	Positive relationships with the destination	

The research systematised the antecedents and outcomes of meaningful experiences into five dimensions (see Table 4.3): personal, emotional, wellbeing, behavioural and relational.

The personal dimension focuses on individuals' intrinsic characteristics. Individuals engage in meaningful experiences to seek authentic and genuine moments, transcend themselves, and develop mindful attention. In addition, tourists look for calmness and the opportunity to submerge in the destination's culture and atmosphere. Individuals also seek opportunities to increase self-knowledge and self-esteem, leading to higher satisfaction. Creating strong memories and wishing to fulfil a dream or desire are also sought using tourism experiences to increase an individual's life purpose. Tourism experiences become more meaningful when they lead to self-knowledge, peace, calmness, fulfilment of a dream, absorption, the connection to something higher, mindfulness and self-awareness, self-esteem and, ultimately, a higher life purpose and meaning (e.g., Filep & Deery, 2010; Kim et al., 2012; Vada et al., 2019a, 2019b; Wilson et al., 2013).

The emotional dimension relates to the need to focus on positive emotions associated with determining activities that promote an individual's emotional connection with the place, the experience, and the people involved. The antecedents are associated with seeking positive emotions and sensations, the need to develop a strong emotional bond with the place and

involvement in activities that fortify the emotional ties. The emotional outcomes are related to the living of positive but also negative emotions (e.g., amusement, joy, hope, love, fear, anger, guilt, disgust, sadness), the capacity to regulate the emotional state and the ability to recall the emotions felt (e.g., Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Garcês et al., 2020; Kim & Kim, 2019; Wang et al., 2021).

The well-being dimension creates meaning and purpose in life and happiness (Garcês et al., 2020; Seligman, 2002). This dimension translates into the desire for pleasure, relaxation, positive emotions, enjoyment, hedonism, escapism and, simultaneously, the development of self-expressiveness, excellence, self-development, higher meaning and purpose, life satisfaction, autonomy, positive relationships, and personal growth. Individuals experience higher levels of positive emotions and sensations, pleasurable activities, excitement, escapism, self-expressiveness, reduction of stress and tensions, significant relationships, a strong meaning of life and purpose, accomplishment, self-realisation, self-confidence, and autonomy (e.g., Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Pourfakhimi et al., 2021; Vada et al., 2019a, 2019b; Yi et al., 2021).

The relational dimension concerns the social meaning of experiences. The antecedents involve engaging in positive and meaningful relationships with travel companions, locals, and destinations. The relational dimension translates into the positive emotions individuals feel when they evaluate the relationships as significant, strengthening the bonds between travel companions, connectedness with people and places, and involvement in the local culture and atmosphere (e.g., Coelho & Gosling, 2018; Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Garcês et al., 2020; Yi et al., 2021; Ying et al., 2020).

Finally, the behavioural dimension relates to belonging, place attachment, active participation in the experience and increased loyalty. As for the outcomes, tourists increase their knowledge of the destination, the experience and themselves while living that experience, manifested by the willingness to revisit the locations, engage in the same activities, buy the same products, and recommend the place (e.g., Baloglu et al., 2019; Coelho & Gosling, 2018; Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Kim et al., 2019; Vada et al., 2019a).

#### **4.5. Discussion**

Psychology is an essential field of research, and its association with tourism assets has increased in topics such as happiness, quality of life and tourists' well-being (Filep, 2014).

The number of publications has increased, especially from 2020 onwards. Only one peer-reviewed article (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017) was published in a psychology journal, suggesting that tourism journals focus more on research that brings together meaningful experiences, tourism, and psychology. Thus, the present article contributes to the knowledge developed in the psychological field by engaging positive psychology, well-being, and mindfulness as solid psychological foundations of meaningful tourism experiences.

The most used theories – Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Broaden-and-Build Theory of Emotions, and Authentic Happiness Theory (AHT) – are positive psychology frameworks, suggesting that positive psychology makes a vital contribution to tourists' well-being through the design of the best experience possible (Chen & Yoon, 2019; Coghlan, 2015). Research suggests that the authentic happiness conceptualisation includes more relevant theoretical constructs (positive emotions, engagement, and a sense of meaning and purpose in life) that explain tourist happiness related to tourist experiences (Filep, 2014). This model represents a reliable approach to addressing the connectivity between the five dimensions highlighted in the antecedents and outcomes.

The remaining theoretical frameworks relate to other interdisciplinary fields: customer delight theory, experience economy, experiential marketing, memorable tourism experiences theory, semantic differential model, Stebbins's theory of casual versus serious leisure, the Stimuli-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model, theoretical models of tourism experiences, transformative learning theory, Turner's (1969) Structure, anti-structure theory and place attachment theory (Lewicka, 2011). Altogether, it is possible to reflect on the coverage of the topic among different disciplines and the potential for developing future empirical studies that imply tourists' well-being in different spheres of their lives.

#### *4.5.1. Meaningful, memorable, transformational, authentic, and extraordinary experiences: Similarities and differences*

Concerning the similarities, all the constructs focus on the following dimensions: 1) affective solid dimension – the development of positive emotions (e.g., Filep et al., 2013; Garcês et al., 2020) and negative emotions (e.g., Gibson et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021); 2) promotion of wellbeing – seeking pleasure, relaxation (hedonia), self-growth and development (eudaimonia; e.g., Cai et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2021); 3) relational dimension – positive and significant relationships (e.g., Coghlan et al., 2015; Gao & Kerstetter, 2018; Wilson & Harris, 2006); 4) acquisition of knowledge (Bosangit et al., 2015) about the place and oneself as a human being; 5) self, personal development and transformation (Bosnjak et al.,

2016); 6) mindfulness – the essence of the experience and the associated meaning (Loureiro et al., 2019; Ying et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, there are several differences related to the focus of each construct. Memorable experiences highlight the evocation of the experiences and how individuals provide them with meaning based on memorability (e.g., Kim et al., 2012; Vada et al., 2019a, 2019b). Authentic experiences focus on the connection between mind and body (Tiberghien et al., 2020) and the uniqueness of the experience (Pernecky, 2006). Similarly, extraordinary experiences focus on the uniqueness of the experiences (Pernecky et al., 2006) and discovering something new about oneself (Goolaup & Nunkoo, 2022). Extraordinary experiences are characterised by simplicity, easing conflict, and creating strong bonds and togetherness between individuals or between individuals and places – like meaningful experiences (Goolaup & Nunkoo, 2022). Transformational experiences provide individuals with the opportunity to transform themselves (van Iwaarden et al., 2021) and develop their spiritual awareness (Zhara, 2006), leading to one's self-transcendence, autonomy, self-reflection, and self-acceptance (Pung & Del Chiappa, 2020; van Iwaarden et al., 2021).

#### *4.5.2. Meaningful tourism experiences: Conceptualisation*

As explored in the results, only four studies from the selected sample addressed meaningful experiences (Bosangit et al., 2015; Chirakranont & Sakdiyakorn, 2022; Sie et al., 2021; Wilson & Harris, 2006). Consequently, the previous brainstorming on the similarities and differences allowed the development of a formal conceptualisation of the construct.

A meaningful tourism experience can be defined as a holistic and metaconceptual experience focused on the individual and the context but also on their close interaction and shared benefits. As a result, individuals engage in a complex process of personal development (spiritual, cognitive, meaning, motivational and development of self), emotional development (emodiversity and emotional regulation), increased well-being (hedonia, eudaimonia, subjective, psychological, emotional), behavioural development (decision making, revisit intentions, positive word of mouth, place attachment) and relational development (positive relationships between individuals and with the destination).

#### *4.5.3. Antecedents and outcomes of meaningful tourism experiences*

The results determined that the antecedents and the outcomes of meaningful tourism experiences can be ordered into five dimensions: personal, emotional, wellbeing, relational and

behavioural. The holistic character of tourism experiences highlights that they are characterised by a high level of personally meaningful holiday activities (Filep, 2014).

The antecedents and outcomes are multidimensional in the generation of meaningful experiences. As such, these experiences are co-created by tourists concerning their goals, desires, dreams, and other individual characteristics. What leads individuals to invest in determining activities and the expectations created about their outcomes is half of the process, which can include self-esteem, value systems and attitudes, personality traits, motivations, and affect (Garcês et al., 2020). The other half lies in the results of the experience, which will determine if the expectations were fulfilled.

Different authors have studied the intertwined stages of the experiences, showing that they start long before their actual occurrence. Aho (2001) proposed that the experiences begin through the awakening of interest and expectations that will be a reference for the entirety of the stages. The author stated that experiences are developed in three phases: 1) before the trip, 2) the trip itself, and 3) after the trip.

In the first phase, the awakening of experiences is responsible for the planning and decision-making that leads to the attachment to a destination. The trip phase is the moment of complete absorption, including immediate reactions and those that ripen longer. It includes the evaluation, the informal or systematic process of relating the previous trips with alternative ones, the registration of the trip into physical elements (e.g., photos, films, souvenirs), social features (people and social contexts that must be remembered) and mental elements (e.g., affections, impressions, and meanings). The third phase is dedicated to reflection, which guides individuals through further decisions and increases the experiences' strengths (Aho, 2001).

More recently, Lemon and Verhoef (2016) engaged in sustainability tourism research that examined an integrative model comprised of multiple touchpoints in a tourism experience and their relationships with hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, revisit intention and online word of mouth. The team acknowledged that the journey starts with the prepurchase period and extends until the post-purchase period, pointing out four categories of customer experience touchpoints: 1) destination-owned (influences tourists' satisfaction, attitudes and preferences through the intentional development of tourist interaction points); 2) partner owned (interactions with customers, controlled by tourism partners); 3) tourist-owned (developed by tourists during the experiences); and 4) social/external (the importance of other people for the significance of the experience).

This reveals an interconnection between what motivates the experience (antecedents), the practical occurrence of the experience and its impact on tourists' different life domains

(outcomes). In this study, the antecedents and outcomes were divided into five different life domains, which does not necessarily mean they are exclusive regarding their connections; instead, they are all connected, and individual expectations and motivations to visit specific places affect all their different facets.

Regarding the personal dimension, some studies have shown that tourism experiences can become more meaningful when they enable a tourist's personal development and transformation. For example, Wilson and Harris (2006) advocated that independent travel offers a unique and vital way to build a tourist's sense of self, confidence, and empowerment. Along the same line, Bosangit and colleagues (2015) advocated that self-reflection and emotions are central to transforming travel experiences into personally meaningful ones, signalling the role of these experiences in the development of self and transformation. Thus, a tourist's transformation influences the characterisation of tourism experiences as meaningful, as the transformational characteristic of meaningful experiences is seen as the "(...) long-lasting, meaningful personal change that remains after the trip (...)" (Chirakranont & Sakdiyakorn, 2022, p. 8).

The results also point out that hedonism (pleasure and positive emotions) and eudaimonia (meaning and purpose in life) are potential dimensions that enable tourism experiences to become meaningful (Bosangit et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2012). Another component that emerged is the creation of memories: the higher the personal, emotional, relational, and behavioural dimensions, the better the memorability of the experience (Bosangit et al., 2015; Coudounaris et al., 2017; Mendonça-Pedro et al., 2019).

On the emotional dimension, the results have been coherent in showing that people repeat enjoyable experiences and avoid the ones related to adverse emotions (e.g., Garcês et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2012; Vada et al., 2019a; Willson et al., 2013). Nevertheless, it is not only the positive emotions that are essential for the meaning attached to the experiences but also the negative ones (Wang et al., 2021). Knobloch and colleagues (2017) stressed that emotions strongly influenced the outcomes (e.g., overcoming fear, achievement, mastery, and awe) – which may impact an individual's self (e.g., renewal and inspiration by helping others), their relationships (e.g., sharing the experience of helping others) and the search for wellbeing (Coghlan, 2015).

Regarding the wellbeing category, the hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing dimensions were frequent motivations to pursue determining activities, and similarly, they are associated with powerful outcomes, such as positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaningfulness, and achievement (Pourfakhimi et al., 2021; Seligman, 2011).

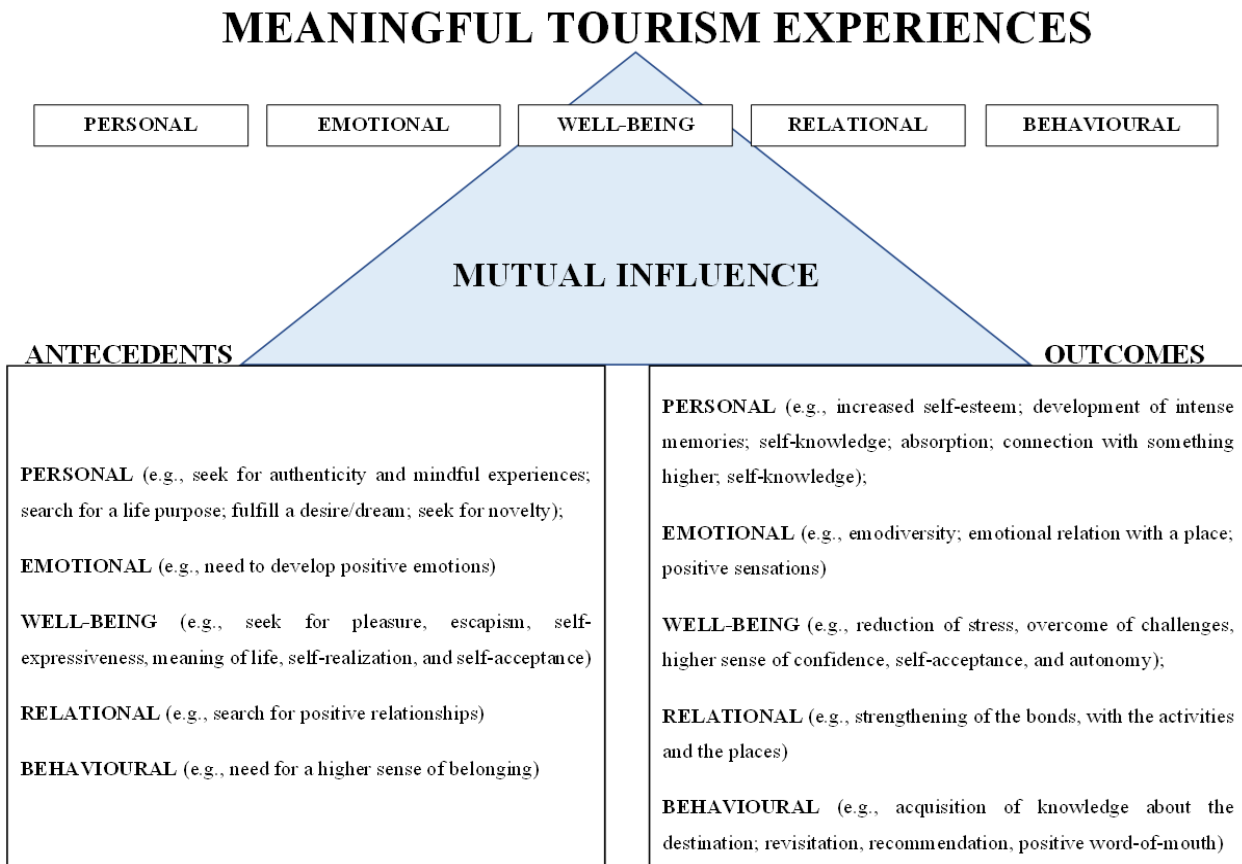
Concerning the behavioural dimension, individuals use their resources towards experiences recommended by someone they trust. This positive word-of-mouth might encourage tourists to look for determining activities that might be repeated or recommended to others, demonstrating a higher loyalty and connection with the place (e.g., Baloglu et al., 2019; Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Loureiro et al., 2019; Vada et al., 2019a, 2019b).

Finally, the relational dimension is associated with searching for the social component of tourist activities, which is a normal process, especially when those activities involve knowing different places and people. Tourism experiences might find the relational dimension to be a strong trigger for the development of intense meanings that translate into the strengthening of relationships between individuals or the engagement in new relationships as well as a synergy between individuals, the place, and the culture of that place.

There is a clear interrelation between the triggers that make tourists engage in the activities, the activities themselves and the outcomes of those experiences. The search for meaning enables individuals to develop satisfaction with life, pleasure, and a strong meaning, enhancing the synergies between all the dimensions involved in the conceptualisation and assessment of meaningful tourism experiences (Aydin & Omuris, 2020; Pourfakhami et al., 2021).

Figure 4.5 synthesises the main antecedents and outcomes of meaningful tourism experiences and the main components of these experiences.

**Figure 4.5.** *Meaningful tourism experiences: Antecedents and outcomes* (Source: own elaboration)



## 4.6. Conclusions

The present article explored the main definitions and constructs assessed, the instruments used to do it and the antecedents and outcomes that emerge when engaging in a meaningful tourism experience within the scope of positive psychology, mindfulness, and wellbeing. This study provided important theoretical and empirical implications for theory and practice.

### 4.6.1. Theoretical implications

The research highlights the potential for positive psychology to maximise tourism experiences' contribution to tourists' wellbeing. Adopting a positive psychology approach to understanding tourism and well-being is a new addition (Chen & Yoon, 2019; Coghlan, 2015) because positive psychology uses psychological theory, research, and intervention techniques to understand the positive, adaptive, creative and emotionally fulfilling aspects of human behaviour (e.g., Garcês et al., 2020; Vada et al., 2019b).

This study also conceptualised meaningful tourism experiences aligned with positive psychology, well-being, and mindfulness foundations. A meaningful experience focuses on the personal dimension (spiritual, cognitive, meaning, motivational and development of the self), emotional dimension (emodiversity and emotional regulation), dimension of well-being (hedonia, eudaimonia, social, subjective, psychological, and emotional), behavioural dimension (engagement in positive behavioural intentions) and relational dimension (positive relationships between individuals and between individuals and places).

Another theoretical contribution lies in the importance of the emerging constructs of positive psychology to the understanding of how tourists derive meaning from their experiences, such as mindfulness and authenticity (e.g., Tiberghien et al., 2020; Wang, 1999). Including these constructs in characterising meaningful experiences is a promising research path, considering their focus on the individual and his or her personal, relational, and emotional development.

Emotions are mentioned as one of the essential elements of tourism experiences (e.g., Aydin & Omuris, 2020; Chen et al., 2021; Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Gibson et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2014; Loureiro et al., 2019; Mendonca-Pedro et al., 2021; Nawijn, 2011; Sie et al., 2021; Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018; Wang et al., 2021). Nevertheless, this study acknowledges the critical role of adverse emotions in evaluating meaningful experiences since these emotions are equally decisive in explaining the meaning individuals attribute to their experiences. Researchers must consider the development of investigations that highlight negative emotions and how individuals derive meaning from them (e.g., Frochot et al., 2017; Gibson et al., 2021; Pourfakhimi et al., 2021).

The study emphasises the demand for multi-method and multi-contextual criteria to assess, evaluate and conceptualise meaningful experiences, focusing on the importance of adopting a mixed research analysis approach and longitudinal and experimental studies.

Finally, the antecedents and outcomes were divided into different but complementary dimensions, suggesting that the personal, emotional, and environmental dimensions, as well as significant people, contribute to improving meaningful tourist experiences (e.g., travel companions, other tourists, local agents, and residents; Coelho & Gosling, 2018).

#### *4.6.2. Empirical implications*

The study highlighted the supremacy of studies with tourist samples, considering that only three articles used a sample composed of residents (Chen & Yoon, 2019; Gibson et al., 2021) and workers in the tourism settings (Gibson et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2018). This result is

consistent with some research gaps in the literature related to the need to consider different populations to assess the meaning of a tourism experience (Filep et al., 2017). Tregua et al. (2020) developed a bibliometric analysis on co-creation, and the results revealed the importance of facing this phenomenon as the engine of satisfactory tourist experiences for every stakeholder involved. Thus, engaging in a multi-contextual assessment of meaningful experiences alerts the tourism community to the importance of being united in promoting experiences from which tourism can derive essential meanings.

These assumptions highlight the importance of personalising the experience, focusing on personal goals and physical and emotional states (Bosangit et al., 2015), enabling tourists to participate in the attraction actively, total immersion in the activity, developing meaning from the attraction and sensory and emotional engagement (Jelinčić & Matečić, 2021). An explicit example is a study by Gillovic and colleagues (2021) associated with intellectual disabilities. The authors concluded that the experience turned meaningful based on three criteria: 1) it encouraged a sense of normality, 2) it encouraged self-efficacy, and 3) it strengthened relational connections. Overall, allowing individuals to engage in personalised experiences is the key to encouraging tourists to be active agents in their development (Gillovic et al., 2021).

An analysis of the authors' keywords showed the synergy between well-being, emotions, happiness, good memories, pleasure (hedonia) and transformation (eudaimonia). Tourism marketers should develop advertising campaigns that promote these constructs as associated with a significant experience, enhancing the touristic potential of destinations and filling tourists' experiences with meaning.

This study also emphasised the role of negative emotions on experiences. As such, tourism managers, operators, workers and even the residents of the destinations might be aware and united in the effort to include this information in the design of the experiences and to deliver the opportunity for a personalised 'emodiversity-seeking' experience (Wang et al., 2021).

Finally, the research contributes to future empirical studies on meaningful tourism experiences by discussing how this construct has been measured. This aspect has practical implications for destinations and tourism firms in assessing the extent of visitors' experiences and is more likely to impact individual well-being and behavioural outcomes.

#### *4.6.3. Limitations and future research*

There are some limitations to this study that can be pointed out as future guidelines for research. First, the research protocol may not have considered other search terms approached by the literature (e.g., optimal, negative emotions). Future studies might include all the essential

research terms to uncover different paths in the literature. The review considered only peer-reviewed articles in English from peer-reviewed journals. Future studies might include other sources, such as books, book chapters or academic documents.

The literature still focuses on tourist samples, leaving behind stakeholders who have essential perspectives and could contribute to redesigning tourism experiences. The emergence of positive psychology-inspired work to explain the involvement of host communities and tourism workers is progressively increasing (Filep & Laing, 2019). Future studies might consider different contexts and samples, meeting Filep et al.'s (2017) assumptions of positive tourism, a movement of multi-contextual involvement.

Despite the emerging studies that focus on the role of negative emotions in the development of meaning (e.g., Gibson et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2021), this topic still needs more investigation (Kim et al., 2012; Sirgy et al., 2011; Wei et al., 2019). Future studies should focus on negative emotions and their impact on tourists' well-being and meaningful experiences (e.g., include the search term 'negative emotions' in the research protocol).

Future studies should uniformise the assessment of meaningful experiences, leading to more investigation on the need to maintain the psychometric properties and the internal validity and reliability of the tools (Filep, 2014). The findings should be applied in different countries, tourism contexts and cultures, leading to different meaningful tourist experiences.

This systematic literature review maps meaningful tourism experiences and the role of positive psychology, well-being and mindfulness in the emergence of meaning from the experiences. Other dimensions have emerged and can be further explored (e.g., novelty, sense of self, place attachment, motivations, personal characteristics, and culture; Chen & Yoon, 2019; Dillette et al., 2021; Filep et al., 2013; Pernecky, 2006; Voigt et al., 2010).

Finally, it would be interesting to explore if different psychological foundations could lead to the same results obtained in this review by following a positive psychology lens (e.g., cognitive, motivational, and educational psychology).

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## 5. CHAPTER FIVE

### **STUDY 4: PORTUGUESE VALIDATION OF THE MEMORABLE TOURISM EXPERIENCE SCALE IN A GENERAL PORTUGUESE SAMPLE**

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## **Portuguese validation of the Memorable Tourism Experience Scale in a General Portuguese Sample**

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**Abstract:** In Portugal, there are no instruments to assess the meaning attached to tourism experiences. This study aimed to adapt and validate the Portuguese version of the Memorable Tourism Experience Scale and the dimension of emotional intensity to a sample of the general Portuguese population. The sample comprises 308 Portuguese tourists, mainly female (76.3%), and Portuguese nationality prevails (88.6%). Concerning the occupation, most of the sample is employed (36.7%). Participants' ages range from 17 to 82 ( $M=33.58$ ;  $SD=12.66$ ). Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were performed, and the psychometric properties were analysed as shown by internal consistency measures, convergent validity, and average variance extracted. Confirmatory factor analysis confirmed an 8-factor structure with good psychometric properties. The current version of the MTES is a valid and reliable instrument for assessing the meaning attached to the experiences. Practical implications are discussed, along with future guidelines.

**Keywords:** MTES; validity; tourists; memorable; meaningful; emotions

## 5.1. Literature review

Meaningful tourism experience (MTE) is an underexplored concept in the literature, frequently used as a synonym for memorable, transformational, extraordinary, or authentic experiences (Câmara et al., 2023). Thus, there is a lack of instruments to assess this specific phenomenon.

A meaningful tourism experience is constructed based on a tourist's assessment of their experience and consolidates and reinforces the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience (Kim et al., 2012). These memories are more focused on the recollection of the experience that led to feelings and sensations of performing the activity in the present moment (Kim et al., 2010) and allow tourists to revisit positive memories associated with positive emotions. On this topic, Tung and Ritchie (2011) identified four key dimensions of MTEs: affect, expectations, consequentiality, and recollection. These findings have been extended with the work performed by Kim and colleagues (2012), who define memorable tourism experiences as a "(...) "tourism experience remembered and recalled after the event has occurred" (Kim et al., 2012, p. 4). For the authors, seven more dimensions are crucial for evaluating a tourism experience as a memorable one: hedonism, involvement, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, knowledge, and novelty.

In recent years, the topic of memorable tourism experiences has grown exponentially, with authors suggesting that novelty, involvement, and social interaction of an experience positively influence how tourists assign an experience as memorable (Wei et al., 2019).

For example, a recent systematic review of MTE research studies within 10 years revealed that most of the articles focus on how MTE influences the perceptions and behaviours of tourists and, consequentially, how marketing destinations can use this information to improve their marketing strategies (Hosseini et al., 2021).

This concept has been explained and applied to different theoretical perspectives, resulting in the assumption that emotions are the most crucial component of the trip experience. One example is the work provided by Servidio and Ruffolo (2016), who studied the relationship between emotional involvement with the experience and recollection of that experience. Similar work has been developed on the core processes of memorable tourism experiences into emotions, involvement, renewal, and knowledge (Coelho et al., 2018), in family cohesion (Lee & Lee, 2021), as well as the role of memorable tourism experiences in the other psychological dimensions, such as the evolution of novelty across personality, behaviour, cognition and neurological procedures (Skavronskaya et al., 2020).

Methodologically, the quantitative method is predominantly used. Methods such as Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) are the predominant ones (e.g., Kim, 2013; Kim et al., 2012; Jiang et al., 2023; Ramiréz-Hurtado et al., 2022). However, some studies have shown the applicability of qualitative methodologies, such as in-depth interviews (e.g., Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015; Sterchele, 2020), focus group (Hanna et al., 2018), or narratives (e.g., Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015; Servidio & Ruffolo, 2016).

Several studies have been undertaken to verify the usability of the MTE scale in different destinations and contexts (Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018).

As such, Kim et al. (2012) were the authors of one of the most well-known scales to measure memorable tourism experience, the Memorable Tourism Experience Scale (Kim et al., 2012). An empirical evaluation of the developed instrument was undertaken using data obtained from U.S. college students at a large Midwestern university. The scale is composed of 24 items, comprising seven domains: hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement, and novelty. The data supported this dimensional structure of the memorable tourism experience and its internal consistency and validity (i.e., content, construct, convergent,

and discriminant validity). The scale has been used in several validation studies across different contexts, as explored right after (Table 5.1).

In 2013, Kim (2013) decided to compare memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) of college students the United States and Taiwan. Based on a sample of 599 college students (295 from the United States and 304 from Taiwan), the results showed that Taiwanese respondents rated refreshment, meaningfulness, knowledge, and novelty statistically higher. In contrast, the American respondents rated hedonism statistically higher. In other words, the Taiwanese respondents were likely to recollect better and retrieve tourism experiences in which they engaged in meaningful activities, learned knowledge, and experienced something new. In addition, the results also revealed that the MTE factors of local culture and involvement were perceived to be important by both the groups.

Chandralal and Valenzuela (2015) developed an instrument to access memorable tourism experiences, from the perspective of more regular and typical leisure-oriented travellers. In the exploratory phase, the authors gathered more qualitative data from 100 travel blog narratives and 35 in-depth interviews. Later, the authors developed the quantitative procedure of validation of the instrument and found a 10-factor solution with 35 items. The dimensions associated were authentic local experiences, novel experiences, self-beneficial experiences, significant travel experiences, serendipitous and surprising experiences, local hospitality, social interactions, impressive local guides and tour operators, fulfilment of personal travel interests, and affective emotions.

Ramírez-Hurtado and colleagues (2022) adapted the Memorable Tourism Experience Scale to the Spanish context of Mototourism. Using a sample of 457 moto tourists, the authors acknowledge that a 6-factor solution was reached once the dimension “novelty” did not make sense, considering that moto tourists usually use specific and usual routes. The p-value of Bartlett sphericity test was less than 0.05; hence, the null hypothesis that stated that the correlation matrix was identified was rejected. Concerning the KMO index, a value close to 1 (0.957) was shown. As for Confirmatory Factor Analysis, all items had factor loadings higher than the threshold (0.707, Hair et al., 2018), and the internal consistency was proven, with values higher than 0.7. As such, the adequacy of the MTEs in the Spanish context was also achieved.

Kim and colleagues (2022) examined the dimensions of the Memorable Tourism Experience Scale, acknowledging that, ten years later, some dimensions might have a different impact from the 7-factor solution found by the ancestral authors in the MTES. As such, the authors developed the Tourism Memory Characteristics Scale to measure the

phenomenological characteristics of tourism memory. The results of the CFA allowed for the emergence of seven dimensions of memorable tourism experiences: Accessibility, trip details, emotional intensity, sharing, valence, sensory details, and vividness.

Finally, Jiang *et al.* (2023) adapted the memorable tourism experience scale to the heritage context, specifically on Beijing's Badaling National Forest Park of the Great Wall. To match the research context and provide more objective items, two dimensions were created beside the original seven dimensions of the instrument: exciting (separated from the hedonic dimension) and freedom (separated from the refreshment dimension). The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) revealed that Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was 2108 ( $p < .000$ ), and the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy for the data set was .947. All correlation values were above .40, and a principal components analysis with an optimal oblique rotation method was applied, with a minimum eigenvalue of one. Communalities analysis was conducted to determine the relative importance of public factors, and all measurement items were between 0.64 and 0.77. As such, this measure was validated for this specific context.

Nevertheless, some considerations can be made in differentiating between a memorable and a meaningful experience. Considering the focus of a memorable experience on the recollection of the experience and the emotions associated with that recollection, a meaningful experience is, otherwise, an experience which finds its meaning in different dimensions, such as personal (e.g. self-confidence, self-care), emotional (e.g. positive emotions, pleasure), relational (e.g. improvement on the relationships with travel companions, and development of new relationships), and well-being dimensions (e.g., engagement, satisfaction with life, happiness). The previous assumptions were demonstrated in a systematic literature review developed by Câmara and collaborators (2023).

In sum and considering that some of the dimensions developed by Kim *et al.*'s (2012) model of memorable experience are suitable for the construct of a meaningful tourism experience, leading to the assumption that emotions are the most relevant component of the tourism experience (Servidio & Ruffolo, 2016). Consequentially, the fact that there are no validated adaptations and translations to the Portuguese context of the Memorable Tourism Experience Scale justifies using this scale to measure the dimensions associated with meaningful tourism experiences.

**Table 5.1.** Cross-culture validations of the Memorable Tourism Experience Scale

Authors	Language	Sample	Methodology	Dimensions
Kim et al. (2012)	English	N = 536 (US College Students)	EFA CFA	24 items 7 dimensions
Kim (2013)	English Chinese	N = 599 (USA and Taiwanese college students)	Cross-tabulation analysis EFA / CFA Independent t-test	24 items 7 dimensions
Kim et al. (2014)	Chinese	N = 800 (Taiwanese College Students)	EFA CFA	24 items 7 dimensions
Chandralal & Valenzuela (2015)	English	N = 700 (General population)	Travel blog narratives 35 in-depth interviews EFA CFA	34 items 10 dimensions
Ramírez-Hurtado et al. (2022)	Spanish	N = 457 (Spanish mototourism tourists)	EFA CFA	19 items 6 dimensions
Jiang et al. (2023)	Chinese	N = 303 (General park visitors)	EFA	24 items 9 dimensions

## 5.2. Methodology

### 5.2.1. Objectives

Considering the lack of validated measures to assess the meaning of a tourism experience for the Portuguese population, this study aims to translate, adapt, and validate the Memorable Tourism Experience Scale (MTEs) (Kim et al., 2012) and the dimension “emotional intensity” from the Tourism Memory Characteristics Scale (TMCs) (Kim et al., 2022), in a sample of Portuguese tourists.

### 5.2.2. Study design and settings

A cross-sectional design was used in the current study to validate the Meaningful Tourism Experience Scale (MTES) (Kim et al., 2012) and the dimension “Emotional Intensity” from the Tourism Memory Characteristics Scale (Kim et al., 2022) for the Portuguese language, using a self-reported questionnaire.

### 5.2.3. Procedures

The research protocol included the study goals, data confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the informed consent form. As for the ethical considerations, besides the formal approval by the Scientific Commission of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of the University of Algarve, informed consent was obtained from each participant before data collection in the first section of the questionnaire. All participants were provided full disclosure of the study’s purposes and significance. Finally, participants were assured that the study data would be kept anonymous.

Data collection began in January 2023 and continued until January 2024. The questionnaire items were scored on five-point Likert scales and required approximately 20 min to complete.

#### *5.2.4. Translation process*

The questionnaire's translation process followed the Cross-Cultural Adaptation of Self-Report Measures (Beaton et al., 2000).

Specifically, the adaptation and validation of the questionnaire were approved by the Scientific Commission of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of the University of Algarve regarding acceptance no. EDOC/2021/26517. Then, the original version was translated into Portuguese by the research team, considering all the members are native Portuguese speakers and have a strong background in studying tourism experiences and their links to psychological variables. All the research members assessed the disparities and consolidated them into a unified version.

The final Portuguese version was assessed through a pilot study with 12 Portuguese people with the same demographic characteristics as the intended sample regarding the questionnaire's comprehension and cultural adaptation (Johanson & Brooks, 2009; Moore et al., 2011). In general, the feedback from the participants was excellent in terms of the novelty of the study and according to George (2011), all the values for Cronbach's alpha were good (> 0.9—Excellent, 0.8—Good, > 0.7—Acceptable, > 0.6—Questionable, > 0.5—Poor, and < 0.5—Unacceptable”; e) clarification of the vocabulary of some of the items; f) evaluation and approval by the Personal Data Protection Team.

The research protocol included the study goals, data confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the informed consent form. As for the ethical considerations, besides the formal approval by the Scientific Commission of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of the University of Algarve, informed consent was obtained from each participant before data collection in the first section of the questionnaire. All participants were provided full disclosure of the study's purposes and significance. Finally, participants were assured that the study data would be kept anonymous and answered the online questionnaire through an online survey platform: the EUSurvey. Data collection began in January 2023 and continued until January 2024. The questionnaire items were scored on five-point Likert scales and required approximately 20 min to complete.

### 5.2.5. *Participants*

The sample of this study followed a non-random convenience criterion (Almeida, 2003), composed of Portuguese adults who had had a meaningful tourism experience in the last few months. The criterion was adopted because several studies on the impact of tourism experience have emerged using a general sample associated with promising results (e.g., Park & Ahn, 2022; Wilson & Harris, 2006). Any Portuguese volunteers with tourism experience who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study were considered for analysis. The exclusion criteria included not speaking Portuguese.

Those who met the inclusion criteria and agreed to participate in the study answered the questionnaire through an online survey software: EUSurvey.

### 5.2.6. *Instruments*

The survey has three parts: a) demographic information; b) characteristics of a meaningful tourist experience the participants had had in the last few months, in terms of the duration of the trip, people whom they travelled with and the activities in which they engaged; c) the questionnaire itself where participants were asked about their perception and satisfaction with a specific trip (MTEs), as well as the intensity of the emotions concerning the memory of those experiences in the present (TMCs). To specify the model, the theoretical models surrounding the latent variable must be explained (Hair et al., 2022).

#### 5.2.6.1. Sociodemographic questionnaire

This questionnaire assessed sociodemographic variables in the sample, such as sex, age, occupation, and country of origin.

#### 5.2.6.3. Memorable Tourism Experience Scale

Kim and colleagues (2012) developed the Memorable Tourism Experience Scale (MTE Scale) to identify the components related to the feelings and experiences lived at a given time. Thus, this scale is comprised of seven dimensions: a) Hedonism (seek for pleasure and enjoyment, Dunman & Matilla, 2005); b) Refreshment (relaxation or renewal, Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987); c) Novelty (need and desire to experience something new, Dunman & Matilla, 2005) c) Local culture (meaning, cultural costumes, way of life and language, Dollinger, 2012; Morgan & Xu, 2009); e) Meaningfulness (sensation of a great value or significance, Kim et al., 2012; Staphit & Coudounaris, 2017; Voigt, 2017), f) Involvement (commitment with the activity and specific services or places (Scott & Le, 2017); and g) Knowledge (learning of

different skills, knowledge, practical wisdom and self-consciousness, Kim et al., 2012). For the seven scales, participants used a 7-point Likert scale, in which 1 represented "I have not experienced at all" and 7 represented "I have experienced very much". Higher scores were associated with higher levels of agreement with a particular statement. In the original version, Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.81 to 0.90 for the general population. In this study, Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.67 to 0.92, and McDonald's Omega ranged from .86 to .91.

#### 5.2.6.3. Tourism Memory Characteristics Scale – Emotional intensity subscale

Kim and colleagues (2022) developed the Tourism Memory Characteristics Scale, if recalling tourism experiences is a decisive factor in tourists' future behaviour and decision-making when choosing destinations. One of those dimensions is called emotional intensity, which is defined as the intensity of emotions experienced by an individual concerning tourism memory (Prayag et al., 2013). The emotions associated with the memories we create of our experiences interact with the emotional content of the memory and the motivations that trigger the will to travel (Prayag et al., 2013), influencing future tourist behaviour (Kim et al., 2022). For this scale, participants used a 5-point Likert scale, in which 1 represented "not relevant at all" and 5 represented "Very relevant". Higher scores were associated with higher levels of agreement with a particular statement. In the original version, Cronbach's alpha was .88 for the general population. This study's value was .962, and McDonald's Omega was .961.

#### 5.2.7. *Statistical procedures*

Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS and AMOS 29 (Analysis of Moment Structures). The last software allows the modelling of data through structural equations. Descriptive statistics were used to group the sample into common characteristics (Field, 2009). Internal consistency of the MTES and TCMS was examined using Cronbach's alpha, McDonald's omega, and composite reliability (CR) through Raykov's formula (Raykov, 1997). For the three indicators, coefficients  $\geq 0.7$  suggest good reliability (Hair et al., 2010).

The outlier diagnosis was made on SPSS. The results showed that the data has no outliers. Additionally, considering the need to guarantee the normality of the data, we ran a skewness and kurtosis analysis on SPSS. All values must be within -2 and 2 to be considered normal. The results confirm that the data follows a normal distribution, considering that all the skewness and kurtosis values were within these values (Hair et al., 2022).

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were performed to obtain the final factor structure for the Portuguese version of the MTES. Varimax

and principal components analysis (PCA) were used for all indicators or items in the EFA. The EFA was carried out using half of the sample to assess the usefulness of every item through factor loading and the dimensionality of the items through the components. In this study, only items with a factor loading greater than 0.50 were retained, as statisticians widely recommended and agreed upon this value and are considered statistically significant (Field, 2013).

The CFA was carried out on the other half of the sample to assess and validate the measurement model based on the previous studies (Carmo et al., 2015). The following fit indices were considered: the ratio of chi-square over the number of degrees of freedom ( $X^2/DF$ ) (values less than 5.0 are associated with good fit); the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA, values below 0.08 are acceptable); Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI); and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) (values  $\geq .95$  reflect a better fit (Hair et al., 2010, 2022).

Convergent validity evidence was performed using the average variance extracted (AVE) coefficients above 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and Pearson correlations between the MTES total score and scales.

### 5.3. Results

#### 5.3.1. Participants

The sample comprises 308 Portuguese tourists, mainly female (76.3%), and Portuguese nationality prevails (88.6%). Concerning the occupation, most of the sample is employed (36.7%). Participants' ages range from 17 to 82 ( $M=33.58$ ;  $SD=12.66$ ). Regarding the destinations mentioned as the most significant ones visited in the last few months, 43.2% were European destinations; Portuguese destinations were highlighted as the most significant (22.8%). The participants travelled mainly with family and friends (89.9%), reporting that it was the first time they travelled to the mentioned destination (62.6%). Finally, the types of tourism practised were mainly related to cultural and urban tourism (34.2%). Table 5.2 describes the sociodemographic characteristics of the sample.

**Table 5.2.** Sample description and characteristics

		Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>	Masculine	72	23,4%
	Feminine	235	76,3%
<b>Age</b>	Below 28	156	50,6%
	Above 28	152	49,4%
<b>Current Occupation</b>	Student	107	34,7%
	Employed	113	36,7%
	Student and employed	76	24,7%

	Unemployed	6	1,9%
	Retired	6	1,9%
<b>Nationality</b>	Portuguese	273	88,6%
	Others (e.g., Brazilian)	35	11,2%
<b>Country of residence</b>	Portugal	292	94,8%
	Others (e.g., Brazil, Spain, England)	16	5,2%

### 5.3.2. Internal Consistency

To assess the internal consistency of the Memorable Tourism Experience Scale, Cronbach's alpha, McDonald's Omega, and Composite Reliability (CR) were performed.

Concerning Cronbach's alpha, the values obtained ranged from 0.673 to 0.917, with values of 0.954 for the total scale.

As for the McDonald's Omega, the values obtained ranged from 0.863 to 0.914, with values of 0.958 for the total scale. Nevertheless, this index was impossible to calculate for the scale measuring *Knowledge*, considering the lack of needed items to perform this statistical procedure (< 3 items). For most scales, the values for internal consistency were higher than 0.70, except for the scale measuring Knowledge (Cronbach's alpha above 0.60). However, for social sciences (Hair et al., 2018).

Composite Reliability (CR) also delivered values between 0.787 and 0.962 for the instrument scales, with values of 0.880 for the total score (Table 5.3).

**Table 5.3.** Internal consistency

Scales	# items	Cronbach's $\alpha$	McDonald's $\omega$	CR
Total	28	0.954	0.958	0.880
Emotional intensity	5	0.957	0.956	0.962
Involvement	3	0.862	0.863	0.829
Local culture	3	0.880	0.885	0.850
Refreshment	3	0.917	0.914	0.943
Novelty	4	0.861	0.865	0.903
Meaningfulness	3	0.895	0.903	0.906
Knowledge	2	0.673	N.A.*	0.787
Hedonism	5	0.873	0.872	0.877

\*N.A. Not applicable

### 5.3.3. Principal Characteristics of the Structural Model

The adequacy of the sample was assessed through the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method. The results obtained delivered good indexes of the adequacy of the sample. They enabled the continuity of the statistical procedures with the factor analysis, considering the values of Bartlett's sphericity test ( $\chi^2=6349,632$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin

(0.915). Considering the eigenvalues of Kaiser's criterion (above 1.0 indicates good adequacy of latent factors), a solution of seven factors was found on the Memorable Tourism Scale, similar as the original scale (Kim et al., 2012). This 7-factor solution structure explained 79.90% of the total variance. Nine items showed factor loadings higher than 0.30 in more than one scale, and two of them were allocated to different scales compared to the original instrument. It is the case of item 19 (*"Eu visitei um lugar que realmente gostava de visitar"*) that showed a higher factor loading on the scale "Hedonism" (0.592), rather than on the original scale "Involvement" (0.308). Similarly, item 22 (*"Foi uma experiência exploratória"*) only showed factor loading on the scale "Involvement" (0.743), and on the original scale, this item was placed on the scale "Knowledge" (Table 5.4). The 7-factor solution was confirmed by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), indicating an acceptable goodness of fit indices ( $\chi^2/DF=3.928$ , CFI=0.896, TLI=0.871, and RMSEA=0.098).

As for the dimension "emotional intensity", the results confirmed the one-factor solution adopted on the original scale that explains 86.72% of the total variance of the scale, considering the values of Bartlett's sphericity test ( $\chi^2=1830,660$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (0.897). PCA confirmed the unidimensionality of each scale. The 1-factor solution was confirmed by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), indicating an excellent goodness of fit indices ( $\chi^2/DF=1.055$ , CFI=1.00, TLI=1.00, and RMSEA=0.013).

**Table 5.4.** Factor analysis

Scales and items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>Factor 1. Refreshment</b>								
Item 12	<b>0.689</b>				0.369			
Item 13	<b>0.759</b>				0.356			
Item 14	<b>0.735</b>	0.392						
Item 15	<b>0.680</b>	0.429		0.304				
<b>Factor 2. Hedonism</b>								
Item 1	0.327	<b>0.520</b>					0.348	
Item 2		<b>0.574</b>	0.471				0.390	
Item 3	0.316	<b>0.720</b>		0.344				
Item 4	0.320	<b>0.663</b>	0.335					
Item 19		<b>0.592</b>	0.308		0.414			
<b>Factor 3. Involvement</b>								
Item 20		0.480	<b>0.611</b>		0.328			
Item 21			<b>0.826</b>					
Item 22			<b>0.743</b>					
<b>Factor 4. Local culture</b>								
Item 9				<b>0.856</b>				
Item 10				<b>0.741</b>				
Item 11				<b>0.884</b>				
<b>Factor 5. Meaningfulness</b>								
Item 16					<b>0.783</b>			
Item 17	0.325				<b>0.783</b>			
Item 18	0.397				<b>0.619</b>		0.431	
<b>Factor 6. Novelty</b>								
Item 5						<b>0.631</b>	0.549	
Item 6		0.351				<b>0.685</b>		
Item 7			0.344			<b>0.796</b>		
Item 8		0.337				<b>0.621</b>		
<b>Factor 7. Knowledge</b>								
Item 23							<b>0.324</b>	
Item 24							<b>0.722</b>	
<b>Factor 8. Emotional intensity</b>								
Item 25								<b>0.921</b>
Item 26								<b>0.931</b>
Item 27								<b>0.954</b>
Item 28								<b>0.937</b>
Item 29								<b>0.913</b>

#### 5.3.4. *Correlations Between Items and Subscales*

All the correlation coefficients between each item and the corresponding scale were above 0.70 ( $p < 0.001$ ), except for item 5 of the novelty scale and item 24 of the knowledge scale. Nevertheless, all the values were above 0.6.

The correlation coefficients between the 8 instrument scales under analysis ranged between 0.470 and 0.89. The majority of the inter-scale correlation coefficients were below 0.5, except for the refreshment and involvement ( $r=0.516$ ), hedonism and involvement ( $r=0.605$ ), hedonism and knowledge ( $r=0.500$ ), and hedonism and local culture scales ( $r=0.523$ ) (Table 5.5).

**Table 5.5.** Pearson correlation coefficients between the 8 scales of the MTEs

Scales	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Refreshment	-							
2. Hedonism	0.435***	-						
3. Involvement	-0.028	0.605***	-					
4. Local culture	0.213***	0.523***	0.017	-				
5. Meaningfulness	0.516***	0.099	0.003	-0.029	-			
6. Novelty	0.207**	0.306***	0.085	0.014	0.152	-		
7. Knowledge	0.199***	0.500***	0.259***	0.235***	0.258***	0.075	-	
8. Emotional intensity	0.024***	0.059	-0.089	-0.012	0.317***	0.070	0.024	-

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

**Table 5.6.** Convergent validity indicators.

<b>Scales</b>	<b>AVE</b>
1. Refreshment	0.803
2. Hedonism	0.867
3. Involvement	0.675
4. Local culture	0.786
5. Meaningfulness	0.759
6. Novelty	0.807
7. Knowledge	0.831
8. Emotional intensity	0.711

#### 5.3.5. *Convergent validity*

As for the convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted criterion (AVE) was analysed. Values higher than .05 are ideal (Hair et al., 2018). As seen in table 5.6, all indices of convergent validity indicated no validity concerns, with AVE being greater than 0.5.

## 5.4. Discussion

In Portugal, there were no validated instruments to assess the meaning of a tourist experience in the general population. Thus, this study aimed to translate, adapt, and validate the Memorable Tourism Experience Scale (MTEs) (Kim et al., 2012) and the dimension “emotional intensity” from the Tourism Memory Characteristics Scale (TMCs) (Kim et al., 2022), in a sample of Portuguese tourists.

EFA and CFA were performed to accomplish this goal, leading the team to the final structure of the Portuguese version of MTEs. The Portuguese version retained all the items from the original version (Kim et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2022), resulting in an 8-factor structure with reasonable goodness-of-fit indices. Regarding the RMSEA value, despite being higher than 0.08 (Hair et al., 2010), some studies suggest that this measure is positively biased (i.e., tends to be too large) (e.g., Kenny et al., 2015) and one of the influences on the amount of the bias is the smallness of sample size. This study's sample size is 308 participants, suggesting it might be a small sample.

The unidimensionality of each scale was confirmed, like the original version (Kim et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2022). The internal consistency of the total scale was good (0.958), comparable to the original version (Kim et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2022). The 8 subscales also obtained good internal consistency values, with the lowest one being the subscale “Knowledge”

(0.673). Nevertheless, values from .6 to .7 are acceptable in psychology (Hair et al., 2018, 2022).

The correlation coefficients between the 8 subscales ranged between 0.470 and 0.89. The majority of the inter-scale correlation coefficients were below 0.5, except for the refreshment and involvement ( $r=0.516$ ), hedonism and involvement ( $r=0.605$ ), and hedonism and local culture scales ( $r=0.523$ ). This suggests that the scales are distinct and non-overlapping compared to the original version and other adapted versions (e.g., Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015; Kim, 2013; Kim et al., 2014).

As for the convergent validity, the results indicated good validity in the Portuguese version compared to the original one (Kim et al., 2012). Values higher than .05 are ideal, suggesting that all the dimensions access and produce different content (Hair et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, items 19 (original dimension: Involvement) and 22 (original dimension: Knowledge) were allocated to different dimensions in the Portuguese version. In the first case, item 19 (*“I have visited a place that I really wanted to visit”*) was introduced in the dimension “Hedonism”. In contrast, item 22 (*“It was an exploratory experience”*) was allocated to the dimension “Involvement”. This finding could be attributed to cultural differences in the perception of hedonism and involvement, considering that hedonism reflects pleasurable feelings that excite oneself (Dunman & Mattila, 2005) and, thus, visiting a place that people like to have visited might be related to the seek for pleasure and excitement. Also, involvement concerns the personal attachment one develops while emerging on a tourist experience (Kim et al., 2012). As such, describing an experience as an exploratory one might lead to feelings of personal attachment and engagement with it.

## **5.5. Conclusions**

### *5.5.1. Theoretical implications*

This is the Portuguese population's first Memorable Tourism Experience Scale validation. The results confirmed the original 7-factor structure with reasonable goodness-of-fit indices. Additionally, the unidimensionality of each scale was confirmed, and the 8 subscales showed higher internal consistency than the original version. The majority of the inter-scale correlation coefficients were below 0.5, and as for the convergent validity, the results indicated good validity in the Portuguese version compared to the original one. As such, the psychometric indices and properties of the instrument were coherent with the previous cross-cultural

adaptations of the instrument (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015; Kim, 2013; Jiang et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2012, 2014; Ramírez-Hurtado et al., 2022).

### 5.5.2. *Practical implications*

This validation study can be seen as a “window of opportunity” to provide individuals with a valuable tool for screening and exploiting the meaning attached to tourism experiences to help different instances on the difficult job of promoting their destinations and increasing their potential on the activities that best suit their purposes.

Tourism experiences are subjective because they are functions of memory processes. People are not predictable in their actions, thoughts, and expectations, which affects how experience is planned, interpreted, and stored, influencing the associated emotions (Larsen, 2007). Thus, marketing campaigns must be undertaken to ally the need to learn about the activities that make us feel good and restored and increase the meaning of the experiences. In sum, tourists must be turned into the centre of their own experiences to meet their personal needs and motivations since knowing how people appraise their experiences and label them “meaningful” can help destinations and stakeholders take the best out of their travel experiences (Dunman & Mattila, 2005; Jiang, 2017).

In line with the previous statement, there is a need to innovate touristic products according to tourists' psychological characteristics (Pine & Gilmore, 2019). One strategy could be personalising the attendance of tourists, physically on the travel agencies or online, through simple surveys to explore the motivations when seeking a determined experience and, this way, provide a personalised service to their expectations. By improving communication with tourists, we contribute to developing their happiness before, during, and after the experience, according to their extrinsic and intrinsic motivations (Filep & Deery, 2010).

Additionally, marketing industries could benefit from the development of appealing and convincing advertisements in different social media channels (e.g., commercials, Facebook, Instagram) with good content related to the overall image of the destination, considering this is the most crucial dimension in the process of choosing a travel destination (Park & Ahn, 2022).

### 5.5.3. *Limitations and future guidelines*

The present study presents some limitations that must be considered and minimised in future studies. First, the sample size of this study might be seen as a limitation, considering that validation studies with this instrument made worldwide used higher samples (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015; Kim, 2013; Kim et al., 2012). As such, results must be interpreted with

caution. Future studies might replicate this procedure using a larger sample. Second, the data was collected during COVID-19, which conditioned the data collection procedure, which had to be made exclusively in an online format. Future studies must ensure that the data collection procedure can be made using online and presential formats to obtain more diverse participants. Third, and despite not being an objective of this study in particular, further information is needed from longitudinal studies to clarify any causal relationships that might arise and are not evident with quantitative methodology. For example, a study in Iran using a qualitative approach revealed that the major themes related to Iranian culture that made tourism experiences memorable are togetherness, independence and control, spontaneity and flexibility, and distinctiveness (Zare, 2019). Another important implication of using a qualitative approach is the possibility of acknowledging the difference between a positive, memorable tourism experience and a negative, memorable tourism experience. A study developed by Staphit & Björk (2022) in the context of Airbnb memorable experiences acknowledged three sources of a negative Airbnb memorable experience: unclean accommodations, unpleasant host behaviour, and poor customer service. As such, a qualitative approach could help understand the dynamics beyond defining a memorable tourism experience.

Further studies must confirm the factor structure obtained in this study with different samples and different contexts to verify the applicability of the instrument to different scenarios, for example, nature (e.g., Garcês et al., 2017) and dark tourism contexts (e.g., Hosseini et al., 2022).

This study invited tourists to think about their most meaningful trip. The timeline reached one month to five years. Some studies have already used this strategy, and one assumption was the different degrees of memory recall because of memory decaying (e.g., Kim et al., 2010, 2012; Staphit & Coudounaris, 2018). In future studies, the research design should notice and control the time interval among respondents.

Finally, it would be interesting to use a different measure of memorable tourism experience to acknowledge convergent validity more robustly. An example could be the scale developed by Chandralal and Valenzuela (2015), which addressed different dimensions of what makes a tourist experience memorable. Similarly, the scale developed by Kim and colleagues (2022) could be used in its total form instead of just the “emotional intensity” dimension. As such, future studies could introduce these two scales to understand the memorable tourism experience phenomenon better.

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## **6. CHAPTER SIX**

### **STUDY 5: THE ROLE OF MOTIVATIONS ON THE ATTRIBUTION OF MEANING TO TOURISM EXPERIENCES**

Câmara, E., Pocinho, M., Agapito, D., & Jesus, S. N. (2024). The Role of Motivations on the Attribution of Meaning to Tourism Experiences. *Journal of Positive Psychology and Wellbeing* (submitted)

## The Role of Motivations on the Attribution of Meaning to Tourism Experiences

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## **The Role of Motivations on the Attribution of Meaning to Tourism Experiences**

**Abstract:** The search for meaning in tourism experiences involves the motivations that lead to the involvement in those experiences, their occurrence, and the consequences attached. It is expected that the motivations for determined experiences lead to different meanings. This proposal intends to understand how motivations for involvement in tourism experiences influence the meaning attached. The sample comprises 168 participants, mainly female (74.4%), with a mean of 36 years old. Data was collected through the Memorable Tourism Experience Scale, the "emotional intensity" dimension of the Tourism Memory Characteristics Scale, and the Wellness Tourism Motivation Scale. Data was analysed with SMART-PLS4. The results show that the model has good psychometric quality concerning the reliability of the indicators ( $\lambda > .707$ ), constructs' reliability – Chronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ ), composite reliability ( $\rho_c$ ), and the Dijkstra and Henseler index composite reliability ( $\rho_a$ ) – convergent and discriminant validity – Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT), respectively. In the structural model, the determination coefficients ( $R^2$ ) showed that the indicators Healthy Food & Diet, Self-care, Nature & Disconnect, and Rest & Relaxation were the ones that better explain the variance of the dimension motivation. As for the dimension of meaningful experience, the indicators that best explain its variance are novelty, knowledge, meaningfulness, and refreshment. Finally, results enabled the emergence of six domains associated with the attribution of meaning to the tourist experience: a) self-care; b) nature and disconnect; c) refreshment and rest associated with meditation and mindfulness; d) learning about well-being; e) meaning and its roots; f) emotional intensity and its development.

**Keywords:** Meaningful tourism experience; Motivations; Psychology; Tourism; Well-being

### **6.1. Introduction**

Psychology is responsible for the study of the personal characteristics of individuals, their social reality (relationship with significant others) and mental life (thoughts, emotions), the biological system (functioning of the nervous system), and the symbolic characteristics of places (Moscardo, 2009; Scott et al., 2017). When applied to tourism, psychology focuses on the tourist, as he is the clue to understand how different people interpret and live the same experience. While tourism relates to the movement of people, psychology is concerned about human behaviour, so it finds an excellent potential for research and intervention to understand how individuals derive meaning from their experience (Garcês et al., 2018, 2020; Scott et al.,

2017). In this sense, psychology is a valuable resource for tourism since it identifies variables, including emotions, personality, memory, perception, consciousness, learning, and motivations (Scott & Le, 2017).

As a multidimensional construct, experiences must be faced as a subjective theme based on individuals' sensations, cognition, affective responses, memory, and participation in activities, with positive outcomes related to knowledge acquisition, enhancing the meaning of those experiences (Moscardo, 2009). Thus, the search for meaning through tourism experiences involves tourists' motivations to involve themselves in the first place, the moment in which the experience occurs, and their consequences. The holistic character of the concept of meaningful tourism experience enhances the interaction between the individual and the context of the experience as the *ex-libris* of this process, with the potential to promote personal, emotional, behavioural, and relational development, culminating in improving well-being. Thus, choosing a travel destination depends on various things to enjoy and experience in tourist venues (Park & Ahn, 2022).

Experiences begin through the awakening of interest and expectations and involve three phases: 1) before the trip, 2) the trip itself, and 3) after the trip (Aho, 2001). According to this division, the anticipatory phase privileges the antecedents related to the expectations, decision-making, motivations, and goals. The decisions based on tourists' preferences for a determined experience or destination (i.e., anticipatory phase) are based on the evaluation of the destination attributes and their performance, as well as the predicted consequences that can facilitate or block the achievement of the customers' goals (Jiang, 2017; Scott & Le, 2017). The on-site experiences focus on peak experiences and the search for meaning. Finally, the reflexive phase is related to the outcomes of perceived value and satisfaction (Scott & Le, 2017). Altogether, an experience is a sum of what motivates the experience (antecedents), the practical occurrence of the experience, and its impact on tourists' different life domains (outcomes) (Câmara et al., 2023). Considering the different stages involved in designing an experience, the following paragraphs explore how the constructs of motivations and meaningful experiences were approached in this study, which generally aims to explore how different motivations enable the development of different meanings of the tourism experience.

## **6.2. Literature review**

### *6.2.1. Meaningful tourism experiences*

The search for meaning and life purpose through travel involves three aspects: the search for self and identity, self-empowerment, and connectedness with other citizens (Willson et al., 2013; Wang, 2020). Likewise, travel can encourage development and self-growth related to new meanings, satisfying needs, and the development of authentic experiences (Reisinger, 2015). Thus, meaningful tourism experiences are characterised not just by the momentaneous pleasure but also by how tourists evaluate the activities they engage in as personally meaningful (Filep, 2014), which enable the development of strong emotions, relevant reflections, memories and significant opinions and knowledge, as well as the involvement of a sense of *communitas* (Duerden et al., 2018). All in all, interpreting an experience is the crucial element that turns it into a meaningful experience (Duerden et al., 2018; Filep, 2014; Fredrickson, 2001; Packer & Gill, 2017).

According to Duerden et al. (2018), a meaningful experience is a sum of the experience itself, its evaluation, and its contextual and environmental contingencies. It involves emotion and knowledge since the way we live the experience can be emotionally intense, associated with the discovery of something new not just from the experience itself but how we deal with the impact of that experience. These kinds of experiences involve emotion and knowledge, since the way we live the experience can be emotionally intense, associated with the discovery of something new, not just from the experience itself but how we deal with the impact of that experience. Filep (2014) defined meaningful experiences as experiences characterised by pleasure and how personally meaningful tourists found their holiday activities. So, more than the experience itself, the interpretation of the impact of the experience is what makes that experience meaningful.

For Packer and Gill (2017), a meaningful experience results from an interpretation, narration, and transformation based on the activities, events, and environments in which people engage that are further interpreted and evaluated in terms of meaning based on its impact and other past experiences. Through meaningful experiences, individuals feel proud due to overcoming personal challenges, self-sufficiency in dealing and negotiating with those plans, and expressing identity.

One of the most studied outcomes of meaningful experiences is the emotional one. However, this trend is beginning to change, allowing for other outcomes, such as acquiring knowledge and personal discovery. In other words, meaningful experiences go beyond the unique idea of an emotional outcome, as they can predispose the individual to intra-or extrapersonal reflection (Duerden et al., 2018).

Kim et al. (2012) are pioneers in studying tourism experiences with meaning associated with strong and intense memorability. They developed a model of a tourism experience promoter of well-being, which was the basis for assessing the concept in this study. It is a holistic and iterative model that emphasises determined components of the experience, namely, the search for pleasure and enjoyment, refreshment and renewal, the social dimension of experience, meaning, happiness and well-being, the search for something out of the ordinary, commitment and innovation (Kim et al., 2012).

Altogether, a meaningful experience is a sum of the experience, its evaluation, and the associated contextual and environmental contingencies. The substantial impacts of meaningful experience are attached to memory through a process of consequentiality, so meaningful experiences can encourage the development of different perspectives about life and how it should be lived (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Years later, Kim, Ribeiro, and Li (2022) emphasised the need to study different dimensions associated with the ones suggested by Kim and colleagues (2012) to analyse the meaning attached to the experiences. One of the dimensions proposed was emotional intensity, both when the experience is happening and in the evocation of the memory of that experience, joining two crucial outcomes of meaningful tourism experiences: emotional impact and memorability.

The previous assumptions lead to critical thinking, considering the role of tourists in co-creating their own experiences under the foundations of their goals, desires, and dreams. If it was possible to divide the experience in two, the first half assessed what leads individuals to invest in determining activities and the expectations created about their outcomes (Garcês et al., 2020). The second half was destined for the results of the experiences, which determine if the expectations previously developed were fulfilled. Therefore, it is crucial to understand what leads people to involve themselves, in the first place, in a determined kind of experience.

### *6.2.2. Motivations*

Motivation is a psychological construct studied through time in different psychological fields. One of the main contributors is cognitive psychology, which focuses on consciousness, perceptions, attention, emotions, mental schema, appraisal, action, and memories related to experience (Scott & Le, 2017). Progressively, the focus has changed from analysing the mental processes involved in developing memories to emphasising the beliefs, values, and motivations to travel based on previous experiences and satisfying personal needs. Motivation is a powerful force that leads to action (Jiang, 2017). Several theoretical perspectives on the role of motivations have been developed throughout the years (Jesus & Lens, 2005).

Gutman (1982) developed the means-end chain theory, one of the leading classical theories of motivation whose primary goal is to understand the relationship between individuals' behaviours and attributes (means) and outcomes and personal values (ends). Jiang (2017) adopted this model in the context of leisure travel to understand how the attributes of an experience can benefit tourists and satisfy their needs and expectations. The conceptual framework presents an interrelated analysis in three steps: a) examination of the values, consequences, and attributes of motivation for leisure tourism experiences; b) analysis of the relationship between the attributes, benefits, and values that tourists seek to achieve, to understand how attributes gained its meaning and importance through the consequences they are perceived to provide (Olson, 1988); c) development of an experience based on the attributes, experience benefits, and values highlighted previously, which enables the understanding of the motivations to engage in a particular tourist activity or experience.

Then, the push-and-pull theory (Dann, 1977) approaches two kinds of motivations and how they enable the development of meaningful experiences. On the one hand, the pull factors are related to external issues, such as the destination's attraction. On the other hand, push factors are associated with internal motivations to fulfil personal needs. Altogether, this theory proposes that the motivations associated with the destination or the experience can be internal (push) and external (pull). Crompton (1979) identified seven push factors: a) escape from routine; b) self-discovery; c) relaxation; d) prestige; e) regression; f) improved family relationships; g) facilitated social interaction; and two pull factors: a) novelty; and b) education, associated with benefits from the travel. Planning a holiday can be a pleasant and remarkable activity because of its intrinsic egocentric and symbolic consequences and the associated goals and motivations (Skavronskaya et al., 2017).

Developed by Iso-Ahola (1982), the social-psychological model of tourism motivation characterises tourism motivation as the central core of tourists' destination choice and behaviour (Iso-Ahola, 1982; Jiang, 2017). According to this theory, people engage in experiences whose results are based on intrinsic rewards, grouped as seeking (personal and interpersonal rewards) and escaping (personal and interpersonal environment).

Finally, the Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000) emphasises the eudaimonic well-being perspective. Within this theory, well-being is associated with self-realisation, which is essential for psychological growth and for actualising the self. The theory is based on three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, relatedness, and integrity. So, accomplishing success in an activity and simultaneously feeling autonomous is associated with high rates of happiness and vitality (Ryan & Deci, 2001). A study developed by Cini and

collaborators (2013) applied the theory to the tourism context, concluding that the satisfaction of intrinsic motivations, compared to extrinsic ones, is highly associated with the promotion of subjective well-being.

The previous frameworks approach the motivations in the pre-site phase. What about the on-site phase? This reflection led to the development of a motivational career in travel, which analyses the specific motivation underneath the ongoing involvement of tourists in their experience, highlighting that travel motivations change through time and are influenced by previous travel experiences. The concept adopted to describe this phenomenon was the Travel Career Ladder (TCL) (Pearce, 1988), which identifies the changing motivations and behaviours associated with the holiday and analyses the relationship between present motivation, decision-making, and past experiences. The termination of the Travel Career Ladder (TCL) changed to Travel Career Pattern (TCP), which assumes that the principal motivations associated with tourist experiences are novelty, escape/relaxation, and relationship, which do not suffer any influence throughout the lifespan (Pearce, 1988).

All previous theoretical perspectives agree that tourists are moved by different – yet complementary – motivations related to the satisfaction of intrinsic and extrinsic needs, both in the process of a tourism experience and in the actual living of the tourism experience.

The theoretical foundation of the construct motivations followed the previous assumptions and was summarised in a model developed by Kessler and associates (2020). The authors established motivations that explain the privileged elements beneath the involvement in tourism experiences, which can be extrinsic (Movement & Fitness; Healthy Food & Diet) and intrinsic (Rest & Relaxation; Meditation & Mindfulness; Learning about Wellness; Self-care; Nature & Disconnect). Considering this dual classification, Bosnjak and colleagues (2016) concluded that the satisfaction of intrinsic motivations is crucial for assessing tourists' life satisfaction through the availability of self-expressiveness. When different desires are assured through travel experiences, individuals feel satisfied with different domains, leading to a positive spillover feeling of satisfaction with life (Sirgy et al., 2011).

So, travel is associated with the improvement of quality of life through the involvement in activities that enable tourists' Relaxation, detachment, control, and mastery (Chen et al., 2017), but also the development of positive affect, self-expressiveness, and self-realisation (Bosnjak et al., 2016; Hosany et al., 2015; Sirgy et al., 2011). Thus, it is expected that the motivations for the investment in determined experiences are responsible for generating different personal, emotional, behavioural, and relational meanings and outcomes. Thus, the

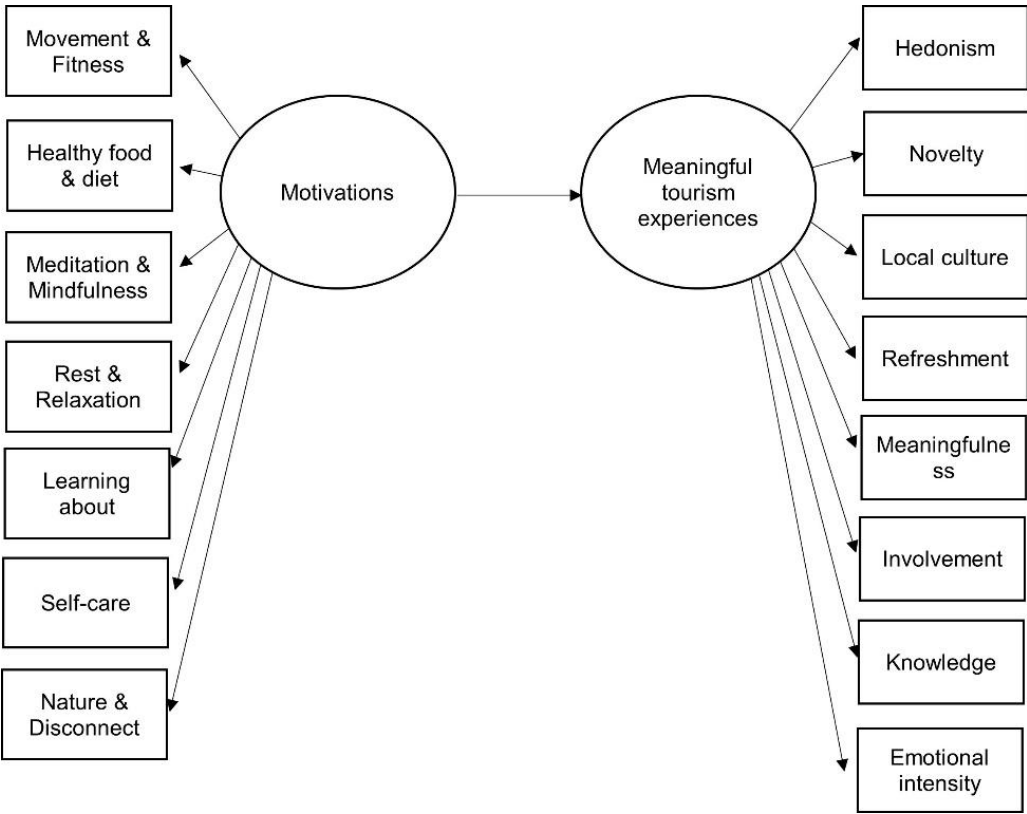
holistic thinking of an experience as a continuum between before, during, and after is the foundation of this study.

### 6.3. Methodology

#### 6.3.1. Objectives

This study intends to understand how motivations for involvement in determined experiences influence the meaning attached. Specifically, it is intended to analyse if determined dimensions of the meaningful tourism experience emerge with a higher frequency, depending on the motivations. Figure 6.1 shows our hypothetical model composed of two latent variables and 15 indicators, which was conducted for the statistical analysis.

Figure 6.1. Theoretical model of analysis



### 6.3.2. *Instruments*

#### 6.3.2.1. Meaningful tourism experience.

To assess meaningful tourism experiences, two instruments were used, both in the process of adaptation and validation for the Portuguese population (Câmara et al., 2023):

- a) The Memorable Tourism Experience Scale (Kim et al., 2012) comprises 24 items grouped into seven dimensions. The internal consistency indices of the original scale were considered good ( $.81 < \alpha < .90$ ), demonstrating good internal consistency indices (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). The scale assesses seven dimensions: a) hedonism (e.g., “I was thrilled about having a new experience”); b) novelty (e.g., “I experienced something new”); c) local culture (e.g., “I closely experienced the local culture”); d) refreshment (e.g., “It was a liberating experience”); e) meaningfulness (e.g., “I did something meaningful”); f) involvement (e.g., “I was interested in the main activities of this tourism experience”); g) knowledge (e.g., “I learnt about a new culture”).
- b) The “Emotional intensity” dimension of the Tourism Memory Characteristics Scale (Kim et al., 2022). On the original scale, the internal consistency value was higher than .70 and, thus, considered good (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). This dimension comprises five items that analyse the intensity of the emotions experienced at the time of the experience and when it is evoked (e.g., “While remembering this trip now, my feelings are very intense”).

#### 6.3.2.2 Motivations.

- a) The Wellness Motivations Tourism Scale (Kessler et al., 2020) comprises 28 items grouped into seven dimensions. The internal consistency of the dimensions on the original scale is above .70, which implies good internal reliability (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). The scale assesses seven dimensions: a) Movement & Fitness (e.g., “to become more fit and toned”); b) Healthy Food & Diet (e.g., “To enjoy a variety of foods that fit my dietary needs”); c) Meditation & Mindfulness (e.g., “To find my inner self”); d) Rest & Relaxation (e.g., “To escape the demands of everyday life”); e) Learn about Wellness (e.g., “To learn general ways to improve my overall

health"); f) Self-care (e.g., "To help recover from a major negative life event"); g) Nature & Disconnect (e.g., "To feel grounded in nature").

### 6.3.3. *Sample*

The sample of this study followed a non-random convenience criterion (Almeida, 2003), composed of Portuguese adults who had had a meaningful tourism experience in the last few months. The criterion was adopted because several studies on the impact of tourism experience have emerged using a general sample associated with promising results (e.g., Park & Ahn, 2022; Wilson & Harris, 2006).

### 6.3.4. *Procedures*

Data collection began in January 2023 and continued until August 2023.

The process of adaptation and validation of the instruments for the Portuguese culture followed these procedures: a) evaluation and approval of the proposal of adaptation and validation of the questionnaire by the Scientific Commission of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of the University of Algarve, with the reference of acceptance no. EDOC/2021/26517 b) direct translation of the items; c) evaluation of the translation by the team; d) pretest with 12 participants with the same characteristics as the general sample; e) clarification of the vocabulary of some of the items; f) evaluation and approval by the Personal Data Protection Team; g) availability of the online questionnaire through the EUSurvey platform.

Data was introduced and codified in the software Statistical Package for Social Sciences – SPSS (version 29.0), in which descriptive statistics was undertaken to group the sample by common characteristics (Field, 2009). The analysis of the relationship between motivations and meaningful tourism experiences was undertaken in the software SMARTPLS 4 to perform a structural equation model with a partial least squares (PLS-SEM) approach.

#### 6.3.4.1. *Statistical procedures*

A Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM) is a statistical procedure that estimates the relationships between direct and indirect variables and between these variables and their indicators. It comprises two analyses, one for each type of model: a) Measurement model that analyses the relationship between the latent variable and its indicators using validity and reliability analysis of each of the measures of the model; b) Structural model

through the estimation of the coefficients between the constructs and its significance, predictive power of the model and correlations between variables (Hulland, 1999).

This study assessed two latent variables - Motivations and Meaningful Tourism Experience – through 15 constructs (seven for motivations and eight for meaningful tourism experiences), each measured by multiple indicators. To specify the model, the theoretical models surrounding the latent variables must be explained (Hair et al., 2022).

Kessler and colleagues followed several wellness tourism motivation models (e.g., Beard & Ragheb, 1983; Chen et al., 2008; Jang et al., 2002; Konu & Laukkanen, 2009; Voigt, 2010; Voigt et al., 2011) before establishing their model on the motivations that are behind the choice for wellness tourism activities. Using a grounded theory approach, the authors developed a theoretical model that sums the motivations that lead tourists to invest in determined activities as being related to seven dimensions: a) Movement & Fitness; b) Healthy Food & Diet; c) Meditation & Mindfulness; d) Rest & Relaxation; e) Learn about Wellness; f) Self-care; g) Nature & Disconnect.

Meaningful tourism experience is an underexplored concept in the literature, frequently used as a synonym for memorable, transformational, extraordinary, or authentic experiences (Câmara et al., 2023). Thus, there is a lack of instruments to assess this specific phenomenon. In a systematic literature review, Câmara and collaborators (2023) concluded that meaning can be attached to personal, emotional, relational, and well-being dimensions. It is worth noting that Kim and colleagues (2012) assessed some of these dimensions on their Memorable Tourism Experience Scale (MTEs), justifying the use of this scale to measure the dimensions associated with meaningful tourism experiences. The authors define a memorable tourism experience (MTE) as a "(...) "tourism experience remembered and recalled after the event has occurred" (Kim et al., 2012, p. 4). An MTE is constructed based on a tourist's assessment of their experience and consolidates and reinforces the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience (Kim et al., 2012). Therefore, memorability is likely to contribute to meaningfulness as people reflect on and construct meanings around the experiences they remember (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Thus, this model is comprised of seven dimensions: a) hedonism, b) novelty, c) local culture, d) refreshment, e) meaningfulness, f) involvement, and g) knowledge.

Years later, Kim and colleagues (2022) considered that some dimensions could be added to the previous ones and, thus, developed the Tourism Memory Characteristics Scale under the assumption that recalling tourism experiences is a decisive factor in tourists' future behaviour and decision-making when choosing destinations. One of those dimensions is called *emotional*

*intensity* and is defined as the intensity of emotions experienced by an individual concerning tourism memory (Prayag et al., 2013). The emotions associated with the memories we create of our experiences interact with the emotional content of the memory and the motivations that trigger the will to travel (Prayag et al., 2013).

The survey has three parts: a) demographic information; b) characteristics of a meaningful tourist experience the participants had had in the last few months, in terms of the duration of the trip, the people whom they travelled with and the activities in which they engaged; c) the questionnaire itself where participants were asked about their motivations to engage on that specific trip and their perception and satisfaction with it. Regarding motivations, participants rated the questions using a 7-point Likert scale, in which 1 meant "Not at all important" and 7 "very important". In the case of a meaningful tourist experience, participants also used a 7-point Likert scale, in which 1 represented "I have not experienced at all" and 7 represented "I have experienced very much". In both cases, higher scores were associated with higher levels of agreement with a particular statement.

SPSS made the outlier diagnosis. The results showed that the data has no outliers. Additionally, considering the need to guarantee the normality of the data, we ran a skewness and kurtosis analysis with SPSS. All values must be within -2 and 2 to be considered normal. The results confirm that the data follows a normal distribution, considering that all skewness and kurtosis values were within these values (Hair et al., 2022).

## 6.4. Results

### 6.4.1. Descriptive statistics

**Table 6.1.** Sample description and characteristics

		Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>	Masculine	42	25,0%
	Feminine	125	74,4%
<b>Current Occupation</b>	Student	51	30,4%
	Employed	83	49,4%
	Student and employed	27	16,1%
	Unemployed	3	1,8%
	Retired	4	2,4%
<b>Nationality</b>	Portuguese	149	88,7%
	Others (e.g., Brazilian)	19	11,3%
<b>Country of residence</b>	Portugal	156	92,9%
	Others (e.g., Brazil, Spain, England)	12	7,2%
		<b>Mín.</b>	<b>Max.</b>
<b>Age</b>		19	82

As seen in table 6.1, the sample comprises 168 Portuguese tourists, mainly female (74.4%), and Portuguese nationality prevails (88.7%). Concerning the occupation, most of the sample were employed (49.4%). Participants' ages range from 19 to 82 years old, and the majority are less than 36 (60.1%). Regarding the destinations mentioned as the most significant ones visited in the last few months, 43.2% were European destinations; Portuguese destinations were highlighted as the most significant (22.8%). The participants travelled mainly to family and friends (85.8%), reporting that it was the first time they travelled to the mentioned destination (64.9%). Finally, the types of tourism practised were mainly related to cultural and urban tourism (40.4%).

#### 6.4.2. *PLS-SEM Model*

Before analysing the results of the measurement and structural models, we verified that the algorithm did not converge, meaning that the stop criterion of the algorithm was reached and not the maximum number of interactions. To proceed with the analysis, the PLS-SEM algorithm must converge before 3000 interactions to find a stable solution. In our data, the algorithm converged after interaction 6, which means that we can continue the analysis of the PLS-SEM model, starting with the measurement model.

##### 6.4.2.1. Measurement model

The measurement model results that will be analysed will be the Outer loading, composite reliability ( $\rho_a$  and  $\rho_c$ ), Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2018; 2022).

The Outer loadings refer to the extent to which the indicators assess the construct they were designed to access ( $\lambda$ ). The ideal value must exceed .707 (Hair et al., 2018). Concerning the results obtained, the individual reliability values varied between .640 (Movement & Fitness – “To look and feel better”) and .957 (Meaning – “I did something important”). Hair and collaborators (2018) suggested that values higher than .06 in exploratory studies are acceptable, confirming that all indicators are reliable and help to explain the variation in the construct they were designed to access.

The internal consistency was assessed with three criteria: Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), Joreskog composite reliability ( $\rho_c$ ), and Dijkstra-Henseler composite reliability ( $\rho_a$ ). The last two criteria are more robust than Cronbach's alpha, a more conservative measure since it

assesses the item's weight. The accepted values for exploratory studies are from .6 to .7, and the good values are between .7 and .9 (Hair et al., 2018, 2022).

As for the convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted criterion (AVE) was analysed. Values higher than .05 are considered ideal (Hair et al., 2018)

Table 6.2 sums up the results of these four criteria.

**Table 6.2.** Internal consistency and convergent validity

Dimension	Alpha de Chronbach	Dijkstra-Henseler ( $\rho_a$ )	Composite reliability Joreskog ( $\rho_c$ )	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Hedonism	0.884	0.887	0.920	0.742
Movement & Fitness	0.857	0.884	0.906	0.711
Healthy Food & Diet	0.900	0.925	0.931	0.772
Novelty	0.875	0.882	0.914	0.728
Local culture	0.884	0.892	0.928	0.812
Meditation & Mindfulness	0.871	0.891	0.913	0.724
Refreshment	0.905	0.908	0.934	0.779
Rest & Relaxation	0.843	0.853	0.895	0.681
Learning about wellness	0.912	0.940	0.937	0.789
Meaningfulness	0.897	0.897	0.936	0.831
Self-care	0.813	0.815	0.877	0.641
Involvement	0.859	0.863	0.914	0.780
Knowledge	0.778	0.795	0.871	0.693
Nature & Disconnect	0.898	0.906	0.931	0.772
Emotional intensity	0.961	0.961	0.969	0.864

All internal consistency values are above the ones defended in the literature for exploratory studies. The dimension "emotional intensity" is the one with the highest value of internal consistency ( $\alpha = .961$ ;  $\rho_a = .961$ ;  $\rho_c = .969$ ), and the dimension with the lowest value was "knowledge" ( $\alpha = .778$ ;  $\rho_a = .795$ ;  $\rho_c = .871$ ).

The values of convergent validity varied between .641 (Self-care) and .864 (emotional intensity), suggesting that all reflective constructs have high convergent validity.

The discriminant validity assures that the values of a construct are significantly different from the other constructs (Hulland, 1999). The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) concerns calculating the average value of the correlation of the items of all constructs concerning the mean of the correlation of the items that measure a given construct. It uses 0.85 as the relevant threshold level, and some studies report the possibility of a threshold level of .90 (e.g., Hair et al., 2022).

**Table 6.3.** Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio Matrix

	Hed.	Mov. & Fit.	Heal. & diet	Nov.	Culture	Med & Mind.	Rest	Rest/relax	Learn WB	Meaning	SelfCare	Inv.	Know.	Nat.&Disc.	Em.Int
Hed.															
Mov.&Fit	0.225														
Healthy & Diet	0.132	0.925													
Nov.	0.827	0.165	0.113												
Culture	0.507	0.174	0.218	0.417											
Med&Mind	0.426	0.674	0.660	0.372	0.260										
Rest.	0.778	0.210	0.082	0.814	0.504	0.455									
Rest/relax	0.549	0.468	0.421	0.482	0.325	0.820	0.625								
Learn WB	0.292	0.780	0.801	0.309	0.255	0.880	0.314	0.633							
Meaning	0.629	0.344	0.293	0.703	0.393	0.563	0.749	0.556	0.474						
Self-care	0.342	0.696	0.698	0.331	0.239	0.895	0.462	0.879	0.924	0.544					
Inv.	0.868	0.163	0.108	0.689	0.514	0.276	0.668	0.338	0.171	0.658	0.217				
Know.	0.825	0.336	0.300	0.761	0.544	0.438	0.695	0.382	0.397	0.718	0.356	0.869			
Nat.&Disc.	0.346	0.676	0.609	0.219	0.222	0.746	0.410	0.740	0.687	0.398	0.842	0.157	0.323		
Em. Int.	0.530	0.303	0.198	0.652	0.284	0.526	0.686	0.568	0.454	0.655	0.499	0.378	0.463	0.452	

As seen in Table 6.3, there were two values above the threshold of .90. Specifically, the relation between "healthy food & diet" and "movement & fitness" (HTMT=.925) and the relation between "learning about wellness" and "self-care" (HTMT=.924). The remaining values were below the threshold, revealing discriminant validity. The next step is to examine if the HTMT values are significantly different from the threshold values, using the technique of bootstrapping to check the bootstrap confidence intervals and explore if they are significantly lower than the threshold values of .85 and .90, with a probability of error of 5% (Hair et al., 2022). After running this test, the results highlighted nine values higher than .90:

- a) HTMT<sub>Healthy food & diet, and Movement & Fitness</sub> = .961;
- b) HTMT<sub>Learning about wellness and Meditation & Mindfulness</sub> =.927;
- c) HTMT<sub>Self-care and Meditation & Mindfulness</sub> =.951;
- d) HTMT<sub>Self-care and Rest & Relaxation</sub> =.934;
- e) HTMT<sub>Self-care and Learning about wellness</sub> =.966;
- f) HTMT<sub>Involvement and Hedonism</sub> =.941;
- g) HTMT<sub>Knowledge and Hedonism</sub> =.902;
- h) HTMT<sub>Knowledge and Involvement</sub> =.950;
- i) HTMT<sub>Nature & Disconnect and Self-care</sub> =.903;

The remaining values in the 95% column are significantly lower than 0.90. To summarise, the bootstrap confidence interval results of the HTMT criterion also demonstrate the discriminant validity of the constructs.

#### 6.4.2.2. Structural model

The structural model begins by assessing collinearity issues through all predictor constructs' variance inflation factor (VIF) values. The ideal value must be below 3.3 (Hair et al., 2018). Zach and collaborators (2019) defended that values below 1 are not correlated, and the ones below 5 have a moderated, but not critical, correlation.

Our results were all below the threshold of 5, with 29 exceptions below 3, allowing us to acknowledge that collinearity among the predictor constructs is not critical in the structural model since all constructs produce unique and independent information.

Following Hair and collaborators' (2022) guidelines, the path coefficient magnitudes were assessed to verify the significance and relevance of the structural model relationships. The values must be within -1 and 1, being that the closest to the value 0 means the weaker, and close

to the edges means a strong correlation (positive or negative). The following table shows the path coefficient magnitudes with significant p values ( $p < .05$ ).

**Table 6.4.** Path coefficients magnitudes

<b>Relation</b>	<b>Path coefficient</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Movement & Fitness -> Healthy food & Diet	0.837	33.852	0.000
Movement & Fitness -> Refreshment	0.237	2.210	0.014
Healthy food & Diet -> Hedonism	-0.211	1.789	0.037
Healthy food & Diet -> Novelty	-0.241	2.312	0.010
Healthy food & diet -> Local culture	0.304	2.063	0.020
Healthy food & Diet -> Meditation & Mindfulness	0.565	8.096	0.000
Healthy food & Diet -> Refreshment	-0.496	4.234	0.000
Healthy food & diet -> Emotional intensity	-0.331	2.957	0.002
Novelty -> Local culture	0.346	3.603	0.000
Local culture -> Refreshment	0.359	5.123	0.000
Meditation & Mindfulness -> Rest & Relaxation	0.724	21.561	0.000
Refreshment -> Meaningfulness	0.606	9.280	0.000
Rest & Relaxation -> Hedonism	0.454	4.091	0.000
Rest & Relaxation -> Refreshment	0.340	3.753	0.000
Rest & Relaxation -> Learning about wellness	0.582	14.080	0.000
Rest & Relaxation -> Emotional intensity	0.271	2.705	0.003
Learning about wellness -> Novelty	0.281	2.788	0.003
Learning about wellness -> Selfcare	0.802	26.033	0.000
Learning about wellness -> Knowledge	0.233	2.305	0.011
Learning about wellness-> Emotional intensity	0.245	1.898	0.029
Meaningfulness -> Involvement	0.608	7.948	0.000
Self-care -> Nature & Disconnect	0.717	18.473	0.000
Involvement -> Knowledge	0.684	12.042	0.000
Knowledge -> Emotional intensity	0.231	3.390	0.000

According to Table 6.4, for the concept of motivation, “movement & fitness” has a strong influence on “healthy food & diet” ( $M=.837$ ;  $T=33.852$ ;  $p=.000$ ), and both evolve in the same direction. Another strong influence is found in the impact of “learning about wellness” and “self-care” ( $M=.802$ ;  $T=26.033$ ;  $p=.000$ ). Subsequently, “meditation & mindfulness” exert a strong influence on “rest & relaxation” ( $M=.724$ ;  $T=21.561$ ;  $p=.000$ ) and “self-care” and “Nature & disconnect” are equally strong influencers ( $M=.717$ ;  $T=18.473$ ;  $p=.000$ ). “Self-care” influences the performance of “rest & relaxation” ( $M=.582$ ;  $T=14.080$ ;  $p=.000$ ). Finally, “healthy food & diet” influences “meditation & mindfulness” ( $M=.565$ ;  $T=8.096$ ;  $p=.000$ ).

Regarding the concept of meaningful tourist experience, “Involvement” influences “Knowledge” in the same direction ( $M=.684$ ;  $T=12.042$ ;  $p=.000$ ), a result that was also

corroborated in previous studies (e.g., Kim et al., 2012). Likewise, “Refreshment” influences “Meaningfulness” (M=.606; T=9.280; p=.000).

Relating the two concepts, the coefficients with the highest magnitude were found in the relationships between “Healthy food & diet” on “Refreshment” (M= -.496; T=4.234; p=.000), “Rest & Relaxation” and “Hedonism” (M = .454; T=4.091; p=.039), “novelty” on “local culture” (M= .346; T=3.603; p=.000) and finally “learning about wellness” and “novelty” (M= .281; T=2.788; p=.003).

To verify the significance of these relationships, the bootstrapping procedure was adopted (Efron & Gong, 1983). The focus was placed on the 95% bootstrap confidence interval obtained by the percentile approach with bias correction, assuming a significance level of 5%. Table 6.5 summarises the path coefficient estimates, t-values, p-values, and confidence intervals.

**Table 6.5.** Bootstrapping values of the path coefficient magnitudes (with bias correction)

<b>Relation</b>	<b>Path coefficients</b>	<b>T values</b>	<b>p values</b>	<b>95% confidence intervals (with bias correction)</b>	<b>Significance (p &lt; .05)?</b>
Movement & Fitness -> Healthy food & Diet	.838	33.852	.000	[.789;.872]	Yes
Learning about wellness -> Selfcare	.802	26.033	.000	[.742; .846]	Yes
Meditation & Mindfulness -> Rest & Relaxation	.725	21.561	.000	[.662; .773]	Yes
Selfcare -> Nature & Disconnect	.718	18.473	.000	[.646; .776]	Yes
Hedonism -> Novelty	.684	13.586	.000	[.596;.760]	Yes
Involvement -> Knowledge	.683	12.042	.000	[.584; .771]	Yes
Meaningfulness -> Involvement	.611	7.948	.000	[.474; .725]	Yes
Refreshment -> Meaningfulness	.607	9.280	.000	[.494; .706]	Yes
Rest & Relaxation -> Learning about wellness	.583	14.080	.000	[.508; .648]	Yes
Healthy food & Diet -> Meditation & Mindfulness	.565	8.096	.000	[.436; .665]	Yes
Healthy food & Diet -> Refreshment	-.492	4.234	.000	[-.698; -.315]	Yes
Rest & Relaxation -> Hedonism	.456	4.091	.000	[.254; .623]	Yes
Local culture -> Refreshment	.367	5.123	.000	[.238; .467]	Yes
Novelty -> Local culture	.351	3.603	.000	[.178; .496]	Yes
Rest & Relaxation -> Refreshment	.339	3.753	.000	[.193; .488]	Yes
Healthy food & diet -> Emotional intensity	-.330	2.957	.002	[-.511; -.143]	Yes
Healthy food & diet -> Local culture	.298	2.063	.020	[.071; .550]	Yes
Learning about wellness -> Novelty	.282	2.788	.003	[.116; .446]	Yes
Rest & Relaxation -> Emotional intensity	.264	2.705	.003	[.109; .435]	Yes
Learning about wellness -> Emotional intensity	.248	1.898	.029	[.034; .459]	Yes
Movement & Fitness -> Refreshment	.241	2.210	.014	[.062; .413]	Yes
Healthy food & Diet -> Novelty	-.239	2.132	.010	[-.417; -.069]	Yes
Knowledge -> Emotional intensity	.234	3.390	.000	[.115; .340]	Yes
Learning about wellness -> Knowledge	.233	2.305	.011	[.073; .408]	Yes
Healthy food & Diet-> Hedonism	-.222	1.789	.037	[-.400; -.012]	Yes
Nature & Disconnect -> Novelty	-.166	1.756	.040	[-.316; -.009]	Yes

All relationships found after the bootstrapping procedure were significant (see table 6.5), allowing us to establish some crucial guidelines for promoting meaningful tourism experiences, which will be exposed in the discussion chapter.

The next phase of assessing the structural model is the model's explanatory power (Hair et al., 2022). The  $R^2$  values indicate a model's ability to predict new or future observations (Hair & Sarstedt, 2021). The values range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating a greater explanatory power. As a rule of thumb,  $R^2$  values of .75, .50, and .25 can be interpreted as substantial, moderate, and weak (Henseler, 2017). Table 6.6 shows the results for the  $R^2$  values of the endogenous latent variables.

**Table 6.6.**  $R^2$  values of the endogenous latent variables

	$R^2$	$R^2$ adjusted	<i>P-value</i>
<b>Memorable Tourism Experience Scale</b>			
Hedonism	0.251	0.218	0.000
Novelty	0.589	0.568	0.000
Local culture	0.192	0.152	0.009
Refreshment	0.472	0.446	0.000
Meaningfulness	0.540	0.516	0.000
Involvement	0.356	0.324	0.000
Knowledge	0.576	0.555	0.000
Emotional intensity	0.385	0.354	0.000
<b>Wellness Tourism Motivation Scale</b>			
Healthy Food & Diet	0.701	0.700	0.000
Meditation & Mindfulness	0.319	0.315	0.010
Rest & Relaxation	0.524	0.521	0.000
Learning about wellness	0.339	0.335	0.000
Self-care	0.643	0.641	0.000
Nature & Disconnect	0.515	0.512	0.000

The determination coefficients show values that range from weak to moderate predictive power (Table 7.6). Specifically, the endogenous latent variables with moderate explanatory power for the construct of meaningful tourism experience were a) Novelty ( $R^2 = .589$ ;  $p=.00$ ), b) Knowledge ( $R^2 = .576$ ;  $p=.00$ ), and c) Meaningfulness ( $R^2 = .540$ ;  $p=.00$ ). These values mean that novelty, knowledge, and meaningfulness explain 59%, 57%, and 54% of the explanatory power of meaningful tourism experience (respectively).

As for the construct motivation, the following variables had moderate explanatory power: a) Healthy food & diet ( $R^2 = .701$ ;  $p=.00$ ); b) Self-care ( $R^2 = .643$ ;  $p=.00$ ); c) Rest & Relaxation ( $R^2 = .524$ ;  $p=.00$ ); and d) Nature & Disconnect ( $R^2 = .515$ ;  $p=.00$ ). Therefore,

motivation finds a higher explanatory power in the endogenous variables Healthy food & diet (70%), Self-care (64%), Rest & Relaxation (52%), and Nature & Disconnect (51%).

Next, the endogenous and corresponding exogenous constructs' effect sizes ( $f^2$ ) were assessed. Values higher than 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 depict small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively (Cohen, 1988). Table 6.7 shows the endogenous and exogenous constructs' large and medium effect sizes.

**Table 6.7.**  $f^2$  values of the endogenous latent variables

Combination	$f^2$
Movement & Fitness -> Healthy food & diet	2.348
Learning about wellness -> Self-care	1.802
Meditation & Mindfulness -> Rest & Relaxation	1.102
Self-care -> Nature & Disconnect	1.060
Involvement -> Knowledge	0.997
Hedonism -> Novelty	0.851
Refreshment -> Meaningfulness	0.513
Rest & Relaxation -> Learning about wellness	0.513
Healthy food & diet -> Meditation & Mindfulness	0.469
Meaningfulness -> Involvement	0.400
Local culture -> Refreshment	0.220
Healthy food & diet -> Refreshment	0.119
Novelty -> Local culture	0.113
Rest & Relaxation -> Hedonism	0.095
Knowledge -> Emotional intensity	0.074
Rest & Relaxation -> Refreshment	0.073
Healthy food & diet -> Emotional intensity	0.046
Learning about wellness -> Novelty	0.043
Rest & Relaxation -> Emotional intensity	0.041
Healthy food & diet -> Novelty	0.036
Movement & Fitness -> Refreshment	0.029
Learning about wellness -> Knowledge	0.029
Healthy food & diet -> Local culture	0.028
Nature & Disconnect -> Novelty	0.026
Learning about wellness -> Emotional intensity	0.022

Concerning the large effect sizes, the following values were reported: a) Movement & Fitness on Healthy food & diet ( $f^2 = 2.348$ ); b) Learning about wellness on Self-care ( $f^2 = 1.802$ ); c) Meditation & Mindfulness on Rest & Relaxation ( $f^2 = 1.102$ ); d) Self-care on Nature & Disconnect ( $f^2 = 1.060$ ); e) Involvement on Knowledge ( $f^2 = .997$ ); and f) Hedonism on Novelty ( $f^2 = .851$ ). Compared to Table 7.7 (path coefficients through the bootstrap method),

larger effect sizes were found in the same relationship with the higher path coefficients as Hair et al. (2018) mentioned.

Finally, one of the study's main objectives was to explore how both constructs – motivations and meaningful tourism experiences – correlate with their different dimensions. A correlation analysis was performed based on the Pearson coefficient ( $r$ ), with values ranging from -1 to 1. Cohen (1988) adopted the following threshold: a)  $0,10 < r < 0,29$  = weak correlation; b)  $0,30 < r < 0,49$  = moderate correlation; c)  $0,50 < r < 1,00$  = strong correlation. Table 6.8 denotes the values for the correlations.

**Table 6.8.** Pearson correlations between endogenous latent variables

	Hedonism	Movement & Fitness	Healthy Food & Diet	Novelty	Local culture	Meditation & Mindfulness	Refreshment	Rest & Relaxation	Learning about wellness	Meaningfulness	Self-care	Involvement	Knowledge	Nature & Disconnect	Emotional intensity
Hedonism	1.000														
Movement & Fitness	0.188*	1.000													
Healthy Food & Diet	0.118*	0.838**	1.000												
Novelty	0.736**	0.118	0.034	1.000											
Local culture	0.448**	0.160*	0.198*	0.377**	1.000										
Meditation & Mindfulness	0.387**	0.564**	0.565**	0.326**	0.232**	1.000									
Refreshment	0.702**	0.177*	0.065	0.730**	0.458**	0.420**	1.000								
Rest & Relaxation	0.470**	0.391**	0.373**	0.414**	0.282**	0.725**	0.549**	1.000							
Learning about wellness	0.270**	0.686**	0.714**	0.285**	0.235**	0.771**	0.305**	0.583**	1.000						
Meaningfulness	0.562**	0.302**	0.263**	0.623**	0.353**	0.506**	0.680**	0.492**	0.447**	1.000					
Self-care	0.292**	0.582**	0.596**	0.277**	0.207*	0.749**	0.400**	0.737**	0.802**	0.468**	1.000				
Involvement	0.757**	0.138*	0.098	0.604**	0.451**	0.252**	0.593**	0.288**	0.168*	0.578**	0.186*	1.000			
Knowledge	0.687**	0.272**	0.243**	0.632**	0.454**	0.358**	0.592**	0.319**	0.340**	0.597**	0.285**	0.723**	1.000		
Nature & Disconnect	0.311**	0.589**	0.550**	0.189*	0.204*	0.657**	0.375**	0.646**	0.619**	0.361**	0.718**	0.145*	0.269**	1.000	
Emotional intensity	0.495**	0.276**	0.192*	0.596**	0.264**	0.488**	0.642**	0.522**	0.436**	0.609**	0.444**	0.347**	0.406**	0.422**	1.000

Note: \*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$

The strongest correlations were found between the following endogenous latent variables: a. Healthy food & Diet and Movement & Fitness ( $r = .838$ ;  $p = .000$ ); b) Self-care & Learning about wellness ( $r = .802$ ;  $p = .000$ ); c) Learning about wellness and Meditation & Mindfulness ( $r = .771$ ;  $p = .000$ ); d) Involvement and Hedonism ( $r = .757$ ;  $p = .000$ ); e) Self-care and Rest & Relaxation ( $r = .737$ ;  $p = .000$ ); f) Novelty and Hedonism ( $r = .736$ ;  $p = .000$ ); g) Refreshment and Novelty ( $r = .730$ ;  $p = .000$ ); h) Rest & Relaxation and Meditation & Mindfulness ( $r = .724$ ;  $p = .000$ ); i) Knowledge and Involvement ( $r = .721$ ;  $p = .000$ ); j) Nature & Disconnect and Self-care ( $r = .717$ ;  $p = .000$ ); k) Learning about wellness and Healthy food & diet ( $r = .714$ ;  $p = .000$ ); l) Refreshment and Hedonism ( $r = .701$ ;  $p = .000$ ); m) Knowledge and Hedonism ( $r = .688$ ;  $p = .000$ ); n) Learning about wellness and Movement & Fitness ( $r = .686$ ;  $p = .000$ ); o) Meaningfulness and Refreshment ( $r = .680$ ;  $p = .000$ ); p) Nature & Disconnect and Meditation & Mindfulness ( $r = .657$ ;  $p = .000$ ); q) Nature & Disconnect and Rest & Relaxation ( $r = .646$ ;  $p = .000$ ); r) Emotional intensity and Refreshment ( $r = .642$ ;  $p = .000$ ); s) Knowledge and Novelty ( $r = .632$ ;  $p = .000$ ); t) Meaningfulness and Novelty ( $r = .623$ ;  $p = .000$ ); u) Nature & Disconnect and Learning about wellness ( $r = .619$ ;  $p = .000$ ); v) Emotional intensity and meaningfulness ( $r = .609$ ;  $p = .000$ ); w) Involvement and Novelty ( $r = .604$ ;  $p = .000$ ).

## 6.5. Discussion

This study intends to explore the dimensions of the meaningful tourism experience that emerge with a higher frequency, depending on the motivations.

The results generally conclude that the PLS-SEM model has good psychometric quality. Specifically, the indicators have good levels of reliability, and convergent and discriminant validities were assured. Regarding the structural model, the coefficients have a significant magnitude that allows us to envision the relationship between the variables and, thus, outline future lines of research.

First, the results from the path coefficient magnitudes and from correlation analysis between constructs highlighted that self-care includes learning about wellness. In other words, taking care of ourselves promotes our well-being by guaranteeing that individuals can access strategies that ensure their holistic development. Thus, tourists must be encouraged to reflect on the appreciation of a meaningful experience and interpret the meaning they attribute to unique and engaging tourist moments (Filep, 2014).

Still, the results showed the relationship between learning about wellness and meditation & mindfulness. Therefore, the interest in learning what increases our well-being leads to the

search for our inner self and life purposes. Likewise, seeking moments of meditation and mindfulness leads to self-care and awareness of our personal needs, which promotes our mental health (Kessler et al., 2020). Nevertheless, well-being is also related to our self-image and self-esteem, pointed out in the results through the relationship between learning about wellness and healthy food and diet. Thus, investing in a healthy body contributes to a healthy mind.

Similarly, coherent with the literature, the results supported the central division of well-being into two major dimensions: hedonic and eudaimonic. Our results suggested that learning about what makes us feel good is related to seeking the supreme good and happiness, the development of positive feelings and activities that activate momentaneous pleasure, from which we highlight moments of rest (Packer & Gill, 2017; Voigt, 2017). On the same line, the dimension of nature and disconnection is also strongly related to the moments of rest. In Garcês *et al.* (2020) study, tourists pointed out nature as a privileged experience that enabled the development of meaning and accomplishment, contributing to our self-care. Park and Ahn (2022) developed a model of tourism activities, suggesting that the harmonisation between hedonic tourism activities, such as seeking pleasure and detachment, and eudaimonic activities related to personal meaning and self-reflection enhances satisfaction with the experience. However, most of all, it improves overall satisfaction and quality of life. As such, it is accurate to establish that the dimension of rest & relaxation is associated with immediate positive outcomes that, in the long term, influence the meaning of experiences by denoting self-expressiveness and self-realisation (Park & Ahn, 2022).

Our analysis also revealed that tourism in natural spaces can promote activities related to meditation and mindfulness. Mindfulness has been defined as a state where individuals experience a full awareness of what happens in the present and around them (Brown & Ryan, 2003). As such, the involvement in activities in nature allows for exploring sensations, emotions, and thoughts. Similarly, refreshment was associated with the need for activities where meditation and mindfulness are present. Thus, fulfilling our needs and self-development involves being aware of our senses and engaging in moments that enable relaxation and revitalisation by releasing pressure and mentally challenging activities and enjoying every stimulus that comes naturally (Stebbins, 1997). Moreover, investing in our rest and refreshment is an essential benefit of the touristic experience and a solid motivation to escape daily routine (Kim et al., 2012). This way, refreshment creates touristic, intense emotional memories when people evocate those experiences (Kim et al., 2022).

Another vital reflection is related to the dimension of novelty. Most of the sample (64.9%) indicated that it was the first time visiting the referred destination, which was the most

meaningful one of the last few months. Therefore, seeking novelty might be associated with positive outcomes of tourist experiences. Our results showed that refreshment and novelty were strongly correlated. Seeking something new is our intrinsic need to evolve. Thus, investing in moments of relaxation and momentaneous pleasure can introduce an innovative factor to tourists' daily routines (Kim et al., 2012). Moreover, a relationship with hedonism was evident. Hedonism is related to the desire for pleasure and enjoyment, development of the emotional component, and well-being (Dunman & Mattila, 2005; Kim et al., 2012; Staphit & Coudounaris, 2017). As such, novelty can be a tool for searching for these kinds of activities since looking for something new involves positive outcomes, such as positive emotions, enjoyment, and refreshment (Dunman & Matilla, 2005). In sum, the results reflect that meaning is attached to the activities we engage in repeatedly and new activities and experiences.

Following the previous assumption, meaningfulness was one of the strongest predictors of the construct of meaningful tourism experiences and showed a strong relation with different dimensions. One of them was emotional intensity. Travel experiences are emotionally solid events, considering the length of preparation and how people experience themselves in different locations (Larsen, 2007). The emotional impact of the experience introduces an intense and persistent mark on how the experience is remembered after its occurrence. Packer and Gill (2017) defend that memorability can lead to meaningfulness since people reflect and construct meanings about the experiences they recall; it is a sign that the experience is somehow meaningful to determine its future recollection. In our study, a strong relationship was found between meaning and refreshment. The meaning attached to a tourist experience is related to the value and significance of the experience itself, which leads to self-development and change (Kim et al., 2012; Staphit & Coudounaris, 2017; Voigt, 2017). Thus, refreshing moments can lead to a solid and emotional meaning of intimacy. Finally, meaningfulness and involvement were positively related. It is expected that the active involvement of tourists in their own experience leads to increased satisfaction (Dunman & Mattila, 2005), considering their internal needs (Jiang, 2017).

Concerning involvement, the results highlighted a strong relationship between knowledge and hedonism. Concerning the first, the more involved in a determined activity, the more the search for new information and competencies that allow the development of a solid meaning to our experience (Kim et al., 2012). As for the relation with hedonism, the involvement in experience dictates the perception of well-being, leading to pleasure, enjoyment, and, consequently, higher satisfaction (Duman & Mattila, 2005).

Overall, six significant areas emerged as being associated with strong meanings in the field of psychology applied to tourism:

a) Self-care as a movement of self-development and promotion of self-esteem is associated with extrinsic (e.g., healthy food & diet, movement & fitness) and intrinsic (e.g., meditation and mindfulness, rest, relaxation, nature and disconnect) motivations, emphasising that taking care of ourselves implies recognising that, both physically and psychologically, we have needs and goals that we seek to fulfil (Kessler et al., 2020; Voigt, 2017). Moreover, self-care is associated with recovery, meaning that positive emotions and feelings of recovery enhance the probability of feeling physically and mentally refreshed (Hur & Shin, 2022). So, divulging these results through the general community is an alert to the urgency of taking care of us through a holistic lens;

b) Nature & disconnect were some of the most associated dimensions with the promotion of meaning associated with well-being, rest, self-care, and mindfulness practice. Therefore, the results highlight that mindfulness is one important construct to explain how individuals thrive meaning from tourist experiences, through the construction of personal narratives and stories, as well as the opportunity to be at peace with ourselves and hear our inner self (Moscardo, 2009);

c) Rest & Relaxation has found roots in meditation and mindfulness, something predictable given the need to relax to get in touch with our inner self and promote mindfulness of our surroundings. In this sense, mindfulness respects a state of conscious awareness that allows individuals to be implicitly aware of the context and content of the information (Langer, 1992). It allows individuals to capture the properties of consciousness that are characterised by clarity and vividness, which can have an essential role in the disengagement of individuals from their automatic thoughts, habits, and routines, focusing ultimately on their personal development and well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Packer & Gill, 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus, involvement in this type of activity presupposes a high level of stimulation and the arduous task of absorbing as much information as possible;

d) Learning about wellness affects other dimensions both in the short-term (e.g., rest & relaxation, healthy food and diet, movement, and fitness) and long-term (e.g., meaning, involvement, self-care, mindfulness). Thus, this study brings critical reflections in terms of the complementarity between the hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives of well-being as concepts with distinct but highly complementary foundations in what is the central point of psychology applied to tourism: the promotion of well-being and psychological health of people through involvement in significant tourist experiences. On the other hand, following the consumer well-

being perspective, not all experiences that bring hedonic benefits reach eudaimonia. Nevertheless, in the long term, eudaimonia is associated with greater meaning, satisfaction, and self-realisation because of its connection with fulfilling intrinsic motivations (Park & Ahn, 2022). Following Seligman's (2002) designation of "a good life", tourism experiences become more significant if they enable tourists to pursue their happiness, immediate joy, satisfaction, and feel pleasant – Hedonic views – but also to seek personal growth, functioning, self-expressiveness, and meaning – Eudaimonic view (Packer & Gill, 2017; Park & Ahn, 2022; Vada et al., 2019; Voigt, 2017);

e) Meaning, strongly correlated with the dimensions of involvement and rest. This result allows us to inquire that the more involved in the experience, the more substantial and more lasting the meaning attached so that promoting the active participation of tourists in the construction of their own experience enables its personalisation (Duerden et al., 2018; Packer & Gill, 2017). Thus, tourists develop a sense of attachment to a determined destination by living meaningful and satisfying experiences, enhancing their meaning and purpose (Vada et al., 2019). In sum, meaning is, *per se*, a component of well-being (Newman et al., 2014; Ryff, 1989), and meaningful leisure activities are the ones that lead to positive emotions, which are the markers of optimal well-being (Fredrickson, 2001; Newman et al., 2014);

f) The emotional component is the basis of evaluating experience and attributing meaning. This study significantly correlated emotional intensity with refreshment, meaningfulness, and novelty constructs. Ma and colleagues (2017) defend that emotions play a significant role in individuals' expectations about the development of an experience, contributing to their involvement and commitment, as well as the positive evaluation and memorability of the experience. Similarly, Tung and Ritchie (2011) argued that substantial impacts of meaningful experience are attached to memory through a process of consequentiality, so meaningful experiences can encourage the development of different perspectives about life and how it should be lived. Since human beings have a profound emotional basis, the memories of their experiences are strongly marked by emotion, which gives them a particular lasting and intense meaning (Kim et al., 2022).

## **6.6. Conclusions**

### *6.6.1. Theoretical implications*

The present study, even with an exploratory character, introduces some theoretical contributions that are important to expose.

The results reinforce the complementary between hedonic and eudemonic well-being, showing that well-being is a continuum that seeks to guarantee the positive immediate experience, self-development, meaning, and purpose (Seligman, 2002; Voigt, 2017).

Additionally, a new important field of psychology applied to tourism has emerged: the meaning attached to experiences of exploring what leads individuals to engage and plan their tourist routes. Individuals' choices are based on the personal background associated with motivations, considering that motivations obey different categories (intrinsic and extrinsic) and are not limited to a single factor (Csikszentmihalyi & Coffey, 2017). As such, this information is coherent with Yi et al. (2018) distribution of motivations to engage in a tourism experience in two groups: a) pull motivations related to the extrinsic elements of the destination's attributes (e.g., movement & fitness, healthy food & diet); b) push motivations, related to individuals' intrinsic characteristics (e.g., learning about wellness, self-care). On this behalf, it is crucial to address the motivations and factors behind tourists' behavioural choices and intentions, and nowadays, the extraordinary dissemination of social platforms and mass media enables tourists to gain increasing information daily (Joeng et al., 2020). As such, the present study can particularly interest different groups.

First, higher educational and professional institutions in tourism and psychology could find important information in this study. A study in Italy explored how higher education institutions (HEI) can contribute to local development through educational tourism. Thus, students can act as educational tourists at the destination, simultaneously acting as motivational triggers for tourists to engage and personalise their experiences (Tomasi et al., 2020). As such, students benefit from their studies, interactions with local and foreign people, and experiences that foster personal and professional growth (Tomasi et al., 2020). While tourism relates to the movement of people, psychology is concerned about human behaviour, so it finds excellent potential for research and intervention (Garcês et al., 2018). If the goals developed before are fulfilled, the emotional response will be more robust (Skavronskaya et al., 2020). Identifying dreams and fantasies beneath the motivations to choose a destination or evaluate one experience as memorable should lead to developing more significant activities based on individuals' preferences and goals (Coelho et al., 2018). In the case of tourism courses, knowing about the different motivations and how they influence the meaning attached to the experiences can be the foundation to create professionals highly sensitive to the need to invest in the development of meaningful tourism experiences. As for psychology courses, the promotion of psychological health and well-being is a potential field of action in tourism to develop initiatives that call for these dimensions in the first place. In sum, tourism and psychology focus on individuals' minds

and behaviours to develop a significance for the experience phenomenon (Garcês et al., 2020; Scott et al., 2017).

Second, the different tourist instances find in this study important information regarding the motivations behind the choice of determined tourist places, to innovate and personalise their offers and promote the potential of those places, meaning that the more the information about tourists is known, the better the recommendations of attractions considering their own expectations (Alves et al., 2023). Specifically, destination marketing institutes are the principal interested market of these outcomes, informing on the need to improve destinations to make tourists engage in meaningful experiences that satisfy their needs, feelings, thoughts, and motivations (Chang & Hung, 2021), which contributes to the authentic identity of the destinations. Still, Garcês *et al.* (2020) acknowledged that the benefits of holidays are numerous, such as physical well-being and an overall increment of happiness. These findings highlight the need for industries and entrepreneurs to know the elements associated with significant experiences (Smith & Diekmann, 2017).

Third, the investigation and development units (I & D) focused on the psychology of tourism could benefit from the present study, following the growing trend of tourism based on the acquisition of knowledge referring to the motivations that brought different tourists to the same place. These I&D units could focus on the attempt to understand a range of different audiences, including the tourists themselves, the community that receives them, and other stakeholders dedicated to this industry, to develop new impactful strategies (Garcês et al., 2020).

#### 6.6.2. *Practical implications*

The reflections made in this study could help develop several initiatives that promote the psychology of tourism, well-being, and mental health.

Of the most cited destinations, 22.8% were Portuguese, showing that internal tourism is increasingly related to more vital meanings. Thus, strategies to promote internal tourism must invest in the benefits of travelling in Portugal regarding the purpose of life, enjoyment, self-development, and meaning.

Then, learning about what increases our well-being is a way to enhance self-care. Tourism experiences are subjective because they are functions of memory processes. People are not predictable in their actions, thoughts, and expectations, which affects how experience is planned, interpreted, and stored, influencing the associated emotions (Larsen, 2007). Thus, marketing campaigns must be undertaken to ally the need to learn about activities that make us

feel good and restore and promote self-care. In sum, tourists must be turned into the centre of their own experiences to meet their personal needs and motivations since knowing how people appraise their experiences and label them “meaningful” can help destinations and stakeholders take the best out of their travel experiences (Dunman & Mattila, 2005; Jiang, 2017).

In line with the previous urges, there is a need to innovate tourist products according to tourists' psychological characteristics (Pine & Gilmore, 2019). One strategy could be personalising the attendance of tourists physically at travel agencies or online through simple surveys to explore their motivations when seeking a determined experience and, this way, provide a personalised service to meet their expectations. By improving communication with tourists, we contribute to developing their happiness before, during, and after the experience, according to their extrinsic and intrinsic motivations (Filep & Deery, 2010).

Additionally, 64.9% of the sample said that it was the first time they visited that determined destination. Thus, novelty can lead to significant meanings (Garcês et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2012). Novelty represents a strong motivation for travelling and a significant contribution to decision-making. So, it is accurate to expose that novelty is an antecedent of emotional (Ma et al., 2017) and meaningful tourism experiences (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015; Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Wei et al., 2019). Moreover, it is a promising concept concerning how some details about temporal, contextual, and emotional issues are remembered and reconstructed, meaning that novelty influences how we reconstruct and reevaluate the experiences (Skavronskaya et al., 2020). Thus, a novel experience might strongly impact the affective image of the destination, ultimately influencing the meaning attached (Beerli & Martín, 2004). Destinations should invest in their touristic potential and engage in campaigns that promote what they have best.

Similarly, the dimensions nature & disconnect were strongly associated with the promotion of meaning and self-care, being one of the strongest motivations for the explanation of the variability of this construct. Recent research has pointed out that, similarly to the meaning attached to relationships with other people, affiliation with natural environments is equally essential to defining tourists' well-being (Filep et al., 2022). In this sense, marketing industries could invest in tourism in nature, considering its particular and attractive characteristics. One strategy could be attractive commercials where nature is associated with self-care, well-being, the ability to practice full awareness, rest & relaxation, and intense emotions and memories. In sum, natural spaces can be promoted as therapeutic spaces that allow for the development of mental and physical well-being (Gesler, 2005). Altogether, tourists seek diversity in destination, allowing for more calm activities and the pursuit of pleasure (e.g., relaxing in nature), but also

novel activities associated with self-expressiveness and awe (e.g., unique experiences; Park & Ahn, 2022). Awe can increase the well-being, spiritual growth, and pro-environmental intent of those who experience it (Schaffer et al., 2024).

The results fortified the need to fulfil physical and psychological needs, restore vitality and energy, and promote self-care. Mindfulness was associated with other dimensions, such as rest & Relaxation, nature & disconnect, learning about wellness, and self-care. The results are coherent with the ones obtained by Iacob and colleagues (2021), who found the effectiveness of mindfulness in improving tourism experiences, promoting satisfaction, loyalty, happiness, well-being, and positive psychological and physical benefits. By acting more mindfully, individuals are more aware of their surroundings, and thus, memories are more easily recalled (Tan et al., 2019). Thus, different touristic industries should be informed about mindfulness as a positive strategy to promote mental health in its different dimensions and develop interventions that promote self-acceptance, full awareness, positive somatic effects, meaning and purpose of life, and transcendence (Chang & Hung, 2021; Chen et al., 2017; Tam et al., 2022).

The meaning attached to the experiences was associated mainly with refreshment, involvement, knowledge, and self-care. As the literature focuses on, meaning is an individual concept since each person evaluates the experience differently and prepares it according to their needs, expectations, and values. Above all, experience is an individual phenomenon; individuals associate different meanings to the experience, and different types of experiences have different outcomes (Jiang, 2017). Touristic instances such as hotels, marketing industries, and touristic companies can enhance their potential through the adaptation of the activities and policies they adopt to tourists' needs by enabling the personalisation of the experience, allowing tourists to engage in meaningful personal experiences that lead to positive emotional, behavioural, and perceptual outcomes (Garcês et al., 2019).

Additionally, marketing industry could benefit from the development of appealing and convincing advertisements in different social media channels (e.g., commercials, Facebook, Instagram) with good content related to the overall image of the destination, considering this is the most crucial dimension in the process of choosing a travel destination (Park & Ahn, 2022). Also, it is essential to include the potential of the destination as one that enables involvement in various activities since travel experiences that enable self-realisation through engagement in multiple activities are associated with higher rates of happiness (Park & Ahn, 2022; Seligman, 2011).

Finally, a study developed by Brosch and colleagues (2023) emphasised different vacation effects on employees' well-being. It acknowledged that, in general, the level of affective well-being was higher after vacation than before the vacation. Moreover, workers with lower levels of general well-being reported higher levels of affective well-being during and after vacation. Thus, tourism industries have an essential role in exploring how tourism activities can be designed to promote affective well-being in workers. Simultaneously, organisational psychologists found scientific evidence of the need to design working interventions to promote employees' well-being in this study.

### *6.6.3. Limitations and future guidelines*

The study revealed some limitations, which can be further planned as future research guidelines.

First, all results must be carefully interpreted considering the exploratory nature of this study, which is associated with the sample size. Thus, future studies must encourage this analysis in a more advanced investigation phase with a more robust sample.

Still related to the sample, the participants chosen for this study were fluent in Portuguese. It would be interesting to replicate this study with different sample characteristics and cultures.

The psychometric properties of the translated versions of the instruments must be privileged in future studies to increase the scientific criterion and availability of the instruments to assess the phenomena they were developed to analyse in the first place.

Then, considering the results obtained and the need to innovate tourism experiences, it could be interesting to complement this study with a qualitative approach through the development of a focus group to inquire about a small group of participants and deepen our understanding of the fundamental motivations to engage in a determined experience, the activities searched and the main benefits. Through this, it would be possible to gather information that enabled the development of a more concise explanation of where the meaning is attached.

Based on the previous suggestion, inquiring about a small group of tourists could also be positive for the development of future investigations that deepen the study of the relationship with natural environments and its role in the attribution of meaning, as literature has pointed out this dimension as equally meaningful for tourists' well-being (Filep et al., 2022).

Then, the overall image of the destination is a crucial factor in deciding to revise a destination. A focus group study could enable a better understanding of tourists' future behaviour regarding revisit intentions, word-of-mouth intentions, and recommendation

intentions (Park & Ahn, 2022). Moreover, it can be attractive to introduce the previous behavioural variables to future investigations on the topic.

The results suggest that one of the most expressive motivations to engage in determined tourism experiences is related to the need to disconnect and find inner peace and self (Kessler et al., 2020), highlighting the impact of spirituality on the attribution of meaning, as it is related to how people seek meaning and life purposes, their quest for experiences of transcendence and connectedness (Pocinho & Garcês, 2019; Willson et al., 2013). Moreover, positive emotional experiences, specifically appreciation, are related to gratitude and luck, increasing spiritual meaning (Zheng et al., 2020). Future studies should deepen the understanding of spirituality as a cause or consequence of meaningful tourism experiences.

Then, the patronised instruments were needed to assess the dimensions of social relationships and their role in the engagement in a determined experience and meaning-making process. Literature highlights that the social component might be one of the primary motivations to engage in a determined tourist experience, related to the improvement of established relationships and the involvement in new ones (Crompton, 1979). Therefore, future guidelines could explore this dimension and its role in attributing meaning to tourism experiences.

Finally, tourism studies tend to classify the management of emotions into two major categories: positive and negative. Several studies have been interested in the influence of positive and negative affect before a tourist trip, and the results have been coherent in showing that people tend to repeat enjoyable experiences and avoid negative ones (e.g., Garcês et al., 2020; Jiang, 2017; Ma et al., 2017; Vada et al., 2019). There is a lack of literature on how ambivalent emotions can generate meaning from experience (Zheng et al., 2020). A study developed in the context of Dark Immersive Theatre Experiences (DITE) revealed that participants report higher levels of positive emotions before and after DITE and that both positive and negative affects tend to decrease after exposure to this kind of dark tourism experience (Belo & Gustavo, 2023). Moreover, the process of meaning-making decreases negative emotions and improves positive ones and life satisfaction (Fredrickson, 2001; Newman et al., 2014; Zheng et al., 2020). Future studies should explore the role of positive emotions in decreasing negative emotions and remembering memories associated with negative tourist experiences. This idea could generate important information on how individuals can accumulate resources and use them when needed, in other words, how to be proactive individuals stimulated by challenges, which leads them to more support, more vitality and, thus, more positive mood (Greenglass & Fiksenbaum, 2009).

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## 7. CHAPTER SEVEN

### **STUDY 6: MEANINGFUL TOURISM EXPERIENCES AND EMOTIONS: THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTENSITY ON THE ATTRIBUTION OF MEANING**

Câmara, E., Pocinho, M., Agapito, D., & Jesus, S. N. (2024). Meaningful tourism experiences and emotions: The role of emotional intensity on the attribution of meaning. *Emotion* (submitted)

**Meaningful tourism experiences and emotions: The role of emotional intensity on  
the attribution of meaning**

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## **Meaningful tourism experiences and emotions: The role of emotional intensity on the attribution of meaning**

**Abstract:** Positive psychology maximises the contribution of tourism experiences to tourists' well-being. Three vital characteristics are the development of positive emotions, the search for meaning and purpose, and life satisfaction. When applied to tourism, positive psychology focuses on how intensely they recall determined characteristics of that specific travel. The present study intends to analyse the impact of different activities on the meaning of the experiences. The sample comprises 308. Data was collected through the Memorable Tourism Experience Scale and the "emotional intensity" dimension of the Tourism Memory Characteristics Scale. Data was analysed with SMART-PLS4. The results show good psychometric qualities concerning the reliability of the indicators, constructs' reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity. The determination coefficients ( $R^2$ ) showed that the indicators refreshment, meaningfulness, and novelty had higher substantial effects and, thus, better explain the variance of emotional intensity. The emotional intensity of travelling experiences is better remembered when associated experiences involve freedom and relaxation, meaning and importance, novelty, and emotional involvement. Thus, new guidelines that promote unique, refreshed, and meaningful experiences can enable tourists to emotionally recall them as intense, powerful, and worthwhile repeating.

**Key-words:** Emotional intensity; Meaningful tourism experiences; Positive psychology; Tourism

## 7.1. Introduction

Psychology is responsible for the study of the personal characteristics of individuals, their social reality (relationship with significant others) and mental life (thoughts, emotions), the biological system (functioning of the nervous system), and the symbolic characteristics of places (Moscardo, 2009; Scott et al., 2017). When applied to tourism, psychology focuses on the tourist, as he is the clue to understand how different people interpret and live the same experience. While tourism relates to the movement of people, psychology is concerned about human behaviour, so it finds an excellent potential for research and intervention to understand how individuals derive meaning from their experience (Garcês et al., 2018, 2020; Scott et al., 2017). In this sense, psychology is a valuable resource for tourism since it identifies variables, including emotions, personality, memory, perception, consciousness, learning, and motivations (Scott & Le, 2017).

Experiences must be faced as a subjective theme based on individuals' sensations, cognition, affective responses, memory, and participation in activities, with positive outcomes related to knowledge acquisition, enhancing the meaning of those experiences (Moscardo, 2009). Thus, the search for meaning through tourism experiences involves tourists' motivations to involve themselves in the first place, the moment in which the experience occurs, and their consequences. The holistic character of the concept of meaningful tourism experience enhances the interaction between the individual and the context of the experience as the *ex-libris* of this process, with the potential to promote personal, emotional, behavioural, and relational development, culminating in improving well-being. Thus, choosing a travel destination depends on various things to enjoy and experience in tourist venues (Park & Ahn, 2022).

Experiences begin through the awakening of interest and expectations and involve three phases: 1) before the trip, 2) the trip itself, and 3) after the trip (Aho, 2001). According to this division, the anticipatory phase privileges the antecedents related to the expectations, decision-making, motivations, and goals. The decisions based on tourists' preferences for a determined experience or destination (i.e., anticipatory phase) are based on the evaluation of the destination attributes and their performance, as well as the predicted consequences that can facilitate or block the achievement of the customers' goals (Jiang, 2017; Scott & Le, 2017). The on-site experiences focus on peak experiences and the search for meaning. Finally, the reflexive phase is related to the outcomes of perceived value and satisfaction (Scott & Le, 2017). Altogether, an experience is a sum of what motivates the experience (antecedents), the practical occurrence of the experience, and its impact on tourists' different life domains (outcomes) (Câmara et al.,

2023). Considering the different stages involved in designing an experience, the following paragraphs explore how the constructs meaningful experiences and emotional intensity were approached in this study, which generally aims to understand how emotional intensity influences the attribution of meaning.

## **7.2. Literature review**

### *7.2.1. Meaningful tourism experiences*

According to Duerden et al. (2018), a meaningful experience is a sum of the experience itself, its evaluation, and its contextual and environmental contingencies. It involves emotion and knowledge since the way we live the experience can be emotionally intense, associated with the discovery of something new not just from the experience itself but how we deal with the impact of that experience. These kinds of experiences involve emotion and knowledge, since the way we live the experience can be emotionally intense, associated with the discovery of something new, not just from the experience itself but how we deal with the impact of that experience. Filep (2014) defined meaningful experiences as experiences characterised by pleasure and how personally meaningful tourists found their holiday activities. So, more than the experience itself, the interpretation of the impact of the experience is what makes that experience meaningful.

For Packer and Gill (2017), a meaningful experience results from an interpretation, narration, and transformation based on the activities, events, and environments in which people engage that are further interpreted and evaluated in terms of meaning based on their impact and other past experiences. Through meaningful experiences, individuals feel proud due to overcoming personal challenges, self-sufficiency in dealing and negotiating with those plans, and expressing identity.

Kim et al. (2012) are pioneers in studying tourism experiences with meaning associated with strong and intense memorability. They developed a model of a tourism experience promoter of well-being, which was the basis for assessing the concept in this study. It is a holistic and iterative model that emphasises determined components of the experience, namely, the search for pleasure and enjoyment, refreshment and renewal, the social dimension of experience, meaning, happiness and well-being, the search for something out of the ordinary, commitment and innovation (Kim et al., 2012).

Altogether, a meaningful experience is a sum of the experience, its evaluation, and the associated contextual and environmental contingencies. The substantial impacts of meaningful

experience are attached to memory through a process of consequentiality, so meaningful experiences can encourage the development of different perspectives about life and how it should be lived (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Years later, Kim, Ribeiro, and Li (2022) emphasised the need to study different dimensions associated with the ones suggested by Kim and colleagues (2012) to analyse the meaning attached to the experiences. One of the dimensions proposed was emotional intensity, both when the experience is happening and in the evocation of the memory of that experience, joining two crucial outcomes of meaningful tourism experiences: emotional impact and memorability.

The search for meaning and life purpose through travel involves three aspects: the search for self and identity, self-empowerment, and connectedness with other citizens (Willson et al., 2013; Wang, 2020). Likewise, travel can encourage development and self-growth related to new meanings, satisfying needs, and developing authentic experiences (Reisinger, 2015). Thus, meaningful tourism experiences are characterised not just by the momentaneous pleasure but also by how tourists evaluate the activities they engage in as personally meaningful (Filep, 2014), which enable the development of strong emotions, relevant reflections, memories and significant opinions and knowledge, as well as the involvement of a sense of *communitas* (Duerden et al., 2018). All in all, interpreting an experience is the crucial element that turns it into a meaningful experience (Duerden et al., 2018; Filep, 2014; Fredrickson, 2001; Packer & Gill, 2017).

The previous assumptions lead to critical thinking, considering the role of tourists in co-creating their own experiences under the foundations of their goals, desires, and dreams. If it was possible to divide the experience in two, the first half assessed what leads individuals to invest in determining activities and the expectations created about their outcomes (Garcês et al., 2020). The second half was destined for the results of the experiences, which determine if the expectations previously developed were fulfilled. Therefore, it is crucial to understand what leads people to involve themselves, in the first place, in a determined kind of experience.

One of the most studied outcomes of meaningful experiences is the emotional one. However, this trend is beginning to change, allowing for other outcomes, such as acquiring knowledge and personal discovery. In other words, meaningful experiences go beyond the unique idea of an emotional outcome, as they can predispose the individual to intra-or extrapersonal reflection (Duerden et al., 2018).

### 7.2.2. *Emotions*

Emotions are personal; they vary in quality and intensity, depending on the experience and its impact on individuals and the meaning we attach to it (Fredrickson, 2001; Ma, 2017). They play a fundamental role in individuals' anticipation and expectation of an experience (Ma et al., 2017a), considering that positive and pleasurable emotions and feelings are the ultimate desired outcome of a tourist experience (Scott et al., 2017; Tung & Ritchie, 2011), and have an important role before, during and after the trip (Hosany et al., 2019; Li et al., 2017). In the pretravel stage (Larsen, 2007), emotions strongly influence tourists' motivations and choice of destination (Hosany et al., 2019; Li et al., 2017).

Tourism studies tend to classify the management of emotions into two major categories: positive and negative. On this behalf, Fredrickson (2001) proposed the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, defending that discrete positive emotions (e.g., joy, interest, contentment, pride, and love) share the possibility to increase (broaden) the repertoire of actions, which contributes to the development (build) of personal, physical, social, and psychological resources to face everyday struggles. The specific positive effects of an action have a better performance in describing the functions of negative ones. So, specific actions and our physiological change work together to interpret a determined situation and its adaptative potential based on our emotions and the way they are broadened and built.

In the presence of positive emotions (e.g., joy, interest, contentment, pride, and love), the situation has a high probability of being less life-threatening (Fredrickson, 2001). In so doing, positive emotions catalyse a stronger response, based on a broader range of hypotheses (Fredrickson, 2001). These emotions are associated with indirect long-term adaptive benefits through the willingness to develop personal resources, which can help individuals deal with future situations that represent threats once they are durable and accumulate during the experience of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001).

Another contribution of the undoing effects is related to the improvement of psychological well-being and physical health by engaging in experiences that allow the crucial role of positive emotions in the process of coping with negative emotions, which gives strength to the fact that psychological resilience reaches different levels, depending on the individual. This allows us to conclude that positive emotions enhance our differences to develop resilience and not just reflect it. Subsequently, by feeling psychologically resilient, individuals increase their emotional well-being, manifested in their involvement in long-term plans and goals.

Individuals who experience positive emotions are more likely to find positive meaning in their lives (Fredrickson, 2001).

The investigation has shown that individuals who experience more positive emotions can become more resilient over time by developing a more proactive, broad-minded coping, which, in return, leads to an increase in positive emotions. In other words, positive emotions can predict how individuals will feel and behave in the future (Fredrickson, 2001).

Filep and Laing (2019) concluded that the simple retrospective thought of experiences can create positive emotions of joy, interest, contentment, and love; the positive emotions elicit positive psychology foundations (Seligman, 2002). Studies have been developed in different psychological contexts, confirming the strict relationship between emotions and memory.

A concept highly related to emotions in tourism settings is the concept of memorability. The desire to engage in a future experience leads to the development of an autobiographical fantasy based on the memories and emotions experienced before. Throughout memory reconstruction, individuals focus on the positive memories, conducting the mind to elicit positive emotions and reinforce the desire to travel (Skavronskaya et al., 2017). Due to its reminiscent characteristics, the memories of tourist experiences contribute to happiness and affect different social life domains (Morgan & Xu, 2009).

Concerning memorability and emotions, Kim and colleagues (2012) define a memorable tourism experience as an experience which is remembered even after the event has passed due to its strong emotional content. It is constructed based on the individuals' evaluation of the experience, allowing them to develop pleasant memories that can be recollected whenever they access those memories and the emotions provided. So, these experiences are the most likely to affect individuals' memory when they are innovative, associated with moments of refreshment, and enable the development of solid meanings.

Emotion is the most central process of memorable experiences, which will be definitive in evaluating a trip experience based on the (positive or negative) emotions remarkably experienced (Coelho et al., 2018). Tourists' descriptions of a memorable experience reflect the significance of the emotion felt, and most individuals reflected positive emotions, feelings, and affect, revealing that the emotional component was one of the critical outcomes of their personal experiences (Tung & Ritchie, 2011).

There is a lack of literature on how ambivalent emotions can generate meaning from experience (Zheng et al., 2020), considering that both positive and negative affects tend to decrease after exposure to some kinds of events, for example, in the dark tourism context (Belo

& Gustavo, 2023). Moreover, the process of meaning-making decreases negative emotions and improves positive ones and life satisfaction (Fredrickson, 2001; Newman et al., 2014; Zheng et al., 2020). In 2002, the neuroscientist LeDoux explored how emotional memories are created and remembered through time, giving rise to a new theoretical movement concerning emotions and memory, the memory reconsolidation theory. When an emotional memory is recalled, it becomes temporarily malleable, allowing for its modification before being restored. In the context of this study, negative emotions can also be an outcome of meaningful tourism experiences, considering their intensity and how they are consolidated in our memory. As such, recalling an experience with a meaningful negative impact could open a window for individuals to modify the associations between the activities performed, the negative emotions felt, and how the associated memories can be improved.

Kim and colleagues (2022) developed the Tourism Memory Characteristics Scale, assuming that recalling tourism experiences is a decisive factor in tourists' future behaviour and decision-making when choosing destinations. One of those dimensions is called emotional intensity, which is defined as the intensity of emotions experienced by an individual concerning tourism memory (Prayag et al., 2013). The emotions associated with the memories we create of our experiences interact with the emotional content of the memory and the motivations that trigger the will to travel (Prayag et al., 2013), influencing future behaviour (Kim et al., 2022).

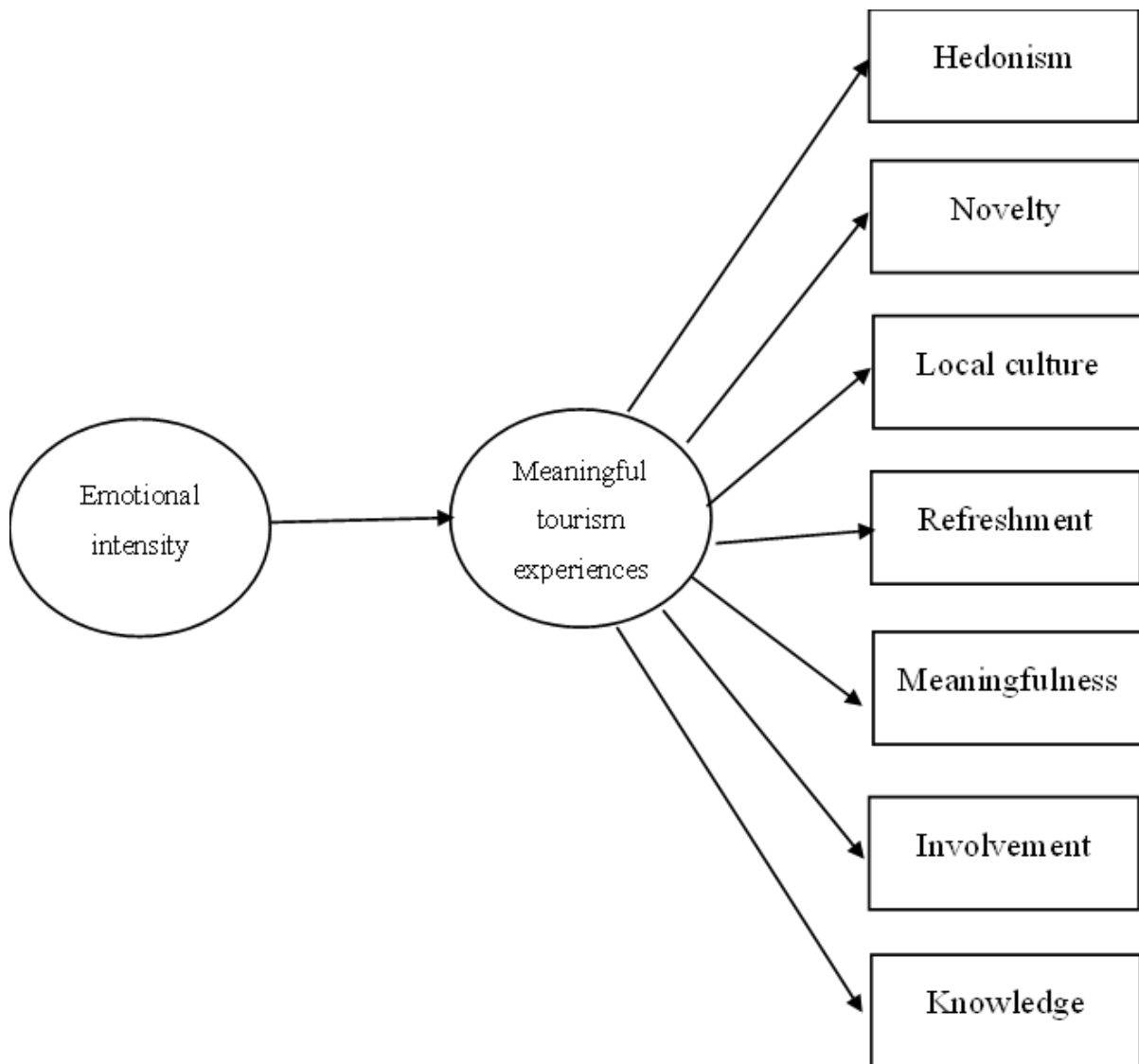
So, travel is associated with the improvement of quality of life through the involvement in activities that enable tourists' positive affect, self-expressiveness, and self-realisation (Bosnjak et al., 2016; Hosany et al., 2015; Sirgy et al., 2011). Thus, the study's foundation is the holistic thinking of an experience as a continuum between before, during, and after, and the emotional impact felt both during and after the experience occurs.

### **7.3. Methodology**

#### *7.3.1. Objectives*

This study intends to understand how emotional intensity influences the attribution of meaning. Specifically, it is intended to analyse if determined dimensions of the meaningful tourism experience emerge with a higher frequency, depending on the emotional intensity felt during and after the experience. Figure 7.1 shows the hypothetical model composed of two latent variables and 8 indicators conducted for the statistical analysis.

**Figure 7.2.** Theoretical model of analysis



### 7.3.2. Instruments

#### 7.3.2.1. Meaningful tourism experience.

To assess meaningful tourism experiences, two instruments were used, both adapted and validated for the Portuguese population (Câmara et al., 2023):

- c) The Memorable Tourism Experience Scale (Kim et al., 2012) comprises 24 items grouped into seven dimensions. The internal consistency indices of the original scale were considered good ( $.81 < \alpha < .90$ ), demonstrating good internal consistency indices (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). The scale assesses seven dimensions: a) hedonism (e.g., “I was thrilled about having a new experience”); b) novelty (e.g., “I experienced something new”); c) local culture (e.g., “I closely experienced the local culture”); d) refreshment (e.g., “It was a liberating experience”); e) meaningfulness

(e.g., "I did something meaningful"); f) involvement (e.g., "I was interested in the main activities of this tourism experience"); g) knowledge (e.g., "I learnt about a new culture).

- d) "Emotional intensity" dimension of the Tourism Memory Characteristics Scale (Kim et al., 2022). On the original scale, the internal consistency value was higher than .70 and, thus, considered good (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). This dimension comprises five items that analyse the intensity of the emotions experienced at the time of the experience and when it is evoked (e.g., "While remembering this trip now, my feelings are very intense").

### 7.3.3. *Sample*

The sample of this study followed a non-random convenience criterion (Almeida, 2003), composed of Portuguese adults who had had a meaningful tourism experience in the last few months. The criterion was adopted because several studies on the impact of tourism experience have emerged using a general sample associated with promising results (e.g., Park & Ahn, 2022; Wilson & Harris, 2006).

### 7.3.4. *Procedures*

Data collection began in January 2023 and continued until August 2023.

The process of adaptation and validation of the instruments for the Portuguese culture followed these procedures: a) evaluation and approval of the proposal of adaptation and validation of the questionnaire by the Scientific Commission of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of the University of Algarve, with the reference of acceptance no. EDOC/2021/26517 b) direct translation of the items; c) evaluation of the translation by the team; d) pretest with 12 participants with the same characteristics as the general sample; e) clarification of the vocabulary of some of the items; f) evaluation and approval by the Personal Data Protection Team; g) availability of the online questionnaire through the EUSurvey platform.

Data was introduced and codified in the software Statistical Package for Social Sciences – SPSS (version 29.0), in which descriptive statistics was undertaken to group the sample by common characteristics (Field, 2009). The analysis of the relationship between motivations and meaningful tourism experiences was undertaken in the software SMARTPLS 4 to perform a structural equation model with a partial least squares (PLS-SEM) approach.

#### 7.3.4.1. Statistical procedures

A Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM) is a statistical procedure that estimates the relationships between direct and indirect variables and between these variables and their indicators. It comprises two analyses, one for each type of model: a) Measurement model that analyses the relationship between the latent variable and its indicators using validity and reliability analysis of each of the measures of the model; b) Structural model through the estimation of the coefficients between the constructs and its significance, predictive power of the model and correlations between variables (Hulland, 1999).

This study assessed two latent variables - Motivations and Meaningful Tourism Experience – through 15 constructs (seven for motivations and eight for meaningful tourism experiences), each measured by multiple indicators. To specify the model, the theoretical models surrounding the latent variables must be explained (Hair et al., 2022).

Kessler and colleagues followed several wellness tourism motivation models (e.g., Beard & Ragheb, 1983; Chen et al., 2008; Jang et al., 2002; Konu & Laukkanen, 2009; Voigt, 2010; Voigt et al., 2011) before establishing their model on the motivations that are behind the choice for wellness tourism activities. Using a grounded theory approach, the authors developed a theoretical model that sums the motivations that lead tourists to invest in determined activities as being related to seven dimensions: a) Movement & Fitness; b) Healthy Food & Diet; c) Meditation & Mindfulness; d) Rest & Relaxation; e) Learn about Wellness; f) Self-care; g) Nature & Disconnect.

Meaningful tourism experience is an underexplored concept in the literature, frequently used as a synonym for memorable, transformational, extraordinary, or authentic experiences (Câmara et al., 2023). Thus, there is a lack of instruments to assess this specific phenomenon. In a systematic literature review, Câmara and collaborators (2023) concluded that meaning can be attached to personal, emotional, relational, and well-being dimensions. It is worth noting that Kim and colleagues (2012) assessed some of these dimensions on their Memorable Tourism Experience Scale (MTEs), justifying the use of this scale to measure the dimensions associated with meaningful tourism experiences. The authors define a memorable tourism experience (MTE) as a "(...) "tourism experience remembered and recalled after the event has occurred" (Kim et al., 2012, p. 4). An MTE is constructed based on a tourist's assessment of their experience and consolidates and reinforces the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience (Kim et al., 2012). Therefore, memorability is likely to contribute to meaningfulness as people reflect on and construct meanings around the experiences they

remember (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Thus, this model is comprised of seven dimensions: a) hedonism, b) novelty, c) local culture, d) refreshment, e) meaningfulness, f) involvement, and g) knowledge.

Years later, Kim and colleagues (2022) considered that some dimensions could be added to the previous ones and, thus, developed the Tourism Memory Characteristics Scale under the assumption that recalling tourism experiences is a decisive factor in tourists' future behaviour and decision-making when choosing destinations. One of those dimensions is called emotional intensity, which is defined as the intensity of emotions experienced by an individual concerning tourism memory (Prayag et al., 2013). The emotions associated with the memories we create of our experiences interact with the emotional content of the memory and the motivations that trigger the will to travel (Prayag et al., 2013).

The survey has three parts: a) demographic information; b) characteristics of a meaningful tourist experience the participants had had in the last few months, in terms of the duration of the trip, the people whom they travelled with and the activities in which they engaged; c) the questionnaire itself where participants were asked about their motivations to engage on that specific trip and their perception and satisfaction with it. Regarding motivations, participants rated the questions using a 7-point Likert scale, in which 1 meant "Not at all important" and 7 "very important". In the case of a meaningful tourist experience, participants also used a 7-point Likert scale, in which 1 represented "I have not experienced at all" and 7 represented "I have experienced very much". In both cases, higher scores were associated with higher levels of agreement with a particular statement.

SPSS made the outlier diagnosis. The results showed that the data has no outliers. Additionally, considering the need to guarantee the normality of the data, we ran a skewness and kurtosis analysis with SPSS. All values must be within -2 and 2 to be considered normal. The results confirm that the data follows a normal distribution, considering that all skewness and kurtosis values were within these values (Hair et al., 2022).

## 7.4. Results

### 7.4.1. Descriptive statistics

**Table 7.1.** Sample description and characteristics

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Masculine	72	23.4%
	Feminine	235	76.3%
<b>Age</b>	Under 28 years old (inclusive)	156	50.6%
	Above 28 years old	152	49.4%
<b>Current Occupation</b>	Student	107	34.7%
	Employed	113	36.7%
	Student and employed	76	24.7%
	Unemployed	6	1.9%
	Retired	6	1.9%
<b>Nationality</b>	Portuguese	273	88.6%
	Others (e.g., Brazilian)	35	11.4%
<b>Country of residence</b>	Portugal	292	94.8%
	Others (e.g., Brazil, Spain, England)	16	5.2%

As seen in Table 7.1, the sample comprises 308 Portuguese tourists, mainly female (76.3%), and Portuguese nationality prevails (88.6%). Concerning the occupation, most of the sample were employed (36.7%). Participants' ages range from 17 to 82 years old, and the majority are less than 28 (50.6%). Regarding the destinations mentioned as the most significant ones visited in the last few months, 43.2% were European destinations; Portuguese destinations were highlighted as the most significant (22.8%). The participants travelled mainly to family and friends (85.8%), reporting that it was the first time they travelled to the mentioned destination (64.9%). Finally, the types of tourism practised were mainly related to cultural and urban tourism (40.4%).

### 7.4.2. PLS-SEM Model

#### 7.4.2.1. Measurement model

The measurement model results that will be analysed will be the Outer loading, composite reliability ( $\rho_a$  and  $\rho_c$ ), Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2018; 2022).

The Outer loadings refer to the extent to which the indicators assess the construct they were designed to access ( $\lambda$ ). The ideal value must exceed .707 (Hair et al., 2018). Concerning the results obtained, the individual reliability values varied between .737 (Hedonism – “*I visited a place I really wanted to visit*”) and .954 (Emotional intensity – “*My emotions are really intensifies concerning this trip*”). Hair and collaborators (2018) suggested that values higher than

.06 in exploratory studies are acceptable, confirming that all indicators are reliable and help to explain the variation in the construct they were designed to access.

The internal consistency was assessed with three criteria: Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), Joreskog composite reliability ( $\rho_c$ ), and Dijkstra-Henseler composite reliability ( $\rho_a$ ). The last two criteria are more robust than Cronbach's alpha, a more conservative measure since it assesses the item's weight. The accepted values for exploratory studies are from .6 to .7, and the good values are between .7 and .9 (Hair et al., 2018, 2022).

As for the convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted criterion (AVE) was analysed. Values higher than .05 are considered ideal (Hair et al., 2018)

Table 7.2 sums up the results of these four criteria.

**Table 7.2.** Internal consistency and convergent validity

Dimension	Chronbach's alpha	Dijkstra-Henseler ( $\rho_a$ )	Composite reliability Joreskog ( $\rho_c$ )	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Knowledge	0.682	0.694	0.862	0.758
Local culture	0.880	0.886	0.926	0.806
Refreshment	0.918	0.920	0.942	0.803
Emotional intensity	0.962	0.962	0.970	0.867
Involvement	0.864	0.883	0.916	0.785
Hedonism	0.878	0.905	0.911	0.673
Novelty	0.863	0.875	0.907	0.711
Meaningfulness	0.897	0.896	0.936	0.830

All internal consistency values are above the ones defended in the literature for exploratory studies. The dimension "emotional intensity" is the one with the highest value of internal consistency ( $\alpha = .962$ ;  $\rho_a = .962$ ;  $\rho_c = .970$ ), and the dimension with the lowest value was "knowledge" ( $\alpha = .682$ ;  $\rho_a = .694$ ;  $\rho_c = .862$ ).

The values of convergent validity varied between .673 (Hedonism) and .867 (emotional intensity), suggesting that all reflective constructs have high convergent validity.

The discriminant validity assures that the values of a construct are significantly different from the other constructs (Hulland, 1999). The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) is concerned with calculating the average value of the correlation of the items of all constructs and the mean of the correlation of the items that measure a given construct. It uses 0.85 as the relevant threshold level, and some studies report the possibility of a threshold level of .90 (e.g., Hair et al., 2022).

**Table 7.3.** Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio Matrix

	Hedonism	Novelty	Local culture	Refreshment	Meaningfulness	Involvement	Knowledge
Novelty	0.779						
Local culture	0.586	0.509					
Refreshment	0.742	0.738	0.596				
Meaningfulness	0.667	0.698	0.480	0.789			
Involvement	0.872	0.664	0.510	0.598	0.568		
Knowledge	0.802	0.741	0.630	0.725	0.775	0.813	
Emotional Intensity	0.531	0.576	0.400	0.720	0.690	0.399	0.557

As seen in Table 7.3, all the values were below the threshold, revealing discriminant validity. The next step is to examine if the HTMT values are significantly different from the threshold values, using the technique of bootstrapping to check the bootstrap confidence intervals and explore if they are significantly lower than the threshold values of .85 and .90, with a probability of error of 5% (Hair et al., 2022). After running this test, the results highlighted two values higher than .90:

- j)  $HTMT_{\text{Hedonism \& Involvement}} = .932$ ;
- k)  $HTMT_{\text{Involvement \& Knowledge}} = .939$ ;

The remaining values in the 95% column are significantly lower than 0.90. To summarise, the bootstrap confidence interval results of the HTMT criterion also demonstrate the discriminant validity of the constructs.

#### 7.4.2.2. Structural model

The structural model begins by assessing collinearity issues through all predictor constructs' variance inflation factor (VIF) values. The ideal value must be below 3.3 (Hair et al., 2018). Zach and collaborators (2019) defended that values below 1 are not correlated, and the ones below 5 have a moderated, but not critical, correlation.

The results suggest that two dimensions present several items with VIF above the threshold defended by Zach *et al.* (2019), as follows:

- a) “Emotional intensity”
  - a. “Esta memória evoca emoções poderosas”: VIF = 5.046
  - b. “This memory evokes strong emotions in me”: VIF = 5.397
  - c. “My emotions are very intense related to this trip”: VIF = 7.425
  - d. “While I remember this trip now, my feelings are very intense”: VIF = 5.787
- b) “Meaningfulness”
  - a. “I did something meaningful”: VIF = 5.684
  - b. “I did something important”: VIF = 6.115

The previous results might suggest that those items produce very similar information, meaning the information is not distinct. The other values were below the threshold of 5, with 29 exceptions below 3, allowing us to acknowledge that collinearity among the predictor constructs is not critical in the structural model since all constructs produce unique and independent information.

Following Hair and collaborators' (2022) guidelines, the path coefficient magnitudes were assessed to verify the significance and relevance of the structural model relationships. The values must be within -1 and 1, being that the closest to the value 0 means the weaker, and close to the edges means a strong correlation (positive or negative). The following table shows the path coefficient magnitudes with significant p values ( $p < .05$ ).

**Table 7.4.** Path coefficients

Relation	Path coefficient	t-value	p-value
Emotional intensity - Refreshment	0.678	19.226	0.000
Emotional intensity – Meaningfulness	0.644	17.869	0.000
Emotional intensity - Novelty	0.531	11.761	0.000
Emotional intensity - Hedonism	0.507	12.078	0.000
Emotional intensity - Knowledge	0.456	8.995	0.000
Emotional intensity – Local culture	0.374	6.123	0.000
Emotional intensity - Involvement	0.372	6.863	0.000

According to Table 7.4, dimension of emotional intensity has a significant and strong influence on the following dimensions of meaningful tourism experiences: Refreshment (M=.678; T=19.226; p=.000); Meaningfulness (M=.644; T=17.869; p=.000); Novelty (M=.531; T=11.761; p=.000); Hedonism (M=.507; T=12.078; p=.000); Knowledge (M=.456; T=8.995; p=.000); Local culture (M=.374; T=6.123; p=.000); Involvement (M=.372; T=6.863; p=.000)

To verify the significance of these relationships, the bootstrapping procedure was adopted (Efron & Gong, 1983). The focus was placed on the 95% bootstrap confidence interval obtained by the percentile approach with bias correction, assuming a significance level of 5%. Table 7.5 summarises the path coefficient estimates, t-values, p-value, and confidence intervals.

**Table 7.5.** Bootstrapping values of the path coefficient (with bias correction)

Relation	Path coefficients	T values	p values	95% confidence intervals (with bias correction)	Significance (p < .05)?
Emotional intensity -> Descanso	0.678	19.226	0.000	[.602; .740]	Yes
Emotional intensity -> Significado	0.644	17.869	0.000	[.565; .706]	Yes
Emotional intensity -> Novidade	0.531	11.761	0.000	[.432; .608]	Yes
Emotional intensity -> Hedonismo	0.507	12.078	0.000	[.414; .578]	Yes
Emotional intensity -> Conhecimento	0.456	8.995	0.000	[.347; .544]	Yes
Emotional intensity -> Cultura do local	0.374	6.123	0.000	[.246; .483]	Yes
Emotional intensity -> Envolvimento	0.372	6.863	0.000	[.257; .469]	Yes

All relationships found after the bootstrapping procedure were significant, allowing us to establish some crucial guidelines for promoting meaningful tourism experiences considering the emotional intensity felt during and after the experience occurred.

The next phase of assessing the structural model is the model's explanatory power (Hair et al., 2022). The  $R^2$  values indicate a model's ability to predict new or future observations (Hair & Sarstedt, 2021). The values range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating a greater explanatory power. As a rule of thumb,  $R^2$  values of .75, .50, and .25 can be interpreted as substantial, moderate, and weak (Henseler, 2017). Table 7.6 shows the results for the  $R^2$  values of the endogenous latent variables.

**Table 7.6.**  $R^2$  values of the endogenous latent variables

	$R^2$	$R^2$ adjusted	<i>P-value</i>
Descanso	0.459	0.457	0.000
Significado	0.413	0.411	0.000
Novidade	0.279	0.277	0.009
Hedonismo	0.253	0.251	0.000
Conhecimento	0.206	0.203	0.000
Cultura do local	0.138	0.135	0.000
Envolvimento	0.137	0.134	0.000

The determination coefficients show values ranging from .459 and .137, all in the range of weak explanatory power (Table 8.6). Specifically, the endogenous latent variables with higher explanatory power for the dimension of emotional intensity were a) Refreshment ( $R^2 = .459$ ;  $p=.00$ ), b) Meaningfulness ( $R^2 = .413$ ;  $p=.00$ ), c) Novelty ( $R^2 = .279$ ;  $p=.00$ ), and d) Hedonism ( $R^2 = .253$ ;  $p=.00$ ). These values mean that refreshment, meaningfulness, and novelty explain 46%, 41%, 28%, and 25% of the explanatory power of emotional intensity (respectively).

Next, the endogenous and corresponding exogenous constructs' effect sizes ( $f^2$ ) were assessed. Values higher than 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 depict small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively (Cohen, 1988). Table 7.7 shows the endogenous and exogenous constructs' large and medium effect sizes.

**Table 7.7.**  $f^2$  values of the endogenous latent variables

<b>Combination</b>	<b><math>f^2</math></b>
Emotional intensity - Refreshment	0.848
Emotional intensity - Meaningfulness	0.704
Emotional intensity - Novelty	0.387
Emotional intensity - Hedonism	0.339
Emotional intensity - Knowledge	0.259
Emotional intensity - Local culture	0.160
Emotional intensity - Involvement	0.158

According to table 8.7, the following values of effect sizes were reported: a) Emotional intensity and Refreshment ( $f^2 = .848$ ); b) Emotional intensity and Meaningfulness ( $f^2 = 0.704$ ); c) Emotional intensity and Novelty ( $f^2 = .387$ ); d) Emotional intensity and Hedonism ( $f^2 = .339$ ); e) Emotional intensity and Knowledge ( $f^2 = .259$ ); f) Emotional intensity and Local culture ( $f^2 = .160$ ); and g) Emotional intensity and Involvement ( $f^2 = .158$ ). Compared to Table 5 (path coefficients through the bootstrap method), larger effect sizes were found in the same relationship with the higher path coefficients, as Hair et al. (2018) mentioned.

Finally, one of the study's main objectives was to explore how emotional intensity influences the performance of the different dimensions of the construct meaningful tourism experiences. A correlation analysis was performed based on the Pearson coefficient ( $r$ ), with values ranging from -1 to 1. Cohen (1988) adopted the following threshold: a)  $0,10 < r < 0,29$  = weak correlation; b)  $0,30 < r < 0,49$  = moderate correlation; c)  $0,50 < r < 1,00$  = strong correlation. Table 7.8 denotes the values for the correlations.

**Table 7.8.** Pearson correlations between endogenous latent variables

	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Local culture</b>	<b>Refreshment</b>	<b>Emotional intensity</b>	<b>Involvement</b>	<b>Hedonism</b>	<b>Novelty</b>	<b>Meaningfulness</b>
<b>Knowledge</b>	1.000							
<b>Local culture</b>	0.486**	1.000						
<b>Refreshment</b>	0.572**	0.540**	1.000					
<b>Emotional intensity</b>	0.454**	0.372**	0.677**	1.000				
<b>Involvement</b>	0.625**	0.446**	0.537**	0.370**	1.000			
<b>Hedonism</b>	0.615**	0.515**	0.674**	0.503**	0.748**	1.000		
<b>Novelty</b>	0.573**	0.447**	0.662**	0.528**	0.578**	0.689**	1.000	
<b>Meaningfulness</b>	0.611**	0.430**	0.718**	0.643**	0.503**	0.591**	0.619**	1.000

*Note: \*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$*

The strongest correlations were found between emotional intensity and: a) Refreshment ( $r = .678$ ;  $p = .000$ ); b) Meaningfulness ( $r = .644$ ;  $p = .000$ ); c) Novelty ( $r = .531$ ;  $p = .000$ ); d) Hedonism ( $r = .507$ ;  $p = .000$ ); e) Knowledge ( $r = .456$ ;  $p = .000$ ); f) Local culture ( $r = .374$ ;  $p = .000$ ); and g) Involvement ( $r = .372$ ;  $p = .000$ ).

## 7.5. Discussion

This study intended to understand how emotional intensity influences the attribution of meaning. Specifically, it is intended to analyse if determined dimensions of the meaningful tourism experience emerge with a higher frequency, depending on the emotional intensity felt during and after the experience.

The results generally conclude that the PLS-SEM model has good psychometric quality. Specifically, the indicators have good levels of reliability, and convergent and discriminant validities were assured. Regarding the structural model, the coefficients have a significant magnitude that allows us to envision the relationship between the variables and, thus, outline future lines of research.

The results from the multicollinearity revealed that four items from Emotional intensity and two from Meaningfulness are above the threshold of 5, suggesting that they might produce very similar information and, thus, assess the same outcome (Hair et al., 2022). This could be related to the process of translation of the instrument to the Portuguese language, considering the words “powerful”, “intense”, “strong” (emotional intensity), “meaningful”, and “important” in Portuguese are seen as synonyms (Priberam, 2024) and, thus, might introduce some redundancy on the respondents.

This study correlated emotional intensity with refreshment, meaningfulness, and novelty constructs. As such, the emotional dimension of an experience is the central component for its evaluation, enabling tourists to attach strong meanings that are better recalled through time. Ma and colleagues (2017) defend that emotions play a prominent role in individuals' expectations about the development of an experience, contributing to their involvement and commitment, as well as the positive evaluation and memorability of the experience. Similarly, Tung and Ritchie (2011) argued that substantial impacts of meaningful experience are attached to memory through a process of consequentiality, so meaningful experiences can encourage the development of different perspectives about life and how it should be lived. Since human beings have a profound emotional basis, the memories of their experiences are strongly marked by emotion, which gives them a particular lasting and intense meaning (Kim et al., 2022).

Overall, three significant areas emerged associated with solid meanings and intense emotional outcomes of the trip in the field of psychology applied to tourism.

The first one is related to refreshment, meaning that activities that enable tourists to feel liberated, enjoy a sense of freedom, feel refreshed, and revitalised (Kim et al., 2012) are experiences that lead to a vigorous intensity on the emotional impact remembered after the experience occurs. As such, investing in activities that lead to self-development and self-esteem is associated with recovery, meaning that positive emotions and feelings of recovery enhance the probability of feeling physically and mentally refreshed (Hur & Shin, 2022; Kessler et al., 2020; Voigt, 2017).

The second one is related to meaningfulness, considering that the tourist activities that are associated with higher emotional arousal – both during and after their occurrence – have a more substantial probability of explaining how individuals thrive in meaning from tourist experiences through the construction of personal narratives and stories, as well as the opportunity to be at peace with ourselves and hear our inner self (Moscardo, 2009). This result allows us to inquire that the more emotionally involved in the experience, the stronger and more lasting the meaning attached so that promoting the active participation of tourists in the construction of their own experience enables its personalisation (Duerden et al., 2018; Packer & Gill, 2017). Thus, tourists develop a sense of attachment to a determined destination when they live meaningful and satisfying experiences, enhancing their meaning, purpose, and the power to evoke the emotions felt at that period (Vada et al., 2019).

The last dimension highlighted in our results is related to novelty. Most of the sample (64.9%) indicated that it was the first time visiting the referred destination, which was the most meaningful of the last few months. Therefore, seeking novelty might be associated with positive outcomes of tourist experiences, especially the ones involving intense emotional arousal. Moreover, a relationship with hedonism was evident. Hedonism is related to the desire for pleasure and enjoyment, development of the emotional component, and well-being (Dunman & Mattila, 2005; Kim et al., 2012; Staphit & Coudounaris, 2017). As such, novelty can be a tool for searching for these kinds of activities since looking for something new involves positive outcomes, such as positive emotions, enjoyment, and refreshment (Dunman & Matilla, 2005).

Following the previous assumption, emotional intensity was one of the strongest predictors of the construct of meaningful tourism experiences and showed a strong relation with different dimensions. It involves emotion and knowledge since the way we live the experience can be emotionally intense, associated with the discovery of something new not just from the experience itself but how we deal with the impact of that experience (Duerden et al., 2018).

Travel experiences are emotionally solid events (Larsen, 2007) that involve strong emotions that enable tourists to develop relevant insights, significant opinions and a long-lasting memory concerning the experience (Kim, 2014). The emotional impact of the experience introduces an intense and persistent mark on how the experience is remembered after its occurrence. Packer and Gill (2017) defend that memorability can lead to meaningfulness since people reflect and construct meanings about the experiences they recall.

Finally, Chandralal and Valenzuela (2013, 2015) suggest that a memorable tourist experience is a very significant travel experience, interpreted as highly exclusive, extreme, or very special. The authors suggest that these experiences are strongly linked to positive emotions (e.g., pleasure, excitement), which are the kinds of emotions that make up the affective component of the experiences and shape how the cognitive component interprets them. Thus, our results might be an essential tool to reflect on a series of theoretical and practical implications on improving the potential of the experiences to become meaningful and associated with moments of refreshment, considering the emotional impact attached.

## **7.6. Conclusions**

The results of this study highlight a strong relationship between emotional intensity and refreshment, meaningfulness, and novelty. The meaning attached to a tourist experience is related to the value and significance of the experience itself, which leads to self-development and change (Kim et al., 2012; Staphit & Coudounaris, 2017; Voigt, 2017). Thus, refreshing moments can lead to a strong and emotional meaning of intimacy (Dunman & Mattila, 2005), considering their internal needs (Jiang, 2017). Learning about what makes us feel good is related to seeking the supreme good and happiness, developing positive feelings and activities that activate momentaneous pleasure (Packer & Gill, 2017; Voigt, 2017). Thus, emotional intensity is better remembered when tourists engage in renewal, refreshment, new activities and experiences, and seek pleasurable and enjoyable moments (Kim et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2022).

Considering the abovementioned ideas, some reflections arise on the theoretical and practical implications the results might suggest.

### *7.6.1. Theoretical implications*

As for the theoretical implications, this study enabled a more substantial reflection on the field of psychology applied to tourism from the “meaning attached to the experiences” point of view. Considering that the activities that enable refreshment, novelty, and meaningfulness

are the ones that lead to an emotionally intense recall, individuals are encouraged to address the motivations and factors behind their behavioural choices and intentions, and nowadays, the extraordinary dissemination of social platforms and mass media enables tourists to gain increasingly information every day (Csikszentmihalyi & Coffey, 2017; Joeng et al., 2020).

Additionally, theoretical implications can be discussed with different points of view.

First, higher educational and professional institutions in tourism and psychology could find important information in this study. Tourism courses could benefit from this study through its potential to introduce important information on how to improve tourism experiences, enabling a reflection on how to provide innovative experiences associated with moments of relaxation, renewal, and higher meanings. As for psychology courses, promoting psychological health and well-being is a potential field of action in tourism to develop initiatives that call for these dimensions in the first place. Thus, understanding the results involves acknowledging the intense emotional arousal of tourism experiences and, thus, providing conditions for its occurrence.

Second, the different tourist instances find in this study vital information to innovate and personalise their offers and promote the potential of those places, meaning that the more the information about tourists is known, the better the recommendations of attractions considering their expectations (Alves et al., 2023), and the higher the probability of the experiences to enable the development of emotional solid, refreshment, and meaningful outcomes.

Third, the investigation and development units (I & D) focused on the psychology of tourism could benefit from the present study, focused on the attempt to understand a range of different audiences, including the tourists themselves, the community that receives them, and other stakeholders dedicated to this industry, to develop new impactful strategies (Garcês et al., 2020).

#### *7.6.2. Practical implications*

As for the practical implications, the results from the path coefficient magnitudes and correlation analysis between constructs highlighted that the emotional intensity of determined travelling experiences is better remembered when associated with experiences that involve refreshment, meaningfulness, and novelty. Thus, activities that enable moments of refreshment can lead to touristic, intense emotional memories when people evocate those experiences (Kim et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2022). As such, the results suggest that tourism industries might consider

the need to encourage the reflection on the appreciation of a meaningful experience and interpret the meaning they attribute to unique and engaging tourist moments (Filep, 2014).

A memorable tourist experience includes the objective elements that attract individuals' attention to generate a set of strong emotions. Working with this assumption leads businesses to develop and design memorable experiences (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013) to captivate tourists' emotions, time, and money and conquer a more recommended destination.

The reflections made in this study could help develop several initiatives that promote the psychology of tourism, well-being, and mental health.

First, 64.9% of the sample said it was the first time they visited the destination. Thus, novelty can lead to significant meanings (Garcês et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2012). Novelty represents a strong motivation for travelling and a significant contribution to decision-making. So, it is accurate to expose that novelty is an antecedent of emotional (Ma et al., 2017) and meaningful tourism experiences (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015; Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Wei et al., 2019). Moreover, it is a promising concept concerning how some details about temporal, contextual, and emotional issues are remembered and reconstructed, meaning that novelty influences how we reconstruct and reevaluate the experiences (Skavronskaya et al., 2020). Thus, a novel experience might strongly impact the affective image of the destination, ultimately influencing the meaning attached (Beerli & Martín, 2004). Destinations should invest in their touristic potential and engage in campaigns that promote what they have best.

Then, marketing campaigns must be undertaken to enable tourists to become the centre of their own experiences, to meet their personal needs, and improve the emotional impact of the experiences since knowing how people appraise their experiences and label them "meaningful" can help destinations and stakeholders take the best out of their travel experiences (Dunman & Mattila, 2005; Jiang, 2017).

In line with the previous urges, there is a need to innovate tourist products according to tourists' psychological characteristics (Pine & Gilmore, 2019). One strategy could be personalising the attendance of tourists physically at travel agencies or online through simple surveys to explore their motivations when seeking a determined experience and, this way, provide a personalised service to meet their expectations. By improving communication with tourists, we contribute to developing their happiness before, during, and after the experience and the choice for an experience that enables refreshment, meaningfulness, and novelty (Filep & Deery, 2010).

The emotional intensity attached to the remembrance of experiences was associated mainly with refreshment, meaningfulness, and novelty. As the literature focuses on, meaning is

an individual concept since each person evaluates the experience differently and prepares it according to their needs, expectations, and values. Above all, experience is an individual phenomenon; individuals associate different meanings to the experience, and different types of experiences have different outcomes (Jiang, 2017). Touristic instances such as hotels, marketing industries, and touristic companies can enhance their potential through the adaptation of the activities and policies they adopt to tourists' needs by enabling the personalisation of the experience, allowing tourists to engage in meaningful personal experiences that lead to positive emotional outcomes (Garcês et al., 2019).

Finally, the marketing industry could benefit from the development of appealing and convincing advertisements in different social media channels (e.g., commercials, Facebook, Instagram) and include the potential of the destination as one that enables involvement in various activities that promote emotional intensity through refreshed, meaningful, and novel activities (Park & Ahn, 2022; Seligman, 2011).

### *7.6.3. Limitations and future guidelines*

The study revealed some limitations, which can be further planned as future research guidelines.

Related to the sample, the participants chosen for this study were fluent in Portuguese. It would be interesting to replicate this study with different sample characteristics and cultures.

The results from the multicollinearity revealed that some items are above the threshold of 5, suggesting that they might produce very similar information and, thus, assess the same outcome (Hair et al., 2022). As such, future studies should replicate the study with different Portuguese tourists to understand if the items are being interpreted as equal and, if so, provide a strategy to solve the problem.

As a result of the abovementioned suggestion, the psychometric properties of the translated versions of the instruments must be privileged in future studies to increase the scientific criterion and availability of the instruments to assess the phenomena they were developed to analyse in the first place.

Then, considering the results obtained and the need to innovate tourism experiences, it could be interesting to complement this study with a qualitative approach through the development of a focus group to deepen our understanding of how emotional intensity is felt in all its dimensions and improve our knowledge on the specific elements tourists find attractive, concerning novel, refreshed, and meaningful activities. Future studies could also introduce a longitudinal approach to the present results, investigating how emotional intensity and meaning

evolve with time. For example, in periods of 1 month, 6 months, and 1 year after the experience to explore the impact of temporal distance on emotional memory intensity.

Moreover, patronised instruments were needed to assess the dimensions of social relationships and their role in the engagement in a determined experience and meaning-making process. Literature highlights that the social component might be one of the primary motivations to engage in a determined tourist experience, related to the improvement of established relationships and the involvement in new ones (Crompton, 1979). Therefore, future guidelines could explore this dimension and its role in attributing meaning to tourism experiences and the emotional impact of sharing the same experience with someone close.

Tourism studies tend to classify the management of emotions into two major categories: positive and negative. Several studies have been interested in the influence of positive and negative affect before a tourist trip, and the results have been coherent in showing that people tend to repeat enjoyable experiences and avoid negative ones (e.g., Garcês et al., 2020; Jiang, 2017; Ma et al., 2017; Vada et al., 2019). There is a lack of literature on how ambivalent emotions can generate meaning from experience (Zheng et al., 2020), considering that both positive and negative affects tend to decrease after exposure to some kinds of events, for example, in the dark tourism context (Belo & Gustavo, 2023). Moreover, the process of meaning-making decreases negative emotions and improves positive ones and life satisfaction (Fredrickson, 2001; Newman et al., 2014; Zheng et al., 2020). Future studies should explore the role of positive emotions in decreasing negative emotions and remembering memories associated with negative tourist experiences (Greenglass & Fiksenbaum, 2009).

Finally, results are based on theoretical models already solid in the literature. Future studies might include mediator (e.g., emotional engagement) and moderator variables (e.g., sociodemographic characteristics, personality traits) to explore if the model could be improved and if different tourists' profiles influence the relationship between emotional intensity and the meaning of the experiences.

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## 8. CHAPTER EIGHT

### **STUDY 7: THE ROLE OF MEANINGFUL TOURISM EXPERIENCES ON TOURISTS' WELL-BEING, SUBJECTIVE HAPPINESS, AND LIFE SATISFACTION**

Câmara, E., Pocinho, M., Agapito, D., & Jesus, S. N. (2024). The role of meaningful tourism experiences on tourists' well-being, subjective happiness, and life satisfaction. *PLoS ONE* (submitted)

## **The role of meaningful tourism experiences on tourists' well-being, subjective happiness, and life satisfaction**

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## **The role of meaningful tourism experiences on tourists' well-being, subjective happiness, and life satisfaction**

**Abstract:** Well-being is the most desirable outcome for tourists, residents, and workers. On one hand, enables the pursuit of happiness, development of positive and negative emotions, the search for enjoyment, and pleasure; on the other hand, leads to excellence, using individuals' virtues and strengths to undertake the best choices and actions. Subjective well-being is an evaluation of a person's overall life, considering the combination of three factors: high frequency of satisfaction with life, strong prevalence of positive emotions, and low prevalence of negative emotions. The present study intends to understand how the meaning attached to tourism experiences influences general tourists' well-being, life satisfaction, and subjective happiness. The sample comprises 308 subjects. Data was analysed with SMART-PLS4. The results show good psychometric qualities concerning the reliability of the indicators, constructs' reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity. The determination coefficients ( $R^2$ ) showed that the indicators subjective happiness, emotional intensity, meaningfulness, and refreshment had the higher substantial effects and thus, better explain the variance of the meaning attached to the experiences. Results also showed that higher levels of tourists' well-being are associated with experiences that promote emotional intensity, meaningfulness, refreshment, and novelty. On the other hand, a better assessment of individuals' life satisfaction and happiness are associated with experiences that promote involvement, hedonism, and knowledge. Thus, new guidelines that promote unique, refreshed, and meaningful experiences can enable tourists to emotionally recall them as intense, powerful, and worthwhile repeating.

**Key-words:** Emotions; Life Satisfaction; Meaningful tourism experiences; Subjective happiness; Well-being

## **8.1. Introduction**

Travelling is an opportunity to grow, to learn, to change. Tourism experiences represent a change in the routine through the engagement in something new. Therefore, it is possible to have the opportunity to see new places and increase personal consciousness about the self. Some crucial variables can mediate this process concerning their role in providing individuals with the best experiences (e.g., the host communities, accommodations, gastronomy, the place, and others). This process usually leads individuals to a personal reflection, not only about the trip itself but also of themselves, since those experiences can change us based on the emotional impact attached to them (Brown, 2013). So, tourism experiences are more than just routine, daily experiences: they have the strong potential to become extraordinary, pure, peak, cathartic, meaningful and memorable (Kirillova et al., 2017b).

When looking for meaning and a life purpose through travel, people consider three aspects: a search for self and identity, self-empowerment, and connectedness with others. The combination of these three is a crucial insight into the way people withdraw meaning from the things they do (Laing & Frost, 2017; Willson et al., 2013; Wang, 2020). Likewise, travel can arouse new meanings and satisfaction needs and develop positive experiences (Reisinger, 2015). Thus, it is essential to investigate the role of the tourist experience in individuals' development to enhance their personal development and meet their characteristics.

The theoretical basis of this work is supported by the foundations of positive psychology, which is approached with a multidisciplinary view (Garcês et al., 2020a). It is responsible for studying determinant topics such as humour, positive emotions, happiness and well-being, flow, kindness, gratitude, love, and other topics surrounding desirable aspects of human life (Filep, 2016).

Considering the different stages involved in designing an experience and the different outcomes related to tourists' well-being, life satisfaction, and subjective happiness in a general way, the following paragraphs explore how the constructs of meaningful experiences, well-being, life satisfaction, and subjective happiness were approached in this study, which generally aims understand how the meaning attached to tourism experiences influences general tourists' well-being, life satisfaction, and subjective happiness.

## **8.2. Literature review**

### *8.2.1. Meaningful tourism experiences*

A meaningful experience is a sum of the experience, its evaluation, and its contextual and environmental contingencies (Duerden et al., 2018). These kinds of experiences involve emotion and knowledge since the way we live the experience can be emotionally intense and associated with the discovery of something new, not just from the experience itself but how we deal with the impact of that experience. Filep (2014) defined meaningful experiences as experiences characterised by pleasure and how personally meaningful tourists found their holiday activities. So, more than the experience itself, the interpretation of the impact of the experience is what makes that experience meaningful. Through meaningful experiences, individuals feel proud due to overcoming personal challenges, self-sufficiency in dealing and negotiating with those plans, and expressing identity (Packer & Gill, 2017).

Kim *et al.* (2012) are pioneers in studying tourism experiences with meaning associated with strong and intense memorability. They developed a model of a tourism experience promoter of well-being, which was the basis for assessing the concept in this study. It is a holistic and iterative model that emphasises determined components of the experience, namely, the search for pleasure and enjoyment, refreshment and renewal, the social dimension of experience, meaning, happiness and well-being, the search for something out of the ordinary, commitment and innovation (Kim et al., 2012).

The search for meaning and life purpose through travel involves three aspects: the search for self and identity, self-empowerment, and connectedness with other citizens (Willson et al., 2013; Wang, 2020). Likewise, travel can encourage development and self-growth related to new meanings, satisfying needs, and developing authentic experiences (Reisinger, 2015). All in all, interpreting an experience is the crucial element that turns it into a meaningful experience (Duerden et al., 2018; Filep, 2014; Fredrickson, 2001; Packer & Gill, 2017).

In tourism, meaningful experiences are characterised by pleasure and how personally meaningful tourists find their holiday activities (Filep, 2014), leading to solid emotions, relevant insights, significant opinions and memories, and knowledge (Duerden et al., 2018).

Years later, Kim and colleagues (2022) emphasised the need to study different dimensions associated with the ones suggested by Kim and collaborators (2012) to analyse the meaning attached to the experiences. One of the dimensions proposed was emotional intensity, both when the experience is happening and in the evocation of the memory of that experience, joining two crucial outcomes of meaningful tourism experiences: emotional impact and memorability. So, emotional intensity is defined as the intensity of emotions experienced by an individual concerning tourism memory (Prayag et al., 2013). The emotions associated with the memories we create of our experiences interact with the emotional content of the memory and

the motivations that trigger the will to travel (Prayag et al., 2013), influencing future tourist behaviour (Kim et al., 2022). Thus, the study's foundation is the holistic thinking of an experience as a continuum between before, during, and after, and the emotional impact felt both during and after the experience occurs.

As the information above acknowledges, emotions and memorability are two interrelated concepts in tourism. The desire to engage in a future experience leads to the development of an autobiographical fantasy based on the memories and emotions experienced before. Throughout memory reconstruction, individuals focus on positive memories, elicit positive emotions, and reinforce the desire to travel (Skavronskaya et al., 2017). Due to its reminiscent characteristics, the memories of tourist experiences contribute to happiness and affect different social life domains (Morgan & Xu, 2009).

In sum, positive emotions lead to positive memories. Thus, the impact of tourism experiences on tourists' well-being will be higher if the experiences are characterised by moments of elicited positive emotions. The next chapter will approach well-being in tourism and how this construct is approached from two different perspectives.

### 8.2.2. *Tourists' well-being*

Applied to tourism, well-being is the most desirable outcome for tourists, residents, and workers (Garcês et al., 2018; Voigt, 2017), and one of the strongest predictors of the emotional bond tourists develop with a particular destination (Vada et al., 2020).

One of the most crucial well-being perspectives includes the search for meaning under the immediate outcomes of the experiences—hedonic well-being—versus a broader perspective related to long-term benefits—eudaemonic well-being (Packer & Gill, 2017; Voigt, 2017; Vada et al., 2020). On one hand, hedonic well-being is the immediate perspective of well-being related to the pursuit of happiness (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999; Packer & Gill, 2017; Voigt, 2017), the development of positive and negative emotions, the search for enjoyment, pleasure, fun, relaxation, escape, and sensory stimulation (Diener et al., 2010; Packer & Gill, 2017; Voigt, 2017; Watson et al., 1988; Waterman, 1993). On the other hand, eudaemonic well-being is characterised by excellence, using individuals' virtues and strengths to undertake the best choices and actions (Laing & Frost, 2017).

Comparing both dimensions, hedonia represents an orientation to the present regarding regulating emotions and affective outcomes, while eudaimonia focuses on the future. Both relate to the positive affect and decreasing distress, significance, appreciation, and long-term outcomes (Seligman, 2011).

Another perspective emerges with Seligman (2011), who defends that there are other elements that, together with the previous, provide a more complete definition of well-being. These elements are positive emotions (e.g., amusement, awe, compassion, contentment, gratitude, hope, interest, joy, love, and pride); engagement (lead to flow experiences when individuals' highest strengths match the challenges); relationships (develop strong ties is a skill that leads to individuals' well-being and health improvement); meaning (belong and believe in something bigger than oneself); and accomplishment (achievement, mastery, competence).

The outcomes of PERMA model are associated with self-acceptance, positive relations with other people, personal growth, and life purpose (Huta & Waterman, 2014; Laing & Frost, 2017b; Seligman, 2011).

Years later, Garcês and colleagues (2017) developed the HOPE (Human Optimal Psychological Experience Model) model under the foundations of PERMA, using the interconnection of three fundamental processes for positive psychology: creativity, optimism, and spirituality. As for creativity, it comes straight from the virtue of "wisdom and knowledge" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), and relates to new and unique situations, as well as with the innovation in products and experiences that meet tourists' motivations and needs and also contributes to their growth (Garcês et al., 2018) by achieving new and creative points of view from the situations (Pocinho & Garcês, 2019). Optimism refers to the capacity to overcome situations perceived as unpleasant and the predisposition to learn from them (Pocinho & Garcês, 2019). Spirituality relates to how people seek meaning and life purposes, their quest for experiences of transcendence and connectedness, and how they subjectively live through their travel (Pocinho & Garcês, 2019; Willson et al., 2013). To the authors of this model, tourists' creativity, optimism, and spirituality influence their well-being and are influenced by the activities and experiences they have at the destination (Garcês et al., 2017).

Finally, subjective well-being is another well-established perspective in tourism and well-being studies that enables a higher understanding of how individuals drive meaning from their experiences (Diener, 1984; Vada et al., 2020).

### 8.2.3. *Subjective well-being*

As a definition, subjective well-being respects individuals' overall perception of satisfaction with their long-term lives and immediate emotions. It results from individuals' mastery and progress considering their goals, strengths, values, personality, activities, and social relationships (Diener, 1984). From this point of view, subjective well-being is an evaluation of a person's life, considering their cognitive state in different life domains and the

presence of positive and negative emotions or the absence of the last ones. It results from individuals' mastery and progress considering their goals, strengths, values, personality, activities, and social relationships.

Subjective well-being has three main characteristics. First, it is subjective: its evaluation depends on individuals' own experience. Second, it involves positive measures: it is not just concerned with the absence of negative factors but also with the inclusion of positive criteria and the relationship between them. Finally, it includes an overall assessment of all aspects of individuals' lives (Diener, 1984).

Considering the causes of subjective well-being, four main causes lead to a general perception of subjective well-being: a) subjective satisfaction, associated with other personal values such as self-esteem, family life, and satisfaction with work and health; b) income, since wealthier individuals seem to rate higher levels of happiness than poor people; c) social interaction, since happier individuals are more sociable, being this a bidirectional relationship; and d) activities, considering that active involvement in activities is associated with higher levels of happiness, depending on the degree of engagement with the activity, and individuals' personality (Diener, 1984).

In this study, the perspective of Diener *et al.* (2003), in which subjective well-being is an evaluation of a person's overall life, considering the combination of three factors: high frequency of satisfaction with life (Cognitive component), substantial prevalence of positive emotions, and low prevalence of negative emotions (Affective component). The following sub-chapters explore both approaches and how they interrelate.

#### 8.2.3.1. Cognitive approach: Life satisfaction

Life satisfaction corresponds to the cognitive component of the Subjective Well-being approach, a construct highly investigated in Positive Psychology (Antaramian, 2017; Barrantes-Brais & Ureña-Bonilla, 2015; Oliveira *et al.*, 2017).

Life satisfaction refers to the perceived contentment of different dimensions of their lives or their general evaluation. As such, it corresponds to a subjective assessment that interprets the enthusiasm/pleasure or suffering those individuals have or feel concerning their way of living (Diener *et al.*, 2009).

Life satisfaction appears to be a significant construct in tourism, considering the perspective it gives to the general things that make people happy. However, tourism research engages in a more profound understanding of a powerful single tourist event over the broader

reflection on tourist experiences (Filep, 2016). Thus, here lies another difficulty that Filep (2016) addresses in the use of SWB theory to approach tourists' happiness: the problem with explaining these influential tourists' moments individually, meaning that life satisfaction may be too generic to get a complete understanding of tourist happiness, evaluations of engagement and meaning to capture the different elements.

#### 8.2.3.2. Emotional Approach: Subjective Happiness

Positive psychology has been vital in the study of happiness (Pais-Ribeiro, 2012). The pioneers in the study of happiness are Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999), who focus on the importance of a subjective approach to studying happiness, defining this process as the self-assessment of how happy or unhappy one person is.

Seligman (2011) defines happiness as a psychological state where individuals experience different sensations, such as positive emotions and a strong engagement in the activities and derive a sense of great purpose for those activities (Seligman, 2002).

Tourism is, by definition, an activity that has become more and more associated with health and well-being. Tourists are increasingly thirsty for satisfying and happy tourist experiences to give meaning and purpose to their lives. Tourist happiness involves distinct elements, such as positive emotions, meaning, and engagement, because if tourists construct their evaluations of the experiences based on these three elements, they experience happiness during their experience (Filep & Deery, 2010).

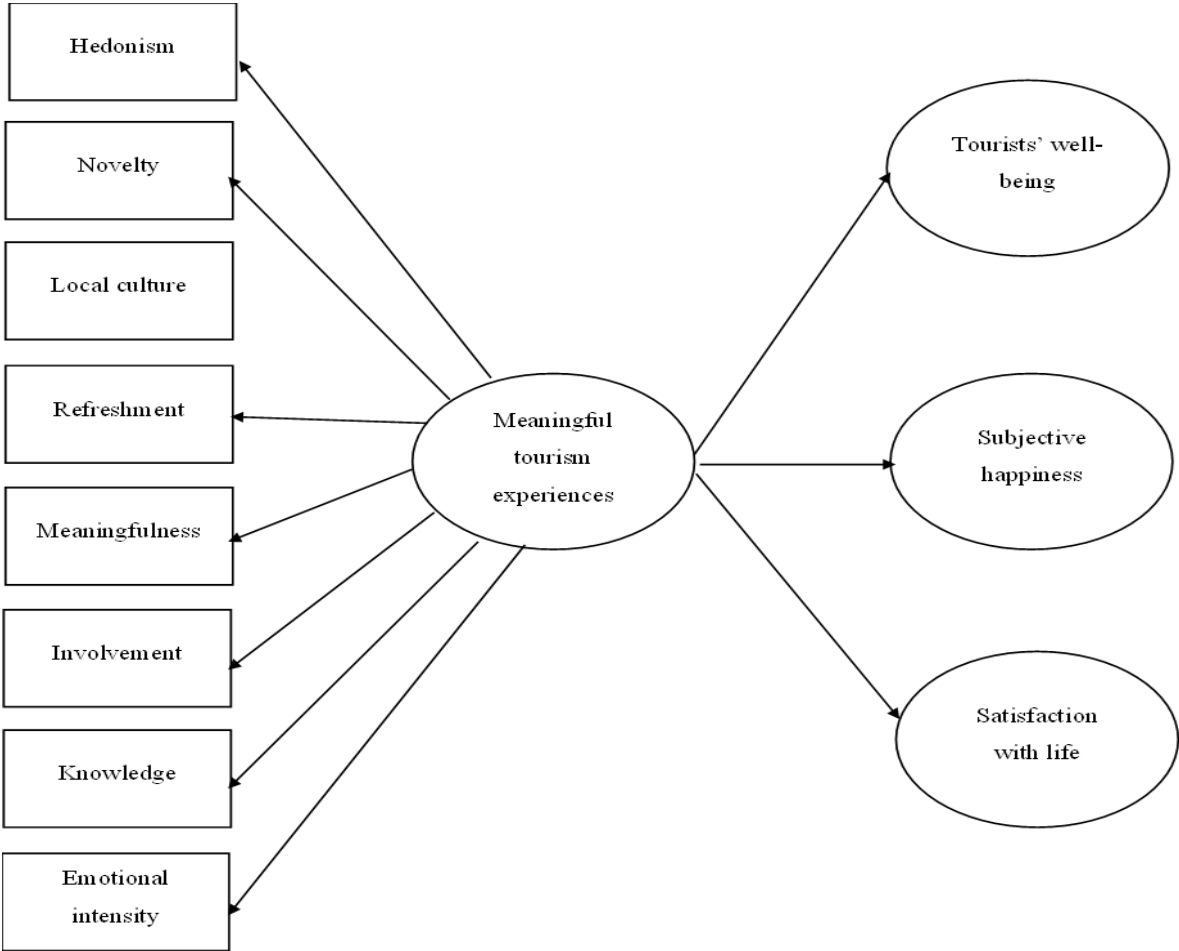
Happiness can be defined desirably, considering external criteria, such as virtue or holiness. Individuals seek positive sensations about what is desirable; being that desirable does not mean a happy state; instead, it means that eudaimonia relates to living a virtuous life, which leads to feelings of desirability and, coherently, happiness. So, happiness depends on the framework of the observer rather than the actor's subjective judgment. People experience more positive and pleasant emotions during a certain period of their lives and are particularly predisposed to those same emotions during the same period (Diener, 1984).

### 8.3. Methods

#### 8.3.1. Objectives

This study intends to understand how the meaning attached to tourism experiences influences general tourists' well-being, life satisfaction, and subjective happiness. Specifically, it is intended to analyse if determined dimensions of the meaningful tourism experience emerge more frequently, depending on their impact on individuals' well-being, life satisfaction, and subjective happiness. Figure 8.1 shows the hypothetical model composed of two latent variables and 8 indicators conducted for the statistical analysis.

**Figure 8.3.** Theoretical model of analysis



8.3.2. Instruments

8.3.2.1. Meaningful tourism experience.

To assess meaningful tourism experiences, two instruments were used, both adapted and validated for the Portuguese population (Câmara et al., 2023):

- e) Memorable Tourism Experience Scale (Kim et al., 2012) comprises 24 items grouped into seven dimensions. The internal consistency indices of the original scale were considered good ( $.81 < \alpha < .90$ ), demonstrating good internal consistency indices (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). The scale accesses seven dimensions: a) hedonism (e.g., “I was thrilled about having a new experience”); b) novelty (e.g., “I experienced something new”); c) local culture (e.g., “I closely experienced the local culture”); d) refreshment (e.g., “It was a liberating experience”); e) meaningfulness (e.g., “I did something meaningful”); f) involvement (e.g., “I was interested in the main activities of this tourism experience”); g) knowledge (e.g., “I learnt about a new culture”).
- f) "Emotional intensity" dimension of the Tourism Memory Characteristics Scale (Kim et al., 2022). On the original scale, the internal consistency value was higher than .70 and, thus, considered good (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). This dimension comprises five items that analyse the intensity of the emotions experienced at the time of the experience and when it is evoked (e.g., “While remembering this trip now, my feelings are very intense”).

#### 8.3.2.2. Tourist Well-Being Scale.

- g) The Tourist Well-being Scale is a self-assessment instrument developed by Garcês and collaborators (2018), based on the dimensions of both PERMA and HOPE models. The internal consistency indices of the original scale were considered good ( $\alpha = .874$ ), demonstrating good internal consistency indices (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). This unifactorial scale intends to evaluate tourism well-being in different destinations and comprises 8 items, each one related to one dimension: a) optimism (“I was able to see the positive side of the less agreeable situations that occurred”); b) meaning (“I found out new ways of being that gave meaning to aspects of my life”); c) positive emotions (“I had lots of fun”); d) creativity (“I faced this experience as a unique/original opportunity”); e) engagement (“I engaged in the community activities”); f) accomplishment (“This experience was a dream come true”); g) spirituality (“I experienced a connection/relationship with something higher than myself”); h) positive relationships (“I felt good in the relationship I developed with new people”). The responses follow a 7-point Likert Scale where 1= Totally Disagree and 7= Totally agree.

#### 8.3.2.3. Satisfaction With Life Scale.

- h) The satisfaction with life scale (SWLS) was developed originally by Diener and collaborators (1985), with the intent to assess satisfaction with the respondents' life. The version used in this study was the Portuguese one provided by Simões (1992), which adapted and validated the scale with a sample composed of college students and general adult populations. The scale comprises five self-assessment items concerning different situations described in each item (for example, have a life close to the ideal, do not change anything in individuals' life), and the responses follow a 5-point Likert scale, where 1= Totally Disagree and 5= Totally agree. The Portuguese version maintains the unifactorial structure and presents good internal and convergent consistency.

#### 8.3.2.4. Subjective Happiness Scale.

- i) The Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1997) was developed to approach happiness with a subjectivist approach. The scale assesses subjective happiness and includes four items. On the first two, individuals are invited to compare themselves in an absolute way (item 1: "In general, I consider myself:") and with their peers (Item 2: "Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself:"). The response to these items follow a seven-point likert scale, where 1 = Not a very happy person (item 1) or Less happy (item 2), and 7 = "A very happy person (item 1), or More happy (item 2). Items 3 and 4 invite individuals to think about the extension to which they identify with the characterization of happiness ("Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization describe you?") and unhappiness ("Some people are generally not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterisation describe you?"). For both items, the 7-point Likert scale varies between 1= Not at all and 7= A great deal. Finally, the original version obtains internal consistency indices between .79 and .94. In this study, the Portuguese version was used (Pais-Ribeiro, 2012), with similar values concerning internal consistency ( $\alpha = .76$ ).

### 8.3.3. *Sample*

The sample of this study followed a non-random convenience criterion (Almeida, 2003), composed of Portuguese adults who had had a meaningful tourism experience in the last few months. The criterion was adopted because several studies on the impact of tourism experience have emerged using a general sample associated with promising results (e.g., Park & Ahn, 2022; Wilson & Harris, 2006).

### 8.3.4. *Procedures*

Data collection began in January 2023 and continued until August 2023.

The process of adaptation and validation of the instruments for the Portuguese culture followed these procedures: a) evaluation and approval of the proposal of adaptation and validation of the questionnaire by the Scientific Commission of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of the University of Algarve, with the reference of acceptance no. EDOC/2021/26517 b) direct translation of the items; c) evaluation of the translation by the team; d) pretest with 12 participants with the same characteristics as the general sample; e) clarification of the vocabulary of some of the items; f) evaluation and approval by the Personal Data Protection Team; g) availability of the online questionnaire through the EUSurvey platform.

Data was introduced and codified in the software Statistical Package for Social Sciences – SPSS (version 29.0), in which descriptive statistics was undertaken to group the sample by common characteristics (Field, 2009). The analysis of the relationship between motivations and meaningful tourism experiences was undertaken in the software SMARTPLS 4 to perform a structural equation model with a partial least squares (PLS-SEM) approach.

#### 8.3.4.1. *Statistical procedures*

A Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM) is a statistical procedure that estimates the relationships between direct and indirect variables and between these variables and their indicators. It comprises two analyses, one for each type of model: a) Measurement model that analyses the relationship between the latent variable and its indicators using validity and reliability analysis of each of the measures of the model; b) Structural model through the estimation of the coefficients between the constructs and its significance, predictive power of the model and correlations between variables (Hulland, 1999).

This study assessed two latent variables - Motivations and Meaningful Tourism Experience – through 15 constructs (seven for motivations and eight for meaningful tourism experiences), each measured by multiple indicators. To specify the model, the theoretical models surrounding the latent variables must be explained (Hair et al., 2022).

Kessler and colleagues (2022) followed several wellness tourism motivation models before establishing their model on the motivations behind the choice for wellness tourism activities. Using a grounded theory approach, the authors developed a theoretical model that sums the motivations that lead tourists to invest in determined activities as being related to seven dimensions: a) Movement & Fitness; b) Healthy Food & Diet; c) Meditation & Mindfulness; d) Rest & Relaxation; e) Learn about Wellness; f) Self-care; g) Nature & Disconnect.

Meaningful tourism experience is an underexplored concept in the literature, frequently used as a synonym for memorable, transformational, extraordinary, or authentic experiences (Câmara et al., 2023). Thus, there is a lack of instruments to assess this specific phenomenon. In a systematic literature review, Câmara and collaborators (2023) concluded that meaning can be attached to personal, emotional, relational, and well-being dimensions. It is worth noting that Kim and colleagues (2012) assessed some of these dimensions on their Memorable Tourism Experience Scale (MTEs), justifying the use of this scale to measure the dimensions associated with meaningful tourism experiences. The authors define a memorable tourism experience (MTE) as a "(...) "tourism experience remembered and recalled after the event has occurred" (Kim et al., 2012, p. 4). An MTE is constructed based on a tourist's assessment of their experience and consolidates and reinforces the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience (Kim et al., 2012). Therefore, memorability is likely to contribute to meaningfulness as people reflect on and construct meanings around the experiences they remember (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Thus, this model is comprised of seven dimensions: a) hedonism, b) novelty, c) local culture, d) refreshment, e) meaningfulness, f) involvement, and g) knowledge.

Years later, Kim and colleagues (2022) considered that some dimensions could be added to the previous ones and, thus, developed the Tourism Memory Characteristics Scale under the assumption that recalling tourism experiences is a decisive factor in tourists' future behaviour and decision-making when choosing destinations. One of those dimensions is called *emotional intensity* and is defined as the intensity of emotions experienced by an individual concerning tourism memory (Prayag et al., 2013). The emotions associated with the memories we create

of our experiences interact with the emotional content of the memory and the motivations that trigger the will to travel (Prayag et al., 2013).

The survey has three parts: a) demographic information; b) characteristics of a meaningful tourist experience the participants had had in the last few months, in terms of the duration of the trip, the people whom they travelled with and the activities in which they engaged; c) the questionnaire itself where participants were asked about their motivations to engage on that specific trip and their perception and satisfaction with it. Regarding motivations, participants rated the questions using a 7-point Likert scale, in which 1 meant "Not at all important" and 7 "very important". In the case of a meaningful tourist experience, participants also used a 7-point Likert scale, in which 1 represented "I have not experienced at all" and 7 represented "I have experienced very much". In both cases, higher scores were associated with higher levels of agreement with a particular statement.

SPSS made the outlier diagnosis. The results showed that the data has no outliers. Additionally, considering the need to guarantee the normality of the data, we ran a skewness and kurtosis analysis with SPSS. All values must be within -2 and 2 to be considered normal. The results confirm that the data follows a normal distribution, considering that all skewness and kurtosis values were within these values (Hair et al., 2022).

## 8.4. Results

### 8.4.1. Descriptive statistics

**Table 8.1.** Sample description and characteristics

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Masculine	72	23.4%
	Feminine	235	76.3%
<b>Age</b>	Under 28 years old (inclusive)	156	50.6%
	Above 28 years old	152	49.4%
<b>Current Occupation</b>	Student	107	34.7%
	Employed	113	36.7%
	Student and employed	76	24.7%
	Unemployed	6	1.9%
	Retired	6	1.9%
<b>Nationality</b>	Portuguese	273	88.6%
	Others (e.g., Brazilian)	35	11.4%
<b>Country of residence</b>	Portugal	292	94.8%
	Others (e.g., Brazil, Spain, England)	16	5.2%

As seen in table 8.1, the sample comprises 308 Portuguese tourists, mainly female (76.3%), and Portuguese nationality prevails (88.6%). Concerning the occupation, most of the

sample were employed (36.7%). Participants' ages range from 17 to 82 years old, and the majority are less than 28 (50.6%). Regarding the destinations mentioned as the most significant ones visited in the last few months, 43.2% were European destinations; Portuguese destinations were highlighted as the most significant (22.8%). The participants travelled mainly to family and friends (85.8%), reporting that it was the first time they travelled to the mentioned destination (64.9%). Finally, the types of tourism practised were mainly related to cultural and urban tourism (40.4%).

#### 8.4.2. PLS-SEM Model

##### 8.4.2.1. Measurement model

The outer loadings, composite reliability ( $\rho_a$  and  $\rho_c$ ), Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2022) will be thoroughly analysed throughout the results.

The Outer loadings refer to the extent to which the indicators assess the construct they were designed to access ( $\lambda$ ). The ideal value must exceed .707, but values higher than .06 are acceptable and help explain the variation in the construct they were designed to access (Hair et al., 2018). Concerning the results obtained, the individual reliability values varied between -.099 (Subjective Happiness – “*Some people are generally not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterization describe you?*”) and .954 (Emotional intensity – “*My emotions are really intense concerning this trip*”).

The internal consistency was assessed with three criteria: Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), Joreskog composite reliability ( $\rho_c$ ), and Dijkstra-Henseler composite reliability ( $\rho_a$ ). The accepted values for exploratory studies are from .6 to .7, and the good values are between .7 and .9 (Hair et al., 2022).

As for the convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted criterion (AVE) was analysed. Values higher than .05 are considered ideal (Hair et al., 2022)

Table 8.2 sums up the results of these four criteria.

**Table 8.2.** Internal consistency and convergent validity

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Chronbach's alpha</b>	<b>Dijkstra-Henseler (<math>\rho_a</math>)</b>	<b>Composite reliability Joreskog (<math>\rho_c</math>)</b>	<b>Average variance extracted (AVE)</b>
Tourists' well-being	0.847	0.852	0.882	0.483
Subjective Happiness	0.644	0.877	0.807	0.602
Hedonism	0.878	0.884	0.911	0.674
Novelty	0.863	0.875	0.907	0.711
Knowledge	0.682	0.690	0.863	0.758
Satisfaction with life	0.923	0.928	0.943	0.767
Involvement	0.864	0.874	0.917	0.786
Refreshment	0.918	0.923	0.942	0.803
Local culture	0.880	0.890	0.926	0.806
Meaningfulness	0.897	0.896	0.936	0.830
Emotional intensity	0.962	0.962	0.970	0.867

All internal consistency values are above the ones defended in the literature (Hair et al., 2018, 2022). The dimension "emotional intensity" is the one with the highest value of internal consistency ( $\alpha = .962$ ;  $\rho_a = .962$ ;  $\rho_c = .970$ ), and the dimension with the lowest value was "Subjective Happiness" ( $\alpha = .644$ ;  $\rho_a = .877$ ;  $\rho_c = .807$ ).

The values of convergent validity varied between .483 (Tourists' well-being) and .867 (emotional intensity), suggesting that all reflective constructs have high convergent validity.

The discriminant validity assures that the values of a construct are significantly different from the other constructs (Hulland, 1999). The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) concerns calculating the average value of the correlation of the items of all constructs concerning the mean of the correlation of the items that measure a given construct. It uses 0.85 as the relevant threshold level, and some studies report the possibility of a threshold level of .90 (e.g., Hair et al., 2022).

**Table 8.3.** Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio Matrix

	Hedonism	Novelty	Local culture	Refreshment	Meaningfulness	Involvement	Knowledge	Emotional intensity	Tourists' well-being	Subjective happiness	Satisfaction with life
Novelty	.779										
Local culture	.586	.509									
Refreshment	.742	.738	.596								
Meaningfulness	.667	.698	.480	.789							
Involvement	.872	.664	.510	.598	.568						
Knowledge	.802	.741	.630	.830	.775	.813					
Emotional Intensity	.531	.576	.400	.720	.690	.399	.557				
Tourists' well-being	.754	.755	.618	.781	.835	.667	.867	.811			
Subjective Happiness	.382	.247	.303	.312	.341	.353	.361	.304	.451		
Satisfaction with Life	.361	.299	.242	.251	.333	.372	.375	.267	.428	.888	

As seen in Table 8.3, all the values were below the threshold, revealing discriminant validity. The next step is to examine if the HTMT values are significantly different from the threshold values, using the technique of bootstrapping to check the bootstrap confidence intervals and explore if they are significantly lower than the threshold values of .85 and .90, with a probability of error of 5% (Hair et al., 2022). After running this test, the results in the 95% column are significantly lower than 0.90. To summarise, the bootstrap confidence interval results of the HTMT criterion also demonstrate the discriminant validity of the constructs.

#### 8.4.2.2. Structural model

The structural model begins by assessing collinearity issues through all predictor constructs' variance inflation factor (VIF) values. The ideal value must be below 3.3 (Hair et al., 2022). Zach and collaborators (2019) defended that values below 1 are not correlated, and the ones below 5 have a moderated, but not critical, correlation.

The results suggest that three dimensions present several items with VIF above the threshold defended by Zach *et al.* (2019), as following:

- c) “Emotional intensity”
  - a. “This memory evokes powerful emotions”: VIF = 5.046
  - b. “This memory evokes strong emotions in me”: VIF = 5.397
  - c. “My emotions related to this trip are very intense”: VIF = 7.425
  - d. “While remembering this trip now, my feelings are very intense”: VIF = 5.787
- d) “Meaningfulness”
  - a. “I did something meaningful”: VIF = 5.684
  - b. “I did something important”: VIF = 6.115
- e) “Satisfaction with life”
  - a. “I am satisfied with my life”: VIF = 5.347

The previous results might suggest that those items produce very similar information, meaning the information is not distinct. The other values were below the threshold of 5, allowing us to acknowledge that collinearity among the predictor constructs is not critical in the structural model since all constructs produce unique and independent information.

Following Hair and collaborators' (2022) guidelines, the path coefficient magnitudes were assessed to verify the significance and relevance of the structural model relationships. The

values must be within -1 and 1, being that the closest to the value 0 means the weaker, and close to the edges means a strong correlation (positive or negative). To verify the significance of these relationships, the bootstrapping procedure was adopted (Efron & Gong, 1983). The focus was placed on the 95% bootstrap confidence interval obtained by the percentile approach with bias correction, assuming a significance level of 5%. Table 8.4 summarises the path coefficient estimates, t-values, p-values, and confidence intervals.

**Table 8.4.** Bootstrapping values of the path coefficient (with bias correction)

Relation	Path coefficients	<i>T values</i>	<i>p values</i>	95% confidence intervals (with bias correction)	Significance (p < .05)?
Tourists' well-being-Knowledge	0.644	14.917	0.000	[.546;717]	Yes
Tourists' well-being-Local culture	0.525	9.502	0.000	[.411;627]	Yes
Tourists' well-being-Refreshment	0.716	22.111	0.000	[.645;773]	Yes
Tourists' well-being-Involvement	0.539	10.830	0.000	[.435;629]	Yes
Tourists' well-being-Hedonism	0.645	17.767	0.000	[.563;706]	Yes
Tourists' well-being-Emotional intensity	0.748	23.471	0.000	[.677;805]	Yes
Tourists' well-being-Novelty	0.672	15.630	0.000	[.575;746]	Yes
Tourists' well-being-Life satisfaction	0.388	7.749	0.000	[.208;475]	Yes
Tourists' well-being-Meaningfulness	0.724	21.377	0.000	[.649;782]	Yes
Life satisfaction–Subjective happiness	0.744	21.043	0.000	[.669;808]	Yes
Subjective happiness-Novelty	-0.180	2.780	0.005	[-.311;-.052]	Yes
Subjective happiness-Novelty	0.142	2.286	0.022	[.020;269]	Yes
Subjective happiness–Local culture	0.144	1.979	0.048	[.002;281]	Yes

All relationships found after the bootstrapping procedure were significant, allowing us to establish some crucial guidelines for promoting meaningful tourism experiences considering its impact on the promotion of well-being, life satisfaction and subjective happiness.

One of the path coefficients is negative, namely, the one between subjective happiness and novelty (-.180; p=.05). This means that the relationship between novel activities and how individuals assess their happiness levels is negative and significant.

The next phase of assessing the structural model is the model's explanatory power (Hair et al., 2022). The R<sup>2</sup> values indicate a model's ability to predict new or future observations (Hair & Sarstedt, 2021). The values range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating a greater explanatory power. As a rule of thumb, R<sup>2</sup> values of .75, .50, and .25 can be interpreted as substantial, moderate, and weak (Henseler, 2017). Table 8.5 shows the results for the R<sup>2</sup> values of the endogenous latent variables.

**Table 8.5.**  $R^2$  values of the endogenous latent variables

	$R^2$	$R^2$ adjusted	$P$ -value
Subjective Happiness	0.582	0.580	0.000
Emotional intensity	0.542	0.538	0.000
Meaningfulness	0.538	0.533	0.000
Refreshment	0.498	0.493	0.000
Hedonism	0.459	0.454	0.000
Novelty	0.456	0.451	0.000
Knowledge	0.439	0.433	0.000
Involvement	0.358	0.352	0.000
Local culture	0.298	0.291	0.000
Life satisfaction	0.149	0.147	0.000

The determination coefficients show values ranging from .582 and .149 (Table 9.5). Specifically, the endogenous latent variables with higher explanatory power for the model were a) Subjective happiness ( $R^2 = .582$ ;  $p=.00$ ), b) Emotional intensity ( $R^2 = .542$ ;  $p=.00$ ), c) Meaningfulness ( $R^2 = .538$ ;  $p=.00$ ), and d) Refreshment ( $R^2 = .498$ ;  $p=.00$ ). These values mean that refreshment, meaningfulness, and novelty explain 58%, 54%, and 50% of the explanatory power of the model (respectively).

Next, the endogenous and corresponding exogenous constructs' effect sizes ( $f^2$ ) were assessed. Values higher than 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 depict small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively (Cohen, 1988). Table 8.6 shows the endogenous and exogenous constructs' large and medium effect sizes.

**Table 8.6.**  $f^2$  values of the endogenous latent variables

Combination	$f^2$
Life satisfaction – Subjective happiness	1.129
Tourists' well-being – Emotional intensity	1.035
Tourists' well-being - Meaningfulness	0.957
Tourists' well-being - Refreshment	0.863
Tourists' well-being - Novelty	0.697
Tourists' well-being - Hedonism	0.647
Tourists' well-being - Knowledge	0.622
Tourists' well-being - Involvement	0.382
Tourists' well-being – Local culture	0.332
Tourists' well-being – Life satisfaction	0.176

Concerning the large effect sizes, the following values were reported:

- a) Satisfaction with life and Subjective Happiness ( $f^2 = 1.129$ );
- b) Tourists' well-being and:

- (i) Emotional intensity ( $f^2 = 1.035$ );
- (ii) Meaningfulness ( $f^2 = 0.957$ );
- (iii) Refreshment ( $f^2 = 0.863$ );
- (iv) Novelty ( $f^2 = 0.697$ );
- (v) Hedonism ( $f^2 = 0.647$ );
- (vi) Knowledge ( $f^2 = 0.622$ );
- (vii) Involvement ( $f^2 = 0.382$ );
- (viii) Local culture ( $f^2 = 0.332$ );
- (ix) Satisfaction with life ( $f^2 = 0.176$ );

Compared to Table 8.5 (path coefficients through the bootstrap method), larger effect sizes were found in the same relationship with the higher path coefficients as Hair et al. (2022) mentioned.

Finally, one of the study's main objectives was to explore how meaningful experiences – in their different dimensions – influence individuals' well-being, subjective happiness, and life satisfaction. A correlation analysis was performed based on the Pearson coefficient ( $r$ ), with values ranging from -1 to 1. Cohen (1988) adopted the following threshold: a)  $0,10 < r < 0,29$  = weak correlation; b)  $0,30 < r < 0,49$  = moderate correlation; c)  $0,50 < r < 1,00$  = strong correlation. Table 8.7 denotes the values for the correlations.

**Table 8.7.** Pearson correlations between endogenous latent variables

	Tourists' well-being	Knowledge	Local culture	Refreshment	Involvement	Subjective Happiness	Hedonism	Emotional intensity	Novelty	Life satisfaction	Meaningfulness
Tourists' well-being	1.000										
Knowledge	0.661**	1.000									
Local culture	0.538**	0.489**	1.000								
Refreshment	0.702**	0.574**	0.540**	1.000							
Involvement	0.587**	0.623**	0.446**	0.537**	1.000						
Subjective happiness	0.334**	0.256**	0.249**	0.245**	0.277**	1.000					
Hedonism	0.667**	0.617**	0.518**	0.669**	0.757**	0.265**	1.000				
Emotional intensity	0.735**	0.453**	0.372**	0.678**	0.368**	0.237**	0.495**	1.000			
Novelty	0.676**	0.572**	0.449**	0.663**	0.579**	0.152*	0.687**	0.529**	1.000		
Life satisfaction	0.386**	0.296**	0.222**	0.233**	0.335**	0.762**	0.329**	0.252**	0.266**	1.000	
Meaningfulness	0.733**	0.610**	0.431**	0.719**	0.504**	0.270**	0.592**	0.643**	0.620**	0.303**	1.000

*Note:* \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$

Considering the main objective of the study, the results were organized in three categories: tourists' well-being; satisfaction with life; and subjective happiness.

a) Tourists' well-being:

- i. Emotional intensity ( $r = .736; p = .000$ );
- ii. Meaningfulness ( $r = .734; p = .000$ );
- iii. Refreshment ( $r = .703; p = .000$ );
- iv. Novelty ( $r = .676; p = .000$ );
- v. Hedonism ( $r = .667; p = .000$ );
- vi. Knowledge ( $r = .663; p = .000$ );
- vii. Involvement ( $r = .589; p = .000$ );
- viii. Local culture ( $r = .538; p = .000$ );

b) Life satisfaction:

- i. Subjective happiness ( $r = .763; p = .000$ );
- ii. Tourists' well-being ( $r = .386; p = .000$ );
- iii. Involvement ( $r = .335; p = .000$ );
- iv. Hedonism ( $r = .329; p = .000$ );
- v. Knowledge ( $r = .296; p = .000$ );

c) Subjective happiness

- i. Tourists' well-being ( $r = .334; p = .000$ );
- ii. Involvement ( $r = .277; p = .000$ );
- iii. Knowledge ( $r = .256; p = .000$ );

## 8.5. Discussion

This study intends to understand how the meaning attached to tourism experiences influences general tourists' well-being, life satisfaction, and subjective happiness. Specifically, it is intended to analyse if determined dimensions of the meaningful tourism experience emerge more frequently, depending on their impact on individuals' well-being, life satisfaction, and subjective happiness.

A first analysis enables the assumption that the measurement model has good psychometric quality regarding reliability and convergent and discriminant validities (Hair et al., 2020; Hulland, 1999).

Concerning the structural model, the coefficients have a significant magnitude that allows us to envision the relationship between the variables. Nevertheless, considering the

nature of the item involved, a result must be highlighted. Item 4 of the dimension “Subjective happiness” obtained a negative outer loading ( $\lambda = - 0.099$ ). Considering that subjective happiness is related to seeking desirable and positive sensations (Diener, 1984), and the scale to measure this dimension is composed of four items, in which item 4 is the only one which is inverted (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1997; Pais-Ribeiro, 2012), this might explain the negative value of the outer loading.

Next, multicollinearity analysis revealed that the dimensions “emotional intensity” and “meaningfulness” aggregate several items with values above the threshold suggested by Hair *et al.* (2022) and Zach (2019), suggesting that the information provided by those items might be very similar in terms of content. A possible interpretation might be related to the process of translation of the instrument to the Portuguese language, considering the words “powerful”, “intense”, “strong” (emotional intensity), “meaningful”, and “important” in Portuguese are seen as synonyms (Priberam, 2024) and, thus, might introduce some redundancy on the respondents.

This study intended to analyse the impact of meaningful experiences’ dimensions on tourists, satisfaction with life, subjective happiness, and well-being. The results from the path coefficients, effect sizes, and the correlations between the variables highlighted that larger effect sizes were found in the same relationship with the highest path coefficients and correlations (Hair *et al.*, 2022). Thus, the discussion on these values will follow the same rationale.

One of the most expressive and robust relationships was between life satisfaction and subjective happiness. Diener’s (1984) definition of subjective well-being suggests that this strong relationship is more than expected, considering that individuals’ satisfaction with their long-term lives and the immediate positive emotions associated is the centre of their evaluation on how determined experiences can impact their overall life satisfaction, enabling individuals to develop a robust set of positive emotions. Tourist happiness involves distinct elements, such as positive emotions, meaning, and engagement, because if tourists construct their evaluations of the experiences based on these three elements, they experience happiness during their experience (Filep & Deery, 2010).

Next, a positive moderate relationship was found between the variable tourists’ well-being and the variable’s satisfaction with life and subjective happiness (Cohen, 1988). This result is coherent with several other studies that highlight the pursuit of happiness (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999; Packer & Gill, 2017; Voigt, 2017), as well as the involvement in activities that enable the development of a life purpose, personal growth, and an overall

positive evaluation of individuals' lives (Huta & Waterman, 2014; Laing & Frost, 2017b; Seligman, 2011) as a vehicle for the improvement on individuals' immediate well-being

Additionally, satisfaction with life and subjective happiness showed the same correlation pattern with meaningful experiences' dimensions. Specifically, both variables correlated moderately with Involvement, Hedonism, and Knowledge. In other words, activities that stimulate pleasurable feelings, such as excitement, enjoyment, and happiness (Dunman & Mattila, 2005; Kim et al., 2012), enable tourists to improve their knowledge of the destination (Kim et al., 2012), and give them the ability to fulfil their willingness of visiting a place that they wanted to visit (Kim et al., 2012) are the ones that have the higher probability of impacting individuals' overall positive assessment of their lives and their subjective happiness (Deiner, 1984). These results corroborate Filep's (2014) work on positive tourism, as the author defends that meaningful experiences involve emotions, self-knowledge, and the ability to interpret the experience meaningfully. So, the interpretation of the impact of the experience is the key to improving their meaning and, as well as the impact on individuals' lives (Packer & Gill, 2017), which will influence how, generally, their satisfaction with life improves, as well as positive emotions. Thus, tourist happiness is a crucial outcome of tourist experiences, considering how it can be interpreted and assessed in different phases of the travel experience (Filep, 2016; Filep & Deery, 2010) once different stages relate to different happiness levels. Similarly, understanding the interpretations and meanings tourists give to their experiences makes it possible to understand the personal value each one gains from the holiday experiences (Filep & Deery, 2010).

Finally, the variable tourists' well-being showed a significant correlation with all the dimensions of meaningful tourism experiences, being the most expressive of the dimensions of emotional intensity, meaningfulness, refreshment, and novelty (correlations higher than .7). In other words, tourists' well-being is improved when they engage in activities where the emotional dimension is a central component, enabling tourists to attach strong meanings that are better recalled through time (Kim et al., 2022).

Tourist activities associated with higher emotional arousal – both during and after their occurrence – have a more substantial probability of influencing how individuals generally feel about the impact of the experience on their well-being. This result allows us to inquire that the more emotionally involved in the experience, the stronger and more lasting the meaning attached so that promoting the active participation of tourists in the construction of their own experience enables its personalisation (Duerden et al., 2018; Packer & Gill, 2017). Thus, tourists develop a sense of attachment to a determined destination when they live meaningful

and satisfying experiences, enhancing their meaning, purpose, and the power to evoke the emotions felt during that period (Vada et al., 2019).

Moreover, the activities that enable tourists to feel liberated, enjoy a sense of freedom, feel refreshed, and revitalised (Kim et al., 2012) are experiences that lead to a higher evaluation of well-being. As such, investing in activities that lead to self-development and self-esteem is associated with higher levels of positive emotions, engagement, involvement in positive relationships, a higher meaning, accomplishment, and higher levels of creativity, optimism, and spirituality (Garcês et al., 2017; Seligman, 2011), enhancing the probability of feeling physically and mentally refreshed (Hur & Shin, 2022; Kessler et al., 2020; Voigt, 2017).

In sum, the results are a vital tool to reflect on the theoretical and practical implications associated with promoting well-being, satisfaction with life, and subjective happiness through tourism experiences, with the probability of becoming intensively meaningful.

## **8.6. Conclusions**

The results of this study highlight a strong relationship between life satisfaction, subjective happiness, and tourists' well-being and the dimensions of involvement, knowledge, emotional intensity, meaningfulness, refreshment, and novelty. Tourism is, by definition, an activity that has become more and more associated with health and well-being. Tourists are becoming increasingly thirsty for satisfying and happy tourist experiences to give meaning and purpose to their lives (Filep & Deery, 2010). As such, some reflections arise on the theoretical and practical implications the results might suggest.

### *8.6.1. Theoretical implications*

As for the theoretical implications, this study was the first one in the literature to explore how specific dimensions of tourism and psychology can interrelate to understand how tourists' well-being, life satisfaction, and subjective happiness can be improved. It might be helpful to propose a theoretical framework which helps the scientific community to answer the continuous gap found in the literature concerning the understanding of what turns a tourist experience into a meaningful one: What are the elements underlying a meaningful experience? Which results are more expressive and, thus, lead to a higher meaning? (Câmara et al., 2023).

Tourists' happiness is an emotional state where tourists experience positive emotions, engage in activities concerning their preferences and goals, and develop meaning and purpose from their travel experiences. Happiness is defined as the outcome of fulfilling and satisfying

experiences and as the motivation to follow a determined choice about tourist experiences (Filep & Deery, 2010). As such, different groups might use the outcomes of this study to improve their awareness of meaningful experiences in terms of their primary outcomes.

First, higher educational and professional institutions in tourism and psychology might find essential guidelines in this study. One of them is to invest in educational tourism as a motivational movement for tourists to personalise their experience and, thus, improve their well-being, life satisfaction, and happiness (Tomasi et al., 2020).

Second, different tourism organisations could use the results of this study to promote not only the destinations and their touristic potential but also the activities they offer to reach tourists' expectations and contribute to the development of a higher meaning from the activities they engage in (Alves, 2023).

Third, the population in general – especially those about to engage in tourism experiences – might find helpful information on how to improve their overall life satisfaction and happiness by engaging in the dimensions that improve the meaning attached to the experiences they engage. In other words, analysing the motivations before travelling, including descriptions of ideal days at a holiday site, revealing the true intentions of tourists about what they expect to find, giving the opportunity to tourists to think about the emotions they value during a significant experience could be the decisive factor for an experience to become meaningful and, thus, improve their general life and positive emotions (Filep & Deery, 2010; Fredrickson, 2001).

#### *8.6.2. Practical implications*

The result of this study highlights that subjective happiness and life satisfaction are two interrelated dimensions associated with higher levels of involvement, hedonism, and knowledge, which give the tourism experience a more substantial meaning. In other words, experiences, as a multidimensional construct, must be faced as a subjective theme based on individuals' sensations and participation in activities, with very positive outcomes related to learning and acquisition of knowledge (Moscardo, 2009). As such, tourism industries might be able to use this information and promote a higher personalization of the experience, with the ultimate outcome of leading people to engage in activities that invoke a robust set of positive emotions (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013; Dunman & Mattila, 2005; Jiang, 2017) and improve the overall feeling of how individuals assess their satisfaction with life. By improving communication with tourists, we contribute to developing their happiness before, during, and

after the experience and the choice for an experience that enables refreshment, meaningfulness, and novelty (Filep & Deery, 2010).

Next, tourists' well-being strongly correlates with emotional intensity, meaningfulness, refreshment, and novelty. Novelty can lead to significant meanings (Garcês et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2012), and is a strong motivation for travelling. Also, studies suggest that novelty and emotional intensity are closely related and influence how some details about temporal, contextual, and emotional issues are remembered and reconstructed (Skavronskaya et al., 2020). Thus, a novel experience might strongly impact the affective image of the destination, ultimately influencing the meaning attached (Beerli & Martín, 2004), as well as how individuals positively assess their overall life domains. Destinations should invest in their touristic potential and engage in campaigns that promote what they have best. Specifically, tourist instances such as hotels, marketing industries, and touristic companies can enhance their potential through the adaptation of the activities and policies to tourists' needs by enabling the personalisation of the experience, allowing tourists to engage in meaningful personal experiences that lead to positive emotional outcomes (Garcês et al., 2019).

Finally, the marketing industry could benefit from the development of appealing and convincing advertisements in different social media channels (e.g., commercials, Facebook, Instagram) and include the potential of the destination as one that enables not only the development of a strong meaning *per se* but most important, that enable the transference of the positive outcomes of the experiences to individuals' general life and levels of happiness. (Park & Ahn, 2022; Seligman, 2011).

### 8.6.3. *Limitations and future guidelines*

The study revealed some limitations, which can be further planned as future research guidelines.

The results from the multicollinearity revealed that some items are above the threshold of 5, suggesting that they might produce very similar information and, thus, assess the same outcome (Hair et al., 2022). As such, future studies should replicate the study with different Portuguese tourists to understand if the items are being interpreted as equal and, if so, provide a strategy to solve the problem. Still, future studies might revise the translation and adaptation of the instrument, considering the similarity between Portuguese terms “intenso”, “forte”, “poderoso”, which can be redundant.

The psychometric properties of the translated versions of the instruments must be privileged in future studies to increase the scientific criterion and availability of the instruments to assess the phenomena they were developed to analyse in the first place.

The sampling method of the study followed a convenience criterion. The result was a sample comprising only Portuguese individuals, most under 28 years old (50,6%), which could represent an obstacle to the study's external validity and the replication of the results to other populations and cultural contexts. Future studies must use a more diverse sample of nationality, age, and socioeconomic profile and a probabilistic sample to increase the representativity.

Our study followed an exclusively quantitative approach. Future studies might improve the analysis by engaging in mixed-method analysis and introducing qualitative strategies, such as semi-structured interviews and focus groups, to obtain the participants' subjective perceptions and enable data triangulation. A qualitative approach might deepen our understanding of how meaningful experiences can improve individuals' general life dimensions and positive emotions, focusing on the outcomes of the experiences for individuals' general lives.

Moreover, some variables obtained low determination coefficients and, thus, low predictive power (e.g., satisfaction with life and local culture). A suggestion for future studies is to include contextual variables, such as demographic and cultural variables, that might influence the impact of meaningful tourism experiences (e.g., age, type of tourism practised).

Additionally, emotions were mentioned as one of the essential elements of tourism experiences (e.g., Aydin & Omuris, 2020; Chen et al., 2021; Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Gibson et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2014; Loureiro et al., 2019; Mendonca-Pedro et al., 2021; Nawijn, 2011; Sie et al., 2021; Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018; Wang et al., 2021). Nevertheless, it was not considered the emotional ambivalence in these experiences. For example, the negative result in the path coefficient analysis between novelty and subjective happiness might suggest that new experience does not always lead to positive emotions, which is a topic that can be explored in future investigations since ambivalent emotions can generate meaning from experience (Zheng et al., 2020).

Finally, the literature highlights that the social component might be one of the primary motivations to engage in a determined tourist experience related to improving established relationships and involvement in new ones (Crompton, 1979). Therefore, future guidelines could explore this dimension and its role in attributing meaning to tourism experiences and understand how it impacts the general assessment of life satisfaction and subjective happiness.

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## **9. CHAPTER NINE**

### **GENERAL CONCLUSIONS**

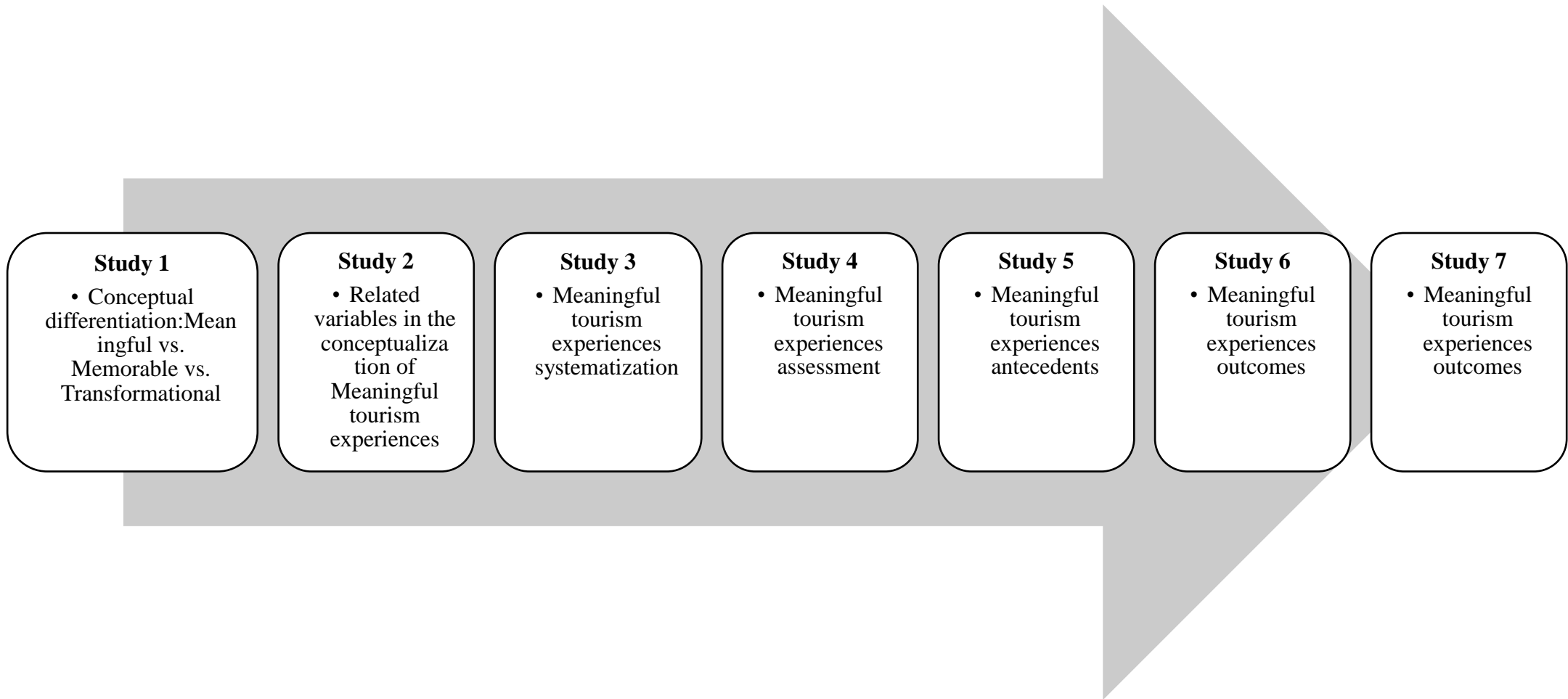
The proposal explores how meaningful experiences are created, which psychological mechanisms are involved as antecedents and outcomes, and how to promote these experiences on touristic destinations. Seven specific objectives were underlined to accomplish the general objective, and each was explored in a different article.

The following paragraphs explore the relationship between the seven articles and the specific objective they proposed to answer.

Then, the joint results are a vital tool to reflect on this work's theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and future guidelines, which will be presented in the second half of this chapter.

The following diagram (Figure 9.1) will be presented to make it easier to check the interrelation between the seven articles and their primary objective.

**Figure 9.1. Interrelation between the studies**



Study 1 intended to define specific boundaries concerning meaningful experiences, distinguishing them between memorable and transformational experiences. In the initial phase of the PhD process, the theoretical exploration leads us to the need to establish the concrete differences between the significant construct under analysis (Meaningful tourism experiences) and the concepts frequently appearing in the literature as synonyms – Memorable Tourism Experiences and Transformative Tourism Experiences. The primary conclusion of Study 1 was that, although all the definitions converge in similar outcomes (e.g., self-discovery, self-transformation, and self-realisation), as well as the emotional impact associated with all three, altogether, they are complementing concepts, once it is evident the crescent pattern on the degree of complexity, personal involvement, and personal impact through the three concepts. (Câmara et al., 2020).

First, there was a need to establish the concrete differences between the three concepts through the authors' definitions.

Memorable tourism experiences include the objective elements that attract the individuals' attention, to generate a set of strong emotions (Duerden et al. 2017); it is the part of the experience that is transferred to the long-term memory, after the experience is lived (Scott et al., 2017), perceived by tourists as self-beneficial experiences, to be better retained and recalled (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013). In sum, memorable tourism experiences focus on those experiences that elicit strong emotions that, ultimately, influence how they will be retained in tourists' memorability due to the long-lasting memories they activate (Coelho et al., 2018).

On the other hand, transformational experiences are characterised by intrinsically motivated, enduring changes in self-perception and behaviour (Sheldon, 2020). Thus, these experiences focus on the changes in individuals' values, beliefs, intentions, and self-perceptions (Jiang, 2017; Sheldon, 2020). Here, the focus is not on how experiences are retained in terms of their emotional impact but on how they change individuals' inner selves, keeping in mind the intense emotions they elicit.

Last, meaningful tourism experiences introduce a new way of looking at tourism experiences: More than “What people feel and what changes are associated?”, “Why do people feel this way with these experiences? How personally meaningful tourists interpret their experiences?”, looking for a determined answer that is the crucial element of the differentiation between this construct and other synonyms: meaning, how and why it is constructed. In the words of Duerden *et al.* (2018), a meaningful experience is an experience where the objective

experience elements attract and hold an individual's attention and produce subjective reactions involving strong emotions and the discovery of significant and personally relevant insights.

In a few words, memorable experiences associate emotions and how they influence the retainment of the experiences in tourists' memory; transformational experiences relate the emotional impact to the changes associated with the inner self and transformation; meaningful experiences explore the interpretation tourists made on the impact of their emotions and how it influences the meaning they provide to their own experiences.

Study 2 intended to explore psychological fields of action that better cope with the meaning attached to tourist experiences, which could help us better systematise the next phase, considering the existing literature on the association of those variables to meaningful tourism experiences (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013; Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Deb & Lomo-David, 2021; Filep, 2014; Filep et al., 2017; Glover & Filep, 2017; Huta & Waterman, 2014; Laing, 1967; Larsen, 2007; Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987; Maslow, 1968; Newman et al., 2014; Packer & Gill, 2017; Park et al., 2019; Reisinger, 2013; Ryff, 1989; Saunders et al., 2017; Seligman, 2002; Steger et al., 2006; Tiberghien et al., 2020; Voigt, 2017; Wilson et al., 2013).

This study complements the abovementioned one, considering that it lies beneath the importance of considering both the reflexive and the anticipatory phase of the trip (Filep & Laing, 2019) through the focus on the antecedents and outcomes of meaningful tourist experiences to understand what personal, emotional, social, or environmental reasons leads to the involvement on a particular experience. So, by studying antecedents and outcomes of meaningful tourist experiences, it is possible to develop a set of meaningful activities and, thus, improve stakeholders' well-being and marketing strategies (Chen & Yoon, 2019; Garcês et al., 2020).

The major conclusions were associated with the synergy between positive psychology, positive tourism, well-being, and mindfulness and the meaning of the experiences (Câmara et al., 2022). The research produced a preliminary diagram illustrating the theoretical links observed in the literature as a first step towards designing a systematic literature review. As such, this study enabled us to conclude that looking at tourism in a positive, humanist-inspired way enables host communities to flourish, encourages workers to thrive and enhances the quality of the experiences (Filep et al., 2017), leading to the development of a strong relationship between tourism, psychology, experiences, and well-being (Filep, 2014, 2016; Filep & Deery, 2010).

In sum, the study led us to a better focus on the variables that should be explored under the primary construct in the study, offering a theoretical reflection on the connections between the referred theoretical foundations, proposed on a preliminary diagram illustrating the theoretical links observed, that acts as a first step towards designing a systematic literature review on the antecedents and outcomes of meaningful tourist experiences. The advantages of this method include the fact that it allows the focus on the critical subjects to invest in future research through the demonstration of significant research gaps that will help to better design and justify the research (Pickering & Byrne, 2014).

Study 3 intended to systematically explore the concept of meaningful experiences, their antecedents, and outcomes under the scope of the preliminary framework developed in study 2. Simultaneously, this article intended to scientifically confirm the conclusions undertaken in Study 1, considering the similarities and differences between memorable, meaningful, and transformational experiences. On this topic, study 3 introduced robustness on the assumptions made, acknowledging for the similarities between the constructs - development of positive (e.g., Filep et al., 2013; Garcês et al., 2020) and negative emotions (e.g., Gibson et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021); promotion of wellbeing (e.g., Cai et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2021); 3) the importance of others on the assessment of the experiences (e.g., Coghlan et al., 2015; Gao & Kerstetter, 2018; Wilson & Harris, 2006); self, personal development and transformation (Bosnjak et al., 2016) – but also, on the emergence of a promising path of study, concerning the specific concept of meaningful tourism experiences. A new definition arose, acknowledging meaningful tourism experiences as:

“(...) holistic and metaconceptual experience focussed not only on the individual and the context but also on their close interaction and shared benefits. As a result, individuals engage in a complex process of personal development (spiritual, cognitive, meaning, motivational and development of self), emotional development (emodiversity and emotional regulation), increased well-being (hedonia, eudaimonia, subjective, psychological, emotional), behavioural development (decision making, revisit intentions, positive word of mouth, place attachment) and relational development (positive relationships between individuals and with the destination).” (Câmara et al., 2022, p. 18).

The results determined that the antecedents and the outcomes of meaningful tourism experiences can be ordered into five dimensions: personal, emotional, wellbeing, relational and behavioural. The holistic character of tourism experiences highlights that they are characterised

by a high level of personally meaningful holiday activities (Filep, 2014). This different but complementary division suggests that the personal, emotional, and environmental dimensions associated with significant people contribute to improving meaningful tourist experiences (e.g., travel companions, other tourists, local agents, and residents; Coelho & Gosling, 2018).

Another significant result of this study was the scientific evidence of the tools and techniques used to assess the phenomena under study and their different dimensions. As such, this study confirmed that: 1) The Memorable Tourism Experience Scale developed by Kim (2010) and improved by Kim et al. (2012) was frequently used to assess memorable tourism experiences through hedonism, local culture, novelty, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement and knowledge; 2) The Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985) has been widely used to assess life satisfaction, which in some studies, as the cognitive component of subjective wellbeing or a part of hedonic wellbeing; 3) Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) is used to assess the subjective wellbeing dimension of happiness (Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2017); 4) Tourism Wellbeing Scale (Garcês et al., 2020), which focuses on wellbeing through the integration of PERMA and HOPE models. Considering this information, the study allowed for the establishment of the final theoretical background of the thesis: 1) Meaningful tourism experiences; 2) Tourists' well-being; 3) Motivations; 4) Life satisfaction; 5) Happiness. The study alerted to the need to uniformise the assessment of meaningful experiences, leading to more investigation on the need to maintain the psychometric properties and the internal validity and reliability of the tools (Filep, 2014). As such, and considering that the Memorable Tourism Experience Scale was not translated and validated for the Portuguese population, a motivation arose for the development of study 4.

Despite the different instruments already developed, there is a need to carefully analyse and adapt some of these tools to understand better and more meaningful tourist experiences (Packer & Gill, 2017). In Portugal, there were no validated instruments to assess the meaning of a tourist experience in the general population.

Thus, study 4 aimed to refine and validate a scale to measure the construct of meaningful tourism experiences. In specific, the Memorable Tourism Experience Scale (MTEs) (Kim et al., 2012) and the dimension “emotional intensity” from the Tourism Memory Characteristics Scale (TMCs) (Kim et al., 2022) were translated, adapted, and validated in a sample of Portuguese tourists.

The Portuguese version retained all the items from the original version (Kim et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2022), resulting in an 8-factor structure with reasonable goodness-of-fit indices. As

such, the study was an essential step in guaranteeing the improvement of the existing instruments that assess the psychological variables under study to address them better and contribute to a better understanding of meaningful tourist experiences.

Considering we can interpret the tourist experience as a product of past, travel-related events that evoke extreme and powerful emotions (Larsen, 2007), Scott and Le (2017) defend that the study of the experiences in the anticipatory phase privileges the antecedents related to the expectations, decision-making, motivations, and goals. Related to this idea, the decisions based on tourists' preferences for a determined experience or destination (i.e. anticipatory phase) are based as well on the evaluation of the destination attributes and their performance, as well as the predicted consequences that can facilitate or block the achievement of the costumers' goals (Jiang, 2017).

The abovementioned division of the tourism experience into three phases (Larsen, 2007) was the rationale for study 5, which intended to explore what happens in the anticipatory phase.

The search for meaning in tourism experiences involves the motivations that lead to the involvement in those experiences, their occurrence, and the consequences attached. It is expected that the motivations for determined experiences lead to different meanings. Kessler and associates (2020) were the theoretical foundation chosen for the study of the motivations attached to the meaning attributed to the experiences, which can be extrinsic (Movement & Fitness; Healthy Food & Diet) and intrinsic (Rest & Relaxation; Meditation & Mindfulness; Learning about Wellness; Self-care; Nature & Disconnect).

Study 5 intended to explore the motivations behind the choice of a specific tourist destination in terms of the expectancies attached to it.

Associated with good psychometric characteristics, six significant areas emerged associated with strong meanings in the field of psychology applied to tourism: a) Self-care as a movement of self-development and promotion of self-esteem is associated with extrinsic (e.g., healthy food & diet, movement & fitness) and intrinsic (e.g., meditation and mindfulness, rest, relaxation, nature and disconnect) motivations, emphasising that taking care of ourselves implies recognising that, both physically and psychologically, we have needs and goals that we seek to fulfil (Kessler et al., 2020; Voigt, 2017); b) Nature and disconnect, associated with the promotion of well-being, rest, self-care, and mindfulness; c) Rest and relaxation, focused on personal development and well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Packer & Gill, 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus, involvement in these activities presupposes a high level of stimulation and the arduous task of absorbing as much information as possible; d) Learning about wellness,

which affects well-being in the short (positive emotions, relaxation) and long-term (meaning, involvement, self-care; Packer & Gill, 2017; Park & Ahn, 2022; Vada et al., 2019; Voigt, 2017); e) Meaning, since the more involved in the experience, the stronger and long-lasting the meaning attached (Duerden et al., 2018; Packer & Gill, 2017). Meaning is, *per se*, a component of well-being (Newman et al., 2014; Ryff, 1989), and meaningful leisure activities are the ones that lead to positive emotions, which are the markers of optimal well-being (Fredrickson, 2001; Newman et al., 2014); f) Emotions, as the basis for the evaluation of the experience and attribution of meaning, were strongly correlated with refreshment, meaningfulness, and novelty constructs. Since human beings have a profound emotional basis, the memories of their experiences are strongly marked by emotion, which gives them a particular lasting and intense meaning (Kim et al., 2022).

Overall, a significant conclusion of this study must be considered. The long-lasting motivations associated with higher meanings of the experiences are the most intrinsic. This conclusion corroborates Yi et al. (2018) distribution of motivations to engage in a tourism experience in two groups: a) pull motivations related to the extrinsic elements of the destination's attributes (e.g., movement & fitness, healthy food & diet); b) push motivations, related to individuals' intrinsic characteristics (e.g., learning about wellness, self-care). On this behalf, it is crucial to address the motivations and factors behind tourists' behavioural choices and intentions.

As the study highlighted, emotional impact was one of the most expressive motivations to engage in tourism experiences, an essential component of tourist experiences, considering their motivational and informational character (Skavronskaya et al., 2017). As such, study 6 intended to explore how emotional intensity influences the meaning attached to the experiences.

Considering Larsen's (2007) division of the phases associated with tourism experiences, studies 6 and 7 enter the scope of the reflexive phase, considering it intends to explore what happens after the experience occurs.

Considering the strong impact of emotions on how individuals live and interpret a meaningful tourism experience, study 6 intended to explore the emotional intensity attached to each dimension of meaningful tourism experiences and understand how emotional intensity influences the attribution of meaning. Specifically, an analysis was made on the dimensions of the meaningful tourism experience that emerged with a higher frequency, depending on the emotional intensity felt during and after the experience.

The significant results highlight a strong association between emotional intensity and the dimensions of refreshment, meaningfulness, and novelty constructs. As such, the emotional dimension of an experience is the central component for its evaluation, enabling tourists to attach strong meanings that are better recalled through time.

As for refreshment, the activities that enable tourists to feel liberated, enjoy a sense of freedom, feel refreshed, and revitalised (Kim et al., 2012) are experiences that lead to a vigorous intensity on the emotional impact remembered after the experience.

Concerning meaningfulness, tourism activities associated with higher emotional arousal – both during and after their occurrence – have a more substantial probability to explain how individuals thrive in meaning from tourist experiences through the construction of personal narratives and stories, as well as the opportunity to be at peace with ourselves and hear our inner self (Moscardo, 2009). This result allows us to inquire that the more emotionally involved in the experience, the stronger and more lasting the meaning attached so that promoting the active participation of tourists in the construction of their own experience enables its personalisation (Duerden et al., 2018; Packer & Gill, 2017). Thus, tourists develop a sense of attachment to a determined destination when they live meaningful and satisfying experiences, enhancing their meaning, purpose, and the power to evoke the emotions felt during that period (Vada et al., 2019).

Finally, seeking novelty might be associated with positive outcomes of tourist experiences, especially the ones involving intense emotional arousal. As such, novelty can be a tool for searching for these kinds of activities since looking for something new involves positive outcomes, such as positive emotions, enjoyment, and refreshment (Dunman & Matilla, 2005).

In sum, emotions are more intense and long-lasting in tourists' memories when the activities are characterised by refreshing moments, enable the construction of more vital meanings, and represent something unique in tourists' lives.

In so doing, meaning attached to the experiences can provide individuals with upbeat, emotionally intense memories that last through time. Nevertheless, the emotional dimension might be too restrictive regarding the impact of meaningful tourism experiences on individuals' general lives. As such, study 7 was developed to explore meaningful tourism experiences' impact on individuals' life satisfaction, subjective happiness, and well-being.

Diener *et al.* (2003) consider that well-being can be assessed through the combination of the following elements: high frequency of satisfaction with life (Cognitive component), strong

prevalence of positive emotions, and low prevalence of negative emotions (Affective component).

Study 7 was the final step of the process, which intended to explore the impact of each dimension of meaningful tourism experiences on tourists' well-being, subjective happiness, and life satisfaction on a long-term basis. Specifically, it is intended to analyse if determined dimensions of the meaningful tourism experience emerge more frequently, depending on their impact on individuals' well-being, life satisfaction, and subjective happiness. The results of this study highlight a strong relationship between life satisfaction, subjective happiness, and tourists' well-being and the dimensions of involvement, knowledge, emotional intensity, meaningfulness, refreshment, and novelty.

Specifically, individuals' satisfaction with their long-term lives and the immediate positive emotions associated with them are the centre of their evaluation of how determined experiences can impact their overall life satisfaction, enabling individuals to develop a robust set of positive emotions.

Similarly, a positive moderate relationship was found between the variable tourists' well-being and the variable's satisfaction with life and subjective happiness. So, activities that stimulate pleasurable feelings, such as excitement, enjoyment, and joy (Dunman & Mattila, 2005; Kim et al., 2012), enable tourists to improve their knowledge of the destination (Kim et al., 2012) and give them the ability to fulfil their willingness of visiting a place that they wanted to see (Kim et al., 2012) are the ones that have the higher probability of impacting individuals' overall positive assessment of their lives and their subjective happiness (Deiner, 1984).

Additionally, tourists' well-being significantly correlated with all the dimensions of meaningful tourism experiences, being the most expressive of emotional intensity, meaningfulness, refreshment, and novelty. In other words, tourists' well-being is improved when they engage in activities where the emotional dimension is a central component, enabling them to attach strong meanings better recalled through time (Kim et al., 2022).

Overall, the studies above converge in some points, which are essential to highlight. First – and the significant contribution of this thesis – memorable experiences focus on memory creation through emotions, transformative experiences focus on lasting eternal changes, and meaningful experiences focus on the meaning attributed to the experiences. Thus, this work acknowledged a growing scale of complexity, personal involvement, and impact between the three major concepts. Second, the seven studies confirmed that emotions are a strong component of the meaning attached to the experience, as well as for personal transformation

and memory formation. As such, intense emotions (positive or negative) increase the likelihood of an experience being meaningful. Third, the identified dimensions of meaningful tourism experiences throughout the studies showed that they are interdependent, reflecting the holistic complexity of this phenomenon. Fourth, meaningful tourism experiences are highly related to emotional intensity, meaning, and novelty, which leads us to the idea that individuals have an essential role in how they plan, live, and reflect on their personal experiences regarding the impact on their well-being and happiness. As such, the personalisation of the experience and the construction of personal narratives help attribute meaning and foster attachment to the destination. Fifth, the interrelation of the results obtained showed that meaningful experiences are seen as catalysts for emotional development (emotional regulation, emotional diversity), personal growth (self-awareness), and relational development (positive bonds with people and places). Sixth, the antecedents of meaningful experiences play different roles, associated with the motivations attached, leading to the assumption that intrinsic motivations (self-care, mindfulness, nature) are more strongly associated with lasting meanings, and extrinsic motivations (destination attributes, healthy eating) play a secondary, but complementary role.

In summary, the common points reinforce the interconnectedness of emotions, meaning, personal transformation, and well-being as central elements for understanding tourist experiences. These insights contribute significantly to academic research, marketing, and tourism planning, as understanding how individuals engage in their own tourist experiences can help promote different destinations and policies to increase the meaning attached.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Travelling is an opportunity to grow, to learn, to change. Tourism experiences represent a change in the routine through the engagement in something new, something unusual. Therefore, it is possible to have the opportunity to see new places and increase personal consciousness about the self. This process usually leads individuals to a personal reflection, not only about the trip itself but also of themselves, since those experiences can change us based on the emotional impact attached to them (Brown, 2013). So, tourism experiences are more than just routine, daily experiences: they have the strong potential to become extraordinary, pure, peak, cathartic, meaningful and memorable (Kirillova et al., 2017b). The present study pioneered the attempt to conceptualise and develop a psychological framework for meaningful experiences applied to tourism, using psychological variables that, altogether, explain how

individuals engage in the process of choosing an activity that somehow matches their intrinsic needs.

Considering the abovementioned implication, the present study can particularly interest different groups.

First, higher educational and professional institutions in tourism and psychology could find important information in this study. A study in Italy explored how higher education institutions (HEI) can contribute to local development through educational tourism. Thus, students can act as educational tourists at the destination, simultaneously acting as motivational triggers for tourists to engage and personalise their experiences (Tomasi et al., 2020). As such, students benefit from their studies, interactions with local and foreign people, and experiences that foster personal and professional growth (Tomasi et al., 2020). While tourism relates to the movement of people, psychology is concerned about human behaviour, so it finds excellent potential for research and intervention (Garcês et al., 2018). If the goals developed before are fulfilled, the emotional response will be more robust (Skavronskaya et al., 2020), as well as the impact of the experience on the overall assessment of individuals' lives and well-being. Identifying dreams and fantasies beneath the motivations to choose a destination or evaluate one experience as meaningful should lead to developing more significant activities based on individuals' preferences and goals (Coelho et al., 2018).

In the case of tourism courses, knowing about the different motivations and how they influence the meaning attached to the experiences can be the foundation to create professionals highly sensitive to the need to invest in the development of meaningful tourism experiences. As for psychology courses, promoting psychological health and well-being is a potential field of action in tourism to develop initiatives that call for these dimensions in the first place. In sum, tourism and psychology focus on individuals' minds and behaviours to develop a significance for the experience phenomenon (Garcês et al., 2020; Scott et al., 2017).

Second, the different tourist instances find in this study important information regarding the motivations behind the choice of determined tourist places, to innovate and personalise their offers and promote the potential of those places, meaning that the more the information about tourists is known, the better the recommendations of attractions considering their expectations (Alves et al., 2023). Specifically, destination marketing institutes are the principal interested market of these outcomes, informing on the need to improve destinations to make tourists engage in meaningful experiences that satisfy their needs, feelings, thoughts, and motivations (Chang & Hung, 2021), which contributes to the authentic identity of the destinations. Still, Garcês *et al.* (2020) acknowledged that the benefits of holidays are numerous, such as physical

well-being and an overall increment of happiness. These findings highlight the need for industries and entrepreneurs to know the elements associated with significant experiences (Smith & Diekmann, 2017).

Third, the investigation and development units (I & D) focused on the psychology of tourism could benefit from the present study. These I&D units could focus on the attempt to understand a range of different audiences, including the tourists themselves, the community that receives them, and other stakeholders dedicated to this industry, to develop new impactful strategies (Garcês et al., 2020).

Next, another crucial theoretical implication of this work relies on developing a valid Portuguese and adapted tool to measure meaningful tourism experiences – The Memorable Tourism Experience Scale. As such, this theoretical contribution answers the need to carefully analyse and adapt some of these tools to understand better meaningful tourist experiences (Packer & Gill, 2017).

### **Practical Implications**

The study focused on undergoing an intensive process of a meaningful tourism experience in its different stages – anticipatory, on-site, and reflexive - to understand how meaning is developed from the beginning. On this behalf, the better the preparation, the more meaningful and permanent the outcomes (Larsen, 2007).

A trip's meaningful characteristic refers to how people plan their travel. Travelling is an experience that, since the beginning, is attached to a strong meaning: it starts with the recognition of the need to satisfy something that is currently missing, the development of expectations and the destination choice (anticipatory phase); the tourist experience itself, where individuals develop a set of emotions, meanings, feelings, and memories (on-site phase); and the evaluation of the experience, supported by the process of remembering the trip and its impact for different dimensions of their lives (reflexive Phase) (Larsen, 2007). These steps represent an opportunity to improve the experience, allowing individuals to interact with the products, services, and technologies in different adventure steps (Willson et al., 2013). Following this thought, tourists must be guided in designing their experiences to meet their internal needs (Jiang, 2017). More than tourist destinations, the individual is the most crucial criterion for creating a tourist experience (Larsen, 2007). An equilibrium between the individual, with his personal characteristics, motivations, expectations and behaviours, and the

destination and its components (Vada et al., 2019) must be considered to create a thriving holistic product.

Next, the study emphasises the importance of personalising the experience, focusing on personal goals and physical and emotional states (Bosangit et al., 2015), enabling tourists to participate in the activities actively. Overall, allowing individuals to engage in personalised experiences is the key to encouraging tourists to be active agents in their development (Gillovic et al., 2021; Jelinčić & Matečić, 2021).

Additionally, the literature argues that positive psychology has a crucial role in explaining tourists' well-being. Nevertheless, these results are not very defunded. So, knowledge about the potential of positive psychology for promoting well-being can be a powerful tool in designing travel experiences (Nawijn, 2015), another alerting idea for tourism industries: to innovate and captivate.

This research ensures that all stakeholders' needs are equally considered. As such, tourism industries can be responsible for exploring if the quality of life and satisfaction of the host community is not threatened by tourism, to achieve positive well-being outcomes, and help host communities and tourism workers to flourish, contributing to the optimisation of the experience and the improvement of well-being (Filep & Laing, 2019).

Nevertheless, this study imposes essential implications for psychology applied to tourism and other contexts. For example, cognitive psychology has substantially impacted how individuals interpret, evaluate, and appraise experiences in different contexts, especially in tourism. Cognitive psychology explores elements like consciousness, perception, attention, emotions, mental schema, appraisal, action, and memory, each with distinct attributes, methodologies, antecedents, and consequences (Scott & Le, 2017). This understanding is crucial for destinations and stakeholders aiming to enhance tourists' experiences by recognising how people appraise and label experiences as meaningful.

By adopting a cognitive appraisal approach, researchers investigate why individuals may react differently to the same experience (Scott et al., 2017; Scott, 2020). Emotional reactions arise from interpreting, evaluating, and appraisal of individual experiences, leading to diverse responses.

The psychological model of tourist experience proposed by Scott et al. (2017) integrates cognitive psychology foundations, highlighting that tourist experiences span planning (prospction) to memory recollection (retrospection). This concept, termed "mental time travel," involves individuals reflecting on past experiences, anticipating future ones, and evaluating them based on associated emotions like pleasure, worry, or happiness (Suddendorf

& Corballis, 2007; Skavronskaya et al., 2017). This capacity benefits evolution by allowing individuals to use past experiences to prepare for the future.

Furthermore, cognitive psychology offers a comprehensive perspective on tourism, shedding light on how internal processes influence tourists' behaviour and their interpretation of travel experiences (Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Kim et al., 2012; Kim, 2014; Scott, 2020; Ma et al., 2017; Skavronskaya et al., 2020; Staphit & Coudonaris, 2018; Vada et al., 2020). Researchers suggest that the future of tourism studies will rely heavily on psychological foundations, focusing on cognitive processes to understand how individuals appraise significant experiences in unfamiliar contexts (Scott, 2020).

Overall, the information above led to the reflection on how psychology can be holistically impacted by the present study. First, the study advances our understanding of emotional appraisal, explaining why people experience different emotional reactions to the same events (Scott et al., 2017; Scott, 2020). This has broader implications for understanding human behaviour in diverse settings, such as work, relationships, or therapy. Second, the concept of mental time travel (Suddendorf & Corballis, 2007; Skavronskaya et al., 2017) enriches memory studies by demonstrating how past experiences shape present behaviour and future planning. This is particularly relevant for clinical psychology, where therapy often focuses on reframing past events to improve future outcomes. Third, tourism as a context allows psychology to explore human behaviour in non-familiar environments (Scott, 2020). This creates opportunities to apply cognitive theories in marketing, consumer psychology, and cross-cultural studies, providing insights into how people adapt and find meaning in new contexts. Fourth, this research promotes interdisciplinary collaboration by integrating individual psychological processes with social and environmental factors. Understanding how cognitive appraisals develop in tourism can inform models applicable to education, healthcare, and urban planning (Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Kim et al., 2012; Kim, 2014). Finally, the evolutionary role of affective memory in anticipating outcomes (Skavronskaya et al., 2017) reinforces the idea that emotions and memory are central to survival. This connection can drive research into decision-making, problem-solving, and emotional regulation. In sum, applying cognitive psychology to tourism provides unique opportunities to understand cognition and behaviour in novel settings, offering a richer, more nuanced perspective on human experiences and their implications across multiple disciplines.

## 9.1. Limitations and Future Guidelines

Throughout the development of the studies, some limitations were acknowledged, which will be discussed with a focus on improvements and future guidelines.

First, our sample was composed of individuals who fluently speak Portuguese. This kind of sampling could limit the study's external validity and negatively influence the intercultural application of the results. As such, future studies must explore more diverse samples of nationality, age, and socioeconomic profiles to generalise the results to a significant scale. Similarly, investigation could replicate this study with specific types of tourism (e.g., cultural tourism, ecotourism).

Second, the data analysis methodologies adopted in the study were entirely based on a quantitative method. The study emphasises a demand for multi-method and multi-contextual criteria to assess, evaluate and conceptualise meaningful experiences, focusing on the importance of adopting a mixed research analysis approach and longitudinal and experimental studies to gather the participants' subjective perceptions that could be suitable. Specifically, semi-structured interviews and focus groups can complement the quantitative analysis and deepen the understanding of the meaning and emotions attached to the experiences.

Third, the study highlighted the supremacy of studies with tourist samples, considering that in study 3 (Systematic Literature Review) only three articles used a sample composed of residents (Chen & Yoon, 2019; Gibson et al., 2021) and workers in the tourism settings (Gibson et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2018). This result is consistent with some research gaps in the literature related to the need to consider different populations to assess the meaning of a tourism experience (Filep et al., 2017). Thus, research stresses out the need to improve the participation of other people, which is simultaneously necessary for the promotion of well-being (Filep & Laing, 2019).

Fourth, emotions were mentioned as one of the essential elements of tourism experiences (e.g., Aydin & Omuris, 2020; Chen et al., 2021; Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Gibson et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2014; Loureiro et al., 2019; Mendonca-Pedro et al., 2021; Nawijn, 2011; Sie et al., 2021; Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018; Wang et al., 2021). There needs to be more literature on how ambivalent emotions can generate meaning from experience (Zheng et al., 2020). A study developed in the context of Dark Immersive Theatre Experiences (DITE) revealed that participants report higher levels of positive emotions before and after DITE and that both positive and negative affects tend to decrease after exposure to this kind of dark tourism experience (Belo & Gustavo, 2023). Moreover, the process of

meaning-making decreases negative emotions and improves positive ones and life satisfaction (Fredrickson, 2001; Newman et al., 2014; Zheng et al., 2020). Future studies should explore the role of positive emotions in decreasing negative emotions and remembering memories associated with negative tourist experiences. This idea could generate important information on how individuals can accumulate resources and use them when needed, in other words, how to be proactive individuals stimulated by challenges, which leads them to more support, more vitality and, thus, more positive mood (Greenglass & Fiksenbaum, 2009; Frochot et al., 2017; Gibson et al., 2021; Pourfakhimi et al., 2021).

Five, the results suggest that one of the most expressive motivations to engage in determined tourism experiences is related to the need to disconnect and find inner peace and self (Kessler et al., 2020), highlighting the impact of spirituality and mindfulness on the attribution of meaning, as it is related to how people seek meaning and life purposes, their quest for experiences of transcendence and connectedness (Pocinho & Garcês, 2019; Willson et al., 2013). These results support that mindfulness is one important construct to explain how individuals thrive, meaning from tourist experiences through the construction of personal narratives and stories, as well as the opportunity to be at peace with ourselves and hear our inner selves (Moscardo, 2009). Even though investigations are beginning to rise on this topic (e.g., Iacob et al., 2022), future studies should explore the relationship between meaningful tourism experiences and mindfulness and how it influences individuals' outcomes and expectations and tourists' well-being and satisfaction with life.

Six, results could be enhanced by including different variables on the data collection instruments. For example, explore how different tourist profiles influence the relationship between emotions and attribution of meaning by including a questionnaire that assesses different personality traits. Also, exploring how tourists emotionally prepare themselves for the experience could be interesting in exploring their anticipatory phase of the trip and how emotionally aware they were of their pre-travel emotions.

This work began and ended on two extremes of the tourism industry. First, it began in the post-COVID era, one of the most challenging events for tourism, considering the impact of the psychological outbreak. Wang and colleagues (2020) recognised that, in China, the psychological impacts were evaluated as moderate or severe (53.8%), characterised by intense anxiety symptoms (28.8%) and moderate to extreme stress levels (8.1%). A Portuguese study (Agência Lusa, 2020) concluded that 24.0% of the sample reported anxiety and sadness, and 82.0% felt at least one adverse mental health effect. The study ended with a different movement: the over-tourism phenomenon, characterised by too many people in the same place

simultaneously, which influences the economic, social, environmental, and psychological factors (Leahy, 2023). The United Nations of World Tourism Organization [UNWTO] predicts that by 2030, worldwide tourists will increase from 1.5 billion in 2019 to 1.8 billion. Destinations have a finite capacity, highlighting the need to hear local people and think about strategies to overcome this problem and actual regulations to control the crowded people in tourist spots. As such, this study highlights that future work might focus on the causes of over-tourism and how different institutions must improve tourism experiences to maximise the emotional intensity and meaning attached. For example, hotels, tourist attractions, tourism organisation managers, and governmental organisations might use this information to promote more off-season travel, limit the number of accommodations, promote less-visited spots to redirect travellers, and limit the traffic to crowded tourist spots (Leahy, 2023). As specific measures, the following might be helpful: Fixed bus routes to highly crowded places, beyond a reservation and payment; Development of a real-time phone application with information on the crowdedness of determined touristic places in real-time, with a red line representing the maximum overcrowded level; Increase the presence of official police entities on the most crowded spots.

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