

Meaningful experiences in tourism: A systematic review of psychological constructs

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Abstract

This study explored the components of meaningful tourist experiences together with 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, wellbeing and mindfulness to understand how tourists derive meaning from their experiences. The scientific platforms Scopus and Web of Science were selected to conduct the search for journal articles. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the final sample was comprised of 70 articles. The results evidence the holistic character of meaningful experiences in tourism in terms of personal, emotional, wellbeing, relational and behavioural dimensions that enable a better conceptualisation of the construct. These experiences were significantly assessed on life satisfaction, meaning and purpose, emotions, authenticity and mindfulness. This review highlights the potential of positive psychology to maximise tourists' wellbeing through their experiences. It represents an opportunity for the tourism and hospitality industry as well as other entities to enhance tourists' experiences, such as researchers, psychologists, resident communities and universities. Therefore, this study contributes to future research to better assess meaningful tourist experiences and to 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

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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 wellbeing 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' wellbeing, 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, wellbeing, 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 focussed 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 field of research in psychology applied to tourism. People are motivated by the meaning associated with the things they find, the people they meet and the experiences they live. 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), wellbeing (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 the enhancement of the literature related to three interconnected premises. First, the research maps out and synthesises 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, wellbeing 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).

2. Literature review

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' wellbeing (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 in life, which is 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 of a subfield called positive tourism. The primary purpose of the positive tourism movement is to understand how tourists, local communities and tourism workers flourish as well as to promote wellbeing 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).

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 wellbeing 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 wellbeing is related to the supreme good in life, the pursuit of happiness and the avoidance of painful experiences and positive emotions. Eudaimonic wellbeing 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 wellbeing 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 wellbeing 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 and is 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 wellbeing 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).

2.3. Mindfulness

Mindfulness represents an essential dimension of an individual's consciousness and strongly relates to wellbeing; it is mainly characterised by an openness to activities or situations. Individuals capture the properties of consciousness marked by the vividness of their everyday experience and functioning, which directly impacts happiness and wellbeing (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).

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 relates to 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) focussed on the existence of four different authenticity perspectives: 1) objective (the physical qualities of originality); 2) constructive (the socially-constructed character of authenticity, focussing 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 the 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, wellbeing, 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. In sum, 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 both the ordinary and the non-ordinary. An emotionally positive experience, intrinsically enjoyable, encompasses collaborative interactions and conflict-easing situations by setting up 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 ultimate 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 wellbeing; 3) the personal dimension; and 4) emotional development. For this reason, they were included in the research protocol.

3. Methodology

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 different studies that are needed (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006).

As a preliminary stage, Câmara *et al.* (2022) developed a theoretical exploration of the links between positive psychology, wellbeing, positive tourism and mindfulness. Despite their clear interrelation, the literature still 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.

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, wellbeing and mindfulness?

3.3. Searching

The chosen databases were Web of Science Clarivate, SCOPUS and APA PsycInfo. 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 throughout the process 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 PsycInfo** – TS = (['Touris* experience'] AND [memorable OR transformation* OR authentic OR extraordinary OR well-being OR well-being OR mindful*])

3.3.1. 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.

3.3.2. 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); 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 not available), 564 records were screened from WoS and SCOPUS, considering that 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 wellbeing (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 focussed 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 in relation to 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 1 presents the PRISMA flow diagram, which visually represents the methodological process to enable a more straightforward interpretation.

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

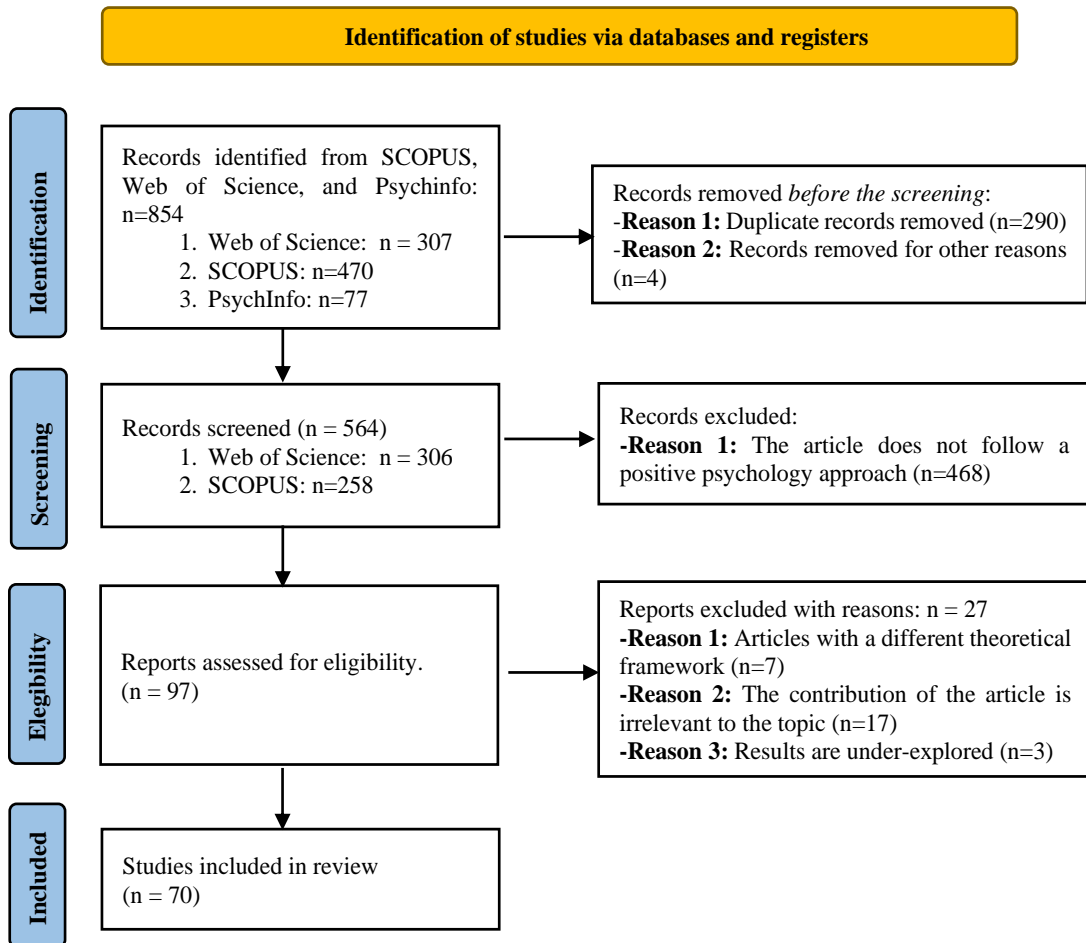


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram (PRISMA, 2020)

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. Results

4.1. Descriptive characteristics

Table 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).

Table 1. Peer-reviewed articles per year of publication

Year	# of articles	Reference
2006	3	Pernecky (2006); Wilson & Harris (2006); Zhara (2006);
2010	2	Filep & Deery (2010); Voigt <i>et al.</i> (2010);
2011	2	Nawijn (2011); Sirgy <i>et al.</i> (2011);
2012	1	Kim <i>et al.</i> (2012);
2013	2	Filep <i>et al.</i> (2013); Willson <i>et al.</i> (2013);
2014	2	Filep (2014); Lin <i>et al.</i> (2014);
2015	3	Bosangit <i>et al.</i> (2015); Coghlan (2015); Pabel & Pearce (2015);
2016	2	Bosnjak <i>et al.</i> (2016); Servidio & Ruffolo (2016);
2017	6	Chen <i>et al.</i> (2017); Coudounaris & Sthapit (2017); Frochot <i>et al.</i> (2017); Knobloch <i>et al.</i> (2017); Laing & Frost (2017); Smith & Diekmann (2017);
2018	7	Coelho & Gosling (2018); Gao & Kerstetter (2018); Lee <i>et al.</i> (2018); Lyu, Mao, & Hu (2018); Pabel & Pearce (2018); Rahmani <i>et al.</i> (2018); Sthapit & Coudounaris (2018);
2019	10	Baloglu <i>et al.</i> (2019); Chen & Yoon (2019); Kim & Kim (2019); Loureiro <i>et al.</i> (2019); Rivera <i>et al.</i> (2019); Sthapit (2019); Vada <i>et al.</i> (2019a); Vada <i>et al.</i> (2019b) Wei <i>et al.</i> (2019); Yan & Halpenny (2019);
2020	13	Aydin & Omuris (2020); Buzinde (2020); Cai <i>et al.</i> (2020); Farkić <i>et al.</i> (2020); Garcês <i>et al.</i> (2020); Sheldon (2020); Huang <i>et al.</i> (2020); Li <i>et al.</i> (2020); Pung & Del Chiappa (2020); Tan <i>et al.</i> (2020); Wang <i>et al.</i> (2020); Yin <i>et al.</i> (2020); Ying <i>et al.</i> (2020);
2021	12	Chen <i>et al.</i> (2021); Chen <i>et al.</i> (2021); Dillette <i>et al.</i> (2021); Gibson <i>et al.</i> (2021); Gillovic <i>et al.</i> (2021); Jelinčić & Matečić (2021); Mendonça-Pedro <i>et al.</i> (2021); Pourfakhimi <i>et al.</i> (2021); Sie <i>et al.</i> (2021); van Iwaarden & Nawijn (2021); Wang <i>et al.</i> (2021); Yu <i>et al.</i> (2021);
2022	4	Chirakranont & Sakdiyakorn (2022); Goolaup & Nunkoo (2022); Miyakawa & Oguchi (2022); Yi <i>et al.</i> (2022);

(Source: Own elaboration)

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 2). Only one article (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017) was published in a psychology journal (*Psychology & Marketing*). Figure 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 and Australia and New Zealand.

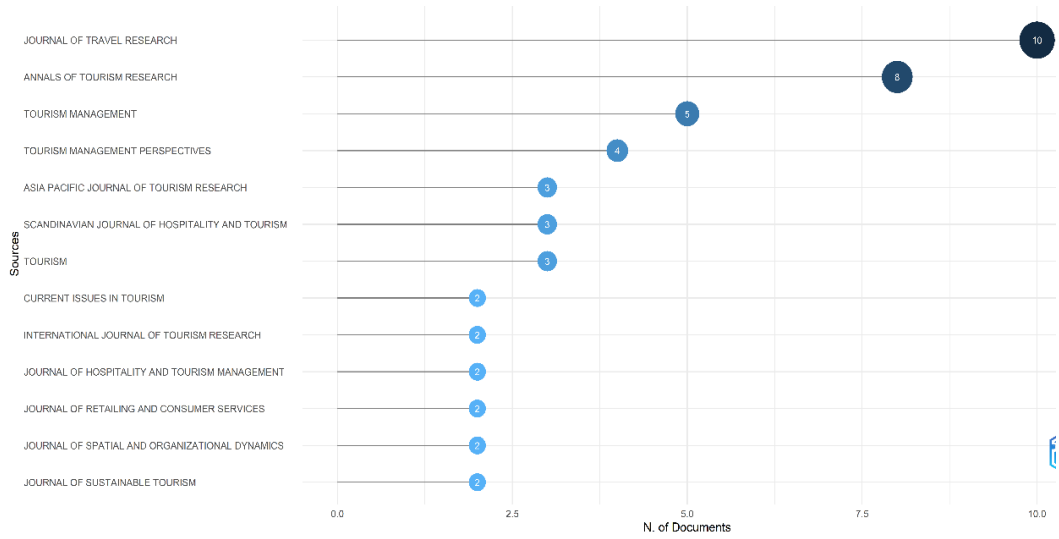


Figure 2. Most relevant sources (Source: Biblioshiny)

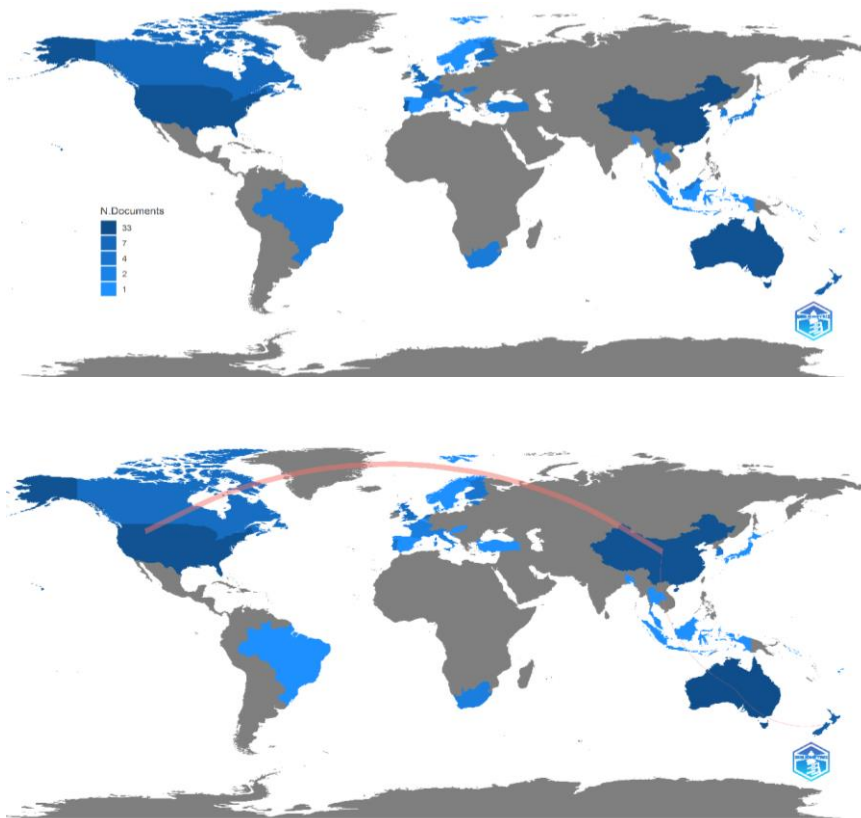


Figure 3. Country Scientific Production and Collaboration Map (Source: Biblioshiny)

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 (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990; Farber & Hall, 2007; Mossberg, 2007; Pullman & Gross, 2004).

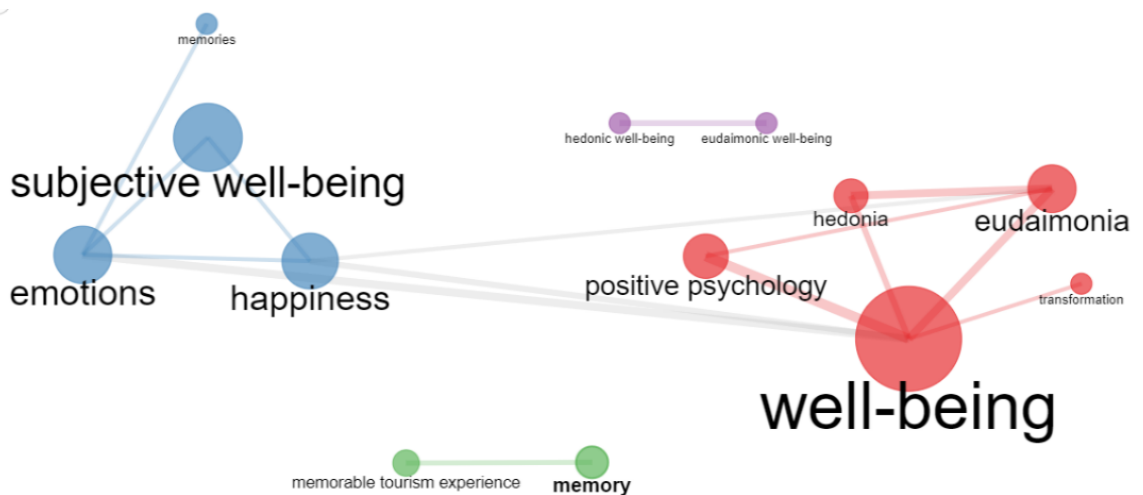


Figure 4. Co-occurrence network of authors' keywords (Source: Biblioshiny)

An analysis of the authors' keywords showed four different patterns (see Figure 4). First, authors tend to relate subjective wellbeing 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 wellbeing and eudaimonic wellbeing are frequently studied together in the literature.

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, the personal characteristics of tourists and motivations (Chirakranont & Sakdiyakorn, 2022).

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 wellbeing or a part of hedonic wellbeing.

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), a 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 10 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) that 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 wellbeing 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 wellbeing;
4. Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), used to assess the subjective wellbeing dimension of happiness (Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2017);
5. McCabe and Johnson's Emotional Wellbeing Scale (2013), which assesses wellbeing through happiness, positive feelings about oneself and emotional wellbeing;
6. Tourism Wellbeing Scale (Garcês *et al.*, 2020), which focusses on wellbeing through creativity, optimism and spirituality;

7. Short Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS; Michaelson *et al.*, 2012) to assess subjective wellbeing;
8. UK's Office for National Statistics (ONS) Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire that measures subjective wellbeing through well-functioning, positive feelings and evaluation of life;
9. A survey of Tourism Wellbeing (Sirgy *et al.*, 2011), focussed on the emotional evaluation of wellbeing;
10. Player Experience of Need Satisfaction (Ryan *et al.*, 2006; Tamborini *et al.*, 2011), which assesses eudaimonic wellbeing through autonomy, competence and relatedness;
11. Ryan and Deci's Studies (2000) to measure the presence of positive emotions and absence of negative emotions (hedonic wellbeing)

The same happens with emotions:

1. Positive and Negative Affect Scale (Watson *et al.*, 1988), which assesses the emotions felt on 10 positive and 10 negative experiences;
2. the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (Diener *et al.*, 2010), which evaluates general positive feelings – good, positive, pleasant, joy, happy, contented – and negative feelings – negative, bad, unpleasant, sad, angry and afraid;
3. Affect Balance Scale (Kahneman *et al.*, 2004), which evaluates the hedonic level of affect and life satisfaction;
4. Modified Differential Emotions Scale (Cohn *et al.*, 2009; Mitas *et al.*, 2013), which uses positive and the negative emotions subscales;
5. Psychological Needs Scale (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010; Nawijn, 2011; Prayag *et al.*, 2017), which assesses positive emotions;
6. Wheel of emotions (Plutchik, 1991), which evaluates joy, sadness, acceptance, disgust, fear, anger, surprise and anticipation;
7. Three-Dimension Emotional Scale (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010), which is focussed on tourists' perceptions of joy, love and positive surprise;
8. Lanciano's (2021) emotional questionnaire, which assesses six basic emotions – disgust, happiness, fear, anger, surprise and sadness);
9. Tronvoll (2011) items of adverse feelings: perception of anger, frustration and embarrassment.

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 in terms of 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. Data analysis techniques

Most of the research on meaningful experiences used quantitative methodologies and established scales (34), followed by qualitative, mixed or theoretical studies (see Table 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 focusses 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.

Table 2. Peer-reviewed articles per data analysis techniques

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	34
2. Content analysis	5	
3. Phenomenological analysis	2	
4. Grounded theory	1	
5. Netnography	1	
6. Constant comparative analysis	1	
7. Hermeneutic method	1	
8. Autoethnography	1	
Other methods (e.g., Creswell and Poth's (2018) five-step spiral concept)	4	
Mixed methods	3	4
Theoretical papers	8	11

(Source: Own elaboration)

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 of time (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 focussed 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 focussed 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).

4.5. *Antecedents and outcomes of meaningful tourism experiences*

The research led to the systematisation of the antecedents and outcomes of meaningful experiences into five dimensions (see Table 3): personal, emotional, wellbeing, behavioural and relational. The personal dimension focusses on individuals' intrinsic characteristics. Individuals engage in meaningful experiences to seek authentic and genuine moments, transcend themselves and develop their 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. The creation of strong memories and the wish to fulfil a dream or desire is also sought by means of 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 itself 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 wellbeing dimension is responsible for creating 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).

Table 3. Antecedents and outcomes of meaningful tourism experiences (Source: own elaboration)

Dimension	Sub-dimension	Reference
Personal	Spiritual	Aydin & Omuris, 2020; Baloglu <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Bosangit <i>et al.</i> , 2015; Bosnjak <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Buzinde (2020); Chen & Yoon, 2019; Chirakranont &
	Cognitive	Sakdiyakorn, 2022; Coelho & Gosling, 2018; Coghlan (2015); Coudounaris
	Meaning	& Sthapit, 2017; Filep (2014); Filep & Deery (2010); Frochot <i>et al.</i> , 2017;
	Motivational	Goolaup & Nunkoo, 2022; Huang <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Kim & Kim, 2019; Li <i>et al.</i> ,
	Development of the self	2020; Lin <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Loureiro <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Miyakawa & Oguchi, 2022; Pernecky (2006); Pourfakhimi <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Rivera <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Servidio & Ruffolo, 2016; Sie <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Smith & Diekmann (2017); Sthapit (2019); Sthapit & Coudounaris (2017); Tan <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Vada <i>et al.</i> , 2019b; Wang <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Wei <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Wilson & Harris, 2006; Wilson <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Yan & Halpenny, 2019; Yin <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Ying <i>et al.</i> , 2020;
Emotional	Emodiversity	Coelho & Gosling (2018); Coghlan, 2015; Filep (2014); Filep <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Frochot <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Gao & Kerstetter, 2018; Gibson <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Huang <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Knobloch <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Loureiro <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Lin <i>et al.</i> , 2014;
	Emotional regulation	Mendonca-Pedro <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Miyakawa & Oguchi, 2022; Nawijn, 2011; Pabel & Pearce, 2015, 2018; Servidio & Ruffolo, 2016; Sie <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Sirgy <i>et al.</i> , 2011; Smith & Diekmann, 2017; Sthapit, 2019; Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2017; Wang <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Wei <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Yan & Halpenny, 2019
Well-being	Hedonia	Aydin & Omuris, 2020; Baloglu <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Buzinde, 2020; Cai <i>et al.</i> , 2020;
	Eudaimonia	Chen <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Coghlan, 2015; Dillette <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Farkic <i>et al.</i> , 2020;
	Social	Garcés <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Huang <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Jelinčić & Matečić, 2021; Knobloch <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Lee <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Lyu <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Miyakawa & Oguchi, 2022;
	Subjective	Nawijn, 2011; Pourfakhimi <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Pung & Del Chiappa, 2020; Rahmani
	Psychological	<i>et al.</i> , 2018; Smith & Diekmann, 2017; Vada <i>et al.</i> , 2019b; van Iwaarden &
Behavioural	Emotional	Nawijn, 2021; Voigt <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Wang <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Yi <i>et al.</i> , 2022;
	Behavioural intentions	Baloglu <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Chen <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Sthapit (2019); Vada <i>et al.</i> , 2019b; Yan & Halpenny, 2019; Ying <i>et al.</i> , 2020;
Relational	Positive relationships between individuals	Buzinde (2020); Filep (2014);
	Positive relationships with the destination	

The relational dimension concerns the social meaning of experiences. The antecedents involve the need to engage in positive and meaningful relationships with travel companions, the locals and the destination. 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; Garcés *et al.*, 2020; Yi *et al.*, 2021; Ying *et al.*, 2020). Finally, the behavioural dimension relates a feeling of belonging, place attachment, active participation in the experience and an increase in 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).

5. Discussion

Psychology is an important field of research, and its association with tourism assets has increased in topics such as happiness, quality of life and tourists' wellbeing (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, wellbeing 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' wellbeing 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' wellbeing in different spheres of their lives.

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 of conflict and the creation of 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).

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 that is 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 wellbeing (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).

5.3. *Antecedents and outcomes of meaningful tourism experiences*

The results determined that both 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 how high the level is 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 that 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 for a longer time. 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 wellbeing, 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 a transparent 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 5 synthesises the main antecedents and outcomes of meaningful experiences in tourism as well as the main components of these experiences.

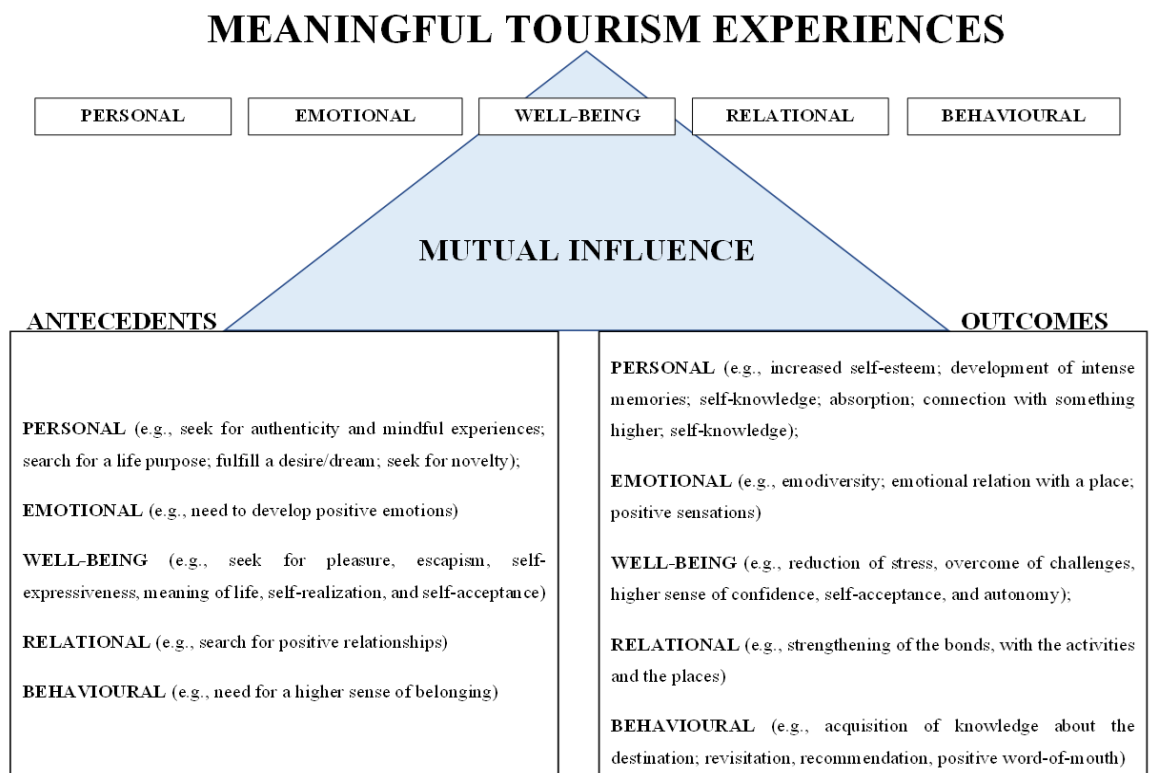


Figure 5. Meaningful tourism experiences: Antecedents and outcomes (Source: own elaboration)

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.

6.1. Theoretical implications

The research highlights the potential for positive psychology to maximise the contribution tourism experiences make to tourists' wellbeing. Adopting a positive psychology approach to understanding tourism and wellbeing 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, wellbeing and mindfulness foundations. A meaningful experience focusses on the personal dimension (spiritual, cognitive, meaning, motivational and development of the self), emotional dimension (emodiversity and emotional regulation), dimension of wellbeing (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 that there is a demand for multi-method and multi-contextual criteria to assess, evaluate and conceptualise meaningful experiences, focusing the importance of adopting a mixed research analysis approach as well as 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).

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 important meanings.

These assumptions highlight the importance of personalising the experience, focussing on personal goals and physical and emotional states (Bosangit *et al.*, 2015), enabling tourists to actively participate in the attraction, total immersion in the activity, development of 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 wellbeing, 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 to assess the extent of visitors' experiences and is more likely to impact individual wellbeing and behavioural outcomes.

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 focusses on tourists' samples, leaving behind stakeholders that 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' wellbeing 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, thereby leading to different types of meaningful tourist experiences.

This systematic literature review maps meaningful tourism experiences and the role of positive psychology, wellbeing 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, 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 from following a positive psychology lens (e.g., cognitive psychology, motivational psychology and educational psychology).

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