Papers

The most important trip for who I am: exploring the dimensions of the Eudaimonic Tourist Experience

A viagem que mais contribuiu para quem eu sou: explorando as dimensões da Experiência Turística Eudaimônica

El viaje que más contribuyó a quien yo soy: explorando las dimensiones de la Experiencia Turística Eudaimónica

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Abstract

Based on a review of the concept of eudaimonia, the study proposes a definition for the eudaimonic tourist experience construct and identifies 15 potential constituent dimensions of the construct, from an extensive literature review in the domains of positive psychology, existential-humanistic psychology, developmental psychology (studies on identity formation in the Eriksonian stream) and tourism (studies on transformative tourism experience). In order to validate the theorized dimensions, a survey with 569 subjects was undertaken. The results of the exploratory factor analysis revealed six factors (Alterity and Benevolence, Intimacy and Belonging, Personal meaningfulness, Openness to the new, Autonomy and Maturity), which accounted for 62.636% of the total variance. Through strong theoretical and empirical foundation, the study aimed to contribute to the understanding of the transformative processes provided by tourist experiences, proposing a multidimensional structure for eudaimonic experiences in tourism contexts.

Resumo

Com base em uma revisão do conceito de eudaimonia, o estudo propõe uma definição para o constructo experiência turística eudaimônica e identifica 15 potenciais dimensões constituintes do constructo, a partir de uma extensa revisão da literatura nos domínios da psicologia positiva, psicologia existencial-humanista, psicologia do desenvolvimento (estudos sobre a formação da identidade na linha Eriksoniana) e do turismo (estudos sobre experiência turística transformadora). Com o objetivo de validar as dimensões teorizadas, um levantamento com 569 sujeitos foi empreendido e a análise fatorial exploratória sobre os dados extraiu seis fatores (Alteridade e Benevolência, Intimidade e Pertencimento, Eudaimonia, Abertura ao novo, Autonomia e Amadurecimento) que explicaram 62,636% da variância total. Com forte fundamentação teórica e empírica, o estudo buscou contribuir com o entendimento dos processos transformativos proporcionados pelas experiências turísticas, fornecendo uma estrutura multidimensional para experiências eudaimônicas em contextos turísticos.

Resumen

Com base en una revisión del concepto de eudaimonía, el estudio propone una definición para el constructo experiencia turística eudaimónica e identifica 15 potenciales dimensiones constituyentes del constructo, a partir de una extensa revisión de la literatura en los ámbitos de la psicología positiva, psicología existencial-humanista, psicología del desarrollo (estudios sobre la formación de la identidad en la línea Eriksoniana) y del turismo (estudios sobre la experiencia turística transformadora). Con el objetivo de validar las dimensiones teorizadas, una encuesta con 569 sujetos es emprendida y el análisis factorial exploratorio sobre los datos extrajo seis factores (Alteridad y Benevolencia, Intimidad y Pertenencia, Significación personal, Apertura al nuevo, Autonomía y maduración) que explicaron el 62,636% de la varianza total. Com fuerte fundamentación teórica y empírica, el estudio buscó contribuir con el entendimiento de los procesos transformativos proporcionados por las experiencias turísticas, proporcionando una estructura multidimensional para experiencias eudaimónicas en contextos turísticos.

1 INTRODUCTION

Studies have shown the tourist experience as a journey of self-discovery or a process of self-knowledge and the impacts that reflections raised in liminal conditions induce in the individuals' conceptions about themselves and their reality (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017, Kirillova, Lehto, & Cai, 2016a, Coghlan & Weiler, 2015, Lean, Staiff, & Waterton, 2014, Voigt, Brown, & Howat, 2011, Wearing, Stevenson, & Young, 2010, Andrews, 2009, Noy, 2004). In those studies, tourism experience is taken as a process that triggers personal transformations, leading to self-identity redefinitions.

Wearing, Stevenson and Young (2010: 36), for instance, view tourism as a "[...] process of expanded social interaction whereby self-identity has the potential for enlargement and growth through the engagement of the tourist with other environments, peoples, societies and cultures". In turn, Desforges (2000) argues that travels enable reflection and can provide a series of answers to questions about self-identity. For Neumann (1992: 179), "Journeys provide the opportunity to acquire experiences that become the basis for the production of identity and are revealed through the narratives that emerge from travel experiences".

Identity formation results from two processes, one of discovery and one of creation (Waterman, 1984). In the first process, something that preexists the individual, his/her true self, needs to be "discovered". In the second one, the individual is born without a true self, but his/her identity is built in a continuous process of choices made by the individual him/herself, among the limitless possibilities that come before them. The metaphor of self-discovery is mainly based on the philosophers of ancient Greece. The famous phrase attributed to Socrates – Know thyself – but corresponding to an apocryphal inscription of the temple of Apollo in Delphos, sums up the foundation of this paradigm. On the other hand, the creation metaphor is based mainly on the existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre (Waterman, 1984).

Waterman (Waterman, Schwartz, & Conti, 2008, Waterman, 2004, 1993, 1990) suggests that the development of identity will have a better chance in succeeding when individuals could identify their best potentials and engage in activities that lead them to their fulfillment. The author asserts that the recognition of individual own potentialities happens during experiences that allow the individual feelings of personal expressiveness, which he called eudaimonic experiences, rescuing the word *eudaimonia* from ancient Greece, associated with Aristotle, that relates it to the *supreme good*, many times translated as happiness or *true self*.

The idea of eudaimonic experience has inspired many studies in the field of tourism in recent years (Kirillova, Lehto, & Cai, 2017, Filep, Laing, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2017, Knoblock, Robertson, & Aitken, 2016, Matteucci & Filep, 2015, Alexander & Bakir, 2013, Filep & Deery, 2010, Voigt, Howat, & Brown, 2010). These researches use concepts and theories of the emerging field of positive psychology to study tourism as a facilitator of inner growth and evoker of the components of human well-being and flourishing, synthesized by the acronym PERMA – Positive emotions, Engagement in meaningful activities, positive Relationships, Meaning and purpose in life and Achievement (Filep & Pearce, 2013, Seligman, 2011).

Even though these studies approach the tourist experience as a vector for the well-being and the development of the self, they explore in a different way the many aspects of the eudaimonic experience, besides giving little emphasis to the matter of self-discovery, that underlies to the concept of eudaimonia, the search for the true self. This premise grounds in the Waterman's (Waterman, Schwartz, & Conti, 2008, Waterman, 2004) orientation that the most successful resolutions of self-identity are the ones that come from self-discovery processes, with the identification and development of talents and abilities that represent the best individual potential, directly related to personal significant commitments (Waterman, Schwartz, Zamboanga, Ravert, Williams, Agocha, Kim, & Donnellan, 2010).

Thus, identifying which aspects are the most significant to personal development provided by travel experiences is essential for a more complete understanding of the transformative processes provided by tourism. A search for the terms "eudaimonia" and "tourism", in Portuguese and English, in bases EBSCO, SciELO and Spell, for the interval between 2008 and 2018, did not find studies that demonstrated a dimensional structure for the eudaimonic experience in tourism settings. The quantitative studies found approached eudaimonia by the construct well-being (subjective or psychological) or under the theme of quality of life. From all indications, there seems to be a gap in the literature related to the conceptual and empirical structuring of the eudaimonic tourism experience construct.

Thus, the present study aims to contribute to fill this gap, guided by the following question: what aspects of personal development are perceived by people on trips considered meaningful for the definition of who they are in the current moment of their lives?

In order to answer this question, three main goals were established: (1) to elaborate a definition for the construct *eudaimonic tourist experience* from the understanding of the idea of eudaimonia; (2) to identify in the literature the possible components of an eudaimonic experience; and (3) to uncover empirically the factors that take part in the eudaimonic tourist experience. An extensive literature review about positive psychology, existential-humanistic psychology, developmental psychology (studies on identity formation), and tourism (studies on tourism experience) was aimed at the first two objectives. Third objective was fulfilled with a survey undertaken with people who have gone through a travel experience that had some influence on who they are today.

There are 5 sections in this article, including this introduction. The second section shows the theoretical framework. The third section explains the survey's methodological procedures, while the fourth section presents the survey results. The fifth section closes the article with the main conclusions and scope of the findings, highlighting the limitations of the study and suggestions for future studies.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Positive psychology and the concept of *eudaimonia*

The study of the development of human capacities from the full realization of the inner self has been driven by research in the field called positive psychology. In the wake of humanistic psychology, positive psychology abandons the "disease model" and follows the orientation of the prevention of mental illness, being interested in the discovery of what works well in the ordinary human being, understanding their strengths and virtues, and studying what is developed and improved in the person (Seligman, 2002). From this perspective, positive psychology attempts to establish a more appreciative view and a more open stance on human potentialities, motives, and capacities (Sheldom & King, 2001). In general, as in existential-humanistic psychology, positive psychology can be understood as the study of the processes and conditions that lead to flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups and institutions, through the paradigmatic inversion of "pathological thinking", putting the emphasis on potentialities and enabling a more holistic understanding of human functioning (Gable & Haidt, 2005).

Positive psychology relies heavily on the principles of existential-humanistic psychology but seeks to give a more scientific character to the concepts of its antecedent psychological school and older philosophy ideas, such as happiness, well-living or good living, by attempting to develop empirically verifiable constructs. Many concepts and theories that are established today in the field of positive psychology were developed prior to its baptism in the late 1990s and early 2000s, such as the theory of self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2017,

2000), the constructs of subjective well-being (Diener, 1984) and psychological well-being (Ryff & Singer, 2008, 1998), the theory of the personal expressiveness (Waterman, 2008, 1993), the flow theory (Csikszent-mihalyi, 1990), and the concepts of personal growth, self-actualization (Maslow, 1993) and full functioning (Rogers, 2009), that come from humanistic psychology. The core concept that has guided researches in the field of positive psychology is *eudaimonia*.

In Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle advocates that the good life would be the one lived in harmony with the *daimon* (Waterman, 1993), and therefore eudaimonia is the kind of life that is thought to be better, or more valuable, or more desirable (Waterman, 1990). According to Norton (1976), *daimon* would be a spirit that people receive when they are born. However, the most accepted understanding of *daimon* is the meaning of the *true self*, or "[...] a set of innate characteristics that each person is born with and must discover within his or her self" (Schlegel, Hicks, & Christy, 2016: 205). In this way, eudaimonia would be a state reached from the effort to live according to the *daimon*, understood as an ideal of excellence and perfection that gives meaning and direction to life (Waterman, 1993). This search takes place through the realization of one's own capabilities and those shared by all human beings (Waterman, 1993).

The discovery of the true self would be supported by three principles or pivotal behavioral drivers, according to the authors of existential-humanistic psychology: (1) the quest for personal growth, "[...] an active will toward health, an impulse toward growth, or toward the actualization of human potentialities" (Maslow, 1993: 24); (2) the pursuit of self-actualization, the coming of one's own self through the realization of one's own talents, potentials and capacities, acceptance of your own nature, and toward integration and inner unity (Maslow, n. d.); and (3) the principle of full functioning (Rogers, 2009), derived from the first two, which would take into account the broader life context of the individual. According to this principle, the fully functioning individual is open to the experiences provided by life, being either objectively or subjectively, which brings with them a series of related attitudes, such as tolerance to ambiguity and the tendency to perceive events with neutrality, without distorting them defensively or with censorship of consciousness (Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

The eudaimonic state has been translated as the equivalent of happiness, achieved through the full realization of true human nature and the exercise of personal and potential virtues in pursuit of the supreme good (Delle Fave, Brdar, Freire, Vella-Brodrick, & Wissing, 2011). However, according to Ryan and Martela (2016), the concept of eudaimonia is misinterpreted when conceived solely as the equivalent to happiness or as a subjective experience that resembles pleasure or engagement. For the authors, eudaimonia should be understood as a way of life that prioritizes virtue and fullness, whose ingredients contribute to happiness and prosperity. In this sense, the authors argue that the eudaimonic way of life is characterized by intrinsic goals, autonomy, mindfulness, and benevolence, factors that can lead to the improvement of well-being.

Ryan and Martela's (2016) conceptualization resembles the so-called perfectionist happiness, defined as the synonym of eudaimonia (Sirgy & Uysal, 2016). In contrast to psychological happiness (hedonia) and prudent happiness (satisfaction with life), perfectionist happiness refers to a life that is good in every aspect, including the moral life (Sirgy & Uysal, 2016).

However, the term eudaimonia has been better understood as flourishing (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2017, Huppert & So, 2013, Seligman, 2011, Ryff & Keyes, 1995, Keyes & Haidt, 2003) and it has been this the focus given by studies in the new field of positive psychology. Conceiving well-being from the idea of eudaimonia (Huta, 2016, Waterman et al., 2010, Kashdan, Biswas-Diener, & King, 2008, Waterman, 2008, 1993, 1990; Ryan & Deci, 2001) instead of hedonic feeling or satisfaction with owns' life (Diener, 1984) allows a more complete understanding of the psychological factors that facilitate the development of individual innate potentials, contribute to self-actualization, and provide flourishing (Gallagher, Lopez, & Preacher, 2009).

Based on these conceptualizations, the eudaimonic tourist experience can be defined as the perceived set of benefits related to personal growth, self-actualization, perceptions related to self-discovery and self-awareness and to the development of one's own potentialities, making possible the process of realization of the inner self or the self-identity, all provided by engaging in personally expressive activities and subjective reflections arising from experience in a tourism setting.

2.2 Tourism experience and positive personal transformations

Kirillova, Lehto and Cai (2017) argue that transformative experiences are especially extraordinary events that not only trigger intense emotional responses, but also lead to self-exploration, serve as a vehicle for deep intrapersonal changes, and provide the optimal human functioning. Bestrom (2009) clarifies that to put one-self outside the domain of familiarity, as being the traveler, the other, the foreigner, creates a different perspective, which entails a valuable view of the meaning of difference and the identity in our world. Reisinger (2013) defines transformation as an irreversible change in relation to personal growth through a process of fundamental rupture with past or current practices, requiring new knowledge. Kottler (2002) explains that by traveling and exposing oneself to diversity, to unfamiliar persons and places, one can be led to a process of change of perspective with lasting impact on one's life, changing the course of knowledge, values, attitudes, and behavior.

Kottler (2002, 1998) states that often in foreign lands (which may be within the country) the person under-goes an irrevocable and permanent change as a result of what he/she has found and what he/she has learned. According to the author, in general, such travel experiences result from six possible situations that can act in a combined way: (1) one is forced to solve problems in a new way, since in places with cultures different from that of his/her own, the individual has to meet his/her needs in a way he/she is not used to; (2) when the person finds oneself in a new environment and is faced with new and different stimuli; different contexts, sounds, smells, and sensations make the person hypersensitive to his/her environment; (3) when a person is lost or facing adversity, but is able to survive in a way that makes him/her more resilient; many transformative journeys occur when the structures of daily life, such as time and routine, crumble, then the individual feels "lost" and disoriented; (4) *when a person develops new relationships or increases levels of intimacy in a current relationship*; (5) *when one develops a different perspective on life, seeing it through the eyes of a different culture*; and, (6) when individual's core beliefs are shaken to the point where the person is led to great changes in his/her return; travel experiences in a different culture challenge beliefs and the worldview one has, often requiring the examination of one's own most appreciated assumptions about one-self and the world.

Through an extensive review of the literature in the domains of positive psychology, humanistic-existential psychology, developmental psychology—studies on identity formation—and the tourism field, specifically studies about personal transformations provided by tourism experiences, 15 dimensions potentially constituent of the *eudaimonic tourist experience* were synthesized. Chart 1 below explains each of the dimensions, corresponding definitions, and their main theoretical sources.

Chart 1 – Theorized dimensions of the Eudaimonic Tourist Experience (continue)

Dimension	Definition	Theoretical sources
Meaning and Purpose in life	The sense and meaning attributed to the nature of the being and existence itself (Steger, Frazier, Oisho, & Kaler, 2006); Objectives and intentions that give a sense of guidance and contribute to giving meaning to life.	Kirillova, Lehto, & Cai, 2017, Huta, 2016, Frankl, 2016, Waterman et al., 2010, Seligman, 2011, Ryff & Singer, 2008, 2003, Steger et al., 2006, Huta & Ryan, 2010, Ryan & Deci, 2001, Erikson, 1972, Ryff, 1989, Jahoda, 1958
Self-Development and Personal Growth	Perception that, over time, the person developed as someone with their own personality and characteristics and evolved as a human being; desire, willingness and disposition to continue developing with the realization of the best potentials and abilities, acquisition of knowledge and skills, and the conviction that one is always in a continuous process of improvement; courage to face and overcome adversities and trials of life from the inner strength.	Huta, 2016, Waterman et al., 2010, Rogers, 2009, Ryff & Singer, 2008, 1996, Ryff, 1989

Chart 1 – Theorized dimensions of the Eudaimonic Tourist Experience (continuation)

Dimension	Definition	Theoretical sources
Self-Awareness and Self-Acceptance	Willingness to know oneself, recognizing the positive and negative characteristics, with impartiality and resignation; Consciousness of the positive and negative aspects of oneself, but with a positive attitude towards them, recognizing one's limitations and orienting oneself towards overcoming characteristics that are changeable and that have not proved effective in facing the challenges of life (Ryff & Keyes, 2008, 1995).	Schlegel, Hicks, & Christy, 2016, Matteucci & Filep, 2015, Waterman et al., 2010, Rogers, 2009, Ryff & Singer, 2008, 1996, Kernis & Goldman, 2006, Waterman, 2007; 2004, 1984
Self-expressiveness	Intense involvement in activities that make full use of the best skills and talents and are the exact translation of who the person is; personally meaningful activities that are accompanied by feelings of self-realization and great experience that give meaning and direction to life.	Waterman et al., 2010, Waterman, 2008, 2004, 1993, 1992, 1990
Belonging	Sense of belonging to a community or group of people with whom the same experience or situation is shared; relationships devoid of status that come from social roles and hierarchy; feeling of equality and "connection".	Kirillova, Lehto, & Cai, 2017, Wang, 1999, Arnould & Price, 1993
Intimacy and Relationship	Having harmonious and trusting relationship with other people; sincerity and openness to people close to you and concern with your well-being and happiness; reciprocity and empathy; give and receive love, affection, tenderness, warmth, and support.	Kirillova, Lehto, & Cai, 2017, Ryff & Singer, 2008, 2003, 1996, Kernis & Goldman, 2006, Kottler, 2002, 1998, Wang, 1999, Erikson, 1972
Authenticity and Spontaneity	Being who you truly are; to act according to your true self and in accordance with your own values, needs and convictions; present yourself in a way that reflects your own essence and relates honestly and truthfully with other people.	Kirillova, Lehto, & Cai, 2017, Canavan, 2017, Kirillova, Lehto, & Cai, 2016b, Huta, 2016, Kirillova & Lehto, 2015, Xue, Manuel-Navarrete, & Buzinde, 2014, Brown, 2013, Rickly-Boyd, 2012, Kim & Jamal, 2007, Seligman, 2011, Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph, 2008, Kernis & Goldman, 2006, Peterson & Seligman, 2004, Wang, 1999
Autonomy	Capability to think and act independently, to have ideas and convictions of your own, even if they go against accepted "dogma" or popular wisdom (Hidalgo, Bravo, Martínez, Pretel, Postigo, & Rabadán, 2010).	Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2000, Ryan, Deci, Grolnick, & La Guardia, 2006, Ryff & Singer, 2008, 2003, Erikson, 1972, Ryff, 1989, Jahoda, 1958
Competence	The feeling that one can accomplish some activity or enterprise.	Ryan & Deci, 2017, Ryan et al., 2006, Peterson & Seligman, 2004, Erikson, 1972
Excellence	Extra effort to achieve high standards of performance, behavior, and ethics.	Huta, 2016, Huta & Ryan, 2010, Waterman et al., 2010, Peterson & Seligman, 2004
Empathy	Capability to put yourself in someone else's shoes, trying to understand their perspective of the situation.	Bestrom, 2009, Ryff & Singer, 2008, 2003, 1996, Kottler, 2002, 1998, Ryff, 1989

Chart 1 – Theorized dimensions of the Eudaimonic Tourist Experience (conclusion)

Dimension	Definition	Theoretical sources
Tolerance	Capability to accept differences; to live with people who have ideas, beliefs, ways of life and values that are different from those of person.	Bestrom, 2009, Kottler, 2002, 1998
Broadened perspective	A developed sense of perception that considers different points of view and understandings about the same phenomenon, providing a more lucid understanding about the facts of life.	Bestrom, 2009, Peterson & Seligman, 2004, Roberson, 1999, Kottler, 2002, 1998, Maslow, 1959
Benevolence	Capability to offer help, care, and generosity in a spontaneous and disinterested way; to have compassion and selfless love.	Ryan & Martela, 2016, Seligman, 2011, Peterson & Seligman, 2004
Opening to the new	Willingness to new experiences; open minded to new ideas, ways of life and possibilities.	Seligman, 2011, Rogers, 2009, Ryff & Singer, 2008, 1996, Peterson e Seligman, 2004

Source: Authors' elaboration from reviewed literature.

3 MATERIAL AND METHODS

3.1 Measuring scales

To access each of the theorized dimensions of the eudaimonic tourist experience (ETE), 96 items were developed from the literature review. The items were aimed to reflect some aspects of the dimension they represented, considering its definition, and were measured on a 10-point scale (1 = Nothing to do with me/ 10 = Everything to do with me).

3.2 Data collection and preparation

Five hundred and seventy-eight (578) questionnaires were obtained between May 25, 2018 and September 15, 2018. From this total, 411 were paper-and-pencil questionnaires and 167 represented responses from its digital version, hosted on the Google Docs™ platform and made available via email and social networks (Facebook™ and WhatsApp™).

The paper-and-pencil survey was preceded by a visit to Higher Education Institutions located in the capital of the Brazilian state of Alagoas (place of residence of the first author) and the proper explanation of the aims of the investigation to the Directors and Program Coordinators in order to get their agreement with the survey. Once authorized, the questionnaire was administered to students in class, with the presence of the respective teacher.

Those who freely accepted to participate in the study were asked to remember the travel experience that most contributed to who they were in the current moment of their lives. Based on the memories of this travel experience, participants responded to the survey. The minimum response time was 25 minutes and the maximum time was about 45 minutes. Data from paper-and-pencil questionnaires were entered into the statistical software (SPSS™). Data from the online questionnaire were automatically recorded on Google Docs™ platform and then exported to the same SPSS™ database.

After initial assessments, data were submitted to exploratory data analysis—checking and treatment of missing data, outliers, and normality. The final sample consisted of 569 subjects, enough to perform the exploratory factor analysis, according to the rule of at least 5 observations for each analyzed variable (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014).

3.3 Data analysis

In order to reduce the total number of items and to verify the latent dimensional structure of the empirical data, the exploratory factor analysis was carried out by principal component analysis, using oblimin rotation, which is preferable when there are constructs significantly based on theory (Hair et al., 2014).

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Sample sociodemographic profile

Men were slightly predominant in the study, representing 53.6% of the valid observations. The vast majority were singles, representing 61.6% of the valid total of observations. Almost half of the subjects in the sample had a high-school education, around 48.4% of the valid observations, while 24.9% had a university degree.

The ages of the subjects varied from 18 to 74 years old, with a mean of 29.22 years. The majority was between 18 and 35 years old. The most common value was 19 years, while the central value was 26 years. Table 1 below summarizes the sample sociodemographic profile.

Table 1 – Sample sociodemographic profile

Gender		Male 53.6%			Female 46.4%		
Marital status	Single	Married	Separated / Divorced	Stable union	Widowed		
	61.6%	25.7%	6.7%	5.1%	0.9%		
Formal education	Primary	Secondary	Superior	Spec/MBA	MSc	PhD	
	0.9%	48.4%	24.9%	11.1%	11.0%	3.7%	
Age	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Min.	Max.
	29.22	26	19	11.153	1.368	1.534	18	74

Source: Authors' elaboration from SPSS™ output.

4.2 Exploratory factor analysis

The 96 items designed to operationalize the 15 dimensions theorized as possible components of the *eudaimonic tourist experience* (ETE) construct, from their theoretical definition, were submitted to the principal component analysis with oblique factor rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of sample adequacy (KMO = 0.956) and the Bartlett test of sphericity (χ^2 = 15409.028; 861 g.l, p < 0.001) indicated the feasibility of factor analysis. Items with low communalities (less than 0.400) were excluded, as well as those with factor loadings less than 0.600 or loaded in more than one factor. As a result, 55 items were excluded. Six factors were extracted in the final solution, accounting for 62.636% of the total variance. The internal consistency of each factor was high, with Cronbach's α always above the minimum thresholds (0.797 ≤ α ≤ 0.932). Table 2 summarizes the results of the factor solution.

Table 2 – Eudaimonic Tourist Experience factor solution   (continue)

Factor	Items	Factor loading	h²	% explained variance	Mean	Std. deviation	α
Alterity and Benevolence	ED_054_I learned to put myself in the other person's shoes before acting or making any kind of judgment in a specific situation.	0.835	0.729		7.554	2.401	
	ED_092_I became more interested and sensitive toward other people's problems.	0.761	0.651	39.092	7.264	2.490	0.932
	ED_036_I realized that one should not judge the other by their general characteristics.	0.722	0.570		8.053	2.428	
	ED_055_I learned that people should not be judged based on the ideas that we had before we actually knew them.	0.814	0.694		7.814	2.404	

Table 2 – Eudaimonic Tourist Experience factor solution   (continuation)

Factor	Items	Factor loading	h²	% explained variance	Mean	Std. deviation	α
	ED_056_I realized that the reality that I believed I knew was just one of several versions of the facts.	0.683	0.515		7.594	2.393	
	ED_075_I realized that the reality is very different from the one we usually know when we experience it closely.	0.658	0.588		8.015	2.139	
	ED_094_I understood that there is always another version for the facts and that you should try to know all possible versions so that you have an idea of that is closer to the truth.	0.654	0.581		7.820	2.268	
	ED_038_I developed the need to help whoever I see that needs help.	0.783	0.634		7.354	2.489	
	ED_057_I started not to omit myself from the needs and difficulties of people.	0.763	0.627		6.927	2.556	
	ED_076_I have started to worry more about the conditions in which people live and try to explore a way to help them as best as I can.	0.826	0.717		7.331	2.436	
	ED_065_I felt deeply connected to a group of people.	0.708	0.606		7.068	2.692	
	ED_066_ I felt a sense of mutual trust with the people with whom I shared those moments, having no need to gain or take advantage of them, and we were totally detached from our roles and functions from our normal lives.	0.809	0.681	7.896	7.450	2.559	0.920
Intimacy and Belonging	ED_048_There was a friendly atmosphere in which I felt comfortable with.	0.708	0.626		7.288	2.633	
	ED_049_There was solidarity and harmony among the people with whom I was connecting.	0.717	0.602		7.594	2.406	
	ED_067_I became more intimate with those who accompanied me.	0.831	0.705		7.636	2.501	
	ED_068_I used to try to make the group feel as good as I felt.	0.812	0.667		7.565	2.442	
	ED_085_I got closer to the people that are important to me.	0.728	0.596		7.775	2.385	
	ED_086_The people seemed to care about me.	0.818	0.681		7.508	2.410	

Table 2 – Eudaimonic Tourist Experience factor solution (continuation)

Factor	Items	Factor loading	h²	% explained variance	Mean	Std. deviation	α
	ED_087_The hours I spent with other people were pleasant and without gain or advantage intentions.	0.782	0.640		7.792	2.315	
	ED_002_The ideas I have about the purpose of my life have been strengthened.	0.753	0.617		6.966	2.538	
	ED_021_I figured out a meaning for my existence.	0.795	0.686		6.029	2.933	
	ED_022_I was certain of what goals I should accomplish in life.	0.795	0.643		6.970	2.592	
Personal Significance	ED_078_I was able to set clear goals and purpose for my life.	0.686	0.565	5.893	6.963	2.534	0.893
	ED_025_I found out more about who I am.	0.733	0.615		7.079	2.491	
	ED_044_I have solved many of my inner issues.	0.690	0.547		5.966	2.720	
	ED_007_I engaged in activities that made me feel who I really am.	0.700	0.550		6.882	2.786	
	ED_027_I engaged in activities that gave me a certainty of what I should do in my life.	0.720	0.537		6.335	2.886	
	ED_020_I learned to appreciate different and even exotic ways of life.	0.680	0.540		7.209	2.698	
Opening to the new	ED_058_I started to enjoy exploring the unknown.	0.681	0.517	3.934	7.527	2.575	0.797
	ED_095_The willing to explore new things and places was awakened in me.	0.846	0.742		7.950	2.299	
	ED_096_I learned to try new possibilities.	0.847	0.735		8.065	2.195	
	ED_031_I could express my ideas and worldview without worrying about what people might think about me.	-0.784	0.667		6.553	2.785	
	ED_032_I felt fully refreshed, both physically and mentally.	-0.612	0.596		7.437	2.613	
Autonomy	ED_050_I did not have to pretend or lie about what I thought or felt regarding something, just to please other people.	-0.628	0.481	3.311	7.443	2.776	0.847
	ED_013_I felt free to express my ideas and opinions.	-0.704	0.569		7.052	2.633	
	ED_033_I was feeling safe to be and act the way I am, without worrying about what people might think of me.	-0.792	0.676		7.154	2.609	

Table 2 – Eudaimonic Tourist Experience factor solution (conclusion)

Factor	Items	Factor loading	h²	% explained variance	Mean	Std. deviation	α
Maturation	ED_052_I strengthened what I thought and believed, without gaining the approval of others.	-0.618	0.546		7.246	2.634	
	ED_042_I understood that for any human being, regardless of age, the act of living is a process of learning and maturing.	-0.711	0.649		8.673	2.026	
	ED_061_I have learned that people are continually developing.	-0.674	0.672	2.510	8.193	2.082	0.833
	ED_062_I realized that we need to learn from the lessons life throws at us and that facing difficulties makes us stronger human beings.	-0.757	0.759		8.321	2.069	

Source: Authors' elaboration from SPSS™ output.

4.2.1 Factor interpretation

The **first factor** comprised 11 items that originally represented the dimensions Empathy (ED_054; ED_092), Tolerance (ED_036; ED_055; ED_074), Broadened perspective (ED_056; ED_075; ED_094) and Benevolence (ED_038; ED_057; ED_076), accounting for 39.092 % of total variance. The factor internal consistency was quite high (α = 0.932). The items allude to a process of awareness of the other, ranging from the perception of realities other than that of the individual, through empathy, acceptance of other ways of life and understanding of differences, culminating with an altruistic and benevolent attitude.

Empathy means the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes, trying to understand his/her perspective on the situation (Bestrom, 2009, Ryff & Singer, 2008, 2003, 1996, Kottler, 2002, 1998). Tolerance corresponds to the ability to accept differences; to live with people who have ideas, beliefs, ways and lifestyles, and values different from those of the person (Bestrom, 2009, Kottler, 2002, 1998). In turn, Broadened perspective represents the developed sense of perception that considers different points of view and understandings about the same phenomenon, providing a more lucid understanding of the facts of life (Bestrom, 2009, Peterson & Seligman, 2004, Roberson, 1999, Kottler, 2002, 1998, Maslow, 1959). Benevolence corresponds to the ability to offer help, care, and generosity in a spontaneous and disinterested way; showing compassion and selfless love (Ryan & Martela, 2016, Seligman, 2011, Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

In order to reflect the process of awareness of other possible realities and the recognition of the other, which includes the items representative of Empathy, Tolerance and the Broadened perspective, it was chosen to name this set of Alterity. However, this name disregards the characteristic of altruism that is highlighted by items representative of the original dimension Benevolence. Thus, to preserve the concepts of the original dimensions, the name chosen for the factor was Alterity and Benevolence, beginning to include all the personal transformations suggested by the indicators.

The **second factor** consisted of 9 items that came from the original dimensions Belonging (ED_065; ED_066) and Intimacy/Relationship (ED_048; ED_049; ED_067; ED_068; ED_085; ED_086; ED_87), representing the social aspect of the tourism experience. The names of the original dimensions were kept to designate

the factor: Intimacy and Belonging. The factor accounted for 7.896% of the total variance and its internal consistency was high (α = 0.920).

Intimacy and Belonging is about having a harmonious and confident relationship with other people. It represents sincerity and openness to close ones. Also, it means concern with their well-being and happiness and it includes reciprocity and empathy. It corresponds to giving and receiving love, affection, and support (Ryff & Singer, 2008, Kernis & Goldman, 2006, Wang, 1999, Kottler, 2002, 1998, Ryff, 1989, Erikson, 1972). Relationship is a basic human need and almost all theoretical and clinical approaches to human development include the domain of interpersonal relationships as crucial to a well-lived life (Ryff & Singer, 2008).

Ryan and Deci (2017) argue that the need for relationship refers to the feeling of being socially connected and that feeling is even stronger when people feel cared for others. However, the authors emphasize that the need for relationship, or, as they also refer to, for belonging, also includes feeling important and necessary to other people. In this sense, belonging concerns as experiencing oneself as contributing (in the sense of "donating oneself") to the lives of other people. Ryan and Deci (2017) also include here the broader aspect of the relationship, linked to an integration with social organizations and groups, when feelings of belonging and benevolence are present.

The meaningful connection with other people has been reported in the tourism and leisure literature as an important factor in episodes of positive personal transformations and in promoting wellbeing. Kirillova, Lehto and Cai (2017) identified two types of meaningful connection with others in their study with individuals who reported episodes of personal transformation in their respective journeys: (1) those that, in conditions of liminality, evoked a sense of community, reproducing the concept of *communitas* (Turner, 2013), and (2) those resulting from encounters with members of the local community. In addition, for the study participants who traveled in the company of friends or family, the authors found that the relationship among them became stronger, contributing to making the trip more meaningful.

In the Matteucci and Filep (2015) study with tourists who asserted experiencing a spiritual experience in the presence and participation of flamenco, a dance and intangible heritage of Spain from the region of Andalusia, it was verified that both the physical environment and the interactions among the participants could trigger significant experiences. Matteucci (2013) concludes that "The contribution of positive social interactions to spiritual experiences is consistent with research that underscores the relationship between spirituality and psychological adjustment through factors such as perceived social support [...]" (Matteucci, 2013: 121).

In order to explain the connection that the participants stated to feel among each other, Matteucci and Filep (2015) highlight the *communitas* episode experienced by tourists. Quoting Turner (2013), the authors reproduce the definition of the phenomenon: "[...] a mix of 'lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship' that emanates from the positive liminal tourism experience" (Matteucci & Filep, 2015: 7). The authors state that as a result of social interactions, there was a feeling of friendship and the establishment of special ties with flamenco artists and colleagues, contributing to a positive environment.

In an already classic study, Arnould and Price (1993) verified the *communitas* phenomenon among rafting participants. The authors observed an evolutionary feeling of communion with friends, family, and strangers. According to Arnould and Price (1993), *communitas* arises in a subtle way over time, with the emergence

and intensification of the "feelings of linkage, of belonging, of group devotion to a transcendent goal [...] facilitated by proximity forced by the narrow canyons, small camping areas, boats, and teamwork associated with rafting itself" (Arnould & Price 1993: 34).

Saunders, Laing, and Weiler (2013) investigated long-distance walkers and verified how the social benefits of this activity can be transformative. The researchers observed that, in meeting other people who think the same way, some participants entered a new social world, participating in other walks with the same group. The conclusions of the scholars revealed that "[...] interpersonal relationships as well as an awareness of the needs of others lead to personal growth outcomes for long-distance walkers" (Filep & Pearce, 2013: 225).

Finally, there are abundant evidences of the presence of a dimension that reflects the social aspect of the tourist experience and the eudaimonic processes related to it, especially regarding the feeling of connection and belonging, a fundamental human need. The feeling of affiliation or the sense of social relationship seems to be a fundamental promoter of well-being (Newman, Tay, & Diener, 2014, Alexander & Bakir, 2013) and of the development of the self.

The **third factor** was composed by items originating from the dimensions Meaning and Purpose in life (ED_002; ED_021; ED_022; ED_078), Self-knowledge and Self-acceptance (ED_025; ED_044) and Self-expressiveness (ED_007; ED_027), accounting for 5.893% of the total variance, and showing high internal consistency (α = 0.893).

The Meaning and Purpose in life concerns the meaning attributed to the nature of being and to the own existence (Steger et al., 2006), and corresponds to the goals and intentions that give a sense of direction and contribute to give meaning to life (Seligman, 2011, Waterman *et al.*, 2010, Ryff & Singer, 2008, Deci, 2001, Erikson, 1972, Jahoda, 1958). For Ryff and Singer (2003), the purpose of life corresponds to the capacity to find meaning and direction in one's own experiences and to propose and set goals for one's own life. According to Waterman et al. (2010), in order to achieve the state of eudaimonia, it is not enough to identify and recognize the best talents and abilities, but also to decide where to direct the life goals related to those talents and abilities. In this sense, individuals need to find ways to use their skills and talents in pursuit of personally meaningful goals (Waterman *et al.*, 2010).

The Self-expressiveness dimension reflects a fundamental aspect in the eudaimonic experience (Waterman et al., 2010, Waterman, Schwartz, & Conti, 2008, Waterman, 2004), referring to the engagement in activities that demand the best use of their own potentialities and capacities and which are personally meaningful.

The Self-awareness and Self-acceptance dimension represents the willingness to know oneself, recognizing the positive and negative characteristics with impartiality and resignation, orienting in the direction of overcoming the characteristics that are susceptible of modification and that have not shown to be effective in facing the challenges of the life (Hidalgo et al., 2010, Ryff & Keyes, 2008, 1995, Erikson, 1972). According to Waterman et al. (2010), eudaimonic ethics invites each person to recognize and to live according to his/her *daimon*, that is, to strive to actualize the true self. According to this philosophy, knowing oneself precedes striving to achieve oneself (Waterman et al., 2010).

Personal meaningfulness was the name originally given by Waterman (2004, 1990) for a neglected aspect in identity development researches that were guided by James Marcia's (1966) identity status paradigm.

After analyzing thousands of interviews accessing identity status, Waterman identified a previously unrecorded dimension in the identity formation literature. This new dimension was added to the two first dimensions—exploration and commitment—fundamental for the classification of identity status. In Waterman's words (2004: 210):

> As I listened to the interviews, particularly with identity achievers in various domains the distinction became apparent that there were some respondents for whom their commitments were personally expressive, intrinsically motivated choices. In contrast, for other respondents, the commitments made were primarily instrumental choices, extrinsically motivated, by which they could make their way in the world with relative success. In other words, although this instrumental group, after the consideration of alternatives, had found something to do, the more expressive respondents had found someone to be […].

Waterman (1990) called this new dimension—*personal meaningfulness*—of *Personal expressiveness* and equated it with the concept of *eudaimonia*. Thus, in order to represent all the items loaded in the factor and the three corresponding original dimensions, in addition to avoiding the occurrence of tautology, in calling a component of the theorized construct by its own name [*eudaimonia*], Personal meaningfulness was the chosen name for the factor.

The **fourth factor** was composed entirely of items from the dimension Opening to the new (ED_020, ED_058, ED_095, ED_096), retaining, thus, the original name for the factor, which accounted for 3.943% of the total data variance and its four items presented good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.797$). Opening to the new corresponds to the readiness for new experiences; opening to new ideas, ways of life and possibilities (Seligman, 2011, Rogers, 2009, Ryff & Singer, 2008, 2003, Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Opening to the new is a feature of fully functional people (Rogers, 2009), who live the moment in their fullness, are flexible and experience themselves in a fluid, non-static and rigid way, as well as being self-confident, guiding themselves without fear by their intuitions, since they rely on their subjective experiences (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). A striking feature of these attitudes concerns of how the individual experiences freedom and, in turn, how he/she perceives daily experiences (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). For example, even if the environment presents as immobilizing, the individual still has the choice of how to respond and feel about this limitation (Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

The **fifth factor** grouped items originating from the dimensions Authenticity and Spontaneity (ED_031; ED_032; ED_050; ED_078) and Autonomy (ED_013; ED_033; ED_52), accounting for 3.311% of the data variance. The factor internal consistency was high ($\alpha = 0.847$). Except for item ED_032 [*I felt fully invigorated, physically, and mentally*], all the others allude to the independence of thought and opinion, more defining characteristics of Autonomy, which is why the factor was thus named.

Autonomy refers to the ability to think and act independently, having own ideas and convictions, even if they go against accepted "dogma" or conventional wisdom (Hidalgo et al., 2010). For Ryan and Deci (2017), what characterizes autonomy is the person's self-endorsed behaviors, congruent with his/her interests and authentic values. Rogers (2009) states that people who function fully have the internal locus of evaluation, guiding themselves only through their own personal standards, not requiring the approval of others to make decisions and act. Moreover, because of self-confidence and their attitude of flexibility and freedom, fully functional individuals are creative in their approach to living, refusing to retreat into modes of behavior that become unnecessarily restrictive (Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

The **sixth factor** was composed entirely of items from the original dimension Self-development and Personal growth (ED_042; ED_061; ED_095; ED_062), but their items captured the aspect of maturation as a person, reflected in the understanding of the development of all individuals, and in the comprehension that people learn throughout their lives and in the acceptance of the very act of living.

Such meanings refer to a more resolute attitude towards life, characteristic of more mature people. In order to translate more precisely the content of the items, and considering that the items do not cover all the aspects related to the dimension Self-development and Personal growth (although they are partially contemplated), the name Maturation was chosen for the factor. The factor accounted for smallest amount of data variation (2.510%), but its internal consistency was high ($\alpha = 0.833$), despite the reduced number of items.

From the analysis and interpretation of the data, it can be seen that, except for the positive emotions element, which emphasizes more the hedonic aspect of the process of human flourishing (Sirgy & Uysal, 2016, Seligman, 2011), the dimensions of the eudaimonic experience capture elements of the related PERMA framework (Seligman, 2011), but emphasize aspects of self-discovery and self-construction in the process of the formation of self-identity, especially the dimensions Intimacy and Relationship, Personal meaningfulness, Opening to the new, Autonomy and Maturity, in a manner consistent with the meaning of eudaimonia and compatible with studies in the field of tourism that point to positive personal transformations and the evolution of the self in settings under liminal conditions.

Thus, with strong theoretical support, the empirical results allow conceiving a multidimensional structure for the *eudaimonic tourist experience* construct, more consistent with the complexity of this type of experience. The following Figure 1 illustrates this abstraction.

Figure 1 - Multidimensional structure of the Eudaimonic Tourist Experience construct
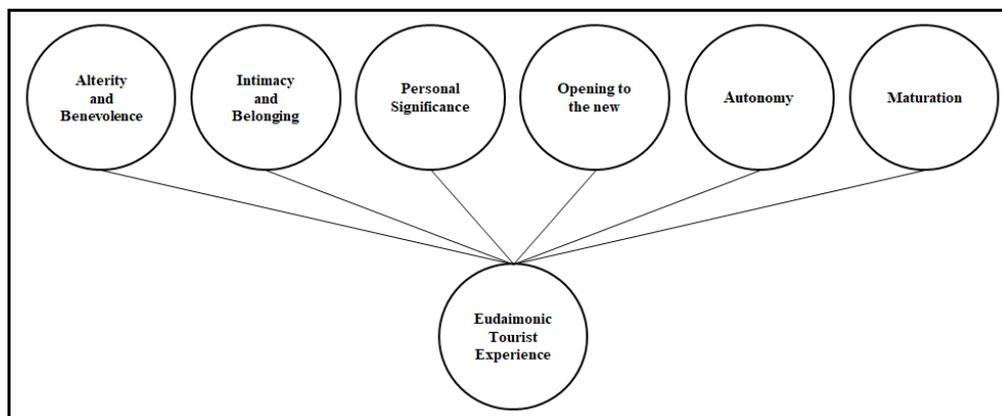
Source: The authors.

5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The study offers important contributions to the field of tourist behavior and to the understanding of the deeper and immersive experiences perceived by people when in tourism settings. The study assumes that much of the tourism experience occurs during the person's interactions with the environment, with other people, with local history and culture, and that, in this process, the self is enlarged, expanded, challenged, renewed and reinforced (Wearing, 2001), making the experience a continuous process that extends beyond the visit itself (Wearing & McGehee, 2013).

The study was based on the philosophical principles of the concept of eudaimonia, as well as on its more operational definitions, developed by the most recent contributions of the field of positive psychology and studies on well-being. The dimensions verified in the empirical survey are strongly based on the theory about eudaimonia, shedding some light on an increasingly studied phenomenon, but still lacking structured conceptualizations and theoretical-empirical support in the field of tourism. The study emphasizes the discovery and construction of identity as the main drive of the eudaimonic experience, a foundational that has been neglected in the tourism literature.

Conceptualizing the eudaimonic tourist experience as a multidimensional construct can help to open an avenue for future research that could deepen and refine the concept. With this objective in mind, the study provides a tested instrument for the measurement/evaluation of positive personal transformations perceived by people in tourist settings.

However, some study limitations need to be highlighted in order to guide future studies that may extend the validity of the findings. The first limitation concerns the survey sample, which comprised mostly university students instead of actual tourists. Although it is assumed that the most meaningful travel experiences for individuals will linger in their memory, future studies should explore the assessment of the eudaimonic experience in situ. Although less feasible, longitudinal studies are also suggested, following the perceptions of groups of tourists over time.

The second study limitation is the lack of confirmatory validation for the factor structure obtained in the exploratory factor analysis. To certify the hypothesized dimensional structure, confirmatory factor analysis with structural equation modeling can provide robust evidence of the focal construct validity, attesting its predictive and nomological validity.

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