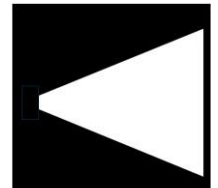


Happy Holidays



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Research Papers

Chen et al (2024). Mental health and well-being in tourism: A Horizon 2050 paper. *Tourism Review*.

Yan et al (2024). Integrative review: Vacations and subjective well-being. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 55(1), 65-94

Park & Ahn. (2022). Seeking Pleasure or Meaning? The Different Impacts of Hedonic and Eudaimonic Tourism Happiness on Tourists' Life Satisfaction. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19, 1162.

West et al (2020). Happiness From Treating the Weekend Like a Vacation. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

Cui, Y. (2023). The optimal length of holidays: Understanding the inverted U-shape effect on well-being. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 55(1), 65-94.

Overview

On returning from a holiday in Boa Vista I wondered if holidays really make you happier? The research suggests they do, but in different ways. Some holidays boost short-term pleasure, while others provide longer-lasting fulfilment through meaningful experiences that enhance personal growth. Even treating a regular weekend like a holiday can enhance well-being. The most impactful breaks seem to be not too long, combine relaxation with purpose; creating memories that nourish both body and mind.

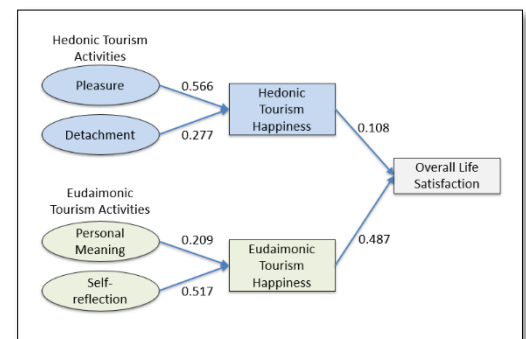
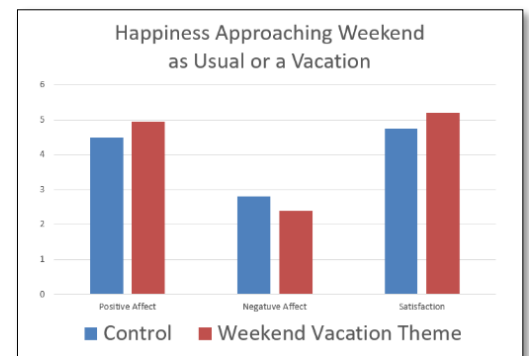
Key Findings & Insights

A review of 125 studies (Yan et al., 2024) highlights that the positive effects of holidays can extend beyond the trip itself, especially if those experiences include relaxation, mastery, or social connection. Notably, treating even a regular weekend like a vacation, with a focus on mindfulness and present-moment awareness, can boost happiness (West et al., 2020).

A paper by Park & Ahn (2022) shows that while both pleasure-seeking and meaningful holidays improve life satisfaction, meaningful experiences have a more lasting impact. This aligns with broader positive psychology ideas that highlight the role of purpose alongside pleasure.

Research by Cui (2023) suggests that holiday well-being follows an inverted U-shape, rising in the early days, peaking around the 8th day, and then gradually declining as boredom, fatigue, or homesickness set in, indicating that holidays of around one to two weeks may be optimal for maximising well-being.

Chen et al.(2024) argue that holidays should be designed with mental well-being in mind, especially for those in high-stress environments. They also suggest integrating positive psychology principles, such as mindfulness and meaningful engagement, directly into travel experiences.



While holidays are generally linked to improved well-being, some research highlights potential downsides. Holiday blues can occur if returning to high workloads or unresolved stressors (Yan et al., 2024), while holiday stress from planning, costs, or unmet expectations can also diminish benefits (Park & Ahn, 2022). Additionally, compulsive workers may experience anxiety during holidays due to the sudden loss of structure (West et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Holidays seem to offer a powerful mix of short-term joy and longer-term fulfilment, especially when they involve moments of reflection, connection, and presence. While relaxation delivers the strongest immediate boost to well-being during a holiday, meaningful eudaimonic experiences tend to have a more lasting impact on life satisfaction. An optimal holiday probably combines moments of relaxation with activities that foster growth, connection, or purpose may offer the best overall benefit. If you've had a memorable holiday that felt more than just 'a break', you may have tapped into some of these deeper psychological benefits.