

An exploratory study of eudaimonia and hedonism in the context of avitourism

Abstract

Avitourism is a niche but rapidly growing sub-domain of ecotourism. Mindful pursuit of ecotourism has been found to enhance personal well-being. However, the mechanics of the attainment of such well-being by an avitourist has not been adequately researched. This study attempts to explore the motives of avitourists and thereby understand the process of attainment of well-being. Content analysis of twenty-two in-depth interviews were done for the purpose. Anchoring on the associated emotions, identified motives are classified into two categories (hedonic and eudaimonic). The study further explores how satiation of these motives leads to consumer well-being. These identified motives will guide the tourism operators to design their service offerings effectively.

Keywords: avitourism, well-being, eudaimonia, hedonism, motivation

Introduction

In recent years, birdwatching as a hobby has become popular. The associated tourism is known as avitourism. Avitourism is a form of ecotourism as it potentially contributes to conservation and sustainability (Blamey, 2001). It is growing at a rapid pace (Janeczko *et al.*, 2021). Avitourists are keen on travelling to far off places to observe exotic birds (Chen and Chen, 2015).

A tourist's generic intrinsic motivations includes relaxation, spending time with family, adventure, and novelty (Yousefi and Marzuki, 2015; Michael *et al.*, 2020). It has been credited with generating emotions like pleasure, happiness, and enjoyment which are associated with the individuals' well-being (Eubanks, Stoll and Ditton, 2004; Kim *et al.*, 2015). In the extant literature the motivation of avitourists has not been well-studied. Chen and Chen (2015) explored it using the push and pull framework and Kruger and Viljoen, (2020) studied behavioural involvement of avitourism.

Well-being is principally valued as the ultimate objective of an individual and is often linked to happiness, satisfaction and quality of life (Ruggeri *et al.*, 2020). Various activities like sports (Kouali *et al.*, 2022), adventure (Pomfret, 2021), nature (Pritchard *et al.*, 2020), rural (Boukas, 2019) etc. have been found to promote well-being. Hedonism and eudaimonia are two perspectives of well-being, which explains the underlying motives and the corresponding emotions (Nisbet, Zelenski and Murphy, 2011).

Accordingly, the purpose of the current paper is to a) identify the intrinsic motives of avitourists b) classify those motives and c) understand the mechanism of deriving subjective well-being from avitourism.

Literature Review

Subjective Well-being

Subjective well-being (SWB) paradigm deals with the notion of meaning of life also referred as authentic living or the quality of life (Ryff, 1989; McCabe and Johnson, 2013). Hedonism and eudaimonia are regarded as two facets of subjective well-being (Armbrecht and Andersson, 2020). While hedonism explains the short-term emotions like pleasure, enjoyment, relaxation, excitement; Eudaimonia characterizes one's long term objective, growth and learning (Sharma, Conduit and Rao Hill, 2017). Both the views have been instrumental in achieving one's subjective well-being (Ryan and Deci, 2001).

Hedonism

The Greek philosopher Aristippus (435–366 BCE) conceptualised 'hedonism' as the sole purpose of existence; that everything in life is simply a means to guaranteeing one's own pleasure and avoiding sorrow (Voigt, Howat and Brown, 2010). In the context of tourism, researches have used scales like 'pleasant feeling', 'fondness for the experience', 'adventure', 'escape', 'fun', 'excitement', 'novelty', 'thrill' for measuring hedonic motivations among tourists (Grappi and Montanari, 2011; Calver and Page, 2013; Pomfret, 2021).

Eudaimonia

The term 'Eudaimonia' come from the Greek meaning "good" (eu) "spirit" (daimon). The concept of eudaimonia originated from the great philosopher Aristotle who advocated achieving growth by developing one's best qualities that confirms with one's deeper principles

(Ryan and Deci, 2001; Huta and Ryan, 2010). Eudaimonic motivation is the disposition to initiate actions to achieve excellence and pursue life's objectives (Zheng, Xia and Fan, 2016). Eudaimonic well-being are characterized by sense of competence, personal growth, inspiring, mastery (Chen *et al.*, 2021).

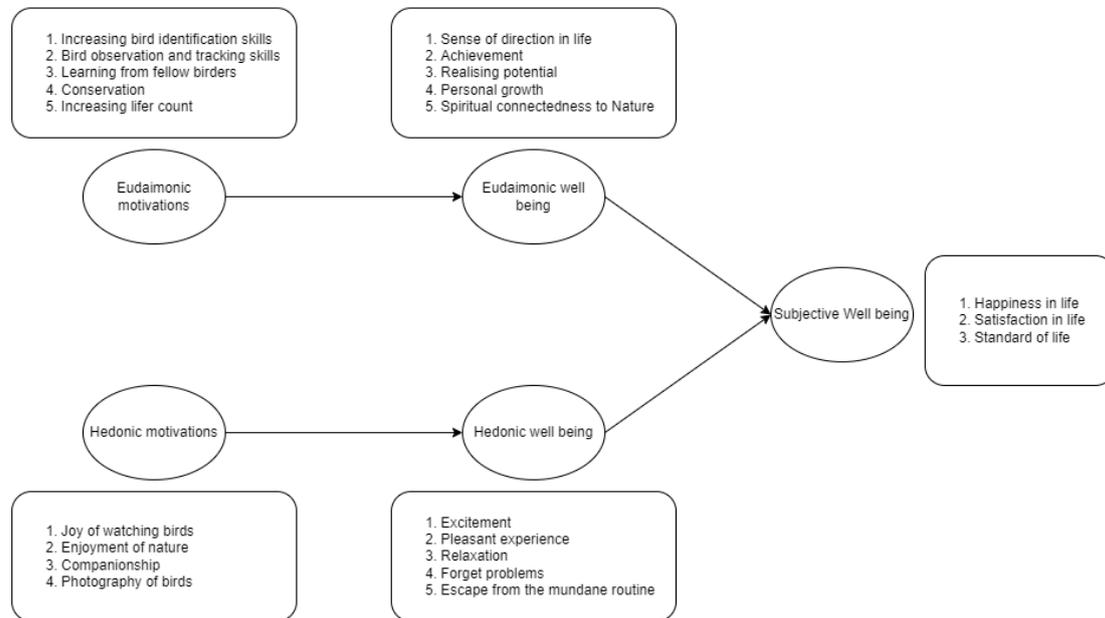
Methodology

A qualitative approach has been applied to understand the motives of the avitourists. Twenty-two interviewees were selected based on their birdwatching affination and past trips to avitourism destination. Purposive and snow ball sampling was used to select the interviewees. Semi-structured and in-depth interviews were used to collect data. Each interview lasted for about thirty to forty minutes. Questions were asked on the motivation of avitourists and what kind of happiness they derive from participating in avitourism. Participants were also asked to explain how participating in avitourism has an impact on their overall life. The transcriptions were analysed using content analysis approach (Krippendorff, 1980).

Findings

Tourist Motivations	Quotes
<u>Eudaimonic</u>	
Increasing Bird Identification Skills	<i>"Observe the birds in their natural habitat strengthens my understanding of their physical appearance and behaviour. Each trip helps me to increase my bird identification skills" (R5)</i>
Bird observation and tracking skills	<i>"There are challenges in tacking birds by listening calls, waiting patiently for the bird to come out in open for clear observation. I feel a sense of achievement when after putting hard work, I get to observe the target species." (R12)</i>
Learning from fellow birders	<i>"Doing field trip with senior and experienced birders allows me to learn from them. This helps in my personal growth and enhances my birding skills." (R2)</i>
Increasing lifer count	<i>"I like to keep a count of birds that I have seen. Visiting new destinations gives me the chance to see new birds and it adds to my tally." (R11)</i>
Conservation	<i>"The birding trip report can be useful later by any researcher and to the concerned authorities for understanding the richness of the habitat. I feel pride to contribute to conservation through my findings" (R18)</i>
<u>Hedonic</u>	
Joy of watching birds	<i>"I feel very excited and amused to see various kind of birds. They are one of the most beautiful creatures of nature." (R4)</i>
Enjoyment of nature	<i>"Birding habitats are very beautiful and I love to enjoy the raw nature. I feel very relaxed while in natural habitats. I forget my current problems while birding." (R8)</i>
Companionship	<i>"Participating in avitourism gives me the opportunity to meet my birder friends after long time. Discussing our past experiences of birding together brings back lot of happy memories." (R22)</i>
Photography of birds	<i>"I like to click bird photographs, not just for record but also for putting up in exhibition, sharing with my friends and social media. The appreciation that I receive for my photographs delights me." (R16)</i>
<u>Subjective Well-Being</u>	
Happiness in Life	<i>"Frequent participation in avitourism has brought happiness in life. I eagerly look forward to my next birding trip." (R20)</i>
Satisfaction in Life	<i>"The number of birds that I have seen, the skills that I have acquired throughout the years are precious to me and gives a sense of satisfaction in life." (R13)</i>
Standard of Life	<i>"Because of this hobby, I have made a self-identity. Many people know me because of my photographs and birding skills. I also deliver lectures to various colleges on birdwatching. I have earned lot of respect and admiration, which otherwise might not have been possible." (R17)</i>

Based on the outcome of the qualitative findings, the antecedents are classified into two categories: eudaimonic and hedonic motivations. Eudaimonic motives were found to lead to eudaimonic well-being and hedonic motives were found to lead to hedonic well-being. These two collectively lead to overall well-being of an individual.



Conceptual Framework

- Proposition 1: Eudaimonic motivations are positively associated with eudaimonic well-being.
- Proposition 2: Hedonic motivations are positively associated with hedonic well-being.
- Proposition 3: Eudaimonic well-being is positively associated with subjective well-being.
- Proposition 4: Hedonic well-being is positively associated with subjective well-being.

Conclusion

The study identified nine motivation factors for visiting avitourism destination which gives the tourists sense of benefits which are further classified into eudaimonic and hedonic. Those objectives which are aimed at growth, realising potential are classified under eudaimonic motivations leading to eudaimonic well-being. Similarly, the objectives responsible for arousal of short- term emotions like relaxation, excitement, escapism are classified under hedonic benefits and leads to hedonic well-being. The ultimate consequence of these experience direct to attainment of happiness and improves the quality of life, resulting in subjective well-being.

Limitations

The study is the first to present a qualitative investigation of avitourist motivations and their relationship to well-being, and as such it has certain limitations. The sample selected for this study belongs to Indian origin; therefore, there is scope for more useful findings from

different cultural contexts. Also, the study did not take into account the specialization of birders which may play a moderating role in the intensity of motivations.

Theoretical contributions and Managerial implications

The findings add to the literature by highlighting the underlying motivations of visitors and their relationship with well-being, both of which have received little attention in the context of avitourism. The study provides critical guidance to the tourism organizations to understand the expectations of avitourists and accordingly design their offerings. The interconnection between avitourism and well-being allows the marketers to highlight their services also as a source of happiness.

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