

ARE AUTHENTIC TOURISTS HAPPIER?

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Are authentic tourists happier? Examining structural relationships amongst perceived cultural distance, existential authenticity, and wellbeing

Abstract: In existentialist and eudaimonist theorizing, while departure from the influence of home culture facilitates existential authenticity, wellbeing is attained in authentic living. To conceptually integrate and empirically test the inherent consistency between the two primary concerns in tourism research – existential authenticity and wellbeing, this study examines the relationships amongst perceived cultural distance, existential authenticity, and wellbeing. Data were collected through surveys of tourists to Hangzhou, China and analyzed through the structural equation modelling approach. Results suggest that while existential authenticity is a positive predictor of hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing, it has no direct bearing on perceived cultural distance. Hence, physically breaking away from one’s home culture does not necessarily guarantee existential authenticity for a tourist, and a higher level of existential authenticity is related to a correspondingly higher level of hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing. Theoretical and practical implications of this research are also discussed.

Keywords: perceived cultural distance; existential authenticity; hedonic wellbeing; eudaimonic wellbeing; happiness

Introduction

Authenticity and wellbeing have been two primary concerns in tourism studies. However, tourism studies have paid little attention to their relationship in the making of “happy” tourists (Smith & Diekmann, 2017). In psychology, prior research suggests that wellbeing is attained in being authentic (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Vainio & Daukantaitė, 2016; Waterman, 1993), and considerable studies from subjects beyond tourism have supported this assumption (Baker, Tou, Bryan, & Knee,

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2017; Kifer, Heller, Perunovic, & Galinsky, 2013; Stevens & Constantinescu, 2014). Theoretically resting upon and informed by health studies and wellbeing, this research is contextualized in the nexus between authenticity and wellbeing as two distinct bodies of literature. Potentially, the study could offer a new perspective on tourism contributing to people's wellbeing or quality of life.

In tourism studies, discussions on existential authenticity are often associated with issues such as constraints, averageness, role playing, social values and expectations, social norms and regulations, community scrutiny, and public roles, which are characteristic of everyday life (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 1999). As a result, the culture within which people are living, hold them back from being authentic. Existential authenticity theorists argue that tourists "feel they themselves are much more authentic and more freely self-expressed than in everyday life" (Wang, 1999, p.351) because of departure from the restriction imposed by home culture. Hence, the presumption is that people traveling to a place of greater perceived cultural distance would feel more authentic because of less cultural restriction. Surprisingly, this inherent presumption implied in the existential authenticity theory has, to the best of our knowledge, never been empirically scrutinized. This study intends to reveal the extent to which this longstanding presumption depicts the truth.

The primary objective of this study is to understand how tourism contributes to wellbeing, which is achieved by answering two research questions: (1) Do tourists who perceive greater cultural distance experience greater existential authenticity? (2) Are authentic tourists happier hedonically and eudaimonically? To this end, the relationships among perceived cultural distance, existential authenticity, and hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing are structured and examined. In so doing, this study offers references to support or adjust the existential authenticity theory in terms of why authentic living is more likely to be experienced in tourism than in everyday life, it also offers a new perspective on researching authentic experiences and the formation of wellbeing in or through tourism.

Literature review

Perceived cultural distance

Culture is "a dynamic system of rules – explicit and implicit – established by groups in order to ensure their survival, involving attitudes, values, beliefs, norms, and behaviors, shared by a group but harbored differently by each specific unit within the group" (Matsumoto, 2000, p.24), and the differences and similarities determine the cultural distance between two societies (Chiang & Chathoth, 2013; Ng, Lee, & Soutar, 2007). Perceived cultural distance is an individual difference

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measure of perceived discrepancies between two societies in culture (Cheng & Leung, 2013). As a subjective dimension, perceived cultural distance has been recognized as a good predictor of psychological and behavioral outcomes (Antón, Camarero, Laguna, & Buhalis, 2019; Cheng & Leung, 2013; Ng et al., 2007); it is a direct and vital factor influencing people's attitude and behavior; it offers researchers detailed information about cultural distance, such as social norms, values, expectations, beliefs, and behaviors; and it captures the intricate and multidimensional nature of cultural distance (Pesch & Bouncken, 2017). This study addresses tourists' perceived cultural distance to examine how cultural difference enables authentic living and wellbeing.

Authenticity in tourism

Authenticity has been an important concern in tourism studies for a long time. The initial interest to authenticity was more about the genuineness or realness of toured objects and events, such as Boorstin's (1964) critiques on the trend that mass tourists are no longer interested in the authentic products of foreign culture, and MacCannell's (1976) "staged authenticity" indicating the artificial setting that serves to meet tourists' desire for authenticity. Wang (1999) classified this agenda of establishing authenticity on the toured objects as objective authenticity. From the social perspective, Cohen (1979) claimed that there is no absolute and static authenticity, where and when the authenticity is always socially constructed. From the individual perspective, authenticity (or inauthenticity) is the result of how people see and interpret what they encounter. Thus, the notion is relative, negotiable, and socially constructed. In Wang's (1999) term, this is constructive authenticity. These two discourses were criticized for allowing toured objects in the tourism setting to primarily determine tourist experience (Kim & Jamal, 2007), which does not depict the whole picture of tourism experience.

Wang (1999) took a postmodernism approach to understanding authenticity in tourism, by deconstructing the boundaries between "real" and "fake", "original" and "copy", and "sign" and "reality"; thus postmodern tourists are less concerned about the authenticity of toured objects or events. As an alternative to tourist experience, Wang (1999) adopted the ontological conception of existential authenticity to indicate "a special state of Being in which one is true to oneself" (p.358). Distinct from objective and constructive authenticity, existential authenticity could have nothing to do with the realness or genuineness of the toured objects or events, as it is determined by the feelings evoked by tourist activities. Thus, the experience is "the authenticity of Being which, as a potential, is to be subjectively or inter-subjectively sampled by tourists as the process of tourism unfolds" (Wang, 1999, p.359). Being existentially authentic is in line with knowing one's true self, being in touch with one's inner self, and then acting under the guide of one's true calling (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006).

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Wang's (1999) existential authenticity theory argues that tourism is a "simpler, freer, more spontaneous, more authentic... lifestyle which enables people to keep a distance from, or transcend, daily lives" (p.360). Departing from home society, tourism liberates people from the "conventional social norms and regulations that structure everyday life" (Kim & Jamal, 2007, p.184); thereby people could negotiate meanings from their tourism experiences freely, which conduces to existential authenticity. Thus, existential authenticity could be understood as a special state of Being triggered by tourism in its own way. This study focuses on existential authenticity; it is an authentic experience that arises from exercising one's true nature, satisfying one's true needs, living in accord with one's true self, practicing one's free will, and existing as who they really are (Belhassen, Caton, & Stewart, 2008; Brown, 2013; Kirillova, Lehto, & Cai, 2017b).

It is important to note that while there is an evident distinction between object-oriented and existential authenticities in ontology and epistemology, they seem to present concurrently and to be related, especially in heritage settings, where people could engage in tourism with motivations for both objective and existential authenticities (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Empirical studies in the context of heritage tourism have illustrated the positive relationships between objective authenticity and existential authenticity (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Yi, Lin, Jin, & Luo, 2016).

The existential authenticity in tourism studies emphasizes the subjective experience that projects people's true self, which is in line with state authenticity in psychology. The latter concept refers to the "sense that one is currently in alignment with one's true or real self" (Sedikides, Slabu, Lenton, & Thomaes, 2017, p.521). It is a temporary state that can be experienced (Lenton, Slabu, & Sedikides, 2016) and defined by individual's innermost values, beliefs, views, interests, and motivations (Lenton, Bruder, Slabu, & Sedikides, 2013). One of the most often used operationalizations of authenticity in psychology is initiated by Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, and Joseph (2008), who identified three dimensions of authenticity: Authentic Living, Accepting External Influence, and Self-Alienation. The Authentic Living indicates being true to oneself and insists on one's value and beliefs. The Accepting External Influence refers to the extent to which individuals accept others' influence and believe that they should meet others' expectations. The Self-Alienation refers to the experience of "not knowing oneself, or feeling out of touch with the true self" (p.386). This operationalization of authenticity is adopted in the current study. *Tourists' wellbeing*

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Wellbeing is an indicator of how well a person has been living his/her life. Ryan and Deci (2001) identified two dominating paradigms of wellbeing: the hedonic and the eudaimonic. Hedonic wellbeing emphasizes attaining positive feelings and avoiding negative ones, such as the Subjective Wellbeing theory (Diener, 1994). The eudaimonic wellbeing however denies that hedonic happiness is a principal criterion of wellbeing, and holds that human flourishing arises from achieving the best that is within us, from realizing our true and best nature (Ryff, 2013), and from living in accord with the true self, which makes people feel intensively alive and authentic (Fromm, 1978; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman, 1993).

Studies on tourists' wellbeing have flourished for the last decade. Longitudinal and quasi-experimental studies have demonstrated that tourism boosts wellbeing (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Chen, Lehto, & Cai, 2013). Cross-sectional data-based studies have generated much knowledge on tourists' wellbeing as well (Saayman, Li, Uysal, & Song, 2018; Lyu, Mao, & Hu, 2018; Mak, Wong, & Chang, 2009; Nawijn, 2010). However, these studies primarily focus on hedonic aspect of wellbeing, another essential aspect, eudaimonic wellbeing, has been neglected (Filep, 2014; Knobloch, Robertson, & Aitken, 2017; Kirillova, Letho, & Cai, 2017a). This study dedicates to addressing the imbalance by approaching both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing.

Perceived cultural distance and existential authenticity

Culture is the collective programming of mind which distinguishes people from different societies (Solomon, 1996); it shapes people's behavior by providing ultimate values for orienting human actions or activities (Swidler, 1986). The attitudes, values, beliefs, and norms of a society "create moods and motivations, ways of organizing experience and evaluating reality, modes of regulating conduct, and ways of forming social bonds" (Swidler, 1986, p.284). Thus culture defines a society's "patterned ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting" (Kluckhohn, 1954, p.86); therefore, the way people live in a certain society is strongly influenced by its culture. Tourism studies have found that the cultural distance between home and host societies influences tourists' behavior and experiences during the travel (Ahn & McKercher, 2015; Martin, Jin, & Trang, 2017; Ng et al., 2007).

Tourism involves "the notion of departure, of a limited breaking" (Urry, 2002, p. 2) with the home culture characterized by constraints, rules, values, expectations, averageness, role playing, loss of identity, social norms and regulations, community scrutiny, and public roles (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 1999). These cultural baggages hinder people from living authentically in their home society. For example, Brown's (2009) ethnographic study revealed that the departure from home society liberated people from cultural expectations and offered them an opportunity for self-discovery. Kim and Jamal (2007) also reported that the Texas Renaissance

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Festival enabled participants to experience existential authenticity through participating in some activities of their own choice but being controlled by rationalized social order in home society, such as public expression of sexual desire, flogging, and exposing intimate body parts.

When people are traveling, the values, social norms, beliefs, social roles, “proper behaviors”, and social relations of the home culture are no longer ultimate principles that the travelers have to comply. Tourists are exposed to an alien culture where they could “behave in a way not governed by conventional social norms and regulations that structure everyday life” (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006, p.184). This liberation enables tourists to “develop new social worlds and experiences that lead them towards an authentic sense of self rather than being lost in public roles” (Kim & Jamal, 2007, p.184). They can also adopt new values, norms, roles, and behaviors that reflect their true self (Brown, 2013). For example, Rickly-Boyd (2012) reported rock climbers’ experience of confusions about who they were and what was truly important to them in their daily life, and subsequently self-discoveries through rock climbing. Kim and Jamal (2007) reported that the Texas Renaissance Festival allowed one participant to be the person that was always inside him but he did not see at home society. Another participant said the festival has allowed her to freely say what she thinks and express what she feels, and has made her feel she is much more herself than she was in her home society.

However, it is important to note that this study is not claiming that existential authenticity cannot be attained at all in daily life, or that departure from routine life guarantees existential authenticity. Actually, an emerging theory grounded on the concept of “alienation” is contesting the existential authenticity theory. Departing from existentialism, alienation is conceptualized as a “certain type of relations that man has with himself, with others, and with the world” (Sartre, 1992, p.382), where an individual prioritizes others over oneself in the relations. For existentialists, the pursuit of authenticity is a counter dose to alienation; thus alienation and authenticity are two sides of the same coin (Xue, Manuel-Navarrete, & Buzinde, 2014). Modernity has produced an inescapable feeling of alienation from true self and others, in which a significant motivation of tourists is to search for authenticity (MacCannell, 1976). However, existentialists posit that the alienation indwelling in routine life is not imposed by the dominant modern institutions as Wang (1999) presumed; rather it comes from people’s unreflective engagement or mindless conformity with the society they live in (Rickly-Boyd, 2013; Sartre, 1992; Xue et al., 2014). Therefore, existentialists contested Wang’s (1999) postulation that displacing tourists from alienating daily routines guarantees authentic being. They argued that people could experience authenticity in daily life if their behavior is driven by autonomous decisions. On the other hand, if their behavior is driven by external expectations and social duties even in tourism, such authenticity could not be experienced (Xue et al., 2014).

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Theoretically as much as empirically, prior studies suggest that breaking away from home society facilitates existential authenticity. Although such an assumption has been contested by the alienation theory reviewed above, this study attempts to test the following hypotheses in a hope to better understand the relationships between perceived cultural distance and existential authenticity:

H₁: Perceived cultural distance is a positive predictor of existential authenticity.

Because Existential Authenticity is operationalized in three dimensions, H₁ is further developed into three sub-hypotheses:

H₁₋₁: Perceived cultural distance is positively related to Authentic Living.

H₁₋₂: Perceived cultural distance is negatively related to Accepting External Influence.

H₁₋₃: Perceived cultural distance is negatively related to Self-Alienation.

Existential authenticity and wellbeing

As an important paradigm in health and happiness studies, eudaimonism postulates that wellbeing lies in an individual's fulfilling human potentials and exercising human nature; it is attained in living in accord with one's true self or one's daimon, which was defined as the "potentialities of each person" by Waterman (1993, p.678). The realization of potentialities denotes how well a life has been lived. In this sense, people are living a quality life when their life activities are congruent with and following their deeply held values, directed by personally meaningful orientations, and enable them to be true to themselves, and thereby "feel intensely alive and authentic, existing as who they really are" (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p.146). These articulations echo with theoretical postulations that wellbeing consists in self-actualization, and that fully functioning people live an authentic life (Roger, 1961; Vainio & Daukantaitė, 2016). Hence, existential authenticity is the very essence of wellbeing and optimal functioning (Haybron, 2008). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H₂: Existential authenticity is positively related to hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing.

Operationally, H₂ is also further developed into three sub-hypotheses:

H₂₋₁: Authentic Living is positively related to hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing.

H₂₋₂: Accepting External Influence is negatively related to hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing.

H₂₋₃: Self-Alienation is negatively related to hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing.

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The consistency between eudaimonism and existential authenticity has been supported by considerable evidence. For example, the empirical studies have illustrated that existential authenticity conduces to both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing (Baker et al., 2017; Kifer et al., 2013; Stevens & Constantinescu, 2014). Despite such evidence and research attention paid to existential authenticity and wellbeing respectively, little is known about the relationships between the two in the tourism context, which thwarts the realization of tourism's potentialities in facilitating human wellbeing.

Building on the previous elaboration, this study hypothesizes that *people perceiving greater cultural distance would experience higher existential authenticity, which in turn is related to both higher hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing* (see Figure 1).

(Insert Figure 1 here)

Method

Measurement

The measurement of Perceived Cultural Distance is adapted from the Acculturation Index (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999), which was initially devised to assess the degree of acculturation in the context of migration. The scale consists of 21 aspects of culture, from which fourteen aspects that are most related to tourism are adopted, and three additional aspects are included as suggested by Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, and Lin (2017). In total, the assessment of Perceived Cultural Distance includes seventeen items. Respondents were asked to compare their home culture against the host culture in these aspects, and then to rate each item on a 7-point scale ranging from "1=Very Similar" to "7=Very Different".

The measurement of existential authenticity is adapted from the Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008), which includes three dimensions – Authentic Living, Accepting External Influence, and Self-Alienation. Kirillova et al. (2017b) have adapted the same scale to assess existential authenticity in tourism. For this study, each dimension was assessed by four items, and each item was assessed on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "1=Strongly Disagree" to "7= Strongly Agree".

This study is informed by two paradigms of wellbeing: hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing. The affective aspect of hedonic wellbeing was measured by the Scale of Positive and Negative Experiences (Diener et al., 2010), which comprises six negative and six positive affects, where each affect was assessed on a 7-point scale ranging from "1= Almost Never" to "7= Almost Always". The cognitive aspect of hedonic wellbeing was measured by the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), with five items. The eudaimonic wellbeing was measured by the

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Flourishing Scale (Diener et al., 2010); this brief 8-item scale offers users a summary score on eudaimonic wellbeing. Every item for the Satisfaction with Life Scale and the Flourishing Scale was assessed on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “1=Strongly Disagree” to “7= Strongly Agree”.

The instrument also includes items for such demographic information as age, gender, and education. By the study’s design, data were collected through surveys of both domestic (Chinese) tourists and international visitors. The questionnaires were hence prepared in both Chinese and English respectively. Back-to-back translations between the two languages were performed to ensure consistency and accuracy of the instruments.

Data collection

Data collection was administrated from 8-23 June 2018 in Hangzhou, one of the most famous tourism cities and well-developed destinations in China. The city boasts of its diversity in offering attractions for nature-based tourism, cultural tourism, heritage tourism, and urban tourism. The questionnaire survey was administered at the airport. Due to the transient nature of surveying respondents on the move, a convenience sampling method was used in the study’s execution. Nevertheless, when approaching potential respondents, three criteria were applied: (1) non-residents or non-locals of Hangzhou; (2) tourism or pleasure travel is the main reason of their visit; and (3) competence to read and complete survey in either Chinese or English. In total, 512 questionnaires were administered over the 16 days, from which 466 were returned, with a response rate of 91.0%. Three cases were excluded after screening, and 463 questionnaires were found useful and retained for analysis and interpretation.

Of the 463 respondents, 56.4% were domestic (Chinese) tourists, and 43.6% were international visitors; 44.9% males, and 55.1% females; 12.7% with high school education, 63.3% finished college or university, and 21.4% with Master’s; the youngest respondent was 18 years old, and the oldest was 71, with an average age of 27.6 years for all respondents.

Results

Measurement model

To minimize the complicacy of the model, items parceling is used in this study. The practice of parceling refers to using the aggregation or average of two or more items as the basic unit of analysis in SEM (Bandalos & Finney, 2001). Parceling increases the communality across indicators and the common-to-unique ratio for each indicator, reduces random error (Little, Cunningham,

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Shahar, & Widaman, 2002), and provides more stable estimates and better fitness (Matsunaga, 2008). The parcel-building employed the factorial algorithm (Rogers & Schmitt, 2004) (see Table 1).

(Insert Table 1 here)

The exploratory factor analysis was undertaken on SPSS (version 20) first, and factor loadings for each item range from 0.537 to 0.941, which is above the threshold value of 0.40 (Hair, Tatham, Anderson, & Black, 1998). The Cronbach's alpha for each latent variable ranges from 0.779 to 0.940, suggesting high internal consistency among the items within each factor.

Subsequently, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was undertaken on AMOS (version 24) to assess the unidimensionality, validity, and reliability of the measurement model. The CFA results suggest that standardized factor loadings range from 0.512 to 0.941, which are above the minimum criterion of 0.40; and all items are significantly related to their specified latent variables, suggesting sound unidimensionality of each scale. However, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for Authentic Living (0.486) and Accepting External Influence (0.479) are less than the recommended value of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), so one item with the lowest factor loading was removed respectively. Then the CFA analysis with the remaining model was conducted again, the Composite Reliability of latent variables ranges from 0.768 to 0.940, suggesting a strong internal consistency. The AVE values range from 0.524 to 0.840, exceeding the 0.50 threshold, indicating a good convergent validity. Also, the AVE value for each latent variable is greater than the squared correlation between latent variables, suggesting that discriminant validity is confirmed (see Table 1).

Structural model

The results of full latent SEM analysis suggest a modest fit ($\chi^2 = 353.25$, $CMIN/df = 2.01$, $p < 0.001$, $RMSEA = 0.047$, $CFI = 0.97$, $NFI = 0.94$, $IFI = 0.97$) (Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow, & King, 2006). The regression weights suggest that eight out of fifteen paths are significant. Specifically, Perceived Cultural Distance is not significantly linked to any dimensions of Existential Authenticity, because 56.4% of samples are domestic Chinese tourists and 43.6% are international tourists, where the former group perceived less cultural distance ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.15$) than the latter group ($M = 4.77$, $SD = 0.80$). The relationship between Perceived Cultural Distance and Existential Authenticity might be different for domestic Chinese tourists and for international tourists. Thus a multi-group analysis was carried out, with results suggesting that the relationship is not significant for domestic Chinese tourists (where β ranges from -0.095 to 0.01, and p ranges from 0.18 to 0.88) and international tourists (where β ranges from -0.084 to 0.12, and p ranges from 0.13 to 0.63).

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Therefore, H₁ and its three sub-hypotheses are not supported, suggesting that perceived cultural distance between home and hosting societies does not influence existential authenticity. Authentic Living is positively related to Positive Affects ($\beta=0.35$, $p<0.001$), Life Satisfaction ($\beta=0.31$, $p<0.001$), and Flourishing ($\beta=0.53$, $p<0.001$), and negatively related to Negative Affects ($\beta=-0.13$, $p<0.01$). Thus, H₂₋₁ is supported, suggesting that living authentically in travel facilitates both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing. Self-Alienation is negatively related to Positive Affects ($\beta=-0.16$, $p<0.01$), Life Satisfaction ($\beta=-0.20$, $p<0.001$), and Flourishing ($\beta=-0.23$, $p<0.001$), and positively related to Negative Affects ($\beta=0.30$, $p<0.001$). Thus, H₂₋₃ is supported, suggesting that out of touch with inner self in travel thwarts both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing. However, Accepting External Influence was not significantly associated to either hedonic or eudaimonic wellbeing. Thus, H₂₋₂ is not supported, suggesting that accepting others' influence in travel does not necessarily impede hedonic or eudaimonic wellbeing (see Figure 2).

(Insert Figure 2 here)

Discussion

This study examines whether people are more authentic when they are traveling to destinations where they perceive greater cultural distance, and in turn experience a higher level of wellbeing. The hypothesized model is partially supported. It is found that Perceived Cultural Distance is not significantly linked to any dimensions of Existential Authenticity. Two dimensions of Authentic Living and Self-Alienation are positively and negatively related to both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing respectively, whereas Accepting External Influence is not significantly associated with either hedonic or eudaimonic wellbeing.

The existential authenticity theory implies that higher perceived cultural distance is related to greater existential authenticity since tourism liberates people from the constraints (such as social norms and expectations) hindering people from authenticity in their home culture (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 1999). However, this anticipated relationship is not supported in this study. This is probably because, as Steiner and Reisinger (2006) rightly claim, existential authenticity is a choice that people make when they are traveling, and not all tourists are seeking authenticity. The result also supports the emerging alienation theory (Rickly-Boyd, 2013) that displacing people from their alienating routine life does not guarantee them authentic living; instead, existential authenticity comes from engaging in activities that project peoples' autonomous decisions. Tourists would not experience authenticity if they travel because of social expectations, values, and duties (Xue et al., 2014). Some tourists would carry the values, norms, behaviors, and expectations of their home culture with them as they travel; thus, even though they are physically away from their home society, they would still live in a familiar way. Some of them would just want

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to enjoy a lifetime luxury vacation as advertised back home, which is prevalent in the era of mass tourism.

In addition, the use of smartphones and internet has blurred the boundary between “home” and “away”. Tourists’ social connections are not suspended even though they are traveling. Just as White and White (2007) reported, most of their interviewees made systematic efforts to be connected with people back home while they were traveling, and tourists consequently have “a feeling of being simultaneously at ‘home’...while also being ‘away’” (p.88). Thus, tourists’ social world is extended while on vacation, as they are still besieged by their home culture. This also explains why perceived cultural distance is not associated with existential authenticity.

Furthermore, this study suggests that Authentic Living is a positive predictor of both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing. Theoretically, this observation supports Ryan and Deci’s (2001) elaboration that fully functioning people “feel intensely alive and authentic, existing as who they really are” (p.146). Thus, wellbeing is attained through living authentically (Vainio & Daukantaitė, 2016). In an empirical sense, the results resonate with considerable prior literature from subjects/fields beyond tourism, where it is concluded that existential authenticity is conducive to subjective wellbeing (Kifer et al., 2013), mental health, self-esteem, life satisfaction, and subjective vitality (Baker et al., 2017), and hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing (Stevens & Constantinescu, 2014). This study nonetheless offers the first empirical evidence to elucidate the positive relationships between existential authenticity and wellbeing in tourism.

Moreover, this study suggests Self-Alienation is a negative predictor of both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing, which demonstrates positive relationships between existential authenticity and wellbeing in a reversed way. Being alien to one’s true self is often illustrated as deleterious to wellbeing in the prior non-tourism literature. For example, Vess, Leal, Hoeldtke, Schlegel, and Hicks (2016) and Grégoire, Baron, Ménard, and Lachance (2014) found that self-alienation was negatively related to mindfulness, self-concept clarity, positive affect, and meaning in life, and positively related to negative affect. Thus Self-Alienation is a negative predictor of wellbeing.

However, the relationship between Accepting External Influence and wellbeing is not found significant, which is inconsistent with the prior literature. The definition of Accepting External Influence is exactly in opposition to the autonomy that was emphasized as one of three basic psychological needs by Ryan and Deci (2000) in their Self-Determination theory. Notably, frustration leads to diminished wellbeing, and Accepting External Influence negatively affects on wellbeing through instances such as diminished vitality, work engagement, positive affects, life satisfaction, and psychological wellbeing (Akin & Akin, 2014; Grégoire et al., 2014; Taris & Van den Bosch, 2018).

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Although prior studies suggest a significant relationship between Accepting External Influence and wellbeing, some exceptions are found. For example, Stevens and Constantinescu (2014) did not diagnose a significant link of Accepting External Influence to life satisfaction or vitality. Lopez, Ramos, Nisenbaum, Thind, and Ortiz-Rodriguez (2015) did not find a significant relationship between Accepting External Influence and the presence of meaning in life. This is probably because accepting external influence in a particular situation is not necessarily inauthentic. Lenton and others (2016) argued that people who accept external influence for autonomous reasons are authentic, for controlled reasons are inauthentic. In other words, whether accepting external influence is authentic depends on “whether the goals and values of the individuals overlap” (p.66). These two empirical studies also supported that rejecting external influence was not a precondition for existential authenticity and that situational acceptance of external influence was more often related to existential authenticity. Thus, although the insignificant relationship between Accepting External Influence and wellbeing is explicable, more future research would be needed to explicate this relationship.

Conclusion

This study suggests that perceived cultural distance is not a significant predictor of existential authenticity, because not all tourists are seeking authenticity during their trips. Some tourists would rather enjoy a familiar or socially desirable way of living when they are traveling. Two dimensions of existential authenticity (i.e., Authentic Living and Self-Alienation) serve as predictors of both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing. The study demonstrates an inherent consistency between existential authenticity and wellbeing. In other words, realizing one’s true nature and being true to oneself would facilitate wellbeing. On the contrary, wellbeing could be ruined. Additionally, this study also suggests that whether accepting external influence is authentic would depend on whether an individual's values and goals overlap.

Theoretically speaking, this study reveals no relationship between cultural distance and existential authenticity. By implication, while tourism enables people to live authentically, it does not necessarily guarantee an experience of existential authenticity. The attainment of existential authenticity depends more on tourists’ intentions. As noted at the outset, existential authenticity and wellbeing are two major concerns in tourism studies, yet no empirical work on their relationship could be found in its literature. This study sheds light on how being true to oneself facilitates tourists’ wellbeing, and hence offers a new perspective on researching tourists’ wellbeing. Although an increasing number of scholars are calling for more efforts to investigate tourists’ eudaimonic wellbeing, more future research will be warranted to fill the knowledge gap on people’s eudaimonic wellbeing from or through tourism.

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In addition to theoretical implications, results of this study are of practical values to tourists themselves and travel managers and operators. For tourists, they can choose to insist on their familiar ways of living and carry their values, mindset, and views along with them during their travel; they could also consider stepping out of their comfort zone and challenge what they are familiar with (or what they have taken for granted) in order to live authentically, which would ultimately contribute to wellbeing. This study hence offers tourists a point of reference for their preference or behavioral adaptation during their travel. Results of the study could help managers to redesign their products and/or services, for example, to lessen the use of phone or internet so as to allow tourists to break away from the unnecessary connections with their home society, which could potentially promote existential authenticity. Products or services that could isolate tourists from their home society would be attractive to people who are seeking authenticity. Finally, tourism is usually depicted as an entertainment or pleasure industry that only serves people hedonically; this study, on the other hand, projects eudaimonic benefits that people can experience from tourism, which could be useful for managers to adjust their marketing strategies so as to highlight the contribution of tourism to people's eudaimonic wellbeing (in addition to pleasure and fun).

Notwithstanding, this study has several limitations that can be considered as opportunities for future research. First, this study used cross-sectional data to examine the relationships among perceived cultural distance, existential authenticity, and wellbeing, where causal relationships may not be available, and the results should be treated with caution. Future studies could benefit from longitudinal and experimental design to better understand any possible causal relationships. Second, while existential authenticity is a primary research area in tourism studies, scale development to quantify or measure existential authenticity still remains a gap. The instrument used in this study is adapted from the Authenticity Scale that was initially devised for general contexts or purposes. Although it demonstrates reliability in this undertaking, more verifications of the scale in varying tourism contexts will be useful to validate its properties and attributes as a psychometric approach to researching existential authenticity in tourism.▲

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Table 1. Normality, reliability, and convergent validity assessment

| | | Mean | Skew. | Kur. | SD | Loading | CR | AVE |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|------|-------|------|------|---------|-----|-----|
| Perceived Cultural Distance | | | | | | | .94 | .84 |
| | Worldview | | | | | | | |
| | Political ideology | | | | | | | |
| PCD1 | Social customs | 3.83 | -.15 | -.67 | 1.34 | .92 | | |
| | Hygiene standard | | | | | | | |
| | Clothing | | | | | | | |
| | Cultural activities | | | | | | | |
| PCD2 | Religious beliefs | 4.00 | -.35 | -.52 | 1.33 | .90 | | |
| | Food | | | | | | | |

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|-------------------------------------|--|------|-------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| | Recreational activities | | | | | | | |
| | Interactions between friends | | | | | | | |
| | Pace of life | | | | | | | |
| | Values | | | | | | | |
| | Family life | | | | | | | |
| PCD3 | Interactions between strangers | 4.03 | -.31 | -.55 | 1.28 | .93 | | |
| | Language | | | | | | | |
| | Standard of living | | | | | | | |
| | Civilization level | | | | | | | |
| Authentic Living | | | | | | | .78 | .55 |
| AL1* | During this travel, I thought it is better to be myself than to be popular | 5.43 | -.99 | -.04 | 1.77 | .62 | | |
| AL2 | During this travel, I stood by what I believe in | 5.49 | -1.11 | .72 | 1.52 | .76 | | |
| AL3 | During this travel, I was true to myself in most situations | 5.62 | -1.22 | 1.06 | 1.47 | .75 | | |
| AL4 | During this travel, I lived in accordance with my values and beliefs | 5.57 | -1.17 | .86 | 1.51 | .64 | | |
| Accepting External Influence | | | | | | | .77 | .53 |
| AEI1* | During this travel, I was strongly influenced by the opinions of others | 3.33 | .44 | -.79 | 1.78 | .61 | | |
| AEI2 | During this travel, I did what other people told me to do | 3.02 | .61 | -.75 | 1.81 | .70 | | |
| AEI3 | During this travel, I felt I need to do what others expect me to do | 2.94 | .66 | -.52 | 1.73 | .82 | | |
| AEI4 | During this travel, other people influenced me greatly | 3.42 | .33 | -.90 | 1.79 | .64 | | |
| Self-Alienation | | | | | | | .84 | .57 |

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| | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--|------|-------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| SA1 | During this travel, I didn't know how I really feel inside | 2.63 | 1.03 | .22 | 1.73 | .78 | | |
| SA2 | During this travel, I felt as if I don't know myself very well | 2.50 | .99 | .06 | 1.61 | .87 | | |
| SA3 | During this travel, I felt out of touch with the "real me" | 2.50 | 1.15 | .59 | 1.66 | .69 | | |
| SA4 | During this travel, I felt alienated from myself | 2.25 | 1.38 | 1.18 | 1.59 | .67 | | |
| Negative Affects | | | | | | | .91 | .78 |
| NA1 | Bad Afraid | 1.90 | 1.58 | 2.87 | .97 | .91 | | |
| NA2 | Unpleasant Angry | 1.97 | 1.77 | 3.73 | 1.10 | .87 | | |
| NA3 | Negative Sad | 2.03 | 1.47 | 2.57 | 1.04 | .86 | | |
| Positive Affects | | | | | | | .94 | .84 |
| PA1 | Joyful Contented | 5.79 | -1.27 | 2.21 | 1.14 | .87 | | |
| PA2 | Happy Positive | 5.88 | -1.56 | 3.49 | 1.12 | .94 | | |
| PA3 | Pleasant Good | 5.85 | -1.45 | 2.84 | 1.13 | .92 | | |
| Life Satisfaction | | | | | | | .84 | .52 |

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|--------------------|---|------|-------|-------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| LS1 | In most ways my life is close to my ideal | 4.99 | -.50 | -.28 | 1.46 | .77 | | |
| LS2 | The conditions of my life are excellent | 4.97 | -.62 | .02 | 1.43 | .78 | | |
| LS3 | I am satisfied with my life | 5.10 | -.56 | -.08 | 1.42 | .84 | | |
| LS4 | So far I have gotten the important things I want in life | 4.61 | -.37 | -.73 | 1.72 | .68 | | |
| LS5 | If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing | 4.10 | -.13 | -1.23 | 2.03 | .51 | | |
| Flourishing | | | | | | | .88 | .70 |
| | I lead a purposeful and meaningful life | | | | | | | |
| F1 | I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me | 5.63 | -1.08 | 1.45 | 1.12 | .90 | | |
| | I actively contribute to the happiness and wellbeing of others | | | | | | | |
| | I am optimistic about my future | | | | | | | |
| F2 | People respect me | 5.70 | -1.03 | 1.18 | 1.12 | .78 | | |
| | I am a good person and live a good life | | | | | | | |
| F3 | My social relationships are supportive and rewarding | 5.60 | -.82 | .30 | 1.20 | .84 | | |
| | I am engaged and interested in my daily activities | | | | | | | |

Note: *The CFA analysis suggested this item should be removed, thus CR, AVE, and following analysis did not include these two items.

Skew. stands for Skewness, Kur. stands for Kurtosis, CR stands for Composite Reliability, AVE stands for Average Variance Extracted