POSITIVE HUMANITIES AND TOURISM: A CONCEPTUAL CONTRIBUTION[1]

HUMANIDADES POSITIVAS E TURISMO: UMA CONTRIBUIÇÃO CONCETUAL

Soraia Garcês[2]

ABSTRACT

Positive Humanities emerges as a new scientific field and investigates the connection between culture and human flourishing. Based on positive psychology, this new area of research studies the positive outcomes of interacting with the arts and the humanities. Tourism and particularly cultural tourism count on many services and products that focus on the local communities' arts and humanities legacy. Therefore, tourism can be a sector where positive humanities can "flourish". This paper aims to contribute to the enrichment of this new field by discussing and reflecting upon positive humanities in tourism experiences. The possibilities of merging these two fields are vast and its interconnection can bring new contributions for the advancement and understanding of both areas of study.

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[2] Assistant Professor at the University of Madeira, at the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts and Humanities. Integrated member of the Research Center for Tourism, Sustainability and Well-being (CinTurs) - University of Algarve and a collaborator researcher at OSEAN – Outermost Regions Sustainable Ecosystem for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. Member of the Research Center for Regional and Local Studies of University of Madeira. She has a PhD in Psychology, Specialty in Educational Psychology, master's in educational psychology and degree in Psychology. Her research themes include (Positive) Psychology, Education, Creativity, Tourism and Psychological Assessment. soraia@staff.uma.pt

KEYWORDS: Positive humanities; cultural tourism; tourism experiences; wellbeing; flourishing.

RESUMO

As Humanidades Positivas surgem como um novo campo científico e investigam a conexão entre a cultura e o florescimento humano. Baseada na psicologia positiva, esta nova área de investigação estuda os benefícios da interação humana com as artes e com as humanidades. O turismo, e particularmente o turismo cultural, conta com muitos serviços e produtos que se concentram no legado artístico e humano das comunidades locais. Portanto, o turismo pode ser um setor onde as humanidades positivas podem "florescer". Este artigo pretende contribuir para o enriquecimento desta nova área, discutindo e refletindo sobre as humanidades positivas nas experiências turísticas. As possibilidades de fusão destes dois campos são vastas e a sua interligação pode trazer novas contribuições para o avanço e compreensão de ambas as áreas de estudo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Humanidades positivas; turismo cultural, experiências turísticas; bem-estar; florescimento.

For decades society has had in the arts and the humanities a *plateau* for their creativity, and imagination. It is also a *plateau* for the uniqueness of each culture, their ways of living and expressing themselves individually or collectively. And while arts can assume different forms, for example, painting, sculpture, or clothing (Bosh, 2023), when speaking about humanities, Vaziri and colleagues (2019) reported that there is an array of different disciplines, that can include philosophy, history, literature, theology between others. Nonetheless, arts and humanities are a fundamental part of society. In fact, throughout our life from childhood until older ages we are constantly in contact with humanities. Children hear stories, sing songs, draw, and paint. Along the school years we are taught about literature, history, philosophy, and many other cultural elements. In adulthood we travel to historical places, go to museums, and appreciate our cultures legacy (Vaziri, et al., 2019). Thus, our lives are surrounded by these intricated fields. But how do these fields impact our own self? Do they have any influence in our daily lives? Can wellbeing be a result from interacting with both fields? These are some of the questions that this paper aims to contribute to, particularly, how does arts and humanities relate to human flourishing in a specific context, namely tourism. Thus, a reflection upon these different and diverse interactions is the core of this work, in the hope to also give theoretical contributions to advance the field.

Arts, Humanities and Flourishing

Are arts, humanities and flourishing related? Can a connection exist between them? Is wellbeing associated to arts and humanities? While these questions have emerged throughout history in different fields, today it is possible to see a "re-birth" of interest in them again. Pawelski and Tay (2018) considered that the benefits of humanities in well-being and human flourishing can be several: a) neurological, physiological, and affective; b) psychological; and c) in overall well-being. In truth, literature has highlighted that humanities may affect cortisol levels (Lupien, et al., 1998), positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998), creativity (Amabile, 1996; Kuhn et al, 2014), or wellbeing in different dimensions (e.g. meaning in life) (Diener, 1984; Ryan, & Deci, 2000; Ryff, 1995). Arts and humanities are known to promote experiences that can be enjoyable and meaningful, thus contributing to human flourishing, and when one is engaged with arts and humanities, different processes are implicated, for example, sensory, cognitive, emotional, social, and physical (Shim, et al., 2021).

Research has shown that beyond the above, engagement in arts and humanities is connected to positive consequences (Tay, et al., 2018). Reading literature has positive links with life satisfaction (van Peer, et al., 2007) and perspective (Kidd, & Castano, 2013; Ivey & Johnston, 2013); music decreases cortisol levels (Khalfa, et al., 2003), and has positive impacts on social relationships (Hallam, et al., 2014); art training is linked with attention networks (Posner, & Patoine, 2009); theatre increases cognitive skills, wellbeing and emotional health in older adults (Noice, et al., 1999; Noice, et al., 2015); experiences of awe are linked to art, music and nature (Shiota, et al., 2007); arts are also linked to positive civic engagement (Catteral, et al., 2012); arts and humanities interventions are too connected to positive outcomes (Shim, et al., 2021); the inclusion of arts in health programmes have also shown positive results for patients, their relatives, and the ward setting (Ford, et al., 2017); visiting art museums seems to be linked to positive outcomes, both in a traditional way (e.g. just visiting) or through specialized developed programs (Cotter, & Pawelski, 2022); and, a systematic review reported that there seems to be a relationship between engagement in the fields of history, literature and philosophy with flourishing outcomes (Vaziri, et al., 2019). For Perez-Martinez (2023) art is a path that can lead to human flourishing.

Thus, flourishing comes as an important outcome of the involvement within the fields of arts and humanities. This construct linked to Positive Psychology science, can be understood as a multidimensional concept encompassing positive states and effects regarding individuals thriving, encircling for example life satisfaction, character strengths and virtues, positive emotions, etc. (Shim, et al., 2021). It is also associated to eudaimonia, the focus on last-longing happiness instead of instantaneous pleasure (hedonia). In this sense, as Ettenger (2015, p.77) stated:

> *Humanities professionals are gifted at and trained in the craft of showing the essence of things. Artists, musicians, writers, scholars, and other humanities practitioners can reveal and interpret the deeper nature of something, whether a place, a person, or a way of life. They often find beauty in the mundane, complexity in the seemingly simple, and basic truths within apparent chaos. With a few strokes of a brush or well-chosen words they can show us the world in new ways, like turning a gem this way and that to reveal all of its facets and brilliance. What the humanities offer is an emotional and*

even visceral response as we connect what we see, hear, or think with

something deep within ourselves. (...), those in the humanities can take us to

new places, teach us new skills, and help us to develop a new and deeper

appreciation for the world.

For Pawelski (2022a, p.217), a refocused on an eudaimonic view of the humanities will allow to "inform, inspire, and support the work of museums, libraries, performing arts centers, and even entire creative industries (such as in music, movies, and publishing) to advance human flourishing more broadly and justly in our society". It is in this confluence of arts, humanities, and flourishing, that a new field called Positive Humanities has emerged.

Positive Humanities

Positive humanities study the interconnection between culture and human flourishing (Pawelski, 2022). It derives from Positive Psychology where flourishing is a fundamental construct related to the idea of prospering or thriving in life. Culture can also be link to the idea of flourishing since it also leads people to prosper amid the cultivation of the mind and knowledge (Pawelski, 2022).

Pawelski (2022, p.5) the leading author of this new field, defines Positive Humanities as "the branch of learning concerned with human culture in its relation to human flourishing". Deepening its definition, Pawelski (2022, p.27) stated that "The Positive Humanities are the interdisciplinary, multi-industry, and cross-sector examination and optimization of the relationship between the experience, creation, and study of human culture and the understanding, assessment, and cultivation of human flourishing."

Therefore, it involves the traditional idea of humanities (classical languages, literature, history, philosophy, …), and modern ones (modern languages, comparative religion, arts, digital humanities, …) (Pawelski, 2022; Shim, et al., 2019). However, it also includes creative industries (music, movie, literature, …) and public/private organizations (museums, libraries, performing art centers, …) (Pawelski, 2022; Shim, et al., 2019). At its core, Positive Humanities innovative field merges a humanistic and empirical perspective in understanding arts and humanities relationship with human flourishing (Cotter, & Pawelski, 2022). Hence, one of the research directions of this field

is focused on the influence of cultural engagement on human flourishing. It also focuses on an array of elements from narratives to performances of cultural traditions including arts, in different contexts and with different stakeholders.

Despite being a new field, Tay, and colleagues (2018) proposed a conceptual model linking the many dimensions of humans with flourishing. In this model, the authors highlighted several elements. One was the *modes of engagement* within the arts and humanities, namely create, perform, consume, study or critique works. For the authors, these modes of engagement can have different effects on flourishing. Additionally, the authors highlighted the *activities of involvement* in the arts and the humanities which can embrace reading, writing, listening, watching, analysing, acting, dancing, painting, singing, playing musical instruments, between others. In the same way, the authors considered that these activities can contribute to flourishing and wellbeing in different forms. The authors then proposed four *mechanisms* in which modes and activities work together and can lead to positive outcomes (Pawelski, & Tay, 2018; Tay, et al., 2018). These mechanisms are immersion, embeddedness, socialization, and reflectiveness (Tay, et al., 2018). The authors affirmed that these mechanisms are "the primary ways through which the arts and the humanities are linked to physiological, psychological, physical, social and normative outcomes" (Tay, et al., 2018, p.217).

In an attempt to understand these mechanisms, they can be defined as follows: a) immersion refers to the sense of immediacy that is usually associated with engaging with the arts and the humanities. When an individual attention is "seized", different levels of sensory/emotional states and first-order cognitions are experienced, conducting to a sense of being "carried away" (Tay, et al., 2018); b) embeddedness refers to a body of social and cognitive procedures that supports the development of specific ideas, behaviors or abilities., e.g., self-efficacy, self-regulation, emotional regulation, hope, autonomy; c) socialisation refers to the extent to which people take on different functions and identities in their communities and cultures. The build-up and development of social roles (such as for example dancers or singers), adds value to people's lives by introducing them to new life experiences (for example, dance or music) and new social networks (Tay, et al., 2018); and d) reflectiveness refers to a deliberate cognitive and emotional procedure for expanding, strengthening or removing an individual practices, character or worldview. When being involved with arts and humanities, it can lead to new insights about desirable or undesirable facets of oneself, lead to a desire to be different, and aid the intend to do it (Tay, et al., 2018). Overall, these mechanisms are considered psychological experiences

or reactions to the modes of engagement and activities of involvement (Tay, et al., 2018) that can lead to flourishing outcomes.

Positive humanities are therefore, inspired by the science behind Positive Psychology and combines methods from the humanities to encourage an ample approach to human flourishing (Cotter, & Pawelski, 2022).

Positive Humanities and Tourism: a possible relationship?

Can a link exist between Positive Humanities and tourism? Is cultural tourism able to contribute to human flourishing? Following the above reflection, these are two questions that arise within the current conceptual discussion. However, to comprehend the possible relationship between these two fields, it is important to first understand the context of tourism and cultural tourism.

As Caton (2014, p. 26) stated:

tourism is more than the sale of hotel rooms, restaurant meals, and tours of interesting sites. It is an activity through which people from different cultures, with different personalities and life histories, encounter one another and one another's spaces. It is a domain highly inflected by power relations, and it has the capacity to engender a host of troublesome impacts, but also to serve as a profound space of possibility for positive change.

Considering the definition posed by Walton (2024) in the Encyclopædia Britannica, tourism is: "The act and process of spending time away from home in pursuit of recreation, relaxation, and pleasure, while making use of the commercial provision of services" (Walton, 2024, n.p.). When speaking about tourism destinations the World Tourism Organization [UNWTO] (2019) included in its definition the physical space where visitors come and stay overnight, but also the products, services, and activities, also encompassing many different stakeholders. In this sense, culture is a major part of tourism endeavours, due to a growing curiosity to its link to host communities, the exponential growth of tourism around the world and the easier access to cultural experiences (UNWTO, 2018).

From the association between tourism and culture, cultural tourism emerged, being it a social phenomenon that goes back to the post-war period after World War II (Richards, 2018). The UNWTO (2019, p.30) defined cultural tourism as:

a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn,

discover, experience, and consume the tangible and intangible cultural

attractions/products in a tourism destination. These attractions/products

relate to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional

features of a society that encompasses arts and architecture, historical and

cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and

the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions.

Interesting to see that Richards (2018) suggested that there is "the need to study cultural tourism not so much as a specific form of tourism or as a coherent tourism market, but as a collection of cultural practices engaged in by a wide range of actors in the destination and by tourists themselves" (p.17). As Timothy (2018, p.178) puts it, "people are becoming more sophisticated in their travel tastes and desires; many are showing more interest in the deeper meanings of places, local identities and their own connections to the places they visit". Richards (2018) highlighted that a cultural tourist is someone who consumes cultural resources, which involves some degree of cultural assets or expertise, and which have some meaning to him/her, being it, for example, learning something new or identifying themselves culturally.

One of the interesting characteristics of this kind of tourism is the fact that it is also dispersed through a variety of different sub-genres, such as heritage, arts, gastronomy, film, or creative tourism, for example (Richards, 2018). Just as a highlight, heritage is seen to have a growing interest for developing new value and enjoyment through culture in tourism endeavours (Lee, & Lee, 2019). When looking to understand it, different elements emerge. Heritage comes from our past as something that is valued, used today and that will hopefully be preserved to the future. Can take the form of tangible or intangible and is one of the most relevant resources for tourism (Timothy, 2018). For heritage tourism, a sense of community is an important part of the experience (Lee, & Lee, 2019), and for some, heritage tourism experiences are more than the place and its actual historical features, it refers to the individuals' own connection to the place they are visiting (Timothy, 2018).

In this regard, experience-based tourism implies an active involvement by tourists (Lee, & Lee, 2019). The typical idea of visiting only castles or cathedrals is nowadays dwelling with new demands from the tourists. (Timothy, 2018). Thus, it is already

acknowledged the need to move beyond the "obvious" and start introducing more "colloquial elements of the human past, such as music, dance, traditions, folklore, games and cuisine" (Timothy, 2018, p.179). So, in this broader perspective, cultural tourism deals with topics searched and researched by the arts and the humanities. When tourists engage with the host communities, particularly cultural tourists, they many times interact with the place's paintings, sculpture, faiths, songs, myths, history, life philosophy, and countless others. Therefore, is there a possible relationship between Positive Humanities and Tourism? It seems so. But how? An answer may exist if Tay, and colleagues (2018) conceptual model of arts and humanities is applied to the tourism context.

As stated before, this model encompasses three important elements: *modes of engagement, activities of involvement* and *mechanisms*. Modes of engagement relates to the way individuals connect with these fields, being it as creators, performers, or consumers, for example. Thus, in tourism experiences, tourists engage many times as consumers of arts and humanities. For instance, in cultural tourism it is very clear the emphasis in looking for the local traditions and cultural idiosyncrasies and immersing in many arts and humanities experiences. Therefore, modes of engagement are part of the tourists' daily lives. Activities of involvement are very closely related to modes of engagement. However, in this case, an emphasis is put on the actual behaviors or actions implemented. Tourists are individuals who listen to concerts, watch paintings or sculptures or even dance. So, being involved in different activities regarded to the arts and the humanities can be part and many times it is part of the tourism experience. Finally, when thinking about the mechanisms of immersion, embeddedness, socialization, and reflectiveness (Tay, et al., 2018) it is possible to observe these four mechanisms in tourism settings. Immersion aligns with sensorial experiences and emotions and can be seen when tourists immerse in the discovery of new things and places and delve into their culture. The sense of being "carried away" to ancient times or living "like locals" is an integral part of tourism experiences, particularly in those that have authenticity at its core. Embeddedness comes as a "natural" progression of immersing in the experience. The authors highlighted that this mechanism involves psychological processes when interacting with both the arts and the humanities. These processes can also be "activated" when interacting in tourism settings, for example emotional regulation or hope can be evoked in these contexts, when visiting historical places or watching paintings from our ancestors, for example. The third mechanism, socialization, can too be seen in tourism. When tourists get involved with the community, when they participate in their activities,

or even develop friendships, this mechanism is clearly present. As Tay, and colleagues (2018) acknowledged, socialization occurs through different manners within a community, but also when "individual learn new ways of relating across different cultural environments" (p.218). Finally, the reflectiveness mechanism where individuals "reflect" about their encounter with the arts and the humanities can bring a sense of understanding of themselves or the world and can undoubtedly be part of tourism experiences. In fact, the growing focus on wellbeing endeavours in tourism including wellness practices or even spiritual or pilgrimage tourism, can be an example of a *plateau* for these when interacting with historical places or sites, or even traditions or different cultures.

In this confluence between arts, humanities, and tourism experiences it is possible to see that positive humanities can have an important place in tourism and bring also flourishing in these particularly human experiences. And as Ettenger (2015, p.77) stated "At its best, this is what tourism informed by the humanities achieves: a lasting change to how we see the world and our place within it. At the very least, our view can be broadened and our understanding expanded by the experience."

Final remarks

Throughout time and across the world there has always been a necessity to understand and discover ways of how to "flourish" and in this quest a considerable amount of works have emerged with the intend to explore this topic (Pawelski, 2022a, p.206).

The field of positive psychology has been undoubtedly one of the biggest contributors in the last decade or so. Studies have shown the importance of flourishing for a life "well-lived" and also have disclosed strategies that can help people in the path to wellbeing and thriving in life. While positive psychology has gone to embark in many different fields, its "arrival" to the study of the arts and the humanities and human flourishing is new, particularly the conceptualization of the new field of positive humanities. As was already reflected and discussed above, positive humanities focused on the "intrinsic benefits of culture, including its eudaimonic effects on personal enjoyment, individual and societal growth, and meaning-making" (Pawelski, 2022a, p.207). It is therefore a field with great potential for study and research and that should not be forgotten but invested in, and also in a broader scope.

Tourism and specifically cultural tourism it's a sector where the arts and the humanities and, consequently positive humanities can expand to. Cultural tourism entails

more than simply "viewing" a different place or culture. It can lead the tourist in an adventure of visiting places through its creations over the times, or modern ones, it can lead the tourist to explore its history and philosophy of living, or it even can embark the tourists in its own and unique arts and humanities pathways. Being the arts and the humanities fields than can bring enjoyment, positive emotions and, ultimately wellbeing and flourishing it is therefore, clear that a connection between both positive humanities and tourism can exist.

In this sense, both fields can profit. Tourism decision-making can be improved and redesign by (re)framing the industry through a humanistic approach and utilizing its many fields to allow a better comprehension of the layers and intricacies of this fascinating discipline. Humanities' perspectives on tourism can improve stakeholders' performance, as well as the industry including organizations and the local community (Ettenger, 2015). As Duxbury and Bakas (2021) puts it "the growing humanistic paradigm provides a point of inspiration for transforming not only intra-organizational management practices, but also shaping the macro dynamics of the intentions and operations of the tourism sector more widely" (p.111). Thus, the arts and the humanities can have in this interconnection with tourism a new outlook of its contribution to the society and its benefits to human flourishing in a new sector, and particularly in tourism experiences. There are, therefore, two fields which confluence has yet to be further explored. This paper tried to contribute to this gap and be a starting point for a conceptual understanding and discussion of this connectedness that shows a promising future for the development of synergies between positive humanities and tourism.

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