

WORK DURING VACATION: NOT SO BAD AFTER ALL

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Work during vacation is publicly and theoretically seen as detrimental to vacationers' quality of life. This study investigated whether work during vacation affects vacationers' quality of life in terms of intensity of felt emotions and needs fulfillment. A sample of international tourists in the Netherlands ($N = 374$) took part in a street survey. Findings indicate that workers' and nonworkers' emotional experience is not statistically different during vacation. The fulfillment of needs is also identical between workers and nonworkers. Ninety-seven percent of workers are satisfied with the balance between work and leisure time during vacation. These findings suggest that working tourists effectively combine work and leisure. Some dissatisfaction did arise from the lack of certain work facilities. Implications for the tourism industry and suggestions for further research are provided.

Key words: Work; Emotions; Quality of life; Need theory; Liquid leisure; Self-actualization

Introduction

Vacations constitute a break from everyday life. While there used to be a very clear distinction between everyday life and vacation (MacCannell, 1976), this is no longer the case in contemporary society where the boundaries between work and leisure seem to fade (Bauman, 2000; Blackshaw, 2010). Although the differences between everyday life and vacation have diminished (McCabe, 2002), both domains still have different characteristics. Vacations often allow for a much needed break from work. Recent research revealed that tourists feel better during vacation than they do in their everyday lives (Nawijn, 2011a). Positive emotions are of particular importance (Mitas, Yarnal, Adams,

& Ram, 2012). Other quality of life studies found brief positive posttrip effects on several aspects of quality of life, such as happiness (Nawijn, 2011b; Nawijn, Marchand, Veenhoven, & Vingerhoets, 2010) and health and well-being (De Bloom, Geurts, & Kompier, 2012; De Bloom et al., 2010). More recently, the focus of tourism studies that deal with the subject of tourists' quality of life has shifted to more detailed outcome variables, specifically emotions (e.g., Hosany, 2012; Mitás, Yarnal, Adams, et al., 2012; Mitás, Yarnal, & Chick, 2012; Walters, Sparks, & Herington, 2012).

Due to the aforementioned changes in society (Bauman, 2000), it is now more common to perform minor work tasks while vacationing (e.g., checking work email, making work-related phone

calls). Still it is unclear how this affects tourists' quality of life. The popular media would like us to believe that work during vacation is bad for one's well-being (e.g., McMahan, 2013; Richtel, 2012). Theoretically, the effort–recovery model (Meijman & Mulder, 1998) also suggests that workload during vacation would hamper recovery mechanisms. In contrast, need theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008) would suggest the opposite effect to take place, namely that when human needs—such as work needs—are fulfilled, this would be beneficial to a person's well-being. The limited scientific evidence that is available shows that work during vacation has a negative effect on posttrip benefits on health and well-being (De Bloom et al., 2012).

However, nothing is known of the effect of work on quality of life during vacation. This information is important as work during vacation may interfere with the restorative properties of a vacation. Furthermore, knowledge of the role of work during vacation is vital for the tourism industry as their product offer may have to be adjusted to facilitate work opportunities. Finally, insight into how work influences emotions is important as emotions have potential long-term effects (Fredrickson, 2001) and shape overall quality of life and life satisfaction (cf. Sanjuán, 2011; Sirgy, Kruger, Lee, & Yu, 2011).

Quality of Life

Quality of life is understood in different ways. Veenhoven (2000) distinguishes between chances and results that life offers, and between outer and inner qualities of a person. In this current study we approach quality of life as an inner quality of the person. Specifically, we focus on fulfillment of needs and intensity of felt emotions. Emotions are regarded as a reflection of the extent to which certain needs are met (Veenhoven, 2009).

Emotions are considered short-lived affective responses to external stimuli (Frijda, 2007). Social expression of emotion is partly dependent on culture (Mesquita, 2001) and gender (LaFrance & Banaji, 1992), while the felt component is largely universal (Hupka, Lenton, & Hutchison, 1999) due to its strong neurological basis (Davidson, Jackson, & Kalin, 2000). Emotions are important for quality of life. The balance between positive and negative emotions serves as a mediating variable between

effective psychological functioning and life satisfaction (Sanjuán, 2011). The latter also holds true for emotions experienced through vacationing (Sirgy et al., 2011). Positive emotions are of particular importance as they have the power to “broaden and build” (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001, 2004). In other words, positive emotions have potential long-term consequences by broadening the scope of thought–action repertoires and attention through which they positively affect overall quality of life (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005).

According to Maslow (1970), quality of life depends on the fulfillment of needs. Maslow distinguished two basic types of human needs: deficiency needs and growth needs. Empirical testing supported Maslow's distinction between deficiency and growth needs (see Sheldon, Elliot, Kim, & Kasser, 2001). Deficiency needs relate to “survival.” Individuals should feel safe and they need good nutrition to survive. In developed countries those basic needs are generally met. Individuals in such affluent societies therefore aim to “self-actualize.” Self-actualization is a term coined by Goldstein (1939) and concerns the need for individuals to be the best they can be—using their full potential (Rogers, 1963). Maslow theorized mostly about self-actualization and he viewed self-actualizing people as autonomous, having meaningful personal relationships and peak experiences (Maslow, 1968). Maslow's interpretation of self-actualization was mostly based on his interpretation of a small sample of self-actualizing people, which he had selected himself.

Although Maslow's (1970) distinction between deficiency needs and growth needs was empirically supported, a more current view on self-actualization—also known as self-determination theory—withstood empirical testing best (Sheldon et al., 2001). Self-determination theory suggests that three psychological needs motivate the self to engage in behavior that is beneficial to personal growth. Three innate psychological needs are distinguished: the needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000b). These three needs are considered universal innate psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Self-determination theory has received much empirical support in several areas of life, such as parenting, education, and work (Vallerand, Pelletier, & Koestner, 2008).

Needs and Vacations

Vacations contribute to the quality of life of people (e.g., Dolnicar, Yanamandram, & Cliff, 2011; Neal & Sirgy, 2004) and are generally considered an important means to foster social relationships (McCabe, 2002). Empirical evidence supports this notion that the need for relatedness is fulfilled during vacation. For example, Nawijn's (2011a) study showed that a person's travel companions are an important determinant of happiness in terms of affect balance (Veenhoven, 1984) during vacation. Furthermore, De Bloom et al. (2012) found that there is high-quality contact between partners on vacation; they talk extensively and positively. Empirical evidence also supports the perception that there is fulfillment of tourists' need for autonomy during vacation. For instance, Nawijn and Peeters (2010) found that freedom in destination choice correlates positively with tourists' life satisfaction. Additionally, McCabe (2002) argued that vacations provide an excellent opportunity for improving social relations. Recently, McCabe and Johnson (2013) found empirical support for this assumption by concluding that social well-being significantly improves for low-income individuals through vacationing. Empirical studies on the need for personal growth through competence in relation to vacations and quality of life are limited in scope. There is some evidence for adventure tourists, such as white-water rafter enthusiasts (Taylor, 1988) and mountaineers (Pomfrett, 2004). These studies suggest that the more competent a tourist is, the more enjoyment and contentment they derive from participating in such activities. A lack of perceived competence, on the other hand, can serve as a barrier to participate in leisure travel—for instance, for people with disabilities (Prayag, Hosany, & Odeh, 2013).

Problem Analysis

This study assesses the extent to which work during vacation potentially affects tourists' quality of life—in terms of intensity of needs fulfillment and felt emotions during vacation. It aims to (1) shed light on whether working versus nonworking tourists experience intensity of certain emotions differently on vacation, (2) whether needs fulfillment

differs between working and nonworking tourists, and (3) determine whether accommodation facilities and transport hubs (e.g., airports, bus stations) provide sufficient work facilities. The third part of the aim is important information for tourism managers. Consequently, our research questions were:

- RQ1:** Does emotional experience differ between working versus nonworking vacationers?
- RQ2:** Does need fulfillment differ between working versus nonworking vacationers?
- RQ3:** How are work facilities at transport hubs and accommodation facilities perceived by vacationers?

Method

Sample

Field work took place in the Netherlands from late February 2012 until early May 2012. There were 374 international tourists who participated in a street survey. This convenience sample of 374 individuals was reached through randomly approaching international leisure travelers at 10 different tourist spots throughout the Netherlands (e.g., Amsterdam, Volendam, Kinderdijk, Keukenhof). These spots were based on a list of the most popular tourist locations of 2010 as published by the Dutch Bureau of Statistics (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2011). Most respondents ($n = 353$) were traveling with a travel party. Most of them traveled in pairs. In some cases, the travel companion also filled out a survey. This caused some dependency in the within-group data. Therefore, the analyses focus only on between-group differences. The net sample was made up of 53 nationalities. Most respondents were married (48%) and between 23 and 40 years of age. The majority of the sample was female (56%).

Variables

The questionnaire contained 17 emotions. These emotions were taken from the modified Differential Emotions Scale (mDES), which was initially developed by Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, and Larkin (2003), adjusted for general use by Cohn, Fredrickson, Brown, Mikels, and Conway (2009) and applied to vacations by Nawijn, Mitas, Lin,

and Kerstetter (2013) and Lin, Kerstetter, Nawijn, and Mitas (2014). The original mDES contains 19 emotion items. In terms of valence, the emotions of the mDES are positive, negative, or neutral. The two neutrally valenced emotions (i.e., surprise and compassion) were omitted from the mDES for this study. These neutral emotions can be interpreted positively or negatively by respondents, which prohibits meaningful interpretation (cf. Lin et al., 2014). Individuals were asked to rate the intensity of each felt emotion using a 5-point Likert-type scale (i.e., 1 = *very slight or not at all*, 2 = *little*, 3 = *moderate*, 4 = *quite a bit*, 5 = *extreme*). The mDES, as we used it, contained nine positively valenced emotions (joy, gratitude, amusement, contentment, pride, awe, love, hope, interest) and eight negatively valenced (anger, sadness, fear, shame, contempt, embarrassment, guilt, disgust) emotions.

For the purpose of answering RQ2, single-item measurements of the three main components of self-determination theory were included in the survey. Respondents were asked to provide an answer to the general question "To what extent were the following needs satisfied during this vacation?" with the items autonomy ("autonomy"), relatedness ("connectedness with others"), and competence ("personal growth"). We purposely avoided the word "competence" due to its ambiguous meaning (Taylor, 1988). We preferred to use the term "personal growth" instead. Respondents could provide answers to each item via a 5-point Likert scale with anchors 1 = *not at all* and 5 = *very much*.

In order to answer RQ3, respondents who worked during vacation were asked how much time they spent on specific work tasks during vacations, if applicable. Furthermore, they were asked to indicate whether they considered the balance between work and leisure time during vacation to be good, if applicable. Additionally, two specific questions were included that probed respondents to specify whether accommodation facilities and transport hubs (i.e., airports, bus stations, train stations) might offer them better facilities to accommodate their potential work needs. Only respondents in the group of workers answered this set of questions. Respondents were asked specifically for their needs and wants in terms of making phone calls, email access, video conferencing, phone conferencing, and networking.

An "other" option was also provided, but was hardly used and therefore not reported in the results section. For each of the two main questions, respondents were given the opportunity to further explain their wishes in two separate open response boxes.

Analysis

Two groups were distinguished for analysis: (1) either the respondent and/or his/her travel companion(s) spent time on work during vacation or (2) neither the respondent nor his/her travel companion(s) spent time on work during vacation. The first group contained 174 respondents and the second group 200. We purposely chose to place all vacationers that dealt with work issues into one group. Respondents who did not work could be affected by their travel companion(s) having to work. Adjusting to work demands of others likely reduces fulfillment of needs (e.g., autonomy and relatedness) and consequently affects emotional experience during vacation. Thus, both/all tourists in a travel party would likely suffer from the work demands of the working individual. We chose to divide the two groups based on the distinction of whether one individual in a travel party worked or none worked. We favored this criterion over another criterion, such as time spent on work. The reason for this is that vacationers may have wanted to work more, but could not. Additionally, vacationers may work only for a limited time per day, but they could have to contemplate about work regularly during the day.

Group 1 contained individuals that belong to either one of these subgroups: (1) both the respondent and his/her travel companion(s) spent time on work during vacation, (2) the respondent spent time on work during vacation, but the travel companion(s) did not, or (3) the respondent did not spend time on work during vacation, but the travel companion(s) did. The number of respondents in these subgroups is 49, 65, and 60 respectively. Analyses for RQ1 and RQ2 consisted of analyzing group differences through independent samples *t* tests. As mentioned earlier in this section, due to some dependency in the within-group data, the analyses focus on between-group differences only. RQ3 was answered through basic univariate descriptives of the survey questions that dealt with

work needs and through additional information supplied by respondents via the open end response boxes that were part of the questionnaire.

Results

To answer RQ1, 17 independent samples *t* tests were performed. We tested whether felt emotions were significantly different between working and nonworking vacationers. An overview of the *t* tests for all emotions is presented in Table 1. The findings indicate that none of the emotions were felt differently between working and nonworking vacationers.

We further tested whether workers and nonworkers differed in terms of need fulfillment during vacation (RQ2). The findings are presented in Table 2. The findings in Table 2 show that workers and nonworkers did not differ significantly in terms of needs fulfillment during vacation. Practically all workers (97%) indicated that they were satisfied with the perceived balance between work and leisure time on vacation. The vast majority of respondents, or their travel companion, did not spend more than 15 minutes per day on work-related tasks. On a daily basis, 63% of workers spent less than 15 minutes on phone calls. Use of email was

Table 2
Independent Samples *t* Tests per Need

Need	Workers		Nonworkers		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Autonomy	3.58	1.255	3.58	1.294	-0.023	353	n.s.
Relatedness	3.42	1.047	3.33	1.122	0.790	356	n.s.
Competence	3.33	1.125	3.32	1.213	0.054	345	n.s.

n.s., not significant (*p* > 0.05).

somewhat lower (39%). Video conferencing and phone conferencing were probably seldom used as most working respondents ticked the boxes for “not applicable” or failed to answer the question completely. Inspection of the open response boxes added to this observation. Respondents indicated that they were “mostly left alone by work other than few emails” and they were “very happy about that.” Similarly, others commented that they tried “to make it a point to not do too much work when enjoying holidays.”

The questions dealing with satisfaction of work facilities (RQ3) generated low response rates. The number of respondents for the five main facility questions, excluding the “other” option, varied between 25 and 93. Respondents indicated that

Table 1
Independent Samples *t* Tests per Emotion

Emotion	Workers		Nonworkers		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Joy	4.39	0.624	4.27	0.712	1.804	372	n.s.
Gratitude	3.97	0.955	4.05	0.984	-0.736	369	n.s.
Amusement	4.03	0.955	3.96	0.976	0.694	371	n.s.
Contentment	4.22	0.793	4.11	0.8230	1.245	367	n.s.
Pride	3.27	1.205	3.27	1.129	0.001	364	n.s.
Awe	4.05	0.929	4.02	0.892	0.335	368	n.s.
Love	3.91	0.957	3.79	1.121	1.076	368.584	n.s.
Hope	3.60	1.087	3.54	1.151	0.529	367	n.s.
Interest	4.38	0.881	4.48	0.741	-1.194	366	n.s.
Anger	1.39	0.743	1.46	0.857	-0.855	371	n.s.
Sadness	1.29	0.680	1.32	0.721	-0.322	371	n.s.
Fear	1.27	0.681	1.30	0.648	-0.362	372	n.s.
Shame	1.15	0.492	1.21	0.655	-1.033	360.681	n.s.
Contempt	1.14	0.438	1.26	0.740	-1.943	327.778	n.s.
Embarrassment	1.30	0.735	1.34	0.726	-0.452	369	n.s.
Guilt	1.17	0.563	1.23	0.672	-0.908	371	n.s.
Disgust	1.12	0.459	1.19	0.579	-1.289	368.892	n.s.

n.s., not significant (*p* > 0.05)

accommodation facilities generally satisfied any work needs they had in terms of making work calls (71%) and email (94%). Some complaints were made about the costs: “Some hotels don’t provide free and convenient Wi-Fi” and “Too expensive email.” Sixty-seven percent were satisfied with networking opportunities. Few respondents were content with the opportunities to participate in video conferencing (30%) or phone conferencing (35%). Most respondents were also satisfied with possibilities provided by transportation hubs to make phone calls (67%) and to check emails (69%), although the latter percentage was not as high as it was for accommodations. Respondents were less pleased with opportunities provided by transport hubs to use phone conferencing (33%), video conferencing (24%), or to network (48%). One respondent explained that transport hubs often lack quiet working spaces. Again, most suggestions for improvement addressed cost issues: “No free wireless.” Many of the working respondents did not provide an answer to the work facility questions for transport hubs, which may indicate they simply do not have the need to work at these hubs.

Discussion

Despite public belief (e.g., McMahan, 2013; Richtel, 2012) and theoretical predictions (Meijman & Mulder, 1998), the findings of this study indicate that work during vacation is not detrimental to vacationers’ well-being. Quality of life—in terms of emotional experience during vacation—is similar for those who work during vacation versus those who do not. Similarly, tourists who work and those who do not work during vacation are equally capable of fulfilling their needs. Thus, although work during vacation may reduce posttrip benefits in terms of health and well-being (De Bloom et al., 2012) and life satisfaction (Sirgy et al., 2011), our study finds that emotional experience during vacation is not affected. Additionally, our findings indicate that almost all workers are satisfied with the perceived balance between work and leisure time on vacation. Most of the working tourists in our sample spent only a limited amount of time per vacation day on work activities. This finding supports the views of the multiple choice society (Schwartz, 2004) and liquid leisure (Blackshaw,

2010). Both works suggest that in contemporary society people are constantly choosing between activities to participate in. The finding that most workers on vacation are satisfied with the balance between work and leisure time implies that most people in present day society are capable of successfully combining work with leisure time, even while on vacation.

Despite the overall positive experience of work during vacation, the working respondents were less satisfied with the opportunity to take part in video conferencing or phone conferencing. An additional point of concern is the cost issue of being able to work during vacation. The open-ended response comments indicated that most dissatisfaction originated from the costs that came along with Internet access. Thus, although workers experience similar levels of emotional intensity compared to nonworkers, our study suggests that the setting to fulfill needs for competence through work (Ryan & Deci, 2000b) may not be sufficiently provided on vacation.

Implications

The findings of the study imply that current customer satisfaction research performed by the tourism industry (e.g., airlines, hotels) may benefit from including work aspects. The respondents in this study were dissatisfied with opportunities to work during vacation. Although actual time spent on work was limited, companies could include questions on work facilities and opportunities in their surveys.

The tourism industry could provide opportunities for tourists to self-actualize by fulfilling the need for competence through offering work facilities. While earlier studies found that vacations can serve as relatedness-supportive and autonomy-supportive social environments (cf. Cini, Kruger, & Ellis, 2013; De Bloom et al., 2012; Nawijn, 2011a), our study suggests that vacations could also be a more competence-supportive environment. For instance, additional cost for Wi-Fi access is viewed negatively by working vacationers. Furthermore, opportunities to participate in video conferencing or phone conferencing are limited, both at accommodation facilities and transportation hubs. The tourism industry could better cater to those needs

by offering quiet work spaces for video conferencing or phone conferencing. Additionally, more free Wi-Fi spots throughout transportation hubs and in hotel rooms would greatly enhance the ability of tourists to briefly work during vacation via their smartphone or tablet.

Suggestions for Future Research

Our study showed that working and nonworking tourists do not differ significantly in terms of felt emotional intensity and needs fulfillment during vacation. Unfortunately, due to some dependency in the within-group data, we were unable to test whether need fulfillment is associated with emotional response, as is argued by Veenhoven (2009). Future research should assess the relation between needs and emotions in a vacation context.

The working vacationers in our sample were a mix of subgroups consisting of travel parties who all work and travel parties where one person works. Future studies could focus on more specific groups to test whether these groups differ in emotional response and needs fulfillment. Also, the majority of the sample of working vacationers in this study did not spend more than 15 minutes per day on work-related tasks. This makes generalization of the findings to specific types of workers difficult. For instance, workaholics may be more tempted to work during vacation, possibly affecting their travel companion's well-being during vacation. Also, our group of workers is rather varied. Thus, additional research is required for specific groups of workers.

Furthermore, levels of competence should be assessed in future studies at different settings within a vacation experience. Earlier research has shown that competence levels may differ between settings (Prebensen & Foss, 2011), which was not specifically accounted for in this study.

Finally, self-determination theory differentiates between two main types of motivations: extrinsic and intrinsic (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Represented on a continuum, the extremes signify regulatory styles of behavior. Extrinsic motivation is synonymous for amotivation. In other words, people who are strongly extrinsically motivated engage in behavior for external reasons. Such behavior is not expected to improve quality of life. The other extreme on the continuum represents intrinsically

motivated behavior, which is conducive to quality of life as it is fully self-determined (Ryan & Deci, 2000a, 2000b). Our study did not distinguish between types of extrinsic and intrinsic motivated behavior. Future research should assess whether work during vacation represents more extrinsically or intrinsically motivated behavior and how these motives affect vacationers' quality of life.

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