

## How Happiness Affects Travel Decision Making

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**Abstract**— Consumer's definition of happiness affects their product choices; therefore, firms try to portray a happy image of their products. The sense of happiness varies depending on our temporal focus. Young people are more focused on the future and their feelings of happiness lead to excitement, and, therefore, they tend to choose exciting products. On the other hand, older people are more focused on the present, therefore, incline to choose a calm product. Nowadays, in the tourism industry, more and more customers pay attention to the psychological level of satisfaction. This study explores the definition of happiness and temporal focus in terms of journey which influence consumers' choice of tourism products. We also observe whether the change of definition of happiness affects the choice of journey between the old and young people. Two experiments were conducted on two groups of students, one consisting of the graduate students and the other consisting of the members of the senior citizens learning camp, from a university of technology in southern Taiwan. The results could give some suggestions to tourism industry to provide more enjoyable products to customers.

**Keywords**- *happiness; calm; excitement; temporal focus.*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, enterprises begin to take into account consumers' definition of happiness when developing marketing strategies. For example, HOLA [1] uses the advertising slogan "To create a new relationship we love, you and I are happy to get married!" Convenience store, 7-Eleven, uses the slogan "The familiar warmth, a brand new taste. The warmth in the hands is the real happiness in the heart." to promote "Kanto-Daki", a famous dish originally from Kanto area in Japan. CHIMEI Group [2] uses "Giving her all she wants to see is happiness. Giving her all the wishes is a luxurious happiness" as slogan to promote their LCD TV screen.

In some situations, the type of happiness is determined by the temporal focus. When consumers focus on the future, they incline to choose an exciting option. On the other hand, when consumers focus on the present, they prefer to choose a calm option. Therefore, this study explores how the definition of happiness and temporal focus affect tourists' choice of itinerary. The results of the experiment could help the tourism industry design customized itineraries based on

the need of customers. In addition, people can choose their favorite itineraries depending on their definition of happiness.

In this research, we observed that young people are more focused on the future than their elder counterparts, who are more focused on the present moment. Moreover, the definition of happiness of the young generations is more related to excitement, while that of the elder ones is more related to calmness. We also observed how the temporal focus affects people's definition of happiness and choice of tourism products, as well as the impact of the change of the temporal focus.

In order to verify the hypothesis, this study conducted two experiments using two groups of research objects, one consisting of the graduate students and the other consisting of the members of the senior citizens learning camp from a university of technology in southern Taiwan. In both experiments, the temporal focus of elderly and graduate students was controlled to verify whether temporal focus would affect the definition of happiness and the choice between excitement and calmness. In the first experiment, graduate students were influenced by focusing on the present. In the second experiment, elderly students were influenced by focusing on the future. In both experiments, we explore how people define happiness, as well as observe their choice of calm or exciting journeys. In the experiments, the types of journeys were unknown to the objects. The journeys were designed during the same periods of time while the price was not considered.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. In Section II, we present literature review. In Section III, we describe research method. The experiment and discussion are shown in Section IV. Finally, we present the conclusion and future work in Section V.

### II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Happiness is abstract and concrete at the same time. It has a nature of singularity as well as diversity. It is a feeling and it is also a scenario. Despite the fact that people are constantly pursuing happiness, they do not know happiness is quietly controlling our decision. What is happiness? Happiness is a dream of almost every one. However, the definition of happiness varies from person to person. There

are many kinds of definitions of happiness, such as being healthy, being accompanied by family or friends, and having a sumptuous dinner. It does not require exquisiteness to enhance happiness. Happiness could be simple, and be happy just because of some ordinary things. Therefore, there is no standard for the real definition of happiness.

Merriam [3] defined happiness as "a state of health and happiness and satisfaction; a pleasant or satisfying experience". So, happiness can be a state of feelings, and it also can be an experience. Some scholars believe that happiness is a singularity that means for everyone happiness is the same [4], [5]. On the contrary, some scholars believe that happiness is subjective and various. According to their study, happiness is different for each person [6]. In some research, happiness is classified into two categories of positive emotions. The first one includes excitement, joy, and passion. This type of emotional response is defined as the positive effect of "high arousal". The second one includes calm, serene, quiet, and ordinary. This kind of mood is defined as "low arousal" [7], [8], [9].

However, age can be a proxy mechanism for the "temporal focus" of the individual's underlying psychological factors. In other words, when a person is young, the temporal focus will fall on the more excited sense of happiness. So, people incline to seek novel and helpful information for the future. Naturally the attention of young people will focus on the future. On the contrary, when a person is older, his/her temporal focus will fall on more calm sense of happiness, because to the elders it is the most important to enjoy the present moment. Therefore, personal happiness experience may come from the temporal focus, rather than age itself. Even though the age may be a useful signal of personal temporal focusing, the personal emphasis on the future or the present is to determine its happiness linked to excitement or calm.

A person's mood may affect a person's perception of things, as well as their choice of type. For example, when a person holds positive emotions, he/she would mostly take heuristic approaches [10]. Heuristic approaches, also called tactical approaches, usually refer to finding the solutions based on limited knowledge or incomplete information, in a short period of time. For example, when making a decision on where to go the ski trip between South Korea or Japan, one finds that the yen depreciated significantly and hence, chooses to travel to Japan. This reasonable process is a typical heuristic approach.

When in a good mood, one would tend to be optimistic about the future, and will not pay attention to immediate concerns, and naturally, will think on the bright side [11]. Regardless of the way a choice is made, the positive emotions are directly affecting the choice. In addition, happiness has singularity and diversity at the same time, that is, some may have the same definition of happiness while some may have different definitions of happiness. Therefore, one would ask whether a person's happiness plays a role in selecting a specific option? If so, how does it affect the choice? For example, when someone defines happiness as calm, he would incline to choose a calm product, such as static journey.

According to previous studies, happiness can be classified into two categories, namely, excitement and calm which not only affect the consumer choice of products, but also affect the consumer evaluation of the products. The tourism industry should classify the customers based on the two types of definition of happiness, and furthermore design favorable tourism products for both types of customers.

To see if guiding the calm consumer to choose more a calmer journey with the proper advertisements is reasonable, we propose the first hypothesis.

H<sub>1</sub>: The definition of happiness will affect the choice, (a) when happiness is close to excitement, one is more likely to choose an exciting option than a calm option; (b) when the happiness is close to calm, one is more likely to choose a more calming, rather than exciting, option .

In addition to the excitement and calm moods, it is also shown that "age is a potential psychological factor - temporal focus." For example, in the choice of diet, young people will choose delicious food and elder people will choose healthy and light food. In the choice of brands, elder people tend to choose familiar and conservative options while young people will tend to choose a new, creative, unknown brand. Therefore, we assume that temporal focus will influence the choice because of the situational factors, and then form the second hypothesis of this study. Assume that when the focus is on the future, happiness is defined as the feeling of excitement, and consumers will tend to choose the exciting option. Suppose that when the focus is on the present, happiness is defined as calm feeling, and consumers will be more likely to choose a calm option.

H<sub>2</sub>: Temporal focus affects selection, (a) when the temporal focus is set in the future, the likelihood of choosing an exciting product is greater than the calm ones; (b) when the temporal focus is set in the present, the probability of choosing a calm product is greater than the exciting ones.

Figure 1 displays the conceptual model of the effects of temporal focus on happiness and choice constructed by H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>.

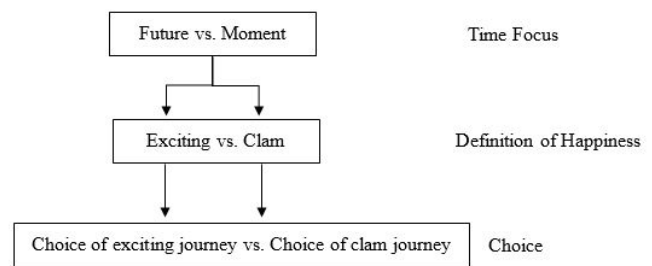


Figure 1. The framework of temporal focus to Happiness and Choice [12]

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, young people are more focused on the future than elder people. The tendency, that the elderly define happiness as calm, is greater than that of the young people. In the experiment, we also observed that whether the change of temporal focus will affect the definition of happiness and the choice between exciting or calm. In this study, the journey is designed as 15 days package tour to

Europe (calm journey) and 15 days of self-service tour to Europe (exciting journey).

*A. Experiment 1: Graduate students and the choice between exciting or calm journey*

The experiment is divided into two parts, experiment 1-1 and experiment 1-2. The subjects are graduate students of a southern University of Technology. Experiment 1-1 used "Happy McDonald's" breakfast as subject. A fast-food breakfast can make people feel excited when they finish their meal. The researchers began to introduce the design of the two journeys for them to select. After a few days, we conducted experiment 1-2. We invited the same subjects to participate in "Coffee of the day". This was an activity about providing them free breakfast at Starbucks. In the leisurely morning, they stayed at a quiet coffee shop and enjoyed coffee or tea to relax.

After finishing the meal, the researcher introduced the two pre-designed journey and questionnaires. Participants were asked to choose the trip they want to attend. Experiment 1 was finished. The purpose of this experiment was to know whether the journey of the chosen student is different from the one chosen for "Happy McDonald's" after the graduate students had been guided into a calm situation. That is, whether the graduate students change the definition of happiness or not by changing the temporal focus.

*B. Experiment 2: Elderly students and the choice between exciting or calm journey*

The experiment is divided into two parts, experiment 2-1 and experiment 2-2. The subjects are elderly people in a southern University of Technology. In experiment 2-1, they do a spiritual and meditation course for 30 minutes. Meditation had been proven to change one's temporal focus and guide them more easily towards a calm happiness [13], [14]. When the course was completed, the researcher introduced the two pre-designed journeys and the questionnaires. Participants were asked to choose the journey they want to participate in. In experiment 2-2, the elderly participants enjoyed the final carnival dinner. The interaction between the participants during the dinner helped to achieve the effect of excitement. After that, the researcher introduced these two pre-designed journeys and the questionnaires. The participants were asked to choose the journey they want to join.

IV. EXPERIMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The subjects of this experiment were graduate and elderly students in the southern university of technology. There are 17 graduate students and they are between 22 and 24 years old. There are 30 elderly students and they are between 50 and 99 years old.

*A. Experiment 1: Graduate students are about the Choice of Excitement and Calm journey*

In experiment 1-1, subjects are graduate students. Before the experiment, they are young and their temporal focus is on future, so they defined happiness as excitement. After the "Happy McDonald's" experiment, the definition of happiness

was guided to excitement, and the condition was achieved. Six questionnaires were conducted on the same day and all of them were valid. From the questionnaire, we asked "Is there any excitement in the activities of the "Happy McDonald's"? Six graduate students believed that the activities will lead them to excitement. Thus, the results of this study show that there were two possibilities. One was changing the definition of happiness by the McDonald's happy atmosphere for graduate students. Another was that graduate students are more interested in an exciting journey when the temporal focus is on the future. The results are shown in Table I.

TABLE I. HAPPY McDONALD'S EXPERIMENT STATISTIC TABLE

Happiness \ Journey	Journey		Total
	calm	excitement	
calm	0	0	0
excitement	1	5	6
Total	1	5	6

Next, in experiment 1-2, subjects are graduate students, and they are young and temporal focus is on the future, so they defined happiness as excited. After the "Coffee of the Day" experiment, the definition of happiness was successfully guided to calm. There were 12 questionnaires be conducted on the same day and 10 of them were valid, 2 were invalid. From the questionnaire, we asked "Is there any calm in the activities of the "Coffee of the Day"? From Table II, there are eight graduate students choose exciting journey. Thus, the results of this study showed that there are two possibilities. One is that the "Coffee of the Day" calm atmosphere changed the definition of happiness for graduate students. The other one is that, no matter how happiness is defined, the temporal focus on the future is more significant.

TABLE II. COFFEE OF THE DAY EXPERIMENT STATISTIC TABLE

Happiness \ Journey	Journey		Total
	calm	excitement	
calm	0	2	2
excitement	0	8	8
Total	0	10	10

*B. Experiment 2: Elderly students and the choice between exciting or calm journey*

The subjects are elderly students in the University of Technology of South Taiwan in experiment 2-1. They are older and focused on the moment and define happiness as a calm feeling. In the beginning, the elderly students were invited to participate in an activity about "mental and physical peace and meditation" and guided students to define happiness as a sense of calmness. From the 22 questionnaires distributed, 14 of them were valid and 8 were invalid. The questionnaire asked "Is there any calm in meditation?". Among these 14 valid questionnaires, there were 13 elderly students who felt that meditation led them to calm, and 1 did not.

In addition, the trainees lead the definition of happiness as calm. There were 8 students who preferred to choose a calm journey. On the contrary, the other six elderly students choose a more exciting travel journey. The results of this study showed two possibilities. One is that "meditation" can change the definition of happiness for elderly students. The other is for the temporal focus on the moment, elderly students felt more like joining a calm journey. The details are displayed in Table III.

TABLE III. MEDITATION STATISTIC TABLE

Happiness \ Journey	Journey		Total
	calm	excitement	
calm	7	6	13
excitement	1	0	1
Total	8	6	14

In experiment 2-2, the subjects were older and focused on the moment and defined happiness as calm. In this experiment, elder students attended the final carnival dinner and they interacted with classmates and professors during the dinner to achieve an excited mood. From the 21 questionnaires distributed, 16 were valid and 5 were invalid. The questionnaire asked "Was there excitement during the carnival dinner?". Among the 16 valid questionnaires, all students felt that carnival dinner led them to an excited orientation. In this study, the trainees lead the definition of happiness is excitement. There are 14 old students prefer to choose a calm trip, on the contrary, the other two choose a more exciting journey.

Table IV shows the results of this study, and it showed two situations, one is the "final carnival dinner" which makes old students change the definition of happiness. Another is temporal focus which is on the moment. No matter how to guide the definition of happiness for calm or excitement, temporal focus had a more significant effect than atmosphere.

TABLE IV. FINAL CARNIVAL DINNER STATISTIC TABLE

Happiness \ Journey	Journey		Total
	calm	excitement	
calm	0	0	0
excitement	14	2	16
Total	14	2	16

*C. Comprehensive discussion*

In this experiment, we found that elderly students had a rich experience, and they were familiar with the country, language communication and even cultural differences. Those aspects maybe had a partial effect on the choice of journey. For young graduate students, any of the two journeys are the same, because both were new, so the experiment result for young graduate students was more precise than for older students.

In this study, we repeated 2x2 variance analysis and the results showed that there was a significant interaction between the "temporal focus" and "the definition of happiness" for the journey to be selected. The experiment showed graduate students' time focus on the future, and they feel more happiness from the exciting journey than the calm one. On the contrary, elderly students focus on the moment and feel more happiness from the calm journey than the exciting one. Whether the experimenter was more focused on the future or the moment, all have the probability to affect the subjects to choose either an exciting or a calm journey. Those who focus on the future are more likely to choose an exciting journey and vice versa. The final analysis explained that the choice was determined by the definition of happiness.

Specifically, the possibility of choosing an exciting journey by the experimental subjects under the temporal focus was influenced by the definition of happiness as emotional excitement. However, the possibility of choosing a calm journey by the experimental subjects under the temporal focus was influenced by the definition of happiness as emotional calm. There was a significant effect on the analysis of temporal focus, making the temporal focus on the future of the experimental subjects expected more happiness from the exciting journey. These results showed when the time was focused, the experimental subjects were expected to feel happy from the exciting and calm journey, let them to the choice of journey. Therefore, the results showed that the definition of happiness and temporal focus will affect the choice. When the desired happiness comes from the excitement of ascension, it will tend to choose an exciting option. Moreover, when the desired happiness comes from the calm of ascension, it will tend to choose a calm option.

## V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

No matter where they come from, how much money they have earned, and how old they are, people are constantly thinking about "what is the meaning of happiness?" This study began with explaining the dynamic meaning of happiness to a person, and showing how the definition of happiness naturally changes over time, and how it affects a person's decisions. In addition, the type of happiness experienced by a person may also change at a particular time, and one can choose the happiness that he or she wants to feel.

The experimental results showed that "Happiness is an option". Also, this study confirmed that the definition of happiness changes over time, and it affects the decisions of consumers. The findings in this study could help the tourism industry to analyze consumer characteristics and then provide more customized services. Furthermore, it suggests that the tourism industry can provide guidance for the consumers to choose happier journeys.

The results of this research are still tentative. In the future, we will issue more questionnaires to have holistic and persuasive results.

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