

THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS IN THE PROCESS OF KNOWLEDGE OF TOURISM PRODUCTS

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“Our thoughts determine the thoughts that we experience”
Richard Lazarus

Abstract

The intermediate results of this study complete the rather limited specialist research in the field, which, based on theoretical and practical foundations, attempts to contribute to elucidating the mechanisms underpinning modern practices regarding the principles and role of emotions in the process of knowledge of tourism products, taking into account the progress towards a liberal knowledge-based economy. The research conducted as part of this study has identified the current need for creative practices emphasising the personal capacity to identify and manage effectively one's emotions in relation to one's goals (career, family, education, etc.) and the major importance of emotional intelligence, which represents a modern technique of becoming aware of one's feelings.

Keywords: tourism product, emotional intelligence, feeling, disposition, empathy, ability

In concrete terms, the tourism product is defined as *a set of goods and services* able to satisfy the tourism-related needs of a person between the time of arrival at and the time of departure from the tourist destination.

Within the category of material goods one can include the following:

- A legacy of natural, cultural, artistic, historical, architectural, technological, medical, etc. resources, that make up the basic physical environment and will trigger an attraction, an experience, a feeling or a positive emotion in the tourists inciting them to travel;
- Certain elements of infrastructure or equipment which, while not generating the motivation or demand for tourism, do contribute significantly to meeting it (hotels, guesthouses, chalets, restaurants, sports venues, conference rooms, etc.).
- Certain transport-related access facilities (vehicles and communication means chosen by tourists to reach the desired sights).

As it falls within the *services category*, the tourism product generally shares their characteristics: intangibility, heterogeneity, simultaneity of production and consumption, the contact between the provider and the customer and the customer's participation in the delivery of the service. There are also certain specific features to the tourism products such as their complexity and integration with the geographical and socio-

economic environment.

a) *The complexity of the tourism product is derived from multitude of components, participants and types of products.*

It is a known fact that the tourism product consists of different components, which are “assembled” to outline its full scope: transportation, accommodation, food, leisure, etc. Such variety raises the question of how to deliver a coherent and integrated product that produces a feel-good sensation, comfort, positive feelings and consequently a constructive emotion, which is simply energy in motion.

The *multitude of participants* is highlighted by the existence of firms that participate in the delivery of a tourism product. The firms are not vertically or horizontally integrated in a single organisation, as among them there are at most understandings or agreements more or less formalised. In order to prevent potential conflict situations among companies participating in the creation of the tourism product, it is essential to ensure the harmonious integration of its components, which requires cooperation between all the firms and organisations involved (carriers, hotel and restaurant owners, traders, landowners, oversight and coordination bodies, local councils, etc.). More specifically, cooperation must aim to:

- Harmonise the goals of the participants in the delivery of the product;

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- Define and evaluate the contribution of each participant in the delivery of the full tourism product;
- Ensure joint participation in product positioning and delimiting the target market;
- Coordinate all mixed marketing strategies;
- Inspire as many positive emotions as possible, indicating personal inner states, motivations, desires, needs and even goals.

The *multitude of product types* is due to the number of individual products denoted by distinct terms: hotel product, restaurant product, and leisure or entertainment product.

b) Integration within the geographical environment leads either to direct participation in the creation of the tourism product (e.g. ski pistes) or indirect participation by creating an atmosphere together with other tourist attractions (the ski pistes are located in a mountain setting with interesting relief, specific climate, seasonal fauna etc.) which can influence our thinking, memory and behaviour, and our recollection of a positive experience or emotions may persist long afterwards.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Emotions cannot be defined very accurately using words. They are felt as closely related to our thoughts, as both can occur at the same moment (e.g. the joy of a successful vacation in the mountains). Emotions shape our judgment, our memory, and our attitude towards events which play a key role in our communication with others. The recognised importance of emotions has led to the emergence of the concept of emotional intelligence and its elements:

- Recognising one's emotions, naming them and the appointment the capacity to differentiate them;
- Expressing emotions so that communication with others should improve and not deteriorate;
- The capacity to use emotions effectively, so that a person may not be driven or inhibited by emotions;
- The capacity to recognise the emotions of others and to react to them.

Emotions can be classified as positive emotions, which include courage, creativity, kindness, love, honesty, patience, openness, trust, etc., and negative emotions, for example: sadness, sorrow, fear, anger, aggression, impatience, violence, discomfort, disgust, apathy, tension, boredom, mistrust, etc. When something goes wrong or is we do not appreciate, our responses will be shaped only by the basic emotion underlying the condition of lack of awareness, namely fear. To get rid of it, it is necessary to imagine something positive such as solving a situation in a positive manner and we may see how fear passes and is replaced by confidence and ultimately by a state of tranquillity and balance (self-control). By changing our emotion, we effectively change our reaction to the outward event.

Positive emotions are constructive in the sense that they support us in achieving our dreams and give

us that energy that underlies our success. Calmness, gratitude, trust, joy create the premises for inner balance and harmony, which translate into achievements in our life overall. This inner balance is not a given, rather we must make efforts to achieve to self-control. **The triad conscience - positive emotions - balance is the optimal path to follow.** It is claimed you one give to another only what one has and can give to oneself, the most effective way to achieve success being to cultivate positive emotions and share them with others.

Our mind cannot be occupied by positive and negative emotions at the same time. Only one can be dominant. It is our responsibility to ensure that positive emotions have the prevailing influence over our judgment and our minds.

To be aware of an emotion is the key to being able to control it more effectively and make use of it. Awareness of one's own emotions does not come by itself. To do this, one must be alert to one's intimate reactions, accept them and control them, which will boost our emotional intelligence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

There are a variety of causes that may exacerbate emotional states. In this respect, Paul Ekman identifies 9 reasons that can activate emotions, namely:

- The self-assessment / self-judgment operation, i.e. mechanisms that come into play when the individual must speak about him/herself;
- Self-reflection also triggers mechanisms of self-esteem, leading to the emergence of emotions;
- The memory of a past emotional experience;
- Imagining a situation;
- Talking about a past emotional event;
- Empathy;
- Our education by others about the meaning of emotion;
- The violation of social norms;
- The voluntary embrace of emotions.

The six types of emotions recognised as universal are: surprise, fear, disgust, anger, happiness and sadness, respectively.

1. Surprise is an emotion caused by an unanticipated situation, which may vary in intensity and therefore in its forms of expression. There are several types of surprise, which can be reflected by one's face: questioning, utter amazement, bewilderment, astonishment, consternation.

2. Fear is a feeling of agitation, anxiety and uncertainty caused by the presence or imminence of danger. Fear is different surprise in terms of duration. Surprise is the briefest emotion lasting one second at most.

3. Disgust is nothing but a deep aversion to something offensive.

4. Anger (ire, irritation, resentment,

irritability) is the most dangerous of emotions, since in such a state we are capable of things we might not have done otherwise. Similar to other emotions, fear varies in degrees of intensity. Probably most commonly anger combines with disgust. People can also express anger in combination with fear, happiness or sadness.

5. Happiness (joy, euphoria, feeling of comfort) is a positive emotion, often occurring in combination with surprise and contempt, producing a facial expression of conceit and superiority. Happiness may also combine with anger. Most often, a smile is used to mask anger, other person appearing happy not angry. A slight smile sometimes appears after a bout of anger, as a comment on that anger, when the person claims that he/she should not have been taken seriously or did not intend to act angrily, or that the person who is the target of their anger will be forgiven. The combination of happiness and fear is not so much a mixture of the two emotions, but rather a comment. Happiness may also be combined with sadness.

6. Sadness (loneliness, pessimism)

If we bear in mind that emotions have an adaptation purpose, we can say that they have different functions:

1. *Fear - as we strive for protection;*
2. *Surprise-helps us find our way in a new situation;*
3. *Disgust - lead to the rejection of what is before us;*
4. *Anger - leads us to destruction,*
5. *Happiness – leads us to re-enact and to reproduce the event that makes us feel good.*
6. *Sadness – motivates us towards new personal reintegration.*

As we have pointed out, feelings are displayed outwardly by specific behaviours. To a certain extent, they may be controlled, and are based on the family and the cultural learning of each group.

Emotions are closely related to the negative feelings and the positive feelings and moods in relation to a specific tourism product

Negative feelings refer to the level of sadness that envelops a person at a given moment, due to an unsuccessful holiday. Those who experience high levels of negative feelings typically report various states specific to negative dispositions including feelings of anxiety, dissatisfaction, discouragement and irritability; in contrast, individuals with low levels of negative feelings describe themselves as calm and relaxed.

Positive feelings sustain one's current level of pleasure and enthusiasm for a successful holiday. Furthermore, individuals with a high level of positive feelings experience a wide array of

dispositions, including feelings of joviality, energy, confidence, etc., while on the other hand, those who experience low levels of positive feelings often report a sense of indifference, lack of energy and interest in the tourism environment respectively.

People who regularly experience a low level of negative emotions (i.e. they are calm and relaxed) do not feel happy or excited, could in fact fail at any point on the path that leads from a low level to a high level of positive feelings. Conversely, people who experience relatively low levels of positive feelings (e.g. they lack interest) are not necessarily angry, fearful or nervous. Consequently, at a particular point in time, we can characterise a person's disposition in terms of both positive and negative feelings, in our case in relation to a specific tourism product.

The research conducted in order to establish the specific features of persons classified among the introverts and extroverts have revealed that emotions influence cognitive processes in very fundamental ways. About happy subjects the findings showed that they:

- Frequently engage in solving problems that require creativity;
- Draw on the data from their recollections;
- Make decisions quickly and efficiently;
- Have a finer ability to resort to information best on schemes and stereotypes.

As regards the category of sad individuals, they evidence a marked tendency to:

- Solve **sylogisms**, more accurately than the happy persons;
- Estimate various correlations more accurately;
- Discriminate more precisely between strong and weak arguments.

Equally significant are the somatic changes that emotions (either alone or grouped with each other) effect on the human body. Thus, anger, fear and sadness produce an acceleration of heart rate compared with disgust. Anger causes the body temperature to rise in the fingers area. One can also talk about a potential direction, namely that sorrow produces peripheral vasodilatation and an acceleration of blood flow, to a much greater extent than any of the negative emotions.

Equally interesting distinctions were demonstrated by research findings on negative emotions compared to positive ones. Thus, unlike the emotion of happiness, the emotion of fear and disgust generates a change in pigmentation.

Socrates' advice, "**Know thyself**", refers to that which is essential to emotional intelligence, namely awareness of one's own feelings at exactly the moment when they occur.

It has already been proven that the future

belongs to emotional intelligence, by which one can achieve awareness of one's own feelings.²

At first glance, it might seem that our feelings are obvious, but more careful reflection reminds us the moments when *we may have overlooked what we really felt about a particular tourism product and reacted late to these feelings*. As part of such awareness, the mind realises and examines the expression itself, including emotions. The feelings that we experience do not occur by chance - they are always related *to a particular fact, a lived event, even if, for one reason or another, we may have forgotten about it*. In reality, the more the experience was unpleasant, the more likely it is to bury it or delete it from memory, therefore we will remember it even less.

*Emotional experiences stored in one's memory will always be expressed by one's behaviour.*³⁴ The bright side is that the sequence *acts-memory-behaviour* acts in a positive manner. Therefore, emotions are necessary because they ensure:

- **Survival** – i.e. they warn us when we lack the natural impulse or need to communicate with people;

- **Decision-making** - our feelings and emotions helps us to make decisions;

- **Setting deadlines** - emotions helps us worry when a person's conduct upsets us;

- **Communication** - emotions help us to communicate with others; if we manage to be as receptive as possible to the emotional problems of others, we are able to make them feel important, understood and useful;

- **Unity** - our feelings are the largest source of unity for all people. *"Truth stops at intelligence and beauty penetrates the heart,"* says the famous preacher and journalist Jean Baptiste Henri Lacordaire stated.

The feelings of empathy, compassion, cooperation, and forgiveness have the potential to unite people and make them better.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, emotions matter in a reasoning due to the emotional capacity that guides our momentary decisions now, working in

² The term emotional intelligence was formulated for the very first time in a doctoral thesis in the US (1985) being defined as an ability to relate creatively with states of fear, pain and desire.

³ Ekman P., 2006 - "Emotions revealed recognizing faces and feeling to improve communication and emotional life", Second Edition, An Owl Book, Henry Holt and Company New York, p. 148-151

⁴ Peiffer V., 2001 - "Gândirea pozitivă", Editura Teora, București.

collaboration with the rational mind, helping *thinking* or not. In our universe the transformation of darkness into light and of empathy into movement cannot be achieved without emotion. In line with the above-mentioned ideas, a famous saying reminds us that *"It doesn't matter how the wind blows. The only thing that matters is how you set your sail"*. It is very important that we are able to control our emotional drive, to distinguish the hidden feelings of our neighbours and treat any relationship with utmost tactfulness. We would stress that this is a rare capacity, as Aristotle acknowledged in his famous *Nicomachean Ethics* (350 BC) that a man is worthy of praise if he is *"angry at the right things and with the right people, and, further, as he ought, when he ought, and as long as he ought"*.

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