

Change as a travel benefit: Exploring the impact of travel experiences on Italian youth

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This paper aims, firstly, at identifying the main dimensions of perceived change induced in young people by a travel experience and, secondly, at understanding which dimensions of the tourism experience have the greatest influence on this change. A survey was designed based on the contemporary literature and validated through a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with experts. Data were collected from a representative sample of 400 young Italian travellers. Principal Components Analysis (PCA) identified two dimensions of perceived personal change. The first dimension is linked to cultural knowledge and openness to other cultures, while the second relates to the introspective benefits that allow young travellers to enhance their self-understanding. By using logistic regression models, the influence of sociodemographic variables and the tourism experience on the two change dimensions were identified. This study confirms the potentiality of tourism to promote change in the young traveller. Moreover, in answering its first aim, it shows that change is a two-dimensional construct involving personal and interpersonal change. Regarding the second research aim, this study has contributed to a more solid distinction between meaning and motivation to travel. Results moreover show that meaning, motivation and satisfaction are the components of the travel experience that exercise a significant influence on the perceived change.

Keywords: youth tourism, millennial travel experience, personal and interpersonal change

Introduction

This paper investigates the impact of youth travel on personal development and focuses on those travellers born between 1980 and 2000, the so-called “millennial” generation (Richards & Wilson, 2003; Glover, 2010). This generation is considered to look at the world through a global lens and to show an attitude of openness to new experiences. Research suggests that millennials are usually confident in themselves, are connected through social networks, and use these and the internet to plan holidays and travel, are aspirational and promote change (Benckendorff, Moscardo & Pendergast, 2010; Rainer & Rainer, 2011; Ruspini, Gilli & Decataldo, 2013). These characteristics of millennials are often summarised with three Cs: Confident, Connected and (open to) Change. However, research focused on how travelling impacts on these three Cs, and especially on the last of the Cs, is limited. Therefore this article focuses on perceived personal change as a travel benefit. The target group of this study is young Italians aged between 16 and 29 years who travelled independently of their family or an organisation in 2010/2011. The aim of this article is twofold: firstly, to identify the main dimensions of perceived change induced in young people by a travel experience; and, secondly, to understand which components of the tourism experience have the greatest influence on this change.

Literature review

Specific benefits expected from a tourism experience, such as personal development and change, depend on what the

traveller is looking to experience. As briefly pointed out in the introduction, “millennials” are thought to share characteristics that set them apart from other generations (Benckendorff, Moscardo & Pendergast, 2010; Rainer & Rainer, 2011; Ruspini, Gilli & Decataldo, 2013). It is therefore relevant to single out this group when researching travel benefits. Although there is some debate on the possibility of investigating behavioural patterns by using generations and thus incurring the risk of downplaying individual differences, it is also acknowledged that focusing on generations is useful from a professional perspective and feasible from an academic viewpoint (Glover, 2010).

Focusing on the travel experience of “millennials” is not only interesting because of their shared characteristics, but also because academic literature has dedicated little attention to youth tourism, preferring to focus on workplace expectations and consumer behaviour of the millennial generation (Glover, 2010). Consequently the existing research on youth travel is fragmented (Richards & Wilson, 2004; Staffieri, 2016). The lack of interest in youth travel is surprising because youngsters in general and the millennial generation in particular have a significant social and economic impact not only on the present, but also on the future of the tourism industry (Cavagnaro & Staffieri, 2015). Economically the total value of international youth travel was estimated at US\$190 billion in 2009 (Richards, 2011). The same study found that on a major trip young people spend on average of US\$2 600, which is almost three times more than an average tourist. From a sociocultural perspective, it has moreover been observed that young people are an innovative force and that their choices may lead to new approaches to tourism by the wider society (Martinengo &

Savoja, 1993; Fermani, Crocetti, & Carradori, 2011). Therefore new developments in tourism behaviour can be anticipated by describing young people's present behaviour (Leask, Fyall & Barron, 2013; Cavagnaro & Staffieri, 2015). The economic and sociocultural impact of the young tourist segment underlies the importance of investigating this target group and identifying the benefits they receive from a travel experience.

Research on (youth) tourism identifies several benefits derived from travelling (Chen & Petrick, 2013; Durko & Petrick, 2013; Petrick & Huether, 2013; Chen, Petrick & Shahvali, 2016). Primarily, travelling is seen as an important step in the training and knowledge development of young people. It is an opportunity for cultural exchange and socialisation, which has the potential to make young people more open-minded (Leed, 1991; Gemini, 2008). As the United Nations World Tourism Organization and the World Youth Student & Educational Travel Confederation (WTO & WYSETC) noted: "The majority of young travellers feel that they have broadened their horizons and become more open-minded, flexible, confident and tolerant as a result of their travel experience" (WTO & WYSETC, 2008, p. xii).

In addition to broadening his/her horizons, the young traveller develops his/her communication skills, both within the group of travelling friends and with the people he/she meets at the destination (Mattioli, 1998). Furthermore, the tourism experience meets the young people's need to expand the boundaries of everyday reality (Buzzi, Cavalli & De Lillo, 2007) and encourages the deepening of core values such as respect and trust towards others (Leed, 1991; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006; Smed, 2009). As several authors have noted, the relationship with other young people enriches the relationship with the self, giving rise to the construction of the traveller's identity (Leed, 1991; Martinengo & Savoia, 1993; Gemini, 2008; WTO & WYSETC, 2008; Stone & Petrick, 2013). For these reasons, travel is considered a radical experience of the individual traveller (Buzzi, Cavalli & De Lillo, 2007; Mois, 2010). Independence is a key concept here: travelling gives young people the opportunity to experience independence and this, in some cases, leads to the further development of traits of his/her personality. Parallel to the development of the young travellers' independence, the journey promotes knowledge of the self, of others and of the cultures with which the traveller comes into contact, (Leask, Fyall & Barron, 2013; Ruspini, 2013).

In sum, the literature suggests that the benefits that young people derive from travel range from cultural exchange, socialisation and developing an open mind to deepening core values, (re)-constructing their own identity and experiencing personal change. This range may be reduced to a dichotomy between forces pushing toward the other and forces pushing toward the self (Leed, 1991). In other words, benefits individuated by the literature such as cultural exchange, socialisation and developing an open mind are a result of forces pushing towards the other, leading to change in the relationship between the self and the other; while deepening core values and personality development are connected with the forces pushing towards the self and leading to interpersonal change. Interestingly, no reference is made in the literature to changes in the way a traveller perceives his/her relationship with the natural environment. In this light, it can be concluded, in order to investigate benefits that young people derive from a travel experience, it is essential to explore the transformation

and change of the traveller's identity in regard to themselves and in regard to others (Leed, 1991). However, research that examines the perceived value and benefits of tourist behaviour focuses mostly on satisfaction and loyalty (Prebensen, Woo & Uysal, 2013; Cohen, Prayag & Moital, 2014), leaving practically unexplored the dimension of change. This study wishes to close this gap by assessing whether youngsters perceive both intrapersonal and interpersonal change after a travel experience.

It should be considered, though, that the value that tourists derive from being in a location for an extended period of time is more than a trade-off between quality and price, and includes social, emotional and epistemic benefits (Prebensen, Woo & Uysal, 2014). As such, benefits, including perceived change through travel, reside more in the experience than in the object of consumption, and should be researched in relation to the different phases of a travel experience. Therefore, the present research investigates change as a travel benefit in relation not only to the main sociodemographic variables, but also to the main phases of the travel experience (Prebensen, Woo & Uysal, 2013; Staffieri, 2016), i.e. the need recognition (including meaning given to and motivation for travelling), the experience itself (here condensed in the destination choice) and the post-experience evaluation (satisfaction).

Meaning "brings to the surface the general needs associated with travelling and is heavily related with the symbolic character of travelling" (Cavagnaro, Staffieri & Postma, in press). It is the "combination of the needs and the desires that affect the propensity to travel in a general sense" (O'Leary & Deegan, 2003, p. 247). Previous studies have concluded that millennials attribute to travel a self-enhancing and self-transcending meaning. Travelling is self-enhancing in the sense that it allows them to escape the quotidian and experience novelty (WTO & WYSE, 2016). It is self-transcending because it embraces the need of being in contact with other people and with nature (Cavagnaro & Staffieri, 2015). In contrast to the more general bearing of travel meaning, motivations have an immediate influence on a specific travel choice. Though the difference between meaning and motivation has not always been properly upheld in the existing literature, it may still be stated that previous studies on youth tourism have identified several motives such as socialising, building friendships, seeking adventure, exploring other cultures, being in contact with nature, resting and relaxing, and furthering personal knowledge and education (Richards & Wilson, 2003; Tibon, 2012; Staffieri, 2016). The relationship between motivations and other constructs, such as perceived value at the destination, and satisfaction, has also been widely studied in the tourism literature, leading to the insight that motivations largely influence the whole tourism experience (for a review, see Prebensen, Woo & Uysal, 2013). Moreover, research has pointed to the importance of considering the tourism destination not only as a pull factor influencing the tourists' choices (e.g. Yoon & Uysal, 2005), but also in its relation to other constructs pertaining to the tourism experience – such as motivation – that may influence the way in which a traveller perceives the destination's value (Prebensen, Woo & Uysal, 2013). Considering satisfaction, finally, research has concluded that this phase of the travel experience is also influenced by motivation (Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Staffieri, 2016). Summing up, existing literature is not only valuable for the support it

provides in categorising the benefits perceived by youngsters after travelling, and their meaning and motivations to travel, but also and foremost because it clearly shows that the several phases of a travel experience should be studied conjointly.

The aim of this paper is to improve our understanding of youth travel behaviour by focusing on change as benefit in a travel experience and by assessing which of the several dimensions of the tourism experience impacts on the perceived change. Specifically, we wish to assess whether, as suggested by the literature, youngsters perceive intrapersonal and interpersonal change after a tourism experience; and whether sociodemographic variables and the phases of a tourism experience (meaning, motivation, destination chosen and satisfaction) influence the perceived change.

Research approach

An electronic questionnaire was designed to manage the sequence of questions through filters and rules. A private company¹ prepared the lists sample (telephone numbers), computerised the questionnaire and provided the software for scheduling the survey. The sample was stratified on two variables: geographical area (north, central, and south Italy) and type of municipality of residence of the phone user (capital/non-capital of the province). Twenty samples were prepared (telephone contacts) in order to obtain names to be used should replacements be necessary, for example due to non-response (for rejection or unavailability), or in such a case as the person contacted via the telephone is not a suitable respondent (aged between 16 and 29 years) and who had taken at least one trip independently during 2010/2011. The sample size of 400 respondents was set above the amount of 300 respondents considered as a good sample size by Comfrey and Lee (1992).

As no existing scale was found in the literature to verify whether youngsters perceive change as a travel benefit, a scale needed to be developed for this study. The development followed a three-step process. First, existing academic literature on the benefits of travel was scanned (e.g. Pearce, Filep & Ross, 2011) and benefits suggested by this literature were listed. Second, this list was compared with the outcomes of research carried out by WTO and WYSETC in 2005 (2008). This research was conducted using mailing lists provided by members of WYSETC in

Canada, the Czech Republic, Germany, Ghana, Ireland, Mexico, the Russian Federation, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. In total, 1 452 pre-trip responses and 510 post-trip responses were collected. It was therefore possible to measure directly the changes in attitudes of the same respondents pre- and post-travel (WTO & WYSETC, 2008, p. 37).

In line with the literature on youngsters' motives for travelling (e.g. Richards & Wilson, 2003; Tibon, 2012), the WTO and WYSEC research found a vast array of reasons, including increasing knowledge, exploring other cultures, interacting with local people, and building friendships. Moreover, the study upheld the existing insights on perceived travel benefits (e.g. Leed, 1991) by concluding that young travellers perceive change both in the way they conceive of their own identity (becoming more confident, for example) and in the way they interrelate with others (becoming more tolerant, for example).

Combining the insights from the existing literature and the outcomes of the WTO and WYSE survey, a list of 10 items was developed to measure perceived change as a benefit gained from travelling. The third and last step was aimed at evaluating whether these 10 items matched the Italian situation. To this scope, twenty Italian experts were asked to assess the items during in-depth interviews. All experts agreed with the proposed items. Considering the specific situation of the Italian youth confronted with high levels of unemployment and often looking abroad for employment opportunities, one expert (Respondent number 4, personal communication, 4 March 2012), suggested inclusion of one item related to job opportunities: *"The travel/experience provided me with job opportunities"* (Staffieri, 2016). The final instrument was therefore composed of 11 items, and a degree of agreement on a Likert scale of one to five was set for each item.

Results

This section reports the study's results, starting with an illustration of the sample. It proceeds to answer the study's first research question, i.e. whether young travellers perceive changed both personally and interpersonally. It then concludes by evaluating the impact of demographic variables and the travel experience's components (meaning, motivation, destination, and satisfaction) on the perceived change, thus answering the second research question.

Sample

The survey reached 401 young travellers living in Italy. Respondents' ages varied between 16 and 29 years. The most consistent age group is formed by 21–25 year olds (35.2%), followed by 16–20 (33.9%) and 26–29 (30.9%). This fits with the definition of young traveller used for this study. In Table 1, other demographic data are summarised. The demographic profile of the respondents does not significantly differ from the population (see Table 1).

In addition to sociodemographic characteristics, the data permits us to design a profile of the young respondents' tourism behaviour and to explore whether sociodemographic variables have an influence on this behaviour. Looking at the family history, 85% of respondents had enjoyed at least one trip with their family of origin in the last two years. In the same period, all respondents have travelled independently. Having travelled independently was the eligibility condition of participating in the survey. On average, respondents undertook

Table 1: Overview of demographic data

		%
Gender	Men	51.4
	Women	49.6
Nationality	Italian	97.1
	Other	2.9
Education	Elementary/low	14.5
	Intermediate	55.5
	High/university	19.9
Area of residence	North	50.5
	Central	20.4
	South	29.2
Living situation	With family of origin	92.5
	Independently	7.5

1.4 trips independently in the last two years. 75.2% of the sample carried out only a single trip, while 15.2% undertook two trips, and 6.3% three trips.

Age groups and gender did not have a significant influence on the average number of independently undertaken trips. There is, however, a statistically significant influence ($p < 0.05$) by the area of residence. Young people living in the north of Italy undertook on average 1.5 trips, compared with 1.4 and 1.2 of young people living in the south and centre of the country respectively. This result is interesting because it suggests that while young women and men have achieved the same degree of liberty when it comes to travelling, young people from the north still have an advantage when compared to their peers from less economically strong regions.

Perceived change

This section addresses the question of whether young travellers perceive themselves to be changed through a travel experience by firstly describing the answers given on the 11-item scale measuring change as a travel benefit, and secondly sharing the results of a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) performed to test whether these items could be reduced to underlying constructs. Table 2 reports the degree of agreement with the items on the change scale. The highest level of agreement is observed for the following three items: "The travel/experience gave me a taste for more travel" (83.5%), "The travel/experience has contributed to my personal growth" (75.8%) and "The travel/experience allowed me to socialise with

different people" (74.5%). Interestingly, significantly lower levels of agreement are observed in correspondence of items related to changing of one's life (19.3%) and changing the way of being (27.3%). Lowest of all is the level of agreement with the ability to find job opportunities through travelling (12.1%).²

In order to verify the internal consistency of the items in the change scale, Cronbach's alpha coefficient³ is calculated. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.800. When one item is eliminated ("The travel experience provided me with job opportunities"), then this value increases to 0.825.⁴ Therefore, this item was dropped from the scale and will not be considered in further analysis. Subsequently, in order to reduce the number of variables and discover eventual underlying constructs, a PCA was conducted on the remaining 10 items (see Table 3). The PCA suggested the extraction of two components explaining 58.5% of the total variance. The suitability of the analysis has been verified using Kaiser-Meyer-Olin (KMO = 0.824).⁵

The first component extracted through PCA is related to cultural knowledge and openness regarding other cultures. The second component relates to the introspective nature of change that allows the young person to get in touch with him/herself and to know him/herself better. In short, it may be said that these two components or dimensions of change reflect the dichotomy identified by Leed (1991) in the existing literature on travel benefits between the push toward the other and the pull toward the self. This study's results therefore confirm that young travellers perceived changed on a personal and interpersonal level after a travel experience.

Table 2: Degree of agreement related to the items of the change (percentage values)

Items of the perceived change	Strongly disagree/ disagree more than agree	Neither agree nor disagree/ indifferent	Agree more than disagree/ strongly agree
1. The travel/experience allowed me to socialise with different people	12.3	13.2	74.5
2. The travel/experience has contributed to my personal growth	12.5	11.7	75.8
3. The travel/experience helped me gain a greater cultural awareness	18.9	13.1	68.1
4. The travel/experience increased my openness to other cultures	19.6	16.0	64.4
5. The travel/experience change my way of being	54.2	18.5	27.3
6. The travel allowed me to know myself better	37.8	17.3	44.9
7. The travel/experienced allowed me to express myself in new ways	41.3	21.3	37.4
8. The travel/experience provided me with job opportunities	81.8	6.0	12.1
9. The travel/experience changed my life	68.0	12.6	19.3
10. The travel/experience gave me a taste for more travel	10.4	6.1	83.5
11. The travel/experience broadened my horizons	19.1	17.6	63.3

Table 3: Principal component analysis figures

Component	Item/category	Description
Change perceived*: "I and you"	The travel/experience helped me gain a greater cultural awareness	First component (FC), obtained from PCA, of the ten items related to the concept of change. FC variance explained = 32.5% Total variance explained = 58.5% KMO = 0.824
	The travel/experience increased my openness to other cultures	
	The travel/experience has contributed to my personal growth	
	The travel/experience gave me a taste for more travel	
	The travel/experience allowed me to socialize with different people	
Change perceived*: "I"	The travel/experience broadened my horizons	Second component (SC), obtained from PCA, of the ten items related to the concept of change. SC variance explained = 26.0% Total variance explained = 58.5% KMO = 0.824
	The travel/experience change my way of being	
	The travel/experience changed my life	
	The travel/experienced allowed me to express myself in new ways	
	The travel allowed me to know myself better	

Note: The order of the items in the table corresponds to their contribution to the new component.

This point stated, the question still needs to be answered about which components of the travel experience impact most on perceived personal and interpersonal change. To answer this question, starting from the two components of change individuated above, two binary variables were computed, considering the median value as a discriminator. Then these two new variables were used as dependent variables in logistic regression⁶ models in which sociodemographic variables (such as gender, age group and family educational level) and the components of the travel experience were used as independent variables (Staffieri, 2016). How the components of the travel experience were calculated is described in the section below.

Influence of demographic variables and the travel experience components on the perceived change

This section is dedicated to answering the second research question of this study, i.e. whether demographic variables and the travel experience's components (meaning, motivation, destination, and satisfaction) impact on the perceived change. In order to do so, on the basis of the gathered data, the travel experience is deconstructed and its main components revealed. This analysis concludes with a table presenting all independent variables, i.e. demographics and the components of the travel experience. Secondly, the results of the logistic regression models used to assess the influence of the independent variables on the perceived change are presented and discussed.

The tourism experience's components

As noted in the literature review, a tourism experience may be deconstructed in three phases: needs recognition, with the sub-components of meaning given to travel and motivation to travel; the experience itself; and the evaluation of the experience. Pre-existing scales were used to measure these constructs (Cavagnaro & Staffieri, 2015; Staffieri, 2016; Cavagnaro, Staffieri & Postma, in press). The scales measuring meaning and motivation contained several items that were reduced through PCA to their underlying constructs (Staffieri, 2016). The PCA identified five meanings associated with the travel, and three motivations for undertaking the travel that were labelled by looking at the common denominator of the subtending items (see Table 4).

A contribution of this study is to have individuated five meanings and three motivations, thus more clearly distinguishing these two components of the travel experience that are often coalesced in the literature. The individuated meaning, moreover, not only confirms the suggestion that that millennials attribute to travel a self-enhancing and self-transcending meaning (Cavagnaro & Staffieri, 2015; WTO & WYSE, 2016), but also suggest the importance of health as a component and not as an outcome of the travel experience (Fermani, et al., in press). Looking at motivations, it is interesting to observe that the third motivation extracted by PCA connects the items on independency with the item about following a mode. To complete the set of independent variables, in Table 4, destination choice illustrates the experience phase, while satisfaction covers the evaluation phase. After completing the list of independent variables, it is now time to consider whether these have any influence on the perceived change. This is the aim of the next section.

Impact of sociodemographic variables and the travel experience on perceived change

The dependent and independent variables have been presented above. This section illustrates the results of the logistic regression models testing the influence of demographic factors and the tourism experience on the perceived change. As explained above, the items measuring change as a benefit from travel have been reduced through a PCA to two dimensions of change: one related to cultural knowledge and openness to other cultures, and one related to introspection and personal change. The first dimension has been labelled "*I and You change*"; the second "*I change*". To assess the influence on these two dimensions of change of sociodemographic variables and of the components of the travel experience, two logistics models were run. The models were tested using the Hosmer-Lemeshow (HL) test, especially suitable in the case of small sample sizes. If the HL test statistic is not significant, the model fit is acceptable (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000). The HL statistic test confirms the goodness of fit for all of the logistic regression models carried out. The sociodemographic variables (gender, age group, father's and mother's education levels) do not seem to have any influence on the two dimensions of change. For this reason these variables are not reported in Table 5 where the results of the logistic regressions are shown.

Several components of the travel experience influence the type of change perceived. Four out of five meanings of travel influence change significantly. The meanings "*knowledge*" and "*physical and mental well-being*" increase the propensity of feeling changed in terms of cultural growth ("*I and you*" change). Personal, introspective change is influenced by the meanings "*friend/romances, changing/growing*" and "*sociality*". However, while the first meaning increases the likelihood of "*I change*", the second decreases it. Meaning three ("*fun, relax*") is not conducive to change. Similarly, the travel motivation "*fun, relax, and friend*" is also not conducive to change. Respondents who travel in order to learn about different cultures and interact with other people ("*knowledge*") are more likely to experience cultural growth. Moreover, the likelihood of being changed both in terms of personal and of cultural growth increases when the motivation to travel is "*independency and vogue*".

Commenting on these results in general terms, it can be noted that they confirm that motivation is a driver of change (Prebensen, Woo & Uysal, 2013). More specifically, the positive influence of the motivation and the meaning labelled "*knowledge*" on the "*I and you*" change may be explained with reference to the items constituting these constructs: all point towards the wish to know new cultures, explore new ways of life and deepen understanding of other cultures and people. This result therefore confirms literature suggesting that travelling offers to youngsters the opportunity to transcend themselves (Cavagnaro & Staffieri, 2015) and that cultural exchange and socialisation have the potential to make young people more open-minded (e.g. Gemini, 2008). It is more difficult to understand why the motivation "*physical and mental well-being*" positively influences this type of change. Tentatively, it could be argued that being engaged in a reflective process involving spiritual and bodily health sets a firm psychological foundation from which it is easier to open up to the other. Researchers have only recently started considering

Table 4: Set of independent variables

Independent variables	Categories
Gender	Male/female
Age group	16–20/21–25/26–29
Father's education level	Low/medium/high
Mother's education level	Low/medium/high
Meaning 1 "knowledge" (a) to discover and experience new cultures to explore different ways of life to acquire and deepen knowledge of art, history to live authentically	Binary variable, built considering the median value of the first component (FC) obtained from PCA, of the 18 items related to the concept of motivation. FC variance explained = 15.2% Total variance explained = 57.9% KMO = 0.826
Meaning 2 "friend/romances, changing/growing" (a) To make new friends to meet many people to change to have holiday romances to grow	Binary variable, built considering the median value of the second component (FC) obtained from PCA, of the 18 items related to the concept of motivation. FC variance explained = 14.7% Total variance explained = 57.9% KMO = 0.826
Meaning 3 "fun, relax" (a) entertainment (nightlife, pubs) escape from everyday life to rest and relax	Binary variable, built considering the median value of the third component (FC) obtained from PCA, of the 18 items related to the concept of motivation. FC variance explained = 9.9% Total variance explained = 57.9% KMO = 0.826
Meaning 4 "physical and mental well-being" (a) to explore a meaningful path of faith to improve health to live in contact with nature	Binary variable, built considering the median value of the fourth component (FC) obtained from PCA, of the 18 items related to the concept of motivation. FC variance explained = 9.7% Total variance explained = 57.9% KMO = 0.826
Meaning 5 "sociality" (a) to not have tensions with fellow travellers being with friends to live in contact with local people	Binary variable, built considering the median value of the fifth component (FC) obtained from PCA, of the 18 items related to the concept of motivation. FC variance explained = 8.4% Total variance explained = 57.9% KMO = 0.826
Motivation 1 "fun, relax and friends" (a) I travelled in order to have fun I travelled in order to relax I travelled in order to have a break from everyday life I travelled in order to interact with my friends	Binary variable, built considering the median value of the first component (FC) obtained from PCA, of the nine items related to the concept of motivation. FC variance explained = 23.0% Total variance explained = 60.4% KMO = 0.724
Motivation 2 "knowledge" (a) I travelled in order to discover different cultures I travelled in order to see the beauty of the destination I travelled in order to meet new people	Binary variable, built considering the median value of the second component (FC) obtained from PCA, of the nine items related to the concept of motivation. FC variance explained = 20.0% Total variance explained = 60.4% KMO = 0.724
Motivation 3 "independency and vogue" (a) I travelled in order to feel more independent I travelled in order because most people think that it is necessary to do at least a trip once in one's life	Binary variable, built considering the median value of the third component (FC) obtained from PCA, of the nine items related to the concept of motivation. FC variance explained = 17.4% Total variance explained = 60.4% KMO = 0.724
Destination	Italy/Europe/Outside Europe
Satisfaction (a) (b) The travel was a positive experience I found happiness from my travel I consider the experience of the travel favourable I would like to repeat this experience The travel was a satisfied experience I will recommend to others to do the same travel The tourism experience gave me back a deep sense of joy and fulfilment	Binary variable, built considering the median value of the first component (FC) obtained from PCA, of the seven items related to the concept of satisfaction. FC variance explained = 71.7% Total variance explained = 71.7% KMO = 0.914

- (a) The items related to the meaning, motivation and satisfaction of the travel are measured through a five-point Likert scale (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree/Indifferent, Agree, Strongly agree);
- (b) The Cronbach's alpha coefficient, calculated in correspondence of the seven items, is equal to 0.93, which suggests that the items have excellent internal consistency; the scale used effectively measures a single dimension on satisfaction with the tourist experience. This result is also confirmed from the PCA conducted on the seven items. In fact, a single component is extracted that is able to explain 71.7% of the total variance.

Table 5: Results of the logistic regression model

	Change perceived: "I and you"			Change perceived: "I"		
	Coeff. b	Sig.	Exp(B)	Coeff. b	Sig.	Exp(B)
Meaning 1 "knowledge" (ref. No)						
Yes	0.889	0.001**	2.432	0.126	0.581	1.134
Meaning 2 "friend/romances, changing/growing" (ref. No)						
Yes	0.351	0.212	1.421	0.821	0.000***	2.274
Meaning 3 "fun, relax" (ref. No)						
Yes	0.142	0.609	1.153	-0.291	0.195	0.747
Meaning 4 "physical and mental well-being" (ref. No)						
Yes	0.572	0.043*	1.771	0.371	0.098†	1.450
Meaning 5 "sociality" (ref. No)						
Yes	-0.183	0.502	0.833	-0.503	0.023*	0.605
Motivation 1 "fun, relax and friends" (ref. No)						
Yes	0.136	0.632	1.145	0.287	0.210	1.333
Motivation 2 "knowledge" (ref. No)						
Yes	2.059	0.000***	7.835	-0.168	0.485	0.845
Motivation 3 "independency and vogue" (ref. No)						
Yes	0.653	0.020*	1.921	0.951	0.000***	2.587
Destination (ref. Italy)		0.009**			0.251	
Inside Europe (excl. Italy)	0.500	0.093†	1.649	-0.230	0.342	0.794
Outside Europe	1.449	0.003**	4.257	0.341	0.369	1.407
Satisfaction (ref. No)						
Yes	1.716	0.000***	5.561	0.303	0.214	1.354
Constant	-3.578	0.000***	0.028	-0.876	0.010*	0.416
Number of cases		400			400	
Hosmer-Lemeshow test		not significant			not significant	
Percentage of observations that are correctly classified		78.6%			65.8%	

Note: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; † $p < 0.10$

psychological health as an antecedent and not as a consequence of travelling (Fermani, et al., in press). A deeper exploration of linkages between psychological health, travel and change through travel is therefore needed to test this explanation.

As noted above, the "I" change is positively influenced only by the meaning labelled "*friends/romance*" and the motivation "*independency and vogue*". The items constituting these two dimensions of the tourism experience reflect the emotional component of travelling. This result supports Leed's (1991) observation that the push towards the other and the push towards the self, interact as mirrors and reflections, and lead to personal growth. The meaning "*sociality*" decreases the eventuality of being changed. This may be explained because the items composing it (such as no tensions with fellow travellers) are linked to the process of travelling itself. A focus on the actual travel process may distract the traveller from the self-reflection needed to deepen personal values and perceive a change (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006; Smed, 2009). A similar explanation can be used to clarify why the meaning and motivation connected to the hedonic component of travelling have no influence on change. Moreover, all travelling may be framed as a hedonic activity (Kim, Ritchie & McCormick, 2012) leading to the reflection that this generic characteristic is insufficient to motivate young travellers to change. Interestingly, the chosen destination influences the level to which the travel is conducive to change in terms of cultural growth. Young people who choose a destination outside Italy feel a change in their openness towards other cultures more acutely than those who chose Italian destinations. Contrary to literature that considers geographical distance insignificant due to the digital age (Wilson & Gerber, 2008; Ruspini, Gilli, Decataldo

& Del Greco, 2013), for the Italian sample the geographical distance covered during a trip does indeed matter: destinations outside Italy lead to encounters with cultures that – being more acutely different from the local, Italian culture – favour the "I and you" change. Whether this is a peculiar characteristic of young Italian travellers may only be assessed in new research covering a sample from different regions. Finally, the perception of satisfaction positively affects change. Even though this is true only for cultural change, it confirms the role of satisfaction as influencer in the evaluation processes of the tourism experience (Prebensen, Woo & Uysal, 2013).

Conclusions

The aim of this study was twofold: on one side it wished to identify the main dimensions of perceived change induced in young people by a travel experience and, on the other, to understand which dimensions of the tourism experience have the greatest influence on this change. Regarding the first aim, the study confirms that a tourism experience leads to changes in the young traveller. Moreover, it confirms the intuition of Leed (1991) that there are two main components of change: one directed towards the other and one directed towards the self. The tourism practice may indeed be conceived as a cultural laboratory in which people have the opportunity to experience and learn new cultures through social relationships and reaching destinations outside their usual environment (Löfgren, 1999). Travelling alters the structures of meaning and increases the traveller's educational and cultural level (Leed, 1991; Gemini, 2008; Gilli, 2009) and is therefore conducive to an experience of maturation and cultural growth.

The second aim of this study was to assess in a simultaneous model the influence of the tourism experience (meaning, motivation, destination, and satisfaction) on the two change dimensions. Results show that not all dimensions of the tourism experience influence change through travel equally. They confirm, though, the role of motivation as driver and of satisfaction as influencer of change (Prebensen, Woo & Uysal, 2013). This result provides a more detailed picture of the relationship between the different aspects involved in the change process. The influence exercised by meaning, motivation and satisfaction confirms and integrates earlier research underlining the impact of the travel experience on young people's minds (WTO & WYSETC, 2008). Additionally, the present study shows that young people travelling abroad feel more acutely changed than those who chose destinations close to their place of residence. Young people who choose a destination outside Italy more strongly experience a change in their openness towards other people and cultures. By travelling abroad, they experience cultural growth by learning about different cultures and interacting with other people. To sum up, they experience the broadening of horizons and express the desire to engage in more tourism experiences that is postulated in the literature (WTO & WYSETC, 2008).

The research results confirm the importance of the topic investigated and represent a useful and strategic information base for the definition of policies in support of youth tourism. Some critical issues have emerged during the research phases: the change studied is not the result of a measurement between two observations (pre- and post-tourism experiences), but as it is perceived by the young people at a specific point in time. Most studies in this area present this problem and the difficulty of measuring the performance post-experience (Pearce, 2011). Moreover, the change dimensions investigated may not be exhaustive. Future, longitudinal studies should improve on these weaknesses by trying to discover new potential change dimensions, by measuring change at different times (before and after the tourism experience), by replicating this research in other geographic areas and by considering more variables involved in the tourism experience such as psychological well-being and leisure-oriented versus study-oriented travel.

Notes

- ¹ Demetra Opinioni.net srl (Venezia).
- ² The item (as noted in the research method section) has been eliminated from the scale due to the low Cronbach value.
- ³ Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency. A high value of alpha is used to indicate that the items measure an underlying factor or dimension. To verify the unidimensionality of the used scale, it is necessary to carry out additional factor analysis (Lavrakas, 2008).
- ⁴ The exclusion of the item "The travel/experience provided me with job opportunities" has allowed us to improve the reliability of the scale used to measure change.
- ⁵ The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value is a measure of appropriateness of factor analysis.
- ⁶ Logistic regression fixes the influence of multiple independent variables existing simultaneously to predict belonging to one or other of the two dependent variable categories (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000).

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