



Echoes of the past: The quality of life impact on visitors to military memorials

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Abstract

Military memorials serve as places of remembrance for those who served their country. Three such memorials found in South Africa are 61 Mechanized Battalion Memorial Needle, located at the South African Military Museum in Saxonworld Johannesburg, the South African Air Force Memorial, located in Valhalla Pretoria, and the Gunners National Memorial found in Potchefstroom, South Africa. The memorials serve as places of remembrance for soldiers who died serving in either the Union Defence Force (1912-1957) of South Africa, South African Defence Force (1957-1994), or the South African National Defence Force (1994-present). The purpose of this research was to determine the relationship between travel motives, life domains and quality of life of visitors attending a military memorial. Permission was granted by the administrators of relevant military social media sites to place a call for participation among the members of the site. The call to participate in the research requested that members who visited the memorials during the previous year to participate in this research. A self-administrated online questionnaire was used by participants which they completed anonymously. Data from 237 (N) fully-completed questionnaires were captured and analysed using Mplus. The data gathered provided support for a structural equation model, which produced acceptable overall goodness-of-fit statistics. The model indicates that travel motives, life domains positive affect, and life domains overall have a direct linear relationship with quality of life of visitors attending a military memorial. Recommendations will be made from the study's findings to the memorial custodians with the aim of maximising visitors' quality of life. This research adds to the literature on tourism and quality of life, and may help military memorial custodians to understand visitor pull better.

Keywords: Travel motives; life domains; quality of life; structural equation model; military memorials



Introduction

According to Venter (2017:5), military heritage tourism is the travel to, exploration of, or participation in a military heritage site or event that has personal historic meaning, resonance or interest for the traveller, which does generate remuneration. Various authors (Kruger, Saayman & Ellis, 2014; Sirgy, Uysal & Kruger, 2015; Kim, Uysal & Sirgy, 2019; Venter & Burger, 2018, Venter & Kruger, 2019; Wong, Law & Zhao, 2018) have in recent years researched travel motives within the field of tourism in relation to quality of life (QoL) or subjective well-being. Venter (2016:94) defines QoL as a predominantly subjective state with objective elements whereby individuals perceive their lives based on their experiences in life domains (financial life, family life, travel life, social life, leisure and recreational life, health and safety life) that are significant to them. In recent years, various authors (Carneiro, Eusébio & Caldeira, 2018; Sirgy *et al.*, 2017; Kim *et al.*, 2019; Uysal, Sirgy, Woo & Kim, 2016; Venter & Burger, 2018; Venter & Kruger, 2018) have conducted research that explored life domains. Research in the field of QoL in tourism includes leisure well-being (Sirgy *et al.*, 2017); tourism experience (Kim *et al.*, 2015); military heritage (Venter, 2017; Venter & Burger, 2018; Venter & Kruger, 2019); stakeholder QoL (Woo, Uysal & Sirgy, 2018); as well as wellness tourism experience (Yi, Chiang, Eojina, Liang & Sung, 2018). Research with regard to travel motives and life domain effect on QoL when visiting military memorials still needs to be conducted. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to *determine the relationship between travel motives, life domains and QoL of visitors attending a military memorial*. Four main concepts will be explored to fulfil the said purpose of the study, namely military memorial, travel motives, life domains and QoL.

Military Memorials

According to the Oxford Dictionaries (2019a), the origin of the word memorial originates from Latin “*memoralis*”, which means ‘serving as a reminder’ and “*memoria*”, which means ‘memory’. Military memorials (monuments) stand as a memory to those soldiers they are dedicated to, so that future generations can remember their sacrifice. According to MacLeod (2016), military memorials’ importance is in direct proportion to the extent that people still care about them and the fallen soldiers they represent and honour. Military memorials reflect the time they were built in and capture the collective memories and understanding (values, practices, ideas and attitudes) of those who built them regarding the war, bravery during a specific time period (McIntyre, 1990). According to Venter (2017:1), South Africa has many military heritage sites, which include military memorials such as 61 Mechanised Battalion Group Memorial Needle, South African Air Force Memorial and National Gunners Memorial. There are also numerous battlefield



sites which qualify as memorials, for example Isandhlwana, dating back to 1879 and the Anglo-Zulu War.

The 61 Mechanised Battalion Group Memorial Needle was erected to remember those members who died in battle (Walker, 2014). It was originally erected in 1984 at Omuthiya, and from there moved to Walvis Bay for storage, and thereafter moved to the Army Battle School at Lohathla, where it was re-erected. The unit was disbanded on 18 November 2005, which gave rise to the establishment of the 61 Mechanised Battalion Group Veterans Association. Chief among their aims was the safekeeping and preservation of the unit's heritage. On 25 May 2010, the 61 Mechanised Battalion Group Memorial Needle was erected at the Ditsong National Museum of Military History in Saxonworld, Johannesburg. The official unveiling to the public occurred on 12 June 2010. Annually, former members of the unit, their families and more recently former foes attend the memorial service to honour those who passed away while in the line of duty (61 Mech Bn Gp - Gone but never forgotten, 2019).

The South African Air Force Memorial is located due north of the Swartkop Air Force Base in Valhalla and, according to Fryer (2010), was unveiled on 1 September 1963 and is dedicated to the members of the South African Air Force (SAAF) who died while in service from 1915 to present-day during peace and wartimes. The memorial also encompasses several recent additions, which include a Memorial Wall, Garden of Remembrance and Memorial to the Unknown Airman.

According to the Gunners Association South Africa (2019) website, the National Gunners Memorial is located in Potchefstroom adjacent to the now-closed No 3 gate through which gunners passed when entering and leaving the local military base. The memorial was unveiled in May 1952 and refurbished in 2000 with two additional dwarf brick memorial walls added.

According to Chanuanthong and Batra (2016:25), memorials, military museums and battlefields receive visitors who have a need to look into the past. Venter (2017:6) states that various military sites such as museums, battlefields, memorials, and monuments form the core elements that make up military heritage tourism. Hartmann (2014) states that military heritage is closely connected with a nation's history. González (2018) argues that (military) memorial tourism must go beyond the simple learning of a site or its historical subject and should entice internal reflection in the visitor, the consequences from the past and its implications in the present.

Travel motives



The term motive originates from the Latin *movere*, which means to move (Oxford Dictionaries, 2019b). The terms motivation and motive often substitute one another due to the semantic similarities between them (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013:3). The study of motivation in literature is found in various social fields of study (Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert & Wanhill. 2013:43), resulting in different approaches and defining what travel motivation means. According to Cohen, Prayag and Moital (2014) and Prayag and Hosany (2014), the push and pull motivation framework introduced by Dann (1977) is one of the most generic approaches used to study travel motivation. Farmaki (2013) found components of push and pull motivation on the demand- and supply side of dark (military heritage) tourism. Push factors are borne from social-psychological constructs and influence an individual to partake in an activity (Uysal, Li & Srakaya-Turk, 2008), in this case, military heritage tourism. Fletcher *et al.* (2013:203) characterise push factors as reasons that generate a desire to escape. According to Chanuanthong and Batra (2016:27) and Fletcher *et al.* (2013:203), pull factors attract individuals to a destination based on their perceived attractiveness. The attractiveness that pulls individuals include aspects such as facilities offered, special attractions, visitor knowledge (Niemelä, 2010), as well as marketing and management (Bigley, Lee, Chon & Yoon, 2010). Various authors (Aquino, Schänzel & Hyde, 2019; Azman, 2012; Mansfeld, 1992; Yuan, Cai, Morrison & Linton, 2005) have concluded that travel motives are context-bound and differ for each tourist and destination. Of particular interest to this study are the findings of Kruger *et al.* (2014:660), that 'enhancement of kinship (camaraderie) and relationships' are important factors of travel motives.

Life domains

Venter and Kruger (2017:3) state that individuals travel to places because they are attracted to something and desire to know or experience more, which subsequently enhances the positive evaluation of their lives. However, there is a gap in tourism literature related to the effect of visiting military memorials on visitors' QoL, which needs to be filled. Page and Connell (2010) explains that life domains are areas of an individual's life, which they consider as important. Furthermore, these life domain experiences are evaluated in terms of the benefits they induce. Positive effects include feelings of enthusiasm and being inspired (Sirgy, 2012; Uysal *et al.*, 2016). According to Venter and Burger (2018), individuals evaluate their QoL (life satisfaction) subjectively by taking into account all life domains that are of importance to them.

According to Sirgy and Lee (2006), the most popular theory used is the bottom-up spillover theory, which states that the overall QoL is affected by the satisfaction of all life domains, which, in turn, are affected by concrete events through a 'bottom-up spillover' effect. Venter and Burger (2018) emphasise that a positive effect



(experiences) in one life domain can spill over into another life domain. Sirgy (2012) proved that the more important a life domain is to an individual, the bigger the final spillover effect into their QoL will be. Venter and Burger (2018) note that the perceived importance of life domains varies from one person to the next. It could, however, be argued that niche market segments share similar life domain values. For the purpose of this research, the following life domains were investigated: family life (McCabe & Johnson, 2013), self-life (Venter & Kruger, 2019), leisure and recreation life (Dolnicar, Yanamandram & Cliff, 2012) and social life (Kruger, Rootenbergh & Ellis, 2013).

Quality of life

Uysal *et al.* (2016:244) report that QoL as a field of study of the social, behavioural, environmental and policy sciences has risen in importance over the past 30 years. Benckendorff, Edwards, Jurowski, Liburd, Miller and Moscardo (2009) define QoL as one's satisfaction with life, and feelings of contentment or fulfilment with one's experiences in the world. According to Kim *et al.* (2015:466), when an individual takes part in a tourist experience, it improves his/her subjective well-being (QoL) and expands his/her scope of interest within life. Saayman, Li, Uysal and Song (2018) state that a number of studies have shown the significant relationship between tourists' satisfaction with a trip experience and their QoL.

QoL is much more comprehensive than happiness and wellbeing, which are more individual-oriented (Prebensen, Chen & Uysal, 2018), if compared to QoL, which consists of a variety of subjective indicators that can include standards, qualities, opinions, reasons, character type, emotional state, psychological well-being, satisfaction with life, life domains, and positive affect (Uysal *et al.*, 2016; Sirgy, 2012; Venter, 2016). According to Venter and Kruger (2019), life domains' effect on QoL is also dependent on the society the individual lives in, the culture they belong to, personal values and ethics.

Methodology

The research design was exploratory and descriptive, and included a quantitative approach. The population of this research consisted of visitors who had visited one or more of the memorials included in the research during the previous year. The online survey ran between 11 August 2017 and 11 August 2018 following a convenience sampling technique. A short link to the online questionnaire, which was created with Google Forms (Google.com, 2017), was placed on various South African military social media groups. The short link took participants to the home page, which summarised the purpose, aims, objectives of the research as well as providing the ethical clearance code (ECN27-2017). Respondents were also



informed via the welcome page that they could only complete the questionnaire once. A total of 237 questionnaires were completed that could be used for the statistical analysis.

Participants

The study population consisted of 93% male and 7% female, of which half (50%) were older than 56 years. The majority of respondents (57%) spoke Afrikaans as a home language, and most respondents (42%) completed grade 12 as their highest qualification. Nearly three quarters (73%) of respondents are employed full time, while the vast majority (76%) are married. Most respondents (19%), confirmed that they have visited a military memorial at least once in the previous six months. Nearly half of respondents (42%) travelled to a military memorial with someone else accompanying them. The vast majority (87%) indicated that they had a military background.

Instruments

Respondents who visited a military memorial self-reported their demographic variables such as gender, home language, and previous military service. This was followed by the completion of 17 statements on travel motives e.g. (*it is important that children be aware of the memorial's military heritage, by attending the memorial I can remember its military heritage, for the military heritage experience with friends and family*);

Life domain positive affect contained 17 statements (*social life – I feel good meeting people; leisure life – I feel good relaxing physically while at the memorial; self-life – I feel good for spending time to enjoy doing things I like best with little social pressure while at the memorial; family life – I feel good for spending time with my family while visiting the memorial*). Life domains overall included overarching statements for each life domain resulting in four statements (*Overall a visit to the memorial has enriched my family life*). Lastly, QoL consisted of five statements (*The conditions of my life are excellent*). All items were scored on a five-point Likert scale, which ranged from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly disagree*.

Data analysis

In order to predict the linear relationship between factors of the research, in supporting the bottom-up spillover theory of subjective well-being (QoL), a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM) were done using Mplus version 8 (Muthèn & Muthèn, 2019).



Hancock and Mueller (2010) provide the following guidelines for evaluating the goodness of a model fit: Chi-square divided by its degrees of freedom (χ^2/df) ≤ 2 or 3; comparative fit index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) ≥ 0.90 ; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) ≤ 0.08 , better ≤ 0.05 ; as well as standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) ≤ 0.08 .

Cohen (1988) classifies the correlation between unobserved variables according to their size as follows: small = 0.10-0.29; medium = 0.30-0.49; and large = 0.50-1.0. According to Statisticshowto (2016), standard error (S.E.) measures the spread of the test scores among factor loadings as well as providing the main score using the same test loadings. Lastly, a SEM was created to determine the linear relationship between travel motives, life domains, life domains overall and QoL.

Results

The measurement model has been specified and all factors were treated as categorical data for the CFA. The goodness of the fit statistics of the CFA model show that the data fit the measurement model well ($\chi^2 / df = 2.89$; CFI = 0.94; TLI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.075 with a 90% confidence interval of [0.07; 0.079]; SRMR = 0.062). Based on the aforementioned, a matching factor structure was used for the SEM.

Table 1: Correlation matrix and reliabilities of confirmed factors

	Travel motives	Social life + affect	Leisure life + affect	Self-life + affect	Family life + affect	Life domain overall	QoL	Omega reliability (Ω)
Travel motives	1.00							0.96
Social life + affect	0.76	1.00						0.93
Leisure life + affect	0.35	0.39	1.00					0.92
Self-life + affect	0.65	0.79	0.45	1.00				0.94
Family life + affect	0.72	0.73	0.47	0.84	1.00			0.97
Life domain overall	0.70	0.87	0.61	0.88	0.83	1.00		0.89
QoL	0.53	0.59	0.14	0.55	0.55	0.54	1.00	0.95

Table 1 summarises the *r*-values and the Ω results. The factors attained Ω 's that ranged between good and excellent (0.89-0.97), which, from a psychometric perspective, validates the internal consistency of the Likert scale used to measure the statements in Table 1. *Family life* positive affect attained the highest ($\Omega = 0.97$), followed by the *travel motives* ($\Omega = 0.96$), *QoL* ($\Omega = 0.95$), *self-life* positive affect ($\Omega = 0.94$), *social life* positive affect ($\Omega = 0.93$), *leisure life* positive affect ($\Omega = 0.92$)



and *life domains overall* ($\Omega = 0.89$). The above shows that military memorial visitors value family life positive affect, travel motives and QoL as the three most important factors that enhance their QoL.

The correlation matrix shows that *travel motives* had a large positive statistically significant correlation with *social life positive affect* ($r = 0.76$), *family life positive affect* ($r = 0.72$) and *life domains overall* ($r = 0.70$). *Social life positive affect* achieved a large positive statistically significant correlation with *life domains overall* ($r = 0.87$), *self-life* ($r = 0.79$), *travel motives* ($r = 0.79$) and *family life* ($r = 0.73$). *Leisure life positive affect* only shows a medium positive statistically significant correlation with *life domains overall* ($r = 0.61$).

Self-life positive affect indicates a large positive statistically significant correlation with *life domains overall* ($r = 0.88$), *family life positive affect* ($r = 0.87$) and *social life* ($r = 0.76$). *Family life positive affect* revealed a large positive statistically significant correlation with *self-life positive affect* ($r = 0.84$), *life domains overall* ($r = 0.83$) and *social life* ($r = 0.73$). QoL showed only medium positive statistically significant correlation with *travel motives* ($r = 0.53$), *social life positive affect* ($r = 0.59$), *self-life positive affect* ($r = 0.55$), *family life positive affect* ($r = 0.55$), and *life domain overall* ($r = 0.54$).

Research on traditional heritage events (Venter & Kruger, 2017), military museums (Venter & Burger, 2018) and military festivals (Venter & Kruger, 2019) shows that a positive relationship exists between travel motives, various life domains positive affect, life domains overall and QoL of the visitors to the event, museum and festival.

Table 2: Standardised factor loadings for the seven-factor model

Factors	Loading	Std error (S.E.)	Significance (p)
Travel motives	0.77	0.44	0.001
Social life + affect	0.85	0.11	0.001
Leisure life + affect	0.80	0.20	0.001
Self-life + affect	0.92	0.03	0.001
Family life + affect	0.95	0.04	0.001
Life domains overall	0.81	0.11	0.001
QoL	0.89	0.09	0.001

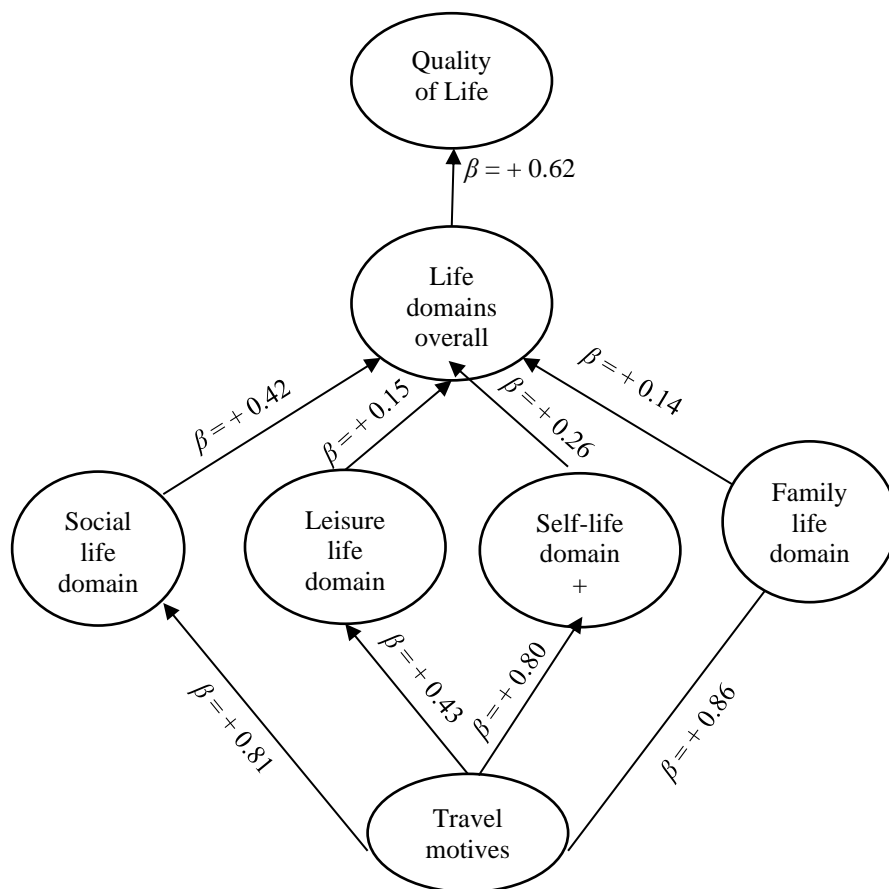
Table 2 reveals that the factors travel motives, social life positive affect, leisure life positive affect, self-life positive affect, family life positive affect, life domains overall and QoL were all statistically significant at $p = \leq 0.001$. The *family life positive affect* domain attained the highest factor loading among all the factors ($\lambda = 0.95$), followed closely by *self-life* ($\lambda = 0.92$) and QoL ($\lambda = 0.89$). The factor *travel motives* achieved

the lowest factor loading ($\lambda = 0.77$). Small estimates can be observed with regard to the standard error, which indicates that the study population supports the estimation process of the CFA (TutorVista.com, 2018).

Table 3: Regression analysis between travel motives, life domains, life domains overall and QoL

Factors	β	Std error (S.E.)	Significance (p)
<i>Social life + affect on travel motives</i>	0.81	0.03	0.001
<i>Leisure life + affect on travel motives</i>	0.43	0.04	0.001
<i>Self-life + affect on travel motives</i>	0.80	0.03	0.001
<i>Family life + affect on travel motives</i>	0.86	0.03	0.001
<i>Life domains overall on social life + affect</i>	0.42	0.06	0.001
<i>Life domains overall on social life + affect</i>	0.15	0.03	0.001
<i>Life domains overall on social life + affect</i>	0.43	0.03	0.001
<i>Life domains overall on social life + affect</i>	0.14	0.06	0.026
<i>Quality of life on life domains overall</i>	0.62	0.04	0.001

Figure 1: The measurement model of travel motives, life domains, life domains overall and QoL. β = statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$. *Overall goodness model fit statistics: $\chi^2/df = 2.89$; CFI = 0.92; TLI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.089 with a 90% confidence interval of [0.085; 0.094]; SRMR = 0.081.





The data in Table 3 and Figure 1 show that a positive linear relationship exists between travel motives and social life domain ($\beta = 0.81$; $p \leq 0.05$), leisure life domain ($\beta = 0.43$; $p \leq 0.05$), self-life domain ($\beta = 0.80$; $p \leq 0.05$) and family life domain ($\beta = 0.86$; $p \leq 0.05$). Furthermore, social life domain ($\beta = 0.42$; $p \leq 0.05$), leisure life domain ($\beta = 0.15$; $p \leq 0.05$), self-life domain ($\beta = 0.26$; $p \leq 0.05$) and family life ($\beta = 0.14$; $p \leq 0.05$) domain showed a positive relationship with life domains overall. Finally, life domains overall ($\beta = 0.62$; $p \leq 0.05$) presented a positive relationship with QoL. The SEM, depicted in Figure 1, constitutes adequate *goodness of overall fit statistics.

Findings

The findings are based on the demographic profile, CFA and SEM, which contribute positively to the literature and methodology of military heritage tourism. Due to ethical considerations, the research excluded potential respondents younger than 18 years. Therefore, the findings are applicable to the specific age groups measured.

Based on the demographic findings, a typical military memorial visitor will be male, older than 56 years, speak Afrikaans, completed grade 12 and married. He served in the South African Defence Force (SADF) or South African National Defence Force (SADF). Additionally, he has visited a military memorial at least once in the previous six months with someone accompanying him. This is supported by Venter and Burger (2018:119) and Raths (2013:173), who found that the primary visitors to military museums are males with a military background. Venter and Burger (2018:126) point out that South Africa abandoned military conscription in 1993, which can explain the high average age of respondents.

With regard to the CFA, all domains besides *life domains overall* achieved excellent Ω , which is indicative of the internal consistency of the Likert scale used. The large to medium positive linear r is indicative of the relationships between the various domains and serves as a good predictor of visitor satisfaction to a military memorial. The research shows that respondents experienced a large to medium positive effect in their travel motives, life domains, life domains overall and QoL when visiting a military memorial.

The SEM shows the practical working of the bottom-up spill-over effect as illustrated in Figure 1, as all of the β s were statistically significant. Respondents' travel motives were met, which positively spilled over upward to the life domains measured. The life domains, in turn, spilled over upwards positively into life domains overall, which, in turn, spilled over positively to their QoL. The same positive spill-over effect was observed with research on military heritage festivals



by Venter and Kruger (2019), and to a military museum by Venter and Burger (2018). The findings show that visitors to a military memorial who have a connection to the site could experience a higher QoL if their expectations are met.

Limitations, conclusion, and recommendations

This research focused on a niche market within military heritage tourism, namely military memorials. Due to the non-commercial nature of the research setting and random visitation times, a convenience sampling technique was the most suitable. The research population is unique due to the sombre nature of the military heritage setting and the findings can therefore not be generalised to other populations or heritage sites. The vast majority of respondents were male and had a military background that fits the research setting. The findings point towards a continuous positive spill-over from one domain to the next, starting with travel motives, then the various life domains measured, followed by life domains overall, and lastly QoL. Therefore, the research achieved its objective by determining the relationship between travel motives, life domains and QoL of visitors attending a military memorial.

Future studies could be done internationally to conduct a comparative analysis with other countries' military memorials to identify possible perceptual differences between cultures and their view of military heritage tourism. Additionally, non-military memorials could be researched, which could provide research evidence for continuous and sustainable growth and development of military heritage tourism in South Africa.

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