

Conceptualising Challenging Experiences and Post-Travel Culture Involvement



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Abstract When cultural differences are significant and contact is relatively brief, it can be difficult to find personal relevance in the cultures of others, let alone develop an enduring interest in the host cultures, which would continue after travel. This chapter addresses these cultural tourism issues by examining the relationship between the concepts of challenge and post-travel culture involvement, and their association with self-development. The conceptual framework proposed here draws on interconnected theories from acculturation, cognitive appraisal and positive psychology, as well as relevant literature on immersive, memorable, adventure and transformative tourist experiences. It concludes that the acculturation process models and the stress, appraisal and coping theory are the most helpful for explaining this underlying relationship and for providing a more nuanced understanding of challenge in the context of cultural tourism.

1 Introduction

As the notion of culture in tourism has gradually expanded to incorporate all possible aspects of everyday life of ordinary people, so has the meaning of cultural tourism (Smith 2015). In terms of the sheer volume of people travelling to experience other cultures, cultural tourism has also grown to become the new mass tourism (Du Cros and McKercher 2015). Some tourists treat their cultural adventures much more seriously than others (Stebbins 1996), but learning about distant places and people is a very common reason to travel, often combined with relaxation and entertainment (Jovicic 2016).

Still, when cultural differences are significant and contact is relatively brief, it can be difficult to find personal relevance in the cultures of others (Timothy 1998),

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let alone develop a level of interest in the host culture that would last “beyond the time and space of the vacation” (Hough 2011, p. 88; Lean 2012). The issue of personal relevance has been addressed through the concepts of emotion, embodiment, performativity, co-creation, creativity, and involvement and immersion (Edensor 1998; Mossberg et al. 2014; Rakić and Chambers 2012; Richards and Wilson 2006; Robinson and Picard 2012), all of which are integral to the understanding of sense of place and place attachment (Scannell and Gifford 2010). The research on the last two concepts, in particular, has dealt with helping tourists feel and understand the essence of the place, and build an invisible emotional bond with it and its residents through active cognitive, emotional and sensory engagement (Biran et al. 2006; Poria 2010). It has also explored how to create new long-lasting memories where tourists’ past life experiences intertwine with new experiences of foreign cultural realities (Shamsuddin and Ujang 2008). As for long-term interest, while other tourism outcomes such as post-trip satisfaction, positive word-of-mouth and intention to revisit have received considerable attention (Carlson et al. 2016; Kastenholz et al. 2013), the question of tourists’ enduring involvement with another culture has been generally overlooked. The subject of how sojourners (short-term travellers) develop a feeling of affiliation with other cultural groups has largely remained the domain of cross-cultural psychology (Rasmi et al. 2014; Robinson 2013).

This chapter addresses these knowledge gaps by further integrating acculturation research into tourism studies. In particular, it approaches the issues of personal relevance and long-term interest in international tourism by examining the relationship between the concepts of challenge and post-travel culture involvement, and their association with self-development. Emerging research on transformative travel suggests that challenging cultural experiences should be actively facilitated and that organised tour programs can be particularly conducive to personal transformations (Christie and Mason 2003; Coghlan and Gooch 2011). Given their growth promoting qualities, challenging experiences can be stimulating and enriching, and encourage further interest in continuous engagement with the host culture (Kanning 2013).

However, the close relationship between challenge and post-travel culture involvement has not been previously studied. The challenge aspect of tourist experiences is an emerging area of research. To the exception of a few studies (Pomfret 2006; Tsaur et al. 2013; Tung and Ritchie 2011), references to challenge are quite anecdotal, offering no clear conceptualisations of the construct, and the research on post-travel (posit-visit) culture involvement is particularly limited. In this chapter a conceptual framework is proposed for the relationship between these concepts, drawing on interconnected theories from acculturation (Berry 1997; Ward et al. 2001), cognitive appraisal (Lazarus and Folkman 1984) and positive psychology (Csikszentmihalyi 1975), as well as relevant literature on immersive, memorable, adventure and transformative tourist experiences. It concludes that the acculturation process models and the stress, appraisal and coping theory are the most helpful for conceptualising this underlying relationship in the context of cultural tourism and for providing a more nuanced understanding of challenge.

2 Literature Review

Culture involvement, also known as culture immersion, is a domain of qualitative research on backpackers, lifestyle travellers and voluntourists (Buddhabhumbhitak 2010; Coghlan and Gooch 2011; Sin 2009). Current research on this subject has been underpinned by the contact hypothesis (Amir 1969) and has focused on tourists' immersive behaviour during travel and their experiences of self-change. Emphasising the primacy of contact between tourists and hosts, the literature maintains that people are more likely to seek cultural involvement when engaging in participative, interactive, authentic and creative experiences (Jansson 2007; Mkono 2013; Reisinger 2013a). Only then the foreign is likely to become highly personal and consequently meaningful, despite cultural differences. Personal growth, self-actualisation and self-identity transformations are exemplified as personal development outcomes of such tourist experiences, together with improved appreciation of cultural differences. There is a lack of research, however, on how individual-level outcomes of travel experienced by tourists continue to evolve over time, and post-travel culture involvement is a noticeable example of an insufficiently explored theme in this context. Published in Reisinger's (2013b) timely volume on transformational tourism, some exceptions include the studies of Grabowski (2013) and Kanning (2013) who examine the changes experienced by tourists after they returned home, including their relationship with the places visited.

This gap in research on post-travel culture involvement is both surprising and not. On the one hand, its long-term benefits to the individual and the host culture are difficult to overlook and underestimate. Building on past cultural experiences through further self-education and participation in ethnic community events, for example, not only supports life-long learning but can also improve cross-cultural understanding and thus strengthen appreciation of cultural diversity in multicultural societies. On the other hand, tourism is, after all, a temporary activity and the connections developed during travel may not be expected to last. As Lean (2012, p. 152) notes, "the effects of travel are often only temporary, falling by the wayside as more pertinent concerns [are] capturing one's attention upon their return". Even the intimate and frequent contact provided in voluntourism programs may not be enough for tourists to "stay connected" with the destination and its culture (Raymond and Hall 2008, p. 537). The limitations of the contact hypothesis for resolving cultural stereotypes are also pointed out by Tomljenovic (2010, p. 17) who found that having opportunity for interaction and participation is not enough to "bring about greater understanding and mutual liking between people".

In search for the solutions to these issues, a growing number of scholars are recognising the need to facilitate not only pleasant and immersive but also challenging experiences during travel. Tourists who seek deep cultural experiences are motivated by learning about others as well as themselves (McKercher and du Cros 2003). As demonstrated by the rich post-travel interview data collected by Kanning (2013), improved awareness of the self and one's position in the world can be

accompanied by changes to cultural assumptions; increased personal relevance of what was experienced; and stronger emotional connection with the place and interest in it. To understand what stimulates tourists' psychological transformation, as well as adoption of foreign cultural practices into one's "daily routine" Grabowski (2013, p. 185) turns to acculturation theory. It suggests that these individual-level changes come not with any cultural contact but with experience of associated challenges as their triggers.

Acculturation research examines how behavioural and attitudinal orientations towards host cultures in terms of host culture immersion and home culture maintenance change in response to a number of situational factors and depending on the individual characteristics of sojourners (Sam 2006). This approach to acculturation differentiates between four sets of bidimensional acculturation strategies: two adaptive, i.e. integration and assimilation, and two maladaptive, i.e. separation and marginalisation. The full list of factors is presented in Table 1 based on the acculturation models by Berry (1997) and Ward et al. (2001).

Furthermore, acculturation theory differentiates between interaction with hosts and participation in their culture, and between degrees of culture immersion across different domains (elements) of culture (Arends-Tóth and van de Vijver 2004). The acculturation approach to the primacy of contact for deep cultural engagement also appears to be more flexible than the one held by proponents of the contact theory. While contact is viewed as a building block of cultural adaptation in acculturation literature, Sam (2006, p. 14) suggests that "perhaps, the issues of "how long" or "continuous" contact in themselves are not as important as the resulting change following the contact". A large sub-set of acculturation literature also deals with the notion of acculturative stress in the context of difficult cultural encounters. As Ward et al. (2001, p. 45) explain, "the construct of acculturation [is] being increasingly used as a replacement for the term 'culture shock' ". While "culture shock" implies a purely negative valence of stress, acculturation has been also linked to positive adaptation outcomes for individuals (Berry 2006; van der Zee and van Oudenhoven 2013). The validity of the five-stage culture shock model has also been questioned in both acculturation and tourism literature, with Hottola (2004) proposing a

Table 1 Moderators of individual level acculturation

Individual level variables	Situational level variables	
	Prior to contact	During contact
Age, gender, education Migration motivation, and expectations Cultural distance (language, religion, values, identity) Personality Pre-acculturation (training and experience, cultural knowledge)	Social, political, economic and cultural characteristics of society of origin	Contact length, amount and quality Social support Acculturation strategies Other coping strategies Societal attitudes Social, political, economic and cultural characteristics of society of settlement

framework of “culture confusion” instead. The two most widely applied models of acculturation belong to Berry (1997) and Ward et al. (2001): the acculturative stress framework and the ABC (Affect, Behaviour, Cognition) model of acculturation which incorporates Berry’s approach, as well as other theories.

Berry (1997) interprets acculturation attitudes and behaviours as coping responses to external stressors. In the process of coping with stress, once it is evaluated as a threat or a challenge, coping strategies are applied to deal with the situation (Duhachek and Iacobucci 2005; van der Zee and van Oudenhoven 2013). Depending on whether or not the stress presented by the demands of intercultural contact is manageable, travellers choose one of the four bidimensional acculturation strategies mentioned earlier. When demands are too high, they decide to separate or marginalise, and when stress is manageable, assimilation or integration occurs. In summary, the acculturation literature reviewed above shows that a change towards increased host-culture involvement can be stimulated by facing difficulties of cross-cultural adaptation that involve experience of manageable stress with which an individual can cope. As explored further in more detail, manageable stress functions as a critical component of what is known as “challenge”.

2.1 The Notion of Challenge

Discussion of challenging experiences in the context of intercultural contact can be found in studies directly referring to challenge, as well as in the wider literature on difficult, demanding, uncomfortable and confusing experiences. Indeed, cultural tourism exposes people to a number of demands of intercultural contact which utilise their mental and physical resources and can result in feelings of “social awkwardness and physical discomfort” (Stebbins 1997, p. 450); cognitive dissonance (Christie and Mason 2003); disorientation (Coghlan and Gooch 2011); and struggle (Sin 2009). These demands can include any of the 20 elements of culture identified by Reisinger (2009) and incorporated in touristic activities, including cultural values and such value-laden place meanings as sacredness and national pride (Edensor 1998; Rakić and Chambers 2012). In international travel, demanding experiences may also test tourists’ “perceptions of self and own culture”, essentially destabilising their self and cultural identities (Hirschorn and Hefferon 2013, p. 285). As mentioned earlier, challenge can be associated with some degree of stress. Negative effects of stress are addressed by culture shock studies which highlight such undesirable outcomes as “psychological, emotional and physical disturbance” (Brown and Holloway 2008, p. 45) that thwart adaptation and strengthen negative attitudes towards hosts (Hottola 2004).

Despite the differences in terminology and acknowledgement of the negative effects of stress, many scholars posit that manageable stress is still beneficial to tourists’ learning and link it to significant personal gains (Falk et al. 2012). Robinson (2013, p. 32), for example, draws attention to the importance of initial “angst” of difficulty and discomfort of “breaking free” of familiar behaviours by

reading a menu in a foreign language or catching public transport to the nearest attraction. The associated personal growth involves enhanced self-efficacy (Milstein 2005) and gaining a vast number of positive human qualities (Pearce and Packer 2013) as part of spiritual and intellectual development that can lead to memorable tourism experiences (Horvath 2013). Furthermore, Pearce and Lee (2005) have conceptualised the self-development motivation factor as consisting of both personal development and host-site involvement, linked by growth-related needs. To sum up this research, tourists may need to apply effort at some point during their travel if they are to experience any positive transformations and associated deep intrinsic satisfaction (Falk et al. 2012; Stebbins 1996).

The key distinction lies in understanding what makes these experiences challenging, i.e. how such an evaluation comes about. The above mentioned examples of difficult cultural tourism experiences discuss environmental stimuli as given sources of challenge or demand which “create feelings such as fun, excitement, surprise, danger or risk” (Cetin and Bilgihan 2016, p. 147). The few systematic studies which examine sources of challenge within a broader experiential context, however, demonstrate how a difficult situation is only a source of a potentially challenging experience. The main theoretical perspectives and frameworks applied in the relevant studies include the theory of flow from positive psychology (Csikszentmihalyi 1975); frameworks of memorable tourist experience (Tung and Ritchie 2011); and the transformative learning theory from education research (Mezirow 1990). The ideas of challenge-skill balance and importance of intrinsic motivation, central to the flow theory, have gained particular popularity in the studies on highly risky and physically strenuous activities such as mountaineering, demonstrating that challenging experiences are influenced by a combination of factors (Pomfret 2006, 2012; Tsaur et al. 2013). Referring to the stress, appraisal and coping theory by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), Tsaur et al. (2013) also combine the flow theory approach to challenge as perceived task difficulty with the notion of “sense of challenge” as a feeling resulting from stressful situations. As for cultural tourism, future empirical research may need to review some of the known pre-conditions of challenge, including the competence, mastery and risk factors, to reflect the less physical and more intellectually stimulating nature of cultural adventures and associated gains (Pearce and Lee 2005; Weber 2001).

The research on memorable tourist experiences approaches challenge as one of its dimensions, highlighting the link between difficult experiences, long-term memory and emotional connection. The limitation, however, lies in interpreting challenge as a source of only physical demand and stimulant of improvement of physical abilities (Horvath 2013; Tung and Ritchie 2011). What differentiates the literature on transformative or transformational tourism from the studies above is the focus on improving tourists’ understanding of and relationship with other cultures. It advocates for deliberate facilitation of cognitive dissonance and disorienting dilemmas to question tourists’ cultural assumptions and stimulate attitude and behaviour change (Coghlan and Gooch 2011; Christie and Mason 2003; Raymond and Hall 2008). Although initially people may experience “anger and denial”, eventually they will reappraise the difficult situation as positive growth,

providing, of course, they are committed to learning and changing in the first place (Christie and Mason 2003, p. 13). This research highlights the motivational arousal properties of cognitive dissonance (Elliot and Devine 1994); the crucial role of ongoing critical reflection and dialogue; and how the social, organised and guided nature of group travel creates a favourable ground for such exchange in terms of communication within the tour group and between the group and the tour leader.

As highlighted earlier, difficult stressful cultural encounters and their positive change outcomes related to involvement with host cultures are also explored in acculturation psychology (Berry 1997). The relationship between acculturative changes and stress is underpinned by the work of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) on stress, appraisal and coping which was later incorporated by Lazarus (1990) into the CMR (cognitive-motivational-relational) theory of emotion and adaptation. Both theories position cognitive appraisal as a process, mediating the relationship between a stressful situation and its outcomes where challenge is one of possible stress appraisals.

Cognitive appraisal is the domain of cognitive appraisal theories developed by Lazarus (1966), Roseman (1984), Ellsworth and Smith (1988), Frijda (1993), and Scherer (1993) which share the understanding of cognitive appraisal as an evaluation of an experience in terms of personal significance, i.e. its relationship with the individual's goals and its potential outcomes, and characteristics of a given situation, or situational appraisals. As acknowledged by Ellsworth and Scherer (2003), and Smith and Kirby (2011), this distinction is attributed to the work of Lazarus (1966) who conceptualised appraisal as consisting of two complementing interrelated appraisal processes, i.e. primary (personal significance) and secondary (coping resources). In terms of its relationship with emotion, Lazarus (1990, p. 138) explains that "appraisal is the process most proximal to a person's emotional state, because it reflects what the person understands and cares about". Many empirical appraisal studies of stressful experiences which are based on this theory, including Tsaour et al. (2013), focus on the stress appraisals of challenge, threat and harm/loss (Ferguson et al. 1999). Fewer consider benign-positive (benefit) and irrelevant (neutral) appraisals due to their disassociation with coping effort (Larsson and Wilde-Larsson 2010). Depending on whether a stressful encounter is appraised as potentially generating harm or benefit, it is evaluated as threatening or challenging, while harm/loss appraisal refer to actual damage of physical and psychological nature. When a situation imposes no demands on an individual, it is appraised as either irrelevant or benign-positive. These primary appraisals are marked by an emotional response which is measured using adjective-based scales (Ferguson et al. 1999; Folkman and Lazarus 1985; Larsson and Wilde-Larsson 2010; Smith and Kirby 2011). Although challenge has also been studied as a single emotion (Ellsworth and Smith 1988), including by Lazarus (Smith et al. 1993), cognitive appraisal literature is unanimous in conceptualising challenge not as an external stressor but as an internal psychological response of an individual to a particular situation. As argued by Rheinberg (2008), this is an important distinction, and it has not been clearly communicated in the current tourism literature.

Folkman and Lazarus (1985, p. 152) define challenge as a positive evaluation of experience not only as effortful but also motivation-relevant and congruent, and offering an opportunity for “growth, mastery, or gain”. They also emphasise the interaction between the individual and the environment (situation), and the diversity of situational conditions influencing experience appraisal. Special attention is given to how a situation impinges on achieving something personal at stake and demands substantial effort for its attainment. In relation to positive change, when an encounter is appraised as challenging, one’s behavioural repertoire is likely to expand due to associated positive affect (Lazarus 1990; Skinner and Brewer 2002). In cognitive appraisal research, challenge has also been linked to strong interest in the pursued activity (Ellsworth and Smith 1988), and such positive emotions as eagerness, exhilaration, happiness and joy, as well as excitement, hopefulness and enthusiasm (Larsson and Wilde-Larsson 2010; Lazarus 1990).

On the one hand, this approach to conceptualising challenge and its surrounding situational conditions has much in common with Csikszentmihalyi’s (1975) concept of “optimal experience” or flow (Peifer 2012). On the other hand, the differences in how well the flow and stress appraisal theories can help conceptualise the relationship between challenge and post-travel culture involvement are also quite significant. In the flow theory, challenge functions as a unidimensional construct, i.e. a demand, or perceived task difficulty, which, in cognitive appraisal terms, is only one of many situational appraisals. Furthermore, even though challenge appraisal and flow appear to refer to a very similar psychological state, the flow and the stress appraisal models fulfil different purposes. The former explains the phenomenology of involvement in an activity and its effect on a person (Peifer 2012), while the latter has been integrated into the study of a person’s relationship with others, i.e. culture involvement. Finally, while the idea of skill mastery is central to both, the broader notion of gain used by Lazarus (1990) creates room for such cognitive outcomes as change in one’s world view and ways of life, as well as integration of the world views and ways of life of others (Weber 2001).

3 Conceptual Framework

There is substantial theoretical and empirical evidence to suggest that challenge can play an important role in stimulating post-travel culture involvement. In particular, the acculturation and cognitive appraisal theories reviewed above provide theoretical rationale for the relationships observed empirically in tourism literature. The framework presented in Fig. 1 consists of three main parts: experience during travel (the circular diagram); the overall cumulative appraisal of the entire experience; and post-travel culture involvement as the long-term outcome of interest. The framework flow reflects the understanding of appraisal as a mediator between the experience of what happens during travel and the experience outcome. The circular diagram represents the overall tourist experience as a combination of everything experienced by a tourist during a trip. It shows that ongoing appraisal and

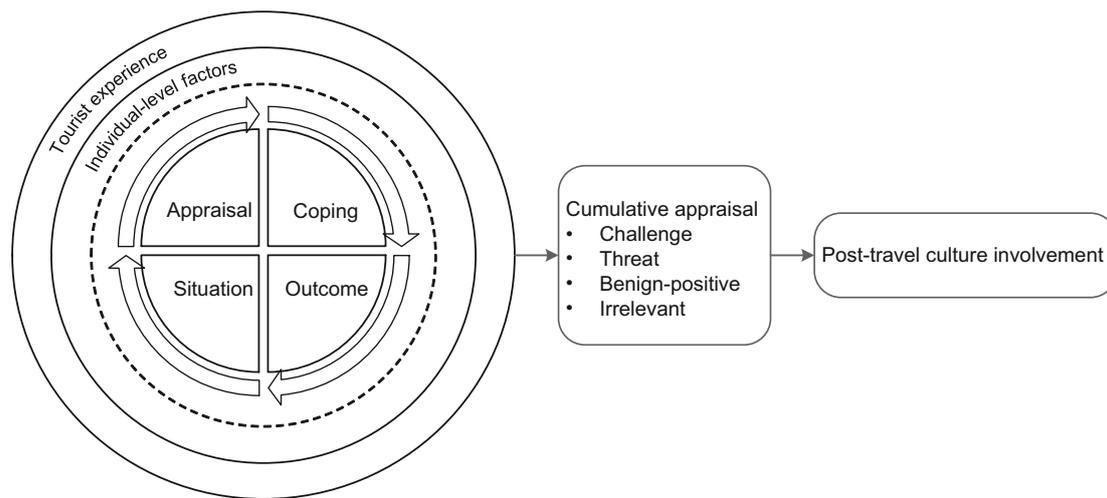


Fig. 1 Conceptual framework

reappraisal of all individual situations which make up the total tourist experience results in a cumulative evaluation of that experience.

The longer the visit, the more individual situations, also referred to as events, activities, encounters and experiences, it includes. The evaluation may identify the experience as challenging, threatening, benign-positive or irrelevant, influencing post-travel culture involvement as one of experience outcomes. Unlike the acculturative stress model (Berry 1997) and the ABC model of acculturation (Ward et al. 2001), this framework uses circular flow to illustrate that an evaluation and outcome of one situation (activity) influences the experience of the next one. This interdependence is particularly important for understanding extended trips such as leisure group tours which are gradually gaining recognition in tourism research (Carlson et al. 2016; Pomfret 2012). While such approach may not be feasible for understanding experiences of migrants which involve highly individualised independent journeys, this interdependence of different activities is particularly important for planning organised itinerary-based short-term trips where the order of activities can impact the overall experience. An evaluation and outcome of one pre-planned activity on a tour can influence the experience of the next one, and how tourists spend their free leisure time afterwards or which optional activities they choose.

The framework also incorporates individual-level factors the continuous influence of which on the experience is communicated by the dashed circle surrounding the stress and coping process as a symbolic “frame of mind”. Besides the influence of cultural distance on sojourners’ experiences of other cultures (Demes and Geeraert 2014; McKercher and Du Cros 2003), socio-demographic factors such as gender, age, education, occupation and income also play an important role. In particular, the last four are associated with a number of critical coping resources and moderate an individual’s ability to deal with cultural demands (Ward et al. 2001). These resources, which involve not only travel-related skills but also attitudes and cultural knowledge (Kashima and Loh 2006; Ward and Searle 1991) are predicted by previous travel experience and reflect overall cultural competence (Berry 2006;

Safdar et al. 2012). In tourism research, these socio-demographic factors are used to differentiate tourists in terms of destination choice, motivation to travel, travel memories, form of travel, risk perceptions and coping strategies, preferences for comfort level and a range of other characteristics relevant to the concepts of challenge and culture involvement (Benckendorff et al. 2009; Kazeminia et al. 2015; Lloyd and Little 2010; Moal–Ulvoas and Taylor 2014; Pearce and Lee 2005). Other important individual-level characteristics include personality (Pomfret 2006; Tomljenovic 2010; van der Zee and van Oudenhoven 2013); expectations (Rogers and Ward 1993); and motivation to travel, particularly to engage with the host culture (Falk et al. 2012; Safdar et al. 2012; Tomljenovic 2010), to persevere, and to challenge oneself (Lazarus 1990; Pomfret 2006; Stebbins 1996; Rheinberg 2008).

The “situation” stage refers to the key factors relating to the experience context which have been highlighted as important in both tourism and psychology research. These include host attitudes to visitors (van Oudenhoven and Hofstra 2006) or residents’ attitudes towards tourists (Hough 2011); amount of support received in coping with cultural differences (Ong and Ward 2005), including around dialogue and critical reflection (Coghlan and Gooch 2011); external, or potential sources of stress such as infrastructure (economic), norms of communication (social), and values (cultural); and factors related to the format and nature of cultural contact such as length, frequency, intimacy and authenticity of interaction with the hosts and participation in their culture (Jansson 2007; Reisinger 2013a; Tomljenovic 2010). Other conditions include the actual activities undertaken by the tourists and form of travel (organised or independent); opportunity for creativity, or imaginative, problem-driven and skilled consumption (Richards and Wilson 2006), and a number of challenge-predicting appraisals. These appraisals are motivational relevance and congruence; potential for harm or loss; opportunity for some form of gain related to self-development; centrality (importance) of a given activity and its outcome to an individual; certainty/uncertainty; and appraisals of perceived coping resources such as perceived effort (effortfulness) and perceived control (controllability) (Duhachek and Iacobucci 2005; Ellsworth and Smith 1988; Lazarus and Folkman 1984; Peacock and Wong 1990).

Table 2 incorporates all individual-level tourism outcomes of challenging experiences discussed in the literature review, which can develop to various degrees and at different rate, both during and after travel. The outcome of post-travel culture involvement in this framework functions as a matter of change in attitudes and behaviours towards the host culture and is differentiated from more complex and long-lasting changes in cultural identity. Although empirical acculturation research examines the effects of international sojourn on short-term travellers such as students and expatriates, the idea of post-travel outcomes is not reflected in the current acculturation frameworks which deal with individual-level changes occurring only during the cross-cultural contact. Thus, while the issue of post-travel culture involvement can apply beyond tourism, it has not been found elsewhere in the relevant literature. The distinction between short and long-term outcomes used in acculturation psychology was deliberately excluded from this framework because any of these outcomes can start manifesting themselves at any point during the trip and strengthen

Table 2 Tourist experience outcomes

Register of engagement	Positive	Negative
Self-related	Positive affect (eagerness, exhilaration, happiness, joy, excitement, hopefulness, enthusiasm) Satisfaction Improved psychological well-being Increased motivation Involvement (strengthened interest) Personal development (personal growth, competence-mastery, self-actualisation, improved self-efficacy and self-confidence, self-identity change)	Physical discomfort, harm and loss Emotional discomfort (social awkwardness, confusion, cognitive dissonance) Negative affect (anxiety, fear, anger) Dissatisfaction Reduced psychological well-being Culture shock Identity crisis Perceived or actual harm or loss
Others-related	Place attachment Cross-cultural understanding Culture appreciation Culture involvement (integration, assimilation) Cultural identification	Reinforcement of cultural stereotypes Negative attitudes towards hosts Separation Marginalisation

afterwards. Another grouping principle which is not applied here is by psychological and sociocultural outcomes. While this distinction is important and is implied in the outcomes themselves, it was more relevant to the subject of this chapter to highlight the differences between the “registers of engagement”, i.e. self-related and others-related (Smith 2012, p. 12) and their valence (positive and negative).

Among the self-related outcomes, the framework acknowledges physical discomfort, harm and loss, and positive and negative affective responses to intercultural contact known as “immediate effects” (Berry 1997, p. 19). In terms of associated stress levels, affective reactions can range from the emotional discomforts discussed by Stebbins (1997), including cognitive dissonance (Elliot and Devine 1994), to feelings of anxiety (angst) highlighted by Robinson (2013). These immediate responses precede such more lasting psychological outcomes as satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and improved and impaired well-being (Ward et al. 2001). Strong negative emotions used to measure threat appraisal are associated with experiencing culture shock and personal crises (Berry 1997; van der Zee and van Oudenhoven 2013). However, whether or a not an individual evaluates an experience as challenging (positive) or threatening (negative) is ultimately influenced by a combination of situational and individual-level factors discussed earlier. Besides positive emotions, other positive self-related outcomes include increased motivation; involvement (as interest in the pursued activity); and a number of gains related to personal development.

Others-related outcomes represent positive and negative changes in affective, cognitive (attitudes and values) and behavioural orientations of tourists towards a host culture, and were organised according to their complexity. The outcomes

commonly mentioned in tourism literature include strong emotional bonding (place attachment); understanding the importance of other cultures and cultural differences (culture appreciation); and reinforcement or resolution of cultural stereotypes and prejudices (cross-cultural understanding). As for culture involvement and culture identification, it must be acknowledged that although tourists may experience changes in their cultural identity and choose to fully adopt foreign behaviours and values, such substantial changes are less likely to occur for two reasons. One is the briefness of culture contact in many instances and the other is the high adaptational difficulty associated with these changes (Stephenson 2000; Osland and Osland 2005). That is why in this framework culture involvement is interpreted as active behavioural involvement with another culture, either through independently undertaken activities such as watching documentaries, learning a language or mastering a craft, or participation in organised cultural activities and events. In regards to the four acculturation strategies, although they are more applicable to touristic experiences during travel, they are relevant to the discussion of the overall experience and communicate different types of culture involvement.

The discourse of “self” versus “others” has been criticised for reinforcing the divide between tourists and hosts instead of bringing them closer together (Robinson 2013). For the topic of this chapter, however, the “positive-negative” and “self-other” dichotomies are important as they highlight critical differences in touristic experiences and their outcomes. Firstly, the framework differentiates between two types of positive evaluations, i.e. challenge and benign-positive. Both appraisals characterise a situation or experience as beneficial but only a benign-positive experience requires no coping effort, as an individual feels content with the positive outcome, comfortable and relaxed. Furthermore, cognitive appraisal studies have found that by sharing characteristics with boredom through such positive emotions as relaxation, enjoyment and happiness, benign-positive appraisal in some instances cannot be distinguished from irrelevant appraisal which is given to experiences that have no personal relevance to an individual whatsoever. For migrants, benign-positive appraisal is a highly desirable state that leads to smooth adjustment “made with minimal difficulty” (Berry 2006, p. 47).

Tourists, however, feel no need to change due to the perceived temporariness of contact, and a benign-positive evaluation of an experience may not necessarily stimulate further interest in the destination and its culture, as people feel almost too comfortable. Moreover, as Horvath (2013, p. 390) points out, “too much complexity or not enough content can equally...cause stress and fatigue”. That is when research on challenging experiences can help explain what causes overchallenge and stress and underchallenge and boredom. Secondly, the aim of the framework is to emphasise the interrelatedness of self-related and others-related outcomes and its implications for culture involvement. In particular, it draws attention to how outcomes that develop the “self”, act as antecedents of outcomes related to our relationship with the “other” under the experience of challenge. As mentioned earlier, cultural tourists are motivated by both personal development and host-culture involvement, and an experience of challenge touches on both motivations through its growth-inducing quality. Furthermore, tourism scholars and practitioners should