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To cite this article: Xavier Matteucci & Sebastian Filep (2015): Eudaimonic tourist experiences: the case of flamenco, Leisure Studies, DOI: 10.1080/02614367.2015.1085590

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2015.1085590

Published online: 29 Sep 2015.

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Introduction

Music, among other cultural expressions, is an important element in the construction of tourism (Gibson & Connell, 2005), and tourists are increasingly engaging in diverse forms of music workshops for personal growth and development purposes. People leave their usual domiciles to live up to lifestyles marked by the pursuit of substantial leisure practices, which arguably engender a vast array of personal benefits to their participants beyond mere rest and relaxation (Aoyama, 2009). This skilled tourist experience, a type of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982), often takes the form of courses, where participants can self-develop (Richards & Wilson, 2006) and feel as if they were non-tourists through their perceived sincere and authentic interactions with local people (Prentice, 2001).

Skilled tourist experience, particularly one in which tourists take part in music and dance workshops, has received little empirical attention compared with other forms of tourism. The challenge
for scholars to situate themes like personal growth, self-development and skilled consumption in discourses of tourist behaviour has arguably been in the way tourism as a leisure phenomenon has been conceived by sections of academia and the general public (Sharpley, 2013). The dominant discourses of tourist behaviour influenced in some cases by a Protestant work ethic (Vittersø, 2011) devalue leisure activities like tourism as frivolous activities or regard them at best as opportunities to recover from work (Haworth, 1997) – not as opportunities for serious leisure pursuits, like engagement in music workshops. The argument is that people do not need to spend leisure time to pursue a self-development activity if there are appropriate growth opportunities at work (Vittersø, 2011). Skilled tourists’ participation therefore contrasts the view of tourism as a largely light-hearted leisure pursuit, like other voluntary leisure activities (Vittersø, 2011). Yet, recent studies by scholars into related topics on recovery experiences (Chen & Petrick, 2013; Chen, Petrick, & Shahvali, 2014), memorable tourist experiences (Tung & Ritchie, 2011), tourist happiness (Nawijn, 2011), meaningful tourism (Noy, 2004), transformative travel (Lean, 2012), spiritual experiences (Sharpley & Jepson, 2011), tourists’ existential authenticity (Wang, 1999), the tourist moment (Hom Cary, 2004) and similar topics, all point to more profound and less frivolous qualities of tourist experiences. Discussion of each of the above bodies of knowledge is beyond the scope of this introduction; however, our review of this literature points to two core observations.

Our first observation is that specific types of tourist experiences lead to self-development, personal growth, self-renewal and self-change, offering multiple rewards beyond hedonic benefits, like rest, pleasure or relaxation. Ryan and Deci (2001) clearly distinguish between the hedonic rewards and the non-hedonic rewards. They point to Fromm’s work (1981) who draws from Aristotle to distinguish between those needs that are only subjectively felt and whose gratification leads to momentary pleasures, and those needs (or desires) whose realisation is conducive to human growth and produces eudaimonia. Eudaimonia can be thought of as a higher state of flourishing that is explicitly formed through self-development and self-realisation of the individual (Ryff & Singer, 2008). For this reason, the essence of eudaimonia is ‘the idea of striving toward excellence based on one’s unique potential’ (Ryff & Singer, 2008, p. 14).

Sociologist and cultural theorist Mike Featherstone (2010) suggests that the focus on the quest for self-development and personal transformation has become a central concern of the Western tourist society of the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century. In the leisure and tourism literature, there are many references to this quest for personal development and to subsequent eudaimonic rewards from tourist experiences. In a study of girlfriend getaways (GGAs or all-women leisure-based travel experiences), it was found that GGA outcomes surpassed the hedonic well-being benefits and are more in line with the eudaimonic approach to well-being (Berdychewsky, Gibson, & Bell, 2013). These experiences offered women the potential for positive emotions (hedonic rewards) but also eudaimonic rewards, examples of which were sense of purpose and meaning, personal growth, accomplishment and self-acceptance. Backpackers, in Noy’s (2004) research, also reported profound, eudaimonic, personal changes. They are portrayed as narrators, whose narratives feature themes of authenticity and adventure as part of the powerful experience of self-change. Likewise, an investigation by Wilson and Harris (2006) of independent female tourist experiences highlighted three key themes: a search for self and identity, self-empowerment and connectedness with others/global citizenship – themes that are more about the nature of one’s being and existence than pleasure. Arnould and Price (1993) similarly pointed to three dimensions of an extraordinary tourist experience: communion with nature, connections with other people (communitas) and personal growth or self-renewal. Zahra and McIntosh (2007) found that modern volunteer tourists’ experiences in their study were profoundly life-changing or cathartic. In Australia, Voigt, Howat, and Brown (2010) examined three different groups of wellness tourists’ experiences through Stebbins’s framework of casual vs. serious leisure. The authors found that spiritual retreat visitors’ experiences were predominantly characterised by eudaimonic or serious leisure themes such as the experience of self-fulfilment and a greater sense of identity. All of this empirical research supports an older anecdote that periodic changes of domiciles and ordinary

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settings are necessary for humans to think and reconsider their goals in life and achieve eudaimonic outcomes like self-actualisation and personal growth – not just greater pleasures (Gewirth, 1998).

A second observation emerging from our analysis is that, despite these studies, there is a general dearth of investigations about tourists’ experiences of engagement in music and dance workshops for growth and development purposes – notably, studies about flamenco tourist experiences. With the rise of globalisation, the tourism, entertainment and music industries have seen economic opportunities in crafting, glossing and packaging place-specific cultural manifestations to meet the self-development needs of a growing mass of cosmopolitan tourists (Aoyama, 2009). Every year, thousands of aficionados travel to Spain to actively partake in flamenco music and dance courses. Flamenco is usually defined as a tripartite art form, which involves cante (song), baile (dance) and toque (the guitar). In 2004, it was estimated that out of the 626,000 flamenco tourists who visited the southern Spanish region of Andalusia, about 15% attended flamenco schools (Junta de Andalucía, 2004), many of them in the capital city of Seville.

The Andalusian capital rests on the plain of the river Guadalquivir and is Spain’s fourth largest city in population, with about 703 261 inhabitants (Ayuntamiento de Sevilla, 2014). Seville, which has long been associated with a rich flamenco tradition for being the birthplace of flamenco artists, is the host of many flamenco institutions and cultural events, such as the Bienal de flamenco de Sevilla (Seville flamenco fair), the museo de baile flamenco (flamenco dance museum) and its flamenco tablaos (clubs or taverns). Many prominent Andalusian artists such as Andrés Marín (dancer), Juan Polvillo (dancer), Alicia Marquez (dancer), Manuel Betanzos (dancer) and Esperanza Fernandez (singer) teach at flamenco schools in the picturesque districts of Macarena and Triana. Aoyama (2009) estimates that, in Seville alone, the annual earnings generated by the flamenco school industry are approximately two million Euros – much of these revenues are derived from foreign tourists.

There are many types of genres within flamenco, and because these distinctive genres follow different complex rhythms, flamenco is difficult to acquire. Flamenco dance requires expert coordination between hands, arms, with fast and rhythmical stomping of the feet, while flamenco guitar is said to be one of the most difficult among many guitar music genres (Aoyama, 2007). Due to this complexity, Aoyama observes, foreign tourists tend to spend weeks or months in Andalusia to gain proficiency from the most prestigious flamenco representatives. Yet, investigations of tourist experience of flamenco have received almost no attention by leisure and tourism researchers (Aoyama, 2007; Cantero, 2009). A notable exception is the research note from Vidal Gonzalez (2008), which briefly argues that there is a link between Japanese tourists’ participation in flamenco and the construction of identities. Another exception is Matteucci’s (2014) recent study on the way tourists use their bodies in their experience of flamenco. In this journal, there is a related study of young adults’ experiences of social dancing, albeit not in the flamenco context (Boyd, 2014). Nevertheless, outside the leisure and tourism literature, related works on embodied experiences of dance performances and music are available in disciplines such as performance studies and ethnomusicology. One example is Olszewski’s (2008) ethnographic study of Argentinean tango practices at tango halls along the North American West coast. Another valuable study, outside the leisure and tourism context, is Caltabiano’s (2009) Atlanta-based exploration of how female dancers negotiate their embodied flamenco identities. Caltabiano (2009) acknowledges the complex negotiation of the flamenco dancer’s identity which, she argues, is shaped by ideas of authenticity, exoticism, tradition and modernity, thus allowing dancers to break traditional roles. She however does not evaluate the dancers’ experiences in depth.

In this paper, we add to the above limited literature by exploring how tourists engage in flamenco music and dance courses in Seville. We ask one main question: How do tourists experience flamenco workshops, that is, which dimensions characterise these experiences?

**Methods**

To research experiences of flamenco, we followed a constructivist grounded theory strategy (Charmaz, 2006), whereby qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews and photo elicitation.
We opted for a constructivist orientation to grounded theory because constructivism views scientific work as a creative and imaginative social activity engaging emotionally, mentally and physically both researchers and research participants in the sharing of experiences that are relevant to the phenomenon under scrutiny. Those shared subjective experiences help researchers articulate theoretical propositions that are understood as ‘plausible accounts’ (Charmaz, 2006, p. 132). Therefore, as Latour (2004, p. 220) argues, good propositions – or plausible accounts – are ‘ones that allow for the connection of widely different phenomena and thus generate even more recognition of unexpected differences by engaging a few entities in the life and fate of many others’. In other words, unlike other research traditions that seek to encapsulate coherent laws in one single theory, constructivist grounded theory calls for more risky descriptions of a phenomenon that may be compatible with alternative propositions. Constructivists talk about multiple realities, and it is precisely by embracing these multiple realities that a global understanding of the world is possible (Latour, 2004), or, to relate this to our context, that a better understanding of flamenco experiences is possible.

Purposive sampling was used to initially locate the first participants who were all recruited at various flamenco schools in the city of Seville, Spain. Then, theoretical sampling enabled us to select other interviewees. By theoretical sampling, grounded theorists mean that new research participants are sought based on preliminary findings and the new questions are tested through the collection of new data. At this point, researchers move from inductive to deductive reasoning and further develop a conceptual framework (Charmaz, 2006). Thus, as in traditional grounded theory, the data analysis, data collection and memo writing were performed concurrently. A total of 20 interviews were conducted with French and English native speakers in two distinct stages between September 2009 and May 2010. The French-speaking participants came from Canada, France, Luxembourg and Switzerland, while the English speakers were from Canada, the USA, England, Wales and Australia (see Table 1 for detailed information about each interviewee). All research participants were tourists who had principally come to Seville to partake in flamenco courses, but who also engaged in traditional tourism activities like general sightseeing. The tourists included 16 female dancers and 4 males (one dancer and three guitar players). While the sample used in this study is fairly representative of the broader population of tourists taking flamenco courses in Spain – mainly women – we acknowledge the disproportionate number of female over male research participants. Therefore, it is worth pointing out that this paper mainly presents females’ accounts of their flamenco experiences. The research participants were interviewed only once. They all consented to participate in interviews about their flamenco experience in Seville and allowed the interviewer to record the conversations for data analysis purposes.

The interviews consisted of two parts: first a regular interview in the form of a conversation followed by the use of images in a photo interview (photo elicitation). The 18 images used to elicit responses were selected by the first author and consisted of varied flamenco-related situations. Interviewees were asked to select one or more images that best described their flamenco experiences in Seville and were further asked to explain their choices. Images were thus employed to elicit intimate accounts about the tourists’ embodied experiences that might have otherwise remained silent. The use of images proved to be fun and stimulated dialogue between the interviewer and interviewees. The vast majority of the interviews took place in local cafés and were held either in English or in French language. On average, the interviews lasted just over an hour.

Interviews, and the use of visual data in interviews, were deemed appropriate as we sought to go beneath the surface of superficially reported experiences. An important aspect of both interviewing and employing visual data was to apprehend the interview encounter as an opportunity to engage socially, emotionally and sensually with both the informants and the physical environment (Pink, 2009). Since the primary objective of the study was to explore how tourists experience flamenco in a broad sense, we asked open-ended questions such as ‘how do you describe your flamenco experience here so far?’ or ‘what is your best experience here so far?’ Other central questions to the study included: ‘how does it feel to engage in this flamenco course?’ and ‘what does this experience mean to you?’ All conversations were digitally recorded and transcribed. The first author (a native French speaker who
is also fluent in English) first translated the French text into English and two English native-speaking colleagues then checked the excerpts with the first author to ensure translation validation.

The textual data derived from both in-depth interviews and photo elicitation were analysed following a process of coding and categorising the information. Following Charmaz (2006), the coding process included three steps: initial coding, focused coding and theoretical coding. In the first step, chunks of data were broken down into smaller units of meaning and labelled. In the second step, the amount of data was reduced to what we thought were useful analytical codes. The third step involved making connection between codes in order to form conceptual categories. As common in grounded theory analysis, throughout the enquiry, we systematically compared data in the form of statements, stories and incidents. At the same time, as the data were being compared, we wrote analytical memos to link the empirical codes to theoretical ideas, which then usually lead to further questions specific to the emergent proposition. Table 2 provides an example of initial coding, focused coding and theoretical ideas written in a memo. In order to cross-validate the researchers’ interpretation, two external researchers and senior colleagues were asked to code chunks of data. Data collection stopped once the freshly collected data did not generate new insights to the phenomenon. Charmaz’s (2006) criteria of credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness were applied in evaluating the soundness of our research. For instance, to enhance credibility of our findings, we have systematically compared observations with observations and categories with categories, thus providing strong coherent links between the data and our theoretical propositions. We believe that a sense of familiarity with the tourists’ experiences of flamenco was thereby achieved.

### Findings and discussion

The study indicates that at the core of the tourist experience of flamenco resides the need to behave in accord with one’s true nature, suggesting that the flamenco experiences were eudaimonic (Waterman, 1993). Tourists experienced their inner selves in ways that were authentic and meaningful.

Four core dimensions characterised the eudaimonic tourists’ flamenco experiences: environment, challenge, arousal and self-discovery. The environment dimension refers to both physical spaces tourists found themselves in and tourists’ interactions with significant people such as peers and flamenco values.
instructors. The challenge dimension has to do with the endurance of hardship. Arousal relates to tourists’ intense emotional states such as feelings of transcendence. Finally, self-discovery corresponds to the motivation that comes from inside an individual for personal fulfilment through flamenco. Each of these four dimensions is now described in the following sections.

**Environment**

The physical environment in its variety of spaces appears as an influential factor in the informants’ experience of flamenco, and, thus, is revealed as a key dimension. A dominant theme in the participants’ accounts was the one of perceived authenticity in relation to places. Seville was described as being ‘the source’ of flamenco or the ‘capital of flamenco’ – a place where the flamenco culture is omnipresent. Flamenco is, therefore, seen as being an intrinsic element of Seville. For some research participants, the city of Seville even attains the status of a sacred centre, which one has to come to in order to experience authentic flamenco and be self-perceived as an authentic aficionado. The following quote illustrates this point:

Well, on a first thought that it came to my mind, I wouldn’t be able to do it anywhere else. This energy doesn’t exist for me anywhere else … and the presence of flamenco in so many different forms … (Irene)

Seville is, therefore, not only perceived as being the birthplace of flamenco, but it is seen as a centre where ‘flamenco pilgrims’ gather and experience authenticity. Seville is experienced, as such, through the pervasive flamenco culture in the many aspects of Seville’s mundane and daily life. This diversity and multiplicity of flamenco experiences were expressed in terms of the abundance of flamenco events, venues, schools, serendipitous flamenco encounters and street atmosphere. The following quote from Alice provides a good example of her enchantment with Seville:

[Here] you really feel like flamenco is really alive, even in everyday culture. You know -people singing in the street, so … You can really feel it living here. So to be at the centre of that is really amazing for me.

Seville’s heterogeneous spaces are real and extraordinary. They are extraordinary for being imagined, fantasised and allow tourists to derive meanings, act in accordance to those meanings and embody their identities. Additionally, the intimacy of spaces, such as the flamenco clubs (peñas) and the flamenco studios, assumes particular performances; these performances are legitimised by the peculiar confinement of those bounded spaces. For example, for some tourists like Catherine, the flamenco

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<td><strong>Initial coding</strong></td>
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<td>Peter: It [taking flamenco classes back home] wouldn’t be the same because here is the core or the heart of flamenco anyway. And, ok, my introduction to flamenco back home and to classical music, I bought this DVD Juan Serrano. And he shows the basic techniques. So for the last two years, three years I’ve been doing the beginning things, the basic techniques, you know. Here is the real McCoy. That’s why I came here. And it’s a dream. Being here for me is a dream. I’ve always wanted to be able to play flamenco. I’m getting there, you know</td>
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studio unequivocally represents a liminoid space in which she feels safe and empowered to adopt a behaviour that is different from her everyday conduct:

Here [in Seville], we are more daring to let it all go than in France. Because, first, we're surrounded by girls who, in general, dance well, and even really well; and so we're not afraid to loosen up. Then, you tell yourself why not let it go?! In France, we are very … well, at least me I feel … I feel more embarrassed by the gaze of others. It's because here, people dance for themselves before anything else. They're enjoying themselves. (Catherine)

Other tourists described their dance instructors as ‘mentors’ for guiding them through difficult life circumstances. For example, Maya below reflects on her experience with her dance instructor, an influential person with whom she has developed strong emotional ties:

At the start, I had a teacher who told me off right away telling me that I couldn't come to class being sluggish, tired and yawning – because this course takes place in the morning. I had no excuse. Flamenco was an attitude that one has to have and that this attitude determines many other things. This was like a trigger in me and I felt very emotional about it. He told me off and I could have dropped out like many girls do because he can be a bit harsh sometimes. But I came back … Anyway, and since then, we have a really strong relationship. I’m really grateful for that. He really did me a huge favour. (Maya)

In the informants’ testimonies, there is some evidence that the presence of peers contributes to positive feelings of togetherness, reassurance and comfort in their quest to learn flamenco or adopt flamenco as a life style. This particular bond and community feeling was explicitly articulated by Irene:

There is a sense of community which is quite important. So it's not my mainstream life but part of the spirit is very important in my life. Personally … Yeah, to be able to and not only to do it but also to belong to, to belong to a group that has something and it's passionate about it or have a different take to learn from experiences. And part of it, it is that it is an international group.

This special social connection is what Victor Turner (1969, p. 96) refers to as communitas, which he describes as a mix of ‘lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship’ that emanates from the positive liminoid tourism experience. An outcome of these interactions was the making of friendship and the establishment of special bonds with flamenco artists and peers, contributing to a positive environment. A recent review of the leisure literature conducted by Newman, Tay, and Diener (2014) points to numerous studies that highlight the link between social bonding and a number of positive outcomes such as feeling positive emotions and enhancing quality of life. They argue that affiliation with others, which is a sense of social relatedness, is a key mediator that promotes well-being.

**Challenge**

The challenge dimension was found in most of the informants’ accounts and was articulated in terms of risk, doubt, sacrifice, hardship and life crises. For instance, a number of female tourists reported experiencing exhaustion due to extensive daily training. Anna took five daily hours of dance classes which forced her to adopt a very disciplined life style. She mentioned that she could not allow herself to do other things as she otherwise would be in too much pain to follow the course the following morning. Similarly, James talked about his challenges in the following terms:

You know, you have four and half hours of class and you have to practice at least four to five hours on top of that to keep up. And really man, you don’t have a whole lot of time to enjoy yourself in fact.

Another illustration of the theme of challenge is found in Juliette’s description of her flamenco experience:

Mentally, I went through all kinds of states from sadness to joy and as much as self-disgust to a point where you say ‘what the hell?’, ‘Stop that’ or ‘put your head up’ … for me it was like an internal struggle, a continuous one.

Often, doubt experienced by the research participants was linked to the higher quality of flamenco in Spain and to the local instructors’ high expectations from their students as opposed to more lenient or less serious teachers back home; this contrasted the experience of flamenco in Seville to the experience of flamenco at home. For the tourists, this contrast bolstered their perception of Seville as being a culturally authentic place in which flamenco is deeply rooted. Another illustration of the feeling of
doubt is found in Marlene’s account, when she said that she first felt daunted by the presence of many advanced foreign dancers in her class:

You realise that there are so many other people who had the same idea as you, who want to do the same exact thing as you – you know what I mean? And so, it’s kind of discouraging in that way, and also in a way that … you think that you’ve reached a certain level and then I get here, and then that’s just like ‘oh no you’re not!’ [laugh] – You know? It’s like ‘oh wow!’ I’ve improved a lot less than I thought I did. I have a really long way to go! The first feeling that I had was discouragement ‘cause I was just in shock but then, I was like ‘what are you talking about? You have to do it.’ In my head, I was like ‘this is what you’ve been here for’ – you know – it will get better over time.

As the quote indicates, Marlene is intimidated by other dancers, but she also finds the strength to persevere which demonstrates that personal challenges may push people to overcome difficult situations. This finding echoes the work of Huta and Ryan (2010), who found that although eudaimonically motivated activities may sometimes be stressful to people as they are engaging in them, participation in those activities may produce positive effects in the long run.

Participants also reported unfulfilling working lives before coming to Seville. Celina did not feel passionate about engineering nor was Juliette satisfied with her accounting job; and Laurent felt depressed about the hard working conditions on construction sites in the cold and dull factories he had been working in. For these tourists, doing flamenco in Seville may represent an escape from unhealthy life patterns (e.g. alienating work routines in stressful environments). In the subsequent excerpt, Natalie alludes to her life crisis.

I was always trying to be that person that everybody expects me to be, and it was just easier to do things like to focus on other people instead of myself. I’ve been in a relationship for 15 years solid, so [chuckles], so it’s just never been about me … I think that’s the whole catholic upbringing too [laugh] … I’ve never really realised how strong it was until I was travelling. Just the whole idea of self-sacrifice and you know, pride being a negative thing, vanity being a negative thing, like all those things you need to be a strong person … Well, I’ve learnt a ridiculous amount about myself, things I didn’t know were there and so I know when I go home there’s gonna be some significant changes that not everybody is gonna be happy about.

The words articulated by Natalie evoke the disintegration of her sentimental life and the challenges to her basic values and beliefs; yet, she demonstrates determination to change and overcome the challenges. Natalie’s negative feelings have pushed her to experience new things. For Natalie, this translates into the development of self-confidence and willpower. In this respect, Harter (2002) argues that negative feelings often enable character strengths to flourish. Indeed, it is through the experience of hardship that people feel forced to rely on their inner strengths so as to overcome stressful life events (Ryff & Singer, 2003). Fulfilment from tension associated with learning and performing flamenco in Seville serves, thus, as an example for what psychologists describe as stress-related growth (Park, 2003) – through life crises, multiple selves may emerge, and this multiplicity is conducive to healthy outcomes.

**Arousal**

Bond and Stinson (2000) describe the state of arousal as an elevated state of consciousness combined with the stimulation of the sensuous body in a way that individuals get to feel their own bodies more acutely. Many of the tourists describe their experience of flamenco as something visceral, something they feel deep inside. Additionally, flamenco is said to be an outlet for passion, a catalyst through which emotions are embodied. The first description of the state of arousal relates to Robert’s emotional experience of the powerful voice of a female singer at a small *peña*:

I remember something that still gives me goose bumps now – really – that was a concert at a peña when this woman started singing. I called her the ‘flamenco Pavarotti’. Amazing! The power of her voice … I had never seen anyone sing like this. The strength of that woman who was a bit bulky, not huge but she had this voice. That was crazy. Amazing … It was like ‘wow’, it was just incredible. Just imagine that Pavarotti is standing next to you in a small quiet room with cement walls, and he starts singing … the power of his voice and his presence is like … And then, the music moves me. Even sometimes, if I’m tired, it can even make me cry.

This description pertains to a vivid and corporeal experience. Robert’s use of the adjectives: ‘amazing’, ‘crazy’, ‘incredible’ and ‘wow’ denotes a pleasurable and overwhelming experience which is difficult
to describe. Yet, the intensity felt in the moment is encapsulated by the phrase: ‘goose bumps’ and the words: ‘power’, ‘strength’ and ‘presence’. This description demonstrates that the body should be seen as a bundle of interrelated senses which experience other bodies, places and objects in a multi-sensuous way. Robert’s experience is insightful because it is described as pertinent to a specific environment; the room is small with poor acoustic properties, the singer is at reach and the voice is powerful. Here, the physical space and the proximity of the singer together give Robert a sense of orientation and a measure of the environment where he finds himself in. Additionally, his sense of sight (bulky woman, cement walls, etc.), his sense of hearing (powerful voice) and his sense of touch (goose bumps) are activated simultaneously.

The next quote provides further evidence which supports the argument that the more senses an experience engages, the more effective and memorable it can be.

For example, when I am working at my desk in the engineering stuff, it’s like my brain real hurts spinning but when I am dancing, I am moving so I am feeling my body, I am listening to the music, so I am using my sense of hearing, I can see myself moving and I can see other people moving, so I’m using my sense of sight, I just feel like everything is awake ... When I am listening and reading and speaking, then I am using more of my senses, and that's the same way with dance I guess. And you are using your mind too. (Celina)

The more the senses are at play, the better the flamenco experience can be, and the larger the degree of activation of those senses is, the more rewarding the experience is likely to be. Celina speaks of moving, feeling, listening and seeing to describe arousal. Of particular relevance here is the phrase ‘everything is awake’, which points to the multi-sensual and kinaesthetic nature of dancing. The adjective ‘awake’ also opens the door to creativity, or a world of possibilities and discoveries, where the body can experiment, learn and feel new sensations. In her description, Celina elevates the tourist dance experience to something more fulfilling than her work activity, an ordinary activity which fails to fully stimulate her senses. The literature on embodiment (e.g. Csordas, 1990) highlights the relationship of human performances and the social and physical environments. The above quotes point to the primacy of a situated fully sensuous participative body, revealing human agency as a site for self-expression, exploration and learning. Robert and Celina are enjoying themselves, perhaps because they are both alert and receptive to new environments while being situated in the present. Their embodied experiences of flamenco give them a sense of increased well-being.

Engaging in flamenco in Seville is further revealed as an arousing experience when Celina talks about her class experience with Andrés Peña (an accomplished flamenco dancer) that she describes as ‘not something that [she] feel[s] often normally in [her] daily life’. She describes her experience in the following way:

When I am dancing and when they’re singing, it's like ... I don't know, it's hard to explain ... How do I feel? I don’t know why but like, it does not matter, I mean if I am dancing a soleá and stuff, it’s a really sad song, right? But afterwards it’s like; it’s like runner's high, afterwards. What do they call it? Endorphins? I don’t know …

Celina’s dancing experience is ineffable and illustrates the liminality of the tourist space and practice of flamenco in Seville which is undoubtedly reinforced by the presence of significant local artists. Other research participants have used a number of words and metaphors to describe their embodied arousing experiences of flamenco such as: ‘feeling alive’, ‘the emotion inside’, ‘I’m grooving’, ‘emotional shock’, ‘it gets to those places in us’, ‘it exhausts you emotionally’ or ‘it’s like a knot in your throat’. Most of these expressions indicate that these experiences are extremely gratifying. The gratifying experiences resemble what was described in the literature as the tourist moment (Hom Cary, 2004). In her description of the tourist moment, Hom Cary (2004, p. 64) notes that the subject becomes ‘entirely subsumed by the dance’, a state of being which suggests a loss of separate identity, similar to our findings. By way of further illustration, in her study of tourism dance performances, Daniel (1996, p. 789) talks about a moment in which ‘time and tensions are suspended’. When Daniel goes on to say that ‘for many tourists, the dance becomes their entire world at that particular moment’, she alludes to a sense of personal synthesis where body, mind and the environment become one.

The work of Dewey (1934) is also relevant in explaining the dimension of arousal based on our findings. In his description of imaginative unification, Dewey insightfully illustrates that ‘we are carried
out beyond ourselves to find ourselves,' which results in a feeling of wholeness that resembles the religious experience (Bond & Stinson, 2000, p. 73). In this study, flamenco activities take tourists away from their ordinary life through states of intense emotional and sensory arousals to then throw them back into a more meaningful life. This process is also akin to the notion of personal expressiveness (Waterman, 2005). Waterman (2005) refers to personal expressiveness to describe the subjective experiences that one undergoes while engaging in intrinsically motivated, identity-related activities. Waterman (2005, p. 169) writes that while participating in intrinsically motivated eudaimonic activities, people ‘experience (a) an unusual intense involvement, (b) a special fit or meshing with the activities, (c) a feeling of intensely being alive, (d) a feeling of completeness or fulfilment, (e) an impression that this is what the person was meant to do, and (f) a feeling that this is what the person really is.’ So, as Telfer (1980) explains, eudaimonia embodies the idea, not that one is pleased with one's life, but that one has what is worth desiring and worth having in life. This idea and the six eudaimonic dimensions that Waterman explains are present in the tourist experiences of flamenco in Seville.

**Self-discovery**

While some experiences were found to be the result of serendipitous encounters with flamenco, for many participants, rewarding experiences resulted from their active interest and engagement in flamenco and a deliberate search for self-discovery through this activity. The following account indicates that the flamenco experience in Seville is not a spontaneous, pleasurable event, but instead corresponds to a much deeper search for self-discovery.

… Because of the very essence of flamenco, it is you that have to make all these efforts to learn it. So, this way you actually learn a lot about yourself … It's very enriching, It's wonderful. This is also why we can't leave after a few months, we just can't. We can't! It is so nourishing when you're passionate about it like I am. It is wonderful. It's so nourishing that I feel myself living. (Maya)

Maya's account of self-discovery points to a number of eudaimonic themes such as self-fulfilment and a sense of meaning when she says that her experience is 'enriching' and 'nourishing.' Her words also reveal that a heightened sense of being is not achieved without efforts. Huta and Ryan (2010) have found that intrinsically motivated people who strive to go beyond their usual boundaries tend to report higher levels of self-fulfilment and meaning. In the following quote, Marlene describes her newly discovered self:

You can express yourself in so many ways with flamenco. Yeah, so I guess that's my experience here, it's helping me touch part of myself that … [laugh] It's helping me get in touch with parts of myself that I didn't know …

Maya has also expressed her experience in terms of discovering her true self:

I lived in Lebanon until I was 11, and I really was infused with the Lebanese mentality. Then, I lived in Switzerland for 18 years but never really feeling Swiss. I really have a hard time with the Swiss mentality. So, when I came here, without really knowing anything [about the local culture and mentality], I really found myself again in the way… the attitude that people have towards life in general … It's like if it had opened my eyes about the things that I really like, the things that I have always liked, which I have always looked for. It wasn't like something which was given to me but it was already in me and I've just realised that.

Natalie similarly discerns her emerging authentic self that she articulates in the following account:

Well, I've learnt a ridiculous amount about myself; things I didn't know were there … I found that was a lot of stuff I was kind of locking up then. I thought I'd let it go, and it turns out like I was just kind of building all these little walls and now they're starting to crumble.

For British psychologist Donald Winnicott (1960), both a true self and a false self cohabit in every individual and the theme of self-discovery can be understood in this context. While the true self connects with our very nature in a way that we feel real, alive and authentic, the false self is seen as a compliance with external rules or stimuli (or in our case, compliance with the mundane daily work reality at usual domiciles – the antithesis of the tourist flamenco experience). The true self is what
Maslow (1968) calls the *inner nature* of human beings. In a similar way, Maslow believes that it is possible for individuals to discover their inner nature and that by bringing it out, people would live healthier and happier.

The false self may be seen as Maya’s Swiss identity, which could be described as a compliant self with a given environment, and which stands against her real nature, her Lebanese self. Likewise, Natalie’s true self is now unleashed and therefore free to flourish as her false self is starting to crumble. The metaphoric walls that Natalie uses to describe her false self relate to the idea of compliance with particular social codes which have been locking her up for years. Natalie makes reference to a heightened sense of self when she says: ‘I’ve learned a ridiculous amount about myself; things I didn’t know were there’. She becomes aware of an unexpected self. In addition, her last statement: ‘… and now they [the walls] are starting to crumble’ metaphorically suggests the emergence of a new self – which compares to the new landscape in the aftermath of a volcanic eruption – or a self in transition.

We can therefore understand self-discovery as a process of adaptations or rearrangement of the self, rather than as a mere outcome. In the subsequent quote, Natalie explicitly narrates her ongoing process of self-discovery when she says: ‘… and now I actually end up feeling that I can become that person’.

Everybody thinks [she] is super chilled and happy together and is really strong but I’m really not, and now I actually end up feeling that I can become that person. I’ve been getting some good input from my friends back home too that like I’m coming up with realisations, talking about them, and they’re like yeah! We know. And it’s just … [laugh]. I don’t know. It’s kind of scary when … I’ve met people along the way that tend, that seem to know me better than I know myself, and it’s people that I’ve only met for a day. And it’s quite an experience so far [chuckles] … With me I think I was … I was always trying to be that person that everybody expects me to be, and it was just easier to do things like to focus on other people instead of myself. And this is really the only time I had where, I really have to depend on myself, I have to book my train tickets, I have to figure where I’m going, I have to find a place on a map, and I think that’s where a lot of experiences are coming from. It’s taking this time for myself that I just haven’t really done.

Natalie’s reflective account depicts a turning point in her life as she realises that she had never before given herself priority over other people. She here alludes to a behaviour that has been foreign to her authentic self. Natalie’s self-discovery is recounted in positive terms as she has become more assertive as well as socially and emotionally stronger.

**Conclusion**

This study sought to address the lack of insights into what constitutes the experience of flamenco through tourists’ active participation in music and dance activities. In-depth interviews were employed in a constructivist grounded theory strategy with 20 tourists. The iterative process of data collection and analysis of grounded theory helped to identify four key dimensions which characterised tourists’ experiences of flamenco: the social and physical environment; the experience of challenge; arousal; and self-discovery.

The discussion of the flamenco experience dimensions points to the conclusion that the flamenco tourist experience is eudaimonic in character due to three reasons. Firstly, the tourists’ experiences of flamenco are intrinsically motivating and participants feel that they are connecting with their true selves. True self-behaviour is referred to as a life that is lived in accordance with one’s *daimon* or true self – a core characteristic of eudaimonia (Schlegel, Hicks, Arndt, & King, 2009; Waterman, 1993). Secondly, the experiences are characterised by stress-related growth, involving hardship and challenge. Participants talked about the pressures to learn and perform flamenco in Seville and the stresses of their mundane lives which lead them to embark on the flamenco journey – the journey that they desired, despite all the stresses. Thirdly, while there was evidence of experiences of pleasure and arousal, there was more evidence of deep reflections on inner nature, a sense of purpose and meaning in life in line with eudaimonia. Contrary to hedonistic pursuits, eudaimonic experiences relate to longer term personal-level outcomes (Huta & Ryan, 2010).
Eudaimonia through this type of tourism occurs in special, different, authentic environments, like Seville. These environments are liminoid tourist spaces that are away from usual domiciles and daily work obligations. The environment dimension, based on the participants’ quotes, lends credence to the notion that changes of domiciles are needed for humans to self-actualise and thrive (Gewirth, 1998). By highlighting this eudaimonic quality, the study’s findings are challenging discourses of tourist behaviour, where tourism activities are transient, frivolous, hedonic encounters, and they are expanding the dominant hedonic conceptualisation of tourist happiness (Nawijn, 2011; Vittersø, 2011).

Therefore, the study points to flamenco tourism’s power to ultimately enhance individuals’ personal development and sense of self. Most of the experiences presented here have served to illustrate the tourists’ rugged trajectories, but also positive changes which accompany them. The investigation thus reveals that the flamenco tourist experience significantly contributes to the fulfilment of those who engage in it.

Three main limitations of this study need to be highlighted. First, in the methods section of this article, we have acknowledged the disproportionate number of female over male informants. The limited number of male informants did not allow gender differences to be explored. Secondly, we have only interviewed English- and French-speaking flamenco aficionados. A larger study with non-Western cohorts of tourists who pursue flamenco would be insightful. A third limitation is concerned with the in situ nature of the study. Pre- and post-evaluations may allow for a fuller picture of tourists’ experiences of flamenco to emerge.

We have identified opportunities for researchers to build on our study’s findings. Our findings have highlighted the central role that the body and the senses play in fostering experiences of a rediscovered or different self. The centrality of the body and the senses in the tourist experience of music and dance deserves further research attention. As Featherstone (2010) argues, the elevated status of beautiful bodies within consumer culture suggests that there is a link between enhanced body appearance and a more congruent sense of self. It is unclear however how, and to what extent, the enhancement of the body may result in a renewed self. Further, and beyond mere body appearances, Featherstone (2010) and more recently Matteucci (2014) have highlighted the primacy of the affective body (which is a felt body through sensory stimulations and kinaesthesia) in fostering self-transformations. Therefore, a more detailed exploration of the link between tourists’ performances and fulfilment should shed some light on the ways embodied experiences can facilitate eudaimonia. Likewise, the experience of challenge in tourism experiences deserves further attention. Although research has demonstrated the relevance of the challenge dimension to promote self-fulfilment as described in flow experiences (Csiksentmihalyi, 1990) and serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982), it is unclear what kind of challenge leads to eudaimonia. Further, it would be informative to study how much of the tourists’ new selves remain upon their return to usual domiciles and how long such benefits last? Such research endeavours would certainly matter to tourists themselves, educators and practitioners involved in the tourism, leisure, entertainment and cultural industries.

Lastly, there are implications for practice based on the study. Fresh insights into the nature of positive experiences of flamenco should be valuable to both practitioners and policy-makers seeking to sustain and valorise expressions of intangible cultural heritage. The findings point to a need to focus on cultural tourism initiatives which aim at empowering both tourists and local talents in ways which would provide opportunities for learning, self-discovery and self-fulfilment. Initiatives such as those relying on tourists’ skills and creativity (Richards, 2011), and which often consist of courses or workshops catered for both tourists and locals, may be best suited to deliver such personal benefits. Eudaimonia based on this study is likely to be experienced when flamenco tourists interact with and learn from prominent artists within intimate spaces through experiences that are perceived as non-commercial in nature. Employers should, therefore, not only hire highly skilled flamenco artists but also provide spaces outside the service frame through which aficionados (instructors and learners) can openly interact. Through such initiatives, the quality of life of both tourists and of local actors is likely to be improved.
**Note**

1. **Soleá** is a dramatic song or **palo** (flamenco music style) within the flamenco repertoire and consists of 12 beats.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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