

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

**Entertainment as Pleasurable
and Meaningful: Identifying Hedonic
and Eudaimonic Motivations
for Entertainment Consumption**Mary Beth Oliver¹ & Arthur A. Raney²¹ Department of Film/Video & Media Studies, Penn State University, University Park, PA 16802, USA² School of Communication, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2664, USA

The purpose of this research is to broaden the conceptualization of entertainment selection to identify not only pleasure-seeking (hedonic concerns) as a motivator, but to also recognize that individuals may choose media as a means of “truth-seeking” (eudaimonic concerns). This article conceptualized and developed measures to illustrate that entertainment can be used as a means of experiencing not only enjoyment, but also as a means of grappling with questions such as life’s purpose and human meaningfulness. Four studies were conducted in the development of these measures, providing evidence for their validity in terms of entertainment preference and individual differences, and illustrating how these motivations predict preferences for entertainment that elicits unique affective experiences.

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Media scholars agree that viewers are motivated to consume entertainment for a variety of reasons. For example, research from a uses-and-gratifications perspective over the past 35 years has sought to delineate (via self-report) a variety of viewing motivations, including surveillance/information, personal relationships/social interaction and integration, personal identity, and diversion/escapism/entertainment (for overviews, see Rubin, 2008; Ruggiero, 2000). Acknowledging that motivations for entertainment consumption are recognized to be diverse, we also note that the ultimate “goal” or pursued “outcome” of entertainment has generally assumed to be that of enjoyment, and has therefore formed the basis of a great deal of theorizing in media psychology (Vorderer, Klimmt, & Ritterfeld, 2004). Such a focus undoubtedly not only has great intuitive appeal, but also empirical and anecdotal support as well, as farcical comedies, thrilling action movies, and romantic love stories likely form the vast majority of entertainment offerings. At the same time, however, there exist

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numerous forms of entertainment for which “enjoyment” may not be the most apt descriptor of the gratifications that individuals experience. Tragic drama, moving cinema, heartbreaking opera, or poignant novels and poems are but a few examples of entertainment that may be deeply gratifying, but not “enjoyable” in the colloquial sense of the term. Indeed, to say that one “enjoyed” or was “entertained by” a film such as *Hotel Rwanda* would seem decidedly odd, at best.

The idea that moving or meaningful entertainment could be gratifying, but simultaneously not readily characterized in terms of positively valenced affect has generated considerable theorizing that has aimed at resolving the apparent “puzzle” or “paradox” of the “enjoyment” of genres such as sad films or tearjerkers (Oliver, 1993; Zillmann, 1998). For example, in trying to reconceptualize enjoyment so as to better capture the diversity of audience responses, some scholars have highlighted the importance of metaemotions in the entertainment experience (Bartsch, Vorderer, Mangold, & Reinhold, 2008), and others have suggested that enjoyment is a reflection of the fulfillment of intrinsic needs (Tamborini, Bowman, Eden, & Grizzard, 2010), including “higher-order” needs such as those identified in self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Similarly, some scholars have suggested that entertainment—including entertainment that elicits negative affect—can be conceptualized as a form of “play” that ultimately helps viewers/users cope with or confront their realities (Vorderer, 2001) and that may further have evolutionarily benefits in terms of providing safe “training” for dangerous or threatening situations or allowing for the enactment of a diversity of cognitive and behavioral responses to the environment (e.g., Steen & Owens, 2001). More recent scholarship grappling with the concept of media enjoyment shares a common recognition that entertainment gratification need not elicit positively valenced affect to be perceived as gratifying to viewers. Indeed, in part to highlight this argument, Oliver and Bartsch (2010) recently argued that the term “appreciation” may be a better descriptor of the gratifications associated with the experience of more moving or meaningful entertainment (see also Vorderer & Ritterfeld, 2009).

If scholars now accept the idea that entertainment may be fulfilling yet, at the same time, not *enjoyed* as commonly understood, the question remains as to why viewers seek out entertainment that seemingly fails to elicit feelings of pleasure. That is, if viewers choose comedy, action, or thrilling suspense as a means of seeking fun, laughs, or pleasure, what are they seeking when they choose entertainment that fails to elicit feelings of “enjoyment”?

In this article, we suggest that rather than conceptualizing the primary dimension of audience gratification along a single continuum of pleasure, the additional dimension of “meaningfulness” may address audience behaviors that have often been seen as somewhat paradoxical. Simply stated, we argue that people consume media entertainment in the pursuit of pleasure and amusement (hedonic motivations) *and* as a part of their general need to search for and ponder life’s meaning, truths, and purposes—motivations that we characterize as “eudaimonic” (in addition to other motivations that are beyond the scope of our article). To those ends, the overarching

purpose of the present research is to examine the viability of our distinction between hedonistic and eudaimonic entertainment motivations by developing measures of these two dimensions. We examine the validity of the measures in terms of their relationship with entertainment preferences, individual differences associated with these motivations, and emotional and cognitive responses associated with preferred entertainment.

Enjoyment of “sad” entertainment as paradoxical

As mentioned previously, scholarship in entertainment psychology has tended to characterize the enjoyment of “sad” entertainment as somewhat curious, if not paradoxical. Such characterizations likely reflect very influential theories that generally assume or reflect the assumption of hedonism in the realm of entertainment. For example, disposition-based theories of entertainment suggest that enjoyment is maximized when liked or beloved characters enjoy positive outcomes in a story (or disliked characters suffer) (Raney, 2006; Zillmann & Cantor, 1977). Similarly, mood-management theory very clearly characterizes individuals’ entertainment selections in hedonistic terms, arguing that viewers choose entertainment that serves to maximize positive states (e.g., moods, arousal levels) and minimize negative states (Zillmann, 1985, 2000). Though both of these theoretical frameworks have garnered a great deal of empirical support across a variety of entertainment types, it is evident that the enjoyment of sad films or tearjerkers that routinely feature the suffering or tragedy of well-liked protagonists are difficult to explain in these dispositional terms. Similarly, scholars have noted that the assumptions of mood management are seemingly at odds with anecdotal accounts and more formal studies suggesting that at times, more somber entertainment (e.g., mournful songs) seems to hold particular appeal among individuals who are feeling blue, sad, or melancholy themselves (Gibson, Aust, & Zillmann, 2000; Mares & Cantor, 1992).

Scholars have proposed a number of different possible explanations in attempting to resolve these seeming “paradoxes” that challenge the assumptions of hedonic entertainment selection and enjoyment. For example, notions of catharsis suggest that tragic entertainment offers viewers the opportunity to “purge” their negative emotions (see Cornelius, 1997). Downward social comparison (Festinger, 1954) suggests that downtrodden viewers may feel better through comparison to similar others in circumstances worse than their own (Mares & Cantor, 1992). Similarly, researchers have also argued that the portrayal of unpleasant situations may assist viewers by providing them with information that may ultimately help them resolve or cope with unhappy or distressing circumstances (Nabi, Finnerty, Domschke, & Hull, 2006; Zillmann, 2000). Further, some scholars have outlined a number of potential benefits that individuals may perceive in maintaining (rather than alleviating) bad moods, including empathizing with others, working hard, or enhancing problem solving, among other benefits (Parrott, 1993; see also Knobloch, 2003).

In the aforementioned explanations, the assumption of hedonic motivations for media consumption is generally unchallenged. Specifically, although all of these explanations imply that sad films, tearjerkers, or similar negatively valenced content may *temporarily* elicit unpleasant affect, each explanation also implies that the experience of negative affective reactions ultimately gives rise to mood repair or other tangible benefits. In contrast, in this article, we suggest that there exists an additional motivation for entertainment consumption—one that is largely orthogonal to hedonic motivations—that may help explain viewers' selections and experiences in ways that do not rely on the experience of pleasure or positive affect specifically. We turn, then, to our discussion of what we label “eudaimonic” motivations for media consumption.

Eudaimonic motivations for media consumption

The focus on more positively valenced, hedonically oriented entertainment has resulted in considerable puzzling over seemingly contradictory evidence. One outcome of such a focus and its consequent puzzling is that models of entertainment may have unnecessarily directed attention to aspects of media content that either conform to or seemingly contradict hedonic considerations, and deflected attention from alternative entertainment depictions and viewer motivations that may be more relevant in some circumstances or for some individuals. For example, the characterization of some forms of drama as “sad films” or “tearjerkers” puts into the forefront the extent to which these types of entertainment elicit negative affect. Yet this characterization overlooks the idea that individuals may consume this type of entertainment for reasons *other than* the type of affective experience that it affords. For example, Oliver (Oliver, 2008, 2009) argued that sad films, in addition to frequently showing tragedy, also feature poignant portrayals of human connection that grapple with questions of life purpose. As a result, rather than characterizing enjoyment of sad films as necessarily counterhedonic, viewers' motivations for consuming such content may reflect an alternative motivation—that of seeking meaningful portrayals of the human condition.

The distinction between gratifications associated with pleasure (hedonic considerations) and gratifications associated with meaningfulness or insight is one noted in various disciplines, and in particular by scholars exploring notions of well-being. For example, Keyes, Shmotkin, and Ryff (2002) distinguished between subjective well-being and psychological well-being. Subjective well-being was conceptualized by these authors in ways akin to hedonic concerns, associated with feelings of positive affect; psychological well-being, in contrast, was conceptualized as being associated with feelings of personal growth and meaning in life. Similarly, drawing from ancient philosophical writings (Aristotle, trans. 1931), Waterman (1993) differentiated two types of happiness: *hedonic happiness* that is conceptualized in terms of pleasure, and *eudaimonic happiness* that is conceptualized in terms of personal expressiveness, self-realization, and personal development.

Recognizing that happiness may reflect both pleasure (hedonic concerns) *and* meaningfulness (eudaimonic concerns) has important implications in terms of understanding individuals' entertainment motivations. Specifically, we suggest that rather than conceptualizing entertainment motivations along a single dimension of pleasure-seeking, there exists an additional dimension of meaningfulness-seeking (eudaimonic motivations) that may also drive entertainment selections. Whereas hedonic concerns may be characterized largely in terms of pleasure and positive valence, eudaimonic concerns may instead reflect greater introspection, seeking of insight, and more mixed affective reactions that likely accompany contemplations of life profundities. With these dimensions in mind, then, media selections that may seem curious in light of hedonic concerns (e.g., the enjoyment of sad films) may *instead* reflect an emphasis on a different motivation (e.g., the gratification of greater insight concerning the human condition).

The use of media entertainment as a means of grappling with meaningfulness has generally received scant attention among media psychologists. However, some earlier scholarship from a uses-and-gratifications perspective revealed motivations that are akin to such preferences. For example, Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (1973) observed that some of individuals' motivations for consuming entertainment were associated, in part, with raising morale and experiencing beauty.

Other scholars have addressed the notion of meaningfulness as a means of coping with existential thoughts of mortality. Namely, Goldenberg, Pyszczynski, Johnson, Greenberg, and Solomon (1999) employed the concept of mortality salience in their examination of individuals' responses to tragedy in literature. In brief, terror management suggests that the contemplation of one's own mortality causes individuals to become more reflective and to search for meaningfulness in human life—including in cultural representations—beyond their individual existences (Greenberg, Solomon, & Pyszczynski, 1997). Based on this reasoning, Goldenberg et al. (1999) suggested that tragedy should be particularly attractive and emotionally involving when mortality salience is high, as tragic entertainment provides individuals with the opportunity to confront their fears in a safe and nonthreatening environment. Although these authors found general support for the predicted effects of mortality salience on the intensity of readers' emotional responses, no measures were employed to assess the extent to which these emotions reflected greater feelings of meaningfulness or insight.

Most recently, Tamborini et al. (2010) argued that media enjoyment may be conceptualized in terms of the extent to which it fulfills needs, including needs such as autonomy, competency, and relatedness, as identified by self-determination theory (Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008). In support of their argument, these authors found that elements of video game play (e.g., motion controllers) that enhanced feelings of fulfillment (e.g., competency) resulted in higher levels of self-reported enjoyment. Importantly, these authors successfully explained a large portion of variance in enjoyment scores in terms of intrinsic-need fulfillment without relying on measures of positive affect typically employed in the assessment of enjoyment. Ultimately, these authors suggested that enjoyment of media entertainment can best be understood in

terms of need-fulfillment in general, with the fulfillment of lower-order needs more indicative of hedonic considerations, and the fulfillment of higher-order needs (e.g., autonomy) more indicative of what we are calling *eudaimonic* concerns.

Like Tamborini et al. (2010), we believe that eudaimonic motivations may reflect an example of a higher-order need. However, we also suggest that “truth-seeking” or “meaningfulness-seeking” may represent a unique need in addition to the ones identified by self-determination theory, both in terms of its focus, and in terms the affective components associated with it. Specifically, it is our belief that eudaimonic motivations (as we have defined them) reflect a need for greater insight into or understanding of the human condition more broadly than the fulfillment of needs focused on the self. That is, whereas need fulfillment as discussed and operationalized in Tamborini et al.’s (2010) research focused on self-gratification, our conceptualization of eudaimonic motivations is more transcendent, focused more broadly on meaning-of-life questions.

Additionally, though grappling with issues of human poignancies and life meanings may be gratifying in terms of added insight, we also believe that such insight may, at times, be somewhat painful. For example, recognizing human frailty, observing a person confronting tragedy, or even witnessing moral beauty may have uplifting or inspirational components, although such experiences may also be associated with more somber, tender, or even sad affective reactions. Consistent with this reasoning, Larsen, McGraw, and Cacioppo (2001) found evidence for the co-occurrence of happiness and sadness when their participants watched the moving film *Life is Beautiful*. As such, although the viewing of sad films may result in sad or negative affect as has understandably been assumed in prior research on these types of genres, these films may also be associated with the simultaneous experience of positive affect—with mixed affect being the result of seeing moving depictions of poignant, meaningful portrayals, and characterized by such terms as “inspired,” “compassionate,” or “introspective.”

Summary and purpose of present research

To summarize, extant research in media psychology has generally assumed that entertainment selection is driven by hedonic concerns that reflect a preoccupation with pleasure and enjoyment. As a result, scholars have puzzled over the enjoyment of entertainment such as mournful music or tragic drama that seems counter to hedonic pursuits. In this research, we suggest that such entertainment preferences may not seem puzzling if truth- or meaningfulness-seeking (eudaimonic concerns) is recognized as an additional (but not opposite) motivation for individuals’ entertainment selections. The idea that individuals use media as a means of contemplating life purpose would not only provide an important step in understanding the appeal of entertainment that, at first glance, seems counterhedonic, but it would also provide insight into what we believe are the unique affective elements that may accompany more contemplative forms of entertainment.

With this rationale in mind, the overall purpose of this research was to examine the feasibility of our argument by developing scales that reflect hedonic and eudaimonic motivations for entertainment consumption, examining the relationship between these measures, providing evidence for the validity of these measures, and examining how these preferences predict affinities for different types of entertainment fare. To those ends, four studies were conducted. The purpose of Study 1 was to generate and distill a sample of items to reflect these motivations and to gather initial evidence for their validity. Study 2 was designed to confirm the factor structure of the items and to explore their construct validity via the individual differences that serve as predictors. Given that in these studies, hedonic and eudaimonic preferences were conceptualized in terms of more enduring, trait-like preferences, Study 3 examined the test–retest reliabilities of the scales. Finally, Study 4 examined the factor structure of these scales with a broader, more diverse sample of participants, and also examined how the scales served as useful predictors of individuals' preferences for media entertainment that elicits different types of affective responses.

Study 1

Method

Sample and procedures

Two hundred sixty-eight undergraduate students participated in this study in exchange for a nominal amount of extra credit (54% males; $M_{\text{age}} = 19.61$, $SD = 1.35$). Data collection was conducted via an online questionnaire, with participants provided with a URL and given approximately 1 week to complete the questionnaire on their own time.

Measures

To generate a sample of items, a separate sample of 141 undergraduate students provided open-ended responses to describe characteristics of films and types of reactions to films that they did and did not like. Interviews were also conducted with entertainment scholars and film makers to generate additional items. These open-ended responses were then employed in the construction of 40 items that reflected a variety of affective and cognitive motivations associated with film preferences. In the questionnaire, these items were presented in a section titled "Movie Preferences," with instructions for participants to indicate how well each statement reflected their movie preferences using scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

To assess the extent to which the hedonic and eudaimonic scales predicted distinct patterns of entertainment preferences, participants were asked to indicate their liking of 12 different genres taken from the Internet Movie Database using scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). To analyze subgroups of similar film types, ratings of these 12 genres were submitted to a principal components analysis. This analysis revealed five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, accounting for 74.37% of the variance. The first factor was labeled "nonfiction" and consisted of

biographies, documentaries, and historical films ($M = 3.83$; $SD = 1.41$; $\alpha = .82$); the second factor was labeled “dramas” and consisted of dramas, sad films, and romances ($M = 4.45$; $SD = 1.35$; $\alpha = .75$); the third factor was labeled “science fiction” and consisted of science fiction and fantasy films ($M = 4.10$; $SD = 1.62$; $r = .59$); the fourth factor was labeled “frightening films” and consisted of horror and thriller movies ($M = 4.82$; $SD = 1.52$; $r = .49$); and the final factor was labeled “fun movies” and consisted of comedies and action films ($M = 6.07$; $SD = 1.03$; $r = .35$). However, given the small correlation between these last two genres, liking of comedies and liking of action films were analyzed separately as single-item measures.

Results

Factor analysis of eudaimonic and hedonic motivations

Factor analysis employing principal axis factoring and promax rotation was employed in the initial development of the eudaimonic and hedonism scales. The goal of these analysis was to retain a set of items that would represent the two dimensions of audience motivation of interest in this research, to distill the set of items to a manageable number that could be readily and easily employed in future research, and to retain items that appeared to have strong face-validity in line with our conceptualizations of eudaimonic and hedonic motivations. To those ends, items that had low Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistics of sampling adequacy, that cross loaded on the factors, that were overly redundant, and/or that had low communalities were removed. The final factor analysis resulted in two factors accounting for 47.78% of the variance, with half of the items representing eudaimonic motivations, and half representing hedonic motivations. Overall scale scores were computed by averaging the items with high loadings on a given factor. Table 1 reports the items, factor loadings, and descriptive statistics associated with this analysis. As this table shows, these items were associated with a clear simple structure differentiating the two factors, and the reliability of these two scales was generally good. Perhaps not surprisingly, a paired t -test showed that participants reported higher scores on hedonic ($M = 5.37$, $SD = 0.95$) than eudaimonic ($M = 4.69$, $SD = 1.08$) motivations, though both scale scores were above the midpoint of the scale, suggesting that neither motivation is particularly uncommon. Finally, although scores on these scales were negatively correlated ($r = -.16$, $p < .05$), this correlation was modest, suggesting that eudaimonic and hedonic measures do not represent bipolar motivations.

Relationship with genre preferences

As an initial examination of the validity of the eudaimonia and hedonism scales, partial correlations were computed between these measures and reported liking of different movie genres. Given numerous studies have reported moderate-to-strong gender differences in entertainment preferences (see Oliver, 2000, for a review), these correlations employed gender as a covariate. These analyses provided preliminary evidence of the validity of these measures. Namely, eudaimonia was associated with greater preference for more serious entertainment, including nonfiction ($pr = .36$, $p < .001$), dramas ($pr = .17$, $p < .01$), and science fiction ($pr = .17$, $p < .01$), and

Table 1 Item Loadings and Descriptive Statistics for Eudaimonia and Hedonism Items

	Eudaimonic Motivations	Hedonic Motivations
I like movies that challenge my way of seeing the world.	.86	-.08
I like movies that make me more reflective.	.72	-.14
I like movies that focus on meaningful human conditions.	.69	-.13
My favorite kinds of movies are ones that make me think.	.69	-.30
I am very moved by movies that are about people's search for greater understanding in life.	.67	-.05
I like movies that have profound meanings or messages to convey.	.67	-.09
It's important to me that I have fun when watching a movie.	-.22	.71
Movies that make me laugh are among my favorites.	-.07	.70
I find that even simple movies can be enjoyable as long as they are fun.	-.02	.68
I like movies that may be considered "silly" or "shallow" if they can make me laugh and have a good time.	-.04	.63
For me, the best movies are ones that are entertaining.	-.15	.61
My favorite kinds of movies are happy and positive.	-.19	.57
Percentage of variance accounted for	28.60%	19.18%
Eigenvalues	3.92	2.83
Cronbach's α	.86	.81
Mean (<i>SD</i>)	4.69 (1.08)	5.37 (0.95)

Note: Factor loadings in bold are considered high on the factor.

lesser preference for comedies ($pr = -.17, p < .01$) and action adventure ($pr = -.12, p < .01$). In contrast, hedonic motivations were associated with greater preferences for comedies ($pr = .53, p < .001$) and action adventures ($pr = .21, p < .001$), and lesser preferences for nonfiction films ($pr = -.16, p < .05$).

Discussion

The results of this initial study found evidence for both hedonistic and eudaimonic motivations for entertainment consumption. Hedonistic motivations were generally consistent with conceptualizations of "fun" and diversionary entertainment, as higher scores on this measure were associated with greater preferences for fun and happy entertainment. Eudaimonic motivations were generally consistent with more "meaningful" or serious entertainment, as higher scores on this measure were associated with greater preferences thought-provoking fare such as nonfiction films (e.g., documentaries) or dramatic fictional portrayals.

Study 2

Although the results of Study 1 were promising in providing preliminary indication of the existence of the two hypothesized motivations for entertainment consumption,

these findings should be interpreted as exploratory first steps. The purpose of Study 2, therefore, was to examine the factor structure using confirmatory analyses, and to provide further evidence for the convergent and discriminant validity of these measures by examining their relationships with relevant individual-difference variables.

Method

Sample and procedures

Five hundred thirty-three undergraduate students participated in this study (24.9% males; $M_{\text{age}} = 20.13$, $SD = 1.43$). As in the first study, data collection was conducted via an online questionnaire.

Measures

The first section of the questionnaire included a series of individual-difference scales thought to be theoretically relevant to hedonistic and eudaimonic motivations for entertainment use. Eudaimonic motivations were thought to reflect greater tendencies toward contemplation—and particularly of contemplation of life meanings, and willingness to experience strong affective responses including negative affect. As a consequence, we expected this measure to correlate with the following variables: Cacioppo, Petty, and Kao's (1984) 18-item measure of need for cognition ($\alpha = .85$), Maio and Esses' (2001) need for affect scale (e.g., "Strong emotions are generally beneficial," $\alpha = .87$), Trapnell and Campbell's (1999) reflection scale (e.g., "I love exploring my 'inner' self," $\alpha = .86$), Goldberg's intellectuality measure (contemplative, intellectual, introspective, meditative, philosophical; $\alpha = .74$), and Steger, Frazier, Oishi, and Kaler's (2006) meaning-in-life scales measuring search for meaning (e.g., "I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful," $\alpha = .89$) and presence of meaning (e.g., "My life has a clear sense of purpose," $\alpha = .88$). In contrast, hedonic motivations were conceptualized as reflecting greater tendencies toward the experience of pleasure and fun. As a result, we expected scores on our hedonism measure to correlate with several of Goldberg's (1990) additional personality clusters that were also examined: optimism (optimistic, cheerful, jovial, merry; $\alpha = .75$), playfulness (adventurous, playful, mischievous, rambunctious; $\alpha = .70$), spontaneity (carefree, happy-go-lucky, spontaneous; $\alpha = .63$), humor (humorous, witty; $r = .51$), and pessimism (bitter, joyless, melancholic, moody, morose, pessimistic, somber; $\alpha = .78$). The order of the individual-difference scales was varied to account for order effects and fatigue. The second section of the questionnaire included the 12 items assessing eudaimonic and hedonic motivations for media use employed in Study 1.

Results

Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to examine the factor structure of the eudaimonia and hedonism measures. Given the voluminous body of research reporting gender differences in preferences for and enjoyment of media entertainment, multiple-group analysis was employed to test whether or not this factor structure

was equivalent for males and females. The simultaneous analysis with no constraints imposed revealed an adequate fit, $\chi^2(106) = 269.19, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 2.54, CFI = .93$, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .05 (90% CI: .05–.06). Constraining the factor loadings to be equivalent for male and female participants did not significantly affect the fit of the model, χ^2 Difference (12) = 16.83, $p = .16$, signifying that the factor structure was equivalent for males and females. Scales for the eudaimonia measure (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$) and the hedonism measure (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$) evidenced adequate reliability, with these two scales weakly correlated, $r = .06$.

Convergent and discriminant validity

Confirmatory factor analysis was employed to examine the convergent and discriminant validity of the eudaimonia and hedonism scales in relation to individual-difference variables (see Hayes, Glynn, & Shanahan, 2005). Convergent validity was examined via the correlations between latent variables of eudaimonia and hedonism with each of the individual-difference variables, computed as the covariance between the latent variables with their error variances set to 1 (represented as Φ in Table 2). To establish discriminant validity—that eudaimonia and hedonism are distinct from the individual-difference variables—the covariance between latent variables (with error variances set to zero) was constrained to 1. This constraint is equivalent to a single-factor model. Subsequently, differences between fit statistics between the 1-factor and 2-factor models were computed, with 1 df for χ^2 -difference tests. A substantial improvement in fit between the 1-factor and 2-factor model would signify that the latent variables are unique, thereby providing evidence of discriminant validity.

As expected, eudaimonic preferences were positively associated with greater reflectiveness, need for cognition, intellectualism, need for affect, search for meaning in life, and, to a lesser extent, presence of meaning in life and humor. In contrast, hedonic preferences were associated with lower levels of pessimism and higher levels of optimism, spontaneity, humor, playfulness, and (as with eudaimonia) need for affect and (to a lesser extent) presence of meaning in life. Importantly, too, tests for discriminant validity supported the idea that although eudaimonic and hedonic preferences are related to many individual-difference variables, these measures are assessing unique constructs.

Discussion

Confirmatory factor analysis revealed a good fit for the two-factor eudaimonia and hedonism scales developed in Study 1. Further, factor loadings on these two scales were invariant across gender. Although scores were higher on the hedonism than eudaimonia scale, the mean values on these measures suggest that both motivations are common.

An examination of the individual-difference variables correlated with these entertainment motivations reflected expected associations. Eudaimonia was generally

Table 2 Tests of Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Individual Differences	Eudaimonic Motivations				Hedonic Motivations			
	Φ	1-Factor χ^2 /RMSEA	2-Factor χ^2 /RMSEA	Improved Fit $\Delta\chi^2$ /RMSEA	Φ	1-Factor χ^2 /RMSEA	2-Factor χ^2 /RMSEA	Improved Fit $\Delta\chi^2$ /RMSEA
Reflectiveness	.62***	1073.97 .12	537.08 .08	-536.90 -.04	.05	1424.72 .13	556.20 .08	-868.52 -.06
NFC	.56***	1647.19 .10	1018.34 .08	-628.85 -.03	-.04	1902.35 .11	1032.59 .08	-869.76 -.03
Intellectualism	.51***	433.63 .13	113.67 .06	-319.96 -.07	-.09	641.12 .16	143.47 .07	-497.65 -.09
Need for affect	.41***	1742.44 .14	804.79 .09	-937.65 -.05	.26***	1585.05 .13	790.70 .09	-794.35 -.04
Search—meaning in life	.43***	1016.76 .20	100.88 .05	-915.88 -.15	.08	975.78 .20	107.03 .05	-868.76 -.15
Presence—meaning in life	.13**	1375.02 .24	119.69 .06	-1255.33 -.18	.13**	985.83 .20	132.77 .06	-853.06 -.14
Pessimism	.01	999.79 .17	230.60 .07	-769.19 -.10	-.35***	809.11 .15	206.58 .07	-602.53 -.08
Optimism	.02	685.26 .19	73.67 .05	-611.59 -.14	.46***	542.12 .17	73.94 .05	-468.18 -.12
Spontaneity	.00	237.46 .12	53.02 .04	-184.45 -.08	.30***	231.54 .12	76.83 .06	-154.71 -.06
Humor	.13*	195.96 .13	40.15 .05	-155.81 -.08	.25***	209.35 .13	61.03 .07	-148.32 -.07
Playfulness	.13*	477.71 .16	95.25 .06	-382.46 -.10	.33***	452.33 .15	122.32 .07	-330.02 -.08

Note: RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

associated with more contemplative and reflective tendencies, whereas hedonism was generally associated with more lighthearted and playful tendencies. However, higher scores on eudaimonia were not associated with particularly pessimistic or unhappy traits, nor were higher scores on hedonism associated with particularly shallow or unreflective dispositions.

It is important to highlight two additional findings revealed in the correlations between latent variables. First, need for affect was positively associated with both eudaimonia and hedonism. Although future work is needed to further examine this association, one preliminary interpretation may be that although scores on both measures indicate a desire to view entertainment that elicits affective reactions, the type of affective reactions may not be the same. That is, need for affect as a predictor of hedonism may reflect the desire to view entertainment that elicits positively valenced affect such as humor or joy, whereas need for affect as a predictor of eudaimonia may reflect desire to view entertainment that elicits more meaningful affective states such as contemplativeness, compassion, or even sadness. Although this interpretation is clearly speculative, the stronger correlation for eudaimonia than for hedonism is consistent with this argument, as many of the items composing the need for affect scale generally imply an affiliation for more reflective or somber states (e.g., "I feel like I need a good cry every now and then," or "It is important for me to be in touch with my feelings").

It is also interesting to note that whereas eudaimonia and hedonism scores were both weakly correlated with scores on the *presence-of-meaning* subscale, eudaimonia (unlike hedonism) was strongly correlated with the *search-for-meaning* subscale. One possibility of eudaimonia's differential correlation between the presence- and search-scales is that eudaimonic tendencies reflect a need or desire (in this case, for an understanding of life's meanings) that may be thought to be addressed through the consumption of some forms of entertainment fare (e.g., more contemplative or "meaningful" films). Of course, such an interpretation awaits further testing, but is consistent with the idea that eudaimonic motives reflect the tendency to consume entertainment for purposes of gaining greater insight or reflecting on life's purpose.

Study 3

In this research, we have conceptualized eudaimonic and hedonic motivations for entertainment consumption in terms of more enduring traits. Although we also believe that such motivations may vary from moment-to-moment *within* individuals, the focus of the present research is on more stable dispositions and preferences. Consequently, if this conceptualization in trait-like terms is reasonable, then one should expect to see correlations between these measures over time. Study 3 was designed to assess the test-retest reliability of our scales.

Method

Thirty-six undergraduate students (33.3% male) ranging in age from 18 to 26 ($M = 20.13$, $SD = 1.42$) completed two online questionnaires containing the

eudaimonia and hedonism scales. The first questionnaire was administered approximately 1 month into the semester, and the second approximately 8 weeks later.

Results

All scales showed acceptable reliabilities in both the first wave (eudaimonia: Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$; hedonism: Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$) and the second wave (eudaimonia: Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$; hedonism: Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$) of data collection. Further, test–retest scores indicated acceptable levels of reliability over time (eudaimonia: $r = .89$; hedonism: $r = .72$).

Discussion

The results of Study 3 provided evidence for the general stability of the eudaimonia and hedonism measures. These findings are consistent with the idea that these motivations can be conceptualized in trait-like terms. Of course, even traits or more enduring dispositions may change across the life span. Indeed the use of a student sample may represent a serious limitation in our ability to generalize these findings to a wide age range of participants who may hold very divergent entertainment preferences. Consequently, one goal in the final study was to confirm our measures across a diversity of age ranges. An additional goal was to examine how eudaimonic and hedonic motivations are associated with preferences for entertainment eliciting unique affective experiences.

Study 4

One purpose of the final study was to conduct confirmatory analyses of our measures for a wide age range of participants. In addition, we sought to provide additional tests of validity by examining the extent to which our measures predicted different types of emotional experiences while consuming entertainment. Specifically, this study analyzed how eudaimonic and hedonic motivations were associated with preferences for entertainment eliciting “fun affect” and “meaningful affect,” and how these two affective reactions were, in turn, associated with positive, negative, and mixed affective experiences.

Method

Sample and procedures

Students in a large communication class were recruited to participate in a pencil-and-paper survey. Students were given copies of the survey during class time, were requested to complete the survey themselves, and were asked to have at least one family member complete the survey during the Thanksgiving holiday. A nominal amount of extra credit was awarded to students who returned the self-completed questionnaire and at least one additional questionnaire completed by a family member. The resulting sample of 1,029 participants (67.2% females) ranged in age from 18 to 86 years ($M = 38.89$; $SD = 19.45$).

Measures

Eudaimonic and hedonic motivations for viewing entertainment were assessed using the developed 12-item scale (six items for each motivation).

To assess the affective responses associated with preferred entertainment, participants were first asked to name one of their favorite films. Subsequently, participants rated the extent to which they experienced 12 different affective reactions during the first time they had seen the film that they had named. Eight items were employed to tap into affective reactions that were thought to reflect eudaimonic and hedonic motivations, respectively. An exploratory factor analysis using varimax rotation revealed two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 that together explained 63.64% of the variance and that reflected a clean factor structure. The first factor was labeled “meaningful affect” and was associated high loadings for the items *compassionate*, *inspired*, *introspective*, and *contemplative*. The second factor was labeled “fun affect” and was associated with high loadings for the items *humored*, *entertained*, *amused*, and *excited*. Scales were computed by averaging the items loading strongly on each of the two factors (meaningful affect: $\alpha = .82$; fun affect: $\alpha = .76$).

The remaining four affective-response items were selected to correspond to happy/sad responses specifically: *upbeat*, *happy*, *sad*, and *emotional*. An exploratory factor analysis using varimax rotation revealed two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 that together explained 83.12% of the variance and that reflected a clean factor structure. The first factor was labeled “happy affect” and included the items *upbeat* and *happy* ($r = .66$); the second factor was labeled “sad affect” and included the items *sad* and *emotional* ($r = .65$). To assess mixed-affective reactions, Ersner-Hershfield, Mikels, Sullivan, and Carstensen’s (2008) procedures were employed. Specifically, mixed-affect scores were computed for each participant in terms of the minimum of their happy- and sad-affect scores. Thus, if a person reported low levels for both happy- and sad-affect measures, the person’s mixed-affect score would be low. Similarly, if a person reported high levels of happy affect (e.g., $M = 6$) and low levels of sad affect (e.g., $M = 2$) (or vice versa), the person’s mixed-affect score would also be low ($M = 2$). In contrast, if a person reported high levels of both happy affect (e.g., $M = 6$) and sad affect (e.g., $M = 5$), the person’s mixed-affect score would be higher ($M = 5$).

Results

Confirmatory factor analysis of eudaimonic and hedonic motivations

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to examine the factor structure of the eudaimonia and hedonism measures. This factor analysis also employed multiple-group analysis to test whether or not this factor structure was equivalent for three different age ranges: younger participants (21 and younger, $N = 418$), midrange participants (between 22 and 50, $N = 259$), and older participants (51 years and older, $N = 352$). The simultaneous analysis with no constraints imposed revealed an adequate fit, $\chi^2(75) = 599.98$, $p < .001$, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .05 (90% CI: .05–.06). Constraining the factor loadings to be equivalent for the three age groups did not significantly affect the fit of the model, χ^2 Difference (24) = 33.23, $p = .10$,

signifying that the factor loadings were equivalent across the age groups. In the analyses that follow, measures for both entertainment motivations were constructed by averaging the individual items that composed each scale (eudaimonia: $\alpha = .91$; hedonism: $\alpha = .89$).

Preferences across the life span

To examine how hedonic and eudaimonic entertainment preferences varied across the life span, the first analysis computed partial correlations (controlling for gender) between age and entertainment motivations. This analysis revealed that increasing age was associated with very modest increases in eudaimonic motivations ($r = .09$, $p < .01$) and decreases in hedonic motivations ($r = -.08$, $p < .01$).

To examine the relative magnitude of these motivations as a function of age, a 3 (Age Group) \times 2 (Gender) \times 2 (Motivations) mixed analysis was conducted, with eudaimonic and hedonic motivations treated as a within-subjects factor. This analysis revealed a significant main effect of motivations, $F(1, 1023) = 68.44$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$, with participants reporting significantly higher scores for hedonic ($M = 4.57$, $SE = .04$) than eudaimonic motivations ($M = 4.22$, $SE = .04$). However, this main effect should be interpreted in light of a significant Age Group \times Motivations interaction that was also revealed, $F(2, 1023) = 14.27$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. This interaction occurred because hedonic motivations were significantly higher than eudaimonic motivations ($p < .001$) for both the young age group (hedonic: $M = 4.73$, $SE = .06$; eudaimonic: $M = 4.18$, $SE = .06$) and the midrange group (hedonic: $M = 4.58$, $SE = .06$; eudaimonic: $M = 4.12$, $SE = .06$). However, among the older participants, hedonic ($M = 4.41$, $SE = .06$) and eudaimonic motivations ($M = 4.36$, $SE = .06$) did not differ significantly ($p = .47$). No other significant effects involving entertainment motivations were obtained in this analysis.

Motivations and preferences for affective experiences

The final set of analyses concerned the types of affective responses to entertainment associated with the different motivations. The first set of analyses employed multiple regression to examine how meaningful- and fun-affective responses to the participants' favorite films were associated with eudaimonic motivations and hedonic motivations, controlling for gender and age of participant. As one might expect, eudaimonic motivations were associated with higher self-reported meaningful affect to the favorite film named, $\beta = .39$, $p < .001$, but were unrelated to self-reported fun affect, $\beta = .02$, $p = .45$. In contrast, hedonic motivations were associated with higher levels of fun affect, $\beta = .29$, $p < .001$, but were unrelated to meaningful affect, $\beta = -.03$, $p = .42$.

In our conceptualization of eudaimonic preferences, we suggested that the use of entertainment for purposes of contemplating meaningfulness may ultimately be associated with mixed affective reactions. Although our previous analysis demonstrated that eudaimonic preferences were associated with liking films that elicited "meaningful" affect, the valence associated with meaningful affect was not examined

directly. Consequently, we conducted two analyses to examine the valence associated with meaningful affect. The first analysis examined the interaction between happy-only and sad-only affective reactions in predicting meaningful reactions. For this analysis, hierarchical regression was employed, with gender, age, happy-only, and sad-only reactions entered on the first step of the analysis, and the product of happy and sad entered on the second step as a test of the interaction. The first step of this analysis revealed that both sad-only ($\beta = .78, p < .001$) and happy-only affect ($\beta = .10, p < .001$) were associated with higher levels of meaningful affect. Importantly, too, the Happy \times Sad interaction on the second step was significant ($\beta = .07, p < .01$). Subsequent simple slopes analysis (Aiken & West, 1991) revealed that happy-only affect was a significant predictor of meaningful affect, but only at higher levels of sad-only affect (1 *SD* above the mean, $\beta = .16, p < .001$) rather than at lower levels of sadness (1 *SD* below the mean, $\beta = .03, p = .40$).

The second analysis employed the measure of mixed-affective reactions that was computed as reflecting higher levels of the simultaneous experience of happiness and sadness (Ersner-Hershfield et al., 2008). A regression analysis was conducted using mixed affect to predict meaningful affect, controlling for the gender and age of the participant. This analysis also revealed that higher levels of mixed affect were significantly associated with greater meaningful affect, $\beta = .61, p < .001$.

Discussion

Study 4 provided evidence for the stability of the factor structure across a wide range of ages, suggesting that eudaimonic and hedonic motivations are identifiable dimensions of entertainment motivations across the life span. With these dimensions in mind, though, the examination of the *magnitude* of the motivations showed that as individuals age, they appear to be relatively (though modestly) less interested in entertainment serving hedonic needs, and more interested in entertainment serving eudaimonic needs. These results are consistent with prior research on age differences across the life span that generally suggests that as individuals grow older, they are more interested in meaningful affective experiences, including media experiences (Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 1999; Mares, Oliver, & Cantor, 2008).

The results of this study also shed light on the types of affective responses elicited by entertainment preferred by individuals reporting high levels of hedonism and eudaimonia. As one might expect, higher hedonism scores were associated with the greatest affinity for entertainment eliciting affect that might be described as “fun” (e.g., humored, entertained), whereas higher eudaimonic scores were associated with preferences for entertainment associated with more meaningful affective experiences (e.g., contemplative, compassionate). Importantly, too, the examination of the valence associated with meaningful affect showed that although this state was associated with sadness to a large degree, it was also associated with positive valence as well. In other words, the experience of meaningful affect in response to entertainment preferred by individuals scoring high on eudaimonic motivations appears to be characterized in terms of mixed affect.

General discussion

Together, these studies provide evidence that in addition to viewing films for purposes of fun and pleasure, individuals also turn to entertainment for purposes of greater insight and meaningfulness. This latter motivation that we are labeling “*eudaimonia*” reflects an emphasis on affective and cognitive responses, and a greater interest in consuming entertainment that is associated with affective responses that reflect a blend of poignant and emotional reactions. Further, *eudaimonic* motivations are predicted by a number of theoretically relevant individual-difference measures, including need for cognition, self-reflection, and search for meaning in life. As such, we believe that *eudaimonic* motivations reflect the use of media entertainment as a means of contemplating “truth”-seeking—life’s poignancies and vulnerabilities, even if at the expense of the experience of hedonic pleasure. However, our characterization is not meant to suggest that *eudaimonic* motivations are devoid of benefit. In contrast, *eudaimonic* motivations may be particularly well suited to assist individuals in their search for and understanding of “larger” questions surrounding the human condition, including existential questions surrounding issues of mortality (Greenberg, 1997).

The recognition of entertainment use for purposes of insight (in addition to pleasure) broadens the theoretical scope of entertainment psychology, not only by highlighting additional motivations for entertainment consumption, but also by revealing the complexities of affective and cognitive blends that may accompany such preferences. As a consequence, this broader conceptualization of the entertainment experience may assist in untangling the seeming paradoxes of “sad” or “tragic” entertainment by suggesting that greater insight or meaningfulness is the more important and sought-after outcome from consuming such fare.

With these contributions and interpretations in mind, however, it is also important to recognize the limitations with the present research. First, we note the problems in the use of student samples who may be more interested in pursuing and exploring life’s pleasures than in contemplating its meaningfulness. However, our final study that did include a more diverse age range provided evidence that the general structure of hedonic and *eudaimonic* motivations that we suggest are present throughout the life span. Related to this concern about samples, however, is the fact that our research was conducted in the United States. Given that U.S. populations may have different entertainment preferences—and perhaps more hedonistic ones—than do other cultures, future comparative studies are essential (Klimmt & Vorderer, 2009; Trepte, 2008).

Another limitation concerns our earlier suggestion that our conceptualization of *eudaimonic* gratifications is unique from those examined in research growing out of self-determination theory. Although we believe that the present research may generally suggest that such distinctions exist by highlighting what we believe are unique characteristics associated with our measure (e.g., mixed affect), formal tests to distinguish our measure from higher-order needs such as relatedness, autonomy,

or competence were not included in these studies. Differentiating these gratifications, therefore, is a particularly fruitful direction for research.

Finally, this research conceptualized entertainment preferences as enduring and “trait like.” Indeed, the test–retest indicators and the observed relationship between these scales and individual-difference measures are consistent with this conceptualization. However, entertainment preferences also obviously vary over time, *within* individuals. As a result, future research may benefit from exploration of these motivations not only as traits, but also as *states* that may fluctuate from one time to the next.

With these limitations in mind, though, it is our hope that our conceptualization and operationalization of hedonic and eudaimonic motivations broadens the scope of audiences’ entertainment motivations in ways that help address seeming paradoxes in media behavior, and also in ways that are theoretically productive for future scholars. By recognizing that entertainment can be *both* fun *and* meaningful, perhaps we will be in a stronger position to explore the gratifications of entertainment that provide us with not only pleasure, but also with insight about human compassions and vulnerabilities.

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