

# Developing the humour repertoire concept to guide future tourism-humour research

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## Abstract

*The central interest in this study is to develop and position the humour repertoire concept for tourism and leisure research. The term humour repertoire encompasses the totality of a person's abilities and skills to both appreciate and produce humour. Such skills include the individual's ability to tell/retell humorous (travel) stories, jokes from their life and travels, and the ability to see travel and leisure situations as amusing. A framework outlining the role of the humour repertoire is presented and an online empirical study is reported to address selected components of the conceptual scheme. The results show a weak association between humour appreciation and production, indicating that researchers examining humour in tourism need to be careful in building generic implications from selected work. Attention is then given to the multiple social and contextual factors beyond the individual level that need to be considered when assessing humour in diverse tourism contexts. Fresh research directions are indicated by considering the richness of the repertoire framework and links to cognitive schema research.*

*Keywords: humour repertoire, humour appreciation, humour production, online survey, cognitive schema.*

## 1. Introduction

This study aims to build a conceptual scheme centring on the humour repertoire concept and to provide follow-up empirical testing of some facets of the framework. The work introduces and identifies the humour repertoire concept as central in advancing public and personal understandings of humour. Expressed succinctly, the term humour repertoire, as developed in this study, refers to the breadth of people's underlying ability and skills to both appreciate and produce humour (cf. Ruch 2004). Tourism and leisure provide a context for the development

of the framework, though it is proposed that the scheme may have a wider currency because the supporting literature and research studies are drawn from a spectrum of disciplines including psychology, language studies, and humour research.

The presentation of the approach consists of two parts. Initially, a conceptual scheme is drawn up which reflects the researchers' reading, previous empirical work, and active engagement in humour studies. In this part of the work, the building blocks of the scheme are explained and justified. It is argued that the approach is original and consistent with the functions of mini-theories or conceptual schemes (Fuchs 1992; Outhwaite 2000; Pearce 2004). In brief, this means that the conceptual scheme helps assemble, then re-order and link existing work while pointing to possible unexplored linkages and potential hypotheses. The development of the humour repertoire concept is allied to other psychology-inspired work on cognitive schema, a term used to capture integrated knowledge and skills in specific domains of life (McVee, Dunsmore & Gavelek 2005; Wagoner 2013).

The second part of the research effort begins to explore some facets of the scheme. The tourism context of the study is more apparent in this section. It is argued that tourism is an excellent context in which to pursue an understanding of the concept of humour repertoire because it offers examples of comic situations as well as performances and commentaries across cultures and by multiple participants (Wall 2000; 2017). Two sources of information are used to explore some of the proposed linkages framing the humour repertoire scheme. The data from an online survey using structured questions about facets of humour production and consumption are presented and reviewed. The power of these data to confirm or restructure the initial conceptual scheme is considered. As an allied tool to interpret the framework, the researchers draw on illustrative material from previous empirical work in tourism about humour, notably the work of Frew (2006) and Pearce and Pabel (2015).

People with a great sense of humour can be thought of as having a larger humour repertoire than others. We may anticipate that these humorous people are better at initiating conversations and have warmer relationships (Fredrickson 1998). Being able to apply humour in various social situations requires not just a wide range of humorous stories and jokes, but also knowledge of humour techniques and humour delivery. In the tourism context of this study, the totality of the abilities and skills to both appreciate and produce humour defines the central concept of interest – the individual's humour repertoire. Such skills include the individual's ability to tell/retell humorous (travel) stories, jokes from their life and travels, verbal skills and wit, the ability to be amused by others, and their spontaneous grasp of the ironic or comic possibilities of an incident.

Previous studies into the relationship between humour appreciation and humour production have produced mixed results. For example, older research by Babad (1974), comparing early test measures for humour, highlighted a lack of association between humour appreciation scores and the individuals' ability to produce humour. Lewis (2003), investigating the psychological effects of cartoon humour, reported that for this format, humour creation and humour appreciation were separate dimensions. By way of contrast, Franzini (2012) theorizes that before someone can become a successful humour producer, that individual must first be a master of humour appreciation, that is recognise humour and funny statements. For Franzini, this relationship does not usually work the other way around. These introductory findings and observations need to be set in a larger framework to understand the potential interconnections and defining issues. The aims of the study are to build a conceptual scheme centring on the humour repertoire concept, explain the approach, and provide follow-up empirical testing of some facets of the framework.

## **2. Literature review**

The material necessary to build a humour repertoire conceptual scheme is addressed by noting research highlights from four themes: the multidimensional views of humour, physiological and cultural relativity explanations about humour, studies of humour production, and research about humour appreciation. These topics are considered in turn to provide the basis for the work.

### **2.1. Humour and its dimensions**

Martin (2007) categorises the multidimensional nature of humour in six different ways: it can be a cognitive ability (being able to understand, create, and reproduce clever remarks and jokes); an aesthetic response (in enjoying and appreciating a certain type of humour; a habitual behaviour (being able to initiate humour but also tending to laugh easily and frequently); a temperament trait (being a person with habitual cheerfulness); an attitude (having a positive view and bemused outlook on life) as well as a coping strategy or defence mechanism (being able to maintain a humorous perspective in adverse situations). In a similar fashion, Ruch's (1998) conceptualisations of humour considered various components of a sense of humour, i.e. motivational, cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioural. These five elements are assumed to be interconnected; hence, a change of one element may lead to changes in other elements. However, the extent of the interconnections between these different elements is not exactly clear (Ruch, Beermann & Proyer 2009).

### **2.2. Levels of explanation**

The explanatory mechanisms that underpin some of the descriptive work on humour forms vary from reductionist brain-based studies to broad cultural interpretations and appraisals. For the first line of investigation, evidence exists that many different areas of the brain are involved in humour appreciation and humour production. The findings have been uncovered through examining the effects of lesions and functional MRI studies. It appears that humour appreciation is linked to activity in the right frontal lobe (Shammi & Stuss 1999). In Shammi and Stuss's well cited study, individuals with damage to their right frontal lobe were less appreciative of humour and had a reduced response to spontaneous affective humour. Furthermore, these patients reacted with less emotional expressiveness in terms of smiling and laughter to all the humorous materials to which they were exposed. Similarly, a study by Heath and Blonder (2005), examining the spontaneous humorous communication of stroke survivors, found that right hemisphere-damaged patients showed a statistically significant decline in their orientation to humour.

Wild, Rodden, Grodd and Ruch (2003) argued from the results of many studies that the expression of laughter seems to depend on two partially independent neural pathways. The first of these, an 'involuntary' or 'emotionally driven' system, involves the amygdala, thalamic/hypo- and subthalamic areas, and the dorsal/tegmental brainstem. The second, 'voluntary' system originates in the premotor/frontal opercular areas and leads through the motor cortex and pyramidal tract to the ventral brainstem. These systems and the laughter response appear to arise from a laughter-coordinating centre in the dorsal upper pons. Other more recent neuroscience results reported by Vrticka, Black and Reiss (2013) indicate again that specific cortical and subcortical structures are involved in detecting and resolving humour-based incongruity. Key emotional areas of the brain, notably the amygdala, are also implicated in the complex firings linked to humour related responses. Nevertheless, even the most detailed commentators on the neuroscience of humour remain in agreement with the

earlier view that “frankly at the present time the description of the neural correlates of laughter and humour remains fragmentary” (Wild et al. 2003: 2135).

At a broader level of analysis, how individuals appreciate and produce humour depends on their own background, values, and previous experiences, as well as “the broader social, historical and cultural context in which a communication comes to be defined as funny in the first place” (El Refaie 2011: 104). In fact, large individual differences exist in perceiving humour and responding to humour (Zweyer, Velker & Ruch 2004). Unsurprisingly, people from different cultures see humour from varied perspectives based on clear traditions and sequences of behaviour (Kazarian & Martin 2004; Lewis 2006). Cultural capital shapes much appreciation (Cappelli 2008). Nevertheless, some consistencies do appear. Based on beliefs about cultural assumptions and national characteristics (Davies 1990; Francesconi 2011), it is possible to predict to a certain degree how, for example, Europeans, North Americans, or Asians will react to humour. For example, Wiseman (2007) reports that British and Australian respondents appreciate sarcasm and mocking forms of humour more than North Americans. He suggests the latter have an irony deficiency. Lewis (2006) warns, however, that such generalisations can easily lead to stereotypes. Cultures with more collectivist perspectives, which share a desire for harmony and mutual happiness, prefer to use affiliative styles of humour. By way of contrast, nations with more individualistic perspectives, which tend to be based on competitiveness, are more likely to use aggressive styles of humour.

Both the explanations and research rooted in neuroscience and cultural influences provide a context for the conceptual scheme presented in Figure 1. The former offers a salutary reminder that careful definitions of what is being labelled humour must be used to measure any kind of precise physiological and humour-based response. The cultural relativity material suggests that any framework about the human repertoire must allow for variability in the way communities interact through humour. The next section considers the concepts of humour appreciation, humour production, and the humour repertoire in more detail.

### **2.3. Humour appreciation**

Humour appreciation involves understanding jokes, humorous stories, and other humour formats and perceiving them as funny (O’Quin & Derks 2011). It encompasses the process of successfully identifying, understanding, and decoding the humour attempts by others (Critchley 2002). Individual variability in humour appreciation is a repeated theme in the literature (Neuendorf & Skalski 2001). Personality, gender, and age have been found to correlate with humour appreciation; older individuals and extraverts tend to be more appreciative of incongruity-resolution humour. In comparison, people of a younger age preferred nonsense humour (Forabosco & Ruch 1994). Women appear to appreciate humour by men, but men are less inclined to find fellow males amusing (Collett 2004).

Powell and Andresen (1985) report that using our cognitive processes to recognise a humorous stimulus provides its own pleasure. This is because “we enjoy the sense of mastery or achievement in seeing the joke” which gives some of us a great deal of gratification (Powell & Andresen 1985: 81). In successfully decoding humour, people may either reject a humorous attempt directly by withholding laughter or by showing other signs that the joke was in fact understood but not appreciated by giving a fake “ha-ha-ha” response (Norrick 2003). While all humans possess some kind of humour appreciation, there are, in fact, individuals “who are not highly aroused by or attracted to any humour” (Neuendorf & Skalski 2001: 20). These individuals were profiled as belonging to minority groups, female, not well educated, and much more attracted to sad media content. Neuendorf and Skalski conclude that it was the situational constraints that affected such non-humour responses as opposed to a general lack of sense of humour.

The context in which humour takes place can affect how humour is appreciated (Wimer & Beins 2008). Leisure or work situations may control when we are amused as the broader social, historical, and cultural factors come into play (Van Giffen & Maher 1995; El Refaie 2011). Smiling and laughter count as the visible demonstration that humour is appreciated, but as Wimer and Beins (2008) acknowledge, such expressive responses vary depending on the current environmental features such as the social setting and the material. Tourism situations, especially those where fun and the search for good times prevail, are likely settings for humour appreciation and production (Frew 2006).

#### **2.4. Humour production**

Humour production is the ability to create humour that others will perceive as funny (O'Quin & Derks 2011). The motivation to produce humour depends on the social situation. The effectiveness of the humour may rely on the speed of the response, skill in delivery, gestures, and expressions (Feingold 1993). The ability to tell a funny story or a joke or mimic others can require further performance skills. Humour has been shown to be correlated with cognitive ability (Feingold & Mazzella 1991) and to be an indicator of human intelligence (Howrigan & MacDonald 2008).

Joke telling, one of the most closely researched humour production acts, is considered by Norrick (2003) as a skilled routine. Individuals can be the centre of a social group when they hold the floor to tell a joke (Collett 2004). Success relies on the joke teller's ability to "present the build-up clearly and coherently, and to deliver the punchline without laughing or telegraphing it in advance" (Norrick 2003: 1344). Likewise, performance factors also express personality traits in regard to how much aggression is used to deliver the punchline of the joke. This information is then used by an audience to decode and evaluate a joke. Hence another requirement for successful humour producers is being good self-monitors, which involves sensing how others perceive or react to their humorous attempts, as well as having the memory, creativity, and divergent thinking skills to spot the comic components of situations (Feingold & Mazzella 1991; Köhler & Ruch 1996).

While the use of humour is a well-honed skill, humour production abilities can, in fact, be learnt through experience and by attention to others and their feedback. People can learn to be more cheerful with the help of cognitive-behavioural techniques that aim to reinforce specific beliefs and behaviours (Ruch 2002). Building one's sense of humour is possible, and there are many texts which provide advice (Ruch 2008). Humour skills programmes are also available to enhance one's appreciation and production of humour (Crawford & Caltabiano 2011; Franzini 2012). Sessions and workshops to increase peoples' understanding of the importance of humour in their lives are widespread, although the effectiveness of training programmes is sometimes quite limited (Nevo, Aharonson & Klingman 1998).

#### **2.5. The humour repertoire**

The word repertoire derives from the Latin word *repertorium* which best translates as inventory. The Collins Dictionary defines repertoire as "the entire stock of things available in a field or of a kind". For example, Feingold (1983) suggests that, at minimum, a humour repertoire includes jokes, stories, and humorous memories. The importance of memories and storytelling have special relevance to tourism experiences (Pearce & Zare 2017). One of the social values of travel lies in being able to recount one's travel stories, but it may require flair and humour to entertain the audience (Frew 2006). Developing these earlier ideas, it is possible to propose that the humour repertoire is the collation of all the following abilities: wit, perceptiveness, spontaneity, speed of response, timing, expressions, inventory of jokes and stories, recall and recounting abilities, mime and mimicry skills, and attentiveness to feedback.

All components of the repertoire are underpinned by and derive from personal and cultural capital.

In Figure 1, the key ideas which assist in the understanding of the personal (individual) and public understanding of humour are portrayed. The scheme locates the humour repertoire as central to the processes of understanding how both humour appreciation and production are built. The repertoire available to individuals not only depends on them being mentally fit and healthy but pays attention to the cultural drivers of what is considered acceptable in their community. The framework outlines particular skills which build the repertoire as already identified. A central issue in Figure 1 is the nature of the relationship between humour appreciation and humour production. It is indicated in the Figure by a dotted line to symbolise the possibilities of a link rather than the solid evidence for connectivity. As noted previously, a number of researchers propose a mutual connection, others suggest independence, while yet others see appreciation as the pre-requisite for production (Babad 1974; Köhler & Ruch 1996; O'Quin & Derks 2011). It is this aspect of Figure 1 that the empirical section of the study particularly seeks to address.

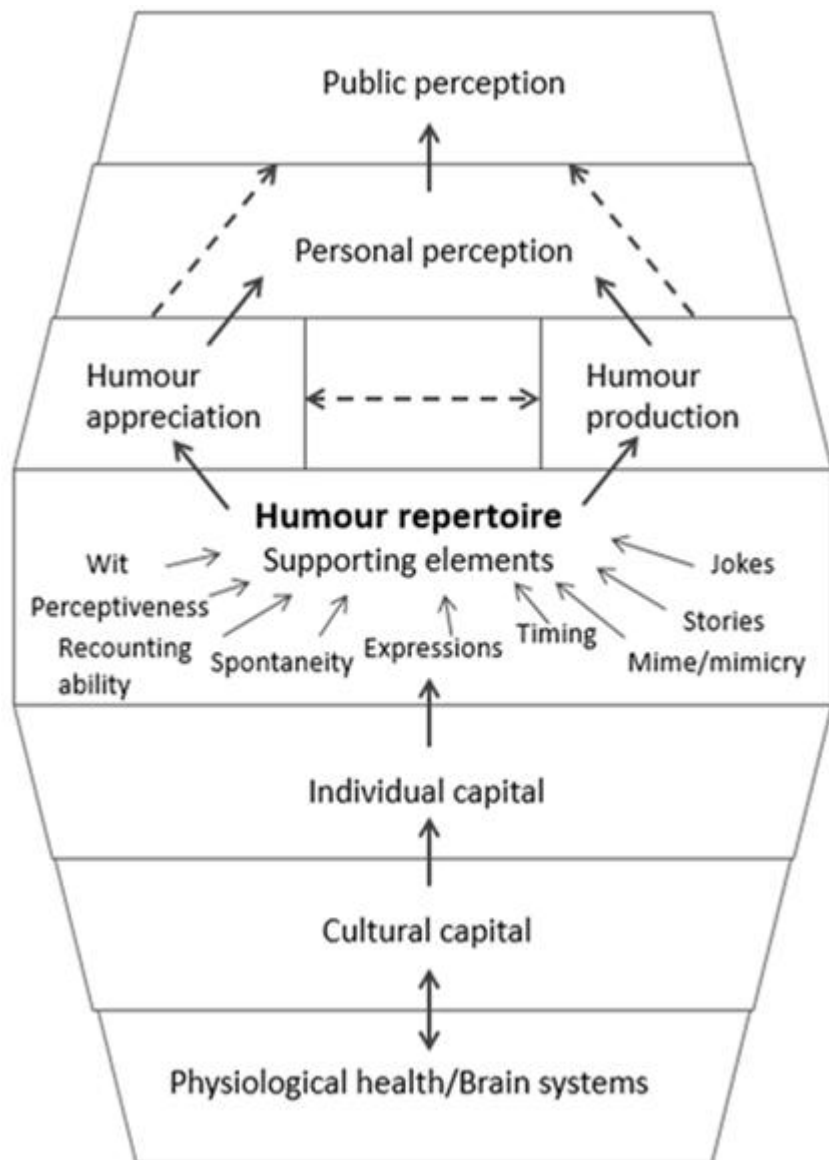


Figure 1. The role and position of the humour repertoire in the perception of humour

The empirical section of this study will begin to explore some facets of the proposed framework. Four areas for study are the individuals' perception of their own sense of humour, the assessment of humour appreciation, the assessment of humour production, and the examination of the link between humour appreciation and production. The researchers recognise the culturally bound limitations of any study conducted in one language, and they make the assumption that the respondents studied have no brain-based physiological conditions limiting their ability to respond to or assess humour. Knowledge of different facets and their relationships are invaluable in driving future research on the tourism-humour relationship.

The development of this framework for the tourism context is especially timely. The last decade has seen an increase in the number of tourism publications focusing on humour and how tour guides and attraction personnel engage with visitors through the use of humour. Many of these studies suggest that employing humour at tourism attractions facilitates positive and memorable experiences, and therefore contribute to the success of tourism businesses (Pearce & Pabel 2015; Pabel & Pearce 2016). Humour is also beneficial in portraying the distinctiveness of certain tourism attractions or places (Zhang & Pearce 2016). In general, humorous stories appeal to several nationalities and different generations, yet there is a need to carefully design humorous inclusions with various tourist audiences (Pabel & Pearce 2018). What is currently missing in this literature is an all-encompassing conceptual framework to guide future research studies into positioning humour and its various components in the context of tourism and leisure studies.

### **3. Methods**

#### **3.1. Measuring humour appreciation and production**

To date, humour has been measured utilising numerous tactics and, as Ruch, Beermann and Proyer (2009) state, there is no all-encompassing assessment tool for humour. The different measurement approaches are determined by the different ways of conceptualising humour (Martin 2007). Humour appreciation measures tend to measure research participants' responses through self-report ratings to humorous stimuli such as films, jokes, and cartoons (Martin 1996). In contrast, humour production is frequently measured through ability tests by asking research participants to write amusing cartoon captions or to provide jokes. These outcomes are then judged for their funniness (O'Quin & Derks 2011; Feingold & Mazzella 1991). While there is a preference for operationalising humour in terms of quantitatively derived measures (Chik Leung & Molloy 2005), there are also qualitative approaches to measure the humour response including the keeping of humour diaries as well as peer-reports from informants, behavioural observations, and interviews (Martin 1996; Ruch 2008). In this study, different facets of the repertoire are chosen to assess humour appreciation (viewing a short travel commercial and cartoon responses) and humour production (caption and joke production). By choosing the tools used in previous work, it is anticipated that some links to existing results may be possible.

#### **3.2. Questionnaire design**

An online survey was used to collect the views of research participants who were older than 18 years. Benefits of online surveys as a data collection method include convenience, reduced costs, reduced social desirability bias, and opportunities to expand the source of the respondents (Dillman & Bowker 2001; Mitas et al. 2011; Baltar & Brunet 2012). While the online survey was not exclusively aimed at tourists, its questions were based on humorous

material such as cartoons from tourism contexts and a short travel commercial. Although the survey was not undertaken with tourists during their travels, the survey included two questions about the respondents' frequency of holidays, i.e. how many holiday trips had they taken in the last three years domestically and internationally.

SurveyMonkey was used in the presentation of the online questionnaire. Four key sections were developed. The first major part of the study was the research participants' self-assessment of their sense of humour. They were asked to rate their sense of humour on a scale from 0 (not funny) to 10 (very funny). Next, they were asked if they thought that other people perceived them as a funny person. Agreements to several humour statements were also collected. The second part focused on respondents' individual humour appreciation which involved rating four cartoons based on 1 (not funny), 2 (quite funny), and 3 (very funny). A further humour appreciation measure involved watching a travel commercial. Respondents had to state if they perceived the commercial as funny or not funny and to give reasons for their response. In the third part, the respondents' humour production skills were tested by asking them to write down their favourite joke and to complete a funny caption completion task. Each participant received the same cartoon and was asked to include a humorous caption. Finally, the respondents' demographic details were collected such as their gender, age, and usual country of residence.

### **3.3. Sampling and data analysis**

The link to the online survey was open from June 2016 to December 2016 and was shared using two different methods. Firstly, virtual snowball sampling was used to recruit research participants (Baltar & Brunet 2012). In the case of this study, it involved sharing the survey link via Facebook using the researchers' personal contacts and asking contacts to share the survey link with their networks. Secondly, paid advertising on Facebook was used to increase participation rates. A small amount of money was spent which led to an increase of approximately 100 responses. The total number of participants added through Facebook advertising is difficult to ascertain since both sampling methods were utilised at the same time. The data were analysed using the statistical software SPSS (version 24). Non-parametric tests were used since no randomisation took place when collecting the data.

### **3.4. Profile of respondents**

The online humour survey received 433 total responses of which 90 responses were invalid due to missing data. The total valid sample ( $n = 343$ ) consisted of 65.4% female respondents and 34.7% male respondents. Most respondents were in the age group 30-39 years old (36%), followed by 20-29 years old (31.7%) and 40-49 years old (17.2%). The online survey replies came from a variety of countries in regions such as the Pacific ( $n = 195$ ), Asia ( $n = 60$ ), Europe ( $n = 45$ ), and North America ( $n = 18$ ). In terms of holiday frequency, the results indicate that respondents took an average of four domestic holidays and three international holidays in the three years prior to completing the survey.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. Self-assessment of humour**

The first component of Figure 1 refers to the public and personal perception of the individual as humorous. Two questions addressed the personal perceptions in this study. First, respondents assessed their sense of humour. The majority (82.5%) of respondents stated "yes"



they thought of themselves as having a good sense of humour, while 5.8% did not regard themselves in this way and 11.7% said they were unsure. Secondly, respondents were also asked to rate how funny they think they are on a scale from 0 (not funny) to 10 (very funny). The scale had a mean of 6.4 (standard deviation of 1.9), a median of 7 and a mode of 7. In exploring any differences between gender and the sense of humour scales, a Mann-Whitney U test found male respondents rated themselves as having a better sense of humour than did females (Males (mean= 7, n = 111), Females (mean= 6, n = 214), U = 8800, z = -3.9, p = 0.000). When prompted to indicate whether other people had previously told them that they were funny, 79.5% of respondents stated “yes”. There were also respondents (10.5%) who indicated they had not been told that they were funny people and others (9.9%) who were unsure about answering this question.

A further contextual set of results locating the views of the respondents about humour was measured with a set of eight statements. Table 1 provides the results. The majority of respondents consider humour in presentations to be something that appeals to them (91.5%). Respondents also indicated that humour helps them pay attention to presentations (86.9%) and that they had previously used humour to deal with a difficult and stressful situation (89.2%). However, responses also indicate that too much humour was perceived as annoying (49.6%) and could even distract from the message (51.2%).

Table 1. Respondents’ agreement with humour statements

Agreement to statements (%)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Humour used in presentations appeals to me	1.2	1.5	5.8	45.9	45.6
I find it annoying when people use too much humour	5.5	25.1	19.5	35.0	14.6
Humour helps me pay attention to other people’s presentation	1.2	2.9	9.0	48.7	38.2
There have been times when I found humour to be distracting from a message	3.8	26.0	18.7	43.6	7.6
I have previously used humour to deal with a stressful or difficult situation	1.2	4.4	4.4	44.3	44.9
I tend to post a lot of amusing comments/photos on my social media	8.3	29.2	14.2	27.7	13.6
I get easily offended when other people make humorous comments	28.9	51.5	11.7	5.6	1.2
I am prepared to look foolish to make other people laugh	2.9	15.2	20.2	39.2	22.2

## 4.2. Humour appreciation

In Figure 1, the conceptual scheme organising this study, it was noted that there is a continuing ambiguity in the literature concerning the link between humour appreciation and humour production. To explore this link, measures of these facets of Figure 1 were undertaken. For humour appreciation, respondents were asked to rate the funniness of four cartoons and a short travel commercial. The cartoons focused on nature-based humour content. They had three response categories for each of the four cartoons (1 = not funny, 2 = quite funny, 3 = very funny).

The ratings to the four cartoons (1 = not funny, 2 = quite funny, 3 = very funny) were transformed into a new variable called ‘humour appreciation of cartoons’ by summing the ratings for each cartoon into a total score. Table 2 indicates the cut-off points on which the

various humour appreciation categories are based. This measure is employed in subsequent analyses to test if respondents' appreciation of the four cartoons influenced how the various scale items were perceived.

Table 2. Cut-off points for humour appreciation categories

Sum of cartoon ratings	Humour appreciation of cartoons	Frequency	Percent
1 to 4	Low humour appreciation	55	16.5
5 to 8	Medium humour appreciation	199	60.2
9 to 12	High humour appreciation	78	23.4

Respondents were also asked to watch a short travel commercial (1.5 minutes) and to indicate whether they perceived it as funny or not. The commercial encourages people to travel in groups using funny animations and animals. (Interested parties can access the commercial via [www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFcWrhO7ekM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFcWrhO7ekM)). The majority of respondents indicated the travel commercial was funny (78.7%), while 8.9% indicated they did not think it was funny and 12.4% were unsure about its funniness. A further question about this travel commercial prompted the respondents to state why they thought it was funny or not. Reasons why respondents thought that the commercial was not funny included that it was “childish” or “too lame” for them; they had seen it before; they were able to anticipate what was going to happen; it did not make them laugh or it did not appeal to their sense of humour.

In contrast, reasons why respondents indicated that they perceived the commercial as funny included: it was clever, witty, cheeky, cute, entertaining; it was an “interesting way to convey the idea” and the animals had general appeal. Participants also liked the cartoon format, comic timing and sounds, and the incongruity of the commercial appealed to them because it had an unexpected twist.

### 4.3. Humour production

Respondents' humour production ability was assessed by asking them to share their favourite joke and to generate a funny caption. For the joke exercise, a third of the respondents (30.9%) wrote down a joke. The kind of material produced is indicated by the following two examples: “Three blonde girls get in a car to drive to Disney land and they drive for four hours until they finally see a sign that says Disney Left; so they turned around and went home”; and “A polar bear walks into a bar and orders: ‘A Bundy..... and a coke please.’ The barman asks: ‘What’s with the big pause?’ So the polar bear says: ‘I was born with them’.” (Bundaberg Rum aka “Bundy” is a popular brand of Australian rum; the company’s logo is a polar bear.) Of the 69% of respondents who did not write down a joke, 41% left the response line to the question blank, 16% expressed various excuses for not being able to write down a joke, and another 12% stated they did not have a favourite joke. The excuses ranged from apologies for not being able to remember jokes very well; to liking only macabre/rude jokes that are not appropriate for sharing; to only knowing jokes in another language that did not translate well; to preferring other genres of humour such as funny family stories. It was anticipated that respondents who perceived themselves as having a good sense of humour would have a favourite joke ready to be shared with others. However, no relationship was observed between rating oneself as a funny person and being able to create a joke when asked to do so.

Participants were also asked to generate a humorous caption for a cartoon depicting a fully booked aircraft filled with misbehaving passengers. Examples of the responses included “Economy class – the only hell high up in the heavens” and “All children to be placed in overhead lockers”. Many respondents (65.0%) wrote down a caption, while 30.6% left the response option for this question blank. A further 4.4% wrote down excuses for not being able to think of something funny at the time of the survey being completed, i.e. not being in the mood, or not perceiving the cartoon situation as amusing (rather stressful in fact). In exploring the relationship between gender and the cartoon caption task, a significant association was found. More male (79.5%) than female respondents (61.7%) tried to provide a funny caption,  $\chi^2 (2, n = 327) = 11.2, p = 0.004$ . Similarly, a higher proportion of male respondents (37.5%), as opposed to female respondents (29.4%) wrote down a joke in response to the favourite joke question, but this difference was not significant.

#### 4.4. Associations between humour appreciation and production

In investigating whether any relationships existed between appreciation and production, Table 3 outlines the associations between measures of humour production and appreciation in this study. A significant association was present between responses given to the cartoon ratings (humour appreciation) and responses to the favourite joke task (humour production),  $\chi^2 (2, n=334) = 6.4, p=0.039$ . The nature of this relationship indicates that with higher appreciation of the cartoons, respondents were more inclined to provide a joke (low cartoon appreciation: 16.4% of respondents provided a joke; high cartoon appreciation: 34.6% provided a joke).

Table 3. Relationship between measures of humour appreciation and humour production

Humour apperception	Humour production	
	Joke task	Caption task
Cartoon ratings	$\chi^2 (2, n=334) = 6.4, p=0.039$	$\chi^2 (2, n=334) = 8.7, p=0.013$
Funny travel commercial	$\chi^2 (2, n=338) = 2.5, p=0.279$	$\chi^2 (2, n=338) = 3.6, p=0.163$

A significant relationship was also found between responses given to the cartoon ratings (humour appreciation) and responses to the caption task (humour production),  $\chi^2 (2, n=334) = 8.7, p=0.013$ . The nature of this relationship indicates that with higher appreciation of the cartoons, respondents were more inclined to provide a caption (low cartoon appreciation: 70.9% of respondents provided a caption; high cartoon appreciation: 76.9% provided a caption). As shown in Table 3, no significant relationships were observed for the appreciation of the travel commercial and the responses to the joke task and the caption task.

## 5. Discussion

This study set out to provide an organising conceptual scheme – the humour repertoire – for the study of humour in tourism. Figure 1, which was presented at the end of the literature review, specified some of the pivotal links and terms, and suggested how they work together when individuals think about their own sense of humour or how others judge this particular social skill and character strength. The work is allied to the long traditions of developing schema-based explanations for key topics in social life but advances such ideas by addressing the topic of tourism-linked humour. In an online empirical investigation, it was possible to test some parts of the suggested framework while other sections and links remain unexamined.

The first component of the conceptual scheme focused on the survey participants' self-assessed sense of humour. Eighty-two percent of respondents believed they had a good sense of humour and they suggested that 79.5% of others thought of them in this way. An untested next step in this framework is to ask others to rate the respondents' humour to check the further alignment of these perceptions. Self-perception of humour should reflect a trait rather than be subject to local feelings and circumstances (Martin 2007; Ruch 2004). The respondents' agreement to several humour statements showed that most of them had positive views on humour, which along with the self-selection bias of responding to the survey, may explain why so many regarded themselves as having a good sense of humour.

The gender differences confirm some of the ideas about humour in the existing literature. Male respondents rated themselves as having a slightly better sense of humour than females and more men participated in the caption and joke telling tasks. Confidence in their humour repertoire and especially joke telling tends to be more of a male characteristic (Crawford 1995; Robinson & Smith-Lovin 2001). By way of contrast, women are more likely to share anecdotal humour, i.e. retelling humorous stories that happened to themselves and others (Crawford & Gressley 1991), but this facet was not tested in the present work. It is useful to add that jokes themselves are a rather minor source of humour in everyday life as opposed to spontaneous forms of humour (Martin & Kuiper 1999).

The second focus of the research investigated participants' appreciation of four cartoons and a short travel commercial. Ruch's (1992) 3WD humour test model offers some useful explanations. Appreciation of jokes and cartoons may be based not so much on the content but the structure inherent in these two forms of humour. In the present study, the cartoon formats were perceived as quite amusing by the respondents. There were also some differences in appreciating humour based on whether individuals were able to successfully resolve the incongruity (Ruch 1992). This kind of information could help to explain the differences in how respondents appreciated the travel commercial. There were some stark contrasts in the respondents' explanations as to why they thought the travel commercial was perceived as funny (or not). Some alleged the animations in the commercial were childish and lame, while other respondents thought the commercial was appealing because it was safe and witty.

The third topic of research, linked to the conceptual scheme in Figure 1, assessed the participants' humour production skills. Respondents were asked to share their favourite joke and to create a humorous caption. Only approximately one third of the participants (30.9%) wrote down a joke. This low response rate to the joke exercise was a surprise, considering that the majority (82.5%) of participants regarded themselves as having a good sense of humour. Clearly, there are variations in the kinds and style of humour that individuals produce. Jokes are easy to study by researchers but may not reflect the individual's humour repertoire as well as the harder to assess skills of wit, mimicry, or spontaneous perceptiveness of an amusing incident (Wiseman 2007). To put this into perspective, a study by Martin and Kuiper (1999) into the types of humour that people are likely to encounter in their daily lives showed that only 11% of laughter occurs in response to hearing a joke, and this does not necessarily have to affect an individual's tendency to create humour.

It seems clear from these responses that individuals have preferences as appreciators and producers of humour. Such preferences can also depend on the social context in which they find themselves (Martin 2007). Developing one's talent of being a successful humour producer goes beyond simply reciting jokes. The humour repertoire of an individual can take on many forms such as creating witty one-liners and retelling humorous stories and life observations. In a tourism context, Pabel and Pearce (2016) found that the most popular humour technique types shared by tour guides when delivering information to tourists were amusing stories, friendly teasing, funny exaggerations, and self-deprecating humour. Similarly, in their study of

tour guides in England, Zhang and Pearce (2016) found that teasing and mockery rather than simple jokes were the commonly produced humour forms.

In this investigation and despite these caveats, a relationship was anticipated between respondents who perceived themselves as having a good sense of humour and those who provided a joke. However, no such relationship was observed with the sample of this study. These findings tend to confirm the complexity of the framework where the components of the repertoire may work together, or separately, or at times be unrelated to the appreciation and production of humour. Further, there is a gap between knowing a joke and recounting the joke. Those who can deliver a joke effectively and make other people laugh may not remember jokes well but just use funny material on a one-off basis.

The majority of participants (65.0%) created a funny caption for the fully booked aircraft scenario. This percentage is much higher than the 30.9% of respondents who wrote down a joke. To become a successful humour producer, “an individual needs to mentally process information coming from the environment or from memory, playing with ideas, words, or actions in a creative way, and thereby generating a witty verbal utterance or a comical nonverbal action that is perceived by others to be funny” (Martin 2007: 6). The result highlights that the repertoire used to produce humour is a complex skill set, sensitive to social demands, the immediacy of the request, and the individual’s motivation. These abilities and nuances are similar to the complexities of other cognitive schema such as those involved in wayfinding and orientation (Lee 2003). All importantly, the results stress that the next set of appraisals of humour production need to cover a very broad array of the humour skills required and any testing of humour must avoid relying on a limited range of measures.

The association between humour appreciation and humour production is indicated by a dotted line in Figure 1 due to the inconsistencies reported in previous studies (Babad 1974; Köhler & Ruch 1996). It was interesting to notice that there was a relationship between cartoon humour appreciation and the joke task as well as a relationship between cartoon humour appreciation and the caption task. This relationship indicated a higher propensity to write down a joke or respond to a caption task with increased levels of cartoon humour appreciation. However, no such association could be observed between the appreciation of the travel commercial, neither for the joke task nor for the caption task. These results again confirm that the link between humour appreciation and humour production is a variable entity, subject to the measures used and the contexts of the research. The choice of using animation for the travel commercial could have affected the outcomes of the association. Some respondents perceived the animated travel commercial as “too lame” and even “disrespectful to animals.” Potential future studies using a set of other films (not based on animation) may result in different outcomes.

There are indeed plenty of humorous examples to choose from both within tourism cases and beyond. For example, Pearce and Pabel (2015) identify several destination promotion videos featuring humour. Pearce and Pabel also provide examples of travel stories from novelists and travel writers, and they recognise the humour provided by popular bloggers. A significant next step in exploring the generality of humour responses involves recording the commonality of humour appreciation responses across a wider range of humour presentation types and categories.

Using self-report measures is a limitation of the work. Lampert and Ervin-Tripp (1998: 246) state that research participants are aware that what they identify as funny can reflect on their personality, and as such, “they may engage in some self-editing, providing only those jokes and events unlikely to make them look bad.” Another limitation is that of humour subjectivity bias, due to the fact that the respondents chose to answer a humour survey and humour is a broadly desirable characteristic (Martin 2007). Research by Neuendorf and Skalski (2001: 4) found that skewed distributions tend to be the result since most respondents

are likely to agree with statements that measure a good sense of humour because “no one admits to having a poor sense of humour.” This study, therefore, recognises that humour is a very subjective experience and acknowledges that any inflated self-report biases cannot be ruled out.

A further limitation is that the study sample is based on snowball sampling, which represents a non-randomised sample of research participants from the general public, rather than a sample of only tourists. The authors tried to ascertain the travel behaviour of the sample by asking questions about the respondents’ holiday frequency. The study sample appeared well-travelled with an average of four domestic holidays and three international holidays in the three years prior to completing the survey. Furthermore, the topics selected for the humour appreciation and production tasks were based on tourism motifs, i.e. cartoons with a focus on nature-based content and a caption task based on a fully booked aircraft filled with misbehaving passengers. These considerations help in establishing the link of the conclusions to the domain of tourism, however future studies conducted directly with people engaged in travelling, in different research contexts and using different research methods may lead to different results.

## 6. Conclusion

The viability of humour as a stress reduction tool, as an emotionally uplifting experience, and a viable business tactic have all been asserted in previous studies (Chan 2010; Martin 2007; Thomas & Al-Maskati 2001). In the context of tourism, the many novel situations in which tourists find themselves can be a rich resource for both appreciating and producing humour. This study has outlined a conceptual framework for developing a more detailed examination of the composite elements of how humour works. Wall (2017: 546) reports that in earlier times “tourism (scholarship) was serious business and no laughing matter.” It is perhaps now a good time to be serious about fun because there is so much to be done to understand the functioning of the complex humour repertoire. Studies of humour, and particularly its analysis in tourism, need a guiding conceptual scheme. Such approaches work at the level of assembling and linking existing work (Fuchs 1992; Lee 2003; Outhwaite 2000). The achievement of the present work lies in beginning this process of collecting and ordering the relationships and influences among humour related variables. The approach taken in this study is specific to the tourism sector and draws on cognitive schemas used in other areas such as wayfinding or learning new languages (McVee, Dunsmore & Gavelek 2005). Arguably, the initial value of the approach lies in bringing together some current work, pointing out possible unexplored linkages and identifying the need for multiple measures. Future studies may focus on other components of the humour repertoire while appreciating social context and the varied roles tourists play as they interact with others.

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