



Motivations of volunteer overseas and what have we learned – The experience of Taiwanese students

Tze-Jen Pan*

Department of Hospitality Management, National Penghu University of Science and Technology, No.300, Liu-Ho Rd., Makung City, Penghu Hsien 880, Taiwan R.O.C

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 26 June 2011

Accepted 6 February 2012

Keywords:

Taiwanese students

Volunteer overseas

Motivations

Gains

Impact

ABSTRACT

The study explores motives for Taiwanese students to volunteer overseas and what they have learned from the trip. Their motivations are classified into pull and push factors. Pull factors include expecting challenge, validating personal perceptions of the place, and getting to know local residents and experiencing the life in a foreign culture. Push factors identified as underlying themes include escaping from daily life to reorganize and relax, look for new ways of life and self exploration, a desire to give back, to make friends who share a common interest, a less expensive way of traveling, encouragement by others, and parental compulsion. The students gain several benefits from this trip, including a better attitude to learning, better communication skills, better stress management, an appreciation of what they have, being more active, becoming more generous and developing empathetic skills, be willing to hear and respect different voices, having trust in co-workers and be willing to admit deficiencies, appreciating a slower life pace, having an open mind, and learning to control material desire.

© 2012 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Volunteer tourism has grown tremendously throughout the world. So far, growing themes has been identified and used to describe the phenomenon of volunteer tourism. It has been described as a more ethical way of tourism than the traditional mass tourism as its benefits are two-fold. Volunteer tourists undertake holidays to another location where they volunteer in an organized project that might involve helping or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in the society, restoration of certain environments or research into certain aspects of the society or environment (Wearing, 2001: p1). It allows volunteers to offer something back to the social and natural environments of their destinations, which is perceived as an act of altruism. In doing so, volunteers will also be engaged in the process of personal development, self-discovery, and (re)-evaluation of personal values (Ellis, 2003; Wearing, 2001), which can be interpreted as an act of egoism.

Although volunteer tourism produces positive impacts on social and natural environments, much research into volunteer tourism is deficient. First, researchers mistakenly view volunteer tourism purely as a way for the rich (Hall & Tucker, 2004) to satisfy their

own desires by forcing their way into the lives of the needy around the world. This is sometimes seen as a form of post-colonialism or neo-colonialism. Second, a related limitation of the existing literature is associated with sampling. This is due to the fact that most previous research (Fisher, 2004; Lo & Lee, 2011; Mustonen, 2006; Pearce & Coghlan, 2008; Scheyvens, 2002) used samples consisting of Western volunteer tourists in volunteer tourism. Volunteer tourism is therefore considered as a western-based pilgrimage, and little is known about Asian students' personal dynamics of international volunteer work, or what they have learned from the experience and its effects on studying and life. Third, most research has focused exclusively on volunteer tourist's experience, motivations, and needs (Brown & Lehto, 2005; Brown & Morrison, 2003; Lo & Lee, 2011; Sin, 2009), rather than the needs of the service area. The most popular research in this sector has focused primarily on the volunteer tourist's motivations. Söderman and Snead (2008) assert that motivational factors, especially for overseas volunteers, are complex and largely under-researched. Motivational factors for volunteer abroad can be roughly classified into altruistic, egoistic, and multiple. It is undeniable that most previous research has taken a western perspective. However, tourist motivations vary across cultural and individual backgrounds (Zhang & Lam, 1999). Overall, the extant research of the motivations for other types of tourists to engage in overseas volunteering is really insufficient.

Although there are many types of volunteer programs offered by tour operators, non-profit organizations (NGOs), and academic

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +886 6 9264115.

E-mail addresses: tjpan@npu.edu.tw, tjpan@gms.npu.edu.tw.

groups to assist in community agriculture, archeology, development, construction, education and teaching, technical assistance, historic preservation, medical and dental (Brown, 2005), environmental protection and conservation (Gray, & Campbell, 2007; Lepp, 2008), scientific research and ecological (Wearing, 2004; Wight, 2003), and taking care wild animals (Campbell & Smith, 2006; Carter, 2005), most research remains focused primarily on the environmental volunteering (Brightsmith, Stronza, & Holle, 2008; Chen & Chen, 2011; Gray & Campbell, 2007; Wearing, 2001). Minimal research is concerned with the motivations of students who volunteer abroad and engage in short-term volunteering projects in guest teaching in schools within developing countries.

Taiwanese students embark on a trip of self-learning as soon as they register for a volunteering program. Before the trip, they might need to collect information about the program (including the destination and instructions they are expected to offer). During the trip, they will be confronted with various challenges in dealing with unfamiliar people (i.e., co-workers and people at the destination), events, and new things. Moreover, most of their destinations are located at remote areas with scarce resources, they have to live in an environment that is extremely different from the one they are used to. The above process requires them to have much self-adjustment and adaptation. The entire activity is not only a challenging experience of life but also a learning process. Manners and Durkin (2000) stress that challenging life experiences can offer more stimulation to one's thoughts and promote self-learning. Cress and Sax (1998) indicate that student involvement in community activities and volunteer works have positive effects on their personal and academic development both during and after school. Research seems to confirm that volunteer experience is a learning process and can bring about positive changes in volunteer tourists (Broad, 2003; Lepp, 2008; McIntosh & Zahra 2007; Palacios, 2010; Scheyvens, 2002; Wearing 2001).

Filling some of these gaps within the published literature therefore guides the present study. By examining the factors motivating Taiwanese students to volunteer overseas and what they learned from the experiences, the study shows how volunteer tourism is not a purely western phenomenon, still less a form of neo-colonialism, and it focuses on education/teaching not environmentalism – though it follows the literature in its emphasis on volunteer tourism motivation rather than the outcome for the service area.

2. Motives of volunteer tourists

2.1. Travel motivation

Travel motivation acts as a trigger that sets off all the events involved in travel. Among the several conceptual frameworks interpreting tourist's motivations, Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs theory and Crompton (1979) and Dann's (1977) push and pull factors of motivations have been widely adopted as an analysis and discussion model. Pearce (1982) applies Maslow's hierarchy to research of tourist motivation and behavior and finds that travel motivation has the properties of an approach-avoidance paradigm. He argues that tourists are attracted to holiday destinations because of the possibility of fulfilling self-actualization, love and belongingness, and physiological needs in that order of importance. When considering the avoidance aspect of the motivational paradigm, tourists consider safety a predominant feature, with additional emphasis placed on failure to satisfy physiological, love and belongingness, and self-esteem needs.

Based on the hierarchy of needs theory, researchers (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977) have explored the reasons why individuals choose to travel using the push and pull concept.

Dann (1977, 1981) explains that push motivation is an internal energy within an individual and compels one to travel, whereas pull motivation is a force external to an individual and influences where people travel, given the initial desire to travel and therefore, destination choice. Dann (1981) further suggests that push motivation temporally precedes pull motivation. Crompton (1979) builds on Dann's (1977) work to further identify nine motives for travel. They are push motives related to the escape from a perceived mundane environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships, facilitation of social interaction or pull motives related to novelty, and education. From Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckei and Pomfret's (2003) point of view, the main factors determining an individual tourist's motivation are associated with one's personality, lifestyle, past experience, past life, perceptions and image. They add that no tourists are likely to be influenced by just one motivator.

2.2. Volunteer tourism motivation

Motivation is considered as a key factor in explaining tourist behavior (Crompton & McKay, 1997) and is an important factor influencing an individual into action to become a volunteer. Numerous researchers have contributed to the research of why people volunteer overseas. Brown and Lehto (2005) mention that volunteer tourists have four main motives: cultural immersion, giving back and making a difference, seeking camaraderie with fellow volunteers, and family bonding and education. "Giving back and making a difference" suggests that tourists do not expect something in return. It implies that volunteer tourists expect to fulfill their desire for self-satisfaction. Clary, Snyder and Stukas (1996) identify six factors of volunteering, including (1) Understanding: involving a sense of learning and/or the ability to use and develop new skills or abilities; (2) Social: having the opportunity to participate with friends and do work that is considered important by the people who matter to the volunteers; (3) Values: having the opportunity to put values into action; (4) Protective: using the volunteer opportunity to cope with inner conflicts and stresses or guilt; (5) Career: using the volunteer experience to build career experience; (6) Enhancement: working on psychological development and building personal esteem.

Chen and Chen (2011) identify eleven motives and group them into three clusters: personal, interpersonal, and other. The personal factors involve authentic experience, interest in travel, challenge/stimulation, and other interest. The interpersonal factors refer to volunteer tourists' desire to help, interaction with locals/cultures, encouraged by others, and enhancing relationships. The other factors include unique style of the trip, time/money, and organization goal. Lo and Lee (2011) also report five main motives for travelers to partake in volunteer trips: cultural immersion and interaction with the local people; desire to give back and show love and concern; a shared experience with family members and an educational opportunity for children; religious involvement; and escape from everyday life.

Key factors for individuals take part in volunteer trip including altruism (environmental conservation, giving back, showing love and care), egoism (volunteer's personal growth and development, personal enlightenment, self exploration, career advancement, escape from daily life, relaxation, leisure) or interaction with local community. Based on the discussion above, the majority of motives are to satisfy volunteer's social and psychological needs, considered as push factors (Dann, 1977). This inference seems to support Brown's (2005) argument that volunteer tourists travel with their own purposes, and they often have a multitude of motivations, and altruistic motivations and leisure seeking or self-development

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات