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Association (GWTTRA)**

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**The Voluntourism Effect: Case Studies and  
Investigations**

**PROCEEDINGS**

## Research Volunteer Tourism: Defining the Experience

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### ABSTRACT

The Research Volunteer Tourism sector consists of organizations that coordinate the activities of those wishing to travel to undertake research projects - often in conjunction with a holiday. The founders of these organizations capitalized on the idea of bringing together scientists to lead research projects and volunteers, who would willingly contribute, both financially and practically, to engage in worldwide, scientifically based research projects and, therefore, repute to offer sustainable development in the longer term. Whilst all the organizations offer a similar service, the range of research projects available to volunteers is both complex and diverse. In terms of defining the experience (Research Volunteer Tourism), there is a lack of common language used at the present time by the organizations and the volunteers in terms of what the experience entails consequently, the research focus was to gain an understanding from both the organizational and volunteer perspectives and therefore define the experience and determine key characteristics.

A mixed-methods approach was adopted drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. Nine of the fifteen organizations studied, responded to a detailed questionnaire. After analysis of the data, four companies were chosen for their strategic position in the sector to follow up as case studies. This was done by interviewing the owner / managers of the four case study organizations. The author spent thirteen weeks participating in three projects in different countries, and interviewed 76 volunteers. Material in the public domain was also examined such as publicity and company websites, this information was used to verify and triangulate where appropriate.

The majority of the organizations in this sector use the term *expedition* to define the experience. It is not clear where this term comes from, it may be as a result of the legacy from companies which originated from a military background (Frontier; Trekforce; Operation

Raleigh) and / or from scientific ventures, both of which extensively used the term 'expeditions'. Other terms used by organizations are 'volunteer trips' and 'travel experience'. One company uses the term conservation holidays, which has been consistently used for a number of years. Even though the term *holiday* has been used, it is evident that the organization does not view this experience in terms of a traditional holiday and use alternative phrases to demonstrate that there is a difference; this sentiment is also echoed by other companies.

The volunteers rarely used the term *expedition* in their responses about defining the experience, however, the term *work* was mentioned extensively, which the organizations rarely use. Both organizations and volunteers appear to have a need to expand upon the experience as being more than just a holiday. For organizations, it is part of marketing and the differentiation from alternative or substitute products. When volunteers had difficulty expressing themselves in terms of what the experience was, they reverted to language to describe what made it different from a traditional holiday experience.

Traditional voluntary experiences are often described in terms of a level of contribution taking place (giving aspect) and benefits received by the volunteers (often expressed in terms of skills or 'self'; i.e. self-image). When trying to express their experience, some respondents (volunteers) used language around these two key themes.

In conclusion, it would appear that both the organizations and the volunteers have difficulty in articulating a message that defines the experience. This being said, it is clearly evident that the use of volunteers is one of the key mechanisms for the organizations to meet their goals and therefore, play an important role. The recruitment of volunteers onto projects enables the unlocking of money, annually, from private individuals that might not otherwise have reached the 'pocket' of the environment and therefore, provides invaluable funding; in addition, weeks and months of individuals' time is donated. Therefore, it is argued that for organizations to capitalize on this, a clearer definition of the experience based on both volunteer and organization perceptions is vital.

## **Journeys of the Self: Volunteer Tourists in Nepal**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The current trend amongst university students is to undertake a gap year or a period abroad to gain some life experience, to have fun and to learn about places very different from their own culture. This is not specific to university students but nowadays is something that people of all ages, generations and backgrounds are seeking. There is an increasing tendency for such people to spend their time volunteering as opposed to simply travelling from one destination to another. Volunteers are increasingly drawn to projects in third world countries, teaching, or helping out in hostels. Nepal is a good example of this because there is a ballooning desire for English language teachers to help out in schools or hostels. Organisations have sprung up to recruit volunteers who can speak English fluently and although there is a preference for native language speakers –such organisations accept volunteers from all over the world.

The paper presents the results of an ethnographic study of volunteers working in villages within the district of Lalitpur, Katmandu Valley, Nepal. Fieldwork was carried out in the summer months of 2008. The majority of participants were either university students or graduates mainly from Western European countries. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 volunteers. This technique allowed participants some freedom to talk in their own terms about their feelings, attitudes and experiences, and to reveal what was of significance to them. The analysis of qualitative data shows that they are drawn to Nepal for a number of reasons but largely for the experience of living ‘authentically’ in a developing country that is a world away from their native country. They are attracted to the fact that where tourists are confined to the tourist route of hotels, tour guides and the tourist bubble – volunteers get a ‘genuine experience’ of what it is like to live in the country and to be immersed in the culture, the people and the society that they are visiting. A common theme amongst them was that volunteering is ‘challenging’, ‘meaningful’ and ‘self-fulfilling’ that includes an individual ‘experience that goes beyond the limitations of normal holidays’.

## Understanding Voluntourism: A Glaserian Grounded Theory Study

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to understand voluntourism using Glaser's grounded theory. The concept of 'all is data' guided the collection of data from ninety four questionnaires supplemented by field work, general conversations, current academic literature, books, articles, web-sites, talk shows, blogs, and media stories. What emerged to describe voluntourism is the key category of 'engagement', necessarily associated with two other emerging categories of 'volunteer work' and 'tourist'. These categories together provided the encompassing explanation of voluntourism as 'engagement in volunteer work as a tourist', pointing to a purposeful connection to particular peoples and places.

Voluntourism is shown to be about engagement which involves participation, integration, action, penetration, interaction, involvement and immersion. It requires doing volunteer work but offers greater choice of projects than for traditional volunteering, and involves the notion of payment as with traditional tourism. Voluntourists displayed certain expectations and assumptions, and their experience had more profound impacts on the 'self' (the subject of another paper) than traditional tourism. Voluntourists seemed to be motivated by both the desire to travel and 'to help'; however, the study suggests that younger voluntourists, as opposed to younger volunteers, tended towards egoism rather than altruism.

Using Glaser's grounded theory provided an explanation of voluntourism and, at the same time, allowed the deconstruction of the emerged categories into their constituent lower concepts. These categories are discussed in relation to the theoretical codes found in traditional volunteering and traditional tourism with the aim of highlighting the distinguishing features of voluntourism.

By deconstructing the notion of 'engagement' in volunteer work in a touristic setting, the study offers a significant contribution to knowledge; it provides a theorization of the concept of 'touristic engagement', previously under theorized, thus filling a gap in the tourism literature. It also contributes to the literature on life-long learning and has potential implications for informal education.

**The Mystery of The Volontourist:  
Utilizing Pearce and Lee's Travel Career Pattern Model to examine  
Motivations, Typologies, and Preferences of Potential Volontourists**

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ABSTRACT

Results from recent surveys suggest that the number of voluntourism prospects is on the rise (Travelocity 2006 & 2007, CheapTickets 2007, MSNBC.com/Conde Nast 2008). It is estimated that the number of U.S. volontourists alone exceeded 4.7 million in 2007 with more than one million of them traveling internationally (CNCS 2008). But who are these prospective volontourists? The purpose of this study was to utilize Pearce's and Lee's Travel Career Pattern Model (2005) to develop and implement an online survey instrument that would measure the motivations and interests of potential volontourists. Further, the initial data can be used by voluntourism entities to better understand the market and adjust current business practices accordingly.

The online survey for this project was created using SurveyMonkey.com. The survey was first vetted with several volunteer tourism industry professionals, then piloted using a Virginia Tech online class of 358 students. As a result, the questionnaire was refined and a link was provided through the online newsletter volontourism.org. After 6 months, the survey was closed. Over 1400 potential volontourists responded to the survey, with 824 completed questionnaires. Data were then analyzed using SPSS 14.0 in order to determine voluntourism motivations, voluntourism activity preferences, volontourist expectations, and volontourist typologies. For example, to determine volontourist typologies, fifty-five motivational items were used for cluster analysis to produce groupings that are significantly different from each other.

Due to space limitations, only a sampling of the findings regarding volontourists will be discussed here, but a complete report will be included in the presentation. The most commonly reported motivations for voluntourism reported by respondents were: 1) experiencing something different, 2) learning new things, 3) gaining a new perspective on

life, 4) exploring the unknown, and 5) experiencing different cultures. Three voluntourist typology clusters emerged: Vanguard, Quester, and Pragmatist. Roughly 19% of all respondents were Vanguard, who responded favorably to nearly all of the motivation items, were the youngest, volunteered more than the other groups, and tended to travel with a group and/or their family for a slightly longer duration than the other two groups. Questers represent the largest percentage of all respondents (40.2%), and demonstrated a relatively positive response to most of the motives. In terms of age, this group is older than Vanguard and younger than Pragmatist, are the least likely of the three groups to have had international travel experience or volunteer in 2007. Pragmatists form the remaining 30% of the total. In terms of age, travel experience and volunteer experience, Pragmatists are slightly older, in their mid 30s, and tended to have been the most likely to travel in 2007, have had more international travel experience, and expressed a preference for having enjoyed traveling individually rather than with a group and/or their immediate family. They also represented the smallest percentage of having not volunteered in 2007.

Preliminary analysis revealed that volunteer tourists are a unique tourism niche. The primary application of this study is to allow volunteer tourism operators and host communities a glimpse of what makes the potential market for volunteer tourism “tick” – their motivations, preferences and expectations. In particular, what is it about this market that differs from other types of tourists?

## Carrying the Gift of Water, a Voluntourism Event

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### ABSTRACT

The proposed presentation will describe a case study that exemplifies the power of volunteerism in the creation of a week-long cultural event with opportunities for visitors to become involved. The type of tourism in the case study can be described as alternative cultural tourism. According to McIntosh and Zahra (2007) alternative cultural tourism experiences are authentic, interactive, meaningful and experiential. Volunteer tourism has been described similarly. A number of researchers have proposed that volunteer tourism is the key component of alternative tourism largely because of the feelings of altruism, accomplishment and self-development that result from such participation (Brown & Morrison, 2003; Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004; Wearing, 2001, 2002).

Volunteer tourism has been defined as an activity that combines travel with voluntary work (Raymond and Hall 2008). In this book on volunteer tourism, Wearing (2001) describes it as a field of tourism in which people volunteer to undertake projects in support of local communities while they are on vacation. He suggests that volunteer tourism involves assisting in the alleviation of poverty, the restoration of environments or research. While much of the research on volunteer tourism has focused on one of the three previously mentioned areas, the concept should not be limited by this narrow definition. Volunteer tourism does not need to be the main goal of a holiday, nor does it need to be the sole purpose. Tourists who go to a destination for other purposes may find volunteer activities enrich their experience while on vacation. For example, many of the visitors come to Sedona Arizona for one to two weeks to enjoy the beautiful scenic area. After they have taken their hike, enjoyed their spa treatments, ridden the jeeps on the red rocks and shopped, they need something meaningful to do. Providing meaningful activities for the visitors endears them to the community and increases the likelihood that they will be repeat visitors. They will be drawn back to the community they helped.

Numerous authors have described today's tourists as seeking more active, meaningful, enduring and worthwhile experiences than traditional tourism offers (Chambers, 2008; McIntosh, 2004; McIntosh & Bonneman, 2006; Phelps, 2001; Trauer, 2006; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Richards 2001; Richards & Wilson, 2006). The Carrying the Gift of Water event described in this paper is an example of the type of tourism sought after by today's high end

market segments who search for experiences that allow them to satisfy their desire for altruism, self-change, and self-confirmation.

Under the leadership of the Institute of Ecotourism, five volunteer organizations coordinated activities for the Carrying the Gift of Water event. Elements of cultural tourism, agri-tourism, geotourism, heritage tourism, culinary tourism, adventure tourism and voluntourism were incorporated into the event. Local and tourist volunteers were joined by celebrities including Lindsay Wagner and Dr. Masaru Emoto who volunteered their talents in support of the event. A detailed and colorful description of the Carrying the Gift of Water Event will be presented. The following provides an overview of the event:

A pre-event activity held one month prior to the event was comprised of a cultural exchange between 2 sets of elementary school children – one from a Hopi village and the other from Sedona. Volunteers provided cultural education for the children. The event began on Earth Day with a 130 mile, two-day journey from the mesas on the Hopi Reservation to the banks of Oak Creek Canyon. Businesses, schools, city officials, the forest service, visitors and local citizens provided support for the relay runners. The run was followed by the screening of the film documenting the 1500-mile run by Hopi Water Messengers from the Hopi Mesas to Mexico City for the World Forum on Water. On the following day, Gardens for Humanity partnered with the Hopis and the Institute of Ecotourism to create a meaningful cultural event where heritage seeds were planted using traditional planting sticks. On the third day, The Twilight Water Concert was held creek side. The special concert explored the ancient and contemporary rituals, myths and stories about water. Visitors contributed their talents to the concert. The following day a Hopi and Indigenous Art Market that attracted visitors was held. The Institute of Ecotourism became a Hopi village with traditional loom and basket weavers as well as piki bread and parched corn demonstrations. Fine art works of Hopi and other American Indian art were offered for sale. On day 5, Sedona students, the local community, and guest elders from Hopi participated in an art and poetry exhibition on the future of water. Dr. Masaru Emoto, author of 15 books on water, offered a free 90 minute seminar on the consciousness of water. On the final day, Dr. Emoto performed the closing ceremony. Hopi water maidens danced, local musicians and poets offered their water stories and the community brought food and drink of many traditions to share.

## **Destination Marketing from a Sustainability Perspective**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines sustainable marketing within the context of destination images. Its main purpose is based on the premises that responsible marketing used by destination marketing organizations (state tourism organizations) can help promote places in a sustainable manner. Mission statements, marketing plans and online advertising employed by signature website of State Tourism Offices are examined using sustainable indicators.

For several decades, the majority of the research has been focusing on destination images, but only evaluating the necessities of tourists. Therefore, researchers have been mainly concerned with tourist's satisfaction. The main purpose of previous marketing strategies has been to evaluate tourist's necessities and lifestyles to be fulfilled in the tourist destination. The proposed paper takes a supply-side perspective and moves beyond the conventional approach to incorporate the concept of sustainable marketing to promote destination images. It is suggested that Destination marketing organizations (DMOs) consider the significance of marketing tools in promoting sustainable tourism development. To this end, sustainable measures need to be employed such as establishing the importance of long term view, responsibility of all stakeholders to preserve the environment, facilitation of local involvement in the tourism industry, etc.

To address the aforementioned need, induced online destination image representations by DMOs will be examined. Indicators will be used to assess the extent to which sustainability efforts are visible. The underlying notion is that sustainable indicators containing ecological, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions are useful to measure sustainable tourism development. In summary, this study aims to answer the following research question: Do the DMO's include sustainability criteria in their marketing strategies?

To evaluate this aspect of sustainable tourism development, marketing content of fifty-one destination marketing organizations is being reviewed to evaluate if their destination images promote sustainability or include sustainable development indicators in their marketing endeavors. In brief, the study will analyze the following: DMO's mission statements (which contain the guidelines of their overall marketing plan), their marketing plans (which contain their purpose, objectives and actions) and signature websites to evaluate their sustainable promotion and advertising strategies. To accomplish this task, each of the DMOs is being contacted to obtain marketing information. Additionally signature websites are also being studied to identify sustainable efforts.

## **The Sport Voluntourism Experience: Case Studies of Volunteers at the Olympics**

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### ABSTRACT

Since the Lake Placid Winter Olympic Games of 1980, the reliance on the services of volunteers to administer the Olympic Games has increased tremendously as have the numbers of volunteers. The number of Olympic Games volunteers that come from and reside outside of the host city has also increased as National Olympic Committees have used means such as the internet to recruit non-local volunteers. These volunteers are referred to as “sport volunteer tourists.”

Minimal research has been conducted on the experience of “sport volunteer tourists” in mega-sport events such as the Olympic Games. From existing research, little emphasis has been placed on administrative processes and practices used to train “sport volunteer tourists.” The success of the Olympic Games relies heavily on the tasks carried out by volunteers, and since National Olympic Committees recruit the services of “sport volunteer tourists” to operate the games, it has now become paramount to understand the administrative process, management and training practices of Olympic Games volunteers.

In 2004, Greece became the smallest nation to host the modern day Olympic Games. The small size of this host nation posed some obvious and some not so obvious concerns for the administrative body of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games. The obvious concerns focused on the management of fiscal resources, transportation to venues, security, etc. The not so obvious concerns arose from issues such as the high reliance on “sport volunteer tourists” to carry out the day-to-day operative tasks of the games. Large countries that have hosted the Olympic Games have relied primarily on volunteers from within their respective nations, whereas, Greece with a population of slightly over 10 million had little choice but to attract a nouveau form of volunteerism – the “sport volunteer tourist” - to help administer the games. This meant that the administrators of the Athens 2004 National Olympic Committee had to be aware of implications for the training of volunteers that considered the needs and concerns of “sport volunteer tourists.”

The purpose of this study is two-fold: (1) to provide an overview of the sport voluntourism experience at the Athens Olympic Games, and (2) to provide suggestions for administrators of mega sport events for sport volunteer tourism management. Three case

studies of sport volunteer tourists at the Athens Olympics Games are presented. These case studies depicted a number of commonalities and differences with respect to the evaluation of the voluntourism experience. The commonalities focused on the overcoming of language, cultural and structural barriers, and the enhancement of communication channels between the voluntourist and Olympic Games administrators; whereas, the differences focused on the self-evaluation of sport volunteer training approaches and the perceived benefits of the voluntourism experience. Based on the aforementioned, it is suggested that administrators of mega sport events: (1) address the unique tourism concerns of voluntourists in training and preparation courses, (2) aid in overcoming barriers that may hinder the volunteer and tourism experience, and (3) bridge the gap between voluntourists and administrators by enhancing channels of communication.

## **Through the Eyes of Marx: The Labor in Volunteer Tourism of New Orleans**

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### ABSTRACT

I pull onto the side of the road at North Dorgenois and Delery Street in the Lower Ninth Ward, an area devastated after Hurricane Katrina by the breakage of a levee and further devastated by the events that followed August 29, 2005. Two and a half years later, as I emerge from my car, the neighborhood looks starkly different from the images conveyed by CNN. A group of men are re-roofing a boarded up home. The truck parked in front of mine reads B&H Construction. As I walk down the street, I see a big banner that reads “Historic Green: Rebuilding New Orleans” and a bunch of college-aged kids taking direction from someone ever so slightly older.

One of the fundamental components of volunteer tourism is the labor tourists engage in while on vacation. In Dean MacCannell’s *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, he draws largely from Karl Marx for support of his ideas of commodification and labor in tourism. In this paper, I apply the concepts MacCannell uses in Marx to volunteer tourism in New Orleans by problematizing labor practices of volunteer tourists and paid laborers with the work travel involves. In addition to looking at how Marx is utilized in volunteer tourism, the paper provides an overview of volunteer tourism in New Orleans.

## **The Global Citizens Network Model –An Intergenerational, Team Approach**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Global Citizens Network (GCN), a non-profit organization has 17 years of experience in the field of providing short-term cross cultural experiences. GCN is one type of volunteer organization that many prospective participants considers while trying to determine the “right program.” Global Citizens Network (GCN) offers an alternative to mass tourism for its trip participants who seek travel with purpose, as well as an alternative means to economic development for the host communities where we work. Through grass-roots, community-based tourism, GCN projects are locally conceived, globally achieved. GCN commits to projects until complete; while bringing awareness of other cultures and often more sustainable ways of living to trip participants. Examples of sustainability in GCN’s host communities include: sustenance farming, women’s cooperatives, youth empowerment and cultural preservation in indigenous cultures . GCN’s groups are age-diverse and family-specific trips and sites are available; we also accommodate school, church or other civic groups. GCN’s tax-deductible program fees vary from \$975 to \$2,450.

## **Marketing in a Tough Economy**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The presentation is intended to allow attendees to get an accurate feel for the state of the industry, not just hearsay, share surveys, trends, research. The information provided will enable participants to walk away with tactical tips they can start doing when they get home to increase sales –marketing/strategy ideas that don't require big budgets. Additionally, the presenters will share ideas for partnerships that can drive additional revenue streams in tough economic times.