



**Travel with a purpose: An investigation into the benefits and motives behind Volunteer
Tourism.**

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Abstract:

In recent times volunteer tourism has developed significantly as a form of alternative tourism. As its development has come at such a rapid speed it has been subject to negative criticisms of its effects such as having a cultural, social and environmental impact. In contrast, light has also been shed on its positive aspects such as being sustainable and connecting the concept of travel with altruistic motivations.

With this niche market growing so extensively globally, research has been sanctioned with regards to understanding the motivations of the individuals who decide to participate in these endeavors. Examined in this study is different factors which have motivated individuals to spend their trip abroad participating in humanitarian or volunteer activities. With the consideration that ‘missions’ have often connotations of a religious meaning, the expression ‘travel with a purpose’ has an even greater significance as this concept is developed.

Justification for this industry’s potential misperceptions, the constraints of definitional boundaries and correlated sectors is discussed within this study. Through the analysis of the data received in the 11 semi –structured interviews this research uncovers some principle motivations and key concepts of volunteer tourism and puts a focal point on potential areas which require additional examination.

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

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Signature of research student:

Aisling O'Halloran

Date: 17/08/2020

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I would first like to deeply thank the individuals who agreed to take time from their day to be interviewed and honestly answer a list of questions and discuss their personal experience of their time volunteering abroad with me. I would also like to thank my family and friends for their calming patience and listening ear when I was extremely stressed by the pressure which came with working and studying full time. Finally, I would like to thank my supervisor Matthew Hudson, due to covid-19 we never got to meet in person. Matthew was always an email away offering valuable advice and guidance throughout this research process.

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(1.0) Chapter One: Introduction

The pitch is easily explained. Rather than go somewhere scenic for two weeks and sip wine in a comfortable location you put your time and money to better use and go to an agency aid or developing world charity and volunteer your labour. Virtue oozes from the idea. I get bothered when something sounds so good. It makes me wonder are volunteer tourists offering real value to their host (Kwa, 2007).

The pessimistic side of me speculates that more is taken home by these short timers from their time slumming in disadvantaged areas of the world rather than what they leave behind for those they are supposedly helping. The guilt of a middle class developed world individual is here cleansed. The opportunity may even arise for them to discuss this experience in future job CV's or University applications (Kwa, 2007).

As a response to the 21st century's socioeconomic transformations such as wanting to give back to the disadvantaged and undertake in volunteer work. Volunteer tourism has emerged as an explosive growing trend. It involves individuals who volunteer to work abroad as a part of his or her travel with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and are connected through tourism agencies to locations where communities are experiencing situations of adversity and poverty (Wearing, 2001). Its nature is different from that of a traditional touristic activity as individuals face situations while experiencing life in poverty abroad which present an uncomfortable reality. Although it seems completely selfless it is commonly positioned as a form of “goodwill” or “justice” tourism, the real value or effectiveness of this form of tourism is increasingly being critiqued in media we see an example of this in the newspaper article commentary as cited in the opening statement above (Muller and Scheffer, 2019).

Arguably there is a lack of middle ground between those who take a cynical view against this niche market and those who praise the presupposed benefits which come from volunteer tourism and there lacks a presence of research with a view of volunteer tourism which is balanced. Research that is available regarding this topic tends to have an infrequency of pieces which take a critical view. Thus, the researcher's main aim of this investigation is to build a deeper understanding and firm foundation of both the positive and negative aspects of volunteer tourism and understand the motivations which lie behind the activity of the volunteers and uncover whether their partaking in this experience is mainly for self-meaning rather than aid to the communities in these adverse situations or is mutually beneficial to both the host and volunteer (Muller and Scheffer, 2019).

In a postmodern world a range of significant issues have developed affecting the spheres of work and life. These issues include unstable relationships, impermanence, a weakening in sacred and religious aspects (Freitas, 2000). Traditional aspects of organisations such as employment contracts, job security and long-term perspectives are being replaced by a psychological contract which is employee based. This is in regards to the set of expectations between an employee and their employer which are unwritten. They include aspects such as common grounds and informal arrangements. From this context emerges, a postmodern subject. This subject has multiple identities is individualistic and a large amount of their social relations are engaged virtually. A constant contemporary search for meaning evolves within the subject as a direct result of the impact of these aspects (Muller and Scheffer, 2019).

Volunteer tourism is a niche market which responds to this context and attends to the consumer's increasingly sophisticated needs, and that is Volunteer Tourism. Its nature is different from that of a traditional touristic activity as individuals face situations while experiencing life in poverty abroad which present an uncomfortable reality (Freitas, 2000).

The volunteer tourism industry often commoditizes the culture of the host community or is discarded as a genuine travel motivation by the tourist. This debate is not one that has only come to light recently and has spanned over thirty years, in the last few years it has been refueled by academics recently as the niche market expands at a rapid rate. The ongoing debate paints the tourist out to be seeking a shallow experience which is not likely to leave an impression or

seeking to find meaning or authenticity in their live through the lives of the host communities (Freitas, 2000).

1.1 Framework of the study:

A critical analysis of volunteer tourism experiences in designated disadvantaged countries participated by individuals from relatively well of countries in the global south and north will be offered in this piece of research. With the use of literature reviews and the interviews with individuals who have volunteered, the motivations behind it and its consequences on worldwide health will be understood from the perspective of a western volunteer tourists. Building on this understanding the effects on the local communities and the involvement of participating businesses will be evaluated. From this study the researcher intends to expand on the conversation regarding Volunteer Tourism and offer suggestions for organisations and future volunteers to consider. The researcher's Hypothesis is arguing that the reasons behind why volunteers engage in volunteer tourism are more self-motivated than the desire to help people in adverse situations.

1.2 Research Objectives:

The research's main objectives are to:

1. Investigate why individuals are motivated to get involved with Volunteer Tourism.
2. Uncover what the benefits and/or impacts on the host communities which come as a result of individuals participating in these experiences?
3. Uncover the emotional labour aspects behind volunteer tourism.

This research will establish conceptualization regarding the industry of volunteer tourism, The notable benefits will be included alongside an explanation of the associated issues of international volunteer tourism. Lastly the researcher will provide an approach recommendation for participants and program providers to take to improve the industry and lessen its negative. The well intentions of volunteering will not be ignored in this study

2.0 Chapter Two: Literature Review

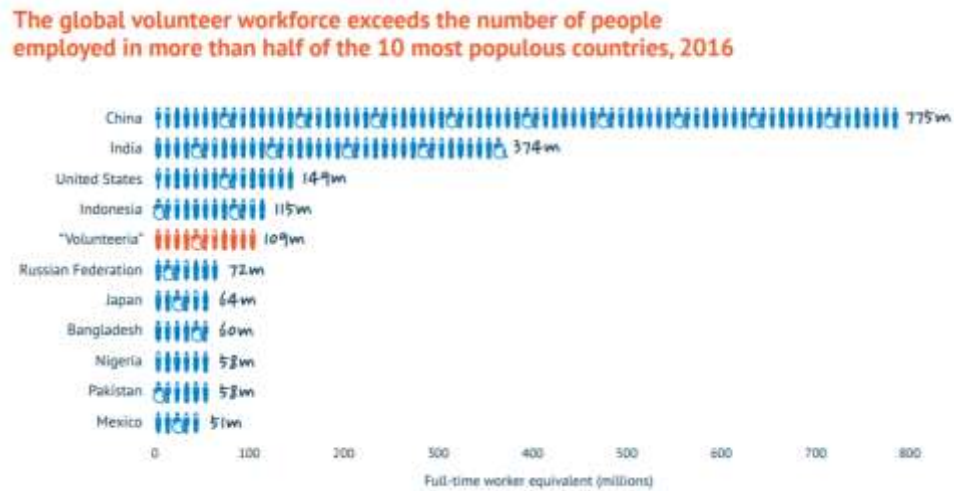
2.1 Introduction:

The intention this literature review is to provide the research with a contextual background and it aims to clarify the motivations behind individuals who engage in volunteer tourism and analyse the positive and negative aspects which come as a direct result of these projects.

2.2 Volunteer Holidays and Volunteering:

Throughout the world volunteering has been used as a buzzword for some time by countless socially oriented individuals. UN volunteer estimate that as of 2017 the number of volunteers worldwide is at approximately 970 million. Putting into consideration the number of hours they contribute this is the equivalent of more than 109 million workers who are full time (Medina, 2017). In a study conducted at John Hopkins University it was found that one out of four volunteers time and skills is contributed through organisations. The rest of individuals do so by directly helping their communities and neighbors. They estimate that in terms of economic impact they place volunteer work at a value of \$1.348 trillion USD or in terms of the entire global economy 2.4% (Salamon, Haddock and Sokolowski, 2019).

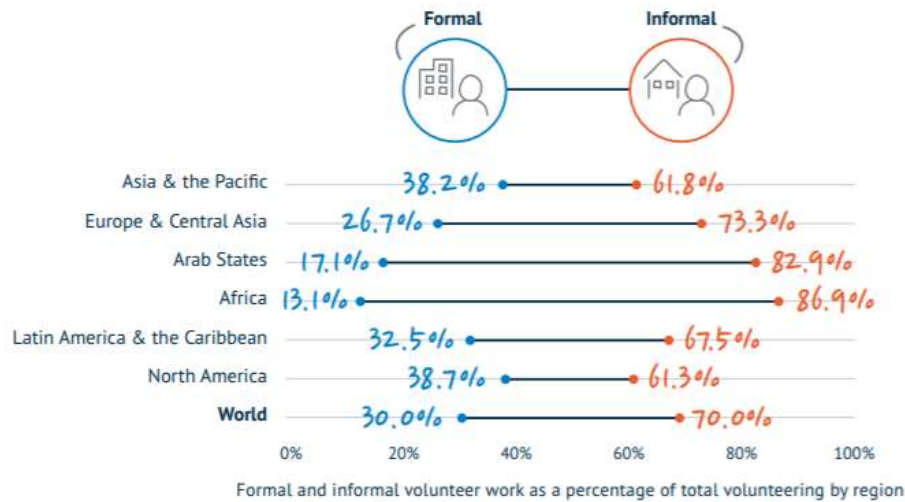
Figure 1: The volunteer workforce globally exceeds the number of individuals employed in more than half of the top 10 most populated countries, 2016.



(UN Volunteers, 2018)

Figure one visualises just how large the globes volunteer work force is. “Volunteeria” (Figure 1.0) is the name given in figure one to categorize the full-time volunteer workers. “Volunteeria” has the fifth largest workforce in the world and is the equivalent roughly to the number of people employed in Indonesia. This graph also highlights how the volunteer workforce globally exceeds that of multiple global industries (UN Volunteers, 2018).

Figure 2: Across all regions, Informal volunteer work exceeds formal volunteer work.



(UN Volunteers, 2018)

Volunteering’s form and extent also varies by context. In all regions globally informal volunteering exceeds formal volunteering. The participation in formal volunteering which is organisation based is affected by the amount of associations who mobilise volunteers in a country and also by institutional arrangement differences. Countries with higher incomes tend to have an increased concentration of formal voluntary organisations and as a result give people here more opportunity to participate in this way (UN Volunteers, 2018).

Volunteering is defined by Stebbins (2004) as help which is unforcedly offered either informally or formally with no or at the most a token of pay, which is done for both the benefit of the individual and the volunteer (Stebbins, 2004). Similarly, volunteering has been defined as an act where a volunteer provides assistance, or a service which is unpaid that benefits a community (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1986). Others such as Van Til (1979) put emphasis on the action’s characteristics, describing it as freely chosen, aimed generally at helping others and is without financial gain (Till, 1979).

Leopold (2000) proposed the ‘American Model’ of the volunteering process as one that begins with looking at what is needed, after this they then recruit volunteers to complete the work. On the other hand, in Europe there is a tradition of membership. Everything here begins

with the member. It is left up to the member to make the decision in what they want to do. Regardless of this he views volunteering as beneficial to the volunteer's wellbeing (Leopold, 2000).

Stebbins & Graham (2004) suggest that participants gain a sense of purpose from engaging in this type of work and a sense of deep personal fulfillment is generated. Serious contemplation is provoked within the volunteer and their concern for others is encouraged. Other durable benefits for the volunteer include feelings of self-enrichment, self actualisation, renewal or recreation of self. Volunteers feel a belongingness, enhanced social interaction, improved self-expression and self-image (Stebbins and Graham, 2004). In Hewitt & Thoit's (2011) study they examined empirically how six different well-being dimensions were affected by volunteering. These dimensions included self-esteem, depression, life satisfaction, physical health, sense of control over life and happiness. In their research it was revealed that people in better mental and physical health were more likely to volunteer. Contrary to this volunteer work is valuable for good physical and mental health. They also suggested that when exposed to a different culture volunteers were more open to attitude changes which were positive. This may explain why more frequently volunteers reported becoming content with life, more relaxed, broad minded and less psychocentric and selfish and had a changed view of the world as outcomes of their volunteer experience (Thoits and Hewitt, 2011).

2.3 What motivates individuals to get involved with Volunteer Tourism?

Volunteer Tourism's early literature focuses mainly on the niche markets benefits. The benefits mentioned include, personal development of volunteers, improved cross cultural understanding, increased activism and social movements and enhanced living conditions for host communities. Altruism is also highlighted by scholars stating that volunteers have a desire to give back to society. In contrast to Volunteer tourism's early main motivation of giving back has been revisited in recent studies more critically. It has been reassessed as in fact a form of new colonialism. The desires and needs of the local communities are outweighed by the western volunteer's interests and motivations. Short term volunteer programs are an example of this.

They have been established to suit the livelihoods of the volunteers, but the detrimental effects these projects have on the host communities are overlooked. These intentions and motivations are important to understand in order to determine volunteer tourism's full impact (Hernandez-Maskivker, Lapointe and Aquino, 2018).

Though it is clear to see there is a plethora of existing motivations for volunteering identified in the literature. Two of the main motivations which are recurring continuously are selfless and altruistic motives.

2.4 What are selfless and altruistic motives?

Volunteering in its basic form has been explained as individuals wanting to give help to others. This as a motive has been described as altruistic. In this regard the volunteer partakes in a program for selfless reasons with the desire to help those who are in need of their service (Wearing, 2001).

Dr Rebecca Tiessen (2012) conducted a study which supports this view. Her study revealed both selflessness and altruistic motives were the most important motivations behind individuals who volunteer abroad. This reaffirmed the international developments one-directional nature of volunteer's benefits being in favour than those of the communities of the global north. A consumerist approach is mirrored in the hunger for experience, where volunteer tourism has become an exchange which is very profitable. Organisations who offer volunteer programs have created marketing strategies to create an image of a personally attractive experience. The motivations expressed by volunteers are mirrored in the marketing strategies and images which confirms the importance of cost, locations added activities and skills developed in the programs. Information regarding the host community tends to be less pronounced with the primary content of the marketing images videos and text being centered around the personal gain and adventure to the volunteer (Tiessen, 2012). Although altruism and being selfless is mentioned as a main motive in many types of volunteering, there is a significant amount of research which challenges this claim. These pieces of research highlight a broad second group of egotistic factors (Otoo and Amuquandoh, 2014).

Altruism and Egoism are contrasted by psychologist Batson (1990) as the two primary motivational states behind why we decide to give help to others, she describes these actions as having a goal (Figure 3).

We can see in Figure 3 that a social egoist may exert oneself to give help through instrumental means to another, they do this with the aim of reaching their ultimate goal which is to benefit themselves personally (See Figure 3). In contrast to this the attempt of the altruist is done with the ultimate goal being to relieve the suffering of others. Benefits which do emerge to the altruist as a consequence of their actions in this situation are done unintentionally (Batson, 1990).

Figure 3: Altruism’s formal structure.

	Outcomes of helping	
Explanations of why we help	We relieve the other's suffering	And as a result we receive self-benefits
Egoistic account	Instrumental goal	Ultimate goal
Altruistic account	Ultimate goal	Unintended consequences

(Batson, 1990)

The extent in which we argue for or against egoism or altruism is related to the transaction cost which may be incurred. For instance, if there is little cost or energy to us, and giving this aid to help someone makes us happy then we may in fact be acting egoistically. Yet, if the intended outcome is to make someone happy and we go to great lengths without regarding our own happiness then compared to the first case may be regarded as more altruistic. An altruist receives unintended consequences as a result of their ultimate goal, an attempt to explain this is illustrated in Figure 3 (Batson, 1990).

2.5 What Egotistic factors are present in Volunteering?

The egotistic factors are the benefits that are received by the volunteer for being involved in the chosen program. Examples of these factors include career development and the strengthening of relationships with families and friends. The notion of altruism is challenged by Smith and Macauley (1980) who suggest that volunteers are solely motivated by their own interests rather than any altruistic desires (Smith and Macaulay, 1980). This view is further supported by Rehberg (2005) who suggests that volunteer's motives are multifaceted. These motivations occur in a combination rather than in isolation with each other (Rehberg, 2005). The five main common motivations Brown (2005) found among volunteer tourists were making a difference, giving back, cultural immersion, family education and bonding and seeking togetherness with associate volunteers. Participants of her study hoped that the immersion in a local culture would lead them to creating connections with individuals in the community. According to her study for some participants immersion did lead to creating relationships with hosts. The only two motives where the tourist didn't expect something in return were making a difference and giving back. Making a difference and giving back gave volunteers a sense of purpose (Brown, 2005). Also identified by Gilmour and Saunders (1996) was that people volunteered to get away from reality and take a break from their lives. Individuals wanted also to try something different and widen their horizons rather than having a passive holiday which was focused on lying around swimming pools or beaches. They wanted to be able to see how countries and their ecosystems work and could do this if they had someone who lived there to show them (Gilmour and Saunders, 1996).

Outlined in Clary's (1998) study were six broad functions which were suggested to be served by one's participation in volunteering (Clary, 1998). First was **Social**, the individual got the opportunity to make new friends or be engaged in an activity that was viewed by others as favorable. Secondly was **Values**, the individual got the opportunity to express their values associated to humanitarian and altruistic concerns for others. Thirdly was **Career**, the individual perceived the experiences they underwent as part of the program would look attractive to employers in future career endeavors. Fourthly was **Protective**, the individual got the opportunity to address their own personal problems and also reduce their guilt about being in a more fortunate position than others. The Fifth function was **Enhancement**, the individual got the

opportunity for personal development and growth of their ego. Lastly was **Understanding**, the individual got the opportunity to exercise their abilities, skills and knowledge and have a new learning experience (Clary, 1998).

. Clary (1998) states that the degree in which volunteers felt the fulfilment of these functions directly related to their satisfaction with the volunteer experience (Clary, 1998). However, Stoddart and Rogerson (2004) highlight that volunteer tourist's motivations are dissimilar to the escapist motives of tourists who are non-volunteer. This is due to the fact they generally do not pursue the typical itinerary of an international tourist. They also found that volunteering tourists as well as travelling to a unique location were motivated to also develop their relationships and skills with others (Stoddart and Rogerson, 2004).

As discussed, the terminologies which are commonly accepted for the motivations of volunteer tourism include, professional development, personal growth, adventure and travel, altruism, learning and cultural exchange, the program individually itself and right place and time. However, Pearce and Lee (2005) caution that an individual may start with an initial travel motivation which over their experience of the trip and their travel and life stage may shift. From this point it is possible that factors such as travel experience could have a compelling interaction effect on travel intention and motivation (Pearce and Lee, 2005).

2.6 Is Volunteer tourism a form of emotional labour?

Currently the most popular international Volunteer Tourism projects are projects involving the aid of children, with 21% of volunteer programs directly associated with young people or children. An extremely popular program involved orphanage tourism in Cambodia. Short term volunteer programs, tours, cultural performances in hotels or on site are just a range of the interactions compromised there (Guiney, 2017).

Literature to date discusses the range of problems which arise from orphanage tourism some being, attachment disorders, trafficking, pedophilia and corruption. Children are being objectified and commodified in this growing form of tourism. Emotional labour is first discussed in Hochschild's (1983) study where he expresses that there are feeling rules within different cultures which prescribe within specific contexts which emotions are appropriate. He notes, while giving back the tourist desires emotional encounters. The emotions of volunteer are played upon and exploited in the hope of furthering their commitment to the centers. More concerning he raises the possibility of further negative emotional impacts on the emotional development of the children who are caught in the middle of orphanage tourism. Children within these spaces are expected to conform to stereotypes which are dominantly imposed on them. Orphanage directors exploit interactions for their own personal benefit so that children perform emotions which are poverty centered but then must mediate their happiness to tourists in their orphanage life. Further research on the impact and pressure placed upon the children in these spaces is needed in literature as it has yet to be explored in research (Hochschild, 1983).

2.7 What are the negative consequences which come as a result of Volunteer Tourism?:

To date, a number of various studies have begun to assess the inefficiency of Volunteer Tourism (Conran, 2011; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2014; Garrison, 2015). As noted by Conran (2011) it has occurred that volunteers in some situations have in fact little or no positive effect on the community being assisted (Conran, 2011). Volunteers only assistance is with issues that are superficial as the problems these communities are facing tend to be complex. The main constraint of them making a contribution which is significant to the destination is that they lack the knowledge and skills needed. This view is supported by Kontogeorgopoulos (2014) and Garrison (2015) who both state that a large majority of volunteers aren't prepared, with some companies offering no training to them before they go out into the field. The main reason for this downfall is that the duration of their stay is too short to fit in the adequate necessary training. Companies therefore avoid incorporating it into programs as they are unlikely to get a return on investment if the volunteer is only staying for a week or two (Garrison, 2015; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2014,). This lack of training becomes detrimental to not only the programs development but more worryingly to the host communities (Hernandez-Maskivker, Lapointe and Aquino, 2018).

Another negative potential discussed by Guttentag (2009) is the dependency it creates of hosting communities on nations who send volunteers. As a direct result of this an authoritative power of position has been reinforced of volunteers leaving the residents marginalised and disempowered (Guttentag, 2009). Smith (2015) discusses how detrimental medical volunteer programs can be to those being served. The most worrying statement she makes in this study is that there is no formal requirement or standardisation for the amount of experience or training volunteers require before they perform health procedures. If untrained volunteers are forbidden from delivering medications in affluent countries, why should it be acceptable in disadvantaged areas? (Smith, 2015).

Citrin (2010) reports that an unstable health commodification is developed when new technologies and medicines are dispensed to those who lack in a long-term supporting infrastructure. These medical prescriptions become a right which is expected or demanded from

the patient. Community's perceptions of medical care can also be affected from this. An example he brings to light is for example a procedure which is revolutionary that can be successfully performed but complications can occur if there is not a proper follow up consultation. A patient's adherence to their prescribed plan can also be hindered by language barriers. If patients are unable to understand the physician's explanation or directions the treatment may be deemed noncompliant as they may not be able to follow the course of care. As a result of this patients may experience more serious health consequences. If patients in disadvantaged areas are prescribed antibiotics which are not available or accessible consistently this can create forms of bacteria which are drug-resistant (Citrin, 2010).

2.8 What are the benefits of Volunteer tourism?:

Prior to the negative impacts discovered which come as a result of individuals getting involved in volunteer abroad programs, there is also numerous pieces of research conducted in support of the industry. These studies reinforce the claim that such projects accommodate mutually beneficial experiences which are both sustainable and authentic (McIntosh and Zahra, 2009). Volunteer holidays are deemed by both the travelers and organisations that provide them to be an ideal way to escape mass tourism's criticisms while maintaining to deliver international travels benefits and satisfaction. For those who yearn for a unique holiday, volunteer tourism offers an extensive list of perks to these individuals such as fulfilling self-discovery desires, satisfying altruistic goals and the opportunity to create bonds with locals (Garrison, 2015).

Although this study addresses how the benefits of Volunteer Tourism may possibly reinforce a cycle of poverty in the communities who host these programs, it would be unfair to completely disregard the advantages. Innately the participation in these programs is not intended to be harmful, the damage comes rather as a consequence of an action which was well intended. In order to identify the motives behind participating in this evolving field and the steps necessary for improvement it is crucial to consider volunteer tourism's benefits for a holistic understanding (Garrison, 2015).

2.9 Self-discovery and professional development:

A potential advantage of volunteering abroad programs is personal development in the sense of fulfilment and self actualization. Past participants and providers of these programs describe how as a result of serving these host communities they have experienced personal gratification in high levels. Evidence in Coghlan and Gooch's (2011) study found that volunteers felt a sense of independence and empowerment, spiritual development and increasing self-awareness (Gooch and Coghlan, 2011). These trips were described by participants as life changing, this supports the claim that a greater sense of personal identity is gained by those who engage in volunteer programs instead of a conventional holiday abroad (Gooch and Coghlan, 2011).

Volunteering abroad has also been seen as an advancement technique by professionals and students, which could possibly push them in their field in advance of their competitors. Although the majority of those who participate in these programs declare continuously that their prime motivator of involvement is the desire to help less fortunate communities, these adventures have evolved into enhancing experience professionally and also résumé builders (Garrison, 2015).

2.10 Authenticity of interactions and experience:

Critiques have argued that traditional tourism does not allow tourists to experience the country they are visiting's true culture and also does not expose them to genuine interactions with individuals in the local communities. Tourists instead spend their money and time on conventional activities which meet the typical expectation of a tourist and are often affiliated with exploitation. These activities do nothing to provide an authentic representation of the community's culture. Calls have been made for more authentic activities for travelers to engage in and as a result these communities would be positively impacted (Raymond and Hall, 2008).

The solution to these problems is believed by many researchers to be volunteer tourism, as a genuine ideal experience is created by its mix of both service and tourism. The authentic

relationship which is created between the host and the participant becomes a starting point for many benefits. These benefits include the mutual understanding promoted by the interaction with members of the local community, bonding promoted by the friendships which are created as a result of interactions with travel peers and working with members of their family. As this form of tourism could create an environment which may lead to a greater understanding and thus facilitate an experience which is mutually beneficial for both the community members and volunteers (Dykhuis, 2010).

2.11 Cross cultural exchange and international learning:

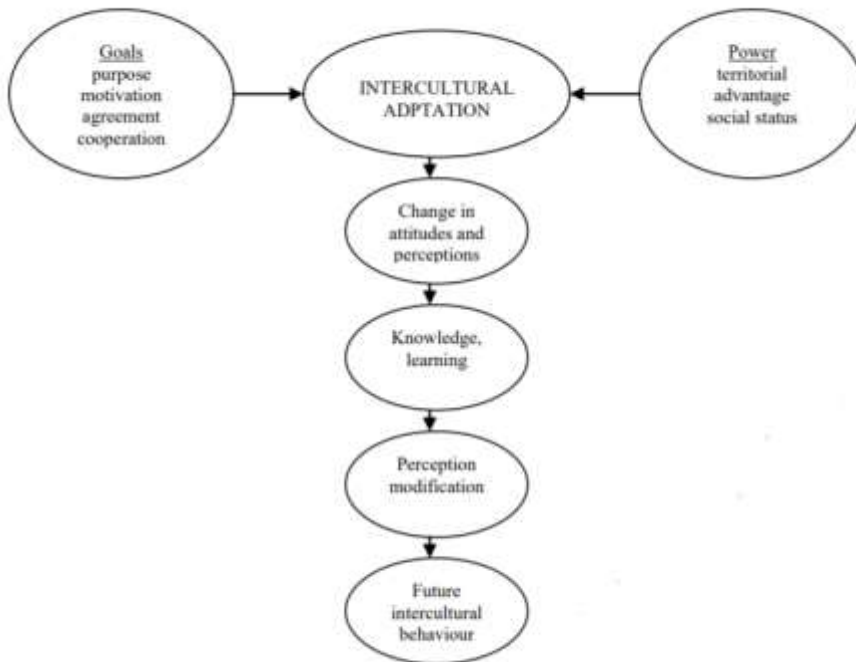
It is emphasized that the relationship which is developed between locals and volunteers is a way to foster understanding internationally. It is seen to be a helpful way to transform attitudes in relation to social problems and is also useful for both professional advancement and personal growth. As these opportunities allow individuals to gain a unique knowledge, employers and universities stress international experiences importance for adapting this global mindset.

Participants have the potential to have a transformative experience enabling a trans-cultural progressive understanding between the tourist and the local community (Butz and Kavitz, 2011).

As an international learning environment is offered with volunteer tourism, traditional tourism is far surpassed. Through their service and humanitarian-oriented framework these programs claim to offer a greater degree of cross-cultural exchange. The participants global citizenship is developed by the projects and trips unique nature which allegedly provide an environment which is creative, genuine, and mutually beneficial which in hand enhances the volunteer's ability to understand different cultures (McLennan, 2014). Global volunteer's CEO is quoted by Raymond and Hall (2008) who believes strongly that a critical way to waging peace is friendship and hope, which is engendered in volunteer service. He believes that the world will be a more peaceful place the more individuals volunteer around the world and become friends with the locals. Similar ideas are reflected by others who believe the first step toward a peaceful society globally is an international understanding (Raymond and Hall, 2008).

For over thirty years theorising intercultural exchange has been the focus of sociopsychologists, anthropologists and sociologists. Over this timeframe multiple models have been created to illustrate sojourners adaptation processes and cross-cultural experiences. Intercultural adaptation is the term used when an individual tailors their behaviors in cross cultural situations to facilitate understanding (Reisinger and Dimanche, 2008). This term was theorised by Ellingsworth (1988) who stated that intercultural communication is observed as arising under conditions which can be characterised by inequality in power and status, discrepancy of purpose and an advantage in relation to the environment. His proposed Intercultural Adaptation Theory (Figure 4). articulates that only in the presence of equity is this adaptive behaviour shared, otherwise the adaptation burden is shifted to those in the less advantaged situation. Hence, only when groups both strive to the same goals and have equal power relations will true intercultural communication occur (Ellingsworth, 1988).

Figure 4: Intercultural Adaptation Theory



(Ellingsworth, 1988)

The model as shown above (See figure 4) was further built upon by Cai and Rodriguez (1997) who propose that when tenuous preconceived notions regarding a culture are present or when shared knowledge between the participants within the exchange is lacking, misunderstanding occurs as a result. The process of adaptation then becomes very difficult. Cross cultural misunderstanding can be avoided if the outsider is prepared. Most importantly, as a direct result of this positive experience there will be an increased understanding and effective adaptation. (Cai and Rodríguez, 1997)

Researchers believe that volunteer tourism can in fact achieve intercultural exchange if its principles are aligned with those of ecotourism and community-based tourism. This means the environments which it depends on should not be damaged, it should be of small scale, the host communities should be empowered by allowing to manage and plan the programs and an understanding between the community and industry (NGOs and private) and guest and host should be fostered (Wearing, and Ponting 2004; Sofield, 2003; Scheyvens, 2002)

2.12 Increasing social activism levels:

A benefit of individuals participating in volunteer tourism which is at a more Macro level is the increased involvement in activism and social justice as society as a whole could improve from these benefits. When participants witness the serious levels of poverty and realise the severity of this which is faced around the world by countless communities it may act as an eye opener and a catalyst for them to participate in social action movements in the future. Some volunteers may be encouraged to continue practicing in service globally whereas other may just bring back to their home communities their newfound knowledge and development. This is just as beneficial to the bigger picture as it can have a knock-on effect to the individual's family and friends. Research undertaken by McGehee & Santos (2005) backs up this claim, they found that volunteer tourism participation has a positive effect on the support for activism and intended social movement activities post trip. Furthermore, they argue that despite short-term volunteer programs limitations if they raise social awareness and encourage consciousness they should be expressed as successful (Santos and McGehee, 2005).

3.0 Methodology:

3.1 Introduction:

The study will undergo a qualitative investigation of the intention's motivations, perceptions, and the effects of volunteer experiences. These insights will be collected through semi-structured interviews on individuals who have participated in a volunteer abroad program. To analyse the transcripts a content analysis will be undertaken. This method was selected with the intention of expanding the current body of research which exists in this field of research and further uncover the direct evidence of Volunteer tourism's effects. A similar approach is undertaken by Megan Smith (2015) in her senior theses on 'The Cost of Volunteering: Consequences of Voluntourism' (Smith, 2015). In addition to semi-structured interviews Smith (2015) underwent a participant observation to draw an analysis from her own personal Volunteering experience. As this piece of research is non-funded and under a time constraint the researcher will be unable to participate in an experience of such to strengthen this paper's methodology (Smith, 2015).

3.2 Research design:

Alternately, the researcher put their sole effort in extracting as much valuable information from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the goal of attempting to answer the research question proposed. Interviewees were individuals who had travelled and volunteered in a broad range of volunteer experiences outside of their home country. Interviewees were found through volunteer groups on social media sites and through acquaintances of the researcher. The interviews included questions which were prepared in order to collect fundamental demographic information, in addition to this semi-structured questions were also included to uncover the most information as possible about their volunteering experience. Interviews were completely voluntary and completed between March 2020 to June 2020. A consent form was emailed to all interviewees prior to commencing the interview and this outlined to participants the nature of the study, that their data will be used for an academic research paper and also assure them that their confidentiality and anonymity will be respected (See Appendix 2). Participants were also be

ensured that they were free to withdraw at any time from this study and that their answers would be discarded without any consequences (Smith, 2015).

3.3 Data Gathering:

All participants were asked the same questions in their interviews as listed below. These questions were opened ended and not constrictive, they were used as a mere guide to the conversation and to keep a similar flow of conversation between participants so that the researcher could compare and contrast their answers.

1. What Type of Volunteer Program were you involved in and what were your tasks?
2. What motivated you to get involved in the program? /What did you want to get out of your experience?
3. How did you pick your program and the organization you did it with and did they have any requirements before you got involved?
4. What impact/benefit do you think came to the people you were helping as a result of your involvement in this volunteer program?
5. How did you benefit personally from the program you were involved in?
6. Do you feel there was any negative consequences on the people you were helping as a result of this program?
7. Did the program meet your expectations? / were there any negative aspects for you personally, as a result of being involved in this volunteer experience?
8. In the future would you like to go on another Volunteer trip/ Do you have any recommendations of how an organization might improve their experiences?

(See Appendix 3)

3.4 Data Analysis:

Analysis of the data occurred throughout the whole research development this included during the interviews, immediately after the collection of the data, and once again during the stage of interpretation and reflection. The researcher read through the responses and transcribed and analyse the data collected. Effort was made to abide by the interviewees intentions and ensure the ideas which are offered in the interviews were conferred in a context which was appropriate. To demonstrate the significance of the responses they were quantified in each area of the research. To identify factors individuals considered when they decided to volunteer abroad an coloured coding scheme was used. This scheme conceptually transformed and interpreted the raw data from the transcripts of the interviews to a meaningful representation of interviewees volunteer tourism experience. A colour coordinated codebook was developed to separate the different themes which helped the researcher identify connections, compare responses and formulate some sort of conclusion of how the volunteer abroad experience was for each participant. An obvious starting point was how volunteers felt about the impact their role had. Other key themes as highlighted in the literature were pinpointed these included community interaction, motivations and self-benefit. In addition to this to elaborate the findings of the interviews quotations and examples were used (Smith, 2015).

3.5 Method:

Eyles and Smith (1988) describe an interview as a conversation which holds some sort of a purpose (Eyles and Smith, 1988). This structure was largely followed in the interviews undertaken in this study. The relaxed opened ended questions and fluidity in the interviews created a comfortable environment for the respondent which allowed the researcher to elicit and extract in-dept knowledge and valuable data. The advantage of adopting this approach is that it is both people orientated and sensitive which allowed them to in their own words construct an account of their experience to an extent in which they felt was appropriate. Between the different interviews the semi structured nature insured there was consistency by using a similar order and wording but also allowing for some flexibility which if an unstructured/structured interview was adopted this would not have been viable (Sin, 2003).

The interview questions were established in a way which would gain a comprehensive understanding of each interviewee's experience in respect to personal benefits, program structure, motivation significant outcomes and interactions with the host communities. The researcher then used their personal contacts and social media to find participants for the interviews. Contact was made through email with 43 potential participants, and a response was from 25 individuals who were interested in taking part in the study. Of the 25 who expressed interest in the study only 11 interviews were completed. Permission to record the interview was then gained from each participant. Interviews were conducted through a mix of video calls through online platforms such as Skype and telephone calls through online platforms such as WhatsApp. These calls were then transcribed by the researcher and analyzed to find trends among answers.

3.6 The Volunteers demographic:

All volunteers involved in the research had travelled abroad to participate in a program and had given their free time and some money and worked for periods between 2weeks to more than a year. The average age of the volunteers was 25 and had an age range of 19-35. The researcher completed 11 interviews with individuals which consisted of four males and seven females. Represented in these interviews was ten nationalities These participants had been involved in a range of different voluntourism experiences across 10 different countries including Egypt, Nepal, Kenya, Thailand, Mexico, American Samoa, Rwanda, Cambodia, Jordan, and Zambia (See Appendix 1). Having participants who have completed their programs in a broad range of countries gives an effective representation of the volunteer tourism experiences available across the world. Each volunteer had completed high school, and were involved in or had completed a diploma, bachelor's degree or postgraduate study. To keep the interviews anonymous their names were not disclosed in this study and instead given a number from one to eleven. For example, interviewee one who completed his program in Egypt will be abbreviated to **I,1 (Egypt)**. Appendix 1 gives an additional break down of each participant and the program they participated in (See Appendix 1).

3.7 Limitations:

During the course of this study several limitations were encountered. Firstly, due to the lack of funding and limited time allocation to complete this study the researcher could not personally partake in a volunteer abroad program to firsthand gain an in dept understanding why one would be motivated to embark on this journey and what benefits this form of tourism really brings both personally and to the host. As a result of this the research methodology is based on secondhand information on the experiences of others who have previously partook in these projects.

Secondly due to the current global circumstance and distant locations of interviewees the researcher had to opt out of face to face interviews and conduct them online through email and video calling platform such as Skype. Eleven interviews were conducted in total which means a sample size of this amount cannot cover all variations of volunteer tourism projects available. Due to this limitation the consequence may be lack of representation of some forms of programs.

4.0 Analysis of volunteer's Interviews:

4.1 Introduction:

This section of the research will be an analysis of the volunteer's experience which they discussed in their interviews. This material will be analysed with regard to the literature review conducted on volunteer tourism at the beginning of this study. These programs also displayed common characteristics in the industry globally such as altruistic intentions, touristic activities and involvement in an array of service work. The most popular type of program the interviewees were involved in was providing service learning or education in their host communities. It is important to note that the programs which this study represents are not labeled as voluntourism explicitly, but fairly fall under wide-ranging conceptualization and definitions of models of volunteer tourism which are established throughout the literature. In previous sections of this study much of the literature include studies conducted on volunteer tourism programs which are educationally based. Therefore, the analysis of the following interviews will allow appropriate connections of the primary benefits and limitations of voluntourism to be made.

To determine if participants had been motivated to volunteer by such perceived benefits or characteristics data from their interviews and a handful of follow up conversations was analysed. Following this a set of categories fitting with previous literature and grounded in the data which fitted responses was determined. Then snippets were extracted from these interviews and quoted below fitting in with the theme to help tease out the volunteer's motivations. Each participant was motivated by more than one of the motivational categories.

4.2 Incentives & Motivations:

At the beginning of each interview the researcher firstly wanted to gain an understanding of why these volunteers wished to help, this being their ultimate and instrumental goals as discussed in the literature review. This will begin to shape an understanding on why tourists decide to volunteer. After looking at previous studies the researcher has already suggested volunteers are

motivated through altruism to join these projects. The following responses from interviewees followed the trends of escapism, a learning opportunity and altruistic motivations.

Escape from normal everyday life:

I,3 (Nepal): I simply wanted to gain some new experiences in a completely new environment and with a different culture.

I,5(Thailand): I recently graduated college and was looking for my calling in life. But I wanted to prove I could solo travel and do it for myself not my awful ex who put in my head thinking I couldn't.

I,7 (American Samoa): My hope was to gain greater awareness, resiliency, and a wider skill set to push myself outside my comfort zone.

Here when interviewees were asked why they had decided to get involved in their volunteer abroad program rather than a traditional holiday or touristic trip abroad it is clear to see in their responses the presence of trends of learning opportunities, altruistic motivations and a desire to go outside their comfort zone and do something different while experiencing an international culture. Participants were motivated to get involved in these experiences to give them the opportunity to escape everyday life. By doing these programs they were able to disconnect from their busy work lives and take time to engage in self-reflection and relax and search for inner peace.

Altruism:

Four out of eleven interviewees had altruistic motivations to help those in adverse situations as the main desire of their trip, this is demonstrated in the responses bellow:

I,8 (Rwanda): I wanted my eyes to be opened to how others live and learn and give back to the community where I expected nothing in return.

I,4 (Kenya): I wanted to give something to the community that they will remember forever, and I think that the feeling you get while helping is indescribable. It's a good way to know another place and to volunteer as well as helping others.

I,11 (Zambia): I was thinking to like connect my travel experience and also like to make some change or like help people in need.

I,10 (Jordan): My primary motive was to help desperate children understand they have worthy, intrinsic value and hold a significant place in the world. I wanted to give back to children and families that have greater needs than my own.

The willingness of volunteers to engage in programs such as these for altruistic motives lies consistent with the findings from previous research. For ongoing volunteering people's feelings of being needed or useful and support towards a cause can be a strong motivator of why one may get involved (McSweeney and Alexander, 1996).

4.3 Personal impacts and benefits:

A variety of personal impacts and benefits gained from their experiences were recognised by all of the interviewees. Commonalities were revealed from the responses particularly of personal development and growth also included from participants was building relationships, international experience, and gratification. These all mirror the benefits of volunteer tourism which have been described previously in this study.

Friendships/Relationships:

Camaraderie is another motivational theme which is seen to be sought by volunteers on their trips. Meeting people, making friends, and interacting with those who share common values and interests was important to a number of interviewees. Creating these bonds with people of similar minds added both enjoyment and value to their overall volunteer experience.

I,10 (Jordan): Personally, I gained friendships from an array of committed interesting, engaged and goal-oriented humans that share a common goal: to unite the world through acts of kindness and love. I have also learned vast amounts from my new friends as well as from my experience volunteering.

I,6 (Mexico): *I was hoping that at least I would make some new connections, I would learn some basic Spanish and that I would leave with a feeling that I had accomplished something really meaningful that would look really good on a resume.*

I,9 (Cambodia): *There were two other volunteers working at the same time as me, we made such good friends. Having this experience meant we built a bond together different from normal friendships.*

I,1 (Egypt): *It's like experience is for me is priceless. I would pay anything to get experience. Second of all I met so many good people, really good people that are still my friends until now.*

I,6 (Mexico): *I was introduced to people and made friendships and connections that will last a lifetime.*

While examining the interview responses regarding this theme the researcher noted that it may be attributed to the benefit element of volunteer tourism rather than a factor of motivation. This was in respects to participants choosing to volunteer abroad solely on building friendships or in retrospect was it a realised benefit which resulted from getting involved in the experience? To uncover the answer to this question, a follow up interview was conducted with three of the interviewees. Further questions were asked, and these participants confirmed that it was indeed a motivational factor in which prior to the trip they looked forward to. As stated by

I,9(Cambodia): *None of my friends back home were interested in getting involved in a program like this so I was excited to create lasting friendships with new people who had the same empathy and interests as me.*

International experience/Gratification:

Through their volunteer experiences interviewees wanted to make a difference and do something meaningful in the lives of others while immersing themselves in a new culture.

I,3 (Nepal): *I also learnt to be more understanding of different cultures and flexible to working in a new environment and following their protocol.*

I,6 (Mexico): *I left this program with a new sense of perspective on the world and the gross inequality that is around us at all times. I had the chance to learn about topics that I hadn't*

covered in school about our global community, and the horrible struggles that people face each day in a developing country.

***I,4 (Kenya):** I came back with a different mindset; I appreciate more things. I really loved the things I took for granted, stuff like the bathroom and my bed and everything like it was completely different when I came back.*

***I,11 (Zambia)** In the end when I came back home I realised that I didn't change them it was the opposite like I learned many things and they changed me and showed me many things I didn't expect. I thought I could show them happiness. The things are like they don't have anything, and they are super happy. They're not worried, they're not stressed they just live in the moment. I never felt so free in life because I wasn't connected, I didn't use my phone. But they showed me the real world.*

***I,9 (Cambodia):** I also think I changed a lot myself from being involved I look at life a lot differently now and how I go about daily life, I'm more appreciative of things and my situation at home.*

Confronting and witnessing inequality face to face seems to have enabled these participants to put problems in their own life into perspective. After returning home when something does not go to plan, they can become more realistic. While abroad Volunteers were forced to think of themselves in relation to an environment completely different to the comfortable life they had at home, these changes come as a result of their encounters with the local communities.

Personal development:

Previous research has established numerous benefits which are derived by participants from their experience (McIntosh and Zahra, 2009; Garrison, 2015; Gooch and Coghlan, 2011). In their studies they focus on areas such as self-fulfillment, personal development, a greater sense of independence, empowerment and a heightened spiritual development and self-awareness by reflecting on values from the West (McIntosh and Zahra, 2009; Garrison, 2015; Gooch and Coghlan, 2011). Others such as Raymond and Hall (2008), have described the benefits offered from these experiences as kinds of benefits that one cannot purchase. For example, making meaningful connections, and the feeling after seeing hard work pay off (Raymond and Hall, 2008).

***I,6 (Mexico):** I was given a new perspective on what it means to be a volunteer, and how to properly give. Knowing now when helping can hurt and when we are giving to the less fortunate for our own personal gain, instead of potential growth.*

***I,5 (Thailand):** I do look at animals and life in a different way. I have seen what these animals have been through, the pain the uncertainty and then all of a sudden like nothing happened. But if this dog who has been tortured stuck in a cage begging for food can love again why can't I?*

***I,8 (Rwanda):** Through my experience in volunteering, I was reminded that we are one people of the world. No matter our language, our religion, our skin colour, our upbringing or our way of life we are all belonging to one human race. We are all craving love and connection and at the end of the day, it's what unites us.*

***I,1 (Egypt):** Pretty much I was just a kid at that time I didn't know much about the work atmosphere or anything and it got me in to like the mood for work. You know that like it's adult life now you can work and do stuff.*

***I,7 (American Samoa):** I was appalled by how hard this experience would be for me especially mentally and emotionally. Through completing the program, I gained immense strength, resourcefulness and resiliency.*

Several of the participants highlighted how privileged their life was compared to those of the hosts and material lives stark differences. These trips impacted their lives in an enlightening way and their expectations for their trips were massively exceeded. This claim is represented when a handful of interviewees said that as a result of their volunteering trip that their career choices in the future would be influenced by their experience. Nearly half of the interviewees said the way they looked at the world and life, changed in some aspect after their trip. For some by visiting impoverished areas and experiencing the lives of the people in poor communities they were able to notice a great discrepancy between life there and their own at home.

4.4 Community benefit/ Interactions:

This section highlights the importance for interviewees to be able to emotionally and physically immerse themselves in the local community's culture as a clear-cut motivational factor. This sentiment was common among participants as it gave them an invaluable opportunity which allowed them to be immersed into the locals culture in such a degree which wouldn't have been possible without these first hand interactions through their volunteer work with the local community and people, Travelers were enabled through their experience to go beyond the platform of a typical tourist and learn by seeing these peoples living environment, their lives and as they really are rather than lounge around a lavish resort or beautiful beach. A strong value was also attached by volunteers to seeking an authentic experience in a new destination. It was also demonstrated by participants that they had an insatiable curiosity about new places and people and that they believed the opportunity to connect in a more profound way with the local communities and people came by interacting and working with them. Correspondently, participants testified that long-term friendships and relationships were built between the visitors and hosts as a result.

Response from the community:

The relationship built between the locals and volunteers has been emphasised as an empowering way to stimulate an international understanding. Zavitz & Butz's (2011) believe that the first step to a peaceful society globally is an international understanding,

I,4 (Kenya): The children over there were really happy to see us. When we left you could feel their emotions, they were so grateful with us and it was just so so happy when we were there that they cried.

I,3 (Nepal): It was hard at times to get them to take us more seriously- we had to prove to them we were there to help them and not just for a holiday.

I,8 (Rwanda): There never was a shortage of warm hugs, loving touches, sincere smiles and joyful high fives from the people there. When they laughed with you, you felt a connection.

I,7 (American Samoa): There was tension in the relationship between the American Samoa and WorldTeach who were holding the program. And after ten years in that location needed some change in overall communication and support.

I,6 (Mexico): Throughout the entire program I always felt like I was a part of the community.

From this data we can see an overall positive response from participants when asked questions about working and interacting with the host communities. Although participants were in completely different countries completing different projects there is a similarity between their perception of the response from the community and the authenticity level. This shared idea that there was a lasting impression left on host communities is interesting as many participants confer there was a lack of follow up and progress measurement after returning home which will be discussed further into the research.

Authenticity:

Volunteer tourism has the capability of creating an authentic environment between community members and volunteers and as a result of this leads to a greater understanding between both parties.

I,6 (Mexico): *I think that over the course of the program we definitely impacted the communities with our friendships, with our connections and relationships.*

I,8 (Rwanda): *A lot of them assumed we could sponsor them and get them to America and that we would give them money. I've had a few reach out to me personally to ask for money which in turn makes me extremely guilty.*

I,7 (American Samoa): *I stayed the whole year despite wanting to leave many times, because the relationships I made with my students was so important and special.*

I,9 (Cambodia): *The hardest part of the trip was saying goodbye and trying to explain to the children I wouldn't be back, When I explained it to them some were quite upset and confused. Although I was helping, I didn't want them to think I was abandoning them which for some might have brought up some trauma. After returning home, I sent some emails to check up on the children I had created close connections with.*

These responses show how moved the volunteers were by the genuine interactions they made with the local communities. This supports the belief from literature that when in the presence of the host participants don't feel like the simple 'tourist'. Interacting and working with one another fosters friendships and bonding between the two groups which develops and promotes a mutual understanding (Garrison, 2015). With some participants there was a trend of hoping to continue communication with individuals they met during their program. But it seems the follow through may have been minimal. But it is fair to say that this may be attributed to the developing countries lack of communication ability and reflects the belief that friendships and relationships made are constrained to the time spent within the community.

Benefits the community received:

I,3 (Nepal): *We provided new materials for improving peoples job opportunities and conditions. We also worked with the youth in the community to encourage and empower them to make their youth group more active.*

I,5 (Thailand): *We set up educational programs for the locals to educate them on dogs and what we were doing as an organisation and then a lot of locals worked with us bringing in dogs.*

I,8 (Rwanda): *The people we taught got more of a chance to practice their English skills by having English native speakers on site.*

I,10 (Jordan) *our/my greatest impact is giving the children a sense of a better world where all children matter, no matter where they're from, or what groups they belong to.*

I,9 (Cambodia): *The organisation needed some sort of donation so before I left for my trip I saved and started a gofundme page. The people working in the orphnage were so happy to receive the money and I saw how big a help it would be as they were struggling financially.*

This section highlights the importance for interviewees to be able to emotionally and physically immerse themselves in the local communities' culture as a clear-cut motivational factor. This sentiment was common among participants

When participants were asked what benefits, they felt their participation brought the host country and about their experience with working with the local community members all participants had overwhelmingly one or more positive aspects during their trip to speak about. Although the projects completed by the interviewees all were different their perception of the benefits the communities received, the authenticity level and responses from the members of the communities were very similar. Interestingly despite the lack of follow-up measurement of progress after they returned home, they all shared the same idea that for each community a lasting impact was made.

4.5 Developing an understanding of Inequality and poverty:

As not all of these programs offered debriefing exercises or structured reflection as discussed in the next section, it was clear to see that some responses who had been involved in discussion during their trip, when discussing issues surrounding inequalities and poverty showed a deeper understanding in these areas which leads us to the conclusion these exercises were important to allow them to see and think further into the problems which were taking place in these areas. Of the participants who spent time in developing countries all acknowledged the presence of poverty in these areas and had a general understanding of the array of issues which contributed to this impoverishment. Without an educational component with reflection, efforts and a learning environment of these volunteer programs volunteers are hindered from seeing further.

I,1 (Egypt) helping little kids to get good education and a fruitful one is like that best thing you can do in life. Giving them a future helping them to get out of the streets its absolutely beautiful I liked it a lot. Let's say the good deeds you want to do because you want to teach people and not only give to them, you need to teach them how to get what they want. Not just give them what you want or what they want

I,6 (Mexico): We had many discussions about poverty, slavery, and trafficking. These classes were always a great time to share your personal thoughts and they helped us have a better perspective on the communities we were working in. It is very easy for us (privileged volunteers) to just hand out "stuff" or give money or tangible items and that can leave a negative effect on a community. The real task of a successful volunteer program is finding ways to give non-tangible things

The volunteer's understanding of poverty prior to their trip had them questioning if the communities needed their help. This view supports the illusion that society in the West is the South's only solution to their issues of global development. Due to solidarity the building of international relationships is jeopardized by this. The notion that individuals can do, and already do is fundamental to such experiences as many helps themselves rather on relying on the help of outsiders hopelessly. It needs to be recognised by volunteers that what they see reflects the local peoples existing skills, capacity and knowledge.

4.6 Negative aspects of the trips:

When questioned on the negative impact if any, their trip might have had on the host communities some downsides many have been overlooked by interviewees. Tourists who participated in programs which were of a long duration were more aware of the possible negative effects which came as a result of these projects. It seemed that all volunteers were somewhat aware of the negative effects, but this highlights the need for marketers and organisations to ethically and honestly advertise their business.

The negative feelings may have been felt by the host communities themselves. Having flows of volunteers coming and going from countries with more wealth may have left the local community members feeling frustrated and inferior. At the same time having too many volunteers visiting impoverished areas may cause problems related to infrastructure development and tourism as there might not be sufficient resources and food in some countries.

In adequate program on boarding + Debriefing:

Reflection and effective onboarding and debriefing is an important additional aspect of volunteer tourism programs if they aim to be educational. The programs represented by the participants utilized varying pre-trip briefing assignments, personal verbal reflection, weekly assignments and journal entries. These varied in level of effectiveness and structure and the programs and more participants were vocal about their negative experience with this part of their programs.

I,7 (American Samoa): I found the on-boarding process prior to leaving for American Samoa was very limited and not helpful in adequately preparing volunteers to live and teach in American Samoa. I felt very alone in preparing lesson plans and going about my days at my respective elementary school. My own battles with anxiety and depression really came to a head and there was little means of treating that.

I,6 (Mexico): My only feedback to any international volunteer program would be to really invest in the discussion time each day with the students and young people joining the programs. I think that it is so important especially with young teenagers or young adults to help

them to digest their experience and to help them work through everything that they are seeing and experiencing each day.

***I,10 (Jordan):** I recommend every volunteer organization to perform self-reflection and internal assessments to monitor for its efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. I also recommend consistent check in with volunteers which will provide help for more than a one-off experience.*

This section examines the preparatory regime the volunteers underwent and from analyzing their comments it shows there was concerns across the board on the way their education was developed. The volunteers highlighted themselves how necessary they feel pre-departure education is. Volunteers felt they did not have the support necessary from the organisations with whom they did their trips. The reflections of the volunteers indicate that the absence of sufficient training resulted in individuals experiencing a misunderstanding of their roles and conflicting expectations of the work at hand. As some went on this trip motivated to make the lives of others better they assumed they would use their existing skills and take on the role of a helper. When this wasn't utilised like they expected they became disappointed and began questioning their development process role. The next section holds similarities where more interviewees speak about the lack of training, they received during their projects.

Unprepared and Untrained:

The harsh truth which is often seen in these programs is that volunteers in reality have no training, preparation or experience in the work they embark on in these developing areas. Volunteers who nobly travel across the world to participate in these programs with no prior training may contradict the purpose of their trip as with no training they become counterproductive to the whole process (Dykhuis, 2010).

***I,2 (Egypt):** Our main problem was regarding the culture where we didn't know enough to understand that some things we did were wrong.*

***I,3 (Nepal):** It was very difficult to engage community members to get involved with the training provided.*

I,9 (Cambodia) *It would have been good if we were given a bit more training to know what sort of levels the children were at.*

I,8 (Rwanda): *The only recommendation I would have for them is to plan out the lesson plans a bit more in advance i.e prior to our arrival. So, we have more of a heads up of what we are teaching and how we can improve that experience*

I,1 (Egypt): *NGO's sometimes treat their people as if they're working in a corporation and that's not right because these people even if they're getting paid they don't get paid as much as a corporation for you to ask them to work as much as a corporation employee. You need to be as cool as possible, as encouraging as possible, as articulate as possible because the volunteer might not know what your doing so you need to give them all the tools to tell them exactly what to do because sometimes things get a little messy and the volunteer gets caught up in the middle and it's a big deal.*

I,10 (Jordan): *I understood that not every leader/director of the group/location we volunteered with was happy with our project work.*

An enduring impact cannot be expected to be created by the volunteer when there isn't a basic understanding of the interrelated system problems these communities in extreme poverty are facing. However, the blame should not be placed on the volunteer and instead the facilitators for their lack of conscientiousness for not prioritizing a discussion and preparation pre their departure.

Egocentric motivations:

When there is a presence of egocentric motivations such as self-discovery, personal enhancement and the desire to travel to somewhere new it is fair to say that the leading motivator behind the trip is not pure altruism. It would be unfair to say this is a complete negative that comes with volunteer tourism as it would be unnatural for all volunteers not to consider personal gain to some extent. Where it comes into debate as being a negative aspect is when it is questioned as if it exists equally for both the host community and volunteer or does self interest primarily drive it?

I,1 (Egypt): I wanted to do something besides studying so that was a motivation. I'm a big believer in self enhancement and self-development so that was part of it definitely. I believe that experience is priceless whatever the experience is. So yeah, I wanted to do something to contribute to this community because it really deserves better.

This snapshot of a interviewees responses looks to be more on the egoistic side as a motivation. However, egotistic motives were just found in a handful of participants and altruistic motivations were identified in others. Here we can recognise that necessarily volunteering was not the main and only motive behind some of their their trips. It is important to note that this does not perceive or indicate that volunteer tourism is selfish but rather implies the element of give and take which supports the individualism altruistic claims made (Otoo and Amuquandoh, 2014).

Ineffectiveness of shorth-term programs:

Two interviewees participated in programs lasting from only seven to ten days. This short time span would have hindered a lot of the benefits of volunteer tourisms such as the potential for authenticity, the chance to develop a cultural understanding and cross-cultural exchange and would have reduced the projects sustainability. Snyder, Dharamsi, & Crooks (2011) described these short services as a glorified form of tourism which is swaddled in façade of altruism and to the receiving communities brings no sustainable benefits (Snyder, Dharamsi and Crooks, 2011).

I,9 (Cambodia): I felt as though my week volunteering was not long enough. It took a few days for the children to become completely comfortable around me and by then it was time for me to leave. It was heartbreaking to see how upset they were when I explained I wouldn't be back. When I look back it makes me question was, I doing more harm than good in my short space of time.

From this response we can see an example of where the volunteer tourism market has put emphasis on the satisfaction of the paying volunteer rather than the host community. We can assume this organisation designs their programs to satisfy expectations and the lives of the volunteer. It was not till after the trip was finished did the participant reflect on the damaging consequences their involvement may have had on the host community. This was not the

intentional fault of the volunteer, it came as a result of a lack of awareness, lack of education and a harmful marketing and program design by the organisation. As the people in these communities are already vulnerable, organisations focusing their energy on short-term volunteers satisfaction perpetuates the hosts poverty and multitude of issues which reinforce it.

4.7 Conclusion on data collected during interviews:

Although only 11 interviews from a randomly selected group of volunteers cannot be expressed as significant or generalisable these do create an improved understanding of volunteer tourism programs general educational design. These participants stories provide genuine connections between the limitations and benefits as previously described in this studies literature review. Granting this sample is not generalisable, as all interviewees were willingly interested to be involved in my study their answers are assumedly more truthful and genuine. For each program an overall understanding was gained by the questions asked. However, it is difficult to establish with complete certainty what the strengths and weaknesses are without participating in these programs.

Given the evidence presented from the interviews it is a fallacy to say the motivations of volunteer tourism are entirely altruistic. It would appear on balance however that from these interviews a form of social egoism is represented through engaging participants, through instrumental means others are helped but with the ultimate goal and purpose being to benefit oneself. The role which altruism/egoism plays is still unclear and will be further unraveled in a later stage of this study.

These volunteer reflections show that the volunteers on site development experience was affected by the expectations held when first going over. The importance of volunteers reflecting on their expectations and motivations is highlighted in these participant insights and if underwent will prevent any potential disappointment and further promote mutual learning and social interactions as two important aspects of their trips.

For non-profit organisations, professionals, tourism marketers and potential service providers the information uncover during the series of these interviews could be of great value. All

interviewees expressed that they would get involved in a volunteer abroad experience again so these discussions offer several significant insights to potential service providers in how they might enhance their overseas experiences and make their trips more beneficial for both the host communities and ensure volunteers embark on these trips with the right motives at heart.

It is evident that there are some negatives which come alongside the benefits, in order to minimise them stakeholders, tourism professionals and the government should take note of these negative impacts and when promoting this form of tourism try to minimise them.

4.8 Discussion:

The stories of these volunteer's experiences provide realistic links between the limitations and benefits of volunteer tourism which are described previously in the study's literature review. As all participants were interested personally in contributing to this study this is not a generalisable sample, as responses given were more likely truthful and genuine. An overall understanding of these programs was gained from the questions asked however, as stated previously for one to identify from a personal point of view with complete certainty the weaknesses and strengths which are derived from each program, actual participation is needed.

It is clear to see from the analysis on the data gathered in the interviews that all respondents were travelers who were volunteer minded with a desire to show their concern and love to communities in need and give back. Their motives were similar in many ways to those identified in the literature review. Their participation in these trips came as a result of these individuals wanting to learn about the host communities by interacting with them and to discover different cultures. None of the interviewees were motivated to do these trips for traditional tourist travel activities. Nonetheless, this study has found that several volunteers wanted a change and to escape from their normal everyday lives.

From analysing the interviews conducted it can be assumed most participants wanted to socialise with other volunteers and/or the hosts. Looking at it from this perspective one can say volunteer tourism draws near the conventional type of tourism. Peoples motives are affected by this as

tourism is a social phenomenon. Volunteer tourists who are altruistic minded easily turn on tourists who are vacation minded if the basis of their motives are not strong. However contrarily tourists who are vacation minded and get to know the hosts on a personal level and/or spend time with volunteer minded tourists may experience enlightenment (Mustonen, 2007).

Concerns have been raised by volunteers themselves regarding short –programs and their lasting impact. Organisations tend to brush over training with volunteers who participate in these programs as the time scale they are there is far too short to fit adequate preparation with them in, before they begin. This leaves volunteers not truly understanding the local communities' concerns and needs. This was a main concern voiced by Volunteers regarding their prior lack of knowledge of the community's concerns and needs. Organisations also create easily repeated activities in order to cater to the new cycle of volunteers. As a result of this programs become disjointed and the communities lose interest and their support of the programs declines. In order to create a constructive and collaborative relationship, organizations need to build trust and respect the local communities.

5.0 Recommendations and Conclusion:

5.1 Introduction:

The conversation raised in this research has been inevitably speculative but has highlighted a variety of both the positive and negative consequences which can come as a result of volunteer tourism. If the possible negative impacts of this sector are overlooked and only its positives are promoted there becomes a risk that the industry turns into as Butler (1990) calls a 'Trojan Horse'. What he means by this is communities don't recognize its possible consequences and continue to embrace it (Butler, 1990). Volunteer tourism's negative impacts are fortunately automatically inevitable and when projects are properly managed and planned are likely to be mitigated.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to think differently about the local partner- volunteer relationship. For many host communities the current cost of volunteer tourism surpasses the benefits. The enterprises harmful consequences outlive the pertinence of a graduate's curriculum vitae or the use by date of a picture on Facebook. This at the same time reproduces the very dynamics which help to explain why the volunteer has a university degree and a Facebook profile and not the host in the first place (Banki and Schonell, 2017).

5.2 Recommendations:

This piece of research has likely constructed as many questions as it has attempted to answer. The solution which first comes to mind lies within the exchange's nexus. Soft contracts and agreements regardless of their form are a possible potential way forth. Within them the elements contained for example would be the acknowledgement of structural imbalances, contributing money in exchange for time, guiding the volunteer's actions post project and so forth. On a micro level these theories have a potential to address the imbalances. More extensively an agreement or contract may assist in altering the way we view larger development programs, emphasising the importance of transparency and reciprocity for recipients and implementers of not only short-term aid but long-term assistance. These possible solutions also enliven a series of dilemmas such as what language would the agreement of contract be written or negotiated? In communities with low literacy how would one make the contract public? How

will it be ensured that the legion of volunteer tourists and local partners associated adopt this norm? How can we best harness the power of social media, mobile phones and the internet? Bringing these various questions to head would the researchers suggested proposal work? These questions the researcher holds are adequately compelling to stimulate a necessary conversation. The researcher will further unravel this discussion in the body of this dissertation (Banki and Schonell, 2017).

Nevertheless, volunteer tourism itself and any recommendations made to improve the industry may be an option advisable for some host communities but not suited for others. For instance, it may be a desire of a community to interact and spend time with volunteers whereas another community may have the desire to cut back and reduce the volume of volunteers visiting. Therefore, no formula can be developed singularly to develop volunteer projects which are beneficial to all. Alternatively developing a greater awareness of the negative impacts which come alongside these programs is necessary so projects can be managed independently, and the unfavorable impacts avoided.

5.3 Costings associated with recommendations:

Financially this study's associated application would be fairly moderate. The organisations who run these programs would need to invest time and money into developing and training volunteers before they engage with the host communities. This training will cost the organisation but morally they will be doing the right thing for both the volunteer and host community.

5.4 Personal Learning statement:

This Dissertation was completed as a partial fulfillment of the MSCIB curriculum. As a result of participating in this course I developed an extensive amount of skills which I will be able to bring to my lifelong career while working in business internationally. Upon completion of this project I am now confident in conducting interviews with participants, I can understand the issue at hand and sensitise the argument or problems which are presented to me. When ideas are brought forward, I can comprehensively compare previous literature and use my in-depth knowledge of how to critically analyze concepts and theories and then while following a logical

manner further dive into these views and implement plans. Participating in this project has also highlighted to me the importance of research, planning, time management and implementation. Enhancing my knowledge in these skills will be extremely beneficial in my career within International Business.

Without doubt this project has been an element of my master's program which I found the most tedious and demanding. However, having the autonomy of picking an area of interest to me made this research extremely enjoyable and rewarding for me. This self-directed piece of work will be brought proudly with me to the organisation in which I spark my lifelong career with. I the researcher am a strong believer in travelling ethically and realising that what you participate in may have a hidden negative knock on effect on others, I found it remarkably interesting to explore this rapidly growing trend of tourism. With confidence I can say that the findings of this research will be extremely beneficial to both the organizations who run these programs and future potential participants who want to volunteer abroad.

Further skills I felt I have developed from completing this research include improved communication, listening and a greater self-confidence, all of which will benefit me hugely in my endeavors in my work life into the future. Lastly, the most transferable skill I learnt was the knowledge of understanding how to word and ask the correct questions in order to collect the data which was needed for this study. Coming up with themes to help me understand how to sieve out the information I needed from participants will be a great skill I can bring to the table of the future organisation I join.

The greatest challenge I faced while completing this dissertation was my time management skills. After a promotion within my personal career arose, I knew I couldn't resist as this opportunity to gain this experience wouldn't come again easily. I knew it wouldn't be easy working full time for the first time while completing my studies. I do not regret my decision for taking this role as I feel the experience gained will serve well in my working life. Sadly, due to these external time management factors and social constraints, skills such as critical thinking and flourishing creativity were not developed as much as I would had wished. Going forward I will be making a realistic plans and setting goals within an achievable timeframe before I begin any large projects in order to keep on track.

Overall, I am happy with how my dissertation experience went. I faced some hurdles but developing an independent learning style during this process and various other skills which have shaped me and pushed me to move outside my comfort zone. On a final note it is important to for me to note that thankfully I had the help of a supportive supervisor. This highlighted to me that at times it is extremely necessary and important to reach out and ask for help.

6.0 Conclusion:

The question behind the motives of those who participate in volunteer tourism and the benefits it brings to the hosts remains unsettled amongst academic and practitioners which highlights the need for additional research to be undertaken on this form of tourism. Arguments with the view that the truest form of sustainable, ethical, and alternative tourism is represented in volunteer tourism are countered with arguments equally as strong debating that participants are lacking critical engagement with their surroundings on these projects.

Due to the scope, size and limited research available this study does not intend to produce an explanation for definitive reasons why one would participate in volunteer tourism, but it does however provide insight into possible reasoning for it. It is demonstrated in this paper that the volunteer tourists' motivations are not simply altruistic and are combined with egoistic ones. Through Sober and Wilson's (1998) work we see these altruistic motivations scrutinised even more when they argue that it is a motivation of a pluralistic theory as the desires of an altruist are not all ultimately directed at others (Sober and Wilson, 1998). As the sector of volunteer tourism continues to develop, taking a pragmatic view will help us to understand that the tourism industry will fall subject to market forces and to a larger or lesser extent it will always shape it. It is fair to say that this study will be beneficial to many of volunteer tourism's stakeholders. For academics it shines a light on the gap in research, which is worth exploring in far greater detail, this is in regards to how altruism has been masked within volunteer tourism. For future volunteer tourists and hosts of volunteer tourism it portrays this industry in an accurate light to ensure both parties are fully aware of paths they may be about to embark on.

To conclude the potential negative impacts of Volunteer tourism, have the possibility of being avoided when an improved understanding and awareness of its downfalls is established. As a result of this projects can be managed and planned in such a way to avoid these detrimental consequences. In that event volunteer tourism could manifest to something which is genuinely mutually beneficial to the volunteers and hosting community. This would thereby allow volunteer tourism to deserve truly the applaud it already receives so often.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1. Interviewee Table:

Participant	Type of program	Country	Activities	Highlights	Would they volunteer again?
Interviewee 1: (Male)	Developing educational curriculum for an impoverished school.	Egypt	HR associate doing interviews presentations and making schedules.	Doing a good deed/ Nobel cause Teaching people. Something different to studying. Self enhancement/ self-development. Meet new people. Add to CV. Contributed to a community and made a difference.	Yes.
Interviewee 2. (Male)	Improving IT in a startup company.	Egypt	Participate in meetings, improve the companies processes and coding.	Experiencing another culture and gaining different working skills. Learning to embrace and overcome challenges. Made friends for life, Sightseeing, learnt new language skills.	Yes
Interviewee 3- (Female)	Team Leader for an International	Nepal	Empowering the youth and improving	New experience in a new environment with a different culture.	Yes

	Citizen Service.		their livelihood in a rural community.	Made a sustainable change. Trained community members. More understanding of different cultures.	
Interviewee 4- (Female)	Teaching English to children and helping in an orphanage.	Kenya	Teaching English classes, building a soccer field and painting bedrooms and classrooms	Helping others. Getting to know a new place. An eye opener to appreciate what we take for granted. Made a special connection with one of the children. Came back with a different mindset.	Yes
Interviewee 5- (Female)	Street Dog rescue and rehabilitation.	Thailand	Training, walking, feeding, washing, and medicating the dogs.	Went looking for her calling in life and to see if this was the right career path. Proved to herself she could solo travel. See a different culture, Made difference to dogs livelihoods. Educated locals on the stray dogs. Looks at animals and life in a different way now. Different outlook on life.	Yes
Interviewee 6 - (Male)	Helping communities living in poverty.	Mexico	House building, working with students in an after-school program, Teaching	Gained a better perspective on the communities. Gap year, figured out his path explored different opportunities and interests, Unique experience, learned from the locals and give his	Yes

			English, assisting children with disabilities.	time love and energy. Helped others. New connections. Do something meaningful, look good on Résumé, Long term sustainability for the community. Learned about the world and different cultures. New perspective on the world, learnt about things not thought in school. Understanding when helping can hurt.	
Interviewee 7 - (Female)	Elementary educator	American Samoa	Creating lesson plans, leading a 5 th grade ESL class.	Complete bucket list. Live abroad Gained a greater awareness, push herself outside her comfort zone. Live in a new place and travel, uplift and encourage young people to believe in themselves. Gained immense strength resiliency and resourcefulness. Made special relationships with the students.	Yes
Interviewee 8 - (Female)	Teach computer skills and English. Empower	Rwanda	Teaching locals from the ages of 10- 70. Created a Facebook and twitter page for	Eye opener to how others live and learn, give back to the community. Develop strong human connections. Learnt the true meaning of kindness. Realizing all	Yes

	marginalized women.		the children's home.	humans share the most critical commonalities. Learnt a lot about herself traveling alone,	
Interviewee 9- (Female)	Teaching in an orphanage.	Cambodia	Teaching English and playing games with the children. Administration work for the orphanage.	Wanted to do something different and give help and make her trip more meaningful. Enhanced her CV. Immerse in a new culture. Filled the void of something missing in her life. Became more internationally aware. Made lifelong connections and friendships. Became more appreciative of her normal life.	Yes
Interviewee 10- (Male)	Provide educational activities for Syrian Refugee children.	Jordan	Created a health and wellness program designed to help kids keep their dreams and goals alive.	Gave back to children and families that had greater needs than his own. Learned vast amounts from friends and experiences created on the program.	Yes
Interviewee 11- (Female)	Teaching children aged 5-15 in a school	Zambia	Taught the children discipline and structure. Created a book	Do something different and connect travel to making a change and helping people in need. Came back realizing that they have	Yes

			for the next volunteers so they knew where to take over from.	nothing and in fact we are not as happy as them.	
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Appendix 2. Participant Consent form:

Participant Consent Form.

**TRAVEL WITH A PURPOSE: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE BENEFITS AND
MOTIVES BEHIND VOLUNTEER TOURISM.**

Volunteer tourism represents an emerging sector of tourism for people who want to make an altruistic contribution during their travel abroad, and has experienced an explosive growth in awareness, participation, and sustainability. This research will use the perceptions and experiences of individuals who have participated in volunteer programs to investigate this belief. The interviewer will ask you a series of open-ended questions for you to give your opinion and experience. If you do not feel comfortable answering any of the questions you may skip the question without any penalty. All that is asked of you is to answer questions appropriately and honestly. Feel free to contact the researcher at the email given below if you have any additional questions regarding the interview. This sheet is the only place your name will be recorded in order to protect your anonymity. Your interview will be recorded in an audio/visual or text format so this data will be identifiable but only accessed by the researcher. This information will be held on a password-protected computer and will be de-identified during the dissertation's write-up. At any time, you may withdraw from study without any consequences. Your time and involvement are profoundly appreciated.

- I _____ voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

- I recognise that even with agreeing to participate, I can refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to and can withdraw without any consequences at any time.

- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study and have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing.
- I understand participation will involve answering open ended questions received through email. These can be answered through an audio recorded response such as skype or telephone call. If respondents would prefer to answer the questions through a typed email this also can be arranged. Whichever you feel more comfortable in doing.
- I understand the information which I provide will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that audio recorded/ typed responses, emails receipts and consent forms will be kept by the researcher in a secure file until their dissertation results have been confirmed by the exam board.
- I understand under the freedom of information legislation that I am entitled to access the information I provide at any time while it is being stored as specified above.

In line with National College of Ireland's ethics board this declaration gives consent for the sole use of the interview.

Printed Name

Participants Signature

Date

Researchers Signature

Date

Contact Information

This research project was considered and approved by the National College of Ireland Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or further questions about this study, please feel free to contact:

Researcher: Aisling O'Halloran

Tel: +353 877627524

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You may also contact:

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Appendix 3. Interview Questions:

Interview Questions:

1. What Type of Volunteer Program were you involved in and what were your tasks?
2. What motivated you to get involved in the program? /What did you want to get out of your experience?
3. How did you pick your program and the organization you did it with and did they have any requirements before you got involved?
4. What impact/benefit do you think came to the people you were helping as a result of your involvement in this volunteer program?
5. How did you benefit personally from the program you were involved in?
6. Do you feel there was any negative consequences on the people or cause you were helping as a result of this program?
7. Did the program meet your expectations? / were there any negative aspects for you personally, as a result of being involved in this volunteer experience?
8. In the future would you like to go on another Volunteer trip/ Do you have any recommendations of how an organization might improve their experiences?