

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

“Voluntourism”, the international development charity points out, is a growing market in which increasing numbers of school leavers are paying commercial companies for the privilege of working for nothing in some of the world's poorest communities. In return, they get a good line for the resume, a clutch of traveler’s tales and a warm feeling created by the sense of doing something worthwhile while getting a key “life experience”. Voluntourism has evolved into volunteer travel and volunteer vacations for the leisure travel market. Although mass tourism was still the mainstream of the market, new tourism styles emerged, including “alternative,” “green”, “sustainable”, and “natural” (Holden, 2000). The push force of alternative tourism and the pull force of the need for volunteering promoted this novel type of tourism. Volunteer tourism has become a significant phenomenon for decades. (Chen and Chen, 2010)

Nowadays people are craving a sense of purpose to be the volunteer in their leisure activities. The researcher Rogers (2007) also mentioned that there is increasing awareness of and interest and participation in some form of volunteer travel among travelers. A wide range of volunteer projects and tours is available. Travelers can participate in building schools, homes, and orphanages in developing countries, taking care of lions in South Africa (Rogers, 2007), elephants in Thailand (Carter, 2005), or sea turtles in Costa Rica (Campbell and Smith, 2006), conducting research on environmental or societal issues (Wearing, 2001), conserving the natural environment (American Hiking Society, 2008), teaching English to children, or assisting in construction projects (Ambassadors for Children, 2008).

Globally, various companies or organizations are doing their very best to build international awareness of volunteer tourism. They strive to promote this type of tourism around the world by educating, providing valuable information and advice, and collaborating with different stakeholder groups such as the host community, non-profit organizations, non-governmental organizations, and individual travelers (Voluntourism Org, 2008). International tour operators also act as effective facilitators of volunteer tourism and aim to provide meaningful

experiences for travelers (Rogers, 2007). Thousands of volunteers are sent to work on projects in different countries worldwide each year. Sometimes, charities cooperate with tour operators to create fundraising travel tours or volunteer projects (Callanan and Thomas, 2005). In so doing, the charities can diversify their funding sources, while the tour operators can raise the profile of the companies and promote themselves as socially responsible and ethical (McCallin, 2001). Some tour operators are also involved in promoting volunteer tourism by providing comprehensive international travel and study information that helps to connect prospective volunteer travelers with organizations providing these opportunities (GoAbroad.com, 2008).

The growth of volunteer tourism, particularly among travelers in the Western countries, has motivated researchers, marketers, and non-governmental organizations to conduct research to learn more about the motivations of these travelers, their contribution to the host community, and other related issues (O'Daly, 2007). It is of paramount importance to understand the travel motivation of volunteer tourists because it is the driving force behind their behavior. Fodness (1994) and Crompton (1979) suggested that more knowledge of tourism motivation is necessary to assist tourism marketers in understanding the travel patterns of individuals so that appropriate tourism products can be developed in accordance with their needs and wants. In addition, studying their perceptions of the value of volunteer trips will help to determine their intentions to reengage in or recommend volunteer travel opportunities.

Over the past decade, a number of studies in volunteer tourism have been conducted. Some common themes of these researches looked at the motivation and perceived benefits of engaging in volunteer tourism (Broad, 2003; Brown and Lehto, 2005; Söderman and Snead, 2009). Some focused on the experience of participating in volunteer ecotourism and volunteer conservation expeditions (Gray and Campbell, 2007; Lepp, 2009a; 2009b). One studied the difference between the projected and perceived images of volunteer tourism organizations (Coghlan, 2007). However, all of these studies were conducted with Western population. More research needs to be done to understand the revisit intention of these volunteer tourists and their perceptions of the value attained through their volunteer tourism experiences in different parts of the world.

History of Voluntourism

The “modern-day version” of Voluntourism started back in the 1960's with the PeaceCorps. From its inception, the PeaceCorps' philosophy was that volunteers can and should serve their country by living and working in developing countries, providing aid and assisting in the peace process by interacting with local cultures.

Since then, Voluntourism has evolved into volunteer travel and volunteer vacations for the leisure travel market. (For the meetings, incentive, convention, and event (MICE) industry, it has become a mechanism for expanding social responsibility, delivering purpose-filled teambuilding activities for attendees, and providing spouses with a much needed alternative to destination shopping sprees.) Now more than ever people are craving a sense of purpose in their leisure activities. Sitting on a beach still appeals to some, but for many people a more meaningful vacation is desired. This growing trend is addressed by Voluntourism. (Voluntourism Org, 2008)

Technically, Voluntourism is defined as: a seamlessly integrated combination of voluntary service to a destination, and the best, traditional elements of travel - arts, culture, geography, history and recreation-in that destination. More simply put, Voluntourism is traveling to another place to directly interact with the destination and its residents with the objective of improving their well-being through socio-cultural development or environmental conservation by providing volunteer assistance and/or goods. (Voluntourism Org, 2008)

We also can find some subsequent events relate to Voluntourism include: “Service learning (1960’s)”, “The boom of study-abroad programs (1970’s)”, “Ecotourism (1980’s)”, “Volunteer vacations (1990’s)” (Although the first volunteer vacation was operated by Earthwatch in 1971, the movement was not broadly recognized until the 1990’s.), and “Corporate social responsibility (1990’s)”. These events bring out the Volunteer Tourism research began from early 1990’s. (Voluntourism Org, 2008)

Advantage of Voluntourism

For the volunteer tourists they can not only participate in meaningful service and have a deep impact on a community, but also develop new skills through service or use ones you already have in service. Moreover, the volunteer tourists, they also can interact with locals they would never meet in a hotel or at touristy places, and see and explore places they would never see on a typical tour or vacation. Voluntourism also can help the participants to create friendships that last a lifetime and to experience true satisfaction from their vacation time. (Voluntourism Org, 2008)

For the corporations, if they encourage their employee to join the Voluntourism activities, that can help to improve the team-building, employee-retention and morale through the process they service in the areas. Moreover, the corporations also can use this approach to represent and live up to their social responsibility. Proceeding to the next step, that they can achieve the objective to promote their companies, and build up their public relations. (Voluntourism Org, 2008)

For the hosting nonprofit organizations or communities, Voluntourism not only can help to create ambassadors for their communities' challenges in the wider world, but also to provide additional skill sets, renewed energy and new ideas to the communities. Furthermore, launching the Voluntourism program in the communities also can back up to generate revenue or building capacity for other programs and projects and build the alumni networks for their communities. (Voluntourism Org, 2008)

Research of Problem

To address the importance of the "Revisit Intention" in the Voluntourism research area, first of all, we should trace to the volunteer behavior research, "Intention of Continuous Service", that means when people start to be the volunteer they willing to involve in the same mission or work, and service in organization steady, that can help to reduce the training costs, and enhance the service quality (Hsueh Shu Chen, 2007).

The tourists' "Revisit Intention" for a tourist destination is one of the important indexes for the tourist industry operation and management, which can help to comprehend the consumers' requirements, improve the satisfactions, and create more benefits. (Roger et al., 2001)

It will be seen from this that if the Voluntourism want to be developed and progressed continually, how to enhance the Volunteer tourists' "Revisit Intention" will become a very important challenge, which is what the research problem in this study.

In this study, the concept of "Activity Involvement", "Experiential Marketing", "Experiential Value", and "Place Attachment" will be the study variables, and then explore the effects on Volunteer tourists' "Revisit Intention". As the construct, the research problem will be addressed as follow:

Will the Activity Involvement have the positive effect on the Experiential Marketing?

Will the Activity Involvement have the positive effect on the Experiential Value?

Will the Activity Involvement have the positive effect on the Place Attachment?

Will the Experiential Marketing have the positive effect on the Experiential Value?

Will the Experiential Marketing have the positive effect on the Revisit Intention?

Will the Experiential Value have the positive effect on the Revisit Intention?

Will the Place Attachment have the positive effect on the Revisit Intention?

Objectives of the Study

This research will through the concept of Activity Involvement, Experiential Marketing, Experiential Value, and Place Attachment, and then explores effects on Volunteer tourists' Revisit Intention. The objective of the study as follows:

Probing into the Volunteer tourists' present situation on Voluntourism through Taiwanese participants' experience.

Exploring the Effects of Activity Involvement, Experiential Marketing, Experiential Value, and Place Attachment on the Volunteer tourists' Revisit Intention.

Addressing some suggestions about how to enhance the Volunteer tourists' Revisit Intention.

Expected Results

The expected result of this research, the main output is testing and verifying the factors of activity involvement, experiential marketing, experiential value, and place attachment have the positive effect on the volunteer tourists' revisit intention. To base on the outcome, look forward to bringing up some contributions on the Voluntourism program or activities providing destinations and the holding organizations.

In this research the contributions on the destinations, through the view point of experiential marketing, can address to which concepts (Sense, Feel, Think, Act, and Relate) are the important indexes to have the positive effect on the revisit intention. Then, the destinations that provide the places for volunteer tourists to do Voluntourism activities, they can refer to the results, and then strengthen the important parts of the experiential marketing in their destinations, to increase the volunteer tourists' experiential value and revisiting willingness.

For the organizations who have or plan the Voluntourism program, they can try to plan some orientations or training courses for the people who want to be volunteer tourist, to help to consolidate their Activity Involvement, then improve their Place Attachment and Experiential Value, and go a step further to heighten their revisit intention.

Scope of Study

About the scope of this study, that will focus on the Voluntourism participants in Taiwan, who may take part in the Voluntourism programs or activities on their vocations in domestic or domestic. The Voluntourism programs or activities will be involved several types, such as Eco-Voluntourism, Agritourism, Edu-Voluntourism, living in the communities to help the local people to develop their living environments, or giving assistance to save remains and historical buildings, and so on.

Limitation of the Study

With reference to the limitation of this study, that put forward that it is difficult to distinguish the “volunteer tourist” and “volunteer”. In order to solve this problem, the sample in this study will put the definition on the volunteer tourist, whom is who did the activity on their vocation or leisure time, and have to pay the traveling expenses by themselves, and then the traveling, touring, and getting some experiences is one of the important purposes in their Voluntourism programs or activities.

Definitions of Terms

Voluntourism refers to tourists who pay to travel to another location where they choose to use their free time to engage in meaningful experiences (Wearing, 2001). Voluntourism combines the nonprofit sector and tourism sector. The primary purpose is to serve, to learn about the host community and its people. (Voluntourism Org, 2008; Global Volunteers.org, 2010). Wearing and Neil (2000) describe volunteer tourism as a personal experience people engage in to fulfill intrinsic motivation which can benefit the participant’s life and the host community.

Volunteer Tourist as “shallow,” “intermediate,” or “deep” based on the duration of the volunteer trip, the skills or qualifications required of participants, the degree of involvement (passive or active) of volunteer tourists, their level of contribution to local communities, and the focus of the experience (altruistic or self-interested) (Callanan and Thomas, 2005). Brown and Morrison (2003) found two types of volunteer tourists: volunteer-minded tourists who are willing to spend most or all of their vacation volunteering, and vacation-minded volunteer tourists who devote only some of their vacation time to volunteer work

Activity Involvement, definitions adapted from the consumer behavior literature have focused on the notion of “personal relevance;” where elements of an activity are related to an individual’s identity, values, or needs (Celsi and Olson, 1988; McIntyre, 1989). Based on the literature about activity involvement, Havitz and Dimanche (1997; 1999) have suggested that multi-faceted operations of the construct are best suited. Facets receiving the strongest empirical support include: (a) Attraction: the importance and pleasure associated with the activity; (b)

Centrality: the value of an activity relative to other domains of life (e.g., occupation.); (c) Self Expression: the expression of one's identity through activity engagement.

Place Attachment, Altman and Low (1992) have noted that place attachment is subsumed by a variety of analogous concepts drawn from several fields of knowledge. Building from the work of geographers and environmental psychologists, leisure researchers tend to describe the meaning places have for people in terms of two components; Place Dependence and Place Identity (Schreyer et al., 1981). Williams and Roggenbuck (1989) developed a series of Likert-scaled statements designed to measure these two theoretical dimensions of place attachment. Moreover, Moore and Scott (2003) pointed out that many researches adopted the Williams and Roggenbuck's statements, which become the most reliable measurement tool on Place Attachment research.

Experiential Marketing, which is defined here as a live event or experience that gives the target audience the opportunity to see a product and experience it for themselves. Experiential marketing is further separated into five concepts: Sense, Feel, Think, Act, and Relate marketing (Schmitt, 1999). Experiential marketing is critical for businesses, especially in the hospitality and tourism industry. Williams (2006) that products of this industry are always experiential. In addition to products/services, people get experiences from staying at a hotel, dining in a restaurant, or visiting a travel destination.

Experiential Value has been defined as "perceptions are based upon interactions involving either direct usage or distanced appreciation of goods and services." These interactions provide the basis for the relativistic preferences held by the individuals involved (Holbrook and Corfman, 1985). The typology of experiential value proposed by Holbrook (1994) suggests a value landscape divided into four quadrants framed by intrinsic/extrinsic sources of value on one axis and active/reactive value on the other. Drawing upon prior research, this study labels these four dimensions of experiential value: Consumer Return on Investment, Service Excellence, Playfulness, and Aesthetic Appeal

Revisit Intention, the specific explanation is "The tourists willing to visit the same destination again where they have been before".(Gronhold et al., 2000). And some researchers also mention that repeat visiting is an important phenomenon in tourism, at the level of both the economy as a whole and the individual attraction. (Darnell and Johnson, 2001). Chang

(2006), used 3 items to measure the tourist's revisit intention, willing to visit again, willing to recommend, and willing to place the visiting destination in priority.