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Developing the Dimensions of Tourism Volunteering

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DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

Abstract

Volunteers within tourism settings are of growing interest. Research to date has been fragmented either focusing on individuals volunteering in their community (i.e., hosts) or tourists volunteering at a destination (i.e., guests). In this paper, the tourism and leisure literature on volunteering is synthesized and the host and guest streams of volunteering critiqued according to four defining dimensions: setting, time commitment, level of obligation, and remuneration. These dimensions are refined using interview data to propose a model of tourism volunteering where host and guest volunteering are related rather than distinct. A simple host-guest dichotomy misses the shared and distinct complexities of tourism volunteering.

KEYWORDS: Host volunteering, serious leisure, volunteerism, volunteer tourism.

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

Tourism volunteering encompasses individuals volunteering in their own community (i.e., host volunteering) and tourists volunteering at a destination (i.e., volunteer tourism). Volunteers in tourism on the whole are engaged in the process of assisting the leisure experiences of others while simultaneously undertaking a recreational activity either in their home community or in a destination further afield. The latter scenario of volunteer tourism also encompasses some degree of leisure travel. To date, these two groups have been considered in isolation with minimal attempts to consider tourism volunteering more holistically. In this paper we draw on and integrate literature from leisure and tourism volunteering and from the wider body of volunteerism research to shed light on the phenomenon of tourism volunteering from a leisure perspective.

The concept of volunteering takes on different meanings in different settings (Handy, Cnaan, Brudney, Ascoli, Meijs, & Ranade, 2000; Merrill, 2006; Tuan, 2005) due to varied political, historical, cultural, religious, and social frameworks (Davis Smith, 1999). As a consequence, no universally agreed definition or conceptualization of what constitutes volunteering exists. Cnaan, Handy, and Wadsworth (1996) identified four dimensions of volunteering: free will, availability of rewards or remuneration, formal organization, and proximity to the beneficiaries. Ambiguity exists within each of these elements, and Handy et al. suggested a continuum for each ranging from *pure* to *broad*. The spectrum of volunteering activity ranges from generally agreed to more debatable forms where the extent of choice, coercion, and obligation are variable (e.g., student placements and volunteers receiving monetary payment).

Given these ambiguities, our aim is to take an inclusive approach in considering the concept of volunteering within the tourism context. This paper engages in discourse

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

about the phenomenon of tourism volunteering to conceptualize the differing forms of volunteering within tourism. First, extending Uriely, Reichel, and Ron's (2003) approach, we adopted a broad conceptualization of tourism volunteers as both host and guest. Second, four dimensions of tourism volunteering were identified from the literature: setting, time commitment, level of obligation, and remuneration. These dimensions were each reviewed with reference to the host/guest framework. Third, an exploratory study based on semi-structured interviews with a diversity of tourism volunteers was introduced. Fourth, interview data was used to explore and critique each of the dimensions. The discussion highlights ambiguities and commonalities between host and guest tourism volunteers and results in a model of the dimensions of tourism volunteering.

Integrating Tourism Volunteering: Hosts and Guests

The study of volunteers in tourism has been fragmented by focusing in isolation around two streams of notionally discrete research: host volunteering and volunteer tourism. The terms *host* and *guest* are commonly used in tourism studies to refer to the residents and the tourists in a destination (Smith, 1989). Many residents volunteer to provide tourism services such as assisting at visitor attractions, visitor information centers, or events. We refer to these individuals as host volunteers. In contrast, guest volunteers travel to a destination to volunteer and are, therefore, also tourists referred to as volunteer tourists. Few attempts have been made to integrate these two streams despite tourism volunteering research flourishing in recent years. We critique the extent to which commonalities and differences exist between hosts and guests and suggest that the terminology of *tourism volunteering* better captures volunteering in both host and guest settings (Holmes & Smith, 2009).

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

Since the late 1990s, volunteer tourism has attracted significant academic attention even though volunteering during all or part of a travel experience has a long history (Hawkins, Lamoureux, & Clemmons, 2005). Volunteer tourism is a broad and debatable concept (Lyons, 2003). Brown and Lehto (2005) made a distinction within volunteer tourism based on the mindset of participants: the volunteer-minded mission where most or the entire trip is devoted to volunteering at the destination, and vacation-minded where the volunteering is only a small portion of a predominantly leisure experience. The United Nations refers to these latter activities that aim to “create a positive impact upon the destination” (Hawkins et al., p. 13) as VolunTourism. Research has focused on the volunteer-minded mission encompassing volunteer vacations and gap year volunteering (Holmes & Smith, 2009). The volunteer tourists have been the focus of research mainly through establishing their profiles, motivations, behaviors, and experiences; their interactions with host communities; their environmental and social attitudes and values; and aspects of self and cultural identity. The literature presents a rather idealistic and uncritical approach to volunteer tourism (Guttentag, 2009) by focusing on benefits of volunteer tourism with few acknowledgements of potential costs or negative outcomes (Smith & Holmes). Case studies dominate volunteer tourism research including organizations specializing in volunteer tourism, individual projects, or types of volunteering in particular locations (e.g., kibbutzim). The inclusion of the perspectives of stakeholders other than the volunteers themselves (e.g., the host community or paid managers and staff) is also lacking (Smith & Holmes).

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

Research on host volunteers assisting in tourism organizations has also burgeoned in the last decade. However, studies generally focus on just one setting for the voluntary activity. Researchers have separately considered volunteering in museums and heritage attractions; visitor information centers; parks, recreation, and conservation; and volunteering at events like sporting and mega events. As with volunteer tourism research, studies of host volunteers largely focus on a single organization or event with the exceptions of studies by Cuskelly, Auld, Harrington, and Coleman (2004), Handy, Brodeur, and Cnaan (2006), Holmes (2003), Monga (2006), and Smith (2002). These single focus studies often consider volunteer profiles, motivations, and expectations; experiences and satisfaction; aspects of commitment; comparisons between paid staff and volunteers; and trends and management issues in volunteering settings such as museums. Other host volunteering activities have received less attention (e.g., meet-and-greeters at transport hubs, and employee or corporate volunteering) and the perspective of visitors has been underplayed (Smith & Holmes, 2009).

In response to the disjointed approach provided by these separate research streams, Uriely et al. (2003) offered a conceptualization of tourism volunteers encompassing volunteers as both guest (the volunteer as tourist) and host (volunteers as workers in their community's tourism industry). This paper extends Uriely et al.'s definition of the tourism volunteer and draws the parallel traditions of research on volunteer hosts and guests together. We propose there are commonalities between the groups that should be acknowledged above and beyond the host/guest settings.

Dimensions of Tourism Volunteering

Four dimensions of tourism volunteering were identified from a review of the literature of volunteering in tourism and leisure contexts. The first dimension relates to

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

the setting or location of tourism volunteering using the widely accepted tourism distinction of origin/destination. The second dimension considers the time commitment made by tourism volunteers ranging from regular to episodic and one-off experiences. The third dimension focuses on the level of obligation and freedom of choice related to the conceptualization of volunteering as leisure. The final dimension is remuneration and incorporates the receipt by and payment of money to tourism volunteers. We review each of these dimensions with the host/guest dichotomy as a framework to explore them in relation to tourism volunteering.

Adoption of Uriely et al.'s (2003) host/guest framework of tourism volunteering suggests distinct settings for volunteering activities, but the differentiation between origin and destination is not always evident. The parallel consideration of host volunteers in their own community (i.e., at the origin) and volunteer tourists at a destination initially supports the setting dimension. Destination-based volunteering involves a travel component with researchers focusing on international travel and volunteers from the developed world working on projects in developing destinations. At the origin, hosting roles (e.g., within attractions, museums, visitor information centers, events) are typically done by volunteers drawn from the immediate community. Extant research on both host and guest volunteers largely fits into the distinct origin and destination settings.

Both selected studies and notable gaps within the literature, however, indicate greater complexity. The paucity of research on domestic volunteer tourism (e.g., Halpenny & Caissie, 2003), volunteers traveling between developed countries (e.g., Lyons, 2003), and between or from developing nations (Sherraden, Lough, & Moore McBride, 2008) underplays the diversity of destination settings where volunteer tourism

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

can be undertaken. Although studies attest to the importance of the host community as volunteers at events, the evidence from mega events (Lockstone & Baum, 2007) and events with a more specialist following (Smith & Lockstone, 2009) indicates a pulling-power to attract volunteers from beyond the local host community, including internationally (Fairley, Kellett, & Green, 2007). Wallace's (2006) study of heritage railway volunteers implied further host/guest overlaps with heritage attractions predominately drawing upon volunteers from the host community but, potentially, with tourists themselves also volunteering alongside locals.

The host/guest framework partly fits with the second dimension: time commitment. However, event volunteering does not sit comfortably on this dimension. Traditionally, volunteering commitments have been regular, sustained, continuous, and have mirrored traditional long-term working relationships between employers and employees in the mainstream remunerated economy. Tourism host settings such as attractions typify this regular volunteering relationship with volunteers contributing to the same organization over an extended period of time. Stebbins' (1992, 1996, 2000) serious leisure theory, which focuses on leisure activities (e.g., volunteering) that demand considerable effort on the part of the participant, aligns well to the time commitment required of host volunteers. He contended that serious leisure volunteering is career volunteering rather than a one-off act or a series of sporadic acts of voluntary activity (Stebbins, 1996). The participant's commitment and the development of a career helps to distinguish serious leisure from its more temporal undemanding counterpart casual leisure (e.g., activities such as watching television).

A contrasting trend to traditional sustained commitment is episodic volunteering, which is a more flexible and transient commitment (nfpSynergy, 2005) on

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

a one-off basis and/or for a specific time period (Handy et al., 2006; Macduff, 2005).

This trend perhaps reflects that work-life balance issues and the demands they place on peoples' time (i.e., from employment, family, leisure) are increasingly affecting the time current and potential volunteers can commit to volunteering (Gaskin, 2003; Lockstone, Holmes, Deery, & Jago, 2009; Merrill, 2006). Recognizing this shift to episodic commitments, Stebbins (2005) proposed a third type of leisure to accompany his serious-casual conceptualization. Project-based leisure is "a short term, reasonably complicated, one-off, or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking carried out in free time" (p. 2).

Event volunteering and volunteer tourism both fit the episodic categorization because they are short-term and often one-off experiences. Even extended gap year volunteer tourism projects remain a temporary removal from one's home location. Similarly, event volunteering provides host volunteers with a short-term and temporary volunteering experience. While this places the time commitment of event volunteering in opposition to other host volunteering, Lockstone, Smith, and Baum (2007) suggested that at periodic or reoccurring events volunteers will often *bounce-back* (Bryen & Madden, 2006) to volunteer each time the event is held. Their episodic volunteering is a regular temporal occurrence but with an ongoing connection to the event, which adds further complexity to the relationship between time commitment and host/guest tourism volunteers. The expectations arising from different time commitments relate to the third dimension: level of obligation.

Volunteering as leisure suggests a lack of obligation and this can vary. In Handy et al.'s (2000) spectrum of volunteering, free choice ranges from free will through to obligation to volunteer. As tourists, guest volunteers choose to volunteer as part of a

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

leisure holiday and exhibit free will or a lack of obligation. However, the interpretation placed on the concept of voluntary work and volunteerism, and particularly on the extent of obligation or coercion, varies across social, cultural and national contexts (Davis Smith, 1999; Handy et al., 2000; Merrill, 2006; Tuan, 2005). Stebbins (2001) proposed *marginal* volunteering to conceptualize types of volunteering where the extent of obligation is variable. The obligation can be agreeable or disagreeable. The presence of disagreeable obligation is more likely to result in a non-leisure experience labeled *semi-leisure* by Dumazedier (1967). When the obligation is forced, the individual may be encouraged to abandon the activity (Stebbins, 2000), although not always an option. For example, in some political contexts, volunteering may be imposed by the expectations of the system and linked closely to the responsibilities of being a student or worker (Tuan, 2005). A degree of obligation suggests that some volunteering may be more akin to work than leisure. Volunteering for occupational reasons or work experience has been particularly difficult to reconcile with leisure volunteering (Parker, 1997). Host volunteering internships (e.g., in museums and environmental conservation) typify this work experience element, although this obligation for aspiring professionals to demonstrate commitment through volunteering is not without criticism (Holmes, 2006). Researchers have applied the concept of serious leisure to volunteers in a range of tourism volunteering situations particularly in host settings (e.g., Cuskelly & Auld, 1991; Gravelle & Larocque, 2005; Orr, 2006). Serious leisure opportunities appear most likely to exist in host volunteering roles that demand considerable commitment and, in some cases, an accompanying increased sense of obligation on the part of volunteers in time, effort, and skill development (e.g., museum guides, information officers, and core

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

event volunteers). Overlaps between work and leisure also feature in the fourth dimension: remuneration.

Volunteering brings costs for both the volunteer and the organization. Who shoulders these economic costs is the final dimension. Paid remuneration is generally accepted to be absent from volunteering scenarios. However, volunteers may be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses resulting from the incremental costs associated with volunteering such as travel and meals (Handy & Srinivasan, 2004), which may represent good practice volunteer management, although not all volunteers are rewarded in this way (Volunteering Australia, 2006). Handy et al. (2000) proposed a continuum of remuneration: none, non-expected, expenses reimbursed, and stipend/low pay. Stipends are evident within tourism volunteering with some hosts (e.g., on internships) receiving a nominal fee for their efforts and longer-term international volunteers (e.g., Peace Corp) receiving a living allowance (Holmes & Smith, 2009). At the other extreme, Handy et al.'s dimension can be extended to include payments by volunteers, which sets volunteer tourism apart from other volunteers. Volunteer tourists typically pay significant fees for their volunteer holiday. Therefore, the volunteer rather than the organization may bear the upfront cost of participation in the volunteer project (Tourism Research & Marketing, 2008).

Application of a host/guest framework to these four dimensions reveals both similarities and differences, and suggests greater complexities than evident from a predominant consideration of hosts and guests in isolation. This presents hosts as volunteering in their local community (i.e., at the origin), making a regular commitment which involves a degree of obligation, and they may receive reimbursement of expenses. Conversely, volunteer tourists or guests travel to volunteer at a destination for

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

a short period (i.e., episodic), they are not obligated to volunteer, and are willing to pay for the experience. Although the literature supports this dichotomous interpretation, we have highlighted contradictions and anomalies. For example, guest volunteers who undertake hosting roles at the destination, host event volunteers involved who are involved in hosting on an episodic basis, and stipend host and guest volunteers who are remunerated for their volunteering. To further explore host or guest tourism volunteering requires a move away from the simple dichotomous view of host or guest volunteers. Thus, we report on an exploratory study encompassing a broader range of tourism volunteering experiences.

Methods

Addressing how tourism volunteering lies along the dimensions identified by the literature review requires consideration of primary data to gain a fuller understanding of what is a highly diverse environment. A qualitative approach was adopted for this exploratory study employing semi-structured interviews that were conducted to gain insight into respondents' understanding of the different dimensions. The same researcher completed all the interviews to ensure consistency in approach as suggested by Veal (2006). The interviews were designed to identify different forms of tourism volunteering within the dimensions of setting, time commitment, level of obligation, and remuneration. We sought responses with respect to the location of the respondent's volunteering, how far from where they normally live and their traveling time, whether they described their volunteer activity as work or leisure and why, how far they felt under any obligation to volunteer, what form of time commitment they made to the organization, and what costs were associated with their volunteering.

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

Sampling was purposive. Maximum variation (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was sought as we looked for the most diverse forms of tourism volunteering to address the limitations of previous studies and then sought common patterns within the sample. The sample included forms of volunteering in both host and guest orientated settings. Tourism organizations and programs involving volunteers were contacted on a purposive basis to seek permission to access their volunteers as participants in the study. The only criteria employed were that the organization or program had to involve volunteers in some form of tourism setting including attractions, destination services, events, and volunteer tourism projects. In most cases, the organization itself contacted their volunteers directly and asked for participants to self-nominate.

Diverse organizations included a campground host program, a domestic volunteer tourism program, a sports event, a visitor information center, and a tour guiding program for an off-shore island. All volunteer programs were located in Australia. The campground host program, visitor information center, sports event, and tour guiding program were described as host settings, where volunteers assist tourists. Campground hosts typically spent 4-6 weeks at a campground assisting campers and collecting fees. The visitor information center was volunteer-run and open most days of the year. The sports event was an annual event, which involved training weekends for volunteers during the year as well as at the event. The tour guiding program ran tours every day of the year and additional tours during school holidays. Volunteers assist on a daily basis going to the island to give tours or take part in holiday guiding, which involves staying on the island for a week giving several tours each day. The domestic volunteer tourism program invited participants to volunteer on projects in destinations depending on their itinerary. The projects frequently involved assisting in local

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

museums or heritage centers. Volunteers typically spent between one and two weeks on each project. This final program involved volunteer guests or tourists as paying participants who traveled to a destination specifically to assist in a volunteer program. Despite the diversity, we were not able to include every variation within our exploratory study. For example, international volunteer tourists are missing from the sample.

In total 16 respondents were interviewed. Table 1 provides respondent's details: program, usual time commitment, gender, and work status. The distance of the volunteer activity from their home was included to illustrate the origin/destination dimension. Interviews took place either at the respondents' homes or at an office provided by the volunteer program and were audio-recorded and transcribed. One interview with a domestic volunteer tourist was conducted by telephone due to logistical factors. This interview was not recorded but was written down immediately after and sent to the respondent for checking. The checked copy was amended on the basis of clarifications made by the respondent. Four interviews involved couples interviewed together who both volunteered for the same organization sometimes together and sometimes separately.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Data were entered into NVivo 8 and coded against the dimensions identified in the literature review: setting, time commitment, level of obligation, and remuneration. Other themes were also noted. However given the interview questions and schedule, no other dominant themes emerged. Following Miles and Huberman's guidelines (1994), the coding was first completed by one researcher, who had conducted all of the interviews. The interviews were then sent uncoded to three other researchers who reviewed the interviews and, commented on how they illuminated the four dimensions.

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

These comments were compared with the initial coding. The final coding represented a consensus within the research team. A summary of the findings was sent to each participant and they were invited to comment. No comments were received other than an appreciation of being able to see the outcome of the research.

Findings

The qualitative findings are presented according to the four dimensions identified from the literature review of leisure and tourism volunteering: origin/destination, time commitment, obligation, and remuneration. The purpose was to explore whether the application of a host/guest bifurcation to these four dimensions was as complex as the literature review appears to suggest. The discussion supports a move away from a simplistic view of host and guest volunteers to consideration of a more multi-faceted model of tourism volunteering.

Origin/Destination

Although volunteer tourists are generally acknowledged as traveling considerable distances to destinations to participate in volunteering, the host volunteer literature has frequently focused on activities that do not involve an extended period away from home. The interview findings suggested that the mobility dimension and origin/destination dichotomy needed to be revisited for all forms of tourism volunteering. Findings from our campground host respondents, for example, illustrated the complexity of tourism volunteering. Campground hosts traveled to volunteer but their role was primarily to assist tourists in the origin community rather than being tourists themselves. The extended commitment required from these volunteers was evidenced in the following quote from campground host Neil, “really a month because of the distance, so you have to sort of commit to at least a month.” Likewise, the island

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

tour guides may spend up to a week away from home in the course of undertaking their hosting duties.

Our two host respondents in the sports event setting indicated localized patterns of volunteering with both living less than 100km from the event site. However, the event itself necessitated an overnight stay component as they camped at the event site for its three day duration. As Helen noted in her interview, “for me its three quarters of an hour but for other people...it would be an hour and a half to go to the event and you stay overnight.”

While assuming that international volunteer tourists travel significant distances to volunteer may be reasonable, their domestic counterparts may also travel considerable distances from origin to destination. For example, one of our respondents, Penny, had traveled a distance of over 3,500km to participate in a domestic volunteer tourism program. This volunteering, however, took place within the common culture and economic environment of Penny’s home country. Therefore some of the gaps in knowledge relating to cross-cultural exchanges involving volunteers traveling between or from developed to developing countries cannot be addressed by our research.

The interview data generally highlighted, akin to Wallace’s (2006) study of heritage railway volunteers, that the domestic volunteer tourists sampled were integrated with the community participants and managed as hosts rather than as guests once at the destination. This finding suggested that distance traveled from home to the location of volunteer activity was not always a clear delineator between tourism host and guest volunteers.

Time Commitment

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

The interview data in relation to the time commitment of tourism volunteers highlighted further anomalies around the distinction between host volunteers who predominantly undertook ongoing roles as compared to guest volunteers who engaged in episodic forms of volunteering. The time commitment from an episodic volunteer, though sporadic, may be greater over the course of a year than that of a regular volunteer. For example, the minimum contribution required for the island guide respondents in our study was six days a year, whereas a campground host was likely to volunteer on a continuous basis for at least one month. Volunteer Ian was an extreme example who spent six months in the previous year as a full time campground host. The episodic nature of domestic volunteer tourism attracted respondents Len and Mary as this volunteering fitted in with their frequent travel plans rather than having to commit on a more regular basis:

We do travel [so] it's very disruptive to the organization. You can't very well say well we're going to be here this week, oh but by the way we won't be here for the next 4 but then we'll be available for 2 weeks. You know like it's hard for them to plan a roster too.

Some tourism volunteering activities by their nature are aligned to the episodic extreme of the time dimension. These activities were illustrated by the host volunteers in the sport event setting of our study. In her interview, respondent Gina noted the intensive temporal environment associated with her volunteering once the event was running, "the second day was half past five [in the morning] to about three in the afternoon really without a break. It was full on." Complicating this purely episodic involvement, however, the two sports event volunteer respondents were required to attend training weekends spread over three months before the event. Further, these

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

volunteers had come back to volunteer at the same event over the years. As such, the frequency of the volunteer involvement (i.e., weekly, fortnightly, monthly or annually) rather than hours volunteered or the complexity of tasks undertaken appeared to be the key determinant separating the commitment of host and guest volunteers over time.

Related to the dimension of time commitment, our two sport event volunteer respondents could be classified as serious leisure participants because they developed their volunteer careers through the investment of a significant amount of time and effort in their chosen activity. Both had initially become involved in the event through their leisure interests in water-based activities. Gina was a nursing professional who was able to combine her professional skills with her leisure interest to be of particular value as a safety volunteer. Helen first became a volunteer when her sports club was asked to provide volunteers. She had increased her involvement over six years to include organizing a discrete volunteer unit. Leading onto the next dimension of obligation, Helen viewed her volunteering as a leisure activity distinct from the obligatory pressures of her working life, "If I'm going to volunteer it's got to be something that's fun for me not just me standing around for somebody else's benefit." While Helen had expanded her volunteer role, she no longer attended the sports club that was her initial point of entry for volunteering.

Obligation

Pronounced differences did not emerge from the findings in relation to the levels of obligation host volunteers and volunteer tourists assigned to their volunteering commitments. The findings provided some support for the contention that host volunteering seemed more likely to involve obligation. However, this outcome appeared related more to the time commitment asked of host volunteers involved in ongoing roles

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

rather than a sense that the volunteers themselves felt forced to contribute. Brian, a regular island guide, described the sense of agreeable obligation associated with his volunteering:

I think most people are very much aware that we are volunteers and we do the job for the love as they would look at it because they can't think of another good reason why we do it. But it always comes back with all of these jobs. It does require this modicum of professionalism, reliability, and getting it just right.

This duty-bound state was shared by other respondents who viewed the importance of their roles as a small price to pay for the good their contributions generated in the origin or destination setting. Host visitor center volunteer Alice assessed that, "yes, it is worthwhile. Well I wouldn't be a volunteer in anything if I didn't think it was worthwhile because it would be a waste of time and effort." Domestic volunteer tourists Len and Mary also suggested that while their volunteering was "definitely not work," they had made a commitment to the program to which they were assigned (i.e., restoration of a local museum) and were willing to spend the necessary hours to get the job done.

Remuneration

The host volunteers in our study were more likely to report being out of pocket than the guest volunteers regarding remuneration. The domestic volunteer tourist respondents all commented that they would be traveling anyway so they generally saved money by volunteering. In contrast, the host island guide respondents had to pay a membership fee to the guides association, pay for their training and purchase their uniforms. Transport to the island was a minimal cost as it was subsidized by the ferry

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

company. John and Kathleen, campground hosts, described the costs of their volunteering:

You've got to have your own accommodation. We have a small caravan. Most people have caravans, some have camper vans, and you've got to obviously pay insurance. Food is more expensive up there [in more remote areas] of course. So yeah there is an expense but the theory is once you get to your place of posting you should not be out of pocket.

Although most campground hosts already had the equipment before they volunteered, John and Kathleen commented that traveling around remote campgrounds within a national park for a month did cost in fuel as well as wear and tear on their vehicle. They like other host respondents recognized the significantly higher opportunity costs over time associated with host volunteer involvements. Gina, part-time event volunteer and full-time nurse, noted that her weekend involvement came at the expense of undertaking shift work in addition to "all the days that I gave up as training days as well would have been lost income and that adds up to quite a lot." Therefore, in our study limited by the exclusion of international volunteer tourists who would likely bear substantial upfront costs to volunteer, the volunteer hosts appeared to accrue more expenses than the guest volunteers.

In summary, our in-depth interviews highlighted complexity regarding the four dimensions of tourism volunteering identified in the literature review. The data showed volunteer tourism does not necessarily have to involve international settings, and host volunteering can take place a considerable distance from the volunteer's home. For both volunteer hosts and guests, their volunteerism is largely a form of leisure. Although they may experience obligation to fulfill their commitments to the organization or project

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

through which they are volunteering, these obligations were agreeable (Stebbins, 2000). Host volunteering has traditionally been more regular and sustained in the time commitment expected compared to the occasional nature of volunteer tourism, but the episodic involvement of host volunteers in event settings blurred the distinction born out by trends indicating that the intensification of work-life balance issues is diminishing people's available time to volunteer. Lastly, volunteering imposed costs on both hosts and guests. The costs for volunteer guests can be greater but these expenses were more explicit and usually involved upfront expenditure. The costs for volunteer hosts are often less apparent such as the use of their own resources like transport, telephone, and refreshments. Each of these hidden costs may not be significant in the short-term but they can build up over time and may contribute to eventual dissatisfaction or disagreeable obligation for the volunteer.

Dimensions of Tourism Volunteering Revisited

The interview findings discussed contribute to a proposed model of tourism volunteering that represents three of the dimensions identified from the literature in relation to host and guest volunteering: setting, time commitment and remuneration, (see Figure 1).

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

Figure 1 presents a multi-faceted model of the dimensions of tourism volunteering based on the literature review and refined through data collected from a range of tourism volunteers. The three dimensions are framed by host and guest volunteering. The positioning of the broken lines indicates how each dimension relates to the host/guest framework. Rather than a simple continuum, the model encapsulates the ambiguities and commonalities between host and guest tourism volunteers.

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

The setting dimension is most straightforward since hosts are generally involved at their home origin and guests travel to a destination to volunteer. However, there are overlaps. For example, hosts and guests can volunteer together with the setting becoming both an origin and a destination (e.g., the case of the heritage railway already cited). Hosts may spend a significant amount of time traveling for a day's volunteering (e.g., the island guides in this study), while some guests only travel short distances to their volunteering destination.

Time commitment is more complex than regular hosts and episodic guests. As the literature review demonstrated, event volunteers are hosts but most fit the episodic categorization. The interview findings also highlighted that other host volunteers contribute episodically (e.g., campground hosts). While volunteer tourists as guests fit the episodic category, those who return on a regular basis (e.g., each season) display an element of regularity in their volunteering commitment.

In the literature, the third dimension was level of obligation. However, this dimension was excluded from the final model. The findings suggested that host volunteering seems more likely to involve obligation but this is related to the time commitment involved rather than being a separate dimension. In other words, regular host volunteers felt a stronger sense of obligation because their volunteering was ongoing and they had committed to a regular time slot, which represented a serious durable element within their overall portfolio of leisure activities.

The final dimension in the model is remuneration. While Handy et al. (2000) proposed a continuum of remuneration from none to stipend/low pay, the tourism literature and the findings suggested a complex picture within tourism volunteering. Remunerated volunteers were evident in both host and guest settings (e.g., honoraria for

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

attraction interns, a living allowance for longer-term international volunteers; Holmes & Smith, 2009). Tourism volunteering recognizes the concept of paying to volunteer; this extends Handy et al.'s continuum and our study highlighted different forms that this payment may take. For volunteer tourists or guests payment may entail an explicit and up-front payment. For some host volunteers the lack of reimbursement for expenses or the requirement to pay training or other costs may likewise impose a significant financial burden over time.

Conclusions

The proposed model incorporating the host/guest dichotomy is a multi-faceted framework for exploring the complex dimensions of tourism volunteering. Uriely et al.'s (2003) inclusive definition of tourism volunteering enabled us to conceptualize the similarities and differences between the diverse forms of volunteering within tourism settings. Our exploratory analysis revealed both homogeneity between the nature of volunteering for hosts and guests and complexities within these two groups of volunteers. We conclude that although previous studies have examined host and guest volunteers separately, the boundaries between both groups of volunteers remain too fuzzy for us to draw definitive distinctions between these two groups in the model. Further testing of our conceptual model using broader-based methodologies and a wider sample will complement the exploratory nature of the initial study with its evident limitations of a small qualitative sample.

Research that builds upon our exploratory study could, for example, employ comparable time and finance diaries to be kept by a sample of host and guest volunteers in different volunteering settings. Our research did not include the comparator group of international volunteer tourists and their inclusion in future comparable work would be

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

of value. Collectively such broader-based and more extended testing could lead to the development and subsequent refinement of dimensional scales that may assist in promoting greater understanding of the definitional boundaries of tourism volunteering, which would have both practitioner and theoretical value.

For practice a clearer understanding of the key dimensions and their applicability to situations could enable volunteer organizations to extend their understanding of tourism volunteers and to enhance key human resource functions including recruitment, retention, support, reward and recognition. For theory our contribution may assist researchers to further clarify distinctions between the two categories of volunteers regarding the three dimensions within the model and to place them within wider discussions about the nature of leisure and volunteering.

Our tentative conclusions suggest that cross-pollination between the two approaches to volunteer research and replicating studies of volunteer guests with volunteer hosts and vice versa may also be a way forward. Perhaps a transfer effect exists between the two types of volunteering with volunteer guests more likely to become volunteer hosts after a positive volunteering experience. Opportunities abound for research that compares both regular and episodic volunteering within tourism contexts. For example, host and guest volunteers at the same event may have a similar experience and receive the same benefits in leisure and personal development. In the context of both host and guest volunteers, longitudinal research is needed to examine the role of the volunteering experience on the individual volunteer regarding their life choices (e.g., education, career direction) as well as specific consideration of how the experience helps to develop the volunteers' skills and wider employment and social attributes.

DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM VOLUNTEERING

Using a critique of the literature and exploratory research, we have attempted to develop and refine the dimensions of tourism volunteering within the host-guest framework. We have argued that the host-guest dichotomy is too simplistic in its delineation of host volunteering and volunteer tourism and has failed to capture the shared and distinct complexities that exist within and between both strands. We conclude that notwithstanding a tendency to equate regular, remunerated and obligated volunteering with the role of the host, this simplicity is not necessarily and universally the case. We have sought to synthesize the volunteer types within tourism and a specific leisure context, and to develop a multi-faceted conceptualization of tourism volunteering.

Given the nature of current and projected demographic and social change within many developed economies, forms of volunteering are likely to gain pace as key elements within the social support and leisure fabric of countries. The range of touristic, leisure, and cultural locations and events taken for granted at a community, national, and international level likely cannot be sustained into the future without the support of a growing volunteering population. At the same time, aid for less advantaged communities at home and abroad cannot be sustained at required levels by countries with decreasing access to formal resources of paid skills and financial inputs. Volunteer tourists are part of a solution to overcoming this challenge. Therefore, understanding better the complexities surrounding forms of tourism volunteering is needed.

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Table 1:
Characteristics of research participants

Participant identifier	Program	Time commitment	Gender	Work status	Distance from home
Alice	Visitor Information Center	Regular	Female	Retired	Less than 10km
Brian & Carol	Island guide	Regular	Female & Male	Retired	45km
Doreen	Island guide	Regular	Female	Retired	30km
Elspeth	Island guide	Regular	Female	Retired	30km
Fiona	Island guide	Episodic	Female	Working full time	20km
Gina	Event volunteer	Episodic	Female	Working full time	85km
Helen	Event volunteer	Episodic	Female	Working full time	70km
Ian	Campground host	Episodic	Male	Retired	1200km
John & Kathleen	Campground hosts	Episodic	Male & Female	Retired	925km
Len & Mary	Domestic volunteer tourists	Episodic	Male & Female	Retired	425km
Neil & Olwyn	Domestic volunteer tourists	Episodic	Male & Female	Retired	825km
Penny	Domestic volunteer tourist	Episodic	Female	Retired	3500km

Figure 1:

Dimensions of Tourism Volunteering: Host and Guest Perspectives

