

A segmented volunteer tourism industry

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Volunteer tourism is often discursively constructed, overlapping a number of research disciplines including those of tourism research, volunteering and leisure. Whilst incorporating a variety of forms of tourism within its realms (Lyons & Wearing, 2012; Mostafanezhad, 2013), there are also associations with a number of disciplines such as development and child studies. Fundamentally, the concept comprises both volunteerism and tourism and despite beginning as a micro-niche form of tourism, it can now be found in virtually every industry (Wearing & McGehee, 2013a), even in the extremes of mass tourism (Butcher, 2011). However, in contrast to other niche tourism forms such as diving, medical or wine, it can be argued that the volunteer tourism industry has now progressed into a macroniche with an array of micro niches situated beneath it.

It is on this premise that this research note questions the current research approach to volunteer tourism, arguing that a generic outlook is too simplistic owing to the diverse array of available opportunities available in today's market. Tomazos and Butler (2009) highlight this point, demonstrating that opportunities are as diverse as sports coaching, pandemic support, human rights activism and construction. Whilst there have been case study approaches taken such as Broad's (2003) research into volunteer tourists at the Gibbon Rehabilitation Project and Chen and Chen's (2011) examination of the motivations of volunteers in rural Chinese villages, to date there has been little sight of attempts at market segmentation.

The contribution to academic debate presented here derives from a broader study which demonstrates this need for segmented research. The phenomenological study examines foreign TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language) teachers in Thailand, introducing the concept of TEFL tourism. Whilst for those not in receipt of a salary this tourism type may qualify as volunteer tourism, in other cases the empirical research has found it to be situated some distance from its volunteer counterparts (Stainton, 2016). This research supports the notion that the current research stance, which predominantly takes a macro-niche perspective, does not necessarily lend itself to TEFL or other micro niches of volunteer tourism.

Perhaps most fundamental to the debate is the ambiguous nature of the definition of a volunteer tourist, and by extension, tourism. Whilst it is commonly prescribed that in order to qualify as a tourist one must travel and remain in a place outside of their usual residential environment for not more than one consecutive year (WTO and UN, 1994), others do not impose timeframes, simply requiring travel to be temporary (Matheison & Wall, 1982). With specific regards to volunteer tourism, McGehee and Santos (2005) focus on the volunteering element, whereas Brown (2005) places heavier emphasis on tourism. Some authors highlight the presence of helping others (McGehee & Santos, 2005; Wearing, 2001), whereas some do not (Brown, 2005; Ureily, Reichel, & Ron, 2003). Whilst traditionally volunteer tourism has involved unpaid placements (Ellis, 2003; Wearing, 2001), the blurring of paid and voluntary work has become commonplace (Lyons & Wearing, 2012).

It is ambiguities such as these, amongst others, that make it difficult for researchers to apply existing theoretical and conceptual approaches deriving from a macro perspective to specific situations. This is demonstrated in the examination of TEFL for instance, where some of the most commonly cited volunteer tourism statistics are not representative. According to TRAM (2008), for example, the volunteer tourist pays an average of £2000 per trip, however the empirical research upon which this research note stems found this figure to be considerably smaller for TEFL teachers in Thailand, with an average fee of £550 (quantitative survey data. N = 567) (Stainton, 2016).

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Segmentation of micro-niches in this way would also allow for enhanced comprehension of the customer in the respective market through research areas such as tourist motivations or typologies which are heavily debated in the volunteer tourism literature. It could however be argued that macro-generalisation between those so diverse as medical-based placements to volunteering in an elephant sanctuary to trainee teachers in Thailand is not going to yield the most

accurate results. Typological research provides a valuable foundation for understanding the respective market (Lyons & Wearing, 2012), however if the market is too broad then its ability to be useful is limited. Existing categorisations of volunteer tourists range from Callanan and Thomas (2005) shallow and deep volunteers, McGehee, Clemmons, and Lee (2009) vanguards, pragmatists and questers and Dalendiz and Hampton's (2011) VOLUNtourists and volunTOURISTS. Based largely upon the motivations of tourists however, it can be argued that these theories cannot be sufficiently applied to all micro forms of volunteer tourism. For example, Stainton (2016) suggests that such typologies are inadequate for TEFL tourists in Thailand, instead suggesting these be categorised according to whether they are leisure, philanthropy, career or expatriate-minded.

One could argue that there is now a post-modern volunteer tourism industry. Significant increases in the number of commercial operators has changed the face of the industry (Wearing & McGehee, 2013a). The marketplace is ever evolving, with new businesses entering the market, ranging from those claiming to be charitable or non-profit (Brown, 2005), to projects funded by large institutions such as the World Bank (Wearing & McGehee, 2013b) and traditional tour operators (Benson & Wearing, 2012). With such a range of organisations facilitating volunteer tourism nowadays it can be argued that the generalised macro approach frequently adopted by researchers is no longer sufficient.

In summary this research note argues that there is an urgent need for re-evaluation of the current research approach taken when examining the volunteer tourism industry. Whilst the examples of TEFL tourism have been used to highlight this point, this can be applied to many of the microniches of the volunteer tourism industry. There is no doubt there is informative conceptual and empirical research that is imperative to the study of volunteer tourism, however, with the rapid growth and development it is time that the different segments- teaching, marine, conservation, research and so forth, are segregated in order to facilitate a more accurate and thorough comprehension. In turn, it is argued that volunteer tourism should no longer be viewed as a single tourism form, rather it should be viewed as a macro umbrella term encompassing a number of micro-niches.

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Tourism and economic growth: Does democracy matter?

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Tourism studies have shown a growing interest in the relationship between tourism and the economy, with relevant work exploring the causal direction of effects between a country's international tourism presence and its overall economic performance (Antonakakis, Dragouni, & Filis, 2015; Ivanov & Webster, 2013; Schubert, Brida, & Risso, 2011). The product of this enquiry is a mosaic of four different interpretations (i.e. tourism-led growth, economy-driven tourism and bidirectional or no causality) that render this area of research inconclusive and still open to discussion. A detailed analysis of these hypotheses is offered by Brida and Pulina (2010) and Chatziantoniou, Filis, Eeckels, and Apostolakis (2013).

In their majority, relevant studies focus on specific destinations. However, a cross-sectional analysis of the tourism-economy dynamics allows for a more in-depth and comparative examination of different states (Dritsakis, 2012). In addition, the use of panel data can decrease endogeneity through the consideration of specific country effects, omitted variables, reverse causality and measurement error. In this respect, some papers (Chang, Khamkaew, & McAleer, 2012; Seetana, 2011) explore multiple countries classified on certain criteria, mostly geographic or economic. This study introduces another factor to the said enquiry that has so far been neglected; the destinations' quality of political institutions.

The political economy literature has established the effects of institutional quality on the relationship between growth and economic resources (see, Acemoglu, Johnson, Robinson, & Yared, 2008; Mehlum, Moene, & Torvik, 2006; Rodriguez & Sachs, 1999), defined as the resource curse hypothesis. The latter maintains that non-democratic countries with resource abundance tend to grow at a lower pace compared to democratic ones, as benefits from these resources do not spillover to the wider economy but rather they are exploited by the country's elites. Even more, tourism resources are largely shaped by the political environment of a destination in terms of both policy (e.g. visa requirements, trade openness, taxes) and hospitality atmosphere (e.g. safety, security) (Kester & Croce, 2011). For example, there is evidence that extended political unrest observed in non-democratic countries has devastating results for tourism (Fletcher & Morakabati, 2008). Given that the political regime (as approximated by the level of democracy) in a particular country can influence both the economy and the tourism sector, we examine the dynamic links between tourism and economic growth in 98

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