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INSIGHTS FROM IMAGES POSTED ON SOCIAL MEDIA: EXAMINING THE MOTIVATIONS OF  
VOLUNTEER TOURISTS

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## **ABSTRACT**

Extensive research has been conducted on the motivations of volunteer tourists; however, the scope has not included how motivation is expressed through the posting of images on social media. This study examines the relationship between volunteer tourists' motivations and social media use through the identification of picture publishing behavior based on motivations. An online survey yielding 260 complete responses is used and statistical tests investigate the relationship between demographic factors, motivations and social sharing of photos. The results show that demographics have little impact; however, there is a relationship between motivation and photo sharing and between motivation and volume of photos.

**Keywords:** *volunteers, motivation, social media, photos,*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The motivations of volunteer tourists have been researched extensively, resulting in two major schools of thought: those who believe volunteer tourists to have altruistic motives and those who believe them to have egoistic motives. Many tourists who volunteer abroad return home after a few weeks or months with several hundred pictures posted on various social media sites, so what does this indicate about their motivations? Does taking and publishing photos of the experience, themselves and the host communities on social media platforms reveal insights into the tourist's motivation for engaging in volunteer work abroad? The overriding purpose of this research, therefore, is to examine the relationship between volunteer tourist motivations and their publishing of images on social media. Hence, the first research objective aims to detect if social media habits can be used to study volunteer tourists' level of motivation. The second research objective is to investigate whether volunteer tourists' demographic factors and their trip organization impact their motivational level. And third, the authors are interested in identifying if volunteer tourists' posting of images on social media reveals deep or shallow motivations.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Evolution of Volunteer Tourism*

Volunteer tourism experienced considerable growth in the 20th century (McMillion, 2009), where the number of organizations rose from 100 in 1987 to 1,300 in 2010 (Wright, 2014). While in 1990 an estimated 1.6 million people took part in volunteer tourism annually, in recent years it has been estimated to exceed 10 million annually (McGehee, 2014). However, the growth rate has not yet been fully explained, with an annual spending on volunteer tourism estimated between £832 million and £1.3 billion (Tourism Research & Marketing, 2008). Although there is no single reason for this rapid progression, Wearing & McGehee (2013, p121) found that volunteer tourism “aligns itself with the ideas of development aid and appears to have increased in response to both 1) growing social and environmental issues in developing countries and 2) disasters like the September 11 attacks in the U.S. and the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami that affected much of South East Asia.”

One of the most commonly accepted definitions of volunteer tourism stems from Wearing (2001, p1), who states that volunteer tourism involves “those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or the research into aspects of society or the environment.” If one considers natural disasters such as, for example, the Nepalese earthquakes in April 2015 or Hurricane Irma in September 2017 alongside with the growing travelling mobility to most destinations, and the increasing discretionary income in the developed and developing world, the number of volunteer tourists will most likely continue to rise in the future. Therefore, it is no surprise that volunteer tourism has become the subject of a range of research papers and literature.

The developments in the study of volunteer tourism can be aligned with Jafari’s four platforms of tourism research: advocacy, cautionary, adaptancy and knowledge-based (as cited in Taplin, Dredge & Sherrer, 2014). As stated by Eadington & Smith (1992), tourism research has developed in accordance with these four platforms. The first platform, advocacy, takes place during the early stages of research and is largely positive in tone, focusing on the economic benefits of tourism. With increased research in the field, a more cautious stance was adopted and scholars began to weigh the positive impacts against the less beneficial ones such as cultural

commoditization, which is known as the cautionary platform. From these concerns, the adaptancy platform emerged, which not only aimed to create a holistic view of tourism impacts, but also looked into more niche markets such as green tourism, ecotourism, and some other forms of alternative tourism. The most recent knowledge-based platform adopted a more scientific approach to the research with the increased use of case studies and considers the tourism phenomenon as a whole, rather than just its consequences (Eadington & Smith, 1992).

On the other hand, some researchers turn to the increased media presence in 21st century postmodern societies and its impact on volunteering tourism. Wilkinson, McCool and Bois (2014) suggest that volunteer tourists are considered consumers of the online marketing strategies of organizations such as Goabroad.com who sell the volunteer tourist trips using key selling points such as: authentic experience, global awareness, cross-cultural understanding, intercultural encounters, poverty alleviation, etc. While these motivations may certainly have served as catalysts for volunteer tourism, particularly in regards to media coverage, additional research is required to understand the volunteer tourism phenomenon.

One aspect of the literature is focused on the benefits participants in volunteer tourism derive from their experience, which are grouped into three main areas: “(i) personal development and self-fulfillment particularly a great sense of empowerment and independence, increasing self-awareness, and spiritual development by reflecting on Western values; (ii) knowledge gain and increased skills; and (iii) enhanced interpersonal relations and social networks” (Coghlan & Fennel, 2011, p 393). This paper focuses on the interpersonal relations and social network aspects of volunteer tourism, with a particular focus on volunteers’ motivation and their social media activity during and after experience.

### ***Volunteer tourists’ motivation***

Callanan and Thomas (2005) hypothesize that motivational drivers range from “shallow” volunteer tourism to “deep” volunteer tourism. “Shallow” volunteer tourism refers to tourism projects that are generated around the interests of the volunteers, whereas “deep” volunteer tourism projects are geared towards responding to the host communities’ wants and needs. The “shallow” end of the spectrum can be seen as a form of social egoism. According to Coghlan & Fennel (2011), this means that volunteers participate in activities to help others, but

by doing so, their main purpose is actually to benefit and promote themselves. This finding has also been supported by other academics, such as Matthews (2008) and Soderman & Snead (2008). They report that many volunteer tourists that fall under the “shallow” category are motivated by personal growth, improving their curriculum vitae, career advancement and the social status gained through the experience (Wright, 2014; Coghlan & Fennel, 2011; Cousins, Evans & Sadler, 2009). It has also become more common for people to participate in volunteer tourism as an integral part of an academic course (Lyons & Wearing, 2012), which doesn’t involve any direct altruistic motivation. Although, this narrow definition is seen by some as irrelevant. Indeed, according to Guttentag (2009), as long as the assumption exists that volunteer tourism is beneficial, the motivation behind why people participate becomes irrelevant.

Guttentag (2009) states that the main criticism concerning “shallow” tourists is that these participants focus more on their needs than the needs of the host community, which also promotes the commodification and commercialization of volunteer tourism. Since “shallow” volunteer tourists focus mostly on their own benefits, they tend to perform work based on their opinion of what should be done, rather than on the needs voiced by the host community (Guttentag, 2009). Furthermore, many of these volunteer tourists romanticize the idea of poverty and remark on the happiness of the host community, whilst being grateful that they were born into better conditions (Guttentag, 2009). Since the majority of these volunteers are inexperienced and uninformed about their host environment due to a lack of interest and research, they also do not see the detrimental impacts their participation may potentially have (Wright, 2014).

On the other end of the spectrum, the “deep” volunteer tourists are those individuals motivated by altruism rather than egoism. Their main motivators are cultural immersion, giving back and making a difference (Wright, 2014). These tourists tend to be more critical of volunteer tourism activities and seek a genuine experience. Nevertheless, it is not possible to say that these volunteer tourists are completely altruistic, even if they exhibit altruistic actions and have some altruistic motives (Coghlan & Fennel, 2011).

In reality, most tourists consider themselves neither completely altruistic (deep) nor egoistic (shallow), rather they have mixed motivations, i.e. both altruistic and egoistic motives (Callanan & Thomas, 2005). Several research papers have supported this idea (Brown, 2008; Grimm & Needham, 2012; Soderman & Snead, 2008).

Despite volunteers' tendency to think that their actions are selfless and benefit the host communities more than themselves (Wright, 2014), studies have revealed that many volunteer tourists have both self-development and altruistic motives (Coghlan & Fennel, 2011).

Since motivations for participating in volunteer tourism are usually complex, rather than being completely egoistic or altruistic, they tend to fall on a scale. That being said, volunteering for solely selfish reasons is more likely than volunteering for solely selfless reasons; although, altruistic volunteer tourists may not always be aware of their selfish reasons. Coghlan & Fennel (2011) argue that even the volunteer tourists with the best intentions are affected by eudemonia, a concept which states that true happiness results from doing what is worth doing, and therefore volunteering leads to spiritual and personal fulfilment, even if it happens subconsciously. By ensuring good practices with host-focused operations, it is possible for volunteer tourism to provide opportunities for self-development and altruism, all the while aiding the community and supporting international development and cultural understanding (McGehee, 2014). Nonetheless, and for simplicity in this paper, we will investigate the extremities of motivation, i.e. "deep" and "shallow" motivation.

### ***Social Media, Motivation to share and post images***

Online social networks now play a major role in all communications, and the motivations to engage in these various platforms are also widely debated. For example, Rimé et al. (1991) suggest that many who experience an "emotional event" feel a sense of urgency to connect with others and thus social media platforms are used for a "social sharing of emotion". Balasubramanian and Mahajan (2001, as cited in Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004) stated *social interaction utility* as the most important motivation in the context of sharing online. They further differentiated this social interaction utility into several sub-categories: (1) focus-related utility, which is motivated by adding value to the community through the word of mouth contribution, (2) consumption utility, which is motivated by obtaining value through direct consumption of the contributions of other community members and (3), approval utility, which is motivated by obtaining satisfaction when others consume and approve of contributions. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) add another utility to this list, which is (4) homeostasis utility and which is explained by the desire for some form of balance in life. Sundaram et al. (1998, as cited in Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004) suggest that both positive and negative motivations promote sharing and include

altruism, anxiety reduction, vengeance and advice seeking as reasons to share online. Chang & Chuang, (2011) more recently report that some of the shallow and self-centered motivations are related to the maintenance and/or augmentation of social capital in the forms of increased social interaction, trust, identification, and reciprocity.

Social media takes many different forms and functions e.g. wikis, blogs, microblogs, social network sites media-sharing sites, review sites and voting sites. These types differ in variety of content and level of autonomy offered to participants. Photographs or short videos are increasingly the preferred media to share online (Munar & Jacobsen, 2013). Photo uploads total 300 million per day and every 60 seconds on Facebook, there are 510 comments posted, 293,000 statuses are updated, and 136,000 photos are uploaded. (The Social Skinny, 2015)

***“A picture is worth a thousand words.” (Rosen, 2005)***

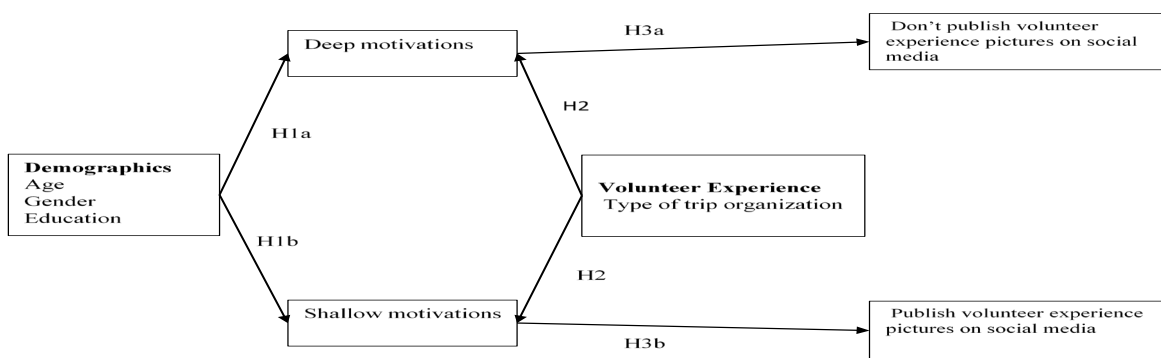
Photographs can support communication by vividly portraying events, information, and proof of our experiences and create histories that leave a trace of our indelible memories (Martin and Martin, 2004). The growth of digital and mobile technology enables photo and on-line photo sharing so that people can easily store, display, manipulate, and share their pictorial experiences. “Photography and travel are linked intrinsically” (Lo, McKercher, Lo, Cheung & Law, 2011, p.726). Photographs both document and shape the travel experience (Haldrup & Larsen, 2003; Larsen, 2008; Urry, 1990). Edensor (2000) proposes that photographs are a ‘ceremonial’ form that endorses relationships with others and other cultures.

Little research has examined the photo-taking and photo-sharing behavior of travelers and tourists (Caton & Santos, 2008). McGehee (2014, p.849) highlights the importance of studying the benefits of crowd sourcing or smartphone apps on volunteer tourism best practices, yet this topic remains largely unexplored. Similarly, in regards to social media, research topics have been proposed that would determine the extent to which volunteer tourists are able to manage their own volunteer experiences and avoid the commercial volunteer travel organizations, making volunteer tourism a more independent experience (Atkins, 2012; Grimm & Needham, 2012). So far, however, few academic articles about social media and volunteer tourism have been published (Munar & Jacobsen, 2013; Lo et al., 2011; Sink, 2011). Sink (2011) discusses the discourse of volunteer tourism with regards to Facebook. This study aims to identify the motivations communicated by volunteer tourists and

the way they are interpreted on social media. Although Sink (2011) does address the role of social media in volunteer tourism, the study primarily analyzes the similarity between the pictures posted by the organizations and volunteers and disregards the motivations behind it.

Callanan & Thomas’s framework (2005) is focused on the motivations of volunteer tourists but does not include social media behaviors, so it was partly adapted for use and as a foundation for the creation of the survey. In order to be more representative of the purpose of this paper, a social media aspect was added to the motivations, creating the conceptual framework (Figure 1) that develops further the overall research objectives. From the conceptual model we extract several hypotheses to test in this paper.

Figure 1: A Conceptual Framework of the Research Design



Hypothesis 1a: There is a statistically significant relationship between the age of volunteers and “deep” motivations, i.e. the older the volunteers the more likely they are to express “deep motivation”

Hypothesis 1b: There is a statistically significant relationship between the education level of volunteers and deep motivations, i.e. the more educated the volunteer then the more likely they are to express “deep motivation”

Hypothesis 2: There is a statistically significant relationship between having experienced an organized volunteer tourism experience and “shallow motivations”, i.e. the more organized the volunteer experience then the more likely they are to express “shallow motivation”.



Hypothesis 3a: There is a statistically significant relationship between volunteers with deep motivations and the likelihood to publish pictures on social media platforms, i.e. the volunteers with “deep motivations” are less likely to publish on social media platforms.

Hypothesis 3b: There is a statistically significant relationship between volunteers’ motivations and the volume of pictures published on social media platforms.

## **METHOD**

### ***Instrument***

An online survey was deployed to examine the relationship between volunteer tourists’ motivations and social media. The survey consisted of 21 questions, divided into three sections. The first section of the questionnaire (5 questions) was aimed at determining the demographics of the respondents through questions about age, gender, and education. The second section, with 5 questions, was focused on volunteer tourism experiences and participants were asked to evaluate statements about their motivations with separate dimensions and items on “deep motivation” and on “shallow motivation” on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The third section of the survey related to social media use and consisted of 11 questions, including a five-point Likert scale question to investigate posting pictures of their volunteer tourism experiences online. These last two sections were adapted from Callanan & Thomas’ (2005) framework, which was developed to understand volunteer tourists’ motivation in order to classify the responses into shallow and deep categories.

### ***Participants***

A non-probability sampling method was used via various online populations of volunteer tourists on Facebook. The first wave of surveys was sent via email to 557 participants, of whom 61 participants responded, resulting in a response rate of 10.9%. The second wave was posted in a specialized volunteer tourism group with 2,335 members. Through the Facebook collector, 390 responses were gathered, yielding a response rate of 16.7%. For both collectors combined, therefore, a response rate of 15.6% was achieved. This is slightly below average response rates for web-based surveys (Sax, Gilmartin & Bryant, 2003, p. 417); however, due to the nature of

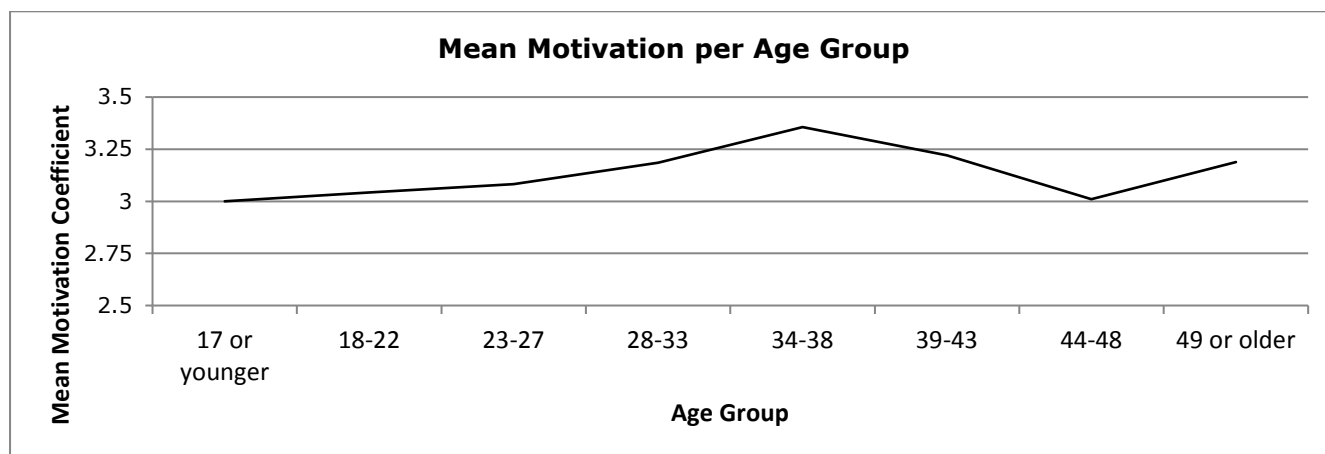
the survey it is not surprising. Since the survey could only be answered by people who had previously participated in volunteer tourism, it was expected that response rates would be slightly below the average as it creates a constraint for respondents. In total, 260 responses were fully completed and analyzed. The responses were coded and SPSS utilized to compute correlations and ANOVA used to examine the relationships between items in the survey.

## RESULTS

*Hypothesis 1a: There is a statistically significant relationship between the age of volunteers and “deep” motivations, i.e. the older the volunteers the more likely they are to express “deep motivation”.*

The majority of respondents (78.5%) were between 18 and 27 years of age, and represent 38 different nationalities. There is a steady increase in the motivation until the age group 34-38. After that, the coefficient dips until the age group 44-48, where it begins to increase again (Figure 2). Yet, the study did not reveal a statistically significant difference among age groups and motivational level in volunteering tourism. Consequently, Hypothesis 1a was not accepted, because motivational level cannot be statistically correlated with the age of the respondents.

Figure 2: Age and motivation levels (1= shallow, 5 = deep)



*Hypothesis 1b: There is a statistically significant relationship between the education level of volunteers and deep motivations, i.e. the more educated the volunteer then the more likely they are to express “deep motivation”.*

Most respondents were either students (50%) or employed (40.4%) having completed either high school (40.4%) or a bachelor's (44.6%) degree. From the descriptive statistics (Table 1), the level of education and motivation for volunteer tourism was not statistically significant ( $p=0.114$ ), though an increase in depth of motivation can be seen as the level of education increases after the bachelor's degree. Hence, Hypothesis 1b was not accepted either because higher educational level does not correlate with higher motivational level in volunteer tourism.

Table 1: Education and Motivation Descriptive

<b>Descriptive</b>								
Motivation Coefficient								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
High School or Equivalent	105	3.075992	.2805217	.0273761	3.021704	3.130280	2.3958	3.7292
Bachelor's Degree	116	3.074174	.2363784	.0219472	3.030701	3.117647	2.4375	3.8542
Master's Degree	38	3.178180	.3099823	.0502858	3.076291	3.280068	2.6875	4.0000
Ph. D.	1	3.375000	.	.	.	.	3.3750	3.3750
Total	260	3.091266	.2679166	.0166155	3.058547	3.123985	2.3958	4.0000

*Hypothesis 2: There is a statistically significant relationship between having experienced an organized volunteer tourism experience and "shallow motivations", i.e. the more organized the volunteer experience then the more likely they are to express "shallow motivation".*

Despite the fact that the mean motivation coefficient for volunteers who organized their trips through specialized travel agencies is lower (more shallow) than for those who organized them through NGOs and individually, it is not significant enough ( $p=0.437$ ) to prove Hypothesis 2 (Table 2).

Table 2: Motivation and Organization of the Trip Descriptive

<b>Descriptive</b>								
Motivation Coefficient								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Specialized Travel Agency	90	3.055556	.2607886	.0274895	3.000934	3.110177	2.3958	3.7917
NGO	105	3.117262	.2587004	.0252466	3.067197	3.167327	2.4792	3.7292
Individually	52	3.103766	.3053649	.0423465	3.018752	3.188780	2.5000	4.0000
Other	13	3.078526	.2284005	.0633469	2.940505	3.216547	2.7500	3.5208
Total	260	3.091266	.2679166	.0166155	3.058547	3.123985	2.3958	4.0000

*Hypothesis 3a: There is a statistically significant relationship between volunteers with deep motivations and the likelihood to publish pictures on social media platforms, i.e. the volunteers with “deep motivations” are less likely to publish on social media platforms.*

Although Hypotheses 1 and 2 were rejected, the central hypotheses that focus on the aspect of social media posting, namely hypothesis 3a was accepted (Table 3). The result of the ANOVA analysis for Hypothesis 3a (Table 3) was  $F(1,258) = 4.034$ ,  $p=0.046$  which indicates a statistically significant difference between the two groups of respondents who are grouped in low (shallow) and high (deep) motivation, which means that the volunteers with “deep motivations” are less likely to publish on social media platforms.

Table 3: ANOVA – Motivation and Publishing Pictures

Motivation Coefficient					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.286	1	.286	4.034	.046
Within Groups	18.305	258	.071		
Total	18.591	259			

*Hypothesis 3b: There is a statistically significant relationship between volunteers’ motivations and the volume of pictures published on social media platforms.*

Hypothesis 3b was also accepted. As seen from the results (Table 4), there is a significant but weak negative relationship between the depth of the motivation and the number of pictures posted on social media. The fact that the correlation is negative means that there is an inverse relationship between the two variables. Thus, as the motivation coefficient increases (motivations become deeper), fewer pictures are published on social media.

Table 4: Correlations – Motivation and Number of Pictures Published

		Motivation Coefficient	Number of photos published
Motivation Coefficient	Pearson Correlation	1	-.151*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.015
	N	260	260
Number of pictures published	Pearson Correlation	-.151*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	
	N	260	260

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

## DISCUSSION

Due to the largely unexplored field of photo-sharing behavior of tourists this research focused on understanding volunteer tourists' post-volunteering behaviors on social media (Caton & Santos, 2008; McGehee, 2014). The summary (Table 5) of the five hypotheses reveals some interesting results on volunteer tourists' motivational level, consequently, the chosen methodology permits a profounder understanding of the phenomenon. The study showed that there is not a statistically significant correlation between age and motivation or between educational level and motivation for volunteer tourism. Nevertheless, some tendencies are worth mentioning, such as the increasing motivational level until the age of 38 and after 44-48 years of age that somehow indicate the professional and/or personal stages of human life. This means that humans usually balance between professional and personal life at different stages of their lives. Hypothesis 2 was also rejected due to the fact that the ANOVA analysis showed no significant correlation between organizing the volunteering trip by an organization or by the individual itself. Consequently, potential volunteers cannot be categorized as more or less motivated by their initial approach of organizing their trip.

Hypothesis 3a and 3b were accepted, which indicates a certain coherence with a previous study by Wilkinson, McCool and Bois (2014) that found that tourists are considered consumers who are encouraged to consume more authentic - and at the same time - global products, such as volunteer tourism, as part of their 'image' on social media. Hypothesis 3a and 3b also reinforce the findings that volunteer tourists gain social status not only throughout their volunteering experience (Coghlan & Fennel, 2011), but also during the post-volunteering period. Their social media presence and social networking through their photo-sharing behavior indicate shallow motivation, hence more social egoism where altruism towards the local populations plays a minor role for volunteers (Cousins, Evans & Sadler, 2009). By gaining social status on the web, and probably in the postmodern society, self-centered motivation can also be understood as shallow-motivated volunteer tourists increasing their social capital due to their increased social interaction, trust, and image in the society (Chang & Chuang, (2011).

Table 5: Summary of Hypotheses Outcomes

Hypothesis		
1a	There is a statistically significant relationship between age of volunteers and motivations.	Rejected

1b	Volunteers with a basic level of education are more likely to have shallow motivations.	Rejected
2	There is a statistically significant relationship between an organized volunteer tourism experience and motivations	Rejected
3a	There is a statistically significant relationship between volunteers with deep motivations and the likelihood to publish pictures on social media platforms	Accepted
3b	There is a statistically significant relationship between volunteers' motivations and the volume of pictures they are likely to publish on social media platforms.	Accepted

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study sought to develop an initial understanding of volunteer tourists who post travel photographs online. The volunteer tourism phenomenon has strayed from its ideological origins, and in certain cases has become more detrimental than beneficial. If volunteers do, in fact, travel for egoistic purposes and publish pictures online to showcase their humanitarianism, it could be contributing to the risks associated with volunteer tourism. This raises the question of whether the social validation of volunteering and posting pictures online can be aligned with the potential benefits of volunteer tourism, or whether the exact opposite occurs.

Sharing of travel photographs may play a vital role in the image formation of volunteer tourism. With the volume of photos relatively high from the “shallow” volunteers tourists in comparison with those more deeply motivated to make a contribution to volunteering, photo sharing may only serve to attract those who are intent on improving their online profile for personal promotion. To encourage those with deeper motivation then, volunteer tourism agencies may want to encourage them to engage in social media and thus promote a more positive, altruistic meaning of volunteerism. Regular updating of these links can also keep their content current for attracting potential volunteers. Most volunteers, at least in this sample, are young and female; the older / male individuals, on the other hand, seem to be less concerned about establishing or modifying their digital self-image.

In order to select appropriate volunteers, companies and organizations should carry out a more reflective selection process to filter candidates by their motivation level. Additionally, those volunteer organizations who themselves wish to promote altruistic and less self-promoting practices should carefully edit and monitor their own websites and social media content that promotes these aligned values. Furthermore, and given the increasing volume of data and images linked to volunteer tourism, there is scope for the volunteering tourism sector to mine this wealth of visual data, profile and actively approach potential candidates and channel them

towards either more commercial, self-serving volunteering or non-commercial, altruistic volunteering opportunities.

One of the suggested solutions of this research project is to visit potential volunteers' social media pages and analyze their photo publishing behaviors during and after their past volunteering experiences. This way, the candidates' deep or shallow motivation for volunteering in tourism can be perceived. Consequently, volunteer tourism could be repositioned as an altruistic and not as an egotistic activity, hence actually helping those in need can be repositioned at the heart of the mission. This would probably contribute to improved results in the host populations as well.

With the importance that both social media and volunteering have gained in recruitment selection, being able to differentiate between shallow and deep volunteers based on their social media use could be beneficial. Recruiters would need to consider whether images on social media are actually representative and be more critical of an applicant's motivations in regards to their suitability for volunteer tourism. This could be examined further through personality tests linked to the selection process.

## **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Although the study aligns with Hargittai's findings (2007) that, overall, there are more female social media users than males it could be interesting to study if motivational level for volunteering tourism is also influenced by gender. This study is limited to answer this question due to the uneven gender ratio among the participants (86.9% female vs. 13.1% male respondents).

Since this study can be considered as a pioneer in the field, the authors suggest that additional in-depth research needs to be conducted regarding volunteer tourism motivations and publishing behavior on social media in order to more fully answer the questions raised in this study and to determine further practical implications. Furthermore, additional research needs to be conducted to not only gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between motivations and photo publishing behavior, but to determine whether the humanitarian portrayal of oneself is, in fact, a motivator in and of itself. This would not only have an impact on the extent to which volunteer tourism is commoditized, but also create valuable psychological insights on volunteers that would aid in the recruitment of volunteers.

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