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Personality traits and motivations of medical voluntourists

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Introduction

The traditional form of tourism has developed a negative connotation of inauthenticity, so people are searching for alternate tourism experiences that are more authentic. As a result of this desire to avoid mass tourism, multiple forms of niche tourism markets have formed. Travelers have found a way to experience culture, leave a positive impact in the community they visit, and achieve some traditional goals of traveling through voluntourism. This is a form of tourism generated by people travelling to destinations outside their normal residence to perform volunteer work to contribute to the development of disadvantaged communities. Our research is specifically geared towards medical voluntourism. In part of this project we are also comparing existing research on surf voluntourism with our research.



Literature Review

Benefits of Medical Voluntourism

- **Professional Medical Voluntourism**
 - Adequate education and training (Wallace, 2012)
- **Transitional Medical Voluntourism**
 - The voluntourists increase their scope of knowledge and practice (Wallace, 2012)
 - Develop professional relationships in the community abroad (Loh, 2013)

Challenges of Medical Voluntourism

- **Professional Medical Voluntourism**
 - Ability to practice medicine in an unfamiliar surrounding (Reynolds, 2006)
 - Small amount of help provided compared to massive amount of help needed (Reynolds 2006)
- **Transitional Medical Voluntourism**
 - Students believe it's a necessary gap year and they may not be as passionate about the care (Jones, 2008)
 - Follow up for the local population is proven to be a challenge (Citrin, 2010)

Motivations and Personality Traits of Volontourists

- People choose activities based on how well the project fits with their motivations (Coursey, 2011)
- Many voluntourists are motivated by the enhanced learning opportunity or by their personal achievement goals (Holdsworth, 2010)

Research Questions

- What are the personality traits of medical voluntourists?
- What are the motivations for participation of medical voluntourists?
- Are there differences between professional and transitional medical voluntourists?
- Are there differences between surf voluntourists and medical voluntourists?

Methods

Quantitative

- Evaluated motivations of medical voluntourists using the Situational Motivation Scale (SMS) (Guay et al 2000)
- Examined personality traits of medical voluntourists using the HEXACO-PIR scale (Lee and Ashton 2004)
- Electronic surveys distributed to medical voluntourism organizations.

Qualitative

- Semi-structured interviews with participants of Hands up for Haiti, a medical voluntourism organization.

Example Questions from HEXACO-PIR

Honesty-Humility

I think that I am entitled to more respect than the average person is.

Emotionality

I feel strong emotions when someone close to me is going away for a long time.

Extraversion

I prefer jobs that involve active social interaction to those that involve working alone.

Agreeableness

When people tell me that I'm wrong, my first reaction is to argue with them.

Conscientiousness

When working, I sometimes have difficulties due to being disorganized.

Openness to Experience

I think of myself as a somewhat eccentric person.

Example From SMS

Why are you currently engaged in this activity?

1. Because I think that this activity is interesting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Because I am doing it for my own good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Because I am supposed to do it	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. There may be good reasons to do this activity, but personally I don't see any	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Because I think that this activity is pleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Because I think that this activity is good for me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Because it is something that I have to do	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I do this activity but I am not sure if it is worth it	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Because this activity is fun	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. By personal decision	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Because I don't have any choice	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I don't know; I don't see what this activity brings me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Because I feel good when doing this activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Because I believe that this activity is important for me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Because I feel that I have to do it	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I do this activity, but I am not sure it is a good thing to pursue it	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Codification key: Intrinsic motivation: Items 1, 5, 9, 13; Identified regulation: Items 2, 6, 10, 14; External regulation: Items 3,7, 11, 15; Amotivation: Items 4, 8, 12, 16.

Limitations

- Online survey (potentially low response rate)
- Limited by amount of organizations and participants
- Lapsed time between volunteer experience and time of survey



Implications

- Help voluntourism organizations understand the personality traits and motivations of their volunteers.
- Help voluntourism organizations recruit and market programs.
- Help voluntourism organizations anticipate conflicts of volunteers.

