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## Volunteers Tourism – making a difference or just another holiday?

*Turismo de voluntarios: ¿marcar la diferencia o simplemente unas vacaciones más?*

*Turismo de Voluntários - fazendo a diferença ou apenas mais um feriado?*

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## Resumen

El propósito de este ensayo es comprender y conocer el papel principal y la motivación que tienen las personas para practicar un turismo de voluntariado, se conocerán los principales grupos de personas que se dedican a esta actividad y la edad promedio de los mismos. Además, esta investigación explica los significados de los diferentes términos que rodean al tema, conociendo un poco sobre el costo y los beneficios acumulados para los voluntarios. Además, reconocer las pautas que la organización debe seguir para hacer una excelente experiencia para sus voluntarios y ayudar a mejorar y desarrollar la comunidad que visitan. Además, el voluntario necesita conocer los aspectos principales del voluntariado y conocimientos generales sobre la comunidad a visitar. Aparte de esto, este artículo describe el significado de vacaciones y tres patrones de hábitos de vacaciones. Toda esta investigación tiene como objetivo marcar la diferencia entre el turismo voluntario con unas vacaciones o encontrar alguna similitud.

**Palabras claves:** Turismo de voluntarios; haciendo; solo otras vacaciones

## Abstract

The purpose of this essay is understand and know the principal role and the motivation that people have for practice a volunteer tourism, the main groups of people who engage in this activity and average age of them will be known. In addition, this research explains the meanings of the different terms that surround the subject, knowing a little about the cost and benefits accruing to volunteers. Moreover, recognize the guidelines that the organization need to follow for making an excellent experience for their volunteers and help to improve and develop the community that they visit. In addition, the volunteer need to know the principal aspects of volunteering and general knowledge about the community to visit. Apart of this, this paper describes the meaning of holiday and three patterns of holiday habits. All this research is for making a difference between volunteer tourism with a holiday or otherwise finds some similarity.

**Keywords:** Volunteers Tourism; making; just another holiday

## Resumo

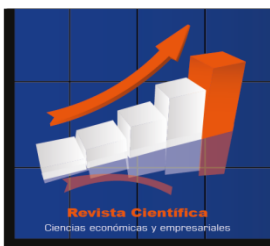
O objetivo deste ensaio é compreender e conhecer o papel principal e a motivação que as pessoas têm para a prática do turismo voluntário, serão conhecidos os principais grupos de pessoas que se dedicam a esta atividade e a idade média dos mesmos. Além disso, esta pesquisa explica os significados dos diferentes termos que circundam o assunto, sabendo um pouco sobre os custos e benefícios para os voluntários. Além disso, reconheça as diretrizes que a organização precisa seguir para fazer uma excelente experiência para seus voluntários e ajudar a melhorar e desenvolver a comunidade que visita. Além disso, o voluntário precisa conhecer os principais aspectos do voluntariado e conhecimentos gerais sobre a comunidade a ser visitada. Além disso, este artigo descreve o significado de férias e três padrões de hábitos de férias. Toda essa pesquisa é para fazer a diferença entre o turismo voluntário com férias ou encontrar alguma semelhança.

**Palavras chaves:** Turismo voluntário; fazendo; apenas mais férias

## Introduction

Volunteer is a person who actively takes on responsibility or project, on her or his own without needing to be ordered or told to do so ((Cambridge Dictionary, 2016)). In some cases, a volunteer is a not paid activity for the work that the people provide; the majority of people are voluntary only by sentiment and willingness to help others and for the feeling of being useful for the society ((Oxford, 2016)). The purpose of volunteer is make some revenue for the host communities, help in the environment conservation, cross-cultural understanding with the difference people who visit the community, and cooperation with the personal growth both belonging to the organization and the community ((Palacios, 2010)). To be a volunteer can bring a wealth of different benefits, for example: the people can acquire a good self-esteem and confidence, because is a great way to improve and develop their skills and interest, by cause of you need to relate with new people and it helps to broad your social circle. Also, is a pathway to upgrade their work experience, because currently most companies support a social cause and in this way they making a different in their communities ((Smith & Font, 2014)).

Volunteering includes a range of some aspects to considerer, which include: benefitted target group, length of commitment, type of task performed, level and nature of supervision, and benefit



to the volunteer ((Smith & Font, 2014)). The cost of volunteering is higher than benefits, and this is because the benefits to volunteers go beyond simple remuneration (in some cases, the remuneration is minimal or not exist) and the social status; is more important the social interaction and leisure activity, and the sense of gratification from working for a cause that you believe. Based on this, a volunteer is a person who costs should clearly outweigh the benefits. For this reason, the volunteers are considered that altruist people with a wish to self-discovery ((Wearing, 2001)). Volunteers are separate in groups with different ages, nationalities, cultures, and social backgrounds. The staffs that support the groups of volunteer performance like as mentors and help to develop the confidence in dealing with people from different cultures, self-awareness, mental resilience to succeed the adversity. Furthermore, they improve the ability to lead group projects, and the capability to work in teams close by others people from different backgrounds ((Wearing, 2001)).

## Development

Volunteerism contributes overall development on a global level; either involving travel or it is by him or herself. The United Nations (UN) stated this quoted “Volunteerism is an important component of any strategy aimed at poverty reduction, sustainable development, and social integration” in the 39<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council’s Commission for Social Development in 2011. Besides, the UN recognize the important and the profitable contribution of traditional forms of mutual cooperation and self-help, service delivery and others different forms of civic participation to economic, social and cultural development. In addition, the UN emphasized the important role of Governments in the development planning to measures on citizen’s ability and willingness to volunteer, with corrects policies to support an appropriate volunteering in private and public sectors ((O’Donnell, 2012)).

When associated the tourism with volunteer, the results is an activity that travellers, for various reasons, join an organization to do voluntary work to help some communities or the environment in the different places that they visiting ((Palacios, 2010)). Volunteer tourism or voluntourism (is the cross roads of volunteering and tourism) it involves a volunteer component to a vacation experience, that is an organized way to undertaken holidays with a volunteer activity, such as

restoration of environment or make a research into aspects of society or poverty. This means that the amount of time spent in volunteering versus tourism activities depends on the desire and devotion of volunteer and the needs of the receiving organization ((Wearing, 2001)). Volunteer tourism have multitude of motivations, not only altruistic motivations, but also some motivations associated with recreational travellers, such as a search for meeting other people, adventure, and fun ((Palacios, 2010)). Thanks to the policies established by the UN, the volunteer tourism has been growing over time, because the volunteer tourists demand for experiences that are more authentic, that allows them to interact with the residents of the host destination and seeking ways to go beyond the confines of their resorts. The volunteer tourism opting for experiential learning activities, they want experiences that are more meaningful ((Mostafanezhad, 2013)).

College students and baby boomers (people who born in the years following the Second War, between 1946 and 1964, now they entering in their retirement years) are the two largest groups who participating like a volunteer tourism ((Palacios, 2010)). More than the half of the volunteer tourism was between the ages of 19 and 26, approximately 65% of them just finished the high school, or college graduates, or current college students. In addition, those volunteer in their majority are the nationalities like British, Dutch, and American; apart of them, the nationalities that follow them are Canadian, Australian, and German ((Mostafanezhad, 2013)). Due to the above, is the growth of the volunteer tourism with the passage of time, and the new desire to learn something new and gain new experiences while volunteering. Currently, there are niches within volunteer tourism, such as culinary, cultural and heritage restoration, animal and environment conservation, and leadership development, just to name few. Volunteering not only has impact during the volunteer's stay in the communities, but probably largely once, they are back home, because no one returns being the same as when left a place.

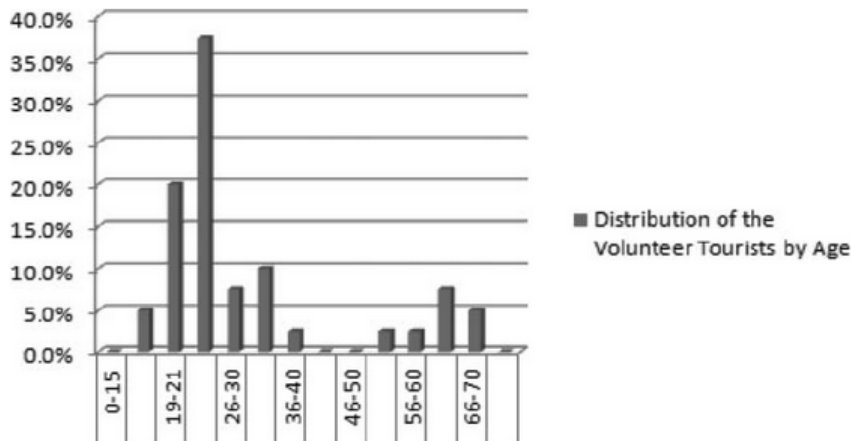
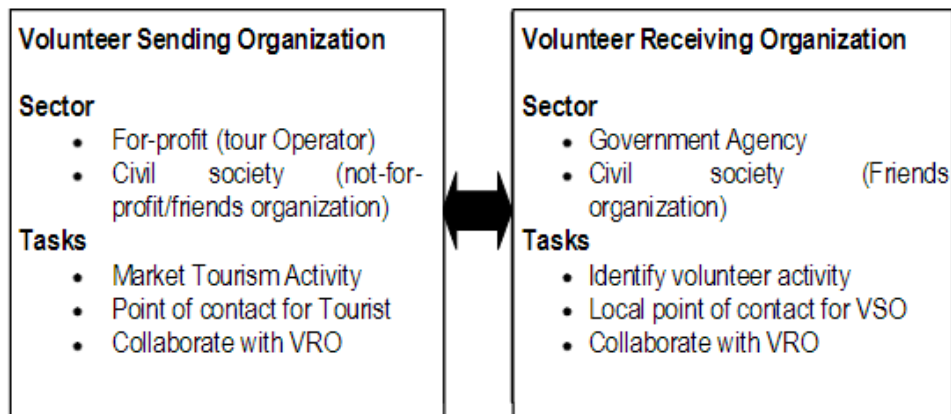


Figura 1. Distribution of the volunteer tourists by age. ((Mostafanezhad, 2013))

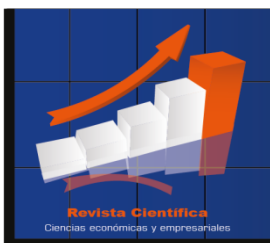
The volunteer tourism is a growth area, which with the pass of the time has been recognized for the role it might play in the development of community, because more travellers are planning their trips around humanitarian purposes, as a response to disaster aid, building homes, or participating in animal and environment conservation research ((Lamoureux & Director, n.d.)). The volunteer tourism has a strongly values-driven organisation, because promoting the ability of young people to work together, regardless of social and national background, becoming part of a global community active in making a world a better place to live in peace, and the experience that baby boomers can bring to them is so important in their careers and live. The experts see the volunteer tourism as means of providing resources and knowledge while allowing to the visitors the opportunity to give back to the destination and interact more meaningfully with the host community. There are a number of resources available to guide volunteer tourism practices, such as the link that partnerships and the community ownership has, that means the volunteer projects must be owned by the local community, because the volunteer tourism is the sporadic nature, the tourist come for a relatively short time in the community and they leave, but the organization must to continue with the necessary work. The community must be a part of deciding what need for the success to the project is, this fosters continuity and maximizes the impact for the destination ((Mostafanezhad, 2013)).

Another guide for doing a success volunteer tourism practice is the education of the travellers, because they need to interact on a very personal level to the hosts in a community, and their education is imperative to minimizing potential negative impact, they need to know and understand the culture and traditions for the community that they are going to visit, as well as helping the traveller understand what to expect. Whether the volunteer tourism may be for-profit, governmental, or non-profit, all the operations during the volunteering should take into account the financial viability of the activities, and this is because all the programs must be managed with the goal of creating a financial sustainability ((Lamoureux & Director, n.d.)). Something else that the volunteer should consider is avoid to create the dependence feelings in the hosts, do not give products that can only be supplied from outside the community, because the residents make the feelings that the volunteers will come to and fixed everything and then they expect that all tourists arriving gifting them something ((Handy et al., 2000)).



**Figura 2.** Volunteer Managing Organizations: Relationship between Sending and Receiving Organizations. ((Lamoureux & Director, n.d.))

When the volunteering it is well organized and thoughtfully planned, the organization can provide to the traveller a great advantage in their visit, and in the same way helping the host community in their economy, because the volunteering. This can be, a good memorable experience with the others volunteer and the population, especially for the baby boomers because they are the ones who enjoy more the volunteering and this because they spent their entire life working at the end they only want to help, enjoy and learn ((Handy et al., 2000)). Nevertheless, when the organization cannot



plan an organized volunteering, it can be more harmful than good, for this reason the organization need to understand the complexity of making this experience successful for both volunteers and population. In the majority of cases, the organization focuses more in make that their volunteer feels good and not in the result to be useful and helpful in the community that they visit. To avoid this problem is important that the organizations know some things about the volunteer, for example: determinate are the skills that volunteer can offer, their likes, and purpose of their volunteering. In addition to, make a carefully assess of the work condition and the life style that the population has, and with this be sure that the organization covers everything that they promote ((Lyons, Hanley, Wearing, & Neil, 2012)). In addition, is important to find the correct balance based on the experience, available time, and motivation in order to identify a suitable project.

At moment to talk about holidays, the research explain that is a time when people go away from home, and can relax, visit new places, are free to do what they want, spent a period of leisure with their family or friends ((Cambridge Dictionary, 2016)). There are three patterns in holiday habits for decision-making at considerer. First, the people know that holiday is a key and habitualized element of life; this means that the people put more attention in the destination that they want to go, in some cases; they want to repeat some destination for the previous experience or want to visit a different one. Second, ad-hoc based decision-making (the term ad-hoc, it refers to new decision for each new situation, and no plans for future contingencies) in this case the people do not have a clear destination, and just leave everything to fate, this kind of habit is more for adventurous tourists, they take risks and decisions to spend their holiday. At last, is the time of transition unlike the others, this pattern of habits is more structured, is more attached to people who like have everything planned and under control, they always make an assessment before or after holidays ((Therkelsen & Gram, 2008)( Blichfeldt, 2007)).

## Conclusion

After performing this research, it can be concluded that not exist similarity between volunteer tourism and holidays, because both have different purposes, a volunteer tourism is a rapidly growing phenomenon that can provide multiple benefits when the activity is host by a credible and sustainable organization. This activity allows the travellers to support a national and international



project though a hands-on work experience and this have a significant effect on people, because while more information the volunteer received by the organization, more effective is the result of the activity. The motivation of volunteer are altruist and they only have the objective to help a community or contribute in the care of a wildlife or environment, contrary of this, the motivation of holidays is just to disconnect from the world and relax for a period of time to return to the daily activities. In the education aspects, the volunteer need to know about the general aspects and the tradition of the destination to visit plus knowing the rules that volunteer tourism has, and for holiday, the tourist just need to know some aspects like as the place to stay, eat or visit. Both volunteer tourism and holidays; give an excellent experience only if the activities have been planned in an organized way. Other difference is the destination, volunteer tourism visit some places that have been affected by a natural disaster or some place or need a financial assistance; by the other side people in holidays go to a beautiful places when they can relax and forget their activities. In holiday, the people can be enjoying with all their family but in some cases volunteers travel alone.

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