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Much more than voluntourism: the altruistic volunteer tourism motivation and experience in Israel

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Abstract: Volunteer tourism is becoming increasingly popular among tourists in different parts of the world. The study's objective is to understand the motives and experiences of volunteer tourists in Israel. Findings indicate that motives for volunteering could be located along various axes – motives of altruism vs. motives of personal benefit; universal vs. particularistic motives; and volunteering-oriented vs. tourism-oriented motives. The volunteer tourist in Israel undergoes a hybrid experience characterised by different elements – relating to the volunteering endeavour itself, to the tourist experience, and to the general experience – all of which crystallise into an integrated multidimensional experience. Volunteers with a unique connection to Israel were found to have unique and slightly different motives and experiences. Volunteering contributes to personal change, to the development of personal abilities, and to awareness of and sensitivity toward underprivileged populations; and it can also lead to a positive change in volunteers' stance on Israel and Israeli society.

Keywords: volunteer tourism; voluntourism; altruistic; motivations; Israel; tourist experience; personal change.

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1 Introduction

Thousands of tourists visit different countries each year to volunteer for significant periods of time within dozens of organisations and institutions with the aim of taking part in endeavours that are meaningful for others. The present study seeks to examine the attributes of volunteer tourism in order to generate an in-depth understanding of and explanation for this phenomenon in Israel. In this way, it aims to fill the lacuna that exists in the academic research with respect to this phenomenon and to enable the various relevant parties – government ministries, organisations, and the institutions operating these projects in Israel – to better understand the volunteers, thereby enhancing and streamlining the volunteer programs. Furthermore, in light of the importance of the sense of religious mission as a motive for volunteer tourism (Ron and Timothy, 2019), the present study provides new insight into this matter with regard to the Holy Land.

The study's overarching objective focuses on understanding the volunteers' motives and the experiences of the volunteer tourists within different programs and organisations engaged in meaningful endeavours for the benefit of others. 'Meaningful endeavours' were classified in accordance with the period of time to which participants committed themselves, the nature of the activity, and its character as a personal commitment to engage in an active endeavour for the benefit of a target population. The major research questions that guided the study were as follows:

- a What are the motives for altruistic volunteer endeavours?
- b What are the attributes of the volunteer tourist's experience, as both a volunteer and a tourist?
- c What is the multi-experience and what is its meaning?

2 Theoretical framework

The major concepts addressed by this study are 'altruism', 'voluntourism', and 'the experience of the volunteer tourist'. The word altruism is derived from the Latin word *altar*, which means 'other'. The term altruism was originally coined in the nineteenth century by French philosopher Auguste Comte (d. 1857) as the opposite of 'egoism' (Scott and Seglow, 2007). Attesting to its complexity, the notion of altruism is defined and conceived of differently in different fields of research. The common thread running through these definitions is the idea that altruism constitutes an endeavour to help or

assist others, without remuneration, that is not taken for granted. The definition employed in this study is that of Arnold, who maintains that: “A trait or a type of behaviour of an individual is called altruistic if it benefits another individual at a cost for the individual itself without immediate or equal return” (Arnold, 2007, p.21).

2.1 Volunteer tourism

Most scholars view volunteer tourism as a form of alternative tourism (Wearing et al., 2017; Godfrey et al., 2019). The most common definition of the phenomenon in academic research is that of Wearing (2001), who describes it as “those tourists who, for various reasons volunteer in an organised way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment” (Wearing, 2001, p.1).

Tourists volunteering within organisations that operate in various countries around the world is not a new phenomenon. Its roots lie in the distant past; during the Byzantine period, for example, Christian missionaries operated throughout the Middle East and especially in the Holy Land (Ron and Timothy, 2019). The decades following World War II marked a turning point in the scope of the phenomenon of volunteer tourism as part of the general development of the global tourist industry. In 2008, Tourism and Research Marketing (TRAM) estimated the market size of volunteer tourism to be 1.6 million volunteer tourists per year. Mintel (2014) estimates that, in 2013, there were four million volunteer tourists worldwide, and Biddle (2016) suggests that volunteer tourism involves 10 million people each year and is worth two billion dollars annually (Cheer, 2019; Curtin and Brown, 2019; Hertwig and Lusby, 2021; Thompson, 2021). “In a very short time, volunteer tourism has become a ‘mass niche’ market thanks to the growth in volunteer projects, variety of destinations, and wide range of market segments that can be attracted” (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p.650).

According to Mintel (2014), the most popular destinations for volunteer tourists are Latin America, Asia, and Africa, which together account for almost 90% of locations offered by operators based in affluent countries. Mintel also divides the market into three categories:

- 1 gap-year and university students, aged 18–25
- 2 career breakers and young professionals
- 3 the 50+ post-family market (Mintel, 2014).

The average length of stay of volunteers differs from one volunteering program to another.

Callanan and Thomas (2005) have developed a conceptual model for identifying three levels of volunteer-tourism intensity: shallow volunteer tourism; intermediate volunteer tourism; and deep volunteer tourism. The intensity is defined by indices regarding the destination, the duration of the volunteering, the main motive for volunteering (egoistical or altruistic), required professional skills, and whether the activity is passive or active (Callanan and Thomas, 2005, p.197).

Young (2008, p.207) considers volunteer tourism as “certainly an expanding sector of the tourism industry in many countries in both the developed and developing world”. In this context, Israel is a modern developed country, serving as both a volunteer tourism destination and a source of volunteers who are willing to go abroad for volunteer missions. Many academic studies have sought to examine the motives of volunteer tourism. Why would tourists go out of their way to incorporate into their annual vacation time a designated period for a non-remunerated endeavour for the benefit for others that may sometimes involve significant physical and emotional effort? Lee and Yen (2014) mention six primary motives for volunteer tourism: altruism, independence, self-fulfilment, curiosity, the need to escape (or change), and a relationship between the volunteer and the benefitted individual or the volunteer and the community.

Chen and Chen (2011) divide the motives for volunteer tourism into three primary categories:

- 1 personal motives, such as personal growth, professional advancement, investment in a future career, tourism, pleasure, and a challenging vacation
- 2 interpersonal motives, such as care for others, altruistic motives, and the desire to contribute to society, as well as motives that include cultural curiosity, the desire to become (closely) familiar with the world of others, or motives related to family and personal closeness
- 3 additional motives, such as playing the role of an emissary of an organisation in which one works or a sense of direct connection to a project (Chen and Chen, 2011).

Another approach classifies the motives for volunteer tourism into two main categories: altruistic and egoistical (TRAM, 2008).

Yet another motive for volunteer tourism is a sense of a religious mission. In their book *Contemporary Christian Travel*, Ron and Timothy (2019) point out that, as part of contemporary Christian tourism, volunteer tourism is the world’s most rapidly expanding form or format of travel. Many churches worldwide organise volunteer delegations (mini missions), usually for periods lasting 1–5 weeks, during which volunteers teach Bible and religious studies, work in construction and farming, etc.

One important framework of volunteer tourism is ‘gap-year tourism’, which is generally characterised by emerging adults taking a break during or immediately following their academic studies to travel for a year or so, before devoting themselves to their career (Meng et al., 2020; Simpson, 2004). According to Simpson (2004), a diverse range of organisations, some commercial and others charity-focused, are offering ‘gap year’ programs (Simpson, 2004). Another concept that is relevant to volunteer tourism is ‘serious leisure’, with which we are familiar from the modern-day field of leisure culture. A prominent phenomenon that is characteristic of the serious leisure framework is that of domestic volunteers and volunteer tourists (Wearing, 2001).

The volunteer tourist’s experience consists of two primary elements: the experience of visiting a foreign country (tourism) and the experience of contributing and giving to others, which involves interacting with the local community and the social dynamic vis-à-vis other volunteer tourists (Wearing, 2001). Smith and Holmes (2009) define the experience as a feeling or knowledge acquired through personal participation in social activity. Wearing (2001) focuses on two major components of the experience of the

volunteer tourist: personal change (self-confidence and personal abilities) and a change in awareness of others. The volunteer-tourist experience has also been described by some scholars as a transformative experience (Coghlan and Weiler, 2018; Kahana, 2021; Magrizos et al., 2020).

The phenomenon of volunteer tourists in the Holy Land, which, as noted, has existed since the Byzantine era, has expanded in recent decades thanks to the numerous organisations and institutions that have joined the effort to promote this field. Spivak's (2015) study on 'The Volunteer Tourist Experience of Young Germans in Israel' examines how young people experience volunteering in Israel and their encounter with Israeli society; the role played by the collective memory of the Holocaust and the Nazis in the experience of young Germans volunteering in Israel; and the manner in which young Germans view Israeli society in light of present politics, particularly against the background of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In her study on the 'Action Reconciliation Service for Peace Organisation', Marom (2002) examines the major influence of the period of volunteering of volunteer tourists on their post-volunteering lives.

Since little research exists about altruistic volunteer tourism in Israel, this study's main objectives focus on understanding the unique motives for volunteering in Israel and the volunteer's experience, with an eye toward exploring different reasons for volunteering in Israel.

3 Methodology

In accordance with the study's overarching objective and research questions, we selected the qualitative research approach, also known as 'interpretive' or 'constructivist' research, which is based on the meaning accorded to the human experience. Specifically, we selected Constructivist Grounded Theory to achieve the goal of this study, as we found it to be the most appropriate methodology for assessing volunteers' motivations and experiences from a personal perspective. Grounded Theory was developed in the United States by Glaser and Strauss (1967) during the 1960s and is regarded as one of the main approaches of qualitative research. It aims to facilitate "the formulation of theoretical explanations for social phenomena via methodical and attentive analysis of data such as interviews, and the optimal representation of the phenomena studied" (Sabar-Ben Yehoshua, 2016, p.141).

The primary research tools of this method are semi-structured interviews and participant observations which, together, enable the crosschecking of information from different sources and the attainment of a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the motives for volunteering and the experience of the altruistic volunteer tourist. The interview questions and fieldwork were based on previous academic research concerning the motivations (Chen and Chen, 2011; Coghlan and Fennell, 2009; Lee and Yen, 2014; Wearing, 2001) and experiences (Coghlan and Weiler, 2018; Curtin and Brown, 2019; Magrizos et al., 2020) of volunteer tourists.

Dozens of organisations and institutions operate altruistic volunteer-tourist frameworks in Israel, bringing thousands of volunteer tourists to the country every year. The Israeli Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Social Services is one of the primary entities involved, bringing some 800 volunteer tourists to Israel each year to work with

people with special needs, elderly individuals without children, at-risk children and youth, the ill, individuals suffering from autism, etc. Other organisations active in volunteer tourism in Israel include: the National Civic Service Volunteering Union, Magen David Adom, commercial companies such as Go-Eco, organisations operating in accordance with religious ideology (such as the ‘Zedakah Bet El’ organisation and ‘Hayovel’), and educational programs for young Jews from around the world seeking to volunteer and contribute to underprivileged populations in Israel. The volunteers were chosen from these organisations and participated voluntarily in the research.

The 49 volunteers who participated in the study represented a variety of ages, genders, religious affiliations, and countries of origin, and volunteered within 14 organisations and institutions in Israel. In addition to the in-depth interviews, 20 field observations were conducted, encompassing 48 h of observation in six different volunteer programs. Data was collected during the period 2016–2020.

The semi-structured interviews focused on the main issues of the study: volunteer motivation and experience. For each topic, a series of questions were chosen; however, the participants added their own personal stories and also addressed other topics.

Analysis of the findings was conducted as follows: First, the recorded interviews were transcribed and a preliminary process of classification into primary and secondary categories was carried out using Narralyzer software. The processing procedure involved assigning each of the interview’s paragraphs to a separate category according to its content and gleaning the main themes from the interviews. The study’s findings were subsequently arranged by grouping together volunteers with the same characteristics in order to examine the findings in relation to specific groups – Jewish volunteers, religious Christian volunteers, German volunteers, and volunteers at least 60 years of age.

In the next stage, the findings were processed into a summarising table that synchronises between the research questions and the study participants. Each column contains the interviewees’ responses to a specific question. A further processing stage involved the division of volunteer motives among three central axes: an altruistic vs. personal benefit axis; a universal vs. particularistic axis; and a volunteer-oriented vs. tourist-oriented axis. Processing this data allowed us to deepen our examination of the study’s findings.

4 Motives for volunteering

An extremely broad range of reasons and motives were identified for the decision to volunteer in Israel. The overwhelming majority of the study participants mentioned several motives or reasons, whereas only a few mentioned one motive alone. When analysing the study findings, the motives for volunteering were placed on a scale from volunteering-oriented motives to tourism-oriented motives. Eight main motives were identified in total, some of which are volunteering-oriented and three of which are tourism-oriented.

4.1 *Volunteering-oriented motives – general*

A desire to help those in need or to contribute to society: The decision to volunteer for a year offers an opportunity to contend with challenges that are new for many of the volunteers, especially considering their relatively young age. Some of the volunteers

stated that they were particularly interested in working with disabled people, whereas other volunteers explained their motive as stemming from a desire to give back to society: "I thought paying back something socially after school was a little bit of a duty of mine... so, I wanted to give something back..." (7).

4.2 Personal benefit-oriented motives

The desire to explore a future professional direction or to acquire practical or professional experience in a previously studied field – One of the prominent attributes of the volunteers who participated in the study was their young age (19-22), which meant that most of them had thus far been unable to devote themselves to a career. The period of volunteering is perceived as an appropriate juncture for examining a future professional direction or acquiring professional experience in a studied field: "I clearly reflected that I wanted to study medicine after this year. So, it is also like criteria for choosing my volunteering service year" (2).

4.3 Volunteering-oriented motives – Israel specific

A unique sense of connection to Israel: Three groups were identified as being motivated by this factor. The first consists of Jews seeking to become more familiar with Israel and to explore the possibility of *Aliya* (Jewish immigration to Israel). As the homeland of the Jewish People, the state of Israel attracts some Jews from abroad to the country to engage in volunteering as part of an exploration of future prospects for settling there. Out of a desire to contribute to the state even if they themselves have no plans to immigrate there, others volunteered on the grounds that 'Israel is my home too'. The second group includes non-Jewish volunteers who feel a special connection to Israel or who are already familiar with it. A previous visit to Israel or a personal relationship (of the volunteer or a member of his/her family) with Israelis are two of their reasons for choosing to volunteer in Israel. Other members of this group take interest in Israel because of the geopolitical reality in the Middle East or as the nation state of the Jewish People. The third and final group encompasses non-Jewish volunteers with a personal connection to Judaism or a desire to convert to Judaism and join the Jewish People. These volunteers are not Jewish but feel a bond with Judaism:

"It started when I read the bible for the first time. And I was curious about the Jewish people. And when I started learning more things about Judaism, I was feeling so.... how can I say it, I felt like a connection, something was calling me and bringing me here..." (36).

Four participants in this study were volunteers engaged in the process of converting to Judaism. Three stated that they decided to convert during their time volunteering in Israel, and the fourth stated that her sense of connection to Judaism began in Italy.

Volunteers from Germany choose Israel because of their sense of responsibility for the Holocaust: The shared history of the Jewish People and Germany, and the sense of responsibility that many Germans feel for the deeds of their fellow Germans during World War II, have led many Germans to volunteer in various institutions in Israel. For some, it is important to volunteer primarily in programs and organisations that care for Holocaust survivors:

“I found it very interesting to meet Holocaust survivors, ‘*shoa*’ survivors. And I also think because I am from Germany, it’s important to know about the history of Germany and it’s a kind of responsibility to say sorry for what happened in the past, and this was part of the decision to come here...” (26)

Religious-Christian volunteers: Many volunteers come to Israel motivated by Christian faith and view volunteering in the Holy Land as a religious calling and a way of serving God and the Chosen People: “I’m here because my motivation is to serve God and the people here in Israel” (24).

4.4 *Tourism-oriented motives – general*

A desire to make a personal change or to take a ‘gap year’: The gap year phenomenon is recognised as one of the main motives for engaging in a period of volunteering. In this context, three specific volunteer age groups were identified: post-high school graduation, post-university graduation, and during a person’s professional career or a transition between jobs: “I wanted, after school, like one year of break between school and university, so I decided to volunteer. I thought it’s a way to not waste the year but use it to help someone and for me to see new things. I wanted to go abroad” (21).

A desire to travel and see the world while volunteering for financial reasons: Volunteer tourism enables tourists with limited financial means to travel the world and visit other countries: “It’s so expensive, to travel and to go with a tourist group... And I think volunteering is nice and it really affects my desire to come to Israel and really fits my budget and my personality” (47).

Volunteering after retirement: Today’s increased life expectancy leads many senior citizens who still feel active to seek out volunteering frameworks in which they can contribute from their experience and talents, whether in their home country or abroad: “I retired, and then two years later my cousin decided – let’s do some volunteer work and in Israel, and that’s how I started” (46).

5 **The volunteer-tourist experience**

The experience of the volunteer tourist was found to be constituted by different elements of their volunteer activity and their time as a tourist in Israel. The experience also encompasses social relationships maintained during leisure time. From the perspective of the volunteering endeavour, the experience includes the connection with those benefitting from the volunteering activity and the beneficiaries’ expression of appreciation for the volunteers. Several of the volunteers mentioned the positive feeling of satisfaction and fulfilment that accompanies giving to others: “I feel useful, so I really... for the first time in my life, the impression that I’m the one who is giving and not taking... it’s always nice to be appreciated” (2). Others mentioned moments of happiness and enjoyment stemming from their connection with the beneficiaries of the volunteering activity, as well as from the activity itself. At the same time, they also mentioned various difficulties, physical and mental alike, and the challenge, as young people, of contending with some tasks for the first time. Language gaps were also specified as a difficulty leading to situations in which they did not always understand what was expected of them or what they were being asked to do, and therefore also as a source of frustration.

In addition to the volunteering endeavour, participants also mentioned the tourist experience, which included learning about Israel and a combination of trips and visits to tourist sites, as well as becoming more familiar with Israeli culture and society. Most of the study participants reported that this was their first visit to Israel and that the tourist element therefore played an important role in their decision. One of the issues discussed in the study was whether the combination of volunteering and tourist experience creates a different, unique tourist experience. The interviewees were asked to relate to the way in which they perceived the difference between a volunteer-tourist experience and that of a regular tourist. The first prominent aspect of their reply was a sense of reservation regarding their very definition as tourists. ‘...But I’m not a tourist’, some explained, articulating their self-perception first and foremost as volunteers.

One of the elements that create or shape a unique tourist experience is the degree of connection with the local community. Although a regular tourist does not have many opportunities to meet or become familiar with the local population of the destination country, a volunteer residing in a country for an extended period of time enjoys numerous opportunities to establish better and deeper relationships with the local population:

“When you are a tourist you just go there to see what you want to see... But when you are a volunteer...you can really see what’s going on. Uh, You, you have the opportunity to learn the language, to learn about people.” (1)

Indeed, this participant’s very independence in managing his visit and choosing its nature, together with the extended duration of his stay in the destination country, resulted in an alternative tourist experience.

Furthermore, the volunteer-tourist experience includes additional elements, such as leisure-time activity, the development of hobbies (a sport, studies, writing a blog, etc.), and social ties among the volunteers themselves and between them and the Israelis they meet.

Four specific groups of volunteers were characterised by such additional elements of experience: Jewish volunteers, Christian volunteers, volunteers from Germany, and volunteers engaged in the conversion process. The Jewish volunteers were familiar (either partially or fully) with the Hebrew language, with Israeli society, and with major tourist sites in Israel. Most had acquaintances or relatives in Israel and their social realm was therefore richer than non-Jewish volunteers. Another unique characteristic was the Jewish volunteer tourist’s desire to contribute to the state of Israel and Israeli society. The religious-Christian volunteers, who were typically characterised by a religious lifestyle that included study, joint prayer, and classes in religion, experienced a sense of personal satisfaction and spiritual-religious development and chose to visit sites with a connection to Christianity and the Bible. The volunteers from Germany chose to volunteer in Israel, specifically, because of their painful shared history with the Jewish People. As members of the younger generation, they expressed a sense of responsibility and a desire to atone for the past deeds of their nation:

“We have a special relationship to the Jewish people, and I think there are two opinions in the young German population. One opinion is that it is not any more our topic, so we don’t have to feel guilty or responsible or anything... and there is another opinion, and that’s more my opinion, that we still have a responsibility not for the past but for the present”. (8)

Many of them chose to volunteer with elderly Holocaust survivors – the last remnants of the European Jewish Holocaust. For them, helping and caring for Holocaust survivors

was an objective in itself. Volunteers seeking to join the Jewish People were characterised by a strong personal bond with Israel and the Jewish People.

The combined volunteering-tourism experience amalgamates all the elements of the volunteer tourist into a single unit – one that volunteers take home with them and that may impact the rest of their lives. The study's findings are varied and relate both to personal aspects and issues associated with the volunteers' continued professional development. The volunteers reported the personal changes they underwent during their year of volunteering and recounted how they had experienced personal growth and empowerment, acquired the ability to change their perspective, learned, and developed awareness of or sensitivity toward people in need of help:

“You know much more about yourself afterwards, and you get to know yourself even better. And you grow out of things. You learn how to deal also with yourself like... there is no mom or dad who is going to take you out of the problems.” (4)

When asked to specify the most important personal benefit they experienced as a result of their participation in the year of volunteering, replies included benefits such as maturity, personal independence, the development of personal abilities, personal and professional skills that will help them later in their professional lives, and a sense of satisfaction from having helped those in need. The integrated experience also appears to have influenced the volunteers' stance toward the state of Israel in general and Israeli society in particular. In this context, the volunteers noted that the year of volunteering contributed to a better and deeper familiarity with Israeli society and a better understanding of political issues in Israel.

6 The volunteer tourist motive's categorisation

A tourist's decision to embark on an extended period of volunteering is based on several motives that we divided into 6 categories: universal vs. particularist; personal benefit vs. altruistic; and volunteering-oriented vs. touristic-oriented.

Universal vs. Particularist: Universal motives are general or common and not related specifically to Israel (Collins-Kreiner and Kliot, 2017). With respect to this study, universal motives included the desire to help others or underprivileged populations, to explore a future professional direction, or to see more of the world, as well as a decision to volunteer for financial reasons or to take a gap year. Particularist or specific motives pertained directly to Israel as a unique destination for volunteering and included the importance of Israel as the Holy Land for the Christian world, as the homeland of the Jewish People for Jews, and as a unique setting for volunteers from Germany.

Altruistic vs. Personal-Benefit: The findings of this study provide several major insights. First, they reflect the existence of a continuum of motives. Second, they demonstrate that the distinction between an egoistic motive and an altruistic motive is not dichotomous and varies from person to person and over time. And third, they indicate that the terminology that was common in previous studies ('egoistic motives') does not accurately reflect the motives of the study participants because volunteer tourists devote their own time for the benefit of others. Even if their motives are not purely altruistic, their decision to volunteer should not be regarded as being motivated by egoism or

selfishness. On this basis, these motives were defined as ‘motives for personal benefit’. The study reveals that there is generally a combination of motives – altruistic motives alongside motives of personal benefit.

Volunteering-oriented vs. tourism-oriented: Volunteering-oriented motives include the desire to help others in general and Holocaust survivors in particular, and tourist-oriented motives include the desire to travel and explore the world, to see new places, and to take a gap year.

Figure 1 summarises the volunteer’s motivations in six categories. For each one of the volunteers (No. 1 to 49), the volunteering motivations that he or she mentions during the interview can be divided into 6 categories: 1–2) universalist vs. particularistic; 3–4) personal benefit vs. altruistic; and 5–6) volunteering-oriented vs. tourism-oriented.

Figure 1 The three-axis model representing the research participant’s motivations (see online version for colours)

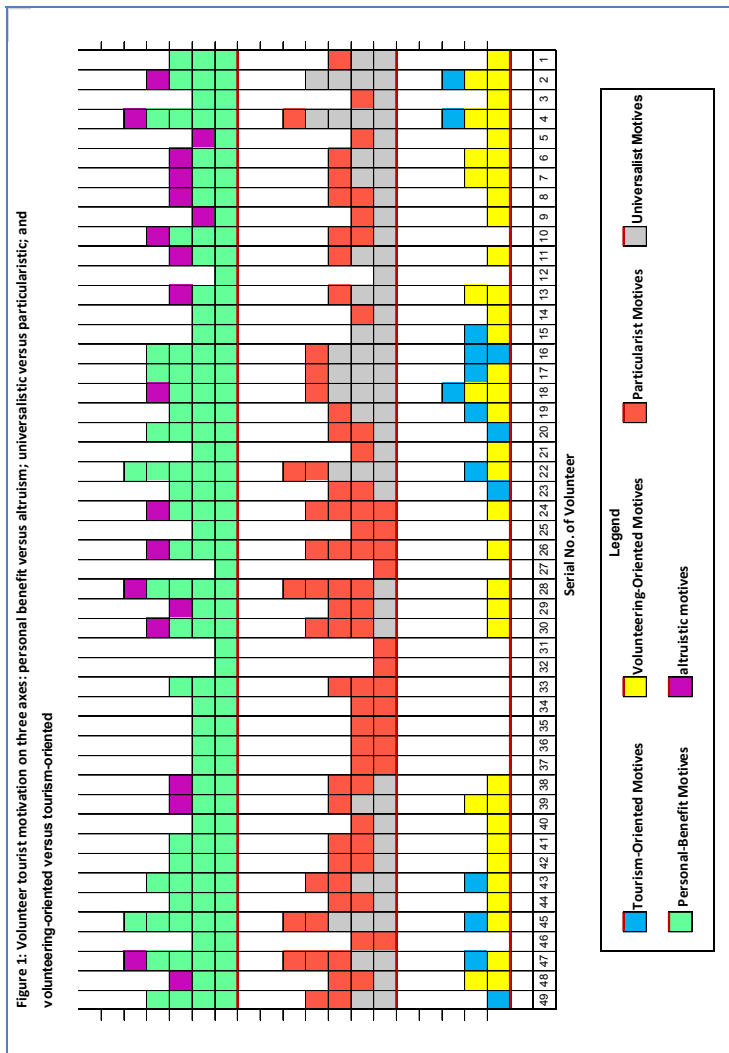
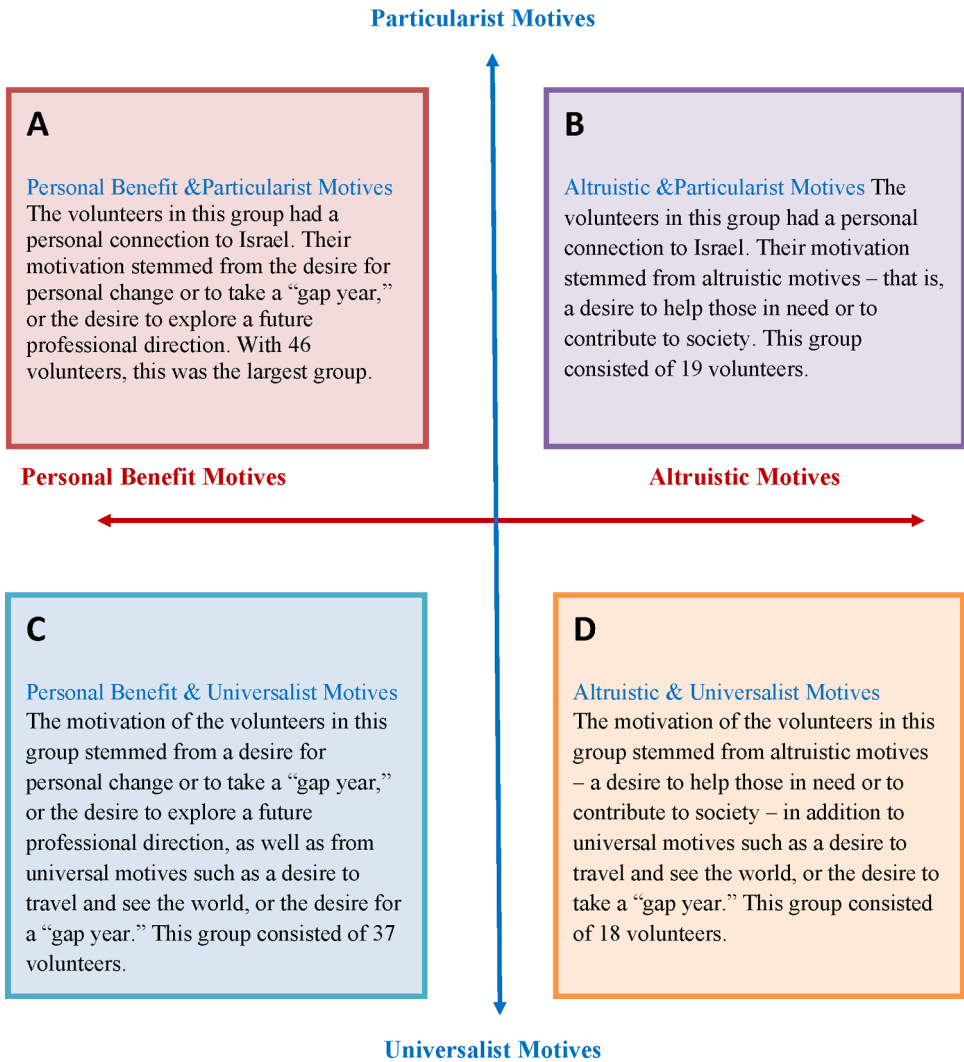


Figure 2 represents the combination of volunteering motives on two different axes – an axis of altruism vs. personal benefit, and an axis of particularism vs. universalism. This figure also specifies the number of volunteers in each group, the largest of which was Group A: Personal Benefit and Particularist Motives.

Figure 2 Motives for volunteering (see online version for colours)



7 Discussion

This study generates several insights based on the literature. First, to analyse the findings we used Callanan and Thomas’s (2005) conceptual model of volunteer tourism, which indicates three intensity levels of volunteer tourism: shallow, intermediate, and deep. An examination of the findings revealed that approximately half the criteria defined in the conceptual model is consistent with intermediate volunteer tourism, and the other half is

consistent with deep volunteer tourism. Our findings, therefore, are consistent with the characteristics of intermediate-to-deep volunteer tourism.

Furthermore, many of the universalist motives, the personal benefit motives, and the volunteers' experiences were similar to volunteer tourist motivations and experiences in other countries.

Our findings reflect broad consistency with the research findings of Chen and Chen (2011) in three primary categories:

- 1 personal motives
- 2 interpersonal motives
- 3 additional motives, such as playing the role of an emissary of an organisation in which one works or a sense of direct connection to a project (Chen and Chen, 2011).

These include the desire to explore a future professional direction, the desire to make a personal change or take a 'gap year', the desire to travel and see the world, and the desire to help those in need. Our research sheds unique light on volunteering motives specifically related to volunteering in Israel, which stem from a unique bond with the state of Israel, as in the case of Jewish or Christian volunteers, or from feelings of national guilt, as in the case of tourists from Germany.

The second insight pertains to the fact that the experience of the volunteer tourist consists of three components: the volunteering experience, the tourist experience, and the general experience, all of which crystallise together into an integrated experience. The interviewees' responses reveal that some of the experiences are perceived as challenging and even difficult to contend with, while others are a source of satisfaction, happiness, and personal empowerment.

The third insight is the personal perception of the experience, which means that different volunteers sometimes perceive elements of experience in contrasting ways. One example is the relationship or connection with the professional team working in the organisation; for some of the volunteers, this was perceived as a positive influence, contributing to the building of a meaningful experience, while others described it as complex, sometimes leading to excessive difficulty or frustration for the volunteer, or even feelings of exploitation or abuse.

The fourth insight generated by the study is that for some of the study participants, an experience that involves personal spiritual work in parallel to engaging in an endeavour for others, substantially magnifies the personal experience. For example, Christian volunteers combined an active Christian religious community life with care for underprivileged sectors of the population or Holocaust survivors, and Jewish volunteers engaged in yeshiva study while volunteering at Magen David Adom. Volunteers who came to Israel out of affiliation connection to the country and the Jewish People reported a distinctive experience that differed from that of the other volunteers. This was the case for Jewish and Religious-Christian volunteers, volunteers from Germany, and those who were in the process of converting to Judaism.

Our research on the attributes of volunteer tourism holds importance with regard to the distinction between altruistic motives and motives for personal benefit. Coghlan and Fennell (2009) "examine volunteer tourists' motivations as well as experiences and benefits as outlined in 43 academic papers. The results suggest that, while volunteer tourists may behave in an altruistic manner, personal benefits derived from the experience by and large dominate the experience. It would appear that volunteer tourism

represents a form of social egoism” (Coghlan and Fennell, 2009, p.377). Our research reveals that most participants mentioned motivations of personal benefit, whereas only a few mentioned altruistic motives (see Figure 1).

The present study maintains that the volunteer’s endeavour in practice is of greater importance than his or her declared motives. A volunteer may claim to be acting out of altruistic motives but in practice contributes nothing to others, and vice versa – a volunteer may declare having motives of personal benefit while assisting and contributing significantly to others. Bar-Tal distinguishes between the motives for volunteering and the characteristics of the altruistic endeavour itself: “The manner in which an altruistic act is performed must also be a fundamental part of the act of altruistic giving” (Bar-Tal, 1986, p.6). The field observations and interviews conducted as part of this study reveal that this is, in effect, an altruistic volunteer endeavour. In this sense, our study adds a new theoretical tier to the discussion of altruistic volunteer tourism.

8 Conclusions

The first conclusion is that motives for volunteering vary and can be located on a number of different axes –in this case, the altruism vs. personal benefit axis; the particularist vs. universal axis; and the volunteering-oriented and tourism-oriented axis. The volunteers who participated in this study generally had several not necessarily coherent motives, such as universal *and* particularistic motives, or a motive of personal benefit vs. an altruistic motive. This conclusion is consistent with previous studies that have been conducted on the subject.

The study contributes new knowledge pertaining to unique volunteering motives specifically related to volunteering in Israel, which stem from a unique bond with the state of Israel and the Jewish People – whether out of religious belief (Jewish or Christian or converts to Judaism) or feelings of national guilt (tourists from Germany). We might refer to these phenomena as compensating tourism (in the case of Germans), spiritual tourism, or even, in some cases, religious tourism, as it is much more than volunteering.

Another conclusion is that the experience of the volunteer tourist in Israel is a hybrid, integrated experience characterised by different elements of experience: of the volunteering endeavour itself, of the tourist experience in Israel, and of general experiential elements – all of which crystallise together into a multidimensional experience. Furthermore, volunteers with a unique connection to Israel and the Jewish People (Jewish and Christian volunteers, volunteers in the process of converting to Judaism, and volunteers from Germany) experienced unique and slightly different elements compared to those experienced by volunteers in general. Volunteers that also engaged in spiritual work – Christian study and community life, Jewish yeshiva students, or those currently engaged in the process of converting to Judaism – benefit from a uniquely intense experience that exerts a significant influence over their lives. This volunteer-tourist experience was found to result in a change in the volunteers’ stance toward the state of Israel and Israeli society, with a significant portion of the study participants experiencing a positive change in the way in which they perceived Israel and Israeli society. The period of volunteering enabled them to enhance their familiarity with Israeli society and its complexity, to gain an impression of its characteristic cultural diversity, and to closely study current political subjects and issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

This experience contributes to personal change, to the development of personal abilities, and to awareness of and sensitivity toward underprivileged populations, and is perceived as an event that will impact the rest of the volunteers' lives. The integrated experience engenders a different tourist experience consisting of several dimensions: a sense of connection with the local population, an extended stay in the destination country, certain aspects of the trip itself (travel by hitchhiking and overnight accommodations in cheap hostels or in sleeping bags), and, above all, a sense of freedom in managing the trip. Some of the volunteers related to the integrated experience as 'the best experience I've ever had', while others related specifically to certain elements.

In summary, this study provides new insight into the motives for volunteer tourism and contributes to the existing theoretical knowledge on the subject. It also highlights several specific motives for volunteering that are unique to volunteering in Israel and that were identified in four groups of volunteers: Jews, Religious-Christians, volunteers from Germany, and volunteers in the process of converting to Judaism.

The study's primary limitation was its relatively small number of participants (49 volunteers), meaning that the study's findings and resultant knowledge can only be applied to the opinions and worldviews of the volunteers participating in this study. Furthermore, there are numerous and varied volunteer-tourism programs operated by different organisations in Israel whose volunteers were not included in this study and whose views are not reflected in the study findings.

The study's innovation lies in its reference to the motives for volunteering and its attempt to define these motives as altruistic or focused on personal benefit by adopting the approach of a continuum rather than a dichotomy of such motives. This was done via axes of altruistic vs. personal-benefit; universal vs particularistic motives; and volunteering-oriented vs. tourism-oriented motives.

Moreover, this study employs the term 'motives for personal benefit' instead of 'egoistic motives', which was previously used by the literature, out of a recognition that the volunteers' contribution to others cannot be regarded as stemming from an egoistic or selfish motive, even if they are not purely altruistic in nature. This constitutes an additional contribution of the study which, unlike previous studies – which focused primarily on the motives for volunteering and categorised them as either 'altruistic' or 'egoistic' – suggests the new approach of identifying not only the motives for volunteering but also the actual product of the volunteering endeavour. The study's findings and conclusions will also provide the various parties engaged in the operation of volunteer-tourism programs with greater familiarity with, and a more comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of the volunteering endeavour in Israel.

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