Social Entrepreneurship and Volunteer Tourism: Beauty and the Beast?

William Cooper

Lecturer

Hunter Centre

Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship

University of Strathclyde

Level 14, Livingston Tower

Richmond Street

Glasgow G1 1XH

Tel.: 0141 548 4598

Email: billy.c@strath.ac.uk

Konstantinos Tomazos

Teaching Fellow

Strathclyde Business School

Abstract

Objectives

This paper highlights definitional issues for social enterprise. The question of what might be considered to constitute a social enterprise and the importance of clarification of such is discussed. The volunteer tourism sector is presented as an example of the social enterprise genre. The paper highlights the need for further research into the nature of social enterprises such as the volunteer tourism business.

Prior Work

Definitions of entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship are often unclear, therefore categories may be disputed within the genre (Morrison 1998, Bridge, O'Neill and Martin 2009). This paper argues that while given organisations may be argued to sit within the genre of social entrepreneurship, there is a need to clarify their position therein. The volunteer tourism sector is presented as a business sector which comes within the parameters of social enterprise and for which there is a clear need for further clarification regarding the nature of the business. The paper explores the espoused theory and the potential similarity or difference with the theory in practice.

Approach

The top forty volunteer tourism organisations by international expansion level were selected from those meeting the research criteria, using the Volunteer Abroad Database. These were then further examined on the basis of their Website content. The 40 organisations selected were examined in relation to key areas of interest based on the International Volunteer Programme Association criteria of ethical practice. The areas of interest for this research were: declared status, pricing policy, diversification, screening of volunteers and involvement of locals.

Results

The results obtained show that there is ambiguity at a number of levels regarding the espoused approaches of the organisations studied and their approaches as evidenced by their operational methods.

Implications

The ambiguous nature of social enterprises is highlighted and a case for volunteer tourism to be considered as a form of social enterprise is presented. Issues are highlighted which clarify the need for further research into social enterprises generally, and volunteer tourism in particular, in order to investigate the range of approaches adopted by different organisations and the impact of such on stakeholders.

Value

This paper contributes to the ongoing debate regarding the nature of social entrepreneurship and related research, where it may be argued that we must clarify the nature of the organisations we choose to examine, and the criteria we choose against which to do so. Debates in the social entrepreneurship literature and in the volunteer tourism literature are aligned and the complexity involved in attempting to evaluate the impact of volunteer tourism enterprises, and their claimed and actual modes of operation at the business and ethical levels highlighted.

Introduction

The entrepreneurial domain encompasses social entrepreneurship, which may be argued to underpin much of what is referred to as social enterprise. Within the social enterprise genre the "raison d'etre" is often claimed to be the betterment of those in need. This paper argues that the volunteer tourism sector

may be considered an example of this genre and highlights the need for further research into the nature of the volunteer tourism business.

The realm of entrepreneurship is such that definitions are unclear and therefore categories may be disputed within the genre (Morrison 1998, Bridge, O'Neill and Martin 2009). The entrepreneurial domain may be argued to encompass social entrepreneurship and social enterprise. There is however considerable debate regarding definitions, categories and boundaries involved. This paper argues that volunteer tourism organisations may be argued to engage in social enterprise, given their espoused social mission. Where these organisations have acted in an entrepreneurial manner, such social enterprises may also be reasonably considered to come within the banner of social entrepreneurship.

Volunteer studies have tended to treat volunteers as a homogeneous group. This approach fails to consider the diversity and proliferation of volunteer activities, which has created a level of ambiguity may be argued to constitute a gap in the literature.

This paper contributes to the ongoing debates regarding the nature of social entrepreneurship and of volunteer tourism and aligns debates in the social entrepreneurship literature with those in the volunteer tourism literature. The ambiguous nature of the volunteer tourism business and the need for further research in this area, in order to investigate the range of approaches adopted by different organisations and the impact of such on stakeholders, is highlighted. It also highlights the complexity involved in attempting to evaluate the impact of volunteer tourism enterprises and their claimed and actual modes of operation at the business and ethical levels.

Social Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprise

The terms social entrepreneurship and social enterprise are considered by some to be synonymous while others would argue that social enterprise is a subset of social entrepreneurship (Nicholls, 2006)Social entrepreneurship may be considered to sit within the social economy as well as the commercial economy. Thus organisations within the social enterprise genre may be found straddling across the public sector, the private sector and the so called third sector of the economy. Social entrepreneurship and the resultant engagement in social enterprise is not a new phenomenon although it has gained significantly higher profile over recent times.

Social entrepreneurship may be argued to be a form of re-labelling of activities with a focus on human welfare, which may be traced back to the early 19th Century. The credit for coining the term "social entrepreneur" is attributed to William Drayton, who founded one of the first organisations "Ashoka" in 1980 in order to fund social entrepreneurs. In order to understand the rise in profile of social entrepreneurship it is important to reflect on the changes which have taken place in society generally. There is a clear progression historically from work which benefited the immediate family, to work for a third party in return for desired reward, either at the private or, where this third party was in government, at the public service level. Equally there is historical evidence to show the existence of organisations which operated primarily to provide social benefit. Over the course of the 20th C populations have increased, technology has developed rapidly and high volume workforces are no longer required either in the public or private sector. This has led to the situation where the welfare state is considered to be struggling to provide. This in turn has given rise to the increased focus on the benefits of having a third sector contribution and the increased attention to the sphere of social entrepreneurship (Bridge, Murtagh and O'Neill, 2009). The evidence suggests that the social economy and the organisations which are grouped within its banner tend to gain momentum at times of economic downturn, such as the economic collapse of 1929 – 32, which gave rise to the formation of co-operatives relating to food and housing. It may be argued that the current interest in the social economy reflects the difficulties regarding employment and the welfare state, which developed in the 1970's (Amin, Cameron and Hudson, 2002).

It may be argued that "Social Enterprises" are needed in order to address issues of social exclusion and to bring excluded groups into the labour market. It may also be argued that in order to have social enterprises we require the active involvement of entrepreneurs prepared to engage in social entrepreneurship. Although there is still disagreement regarding categorisations and definitions of the third sector (Pearce, 2003, Bridge, Murtagh and O'Neill, 2009), and of entrepreneurship (Morrison 1998 , Bridge, O'Neill and Martin 2009) and of the concept of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise (Nicholls 2006, Nicholls 2008), as Bridge, Murtagh and O'Neill (2009) point out, definitions are generally developed for a reason and those reasons are likely to differ, giving rise to differences in definition. As the authors remind us:

" … fashions change and what was at one time popular to promote can later lose favour … "

<div align="right">(Bridge, Murtagh and O'Neill, 2009, p63)</div>

The authors point out that in Northern Ireland in the late 1980's into the early 1990's the term "community business" was in use, but by 2006 this had become "social entrepreneurship".

It is generally accepted that organisations in the third sector are driven by social aims and that the "triple bottom line" involved means that they should be judged not simply in terms of their financial performance but also in relation to their social and environmental objectives. Some would add ethical objectives to the equation which might be argued to constitute a quadruple bottom line (Bridge, Murtagh and O'Neill, 2009). As the authors point out the non-economic objectives involved may vary greatly across organisations. Equally the legal form adopted by third sector organisations may vary from a trust to a partnership or limited company. It may be argued that the dividing line between commercial and social enterprises is blurring and that the guiding principle may be argued to be that social enterprises should be values driven, with financial profitability constituting a means to an end rather than an end in itself for organisations in the third sector.

It may be argued that increased activity in the social entrepreneurship and social enterprise sector is required to address the needs-provision gap within society. However, while many social entrepreneurs exist, many would not choose to describe themselves in such terms, nor would they wish to be referred to as such. This reluctance may be argued to relate to the historical stereotyping of entrepreneurs as "flighty" individuals which may be reflected in some "social entrepreneurs" preferring to be considered as community leaders (Thompson 2002, Bjorn, 2008). It may be further argued that social entrepreneurs are focussed on caring and helping rather than making a profit per se, and that the main domain of the social entrepreneur is within the voluntary sector. That said, it may also be argued that social entrepreneurship may be seen in profit-seeking businesses. In short, a range of categories may be considered to fit within the umbrella term of social entrepreneurship as highlighted by such as Thompson (2002). (see Figure 1)

Figure 1: Social Entrepreneurship Activities

Activity	Focus
Job creation in deprived areas	"urban entrepreneur" – "putting back into the community where they were brought up"
Business with a social ethos	Social / or Environmental ethos – unemployed act as vendors / may have international dimension – address 3rd world issues – e.g. Big Issue / Body Shop

Support and advice agencies	Councils for voluntary advice, citizens advice bureaux, local advice groups re bereavement / specific illnesses / financial advice / better living
Opening or re-using buildings or facilities	Building is key resource – may use existing more intensively / renovate / or build from scratch (e.g. hospices / community halls
Preservation of community buildings	Historic / local community significance
Provision of new public-use facilities	e.g. better street lighting / disabled access to facilities
Replacement of lost services in declining or isolated areas	e.g. village shop / post office / transport in rural areas
Provision of skills training	Linked to job creation in deprived areas
Personal development training opportunities	Emphasis on all round personal development and "new horizons" rather than specific skills
Living (accommodation) or rehabilitation facilities	Focus on threatened and vulnerable individuals / YMCA / Salvation Army (hostel provision)
Community "feel-good" activities	Special events / street parties / local music festivals / village competitions etc
Hospices etc	Specific fund raising for a building dependent activity linked to health and welfare
Sports coaching etc for young people	Volunteer activity – requires some form of physical base or asset
Organised occasional help or activities for the disadvantaged	e.g. lunches at Xmas / trips for disabled / relief for full time carers (Rotary club / Faith communities – equivalent of corporate entrepreneurs)
Fund raising for a cause	Run events to fund raise (e.g. BBC / local entrepreneurs)
Members' credit union	Keeping people away from loan sharks
Support activities for specific and discrete groups	Help people from a similar society (e.g. ethnic / religious group)
Spread the word action groups	Raise awareness / profile – influence others / advocacy & campaigning – may include research element
Community-based support activities	Helping others – generally without having dedicated physical base (e.g. neighbourhood watch)
Local volunteer groups	e.g. scouts / guides etc – often use facilities belonging to others

(Compiled from Thompson, 2002)

We may categorise as social enterprises those businesses that demonstrate they operate with social change impact as an organisational priority, rather than simply profitability or return on investment.

From this perspective it may be argued that we are now dealing with a relatively new paradigm, which sees the amalgam of profit making businesses that have their main focus on bottom line profit making with social entrepreneurs who have a focus on their specific social mission (Sagawa and Segal 2000).

Social entrepreneurship may be considered to be a merging of concepts that do not naturally combine well, that of making profit within a market driven capitalist approach and that of providing social services in relation to community need (Roper and Cheney 2005). The development of the concept of social entrepreneurship may be considered in relation to the social impacts of developments within society and the knock on effects for community groups, particularly in relation to social services (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Development of Social Entrepreneurship Concept

Timeline	Major Event	Impact on Community
1945 – 1970's	Keynesian model of social democracy in place	Fixed exchange rates guarding inflation High level of employment Social services provided by the state
1974	Major oil shortage	Rising inflation
1980's	New Paradigm in place Laissez-faire or free market neo-liberalism	Deregulated markets Privately owned enterprises Corporatisation / Privatisation of previously state-owned assets
1987	Policy deregulation in capital and securities markets	Growth in financial trading leading to economic instability
Late 1990's	Neo-liberal model considered as not ensuring welfare of all in the community Reduced revenue from taxes Technical advances in health care Increased life expectancy Rise of compromise models known as "the third way"	Growing gap between rich and poor Government responsibility for social provision (health, education etc.) Increased expectancy therefore increased cost of meeting community needs and wants Free Market approach for business sector Emergence of "Social Entrepreneurship"

(Roper and Cheney 2005)

The developments shown in Figure 2 may be argued to have underpinned the approach to economics referred to as the third way. This approach attempts to deal with the situation where the state cannot provide all that it once did by allowing Government to retain responsibility for social services such as health and education, while enabling the business elements to enjoy a free market environment. Resistance to this third way approach may be argued to be reflected in a resistance to social entrepreneurship (Roper and Cheney 2005). It may be argued that on one hand social entrepreneurs do good work, for which they are now receiving well deserved credit, but on the other hand that they are

addressing issues that should be properly addressed by those in government (Barendsen and Gardner 2004).

It is generally considered that social entrepreneurship, including corporate social entrepreneurship, and the related social enterprises are likely to be driven by personal values rather than straightforward economics (Hemingway 2005). Personal experience of a traumatic or transformative event is a fundamental impact factor for many social entrepreneurs and the increased focus on social entrepreneurship may reflect dissatisfaction with the operation of existing charities or foundations. It may be argued that the selective targeting of specific groups considered underprivileged in some way then facilitating some form of aid for such groups constitutes a social service. It may be further argued that to do this within the context of an entrepreneurial business constitutes a social enterprise. Volunteer related organisations generally sit within the social economy and may be argued to belong within the third sector category and within that to constitute entrepreneurial entities with a social emphasis, therefore to come within the banner of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise.

Given the differing philosophical standpoints involved here, the concepts of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise may be regarded as entirely positive, entirely negative, or somewhere in – between.

Social enterprises may be defined as organisations which seek to address social problems using business solutions, demonstrating both financial and social returns. It may be argued that such enterprises should be distinguished from others who may be socially oriented but do not seek to run as a business (Thompson and Docherty 2006). It may be further argued that social enterprises stem from acts of social entrepreneurship.

Thompson and Docherty (2006) suggest determining characteristics for a social enterprise:

- They have a social purpose.
- Assets and wealth are used to create community benefit.
- They pursue this with (at least in part) trade in a market place.
- Profits and surpluses are not distributed to shareholders, as is the case with a profit-seeking business.
- "Members" or employees have some role in decision making and/or governance.
- The enterprise is seen as accountable to both its members and a wider community.
- There is either a double- or triple-bottom line paradigm.

(Thompson and Docherty 2006
p362)

The Importance of Motivation

As Bridge, Murtagh and O'Neill (2009) point out, we tend to classify according to the observable business entity, rather than seeking to ascertain the underlying motivation of the founder / entrepreneur. It may be argued that clarification of the underlying motivation is essential when attempting to classify the genre to which social entrepreneurs and their related enterprises truly belong. It may also be argued that wanting money may be regarded as a proxy for needs, given that money may be used to satisfy needs. That said, some would argue that money cannot be used to satisfy needs at the higher level of self-actualisation. Helping others may offer such satisfaction and may therefore be considered by some to be of equal or greater importance than money and may therefore be considered to have a high utility value. Many third sector organisations depend on volunteer labour, which may be argued to constitute a symbiotic relationship whereby the volunteer gets the benefit of feeling they have made a contribution to

the cause and arguably a level of personal development, while the organisation gets the labour input they need.

There are currently two prominent models relating to motivation in the literature: The Two-Dimension Model and The Three-Dimension Model. The Two-Dimension Model considers Egoistic and Altruistic Motivation. Egoistic Motivation in this model is related to tangible rewards and it argues that volunteering is directed towards an ultimate goal of increasing the participant's welfare. Altruistic Motivation in this model holds that the volunteers' actions have the ultimate goal of increasing the welfare of others (Clary and Miller, 1986; Frisch & Gerrard, 1981; Horton-Smith, 1981; Latting, 1990). The Three-Dimension Model considers Altruistic, Material (Egoistic) and Social Motivation. The term social is used to describe access to social contacts or as fulfilling a social obligation to society (Adams, 1980; Fitch, 1987; Knoke & Prensky, 1984).

It is generally accepted that standard economic models are based on the assumption of self-interest having priority over the interests of others. Such assumptions may well be inappropriate when we are dealing with organisations within the third sector and individuals who are primarily mission, rather than profit, driven.

Social enterprises operate within the third sector and may be geared to directly delivering environmental benefits, or promoting such outcomes more indirectly by operating in an environmentally sustainable way, and promoting ethical behaviour. It may be argued that the efforts made by volunteer tourists in projects are geared to improving the lives of indigenous populations. Volunteer tourism organisations generally demonstrate entrepreneurial behaviour and engage in socially beneficial projects with espoused values relating to concepts such as sustainability. From this perspective it may be argued that Volunteer Tourism may be regarded as coming within the category of third sector and to constitute a form of social enterprise as it generally seeks to offer provision where the private or public sector either will not or cannot provide.

As with approaches to evaluating the third sector generally, Volunteer Tourism may be evaluated in terms of the paradigm in use, the policy underpinning the approach taken, or the expected benefits claimed. Paradigms may be economic / entrepreneurship which emphasises the business element and the financial sustainability which is considered to regenerate the community, socio-economic which addresses gaps in welfare provision, or political / ideological seeking institutional change in a more democratic and participative direction (Bridge, Murtagh and O'Neill, 2009).

While it may be considered that such actions veer towards the altruistic, it may also be considered that benefits are accrued which are of genres other than personal financial gain. One of the benefits frequently highlighted is that of a "warm glow", which may be considered beneficial in the form of stress release and improved mood (Andreoni 1990). The "warm glow" or "soul giving" perspective considers that people gain pleasure from doing good deeds and their actions are not motivated by material benefit, which might be argued to suggest a level of altruism is involved. However, it may also be argued that long term self interest may underlie short term sacrifices (Burnham, 2001).

Altruism may be defined as:

"The principle of living and acting for the interest of others."

(Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary)

"Consideration for the well-being of other people."

(The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology)

Volunteer tourists may be argued to give both money and time, for no personal financial benefit on balance. This may be considered to be evidence that they are placing the interests of others (i.e. the community being served) over their own. On the other hand it may be argued that there are underlying motives which are more self-interest related than concern for others. Self actualization may constitute a gain for those offering their services as a volunteer, as may personal development which may enhance their curriculum vitae and future employment prospects, leading to increased earnings.

Altruistic behaviour is considered to be motivated by concern for others, even where this incurs a personal disadvantage or cost. Many human acts may potentially come within the altruistic spectrum. If we accept that altruism refers to a disposition for unselfish humanitarian acts for the common good, then it may be argued that altruism underpins volunteer tourism, given that volunteer tourists seek to help their fellow man by supporting individuals, groups, or particular causes (Smith, 1995). However, even acts which appear entirely altruistic may be argued to offer benefits to the actor. We are faced with an apparent paradox here in that even where there is no direct financial benefit to act as motivation for the observed behaviour, this does not prove it to be altruistic, yet where there may be indirect benefits of a non-financial nature this does not prove that the motivation is not altruistic. As with other concepts discussed in this paper, a central difficulty relates to definition.

At the extreme edge of the definition range altruistic behaviour may be argued to involve actions contrary to the actor's best interest (Pearce, 1993), while at the other extreme it may be argued that the underlying motive for the actions may be altruistic even where personal benefit results from the action taken. While the existence of altruistic motivation in its pure form may be debated at length, this should not be regarded as an acid test for volunteer motivation. For the purposes of this paper we define altruism as a continuum which ranges from behaviour at one end which may be seen as mutually beneficial although undertaken with the benefit of the recipient as the priority, to the other extreme which involves benefit for the recipient at the total cost of the donor.

Volunteer tourism may be regarded as experiences that make a difference for those in need, which may be taken to suggest a level of altruism (Wearing, 2001). However, the literature also shows that people may become volunteer tourists out of personal interest (Broad, 2003) and that one of the central reasons people go on volunteer holidays is that they want to see the side of a country that they would not have been able to see as 'normal' tourists, by working with the local people and experiencing a total change of life a short period of time (Brown, 2005). Volunteer tourists may be considered to experience living in a different environment where people help each other with solidarity and compassion, or even to live in their own "utopia" (Wearing, 2001). Given that the most likely detrimental impact on volunteer tourists is likely to be one of opportunity cost, relative to options foregone in order to act as a volunteer, the term 'altruistic' may be too strong to describe volunteer tourists (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Potential Costs Incurred by Volunteers

Potential Sacrifices by Volunteer Tourists	Potential Benefits for Volunteer Tourists	Potential Opportunity Cost Incurred by Volunteer Tourists	Cost / Benefit Conclusion
Payment to Tour Operator	Time Spent in Chosen Destination	Could have spent entire time on holiday for same / similar payment?	Greater opportunity for inclusion / engagement with local culture
Usage of Leave from Work	Feel-good Factor	Could have used time for more selfish pursuits / personal gain	Greater likelihood for self actualisation than with a routine holiday package

It may be argued that such 'sacrifices' on the part of volunteer tourists are offset, as they may be benefiting in other ways, such as travel and adventure, personal development etc. As Figure 4 shows, it may be argued that volunteer tourists make financial sacrifices by parting with their money, but in return they have a holiday. They also may be said to sacrifice their time by taking two to four weeks off from work, but that cost is also offset as such holidays are generally taken with pay (Thomson, 2006).

Research based on retrospective studies indicates that a majority of volunteers considered their assignments had influenced their personal development or careers positively (Reark, 1998). Feedback from volunteers also indicates that the experience was viewed retrospectively as a turning point in their lives (Starr, 1994). It may be argued that the experience gained as a volunteer tourist is likely to lead the individual volunteers to become more broad-minded, content and relaxed in the long term (Broad, 2003).

When we look at the arena of volunteer tourism in some detail it becomes clear that there are potential benefits, not only for individuals, but also for organisations involved in volunteer tourism (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Potential Benefits of Volunteer Tourism for Stakeholders

Stakeholders	Volunteer Tourists	Volunteer Tourism Organizations
Potential Benefits	Personal Development Acquisition of New Skills Self Discovery Employment Travel Opportunity Leisure Option	Economic Return Political Influence Organisational Power Capability to Employ Labour Opportunity for Social Entrepreneurship Possibility of Philanthropy

It is also clear that there are potential benefits for the host destinations which are derived from the inputs of the individuals and organisations involved in volunteer tourism (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Potential Contribution by Volunteer Tourism

Stakeholders	Volunteer Tourists	Volunteer Tourism Organizations
Potential Contribution **to Host Destination**	Economic Environmental Political Social Development	Economic Development Infrastructure Organization Education/Training Increased Awareness/ Profile

Present day volunteers may want to believe that their contributions echo the work done by missionaries and philanthropists of yesteryear, given that their intentions and motivation are as honourable. Volunteering to help may be considered as one way of learning about those who are poor or disadvantaged in some way. It may be argued that the non poor are likely to be attracted to stories that inspire anger or fear but are likely to avoid any that invoke disgust (Horowitz 2002). It may therefore be argued that people are likely to help those who are perceived as innocent victims rather than those who have brought problems on themselves and that the full cost of helping involves money and time. Traditional forms of volunteering were set within established social milieus such as religious or political communities and the motivation for such individuals was generally considered to be of an altruistic nature.

While motives underlying collective volunteering may involve perceptions of duty in relation to specific local communities and such motives may be based on religious traditions of altruism, it may also be argued that motives for "reflexive" volunteers are likely to be pluralist with self directed or instrumental motives existing in parallel with motives stemming from perceptions of duty to or compassion for particular groups.

Given the level of ambiguity surrounding motivational factors and potential rewards, it may be argued that volunteer tourists cannot be characterised as altruistic (Wearing, 2001). An alternative perspective may be that volunteer behaviour may be categorised as "pro-social" rather than altruistic in order to take into account the fact that the acts concerned may be beneficial for the actor (Pearce, 1993).

The "new" breed of volunteers, in the genre of the volunteer tourist, may be argued to be more project focussed, have clear expectations regarding personal benefits to be gained from volunteering, have no particular loyalty to specific organisations and to be selective regarding that which they are prepared to undertake when volunteering.

Evaluating the Contribution of Volunteer Tourism

As with other social enterprises, there is a potential danger of discarding the "baby" with the "bathwater" should we decide to evaluate the contribution / impact of volunteer tourism using only easily measured elements such as direct outputs based on mainstream accountancy principles. Although it is likely to be problematic to evaluate the effect of volunteer work in terms of building community spirit or increasing awareness of the plight of populations around the world and shaping new individuals (Wearing, 2001) it is nonetheless extremely important to take such intangible benefits into account and to reflect on long term outcomes, rather than short term outputs.

It must also be considered that volunteer input may have a potentially negative impact, in that communities might be considered to benefit more from the work of paid professionals than from the

work of unskilled volunteers (Knox, 1998). From this perspective it may be argued that while volunteers may manage to offer a valued contribution, their efforts may nevertheless prove to be less efficient or effective than the professional alternative for the community concerned. It should be considered however that this argument is only realistic where alternative resources are available to provide professional input. As with most social enterprises, the input from volunteer tourism may be argued to offer a level of provision where there would otherwise be a complete lack of such.

This paper argues that there are potentially many intangible benefits from the volunteer tourism phenomenon, which are likely to pay dividends for the communities concerned in the long term. As with social enterprises generally, such benefits may be latent in nature and it may therefore be argued that, until sufficient time has passed and the effects of a volunteer project have been reflectively evaluated, it would not be appropriate to judge the contribution of volunteer tourism against professional performance in the immediate to short term.

The Importance of Evaluating Organisations that Facilitate Volunteer Tourism

The likelihood of a range of motivational drivers suggests that in order to succeed and therefore survive, organisations offering work oriented programmes should ensure their programs are meaningful for the volunteers and offer a real contribution to solving real problems for the local community concerned. Given that volunteers desire to "achieve something positive for others" and simultaneously satisfy their desire to experience "the new" it is clearly important that direct contact and cooperation with the indigenous population should be established and maintained. There is also a clear need for volunteers to be prepared well in advance of their trip and provided with adequate reflective follow up on their return home (Rehberg 2005). This sets some parameters against which volunteer tourism organisations might be evaluated.

The literature shows that a wide range of third sector organisations, commercial businesses, educational institutions and government agencies facilitate the volunteer tourism experience (Turner, Miller and Gilbert, 2001; Broad, 2003; Ellis, 2003a; Simpson, 2004).

Volunteer tourism organisations use a range of marketing channels such as brochures and websites, to send a message to potential participants, designed to influence their travel choice. The central message, which appears to be aimed at young volunteers especially, is that they should seize the day and experience life to the full, while doing something worthwhile for someone else. This message is intended to reach a wide audience of willing young people who want to make a change and is often purveyed using quotes from famous people such as authors, or political / religious leaders. Examples include:

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you did not do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover".

(Mark Twain as quoted in various volunteer tourism websites)

The evidence suggests that volunteer tourism promoters use the perception of westerners as benefactors to attract business. A typical example of this may be observed in relation to African countries, where an image of a smiling white girl helping black African people is frequently presented on websites of volunteer tourism organisations (Epprecht, 2004). The literature shows that such stereotypical, clichéd, imagery is not new in the field of tourism marketing, with some material using wording that refers to "Tarzan" and "pulsating African drums" (Geshekter, 1998). The potential impact of national

stereotyping and underlying colonial attitudes has been highlighted in the literature (Kean, 1998, Wainaina, 2006). It may be strongly argued that such stereotyping of indigenous populations may be reflected in volunteers developing an exaggerated sense of the value of their own labour and the righteousness of their actions, with locals perceived to be needy recipients of aid, or too lazy, incompetent or indifferent to carry out tasks themselves.

Given the espoused focus on the needs of indigenous people and the professed levels of benevolence involved at both individual and organisational levels, it may be reasonably be argued that volunteer tourism should be considered to be a form of social entrepreneurship. In order to consider the validity of such a conclusion however, it is important that we reflect further on the nature of the provision offered and of the supply and demand cycle involved. It is important to consider whether the market is supply or demand driven, which on one hand may be to answer a call for help from a particular group or area in need, or at the other extreme to seek to create a justification to accommodate a project. It may be argued that in answering a call for help the organisation would be demonstrating its position as one of social entrepreneurship, whereas seeking simply to accommodate a project may be argued to be entrepreneurial but commercially so. Such issues bring us to reflect on the ethical side of volunteer tourism, as reflected in the choice of projects and the locations for such.

The message to potential volunteer tourists is generally that they have the moral high ground, being sensitive, exclusive and in fashion. The key question here would be whether commercial profit sits at the heart of volunteer tourism organisations despite the social enterprise related validation for profit driven practices.

The International Volunteer Project Association (IVPA) was set up in 2006 (IVPA, 2007) with a remit to provide certificates of ethical practice to its members who sign up to agreed rules. While this development may be initially considered as welcome and reassuring, it also highlights cause for concern, given that of the 275 volunteer tourism project providers identified in research conducted for this paper, only 30 were registered as members of the IVPA.

The change in tourists' awareness has led to a desire for the new, the authentic, the sensitive and inevitably the more exclusive. The literature shows that volunteer tourism has experienced increased levels of entrepreneurial activity, offering projects for an increasing range of interest (Ellis, 2003b). The doctrine of low volume- high value that underpins alternative forms of tourism has given rise to exclusivity and at the same time high prices. This may be considered as an opportunity for organisations engaged in volunteer tourism to increase their profits by seizing a lucrative high margin business opportunity and providing new authentic experiences for volunteer tourists.

Methodology

Following on from the work of Callanan and Thomas (2003), this paper utilises the existing data within the Volunteer Abroad Database to examine the nature of the market in volunteer tourism and to raise questions relating to any potential matches and mismatches between the data and the espoused approach on the part of volunteer tourism organisations.

The Volunteer Abroad Database was selected as the source of data for this research as it provided the largest and most accessible level of content relating to available opportunities in volunteer tourism.

Within the Database however there is a wide range of projects, not all of which meet the detailed criteria for categorization as volunteer tourism projects for the purposes of this research. In order to qualify as a valid project for this research the projects concerned were required to meet the criteria for tourism (less than 1 yr more than 1 day and not constitute paid employment) and also the criteria for volunteering.

All volunteer tourism projects encompassed by the Volunteer Abroad Database were therefore screened in order to clarify those projects which met the criteria required for categorization as volunteer tourism projects. Adventure holidays not involving volunteering were excluded, as were paid internships or work abroad opportunities and free places offered by religious organisations. The volunteer tourism projects thus identified were then categorised by: organisation, country, duration of project, type of activity and price.

Based on the assumption that the identified projects were fuelled by local need, the 150 destination countries concerned were examined in terms of level of human development which was identified using their Human Development Index score. HDI scores are compiled using factors like GDP per capita, life expectancy, the quality of education and the literacy rate, to create a value where 1.0 is the highest possible score. Countries with an index above 0.8 are called 'high human development' countries; countries with indices between 0.799 and 0.5 are considered medium, while countries below 0.5 are categorized as low human development countries. The results of this analysis were considered relative to population size, in order to clarify whether population might be an influential variable.

Further analysis was conducted by selecting the top 40 volunteer tourism organisations and examining their Web Sites in order to clarify their claimed status, stated policies and espoused practices. A coding system was developed to enable comparison across the organisations.

Interrogation of the Volunteer Abroad Database showed 3,441 projects listed, of which 2446 projects met the criteria required. This subset of projects involved a total of 146 Volunteer Tourism Organisations. Of the 146 Volunteer Tourism Organisations, the top 40 were selected in terms of international expansion (minimum of ten beyond the original country for this research).

The 40 organisations selected were then examined in relation to key areas of interest based on the International Volunteer Programme Association (IVPA) criteria of ethical practice. The areas of interest for this research were: declared status, pricing policy, diversification (extras), screening of volunteers and involvement of locals (employment).

Results and Findings

The results obtained from the database and Website analysis raise a number of issues. Findings based on these have been presented in relation to the nature of the business opportunity, motivation and contribution involved within the genre of volunteer tourism.

Volunteer Tourism and Business Opportunity

The level of opportunity presented in the volunteer tourism marketplace may be considered to be reflected in the expansion of volunteer tourism over recent years. Not all countries in the world feature as volunteer tourist destinations. It is argued that the locations offered perhaps reflect a number of considerations of suppliers, including cost, appeal (as tourist destination) and need for assistance.

The ten destinations with the highest number of projects are listed in figure 6. All countries in the list are categorized as developing countries, with India having 241 projects listed in the database. Compared to Callannan and Thomas (2003) count of 51, there was an increase of 190 projects in India within a period of four years. The second country on the list, Costa Rica had seen an increase of 158 projects, and Peru 192 projects. Overall in four years, the number of projects examined in 2003 (698) on the Volunteer Abroad database has increased to 3,441 in 2007, which is an increase of approximately 492 per cent in four years, which confirms the rapid expansion anticipated.

Within the volunteer tourism sector we have on one hand individuals who wish to travel to other countries to volunteer their labour and on the other local communities who need work done. The fundamental problem for the local communities tends to be, a shortage of required skills and / or lack of resources to pay for such skills. There are several layers to this situation, which may be considered to offer potential business opportunities (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Volunteer Tourism by Potential Business Opportunity

Potential Customer	Customer need / want	Potential Business Opportunity
Tourist	Foreign Holiday Sight-seeing tours Food and Beverages	Holiday Travel & Accommodation (Package) Travel & Guides Supply of Food / Beverages / Restaurants / Shops
Skill Seeker	Languages / Craft Skills / Business Experience	Training Provision / Sub-Contracting Agency
Employment Seeker	Wage / Experience / CV Enhancement	Employment Provider / Job Seeking Agency / Labour Sub-Contractor
Social Contributor	Opportunity to Contribute Personally to Selected Individuals / Groups	Opportunity Matching Agency

<u>Volunteer Tourism Organisations' Status</u>

In order to clarify the situation here, it is necessary to look more closely at the volunteer tourist sector and the behaviour of those businesses involved. Interrogation of volunteer tourism organisation Websites indicates that the declared status for volunteer tourism organisations tends to have a non-profit focus.

Seventeen of the forty organizations studied that have non-profit status, and as such they are entitled to certain privileges which will be discussed below. In addition, there are 6 organizations that do not hold a non-profit status but instead make clear on their websites that they are operated by, or work for, non-profit organizations. Another 6 organizations call themselves "ethical NGOs" while a further 2 label themselves as charities. Different labels and different statuses involve different legal requirements, benefits and brand image. Three organizations made it clear on their website that they are 'special' tour operators organizing and packaging volunteer holidays. Finally there were 6 organizations that did not disclose their status on their website. This could be to avoid legal issues but the ambiguity might suit them.

What emerges from the above is that the market is characterised by inconsistency in terms of structure, commitment and mission. Non-profit status means that such organizations have a tax status meaning that

any donations towards their projects are in general tax deductible for the donor and this may include participation and travel costs. Charities also hold a similar status with the added benefit that they can count on the support of national or international organizations. The brand and image value of being a non-profit or charitable organization is considerable. Organizations that are not recognised as such seem anxious to explain why they are making profits and why people should still choose them as their volunteer tourism provider. The general claim is that they only make an operating profit, which they argue enables them to continue the work they do. They further argue that they have a duty towards the projects they support, but also towards themselves and their families who must be supported through their salaries and wages. Other organizations refrain from declaring any status and thus do not have to explain or justify anything. However, all types of organizations claim to take the necessary steps to price their products and conduct their business ethically. Such statements are important as prices charged by the organisations are causing concern in the media at least (Times, 2008).

Pricing policy and extras

Interrogation of volunteer tourism organisation Websites also indicates that pricing policy varies across organisations as does the approach taken to extras on offer by these organisations. In terms of pricing, proliferation and variety are again apparent, with different organizations adopting different pricing strategies Starting with the cheapest projects, only one of the forty organizations examined offered volunteer projects for the price of a one-off application/membership fee. This fee was around $500 US and it provided the opportunity to customers to choose another project without charge, as long as they wished to travel within the same year. There was also one organization that offered volunteer opportunities in return for a $1,500 US deposit which participants could collect after completing their volunteer effort. Three organizations refrained from disclosing any details about their volunteer opportunities. Instead they offered guidebooks for sale at prices ranging from $ 30 to $ 75. The vast majority of organizations, 25 out of 40, provided volunteer opportunities at a fixed rate with an all inclusive packaged deal format. The fee in general included project fee, volunteer coordination, accommodation, and administration expenses. These fees range from $ 300 US to $ 1,000 US per week depending on destination, project, and of course, the type of accommodation.

Adding to the price of volunteer participation are certain extras which participants can purchase at their own discretion. These extras vary from short excursions and city tours to safari experiences. A recent development in the field is the option of obtaining academic credit, from mainly US academic institutions. The cost of such an optional extra varies from organization to organization and university to university. There were 10 organizations that would not disclose any details of this option on their website. Instead they offer a call-back service, perhaps in an attempt to utilize direct contact in recruiting new volunteers. It becomes apparent that the theme of ambiguity, uncertainty and proliferation exists in the pricing and packaging of most volunteer organizations. This may have certain implications in terms of the impact and contribution of the organizations to the destinations utilised.

Training and Screening and employment of locals

Examination of Websites within the sample of volunteer tourism organisations studied reveals the provision of training for volunteers to be less than clear in the majority of cases. Volunteers generally need to undergo certain training in order to be sensitive and good volunteers. Looking at the larger picture in terms of training provided for participants, out of 40 organizations, only 16 made it clear on their websites that they provide training to prepare volunteers for their projects. This training varies from language training for volunteers in order to teach English as a foreign language (TEFL certification) to just being taught a local language at 'survival' level, and leadership training. Special projects involving diving may also provide PADI diving certificates for participant volunteers. In more general terms there are organizations (BTCV, Peace Corps) that provide basic manual labour training for volunteers who take part in conservation or construction projects. However, 24 of the organizations examined do not state clearly on their websites whether they offer any pre-project training. Instead they offer the promise of pre-departure briefing material after registration with them. Other organizations advertise certain open-day events, but these could be seen more as recruiting than training events, since registration is not necessary in order to attend. This lack of mandatory training may reflect the simplicity of most volunteer project tasks, or it might also suggest avoidance of potentially costly practices by the organisations

In terms of the screening of participants, organizations go to different lengths in order to ensure 'quality' volunteers. In general terms all organizations profess to be inclusive and democratic in their selection process. Volunteers between the ages of 18 to 90 are welcome. Of course some projects may require a certain level of mobility and fitness which may de facto exclude people over a certain age or these with

physical limitations. Operations Crossroads for example require a letter from the applicant's physician confirming fitness. Volunteers under 18 are often welcome but in general they require the explicit written consent of their legal guardian. However the organisations appear to be widening their scope to attract even younger volunteers with family volunteering opportunities becoming increasingly available. Organizations such as Volunteer Latin America, Cross Cultural Solutions, i-to-i and Volunteer Abroad are typical organizations that are developing this niche market. In terms of gender, both male and female volunteers are welcome within generally mixed sex groups of volunteers. Members of the gay and lesbian communities appear to be welcome also, but organisations caution that in some destinations such volunteers may need to keep a low profile. Looking at statistics provided by the Peace Corps the profile of their volunteer participants shows 3/5 of their volunteers are female and 2/5 male. The average age of their participants is 27 years and the median is 25 years but 5 per cent of participants are over 50 years old with the oldest being 80 years of age. The vast majority of volunteers (93 percent) are single and only 7 percent are married. In terms of education, 95 percent of Peace Corps volunteers have at least an undergraduate degree, which suggests that their market is well educated people.

Different organizations have different requirements in terms of qualification and different quality control systems in place. Out of 40 organizations examined, only 11 request background checks in terms of CV, references or police, and criminal record checks. This can have far reaching implications in terms of volunteers working with the more vulnerable members of communities. This varied approach to requirements and screening of volunteers potentially has implications in terms of the contribution of different organizations and different projects.

The employment of locals in volunteer tourist related projects is shown to be highlighted directly on only a minority of Websites within the sample of volunteer tourism organisations studied. Another way the organizations can contribute indirectly to local communities is by providing employment for locals. This empowers the employees and creates the right conditions for long term viability.

Different organizations yielded different findings in terms of the employment of the locals. To start with 23 organizations out of the 40 examined made no explicit claims or statement on their website that they make sure they utilize local staff, while 9 organizations, even though they imply to be using staff on location, they fail to state whether the staff is local or imported. Only 8 organizations explicitly stated that they have as their policy to employ local staff where possible.

Destinations and Need

It is generally accepted that the HDI score may be taken as indicative of a country's level of need. It would not seem unreasonable to expect that the neediest countries would attract more volunteer projects than those in less need, but the evidence shows that this is not the case. Analysis of the presence of projects in the 156 countries listed on the Volunteer Abroad Database and their relative HDI score, shows that some countries with really low HDI scores, therefore by definition in great need of help, featured fewer projects on the Volunteer Abroad Database than countries with really high HDI scores. Of the 3,441 projects listed, 905 were based in High human development countries, 2,357 were based in medium human development countries and only 147 projects were based in countries with a low HDI score. To illustrate this point further the top ten most 'needy countries' (see table 5.3) and the top ten least 'needy countries' (see table 5.4) were examined. It was found that there were more projects (77) based in highly developed countries than in those countries with a lower HDI index score (and thus a greater need for support 42). If the presumption that volunteer tourism projects are fuelled by need is correct, the greater presence in highly developed countries is a contradiction.

One might argue that total aggregate need might influence distribution e.g. (population of a country. India has a vast population which hosts a total of 241 projects, so at a first glance the assumption seemed reasonable. China most populated country in the world hosts only 89 projects and Indonesia despite

having a large population hosts only 25 projects. Pakistan with a population of 165 million is host to only 2 projects. It becomes apparent that there are countries with a far smaller population than India or Pakistan but with relatively high volunteer project presence like Costa Rica, Ecuador and Nepal that have much smaller populations but feature in the top ten volunteer tourism project destinations. As result the population / project number relationship collapses.

Project Activities and Destinations

The 3,441 project entries in the database have a number of associated activities attached to them. After closer scrutiny it became apparent that of the 3,441 project opportunities advertised, 995 were not meeting the criteria for volunteer tourism. They either exceeded a year in duration or were internships or paid jobs. Thus the researchers were left with 2,446 'pure' (in terms of this research) projects to analyse further. For ease of examination the projects have been categorised into nine activity groups based on the work by Callannan and Thomas (2003). Table 7.6 illustrates the numbers of cases identified within each group. The most frequent cited group was community welfare (805 cases) followed by teaching (572 cases). The next category in prominence was Environmental (502), followed by Medical (236). Next category in prominence was Cultural (131), followed by Business Development, followed by Building (54) and Research (47) with the least popular category of activities being 'other' (28 cases) which included specialised catastrophe relief projects and Olympic Games related volunteer support opportunities.

The most prominent of the groups includes projects designed to support and improve the lives of local communities at a grass roots level. Examples of such projects include working in orphanages, elderly homes or clinics for the disabled. It may also include raising awareness for a cause, like peace, human rights and providing legal support. It has to be said that the spectrum and proliferation of community welfare related projects changes continuously and most of the internet based organisations cite such projects as community development without making clear what the project entails.

Teaching projects are also prominent in the list of project activities. Many organizations offer teaching qualifications (via TEFL tests) a priori to departure to volunteers who then reach their destination with a qualification that in the future could provide them with paid employment. Sports coaching is also popular, especially football coaching in African countries.

Another prominent category, environmental projects, is comprised of activities with a 'green' remit and outlook. They include nature conservation activities such as protecting rainforests, flora, or cleaning beaches; wildlife conservation includes activities such as volunteering to assist new born turtles reach the water or help in animal refuges and hospitals.

Medical related projects involve providing support in hospitals or clinics. They also vary from assisting with eye surgery to raising awareness about sex education and STDs, especially in the HIV pandemic stricken countries of Africa. Drug rehabilitation projects are also included with the volunteers providing support to communities that have such problems.

The cultural category is comprised of projects designed with an emphasis on cultural celebration and preservation. Societal reform is also on this agenda with female empowerment projects, such as the 'revolutionary women of Afghanistan' project which aims to 'free' women from the Taliban's beliefs and oppression. Heritage conservation is also very popular with volunteers assisting at archaeological sites with excavations or providing support at museums or cultural centres.

Business development projects include activities designed to attract western business experts to assist developing communities with building websites, balancing their books or giving advice. It also includes support for farming communities e.g. those that grow organic products. These farmers also benefit from marketing advice.

The building category relates to projects involving construction or renovation. It also includes water management projects such as the construction of sand dams.

The research category encompasses projects involving wildlife monitoring and measuring ice sheets in Antarctica. The volunteers on such projects provide support to scientists or follow an expedition.

The final category involves projects that by their remits are related to a specific occasion. Catastrophe relief projects are few and this might be because catastrophe relief may be included in many of the above activities. There are only 12 explicitly catastrophe relief projects listed in the database. Olympic Games projects on the database compiled in 2007 were designed exclusively to provide volunteer support for the Beijing Olympics of 2008.

Community welfare and teaching may top the list because of limited investment in social services and weaknesses in the educational systems of the countries listed. Increasing demand on these systems is due to issues such as increased birth rates, refugees from neighbouring war torn countries, orphaned children due to pandemics like AIDS and low number of experts and skilled professionals to deal with these problems

It is also clear from the results that some countries appear to have contradictory levels of project volume in relation to apparent need. This raises a number of unanswered questions. India has a low number (8) of environmental projects in comparison to Costa Rica or Ecuador who have 55 and 47 projects. Is the physical environment of Costa Rica or Ecuador more at risk than India's, or is it because Costa Rica and Ecuador are established eco-tourism destinations? One element that needs consideration is the popularity of project areas destinations as tourist destinations and thus whether volunteer organizations are glamorizing volunteer tourism projects by selecting areas that are popular tourist destination as areas for projects. Have they turned volunteer tourism into a product, a macdonaldised sibling of mass tourism with green and charitable undertones?

Conclusions

The results of this preliminary research reveal a number of apparent anomalies within the volunteer tourism sector, which may be argued to be of general relevance for the domain of social enterprise. In order to understand the apparent paradoxes we must consider the wide range of variables which may influence the decision makers involved.

Analysis of the presence of projects in the 156 countries listed on the Volunteer Abroad Database and their relative HDI score, shows that some countries with really low HDI scores, therefore by definition in great need of help, featured fewer projects than countries with really high HDI scores. In the business world it is generally accepted that failure to provide adequately for customers is likely to have a detrimental impact on business success. The business of volunteer tourism may therefore select destinations and projects with more than simply the level of project recipient need being considered. While provision for volunteer tourists generally involves fewer western amenities than mainstream package tours, there is a requirement to meet the participants' basic needs and Volunteer tourism organisations are likely to select destinations and projects with such concerns in mind. The selection of low risk, less volatile project destinations is likely to be mutually beneficial to potential volunteers and operators alike. The volunteers on the one hand minimise the potential for harm upon their person and the operators are less likely have to deal with extreme events. It is reasonable to expect that volunteers, including those who wish to go off the beaten track, experience different things and make a difference, also want to be reassured that their health and safety requirements are taken care of by the tour operator concerned. However this suggests a level of discord with espoused aims of helping those in need.

Interrogation of Websites of volunteer tourism organisations indicates that pricing policy varies across organisations, as does the approach taken to extras on offer by these organisations. The provision of training for volunteers is shown by the information available on volunteer tourism organisation Websites to be less than clear in the majority of cases within the sample studied. The employment of locals in volunteer tourist related projects is shown to be highlighted directly on only a minority of the volunteer tourism organisation Websites within the sample studied. The results obtained show that there is ambiguity at a number of levels regarding the espoused standpoint of volunteer tourism organisations and their approaches as evidenced by their operational approaches. Again this suggests a level of discord with espoused aims of sustainability.

There is a case to be argued for volunteer tourism to be considered as a form of social enterprise within the third sector. This is so where there is evidence that the social mission is of prime importance in the selection and undertaking of projects, the organisation is values driven and there is evidence of the use of a triple bottom line approach to the evaluation of project success. It may however also be argued that while volunteer tourism may come within the banner of social enterprise and serve to generate social capital by establishing a forum within which minorities may be given a voice, thereby helping to address socio-economic disadvantage, there may also be a more negative outcome should the groups involved become regarded by the indigenous population as self-serving and remote.

This paper argues that there is a clear need for further research in this area in order to investigate the underlying nature of organisations claiming to facilitate volunteer tourism for the betterment of indigenous populations. This paper concludes that there is a need to:

- Clarify the nature of supply and demand within this sector and to further explore the ethical elements involved.

- Clarify whether the espoused missions of such organisations equate with the tangible evidence of their outputs and outcomes, taking a triple bottom line accounting perspective into account.

- Classify volunteer tourism organisations by underlying motivation rather than simply focusing on overt business categories

- Conduct longitudinal research in order to take outcomes into account rather than simply relying on easily measurable outputs

There are several potential justifications for a profit making aspect within a mission driven social enterprise. A key element is summed up by Boshee (2008), when he quotes Harrington:

"If you want to help the poor people of the world … step one is to make sure you're not one of them!"

(Boschee, 2008, p388)

The clear conclusion here would be that while there is a very strong case to be made for the acceptability, or even requirement, for business approaches to profit making, such approaches must be tempered in terms of the value driven basis of social enterprise and the ethical elements involved.

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