

## A Comprehensive Analysis of Motivational Factors in Voluntourism

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### Abstract

While voluntourism has gained popularity as a means of contributing to community development and personal growth, a comprehensive understanding of the underlying motivational factors remains essential. The research methodology involved the survey of 200 voluntourists in Uttarakhand, focusing on their motivations, and employed logistic regression for analysis. The major findings unveiled that career development and altruism significantly influence voluntourism participation, with career development exhibiting statistical significance. On the other hand, while social factors also have a positive impact, this relationship lacks statistical significance. These findings emphasize the multifaceted nature of voluntourists' motivations, indicating that programs should be designed to align with these factors for holistic success. In conclusion, this research provides crucial insights for framing voluntourism programs that can cater to the diverse motivations of participants, contributing not only to the welfare of host communities but also to the personal and professional growth of volunteers. It serves as a cornerstone for future advancements in the voluntourism domain, striving for more meaningful and mutually beneficial outcomes.

**Keywords:** Voluntourism, Motivation, Altruism, Career advancement

### Introduction

Voluntourism, a unique blend of volunteering and tourism, has become a prominent mode of travel for individuals seeking meaningful experiences. Hence the endeavour has witnessed a significant upsurge in popularity in recent years, both as a means of travel and as a form of contribution to social and environmental causes. The trend is also reflected in India, with millions actively engaged in this sector, including various aspects of voluntourism, such as education, healthcare, and environmental conservation. According to a recent survey of MDPI around 1.6 million volunteer tourists travel to India each year (Abbasi et al., 2021). Furthermore, voluntourism programs often have far-reaching social and economic impacts, particularly in a country as diverse as India. They can aid in addressing critical societal issues, contribute to the development of marginalized regions, and provide livelihood opportunities (Boysen, 2017). However, motivation is a multidimensional factor, so for the voluntourism purpose. Hence knowing the purposes of motivation is a means to structure the program for optimum results. For example, knowing that many volunteers are driven by the desire to gain new skills can inform the creation of training and development programs for them, further enhancing their contributions to the community.

Furthermore, **Volunteering** is defined as an individual's spontaneous act of willingly giving and caring. It is conducted out of concern and volunteers do not expect monetary benefits in return (Buyakova & Malkova, 2019). While **voluntourism**, Voluntourism, a portmanteau of "volunteer" and "tourism," refers to a type of travel and leisure activity where individuals participate in voluntary service or humanitarian work while exploring new destinations. It combines elements of volunteering and tourism, with participants dedicating a portion of their trip to contribute to various community or environmental projects. **Motivation**, in the context of psychology and behavioural sciences, is the internal or external driving force that influences an individual's thoughts, feelings, and actions. It refers to the reasons or incentives behind a person's behaviour, whether they are intrinsic (arising from within, like altruism) or extrinsic (coming from external factors, like rewards or recognition). However, the pre-Socratic thinkers claimed that human beings had an inherent inclination towards pursuing personal gain, whereas exhibiting selfless conduct is considered a learned cultural characteristic (Cheatham, 2018). In the realm of volunteer tourism, motivations extend beyond intrinsic altruism, encompassing a complex interplay of internal and external factors. Participants are driven by diverse incentives, such as career advancement, social engagement, and personal growth. Hence, designing volunteer tourism programs with a holistic approach is crucial to align both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Eckhauser, 2015). This ensures that participants not only contribute to host communities but also experience personal and professional development. This modern understanding acknowledges the multifaceted nature of volunteer tourism motivations, transcending innate altruism, and results in a more well-rounded and meaningful experience for all (Lewton & Nievar, 2021). Hence, this research aims to analyze diverse motivational factors influencing voluntourism participation and align these factors to design voluntourism programs in different areas of need in India. Hence the research has the following objectives:

1. To identify and analyze the motivations that drive individuals to participate in voluntourism programs, considering both intrinsic and extrinsic factors.
2. To provide recommendations and guidelines for voluntourism organizations and stakeholders to better align their programs with the diverse motivations of voluntarists

Further, future research can contribute to the ongoing development of voluntourism programs that are not only meaningful and motivating for participants but also sustainable, ethical, and impactful for host communities.

## Literature Review

Numerous motives have been documented in the literature about the act of volunteering. However, two primary motivations that have been consistently recognised are altruism along with self-development. Volunteering, in its fundamental essence, has been elucidated as individuals harbouring a desire to provide assistance to others. The aforementioned purpose has been characterised as an altruistic motive. The volunteer engages in the placement with altruistic motives and a want to assist others who need their assistance (McBath, 2015). Nevertheless, extensive study has shown that even though altruism may indeed manifest in many forms of volunteerism, there exists another distinct category of self-centered motivations. This pertains to the advantages that volunteers get from their engagement in the placement, including job advancement and the enhancement of interpersonal connections with acquaintances and loved ones.

Abbasi et al. (2021) provide a critique of the prevailing concept of altruism, positing that volunteers are mostly driven by self-interest rather than any inherent altruistic tendencies. According to Boysen (2017), there is evidence to suggest that incentives for volunteering are complex and interconnected, rather than existing in isolation from one another. The study conducted by Buyakova and Malkova (2019) revealed that individuals who engage in volunteer tourism are driven by four primary objectives. These motives include the desire for cultural immersion, the intention to contribute and have a positive impact, the pursuit of social connections and camaraderie with other volunteers, and the aspiration for family bonding and educational experiences. The

participants expressed a desire for cultural immersion in order to establish meaningful ties with the local population, as seen in the research. As per the findings of the researchers, the process of immersion resulted in the establishment of interpersonal connections between some participants and their hosts. The only motivations that seemed to deviate from the tourist's expectations were acts of giving back along with making a difference, without any apparent desire for reciprocation. For the researchers, engaging in acts of philanthropy and effecting positive change provided the volunteer tourists with a profound feeling of meaning and direction.

According to Cheatham (2018), individuals engage in volunteering activities as a means to deviate from their daily routines, gain insights into foreign countries with the guidance of knowledgeable individuals familiar with the country and its ecosystems, actively participate in meaningful activities, broaden their perspectives, and seek novel experiences, as opposed to opting for a passive vacation centred around leisurely beach activities. According to Eckhauser (2015), engaging in service-learning programmes and educational courses in the US may be seen as transformative educational experiences that expand individuals' perspectives. According to Jill (2017), six overarching roles are proposed to be fulfilled by volunteers. These opportunities encompass the expression of one's values pertaining to altruistic along with humanitarian worries for others (Values), the chance to acquire new learning experiences and apply one's knowledge, skills, and abilities (Understanding), the opportunity to spend time with friends or engage in socially approved activities (Social), the experiences gained through engaging in volunteer work (Career), the alleviation of guilt associated with being more privileged than others along with addressing personal issues (Protective), and the personal growth along with development of one's ego (Enhancement).

According to Lewton and Nievar (2021), the degree to which volunteering experiences fill these roles is associated with pleasure towards volunteer activities. According to McBath (2015), there exists a distinction between the objectives of volunteer tourists and those of non-volunteer tourists who engage in escapist travel. Volunteer travellers often deviate from the conventional international tourist itinerary. In a study conducted by Rappaport (2015), a range of motivating elements were identified, including the desire to assist others, cultivate professional trajectories, and acquire new proficiencies. According to the findings of Stoddart and Rogerson (2004), volunteer travellers were driven by the need to enhance their abilities and establish interpersonal connections, in addition to seeking out distinctive vacation destinations. The authors highlighted that the prevailing terminology used to describe motivation in the context of volunteer tourism include altruism, along with travel and adventure, along with personal growth, along with cultural exchange and learning, along with professional development, appropriate timing and location, and the specific characteristics of the volunteer programme. However, Sum (2017) cautions that individuals may initially possess varying travel motivations that might potentially evolve throughout the course of their travel experiences and as they go through various phases of life.

Hence, from the above review of literature, the following motivations could be summarised:

**Table 1: Motivation for Voluntourism**

| Motivation Factor | Description  |
|-------------------|--|
| Altruism          | Reflects the desire to selflessly help others and make a positive impact on their lives.   |
| Social Factors    | Encompasses motivations related to building relationships, camaraderie with fellow volunteers, and engaging in activities viewed favourably by others. |

| Motivation Factor  | Description  |
|--------------------|--|
| Career Development | Involves the motivation to enhance one's career prospects, acquire new skills, and gain practical experience through voluntourism. |

Despite extensive research on voluntourism motivations, a critical research gap exists in quantifying the influence of these motivations on voluntourism decisions. To address this gap and enable the customization of voluntourism programs, this paper has identified and focused on three key motivation factors.

### Research Methodology

The research paper has opted for a quantitative research methodology, conducted in Nainital, Uttarakhand, India, between the voluntarists. A purposive sample of 200 voluntourists was surveyed, targeting individuals actively participating in child care, education, and environmental projects in the Nainital district. Data collection involved structured questionnaires designed to gather information on voluntourists' motivations and their participation in voluntourism activities. The surveys were administered in person and digitally, ensuring a representative and diverse sample. The dependent variable was voluntourism participation, while the independent variables included Altruism, Social Factors, and Career Development motivations, each measured on a scale of 1 to 5.

### Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis utilized regression analysis to determine the relationships between the motivations (Altruism, Social Factors, Career Development) and voluntourism participation. The results were assessed for significance ( $p < 0.05$ ) to establish the strength and direction of these relationships. However, Limitations include potential self-reporting bias and the study's regional specificity. The results should be interpreted in the context of Uttarakhand's Nainital district and may not be generalizable to other regions or populations. The result of the regression analysis is as follows:

**Table 2: Regression Analysis on Voluntourism**

| Variable           | Coefficient | Odds Ratio | 95% Confidence Interval | p-value |
|--------------------|-------------|------------|-------------------------|---------|
| Altruism           | 0.537       | 1.711      | (1.248, 2.345)          | < 0.001 |
| Social Factors     | 0.231       | 1.260      | (0.932, 1.704)          | 0.134   |
| Career Development | 0.389       | 1.475      | (1.045, 2.087)          | 0.028   |

The research has further conducted a partial least square analysis on the collected data to validate the results from regression analysis. The result is as follows:

**Table 3: Smart Partial Least Squares (Smart PLS) Analysis Table**

| Variable                              | Loading | t-Value | p-Value | R-Squared |
|---------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| <b>Altruism</b>                       | 0.687   | 4.213   | < 0.001 | 0.480     |
| <b>Social Factors</b>                 | 0.312   | 2.034   | 0.042   |           |
| <b>Career Development</b>             | 0.549   | 3.155   | 0.007   |           |
| <b>Voluntourism Participation (Y)</b> |         |         |         |           |

### Data Interpretation

The analysis of motivational factors and their relationship with voluntourism participation reveals significant insights. Altruism emerges as a pivotal motivation, exhibiting a strong positive association (loading = 0.687) with voluntourism engagement. This means that individuals with higher levels of altruistic motivation are considerably more likely to participate in voluntourism activities. This relationship is not only strong but also highly statistically significant (t-Value = 4.213, p-Value < 0.001), explaining a substantial portion of the variance (R-squared = 0.480).

On the other hand, Social Factors, while showing a positive relationship (loading = 0.312) with voluntourism participation, have a weaker influence compared to altruism. Nonetheless, this relationship is statistically significant (t-Value = 2.034, p-Value = 0.042), indicating that social motivations do play a role in driving voluntourism, albeit to a lesser extent.

Career Development motivation demonstrates a robust influence (loading = 0.549) on voluntourism participation. This motivation is associated with a 1.475 times higher likelihood of participating in voluntourism, and this relationship is highly statistically significant (t-value = 3.155, p-value = 0.007). In this case, career-oriented motivations significantly contribute to the decision to engage in voluntourism.

### Discussion & Recommendation

The analysis underscores the significance of Altruism and Career Development motivations as primary drivers of voluntourism participation, with Career Development demonstrating statistical significance. In contrast, the positive influence of Social Factors, though present, is less prominent and lacks statistical significance. This implies that when structuring voluntourism programs, it is crucial to ensure alignment between participants' motivations and program objectives for the holistic betterment of society. Hence the recommendation for the same is as follows:

1. **Encourage Collaborative Partnerships:** Voluntourism organizations could benefit from collaborative partnerships with local NGOs, community leaders, and governmental agencies. Such partnerships may help ensure alignment with the region's development goals and priorities, making programs more impactful and locally relevant.
2. **Consider Skill-Based Programs:** skill-building opportunities for voluntourists interested in personal development should be considered. This may include programs in healthcare, education, agriculture, or sustainable technology. Skill-building initiatives can mutually benefit volunteers and the local community by enhancing their capacity and knowledge.

3. **Facilitate Cultural Immersion:** To cater for voluntourists seeking cultural immersion, and provide opportunities to engage with local traditions, languages, and customs. Suggestions may include homestays, cultural workshops, and interactions with indigenous communities, offering authentic cultural experiences.
4. **Support Career Development:** Those interested in career advancement could benefit from structured internship and training programs. Programs should consider providing certifications or letters of recommendation to support professional growth. Collaborating with relevant industries can help create valuable learning experiences.
5. **Emphasize Social Impact:** To attract volunteers motivated by the desire to make a meaningful difference, emphasis should be on the social impact of voluntourism programs. Showcase success stories and positive outcomes. Ensuring clear impact assessments and transparent reporting is essential.
6. **Promote Local Employment:** There should be encouragement for the creation of local employment opportunities within voluntourism programs, such as hiring local guides, translators, and support staff. This not only contributes to the local economy but also fosters a sense of community ownership in the program, making it more sustainable and inclusive.

Hence, by fostering collaborative partnerships, offering skill-building opportunities, facilitating cultural immersion, and supporting career development, voluntourism can become more inclusive, educational, and impactful. Emphasizing the social impact and promoting local employment not only benefits the communities being served but also instils a sense of purpose and satisfaction in the volunteers.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has systematically explored the multifaceted motivations driving voluntourism participation, with a specific focus on career development and altruism as primary factors. The findings shed light on the profound impact of these motivations on individuals' decisions to engage in voluntourism activities. Beyond the current insights, this research holds enduring significance by paving the way for the development of more nuanced and tailored voluntourism programs. By considering the intricate interplay of motivations, future programs can maximize their positive impact, ensuring not only the betterment of host communities but also the personal and professional growth of volunteers. This comprehensive analysis serves as a foundation for ongoing advancements in voluntourism, aimed at achieving more meaningful and mutually beneficial outcomes.

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