



# VOLUNTOURISM

Give a little

Gain a lot

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**Planelerra**  
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SOCIETY**

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Lastly, we offer our regards and blessings to all of those who supported us in any respect during the completion of this project.

Sincerely,



Stephen Cheung



Merriah Michel



Dan Miller

# Executive Summary

## Background

Voluntourism is the practice of individuals going on a nonpaid working holiday for the purpose of volunteering themselves to worthy causes. The industry has experienced enormous growth in the number of companies operating, volunteers travelling and, projects and regions available.

Current research on voluntourism has demonstrated that there is a need for empirical quantitative analysis. Furthermore, utilizing a large sample will reduce the reliability limitations associated with past research. Valuable insight into the motivations and expectations of these voluntourists will provide for a richer understanding of the market segment.

## Purpose

To examine current and prospective voluntourists', attitudes and perceptions of voluntourism so Planeterra can enhance and differentiate its products and services in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

## Objectives

1. To examine the motivations that people have for volunteering abroad.
2. To analyze current and prospective voluntourists' expectations.
3. To explore current voluntourists' satisfaction with their past experiences.
4. To determine how prospective and current voluntourists choose a travel organization.
5. To profile current and prospective voluntourists.

## Methodology

To address the research objectives, a multi-phased mixed methodology was employed for 'Voluntourism: Give a little, gain a lot.' Phase one was an online survey distributed through the membership databases of Planeterra, Gap Adventures, and The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), with links on Facebook, Twitter, as well as TIES and Planeterra's websites. Ultimately, 1073 responses across more than 70 countries worldwide were collected, with

approximately 60% being prospective voluntourists. This survey examined the motivations and expectations of both current and prospective voluntourists while understanding how they choose a travel company. The satisfaction of current voluntourists was also analyzed in addition to providing a general profile of voluntourists'. Phase two consisted of eight individual in-depth interviews conducted online using Skype software to complement the survey findings.

## Key findings

- Respondent Profile
  - Most voluntourists were aged 20-39 and living around the world. They were single or married without children, highly educated, and avid travelers.
  - Voluntourists can be grouped into four types, 'the altruistic volunteer', 'the local volunteer', 'the definitive voluntourist' and 'the adventure tourist', based on their motivations for volunteering on vacation.
- Motivations
  - Respondents indicated an interest in traveling to South & Central America, Africa and Asia to volunteer. They were motivated by their interest in environmental conservation, community tourism projects and community development.
- Expectations
  - Respondents were interested in traveling for over a week while devoting 40-80% of their trip to volunteering. They also wanted to volunteer between 4-8 hours per day while spending less than \$1500 on their trip.
- Choosing an organization
  - Voluntourists thought the experience and reputation of a company, price of the trip, and knowledge of where their money is going were important when choosing a volunteer travel company.
- Satisfaction
  - Current voluntourists would recommend a volunteer vacation and would likely go again

## Recommendations

- Provide a range of volunteering options and packages that target the four types of voluntourists
  - The four types of voluntourists were defined by their different motivations. Designing a variety of types of volunteer vacations with these differences in mind would ensure that those differences were satisfied.
- One size does not fit all
  - Respondents in different age groups and different regions had different motivations and expectations in terms of duration of experiences, types of projects, regions to volunteer in, and accommodation styles. Providing a variety of types of volunteer vacations that satisfy these differences will ensure there is a trip for every voluntourist.
  - Age and regional targeted marketing would keep in mind the key differences among the groups.
- Clarity of where voluntourists' money is going
  - Knowing where their money was going was important to voluntourists; therefore the breakdown of the trip cost should be as clear as possible.

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# VOLUNTOURISM: GIVE A LITTLE, GAIN A LOT

## Background

Voluntourism is the practice of individuals going on a nonpaid working holiday for the purpose of volunteering themselves to worthy causes (Tomazos & Butler, 2009). It is difficult to pinpoint the exact date that voluntourism began but it is said that the First World War paved its way. Pierre Ceresole presented the idea of a team of volunteers who would repair the damage of the war at the 1919 International Fellowship of Reconciliation conference (Ceresole 1954 cited in Service Civil International). Also, the fears of Soviet dominance by the Americans after the Second World War caused the formation of the US Peace Corps in 1961. The US Peace Corps created an international volunteer travel organization 'blueprint' that the voluntourism industry is founded upon (Tomazos & Butler, 2009).

There has been enormous growth within the industry. For example, the number of voluntourism projects in the top-ten countries in 2003 was 223 in comparison to 1,741 in 2007, a seven-fold increase (Tomazos & Butler, 2009). According to Tomazos and Butler (2009) there are 146 voluntourism organizations worldwide that send thousands of voluntourists around the world each year. There are volunteer opportunities on every continent of the world with the top five countries being China, India, USA, Indonesia and Brazil (Tomazos & Butler, 2009). The range of volunteer projects is just as large, which includes building homes and schools, caring for animals, providing medical aid, teaching children, and many more (Rogers, 2007).

Planeterra, a not-for-profit organization, "dedicated to the development and support of small communities around the globe" ("Planeterra," 2010), was formalized in 2003 by Gap Adventures. Planeterra provides travellers with

voluntourism projects in Africa, Antarctica/Arctic, Asia and Latin America ranging from building, teaching, wildlife, environmental sustainability, and more.

## Literature Review

The voluntourism industry is relatively young, but growing fast and the majority of academic literature has been written within the last ten years (Tomazos & Butler, 2009). Although various methodologies have been implemented, most of these studies have small sample sizes and show mixed results (Table 1). Further research is needed in this field of academia to provide accurate and reliable information to voluntourists as well as voluntourism organizations.

### Qualitative over quantitative methodology

Most of the academic literature related to voluntourism has taken a qualitative rather than quantitative approach (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Brown, 2005; Brown & Morrison 2003). In particular, Brown (2005) examined the attitudes of nine voluntourists using focus groups and in-depth interviews. Although the purpose of the study was exploratory, it's particularly difficult to make generalizations since the sample only consisted of nine respondents who were recruited from the same travel organization (Brown, 2005). Similar to Brown's research, McIntosh & Zahra (2007) conducted an exploratory qualitative study using participatory observation and in-depth interviews. The researchers sought to understand the motivations of 12 Australian voluntourists in New Zealand, all aged 16 to 19. Although valuable insight into motivational factors for volunteering abroad can be gained from these two studies, it's extremely hard to generalize the results to a larger population due to their small sample size. A quantitative approach combined with a larger sample would provide a more empirical based examination of voluntourism.

## Motivations for voluntourism are mixed

Throughout the academic literature on voluntourism there appears to be some debate as to what motivates people to volunteer abroad. In one study, Brown (2005) described four motivators for voluntourism, which included making a difference, cultural immersion, seeking camaraderie and having an educational experience. These were similar to Coghlan's (2006) findings in which he related motivational factors to helping the less fortunate (Coghlan, 2006). Alternatively, Stoddart & Rogerson (2004) found that the top motivators to volunteer in South Africa were adventure and visiting Africa. Not only were these motives related to benefiting one's self, but out of 123 respondents, only 48 mentioned that they were interested in helping others (Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004). Similar research by Sin (2009) suggests that the main motivation for going on a voluntourism vacation is for personal gain.

Although there is a divide within the literature, the social desirability bias may partially explain some of the findings. By definition, socially desirable responding refers to, "the tendency of people to deny socially undesirable traits or qualities and to admit to socially desirable ones (Clemmons, 2009, pg 1)." Brown (2005) and Coghlan's (2006) studies may have been affected by this because of the qualitative methodology used. More specifically, social desirability may have increased more for the in-depth interviews and focus group sessions because of the one on one communication with others. Conversely, social desirability may have been lower for Stoddart & Rogerson's (2004) study since respondents completed a self administered questionnaire. Further quantitative research will be able to measure motivations for voluntourism while reducing the effects of socially desirable responding.

## Promotional Advertising Affects Expectations

Advertising affects the perceptions that people have towards a product or service and voluntourism is no exception. Coghlan (2006) documented this by conducting a study in which 30 respondents had to organize 23 voluntourism organizations based on their mission statement, volunteer testimonials and photo galleries. Out of this process, three major expectations became evident. Respondents either expected the organization to be conservation based, provide cross-cultural understanding or promote personal development and adventure (Coghlan, 2006). Gap Adventures would be placed into personal development and adventure, indicating that their promotional advertisements affect potential voluntourists' expectations about the company. Additional research on potential voluntourists' expectations may help determine their future satisfaction with their chosen organization.

Current research on voluntourism has demonstrated that there is a need for empirical quantitative analysis. Furthermore, utilizing a large sample will reduce the reliability limitations associated with past research. Valuable insight into the motivations and expectations of these voluntourists will provide for a richer understanding of the market segment.

## Purpose

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5. To profile current and prospective voluntourists.

# Methodology

In order to reach out to voluntourists, a multi-phased mixed methodology was utilized, consisting of an online survey for the descriptive conclusive portion, followed by exploratory individual in-depth interviews (IDI's). The survey addressed each of the research objectives, while the IDI's were used to further explore and understand the insights synthesized from the survey results. Phase one, the quantitative online survey, addressed all of our objectives, while phase two, the qualitative IDI's, provided a further exploration into the motivations, expectations and satisfaction of current and prospective voluntourists.

## Phase One – Descriptive Conclusive Online Survey

The online survey accommodated the worldwide reach and geography of the respondents in an effectual, efficient, and cost-effective manner. Non-sampling errors were reduced using this methodology as social desirability was limited and data entry errors by interviewers were eliminated. Additionally, there was no interviewer bias, or workforce administrating the survey, which might have increased the risk of non-respondent error. By utilizing an online survey, obtaining sensitive information from respondents became easier while maintaining a high degree of anonymity.

The online survey was developed using LimeSurvey, a survey designer tool. The survey was launched on February 18<sup>th</sup>. On the same day the link was added to Planeterra's website and promotion began on Facebook and Twitter. On February 20<sup>th</sup> the link was featured on TIES website, and an email was sent to their membership list on February 22<sup>nd</sup>. Planeterra and Gap Adventures also sent a link to their membership list on March 1<sup>st</sup>. On March 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, reminder emails were sent by TIES, Planeterra and Gap Adventures. The Survey was finally closed on March 6<sup>th</sup>.

## Phase One – Sampling Plan

A non-probability judgemental sampling technique was employed which achieved a final sample size of 1073 respondents for the quantitative phase. The initial targeted sample size was 1000 responses, however, it was necessary to over sample to approximately 1200 responses to ensure that each category of analysis had a sufficient number of respondents after the data had been cleaned of incomplete and duplicate responses. While respondents from Central and South America are included in analyses describing the entire sample size, they have been excluded where regional analyses were implemented due to the relatively small number of responses from these regions. Similarly, this was conducted for the 14 to 19 age cohort which also had a low number of responses.

The sample was comprised of approximately 60% females and 40% males, with the largest portion of respondents (33%) being 20 to 29 years of age. This is comparable to other voluntourist surveys which have reported similar gender and age differences (Chow, Nestora, Sundt & Yeung, 2010; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004). Below is a table illustrating where the sample was collected from. The total number of respondents is over 1073 since some respondents heard about the survey from multiple sources. *Figure 1* shows the source and number of respondents as well as the response rates where applicable.

Figure 1: Survey Sample

Source	Emails sent	Survey Sample	Response Rate
The International Ecotourism Society	17,570	597	3%
Gap Adventures	3,389	181	5%
Planeterra	2,801	198	7%
Facebook	-	52	-
Twitter	-	14	-
Link on Planeterra's website	-	11	-
Other	-	55	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,760</b>	<b>1,108</b>	<b>4%</b>

For the purpose of our study, prospective voluntourists were defined as anyone who would travel with the intent of volunteering, while current voluntourists were defined as anyone who has previously travelled and taken part in a volunteer project. These volunteer projects could have been any duration and in partnership with any company or organization. Prospective and current voluntourists completed the same survey with the exception of two satisfaction questions and one travel company question which were only completed by current voluntourists.

### Phase Two – Exploratory Individual In-depth Interviews (IDI's)

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked whether they would be interested in participating in an interview for further research concerning voluntourism. Respondents who agreed were then asked to provide their name, city/town, email address, and Skype user name if applicable. These respondents were then contacted by email to schedule their interview. To follow ethical guidelines, the survey remained separate from the IDI's.

IDI's were conducted online using Skype, a free software application that allows users to make voice and video calls over the Internet. These interviews were

audio recorded, with the verbal consent of the respondent, and lasted approximately 20 minutes in length. This approach allowed the interview to be conducted from the convenience and comfort of the respondents' home or location of choice. This was also necessary to complement the geographic distribution of this international study. The video capabilities of Skype allowed the interviewer to further engage and retain rapport by capturing and interpreting the respondents' body language.

These current and prospective voluntourists also symbolize the future of voluntourism which makes understanding their attitudes and perceptions absolutely essential. The IDI's were conducted to compliment the survey responses and provide the researchers with a deeper understanding of current and prospective voluntourists. The discussion guide was designed to further explore the motivations and expectations of all participants, how travel companies are chosen, and the satisfaction of current voluntourists. Questions were supplemented with probes designed to increase respondents' level of engagement which added richness to the online survey data.

While online focus groups were an initial option, the primary focus of the exploratory phase was the participant's individual experiences, and therefore a group discussion would have been unnecessary and could have potentially created a bias in the results, due to social desirability responding.

## Phase Two – Sampling Plan

The IDI's exclusively focused on survey respondents from the 20 to 29 age cohort. This cohort represented the largest portion of our respondents (33%), and was the second largest group of voluntourists based on past research (Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004). Participants were screened to develop a sample mixed between gender and whether they were a current or prospective

voluntourist. The resulting sample was comprised of 8 survey respondents (5 current and 3 prospective; 6 female and 2 male).

## Limitations

There were a number of inherent limitations with this sampling plan. While the survey was promoted on neutral space such as Facebook and Twitter, the sample was dominantly from membership lists from Planeterra, Gap Adventures, TIES, and not from the general public. Attaining this sample was also partially reliant on the traffic from both Planeterra and TIES' websites. This also meant that the sample was not random as respondents were primarily prospective and current voluntourists who had visited these websites. These respondents will be skewed toward a positive bias of the industry.

While this is an international study, both the online survey and the IDI's were exclusively conducted in English, which therefore excluded respondents who lacked the necessary knowledge of the English language. Due to this particular limitation, some respondents may have misinterpreted the questions or were unable to give proper responses.

# Findings

## Profile

### Who are voluntourists?

*Voluntourists are aged 20-39, living around the world, single or married without children, highly educated, and avid travelers.*

Of the survey respondents, 1/3 were current voluntourists. They were all aged from 14 to over 60 years of ages, with over one half (60%) aged 20-39 (see Figure 2). The majority of voluntourists were married or single (34% and 39% respectively) and most either lived with a spouse and had no children or lived alone (29% and 26% respectively). Nearly 3/4 of the respondents were employed full-time (72%) and 16% were students. Overall, respondents were highly educated with 85% stating they have a college diploma/university degree or higher (see Figure 3).

Figure 2

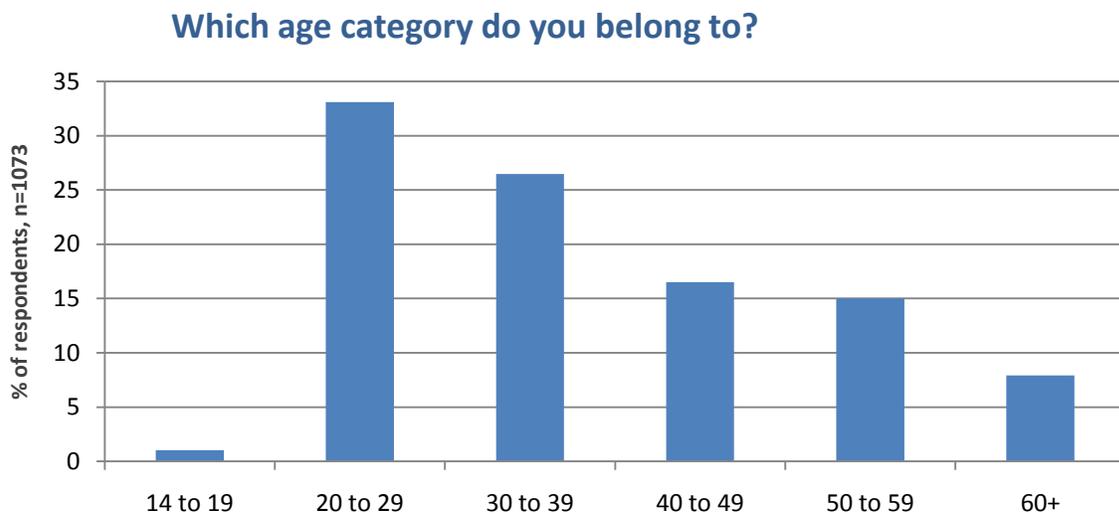
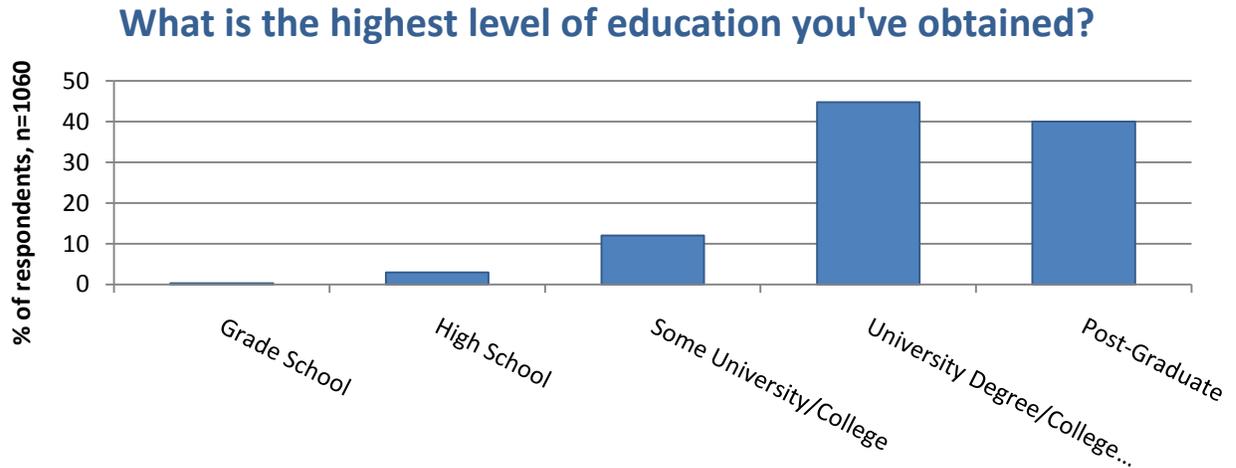


Figure 3



Respondents resided in all regions of the world but were primarily from North America (56%), Europe (16%) and Asia (16%) (see Figure 4). Nearly all (95%) of the respondents stated they preferred to communicate in English. Survey respondents had an avid travel history, with over 1/3 reporting that they had taken 5 or more international vacations in the last 5 years (see Figure 5). Four major types of respondents have also been identified based on their motivations which will be examined later in the report (pg 28).

Figure 4

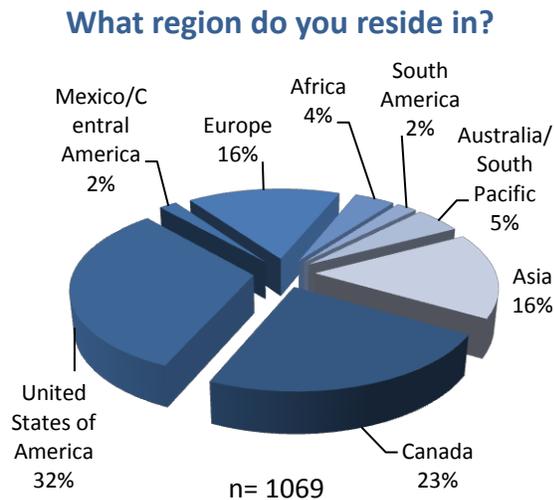


Figure 5



## Motivations

### Where do voluntourists want to volunteer?

*Voluntourists want to travel to South & Central America, Africa and Asia to volunteer*

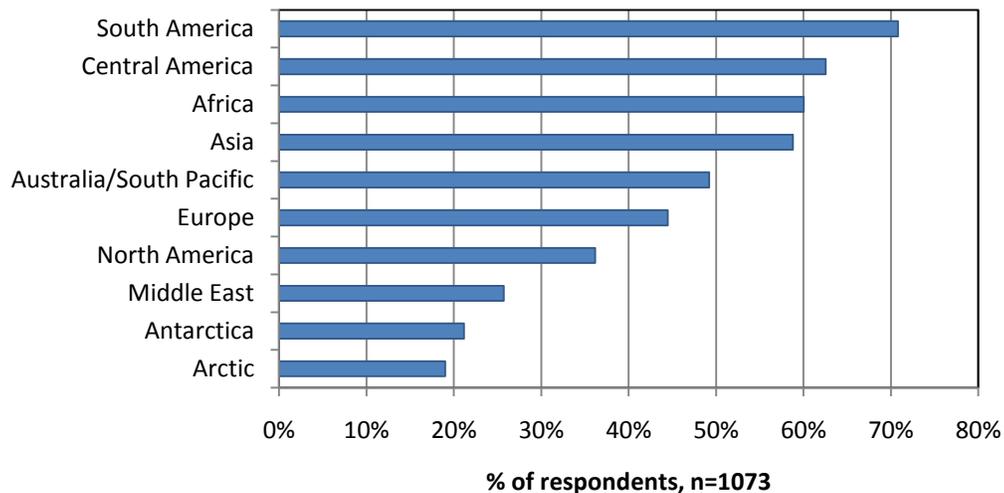
Survey respondents were asked what region(s) they would be interested volunteering in.

Although there was interest in all regions of the world, survey respondents chose South America as their top destination with 71% of respondents stating they would like to volunteer there. Central America, Africa and Asia followed closely behind with 63%, 60% and 59% of respondents respectively (see Figure 6). These findings are consistent with past research which showed that South America was a top destination for voluntourists (Chow, Yeung, Heckenbach, MacKinnon, & Nestora, 2009).

*"I would go to any region that is safe"*  
- IDI, Current, Canada

Figure 6

### Which region(s) would you be interested volunteering in?



Current voluntourists knew more specifically where they wanted to volunteer, whereas prospective voluntourists were more open to volunteering in different regions. Although Antarctica was not chosen as a top destination for volunteering, prospective voluntourists had more interest in volunteering there than current voluntourists. Nearly one quarter of prospective voluntourists said they would volunteer in Antarctica, while only 17% of current voluntourists said they would ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Similarly, prospective voluntourists had greater interest volunteering in South America (74%) and the Arctic (21%), in comparison to current voluntourists (66% and 15% respectively) ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Females were more interested in volunteering in multiple regions than males. The significant differences are listed in the table below ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .05$ ) (see Figure 7). Antarctica, North America, Europe, Asia and the Arctic showed no significant difference between the interest of females and males and are not shown.

Figure 7: Gender Comparison of Region of Interest

	Central America	South America	Africa	Australia/South Pacific	Middle East	
Female	68%	78%	66%	53%	28%	n=651
Male	53%	60%	50%	43%	22%	n=404

Respondents from different age cohorts also had dissimilar interests in the regions where they wanted to volunteer. Younger respondents were generally more interested in multiple regions whereas respondents in the older age cohorts (until age 59) had fewer regions they would be interested volunteering in. Respondents aged 60+ did not follow this pattern and generally had more interest in multiple regions than respondents aged 50-59. The significant

differences are listed in the table below ( $\chi^2, p<.01$ ) (see *Figure 8*). North America, Central America, South America, Europe, and Australia/South Pacific showed no difference between age cohorts and are not shown.

*Figure 8: Age Comparison of Region of Interest*

	Antarctica	Africa	Asia	Arctic	Middle East	
20-29	21%	70%	63%	19%	29%	n=355
30-39	28%	63%	65%	25%	31%	n=284
40-49	19%	50%	57%	20%	22%	n=177
50-59	17%	45%	43%	12%	16%	n=161
60+	12%	55%	53%	13%	19%	n=85

The region a voluntourist lives in has an influence on where they want to volunteer. For example, respondents from The United States of America had the most diverse interest of regions in which they wanted to volunteer. Over 50% of respondents in the United States of America expressed an interest in volunteering in seven different continents. Also interesting, respondents in Canada and Europe were the only respondents who did not have an interest in volunteering in the region in which they live, while respondents from Africa and Asia only wanted to volunteer in their current region. The following are the regional interests of respondents from around the world ( $\chi^2, p<.05$ ) (see *Figure 9*).

Figure 9: Regional Comparison of Region of Interest

Canada	South America (87%); Central America (76%); Africa (73%); Asia (56%); Australia/South Pacific (52%)	n=248
United States of America	South America (82%); Central America (77%); Africa (66%); Asia (61%); Australia/South Pacific (58%); Europe (53%); North America (52%)	n=340
Europe	South America (69%); Africa (61%); Asia (58%); Central America (57%)	n=170
Africa	Africa (56%)	n=45
Australia/South Pacific	South America (69%); Africa (64%); Asia (64%); Central America (62%); Australia/South Pacific (54%)	n=52
Asia	Asia (69%)	n=171

### What type of volunteer work are voluntourists interested in?

*Voluntourists are interested in environmental conservation, community tourism projects, development projects and wildlife*

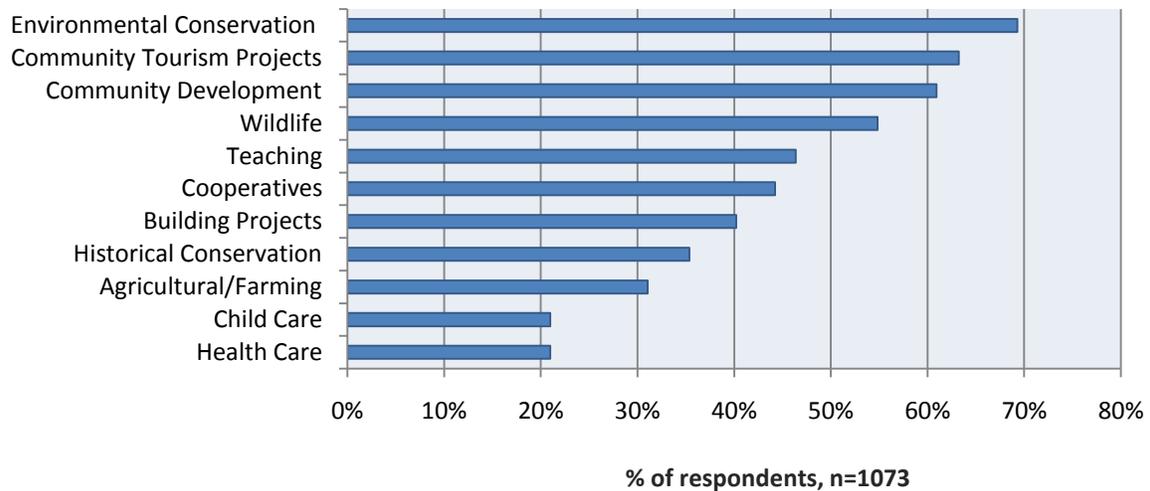
Survey respondents were asked what type of volunteer work they would be interested in. Similar to the region of interest, respondents were motivated by all types of volunteer work. In particular, respondents chose 'environmental conservation' as the most popular type of volunteer work (69% of cases). 'Community tourism projects', 'community development' and 'wildlife' were also very popular with 63%, 61% and 55% of respondents respectively (see Figure 10).

*"The most ideal ... I worked at a rural health unit as a nurse's assistant. It was at an orphanage where I lived, and so I hung out with the kids... then I worked with a conservation project in the jungle"*

- IDI, Current, Canada

Figure 10

### What type of volunteer work are you interested in?



Gender differences with the type of volunteer work followed the same pattern as the region in which to volunteer. Females were more interested in multiple types of volunteer work as opposed to males. Although 'cooperatives' were not selected as a top choice overall, females (53%) swayed more towards this type of volunteer work than men (30%). The significant differences between females and males are listed in the table below ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .05$ ) (see Figure 11). Building projects, environmental conservation, agriculture & farming, historical conservation, wildlife and community tourism projects showed no significant difference between the interest of females and males and are not shown.

Figure 11: Gender Comparison of Type of Volunteer Work

	Teaching	Community Development	Health Care	Child Care	Cooperatives	
Female	49%	65%	25%	26%	53%	n=651
Male	42%	54%	14%	13%	30%	n=404

Respondents from different age cohorts had varying interests in the type of volunteer work they wanted to do. Generally, the younger the respondent, the higher the level of interest in each type of volunteer work. Again, respondents aged 60+ did not perfectly follow the pattern and stood out from the other age cohorts in multiple areas, such as 'child care' (showed the same amount of interest as the 30-39 age category), 'wildlife' (only 41% agreed), and 'agriculture & farming' (only 13% agreed). The significant differences are listed in the table below ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .05$ ) (see *Figure 12*). Teaching, building projects, historical conservation, health care, cooperatives, and community tourism projects showed no significant difference between respondents' age and are not shown.

*Figure 12: Age Comparison of Type of Volunteer Work*

	Environmental Conservation	Agriculture & Farming	Wildlife	Community Development	Child Care	
20-29	73%	33%	58%	70%	26%	n=355
30-39	70%	36%	59%	60%	22%	n=284
40-49	68%	31%	53%	60%	16%	n=177
50-59	65%	26%	52%	52%	13%	n=161
60+	58%	13%	41%	46%	20%	n=85

Respondents in all regions of the world generally shared a common interest in the top types of volunteer work shown in *Figure 13*, but there were some differences among these respondents. Over half of the respondents in Canada were interested in 'building projects' (52% agree), while respondents everywhere else were not as interested ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Similarly, over half of the respondents in the United States of America and Europe expressed an interest in 'cooperatives' (59% for both), while respondents everywhere else did not

express as much interest ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Figure 13 shows each region's top choices for the type of volunteer work.

Figure 13: Regional Comparison of Type of Volunteer Work

Canada	community development (69%); environmental conservation (60%); wildlife (55%); building projects (52%); community tourism projects (50%)	n=248
United States of America	environmental conservation (71%); community development (66%); community tourism projects (65%); wildlife (60%); cooperatives (59%)	n=340
Europe	environmental conservation (76%); community tourism projects (74%); cooperatives (59%); wildlife (58%); community development (55%)	n=170
Africa	environmental conservation (67%); community development (62%); community tourism projects (58%)	n=45
Australia/South Pacific	wildlife (71%); environmental conservation (67%); community tourism projects (62%); community development (58%)	n=52
Asia	environmental conservation (69%), community tourism projects (66%)	n=171

### What factors affect a voluntourist's decision to volunteer?

*The top factors that affect the decision to volunteer abroad are interaction with locals, helping others, environmental sustainability, the type of volunteer work and cultural immersion*

Survey respondents were asked which factors were important in their decision to volunteer abroad and all factors were at least somewhat important.

Respondents stated (97% agreed) that their most important factor for volunteering was 'interaction with locals'. Over 90% of respondents also agreed that 'helping others', 'environmental sustainability', 'type of volunteer work' and 'cultural immersion' were important factors in deciding to volunteer. Figure 14 shows how each of the factors were ranked by the survey respondents.

*"It is a really good way to meet local people, and immerse yourself even more than a situation where you'd be sightseeing. It's also a good way to learn different skills, learning different things that you're interested in"*

- IDI. Current. Brazil

Figure 14: Important Factors that Affect Decision to Volunteer Abroad

Most Important	In the Middle	Least Important
Interaction with Locals	Education	Internship Options
Helping Others	Project Location	A Family Experience
Environmental Sustainability	International Travel	Organized Activities
Type of Volunteer Work	Developing Friendships	Physical Activity
Cultural Immersion	Adventure	

Although current and prospective voluntourists agreed on the importance of most factors, prospective voluntourists were interested in more types of volunteer work. Current and prospective voluntourists had different opinions on the factors 'adventure' (current: 76%, prospective: 81%), 'helping others' (current: 93%, prospective: 97%) and 'organized activities' (current: 49%, prospective: 61%) ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Females and males were similar in how they rated the factors of importance with the exception of 'a family experience' and 'internship options'. 'A family experience' was more important to males than females (51% to 37%) ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Similarly, males stated that 'internship options' was more important than stated by females (43% to 31%) ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Respondents aged 60+ had two significant differences in the factors important to deciding to volunteer. 'Adventure' was only important to 65% of the respondents aged 60+ and 'internship options' only 14%. These were significantly lower (12 – 33%) than stated by the respondents of other age categories ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Respondents in Africa and Asia were significantly different than respondents from other regions around the world in relation to motivations. The following factors were significantly more important to respondents in Africa and Asia than any other region: physical activity (82% and 70%), internship options (62% and 61%), organized activities (78% and 75%), developing friendships (91% and 92%), and a family experience (78% and 59%) ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

## Four major types of respondents

Respondents' motivations for volunteering abroad were further analyzed in order to distinguish if any commonalities existed between the 14 motivational statements. A technique called factor analysis was employed which reduced the number of statements into four groups based on commonalities. These grouped categories were then further analyzed to determine which profile characteristics were significantly related to each group, so as to develop a more comprehensive profile of voluntourists. Four major profiles of respondents have emerged as a result of these analyses, which have been named 'the altruistic volunteer,' 'the local volunteer,' 'the definitive voluntourist,' and 'the adventure tourist.'

### The Altruistic Volunteer

Altruistic volunteers were defined by their motivation to give as opposed to receive. This group of volunteers were likely to choose 'interaction with locals' as the most important statement when deciding to volunteer abroad. Other statements important to altruist volunteers were 'helping others,' 'cultural immersion,' 'education,' and 'environmental sustainability.' Respondents in Europe and Australia/South Pacific were significantly more likely to be this type of volunteer than respondents from other regions (ANOVA,  $p < .05$ ).

*"In order to lend a hand you have to get in touch with the local people and I think voluntourism is one way to do that."*

- IDI, Prospect, China

## The Local Volunteer

As the name suggests, the local volunteer favours regional voluntourism as oppose to international travel. This group of volunteers were significantly more likely to be from Africa and Asia, thus complementing earlier findings which indicated that African and Asian respondents only wanted to volunteer in their own region (ANOVA,  $p < .05$ ). Statements that motivated the local volunteer were 'internship opportunities,' 'family volunteer options,' 'organized activities,' 'physical activity,' and 'developing friendships.' Analysis showed that these volunteers are more likely to be prospective voluntourists and male (t-test,  $p < .1$ ).

*"You don't need to travel far to volunteer. Even people here, in a city like Rome, need help sometimes."*

- IDI, Current, Italy

## The Definitive Voluntourist

Definitive voluntourists were solely concerned with what type of work they will be doing, and where they will be doing it. This was indicated by the statements 'Project Location,' and 'Type of volunteer work,' which these respondents agreed were the most important factors in their decision to volunteer abroad. Current voluntourists were most likely to be found within this category, as were males (t-test,  $p < .1$ ).

*"I hate heat and humidity. Everywhere the temperature is reasonable, I would go there...I wouldn't go somewhere to build a house or anything...I would go to do medicine."*

- IDI, Prospect, Croatia

## The Adventure Tourist

The adventure tourist's primary motivations for deciding to volunteer abroad were adventure, international travel, and physical activity. Due to this combination, they were defined more as a tourist than a volunteer.

Respondents in Canada and The United States of America were more likely to be this type of voluntourist than respondents from other regions throughout the world (ANOVA,  $p < .01$ ). In addition, respondents who were married and couples with children were significantly less likely to be this type of voluntourist (ANOVA,  $p < .05$ ).

*"Africa, the place I volunteered, was cool because it was a total different experience...At the end of the trip we got to go on a two-day safari. We were so close to lions and [my sister] got kissed by a giraffe"*  
- IDI, Current, Canada

## Expectations

How long do voluntourists want to travel abroad for?

*Voluntourists want to travel for a week or more*

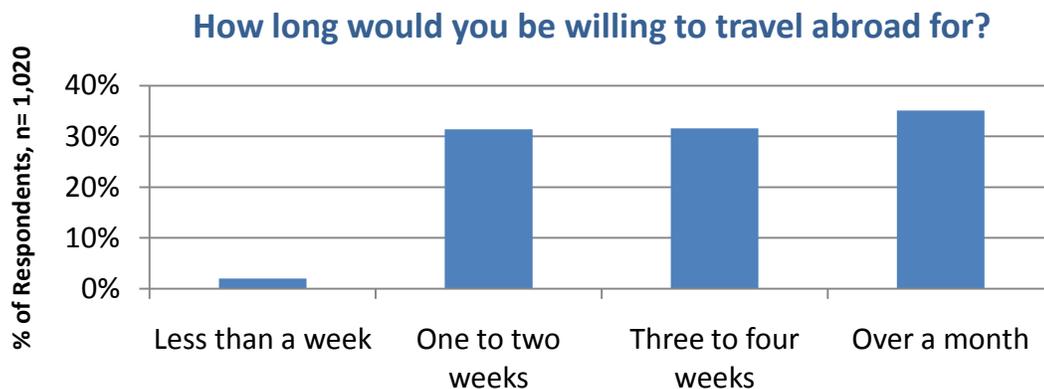
Survey respondents were asked how long they wanted to travel abroad for and nearly all of them (98%) indicated that they wanted to travel for over a

*"I don't believe in volunteer work for only one week"*

- IDI, Current, Italy

week (see *Figure 15*). Of these, nearly the same percent of respondents wanted to travel for one to two weeks (31%), three to four weeks (32%), and over a month (35%). Overall, this group of voluntourists was quite different than the stereotypical vacationers who go to all inclusive resorts for a week at a time.

*Figure 15*



Although the vast majority of respondents indicated a willingness to travel abroad for over a week, there were significant differences between current and prospective voluntourists. In particular, current voluntourists were much more inclined to travel for over a month (46%) while less than one third of prospective voluntourists (29%) shared that same interest ( $\chi^2, p < .01$ ) (see *Figure 16*). This is

particularly interesting as it shows a willingness to travel for longer periods of time if one has been on a voluntourism experience in the past.

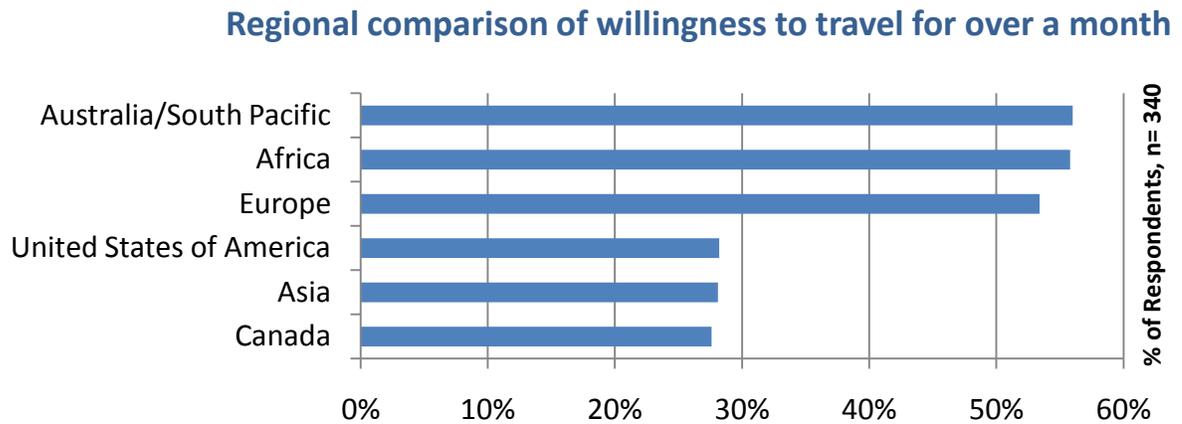
Figure 16



Age also played an important factor in the length of time respondents were willing to travel, with respondents aged 20 to 29 and 60+ showing the most interest in travelling for over a month (45% and 39% respectively) ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These results are not surprising since these age cohorts most likely consist of students and respondents who are retired who might have more time to volunteer.

Overall, the largest contributing factor to a respondents' willingness to travel for over a month is the region of the world they currently reside in. Respondents from Australia/South Pacific (56%), Africa (56%) and Europe (53%) reported significantly higher level of interest in travelling abroad for over a month in comparison to respondents in Canada (28%), Asia (28%) and the United States of America (28%) ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .01$ ). (see Figure 17). Overall, Canadians and Americans were more interested in traveling abroad for one to four weeks.

Figure 17



### How many volunteers do voluntourists want to work with?

*Most voluntourists do not have a preference about how many volunteers they would like to work with*

When respondents were asked about the number of other volunteers they would be willing to work with, most (56%) of them did not have a preference. Another 30% of respondents indicated that they would like to work with 1 to 6 other volunteers. Very few respondents (13%) indicated a preference for working with 7 or more people.

### What type of accommodation do voluntourists prefer?

*Most voluntourists do not have a preference about the type of accommodation they stay in on their volunteer vacation*

Preferences for the type of accommodation yielded similar results with 43% of respondents indicating that they did not have a preference. The second highest choice by respondents was homestay (23%) followed by staying in a single hotel-room (16%), however this differed by current and prospective volunteer. In particular, current voluntourists preferred a homestay

accommodation (28%) over prospective voluntourists (20%) ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

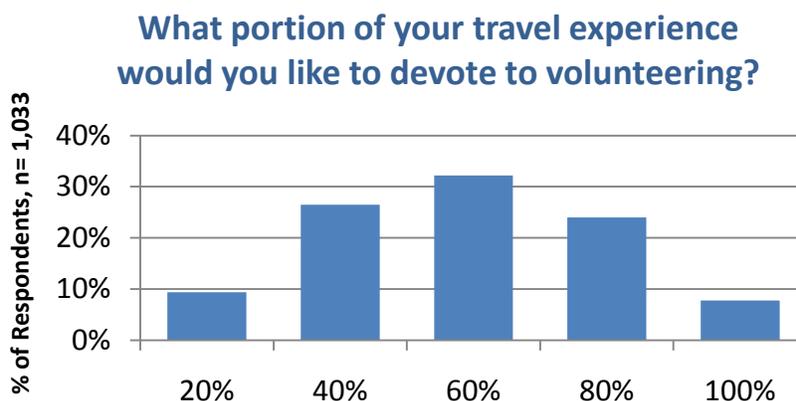
Interestingly, respondents who were 40 and over were more likely to prefer staying in a single-room hotel (26%) than those under 40 (11%) ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .01$ ). From these results, it would appear that older travelers want more comfort and privacy in comparison to younger voluntourists.

## How much time do voluntourists want to devote to volunteering?

### *Respondents want to devote 40-80% of their trip to volunteering*

Survey respondents were asked what portion of their travel experience they would like to devote to volunteering. The largest proportion of respondents stated they wanted to devote 60% of their travel experience to volunteering (32%), while nearly an equal number of respondents stated an interest in devoting more or less than 60% (see Figure 18).

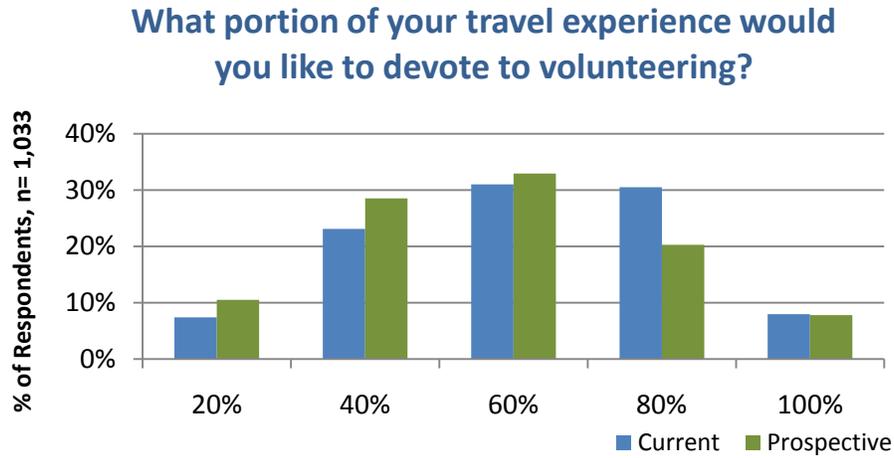
Figure 18



Similar to the length of time respondents would be willing to travel abroad, current voluntourists wanted to devote a higher percentage of time to volunteering in relation to prospective voluntourists ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Current voluntourists were split between devoting 60% or 80% of their travel experience to volunteering (31% for both). On the other hand, only 20% of prospective

voluntourists stated they wanted to spend 80% of their travel experience volunteering (see Figure 19).

Figure 19



How many hours per day do voluntourists want to volunteer for?

*Voluntourists want to volunteer more hours per day as opposed to less*

Survey respondents were asked how many hours of volunteering they would be willing to do per day. Most of the respondents (82%) were interested in volunteering 4 hours a day or more, with 4 to 6 hours per day being the most popular (41% of respondents) (see Figure 20).

Figure 20



Although most respondents stated 4 to 6 hours of volunteering per day as the ideal amount, there were some interesting differences between current and prospective voluntourists. In particular, current voluntourists indicated an interest in volunteering more hours per day than prospective voluntourists ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Males and females also differed with males being more likely than females to want to volunteer 6 or more hours per day ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .05$ ). These results continue the trend seen throughout this report which indicates that current voluntourists want to travel for longer, devote a higher portion of their trip to volunteering and want to volunteer more hours per day than prospective voluntourists.

## How much do voluntourists want to spend on their volunteer vacation?

### *Voluntourists want affordability*

Although many voluntourists were interested in travelling abroad for over a month, they wanted it to be affordable. Most of the respondents (70%) indicated that they wanted to spend less than \$1500 on their voluntourism experience. Additionally, only 15% of respondents would pay over \$2000 (see Figure 21).

*"I would go either in the morning or afternoon and volunteer for them [local residents] until lunchtime. If there's still work to do in the afternoon then I will work with them...whatever they need"*

- IDI, Prospective, China

*"Lower cost: If I'm volunteering for you, maybe you should give me either accommodation or food or some kind of other type of service"*

- IDI, Prospective, China

Figure 21



Although both males and females seemed to be skewed towards the lower price range, there are some important differences between genders. In particular, about 70% of females would pay from \$500 to \$1999 for their volunteer vacation as opposed to 58% of males. This difference became non-existent after \$2000 as neither group wanted to pay any more for their volunteer vacation.

In addition to gender, age also dictated determining the amount voluntourists were willing to pay. In particular, respondents age 20-29 wanted the cheapest price: 80% of them indicated they wanted to pay less than \$1500 for their volunteer vacation ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This is significant as this age cohort makes up 33% of respondents and is the fastest growing group of voluntourists.

## Choosing a Travel Company

### How do voluntourists choose a volunteer travel company?

*Voluntourists use experience & reputation of the company, price of the trip, and knowledge of where their money is going to choose a volunteer travel company*

Survey respondents were asked what factors were important to them when choosing a volunteer travel company. Respondents indicated that all factors were at least somewhat important with over 90% of respondents agreeing that the experience & reputation of the company along with the price of the trip were the most important factors. The least important factors were travel agency recommendations (43%) and family volunteer options (39%) (see Figure 22).

*"I liked that we saw where all our money was going"*

*- IDI, Current, Canada*

Figure 22: Important Factors that Affect the Choice of a Travel Company

Most Important	In the Middle	Least Important
Experience	Company website	Variety of travel destinations
Reputation	Variety of program options	Promotions and sales offered
Price of the trip		Family volunteer options
Knowing where your money is going		Travel agency recommendations

*"I look at companies that everyone knows"*

*- IDI, Prospective, Croatia*

Although current and prospective voluntourists agreed that most factors were important in selecting a volunteer travel company, prospective voluntourists rated almost all factors as more important. Current and prospective voluntourists had different opinions on factors 'travel agency recommendations' (current: 36%, prospective: 47%), 'variety of travel destinations' (current: 65%, prospective: 76%), 'variety of program options' (current: 74%, prospective: 86%), and 'promotions and sales offered' (current: 56%, prospective: 48%) ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Females and males generally agreed on the importance of most factors although females stated more factors as important. Females believed the factors 'reputation of the company' (female: 93%, male: 87%), 'price of the trip' (female: 93%, male: 84%), and 'knowing where your money is going' (female: 91%, male: 85%) were more important than males ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The exception was the factor 'family volunteer options' where 50% of men indicated it as important in comparison to 32% of females ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Respondents in different age categories reported different levels of importance for some of the factors for choosing a travel company. The importance of 'reputation' increased as respondents were older ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Interestingly, the 'company website', 'travel agency recommendations,' and 'promotions and sales offered', decreased in importance the older the respondents were ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .05$ ), with the exception of respondents 60+ who viewed 'company website' and 'promotions and sales offered' as more important than respondents who were 40 to 59.

Similar to the other demographic differences, the region a respondent resided in influenced what factors were important when choosing a travel company. Respondents from Asia and Africa were different than other regions and rated the following factors significantly higher than other regions: 'travel

recommendations' (Asia: 67%, Africa: 65%), 'promotions and sales offered' (Asia: 71%, Africa: 69%), and 'family volunteer options' (Asia: 64%, Africa: 62%).

Respondents from Europe also showed differences and rated 'variety of travel destinations and 'variety of program options,' lower than the other regions with 61% and 74% importance, respectively ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

## Satisfaction

How do voluntourists feel about their voluntourism experiences?

*Current voluntourists would recommend a volunteer vacation and would likely go again*

In an effort to examine respondents' satisfaction with their previous voluntourism experiences, current voluntourists were asked if they

*"When you do volunteer work, when you come back, you have something more in your heart"*  
- IDI, Current, Italy

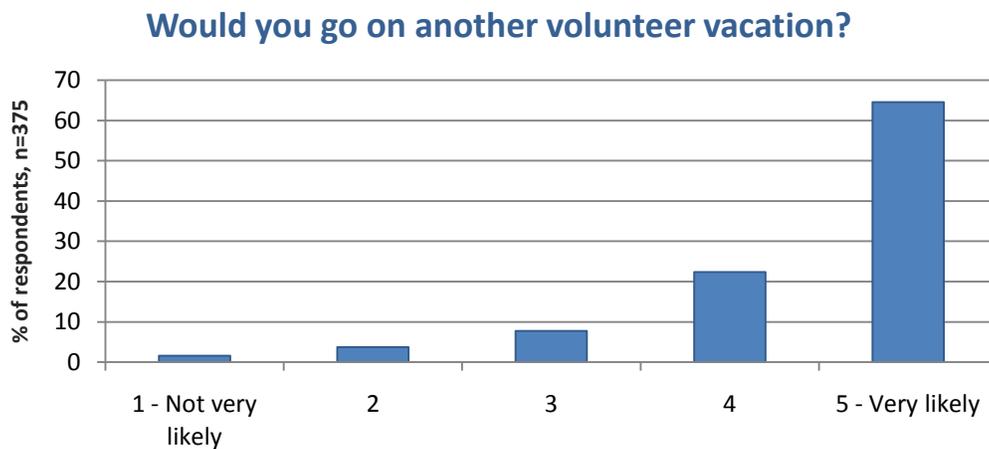
would recommend a volunteer vacation to a friend on a scale from 1 (not very likely) to 5 (very likely). Over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of respondents (82%) stated they would likely recommend a volunteer vacation to a friend. Out of these current voluntourists, only 1% stated they were not very likely to recommend a volunteer vacation (see Figure 23). These results are important in society today since word of mouth has become increasingly relied upon and can be especially influential in the travel and tourism industry (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008).

Figure 23



Using the same five point scale, current voluntourists were asked whether they would go on another volunteer vacation. Once again, the large majority (87%) indicated that they would likely go again with only 2% being not very likely to go on another volunteer vacation (see *Figure 24*). Overall, not only do current voluntourists want to go on another volunteer vacation in the future, but previous findings indicate that they want to go for longer (pg 31).

*Figure 24*



# Conclusions

## The Four Types of Respondents

Determining the four types of voluntourists was integral to understanding what motivates people to volunteer while on vacation. Not everyone is motivated by the same ideas or interests which is evident in the noticeable differences between the altruistic volunteer and the adventure tourist. Furthermore, linking demographic information to each of these types of respondents helped develop a more comprehensive understanding of voluntourists.

## Engagement

Voluntourism is a highly engaging topic for both current and prospective voluntourists. These people are willing to work in almost every region of the world and share a common interest for environmental conservation, community tourism projects and community development. However, current voluntourists differ from prospective voluntourists in that they are willing to travel for longer periods of time, devote a higher percentage of their trip to volunteering, and volunteer more hours per day. This engagement is exemplified from the fact that 87% of current voluntourists indicated an interest in going on another volunteer vacation. These same respondents were eager to share their travel experiences as 51% of current volunteers indicated an interest in talking about their previous experiences in an interview scenario.

## Respondent Profile

Survey respondents tended to be younger (20-39) and from all over the world. These respondents were also highly educated and avid travellers with 1/3 indicating that they have been on five or more international vacations within the last five years. The large majority were either single (39%) or married (34%).

# Recommendations

Provide a range of volunteering options and packages that target the four types of voluntourists

The four types of voluntourists, 'the altruistic volunteer', 'the local volunteer', 'the definitive voluntourist', and 'the adventure tourist', were defined by their different motivations. Designing a variety of volunteer vacations with these differences in mind would ensure client satisfaction.

## One size does not fit all

Respondents in different age groups and different regions had different motivations and expectations in terms of duration of experiences, types of projects, regions to volunteer in, and accommodation styles. Providing a variety of types of volunteer vacations that satisfy these differences will ensure there is a trip for every voluntourist.

## Utilizing voluntourists engagement

Voluntourists are very engaged and keen to talk about their experiences. Finding ways to capture these voluntourists' personal experiences as marketing strategies could be very effective and efficient due to their positive reflections of their vacations and willingness to talk about it.

## Clarity of where voluntourists' money is going

Respondents stated that one of the most important factors for choosing a travel company was knowing where their money was going. The breakdown of the trip cost should be clear so voluntourists feel comfortable and willing to spend the necessary money to embark on a volunteer vacation.

# Future Research Considerations

## Seek to understand baby boomers

Additional quantitative and qualitative research should examine and explore the motivations, expectations, and satisfaction of current and prospective baby boom voluntourists. Baby boomers, particularly in Canada and the United States, represent a large segment of the market as their population continues to swell into the 60+ age cohort. With greater numbers of retirees, this cohort typically has more discretionary income and time to volunteer abroad. This represents an opportunity to develop key insight into a future market segment.

## Further qualitative analysis needed across additional age cohorts

In this study, qualitative research and analysis was conducted on prospective and current voluntourists aged 20 to 29. Future research utilizing the same qualitative methodology should explore the motivations, expectations and satisfaction of the other age cohorts, specifically aged 30 and over. The Skype tool is still relevant in this methodology with older participants, as it can be used to dial international telephone numbers, and not just other Skype accounts. This would effectively supplement the profile data used to effectively reach age sensitive market segments.

## Similarities and differences between the four profiles of voluntourists

Future research should further analyze similarities and differences between the four profiles created in this study through factor analysis. In this study, the four major profiles were examined against the demographics of respondents. To gain further insight, quantitative analysis against preferences, expectations, satisfactions, and motivations would further differentiate these four groups. This would further build a comprehensive profile for market segmentation.

## Community aspect of the internet

The IDI's conducted in our study suggest that both prospective and current voluntourists have a high level of engagement and an eagerness to share their past experiences. A qualitative methodology utilizing online forums designed to monitor their expectations and motivations can explore on-going and developing trends amongst market segments, as well as refine profile research.

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