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Activating the diaspora: engagement and satisfaction amongst philanthropic transient volunteer tourists

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1. Introduction

This study develops understanding of diasporic volunteers who travel for the purpose of fundraising and other supporting roles (excluding service delivery), and seek to contribute positively to social welfare in their homeland. Such volunteers are defined as philanthropic transient volunteer tourists. In support of fulfilling the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNWTO 2015) the hospitality industry has a responsibility to accommodate this nuanced category of volunteer and enhance their engagement and satisfaction. Unravelling the consequences of responsible engagement and its impact for the tourism and hospitality industry, this study draws on Erikson's psychological stage theory (Fyffe and Wister, 2016; Erikson, 1994), and questions the relevance of nonprofit brand heritage, generativity, *communitas*, and work engagement in relation to stimulating philanthropic transient volunteer tourists' satisfaction with life (SWL).

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

This research anchors itself on both Erikson's (1994) psychological stage theory, and McAdams and de St Aubin's (1992) contribution to generativity towards examination of links between motivations to volunteer (brand heritage, generativity, and *communitas*) with work engagement and SWL. Consequently, this study responds to calls for evaluation of branding, work engagement, and satisfaction in volunteering contexts (Harp, Scherer, and Allen, 2016; Vecina et al., 2011). Considered a generative activity (Fyffe and Wister, 2016; Son and Wilson, 2011), volunteering manifests as "interest in establishing and guiding the next generation" (Erikson, 1994, p.104). Volunteering is also noted to be "an opportunity to contribute to nationalistic pride and enhance levels of social capital" (Fyffe and Wister 2016, p.640), highlighting its important social role, as well its interactive elements, and broader benefit to society (Wells *et al.*, 2016).

This research expands on prior understanding of brand heritage, work engagement, and satisfaction by considering their relationships in a homeland tourism and hospitality

context and incorporating investigation of additional factors with potential to enhance their interplay, and ultimately develop insight that can further enable transient volunteer tourist activity (Harp *et al.*, 2016; Vecina *et al.*, 2011; Wiedmann *et al.*, 2011). In relation to diaspora engagement (Abramson, 2017), the literature suggests concern for future generations and social cohesion can have a positive effect on engagement and personal satisfaction (McGinnis, Gentry, and Gao 2008; Wells *et al.*, 2016). Generativity involves “motivations for engaging in community development, including volunteer activities” (Fyffe and Wister, 2016, p.639). Volunteering in charity organizations enables the establishment of networks and relationships, engendering a sense of purpose which strengthens in tandem with improving well-being (Fyffe and Wister, 2016). Building on Erikson’s psychological stage theory, the role of brand heritage, generativity, communitas, and work engagement is considered in relation to promoting philanthropic transient volunteer tourists’ SWL. The theoretical developed from the literature and hypotheses are presented in **Figure 1**.

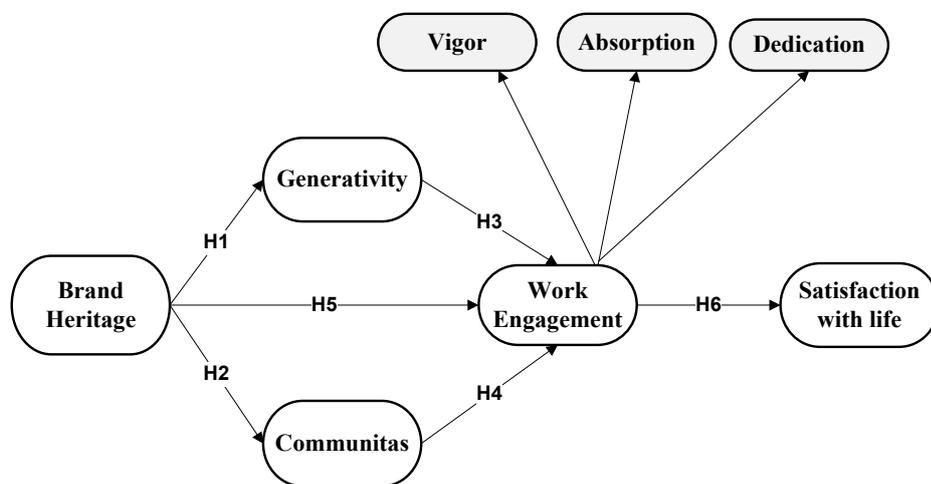


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

This study considers brand heritage; “a dimension of a brand’s identity found in its track record, longevity, core values, use of symbols, and the organizational belief that its history is important” (Urde, Greyser, and Balmer 2007, p.4). Brand heritage stimulates

reassurance, credibility, and trust (Mort *et al.*, 2007), leading to increasing engagement and satisfaction in volunteers (Curran *et al.*, 2016).

Generativity relates to an individual's desire to contribute to society to benefit future generations (Fyffe and Wister, 2016; Wells *et al.*, 2016). Generativity can occur on a broad spectrum of forms such as volunteering (de Espanés, Villar, Urrutia, and Serrat, 2015; McAdams and Logan, 2004; McAdams and de St Aubin, 1992).

Communitas generates experientially associated feelings of high-value and sacredness promoting positive, sustained relationships between those affected by it (Celsi, Rose, and Leigh, 1993), transcending social class, and professional background (McGinnis *et al.*, 2008 p.76).

Branding can stimulate volunteers to align personal values with organizations they support (Wiedmann *et al.*, 2011). Through its emphasis on organizational history, strong nonprofit brand heritage could enhance feelings of togetherness and communitas among volunteers (McGinnis *et al.*, 2012; Wiedmann *et al.*, 2011).

Work engagement is particularly important in the hospitality industry (Babakus, Yavas and Karatepe, 2017), and comprises of three elements; vigor (energetic attitude), absorption (immersion and focus), and dedication (support of the organization). It is operationalized in this study as a higher-order construct, comprising of the aforementioned three elements (Vecina *et al.*, 2011).

Generativity is suggested to influence individuals' employment choices encouraging them to enhance benefit for others (McAdams and de St. Aubin, 1992), serving as an antecedent for volunteering (Stukas, Snyder and Clary, 2016).

SWL is considered to be a cognitive self-evaluation (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin, 1985). It relates to a sense of fulfillment derived from everyday life, and individuals' attitudes to reflecting on their achievements in a fulfilling way.

Derived from the literature, this study hypothesizes:

H1: *Brand heritage positively influences generativity.*

H2: *Brand heritage positively influences communitas.*

H3: *Generativity positively influences work engagement.*

H4: *Communitas positively influences work engagement.*

H5: *Brand heritage positively influences work engagement.*

H6: *Work engagement positively influences SWL.*

3. Research Methodology

Testing the hypotheses, a mail survey of volunteers was conducted in an Iranian nonprofit organization. In this charity, philanthropic transient volunteers perform trustee and ambassadorial roles which require extensive travel as part of fundraising efforts for the charity and its causes. Each respondent holds dual-nationality with Iran and a host country, sharing common desires to work to the benefit of their homeland. As part of their travel, such individuals' have regular contact with different sectors of the hospitality industry.

By engaging frequently with the hospitality industry and fundraising and networking for the charity's benefit, these individuals' meet our newly developed definition of philanthropic transient volunteer tourism. All identifiable information has been anonymized. Surveys were sent to all members of the charity (378) with 292 returned, giving a response rate of 77% (Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson, 2010).

Analytical technique

Partial least squares (PLS) was used as the method of analysis in this research, it is noted as appropriate for early-stage theory building with constructs that have not received detailed empirical attention (Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2017).

4. Main Findings

Derived from the PLS analysis, the following results illustrate that brand heritage has a positive influence on generativity ($\beta=0.799$, $t=65.014$), supporting H1. Brand heritage has a positive relationship with *communitas* ($\beta=0.401$, $t=7.030$), supporting H2. Additionally, generativity positively affects work engagement ($\beta=0.321$, $t=3.006$), supporting H3. *communitas* has a positive impact on work engagement ($\beta=0.229$, $t=3.386$), supporting H4. Brand heritage is found to not significantly influence work engagement ($\beta=0.107$, $t=1.304$), rejecting H5. Work engagement positively influences SWL ($\beta=0.667$, $t=19.268$), thus supporting H6.

5. Conclusions

Philanthropic transient volunteers are suggested to be individuals travelling for the purpose of fundraising or related charitable roles (excluding service delivery), with a shared motivation to work to benefit their homeland. The conceptual framework developed in this research consolidated brand heritage, generativity, and *communitas*, which together serve as predicting factors for positive work engagement, leading to preferred working environments for philanthropic transient volunteers by enhancing SWL. Through highlighting antecedent factors for transient volunteer tourist engagement and SWL, this study also offers guidance to the hospitality industry, encouraging it to better facilitate activities of transient volunteer tourists (i.e. enhancing brand heritage, generativity, *communitas*, engagement, and SWL).

Additionally, this study recommends nonprofits engage in practices that strengthen brand heritage given the importance of the concept highlighted by the findings and its ability to promote *communitas* and generativity among volunteers. With hospitality's role in

philanthropic transient volunteer tourism, hospitality actors could also benefit through considering how their organization's brand heritage could stimulate communitas and generativity for volunteers by offering appropriate experiences, potentially as part of their CSR programmes.

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