

## IMPACTS OF LEISURE TRAVELS ON INDIVIDUALS

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### ABSTRACT

This study discusses the impacts of leisure travels on individuals which is developed based on a qualitative study using a combination of qualitative survey, and in-depth interviews conducted to people who have traveled both domestic and/or international more than once. In general, travels effect individuals constructively in which leisure travel significantly impacts individuals' personal growth majoring in cognitive and affective domains; the expressions made such as to broaden life perspectives and way of thinking, promote an open mind, increase knowledge and wisdom. Change and personal growth occur by means of learning by which travels contribute and facilitate this process of individual development. Learning happens through experiences; travels facilitate opportunities to be away from the mundane, insert the element of dynamic, surprise and beyond expectation; thus, enable individuals to see matters more objectively beyond one's habits and traditions. As to how far thoughts, attitudes and actions are in concurrence is yet another research topic to investigate. Nonetheless, leisure travel is encouraged as a means of indulging in an intelligent leisure.

Key words: tourism impacts, travelers, individuals, leisure travels, personal developments

### INTRODUCTION

Travels nowadays have become rudimentary for the majority of people around the globe; these comprise travels within a country or overseas. These travels could include MICE (Meeting Incentive Convention and Exhibition), VFR (Visiting Friend and Relative), business, or pure leisure related. However, for the purpose of this research only 'leisure travel' is considered. Despite of mounting issues faced by travellers starting from instable political situation, infectious diseases, and economic crisis; still the international travel trend shows significant increase. The pulled and pushed factors strongly motivate individuals to travel (Foster, D. 1985). Apart from motivation, it is interesting to view travels especially individual travels from different perspective, this for example the personal impact of travels on individual. Tourism impacts are measured through 3 dimensions which include: economic, socio-cultural and environment

(UNWTO, 2013); upon which studies on impact assessment of tourism development and destinations are commonly concentrated. This study takes its focus on the impact assessment of individual travel at personal level of the travelers. An attempt to shed light on the effects of such an activity to strive for by the majority. This urge from individuals to travel that creates demands in the industry and thus make tourism one of the biggest industries; the World Tourism Organization (WTO) predicts, there will be 1.8 billion of international travels in 2030 (UNWTO, 2014).

Only few studies that have been conducted on impacts of travels on individuals. These for example, Tingting and McKercher (2016) studied on the returned journey made by American and Canadian having Chinese background. Zimmermann and Neyer (2013) study the impact of travels by comparing young people who travel abroad with those who do not travel on the Big Five dimensions of personality, and discover there are significant differences between the two sample groups. This study focuses on the impacts, particularly the favorable impacts felt by individuals which caused by the travels, thus make a person to continue to travel as a part of a life routine.

Tourism impact is measured in many ways. Since the unfavorable impact of mass tourism became an enormous issue in the 1970s (United Nations General Assembly, 1987; Munt, 1994; Jason 1997; Hall, 2008), the search for a more sustainable model of tourism intensified; thus, the promotion of 'alternative tourism' (Eadington & Smith, 1992). Subsequently, United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) identifies sustainable tourism as 'Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities' (UNWTO, 2013, p. 1). Academics posit criteria of sustainability in tourism and develop instrument in measuring tourism. Weaver (2006) points out seven differentiating features that characterize alternative tourism, which include: market, attraction, business and accommodation, spatial, economic, and lastly regulation. Koster and Randall (2005) study the performance of tourism development, and examine its goals either to beautify the area or to pursue economic goals using eleven indicators involving heavily mainly the community and its surroundings. Travel related behaviour and activities certainly have

an effect on individuals as found in research conducted by Tingting and McKercher (2016). They find that because of these effects many tourists make many return journeys back to their homeland to gather more knowledge and understanding of their quest. However, this particular research focuses mainly on Chinese diaspora tourists living around North America and Canada. Studies on tourism impacts are commonly conducted on tourist destinations; yet few academic articles are available on impacts of travels on individuals as the subject of the activity.

Markman (2013) argues that personality reflects long-term goals tried to achieve by people, and summaries the “Big Five” of personality dimensions, which include: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, and Emotional Stability. It is further explained that personality is influenced by a combination of genetic/biological factors and experiences related to the individual goals. The experiences need to occur over a period of time in order to create an impact on one’s personality.

On the other hand, Bloom et al. (1956) postulate 3 domains in which learning is achieved, among those: knowledge-based, affective-based, and skill-based. Nonetheless, a learning is fully attained with the completion of the three domains: cognitive, affective; and it ends with the performance and the practice of the knowledge within the sphere of a particular set of traits. Therefore, the ultimate learning gained from travels is fully accomplished when a ‘conduct’ could be demonstrated at psychomotoric level. In other words, travels could change an individual at behavioral level, which is according to psychologists within the ‘Big Five’ of personality dimensions (Markman, 2013).

## **METHODOLOGY**

Psychologists assess personal development within the “Big Five” of personality dimensions, which include: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, and Emotional Stability (Markman, 2013). Nonetheless, this research takes a practical approach emphasizing the relation between learning point

obtained from travel and its impacts to their personal development, fundamentally, how travels practically influence individual. Four questions on leisure tourism were asked to respondents. The questions include: 1) What do you enjoy most about the leisure aspect of your travel? 2) The one that you look for the most in your travel, 3) How does traveling affect/impact you personally? 4) What are the learning points do you get from conducting travels for leisure?

Qualitative studies serve better when the research is at its exploration stage (Gratton and Jones 2007); whilst, according to Miles and Huberman (1994) interviews especially provide insightful information to enrich the case. These characteristics suit the purpose of this study. This research is developed based on a qualitative study using a combination of qualitative survey conducted through email, and in-depth interview as data collecting methods that are conducted to well-travelled people. A total of 42 respondents were involved in the study, the face to face in-depth interviews were used to gather more detail data, wherein the data collection was terminated when there was little additional new data was gathered from the respondents. Subsequently, data were tabulated and classified based on the themes emerged, and lastly interpreted and inferences were drawn.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

From the primary data, some themes identified. The traveling purpose was narrow down to leisure travel: what the travellers enjoy most ranging from enjoying nature and experiencing local cultures; something unique to the place something different from home. These could be the encounters with people, people hospitality and kindness, the food, the traditions; and the aspects of nature such as the weather and temperature, the snow, the view. The impacts could be felt and pervaded immediately in the tourist sites or condensed upon the pondering of a done - travel. A rather strange opinion was expressed: the enjoyment comes from observing on how the tourist products or services were delivered. The traveller did not actually focus on the service being provided, rather observing the person who delivered the products, the

professionalism of human resources supporting tourism industry that was found distinctive in every place. From this observation, an internalisation could happen within the individual traveller which could advance further and influence his/her professionalism; voicing the do and the don't when delivering services to customers, that lead to the provision of quality products.

The response of the respondents is positive in majority, which indicates travels effect individual favourably. Markman (2013) argues these changes in personality were related to changes in people's social networks as a result of travel. Nonetheless, there was no expression made regarding travel effects at the level of action. This might indicate that travels effect individuals' personal growth, majoring in cognitive and affective domains, the expression made such as broaden the perspective of life and way of thinking increase knowledge and wisdom, and promote an open mind.

Often, change within individual occurs firstly by means of learning: knowing and understanding contribute and smoothen the process of individual development. Learning occurs through experience creates a deep impact on individual; similarly, experiencing difference environment and culture during travel leave an enduring memory. Challenges faced during travels and the process of overcoming the challenges force an individual to step beyond the comfort zone, thus, individuals' capacity and capability expanded.

Travels also provide an opportunity to be away from the mundane, inserting the element of dynamic, surprise and beyond expectation. Routine and habits could easily turn people into a robot, sometimes losing perspective on a higher life purpose, for some these could result in boredom and lethargic. Travel could place everything into a new perspective, knowing there is no one way of doing something; happiness could be attained through many ways, and the way people reach this state could be in many ways regardless of the cost assumed. At this stage, a returned traveller could question a tradition which leads to the refinement even change of a tradition, the ones that are not relevant could be left behind or changed. This is beyond individual borderline; thus, change in individuals triggered by travelling could affect society in a wider scope. Nonetheless, learning and enlightenment could occur through internalising, comparing,

pondering which lead to a solution to problems or a higher appreciation to the current conditions.

One of the triggers of the unstoppable tourist booming is the emergence of industrial and automation era; the industrial era brought about ease of life and economic prosperity (Egmond, 2007). Nonetheless, people feel losing their connectedness and authenticity (Cohen, 1988; Steiner, & Reisinger, 2006; Cohen, 2012). Ernawati et al. (2017, p. 12110) discuss about authenticity wherein 'modern people feeling alienated within their own modern environment, therefore travel in quest for authenticity'. This phenomenon continues, and nowadays humanity faces another social issue; one of the respondents in this research highlights this issue which is rooted from the adoption of automation in life, even though it could be verified that automation has solved a bigger problem of people living on this planet which are hardship and difficult life. Subsequently people around the globe are left with ample of free time. One of the research participants expressed leisure travel is being use as a way to undertake an intelligent leisure. This respondent further explained about people excessively going to pubs or spending too much of their time in front of the television sets, and suggests to channel their energy for 'intelligent leisure'. Engaging in leisure activities such as traveling is particularly recommended in order to cultivating one's wellbeing. Leisure travel is one of the ways to engage in intelligent leisure. Intelligent leisure could involve knowing and learning about other's culture, behaviour, and tacit knowledge. This suggests that spending time by doing intelligent leisure could be fulfilling and support personal development leading to a more contended life. It could become an essential part of maintaining human wellbeing, thus, becomes a better person in today's high-tech and multicultural society we live in.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

It could be concluded that the effect of traveling felt by traveller majoring in positive way. In general, the respondents replied the survey questions directly and automatically in favourable way. Travel impacts individuals' personal growth, majoring in cognitive and affective domains; the expression made such as to broaden the

perspective of life as well as way of thinking, increase knowledge and wisdom, promote an open mind. Often, change and personal growth occur by means of learning, knowing and understanding which create a passage and smoothen the process of individual development. Learning happens through experiences; travels facilitate an opportunity to be away from the mundane, allow to see matters more objectively beyond habit, and insert the element of dynamic, surprise and beyond expectation. Leisure travel is recommended to be used as a means of undertaking and achieving intelligent leisure. Even though, the impact of travels majorly discussed was within the two domains of cognitive and affective levels, the ultimate level of behaviour in the form of action is yet needed to be further studied. Hence, further research could also be conducted to go beyond leisure travellers.

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