



Beyond Good Intentions

Workaway Volunteer Experiences at Krämars Farm

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Abstract:

This qualitative study investigates the motivations, experiences, and reflections of Workaway volunteers at Krämars Organic Farm in Inkoo, Finland, between 2016 and 2022. Semi-structured interviews were conducted online to gather rich data from volunteers engaged in volunteer work. By employing a deductive thematic analysis, the study identified patterns and themes within the dataset derived through motivation theory and existing literature on volunteer tourism. These findings reveal diverse motivations driving individuals to participate in volunteer tourism, including a desire for authentic cultural immersion, personal development, and a sense of purpose. Volunteers' experiences at Krämars Farm are characterized by a sense of belonging, genuine connections with the host family and local community, and opportunities for skill development and learning.

The study contributes to a deeper understanding of volunteer tourism dynamics, particularly within the context of travel motivations and sustainable exploration. Limitations include sample size constraints and potential biases in self-reported experiences. Suggestions for further research are provided.

Keywords: Volunteer tourism, Workaway, Motivations, Experiences, Thematic analysis, Sustainable travel, Impacts.

Lärdomsprov

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Beyond Good Intentions: Workaway Motivations and Experiences at Krämars Farm.

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Sammandrag:

Denna kvalitativa studie undersöker motivationer, erfarenheter och reflektioner hos Workaway-volontärer på den ekologiska lantgården Krämars i Ingå, Finland, mellan 2016 och 2022. Semistrukturerade intervjuer genomfördes online för att samla in data från volontärer som engagerat sig i frivilligt arbete. Genom en deduktiv tematisk analys möjliggjordes identifieringen av mönster och teman som grundar sig i motivations teori och befintlig litteratur inom volontärturism. Resultatet visar en variation inom motivationerna som driver individer att delta i volontärturism, inklusive förväntning om att fördjupa sig i autentisk kultur, personlig utveckling och en känsla av meningsfullhet.

Volontärernas upplevelser på Krämars präglas av en känsla av tillhörighet, genuina kopplingar med värdfamiljen och det lokala samhället samt möjligheter till kompetensutveckling och ny kunskap.

Studien bidrar till en djupare förståelse för volontärturismens dynamik, särskilt inom ramen för resemotivationer och hållbart utforskande. Begränsningar inkluderar urvalsstorlek och potentiell partiskhet gällande självrapporterade erfarenheter. Förslag till mer läsning har försetts.

Nyckelord: Volontärturism, Workaway, Motivationer, Erfarenheter, Tematisk analys, Hållbar turism, Effekter.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Volunteer tourism, or voluntourism for short, is an exciting and rapidly growing niche in the tourism industry that combines the desire to give back with the spirit of adventure (Mostafanezhad, 2016; Mustonen, 2007). Workaway, a prominent platform fostering an exceptional symbiotic relationship between travelers and hosts, has gained recognition for its inclusive, community-based model that encourages direct communication and local involvement (Dixon, 2016; Milne et al., 2018).

A noteworthy host within the Workaway community is Krämars, an organic farm in Inkoo, southern Finland. Since 2016, Krämars has actively participated in the Workaway program, offering a unique setting for volunteers to engage with the native culture. This farm exemplifies the spirit of voluntourism, creating an environment where contributions are initiated and wholeheartedly supported by the local community, which shows in the positive feedback left by numerous workaway volunteers. (Långstedt, 2016)

One of the main attractions of voluntourism is the opportunity to trade work hours for free accommodation, making it particularly appealing for budget-conscious, altruistic-driven young travelers. Workaway states clearly on their website that part of their mission is “Building a sharing community of global travelers who genuinely want to see the world whilst contributing and giving back to the places they visit”. In fact, the popularity of this concept is also evident in a 2016 Guardian article titled "How to escape: tips and sites for working or volunteering abroad", where Workaway.info received commendations alongside other similar programs. (Dixon, 2016)

This study aims to provide insights into volunteer tourism based on workaway volunteer experiences at Krämars Organic Farm.

1.1 Problem statement

The surge in popularity of volunteer tourism, a global industry worth billions and one of the biggest and fastest growing niches within travel, has encouraged a need for

exploration into its positive social and economic potential. (Bansal, 2021; Mostafanezhad, 2016).

As the global interest in volunteer tourism grows, Krämars Organic Farm recognizes the need to investigate the experiences and motivations of its volunteer workers but has not undertaken any prior research on this matter.

The research questions that will be guiding this study:

1. What motivated Workaway volunteers on Krämars to become volunteer tourists?

By examining the key factors that shape and influence the motivations and experiences of Workaway volunteers, this study aims to provide insights that are not only specific to the case but also generalizable to broader volunteer tourism contexts.

1.2 Aim of the study

The overall aim of this study is to investigate and analyze the motivations and experiences of former Workaway volunteers at Krämars farm.

1.3 Demarcation

The scope of this research deliberately excludes a large section of the volunteer tourism industry, namely religious voluntourism, au pair programs, and educational exchange services, to concentrate on the distinctive dynamics of Krämars from a Workaway volunteer perspective. This focused approach ensures a detailed and specific analysis of motivations, experiences, and impacts within the context of this specific Workaway host, providing unique insights into the Nordic voluntourism landscape.

1.4 Definitions

Volunteer Tourism: Volunteer tourism, also known as voluntourism, refers to the practice of individuals traveling to destinations to participate in voluntary work while also engaging in tourism activities. Participants typically contribute their time and skills to support community-based projects, environmental conservation efforts, or social development initiatives in the host community.

Workaway Volunteers: Workaway volunteers are individuals who participate in the Workaway program, a cultural exchange platform that connects travelers with hosts offering accommodation and meals in exchange for volunteer work. Workaway volunteers engage in a variety of tasks in diverse locations worldwide in exchange for lodging.

Krämars Organic Farm: Krämars Organic Farm is a sustainable agriculture enterprise located in Inkoo, Finland. The farm hosts Workaway volunteers who contribute to various farm activities while experiencing the Finnish countryside.

Semi-Structured Interviews: Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative research method characterized by a flexible question format that allows for in-depth exploration of topics while still providing a framework for consistency across interviews. Interviewers typically have a set of predetermined questions but also have the freedom to probe and follow up on responses to gather rich, detailed data.

Thematic Analysis: Thematic analysis is a method of qualitative data analysis used to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within data. This approach involves systematically coding and categorizing data to uncover key insights and understandings.

1.5 Krämars

Krämars is an organic farm located in Inkoo, southern Finland that specializes in regenerative agriculture and permaculture. Operated by the same family since the 1830s, the farm covers approximately 90 hectares of crops and received WWF's honorary award

in 2019 for its protection zones, two sedimentation basins and its species-rich catch crops (Witting, 2019).

The farm has recently incorporated a greenhouse and a "forest garden," showcasing further commitment to biodiversity and ecological balance. In addition to the agronomy, the farm hosts a summer café named "Ivan och Alexander," a tribute to two Russian prisoners of war captured during the Continuation War that were held hostage on the farm, and a tiny free-range chicken coop where the produce is primarily for on-farm consumption.

This versatile operation has been an active participant in the Workaway program since 2016, providing a unique setting for volunteers to engage with the local culture. Krämars exemplifies the spirit of voluntourism, fostering an authentic environment where the local community not only initiates but also wholeheartedly supports volunteer contributions.

2 Volunteer Tourism

Numerous studies have explored the phenomenon of volunteer tourism, providing valuable insights into the motivations, experiences, and impacts of individuals engaging in this form of travel. Although "Volunteering" lacks a universal definition, the U.N. (2001) lists three fundamental criteria that are often also considered essential: (1) the activity is undertaken of one's own free will, (2) it is unpaid, and (3) it benefits others or serves a community or cause."

The motives and expectations of volunteer tourists exhibit considerable diversity, resulting in regular fluctuations and combinations of purely altruistic and egoistic incentives. The ever-evolving interplay between individual motivations and expectation characteristics in the context of volunteer tourism is a fundamental concept that underscores the dynamic nature of volunteer engagement and its impacts on both volunteers and host communities. By interpreting volunteer tourist motivations as a scale of individuality/sociality and egoism/altruism, researchers and organizers can better understand the diverse motivations behind volunteer tourism, leading to improved program planning and service development that meets the needs of both volunteers and host communities. (Mustonen, 2007)

A notable aspect of the industry that strongly reflects these viewpoints are the marketing practices and ethics of volunteer tourism organizations, specifically the concept of greenwashing. Irresponsible marketing practices often prioritizes the needs and expectations of the customer on the expense of the host community, which has the direct opposite effect of the volunteer's original intention. There are two well documented cases in Finland where workaway hosts have exploited the volunteer work for free labor (Dlaske 2016; Brennan 2018), as highlighted by Ullius (2022). Sustainability in the field of volunteer tourism involves shedding light on all the potential challenges and ethical considerations involved, to ensure that marketing practices align with both the development goals of the host community and the motivations of the volunteer tourists (Mustonen, 2007; Louise Smith & Font, 2014).

While not all volunteer tourism endeavors are intended to be transformative experiences, it is vital not to overlook the significant motivational factors of self-actualization and self-development among volunteer tourists. Magrizos, Kostopoulos, and Powers (2020) identified a three-stage process of self-transformation among volunteer tourists that parallels Campbell's (1988) archetype of the hero's adventure through a pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal phase. Although volunteer tourism has been celebrated for its potential for transformation, not all participants experience this profound change. Significant transformation requires a conscious realization and manifestation of a new identity, often facilitated by powerful experiences and increased involvement with the local community. Two essential conditions—authenticity and immersiveness—are necessary to achieve this. Authenticity refers to the perception of the experience as genuine, while immersiveness indicates applying effort or stepping out of the comfort zone.

In understanding the multifaceted motivations behind volunteer tourism, transitioning into the domain of motivation theory in tourism by shedding light on the fundamental drivers of human behavior in travel contexts, becomes a natural next step.

By further exploring these theories, deeper insights are unlocked into the diverse motivations that drive individuals to engage in various forms of tourism, including volunteer tourism.

2.1 Motivation Theory

A wide range of researchers from diverse fields have extensively investigated the profound impact of motivation on travel, which is widely considered a fundamental pillar of tourism behaviour (Fodness, 1994). The study of travel motivations draws upon insights and methodologies from various academic areas.

Across this domain, an array of academic disciplines contributes to the holistic comprehension of travel motivations, exemplifying the interdisciplinary nature of the field. Disciplines like psychology, social psychology, and anthropology offer invaluable perspectives on the complex factors motivating individuals to embark on journeys and partake in tourism pursuits (Dann, 1981; Šimková, 2014). These insights prove indispensable in guiding strategic decisions within the realm of international business, particularly in the dynamic tourism sector. Here, a nuanced understanding of consumer behavior and motivations serves as a pivotal factor for crafting effective marketing strategies, developing immersive tourism experiences, and promoting sustainable tourism practices (Martini & Buffa, 2020). By combining findings from various disciplinary perspectives, these theories offer relevant insights into the multifaceted motivations forming the foundation of tourist behavior and their impacts within both international business and the volunteer tourism industry.

Phillip Pearce, a distinguished professor at James Cook University in Australia, has proposed a travel motivation pyramid as an extension of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Pearce's adaptation aligns closely with Maslow's conceptualization but tailors it specifically to elucidate the motivations driving travel experiences. (Pearce, 1988)

Pearce's travel motivation pyramid delineates the following tiers:

Physiological needs: Relaxation, food, drink, recreational activities.

Safety and Security: Achieving prestige, experiencing novelty.

Love and Belongingness: Seeking relationships, affection and acceptance.

Self-Esteem: Personal development through cultural, natural, or other activities.

Self-Actualization: The pursuit of happiness and personal fulfillment. (Pearce, 1988)

Fundamentally, motivation theories underscore a critical distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Intrinsic motivations originate from internal desires and values, such as the pursuit of personal fulfillment, self-expression, or curiosity, while extrinsic motivations arise from external incentives or rewards, such as financial gain, recognition, or social approval. (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

Volunteer tourists are motivated by both intrinsic desires for altruism and extrinsic incentives for personal gain, reflecting a blend of internal and external motivations (Mustonen, 2007). This allows individuals the opportunity to engage in meaningful activities that benefit others while simultaneously fulfilling their own desires for adventure and personal development. Ideally, volunteer tourism should serve as a bridge between selfless acts of service and the fulfillment of individual aspirations, creating a mutually beneficial experience for both volunteers and the communities they support (Milne et al., 2018).

In a broader context, this interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations is not limited to volunteer tourism but extends to various aspects of human behavior within both social and economic fields of research. (Benabou & Tirole, 2003)

Workaway employs both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in their marketing efforts. By fostering opportunities for volunteers to immerse themselves in local communities, learn new skills, and create new friendships, Workaway taps into the intrinsic motivation of individuals seeking authentic and transformative travel experiences. In addition to these immersive opportunities, Workaway rewards community members for their achievements through "Workaway Badges" which not only serve as an acknowledgment of active participation and contribution but also provide a sense of recognition and accomplishment to the volunteer. This comprehensive approach motivates users to engage more deeply with the platform and its community, creating a vibrant and active ecosystem of volunteers and hosts. (Workaway Badges, 2021)

Whether it's the altruistic urge to contribute to communities through volunteer tourism or the egoistic desire for adventure and personal growth, motivations shape the way individuals engage with tourism opportunities (Mustonen, 2007). Understanding the interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations is essential for marketers seeking to

effectively promote destinations and create enriching experiences for travelers (Martini & Buffa, 2020).

2.2 Push and Pull motivations in volunteer tourism

Travel motivations can broadly be categorized into push and pull factors. Pull factors, defined as the characteristics of destinations that stimulate motivations to travel, are external and aims to attract tourists to specific destinations by offering unique experiences or attractions. On the other hand, push factors, defined as the desire to travel within an individual and socio-psychological impulses for a journey, originate from within the individual tourist. These include the desire to escape, seek relaxation, or the curiosity to explore and meet new people. In other words, push factors are the motives that drives tourists away from home, while pull factors are the motives that drives tourists towards a destination. (Hall, 2015)

The reasons people travel are typically a combination of motives and needs, influenced by various factors such as social status and life circumstances. Within this framework, Crompton (1979) laid the groundwork by identifying seven push factors, such as escape and exploration among others, and two pull factors: novelty and education. Dann (1981), building upon Crompton's work, emphasized the significance of push and pull factors in motivating tourists.

Dann (1981) argued that during the decision-making process, potential tourists may also consider various "pull" factors that align with their motivational "push" but emphasized that a "pull" factor is not necessarily a required element in the desire to travel.

Push and pull factors play a pivotal role in shaping marketing strategies, especially when enticing tourists to explore different destinations. To effectively lure tourists, businesses conduct surveys to understand their customer base and tailor experiences that foster loyalty towards the destination. This process not only helps identify the strengths of a destination but also highlights areas that may require improvement. (Koljonen, 2020)

Yrjölä's (2016) findings suggest that the predominant "push" motivator in volunteer tourism is the altruistic desire to help, while the primary "pull" motivator is cultural appeal.

3 METHOD

In the realm of social science research, particularly in the exploration of nuanced phenomena like volunteer tourism experiences, researchers often find themselves at a crossroads, having to choose between employing a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approach. Each methodology presents its own set of advantages and limitations, but the choice ultimately depends on the research questions and aim of the study.

3.1 Choice of method

Qualitative methods offer a nuanced understanding of human experiences and behaviours, making them well-suited for exploring complex phenomena in depth by prioritizing understanding over measurement. In the context of this study, which aims to investigate the motivations and experiences of Workaway volunteers at Krämars Organic Farm, a qualitative interview is particularly suitable. Semi-structured interviews allows for open-ended questioning, enabling respondents to share their perspectives, insights, and narratives in their own words. (Bryman & Bell, 2015)

3.2 Respondents

The selection of respondents for this study involves purposive sampling, aiming to recruit individuals who have firsthand experience volunteering at Krämars Organic Farm through the Workaway program. The respondents, identified as Persons A, B, C, and D, were chosen based on their active participation in the program and their willingness to share their experiences:

Respondent	Region	Educational Background	Previous Volunteer Experience
Person A	South America	Degree in Biology	Limited workaway experience
Person B	Europe	Biology, Scientific Journalism	Previous Workaway

Person C	Middle East	Teaching background	Limited volunteer experience
Person D	Europe	Sustainable development	Previous Workaway
Person E	Europe	Art and Education	Previous Workaway
Person F	Europe	Education	Previous Workaway

This description of the respondents includes aspects such as their educational backgrounds, previous volunteer experiences and geographical regions, providing a comprehensive view of the diverse perspectives and motivations which contributed to their engagement with the Workaway program at Krämars Organic Farm.

3.3 Interview guide

The interview guide serves as a systematic tool for conducting semi-structured interviews within qualitative research, enabling the exploration of key topics relevant to the study's research questions. Informed by insights from the literature on volunteer tourism, motivation theory, and thematic analysis, the interview guide was developed to align with the study's theoretical framework and research objectives. It comprises open-ended questions organized into three main categories: Motivation, Experience, and Impact. Each question is designed to encourage detailed responses from participants, enabling a comprehensive understanding of volunteer tourism experiences at Krämars Organic Farm while allowing participants the flexibility to express their perspectives freely. The full list of questions can be found in the appendix (see Appendix 1).

3.4 Research approach

The study was conducted online in Helsinki, Finland, over a period of two weeks from 14.4.2024 to 19.4.2024. A qualitative research design was chosen to explore the motivations and experiences of Workaway volunteers, allowing for in-depth analysis and interpretation of participant perspectives. This approach was deemed appropriate for capturing the nuanced and multifaceted nature of volunteer tourism experiences. All participants have engaged in volunteer work at Krämars Organic Farm for varying durations between the years 2016-2022.

3.5 Analysis of the data

In this section, the methodology used for analyzing the collected data is detailed, ensuring alignment with the study's research questions and objectives. The analytical process draws upon established principles in qualitative research methods to derive meaningful insights from the data.

Prior to analysis, data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews with Workaway volunteers at Krämars Organic Farm. These interviews provided rich qualitative data, capturing the motivations and experiences of participants. The analysis focused on uncovering patterns, themes, and nuances within the dataset, allowing for a deeper understanding of volunteer tourism dynamics.

The analysis approach employed deductive thematic analysis, a method commonly used to identify and interpret patterns or themes within qualitative data which derives from the studies underlying theory.

Thematic analysis does not have a clearly defined set of steps or procedures but offers a structured approach for analyzing themes in qualitative research by providing a way to organize and interpret the data. (Bryman & Bell, 2015)

To test the theoretical validity of this study, a deductive six-phase method introduced by Braun & Clarke (2006) was formulated:

Phase 1: Data Familiarization

The researcher verifies transcript accuracy by simultaneously playing audio recordings and reading transcripts. Relevant interview notes are revisited, and additional observations are noted during transcript review which provides further aid to the analysis.

Phase 2: Initial Coding

A deductive coding approach is used by employing a pre-set coding scheme that derives from the theory. Codes are identified and applied systematically to relevant data segments

which enables prioritization and condensation of the data, keeping the analysis aligned with the research aim.

Phase 3: Theme Identification

Codes are clustered by deductively generating themes based on predetermined literature review findings. Themes reflect coherent patterns in the data and are supported by relevant quotes. A theme table is created to organize main themes and associated quotes:

Main theme	Quote Characteristics
Motivations for Volunteering/Traveling	Reasons behind individuals' decisions to volunteer or travel, exploring their motivations, interests, and goals.
Experiences at Krāmars Farm	Specific activities and interactions encountered during the volunteer experience at Krāmars Farm.
Challenges and Unforeseen Outcomes	Difficulties, unexpected or unintended events faced during the volunteer experience at Krāmars Farm.
Impacts and Reflections	Lasting effects and reflections resulting from the volunteer experience, including personal growth and learning.

Phase 4-5: Theme Review and Refinement

Themes are reviewed against data extracts and the entire dataset to ensure alignment with research questions. Minor adjustments are made to ensure accurate representation of the data.

Phase 6: Report Production

A narrative incorporating themes and excerpts is developed, providing evidence and examples from the data. The final report is then compiled.

3.6 Ethics

It is vital not to overlook the ethical guidelines and responsibilities of any research. Diener and Crandall (1978) lists four main areas to consider in research ethics: Potential harm to participants, lack of informed consent, Invasion of privacy and deception. To ensure the privacy and safety of all participants, a consent form (see appendix 2) has been approved prior to each interview.

4 RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the conducted interviews will be presented and categorized by their respective themes. These results will be presented alongside the researcher's objective insights, providing a comprehensive examination of the data. Furthermore, implications of the findings will be discussed in the following chapter to offer valuable insights for further research and practical applications.

4.1 Motivations of Workaway Volunteers

At the start of each interview, the primary focus was to uncover the motivations driving Workaway volunteers at Krämars Farm. This examination sought to understand personal reasons and experiences that led them to choose volunteer tourism. Participants shared diverse motivations and preconceived expectations prior to their journey:

“About 30 or 25 years ago, while traveling in South America, I encountered an Australian couple in Peru who introduced me to the concept of WWOOFing. They explained how you pay a fee to receive a book of farms to contact by mail. The idea intrigued me, but it wasn't until years later, during a sabbatical year from teaching, that I decided to give it a try. With three young children and the perfect timing, we sold our house, bought a van, and embarked on a journey exploring farms in the northeast” – Person C

“I can't say we had a feeling because you were just like a page on the website, but we were like, OK that can be cool to try this and go and see like with a like real family in Finland.” – Person F

“So my normal process was I had a travel route and I wanted to find this in certain areas and I was coming from Sweden going into Finland and then I would look at the type of work and the reviews. That was kind of the the process that I followed. So umm, I'm pretty sure Krämars had amazing reviews, and rightly so.” – Person D

“When I saw the description of the Workaway opportunity, it immediately caught my attention. I remember Krämars focus on sustainable agriculture and interest in botany. Since I also follow some botanic lessons in Paris, I found it intriguing to discuss how she produces food, including vegetables and wheat, and the approach to sustainable agriculture.” – Person B

The discussion often led to the desire for authentic immersion, as participants expressed a sincere desire to fully immerse themselves in the local culture, lifestyle, and community of Krämars Farm.

"I chose to participate in Workaway because I find it fascinating to discover how people live in their own countries, away from the traditional tourist path. Most of the time, when you visit a foreign country as a tourist, you tend to stick to the famous places and cities, doing the usual tourist activities. But I think that lacks originality and doesn't really show you how the country truly operates, how people feel, and how they live. I prefer the authenticity of experiencing life with locals. It's more genuine, more interesting, and provides a different perspective. While famous places have their historical and cultural significance, I'm more interested in unique experiences that allow me to create genuine memories."
– Person B

"We had wanted to travel for a long time, and the best way we found to do it was through Workaway. We discovered Krämars through the Workaway platform and decided to become volunteers. This was our way of traveling affordably and also of meeting local people, which can be challenging when you're constantly on the road. Workaway offered us the opportunity to build genuine relationships with local people." – Person E

"Personally, it was about discovering the countryside and experiencing the real life of the people. I was intrigued by the country and how its inhabitants live. Before coming to Finland, I even took Finnish classes online to be able to communicate better and immerse myself in the culture." – Person F

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant effect for Person A who was studying biology at the time and was not able to leave Finland after completing a university exchange program in Oulu due to travel restrictions:

"During the COVID pandemic, my lease was ending at the end of May, and my flight back home was scheduled for the end of June. I had planned to go to Germany to study German, as I already had some knowledge of the language from previous studies. However, when COVID hit and borders closed, my flight got delayed, and I found myself facing homelessness as my lease was ending with no plan in place." – Person A

"I'm a biology major and have I always loved like ecology, organic farming and these sort of things" – Person A

4.2 Workaway Volunteer Experiences at Krämars Farm

After exploring the motivations that led individuals to choose volunteer tourism through Workaway, the focus shifted towards understanding the experiences of these volunteers at Krämars Farm. Participants were invited to share their firsthand encounters, highlighting the unique aspects of their stay and interactions with the host family and local environment:

“Everyone at Krämars Farm was very friendly and welcoming, especially the family members. There was one particular aunt who stood out to me because she is a German teacher. When I mentioned that I knew some German, she was excited to converse in the language with me. She even taught me a little, which I found very cool.” – Person A

“We had the opportunity to experience local culture when you're staying with people and doing this kind of work. At the place we stayed, the host wanted to show us around. We visited different cities, she drove us to the train station so we could go to Helsinki, and she suggested places to visit. It was about sharing knowledge and experiences with us.” – Person F

“We had the opportunity to truly immerse ourselves in the daily life of the family. Our interactions with them were constant, from breakfast to dinner. We worked alongside them, sharing experiences and creating bonds. One memorable occasion was Mother's Day, which we celebrated together with a picnic on a nearby mountain overlooking the entire farm” – Person E

Many volunteers described the atmosphere at Krämars as cozy, inclusive, and comfortable, emphasizing the warm and welcoming environment fostered by the host family. They often remarked on the sense of belonging they felt, attributing it to the genuine hospitality and genuine connections formed during their stay.

“Compared to other Workaway experiences I've had, my time at Krämars Farm was truly exceptional. The whole family went out of their way to ensure I had a great time. They took me to various places and made sure I experienced many memorable things. It wasn't just about providing accommodation and food; I felt like a part of their family. They integrated me into their activities, like the Crawfish party.” – Person D

“At Krämars Farm, we had this wonderful dinner with everyone, including my family of five. It felt incredibly familiar, cozy, and heartwarming. Even our morning routines were enjoyable, with interesting tasks that were calm and pleasant.” – Person C

"When you're there, you really feel like you belong in that environment. You start to appreciate every little thing – the air, the sounds, the smells, even the taste of the food. It's all quite different from what I'm used to eating back in France."
– Person C

4.3 Obstacles encountered and unexpected situations

Despite the experiences being mostly positive, there is always room for obstacles and difficulties related to traveling, which in turn directly affects the motivations and experiences of volunteer tourists. Most of the participants did not have any negative remarks concerning Krämars as a workaway host, but instead shared some thoughts on the workaway platform in general from previous experiences:

"Everything about it was truly fantastic and outstanding, especially when compared to other Workaway experiences I've had. The whole family went above and beyond to ensure I had a great time. They took me to various places and made sure I experienced many cool things. It wasn't just about providing accommodation and food; they genuinely cared about making it an enriching experience. It wasn't just a place to sleep and eat, which was sometimes the case"
– Person D

"Yeah, we've had some less-than-ideal experiences on various farms, particularly in Eastern Europe. But for us, it has always felt like we receive more than we can give. With three young kids, we often felt limited in how much we could contribute" – Person C

"The alternative I considered involved a rather eccentric individual engaged in lumberjacking. It was a definite 'hell no' for me; I wasn't going to try that sort of thing, especially not just for food. I've noticed it's quite hit-and-miss. Some places seem promising but may not deliver. I've heard similar stories from my father and others who have volunteered; it's a mixed bag. Sometimes you work tirelessly, almost like slave labor, while other times you do next to nothing and still receive free food and accommodation." – Person A

Person A mentioned the challenge of feeling isolated after a friend left Krämars Farm, which made them question their place in the farm community. However, as communication channels reopened, they found comfort in renewed connections and support within the farm community:

"During my time at Krämars, one of the biggest challenges I faced was feeling completely isolated after someone left. I wasn't sure if I still belonged on the

farm. It was a tough period, but things started to improve when communication resumed. I realized that the issue was not with me personally. One thing that really helped was when my mom wrote a letter, expressing gratitude for taking care of me. I had to translate it into English, and it seemed to foster understanding and empathy. While I'm not certain if it was just the letter, it definitely had a very positive impact on our relationship." – Person A

Person E reflected on the initial challenges of navigating language barriers during their time at Krämars Farm. They described the experience of constantly switching between languages – English with the host family, Spanish with a fellow volunteer, and French with their spouse. Initially quite overwhelming, this linguistic juggling act posed a significant mental challenge. As time progressed however, Person E found that this multilingual environment transformed into a valuable opportunity for language practice, providing a unique and beneficial exercise in language proficiency:

"Initially, switching between languages was quite challenging. When we were with the family, we spoke English; with the Spanish guy, it was Spanish; and with Juliet, it had to be French. It was a bit overwhelming at first, constantly shifting. However, over time, it became a valuable training ground. Balancing Spanish, English, and French was tough on my brain, but it turned out to be a beneficial exercise in language practice." – Person E

Similarly, Person B shared their reflections on the challenges they faced in learning Finnish during their time at Krämars Farm. They described the difficulty of navigating the intricacies of the language, acknowledging the initial shyness and apprehension that often accompanies attempting to speak a new language. In Finland, where English proficiency is widespread, Person B found that locals would often switch to English immediately when recognizing them as a non-native Finnish speaker. This situation sometimes led to frustration, as they had to assertively request to continue conversing in Finnish, despite not understanding everything. However, Person B ultimately accepted these challenges as part of the language-learning process:

"It's always tricky and very challenging, and you feel a bit shy trying to speak the language. Especially in Finland, where people are very proficient in English. When you attempt to speak Finnish and they realize you're not a native speaker, they automatically switch to English. Sometimes it can be frustrating, and you have to insist on keeping the conversation in Finnish, even if you don't understand everything. But that's fine." – Person B

4.4 Reflective Insights and Lasting Effects

This section explores the reflective insights and enduring impacts of volunteering at Krämars Farm. Beyond the mundane daily tasks, volunteer tourist experiences shapes perspectives and foster personal growth. Through introspection, valuable insights into cultural exchange and interpersonal relationships are gained. These experiences leave a lasting impact that may influence future aspirations, attitudes, and interactions:

"Volunteering at Krämars Farm really made me reconsider my everyday consumption habits. It made me reflect on how we produce food and how we can improve our methods towards sustainability. Witnessing the efforts required for sustainable agriculture highlighted the importance of places like Krämars, not just here but everywhere. Sustainable living is crucial for the future, and we need more of that." – Person B

"Since the first time we were there, we came back three more times already, and every time was super, super good. I really look forward to the next time we will visit. After my year of traveling with the van and all the experience with all the farms that we visited and the people that we met, I can't imagine being a normal tourist again. I cannot just go to a hotel and visit cities without meeting the real people and having real conversations." – Person C

"The experience overall had a big impact on me. We built an amazing table together, and I painted this huge picture with flowers, maybe it's still hanging in the living or dining room. It was a bit challenging with the paints and brushes, but it was a cool project. And, you know, engaging with the local community was really something; we shared stories, learned about each other's lives, and it really broadened our horizons. This collective effort of leaving our imprint on the farm makes a difference, you know, continues to improve over time as we all contribute." – Person D

Person A reflected on the tranquil hours spent picking blueberries at Krämars Farm after the harvest. Lost in thought, surrounded by nature and accompanied only by podcasts, they experienced a moment of profound contemplation, pondering the existence of a higher power:

"During those hours spent collecting blueberries, I had a lot of time to think. I'd start early in the morning, take a break for lunch, then go back until late afternoon. It was just me, my thoughts, and some podcasts. I found myself really

getting into it, almost losing touch with reality. It was during one of those moments, maybe because of the beauty of nature or the peacefulness of it all, that I had this thought: 'Maybe, just maybe, God exists.' It was a pretty profound moment for me." – Person A

Both Person A and Person C described their time at the farm as transformative. For Person A, leaving the farm brought a sense of maturity, contrasting with feelings of regression upon returning home. Similarly, Person C experienced profound change, leaving behind a teaching career for a spiritually fulfilling path after connecting deeply with nature and the hosting community at Krämars Farm:

"Leaving the farm, I felt significantly more mature than when I arrived. It was a transformative experience, 100% for sure. However, returning to Brazil, I felt a sense of regression, especially being around my parents. It's almost as if I was more mature during my time there than I am now." – Person A

"I left my teaching career and sought out a more spiritually fulfilling job. Then, I went through a divorce, and everything about my life changed. I believe it's the outcome of the year I spent meeting incredibly generous and kind individuals, experiencing new things, connecting with the earth, witnessing the growth of food, and more. It transformed me profoundly." – Person C

5 DISCUSSION

In the discussion chapter, the focus will be on the findings of the study and their analysis in relation to the research questions, theoretical framework, and existing literature. The motivations, experiences, and reflections of Workaway volunteers at Krämars Organic Farm will be explored by considering factors such as cultural immersion, sustainability, and personal development. Throughout the discussion, the aim is to provide a comprehensive examination of the data and offer valuable insights for understanding the dynamics of volunteer tourism from the perspective of previous volunteers at Krämars.

Through detailed examination of the results presented in the previous chapter, connections between participant narratives and broader themes identified in volunteer tourism research are explored.

5.1 Motivations of Workaway Volunteers at Krämars

The motivations underlying volunteer tourism at Krämars Farm reflect a combination of altruistic and egoistic incentives which aligns with Mustonen's (2007) framework of individuality/sociality and egoism/altruism. Participants expressed a desire for authentic cultural immersion and unique experiences, indicating a social motivation to engage with local communities and cultures. The pursuit of personal fulfillment and self-development, as highlighted by Magrizos et al. (2020), also suggests an individualistic motivation driving volunteer tourists to seek transformative experiences. These findings underscore the dynamic interplay between push and pull as well as intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in shaping volunteer tourism experiences (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981)

The theory of push and pull factors (Crompton 1979; Dann 1981) provided valuable insights into the motivations of Volunteers at Krämars farm. The participants were drawn by push factors, such as the pursuit of personal fulfillment, and some pull factors, including the opportunity to partake in sustainable agriculture practices and contribute to the local community.

5.2 Volunteer Experiences at Krämars

The experiences of Workaway volunteers at Krämars Farm were characterized by a profound sense of belonging and genuine connection with both the host family and the local community, resonating with Pearce's (1988) travel motivation pyramid. According to Pearce's pyramid, travel motivations progress from fulfilling basic physiological needs, such as relaxation and food, to higher-level needs like belongingness, self-esteem, and self-actualization.

Volunteers at Krämars described engaging in meaningful activities that not only satisfied their physiological needs but also addressed these higher-level needs, providing them with a sense of purpose and fulfillment. This alignment with Pearce's pyramid illustrates how volunteer tourism acts as a conduit for individuals to transition from fulfilling basic needs to achieving personal growth and self-realization. By participating in volunteer activities at Krämars Farm, volunteers found themselves on a journey of self-discovery and cultural immersion, enriching their experiences and contributing to their overall well-being and fulfillment (Milne et al., 2018).

5.3 Volunteer Reflections and Lasting Impacts

Reflective insights from volunteers at Krämars Farm highlight the enduring impacts of their experiences, emphasizing personal growth, increased awareness of sustainability, and profound transformations. These reflections resonate with the stages of self-transformation identified by Magrizos et al. (2020), particularly the liminal phase characterized by introspection and profound change. Additionally, the emphasis on authenticity and immersiveness underscores the importance of meaningful engagement with local communities in facilitating transformative experiences (Magrizos et al., 2020).

5.4 Discussion of Method

The method of semi-structured interviews effectively captured the motivations, experiences, and reflections of Workaway volunteers at Krämars Farm. While language barriers and potential biases in self-reported experiences presented challenges, efforts were made to ensure the reliability and validity of the study through member checking and triangulation of data sources. Alternative methods, such as participant observation or

focus groups, may have provided additional insights, but the chosen approach allowed for nuanced exploration of individual narratives and subjective experiences. Overall, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of volunteer tourism motivations and experiences within the context of Krämars Organic Farm.

6 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study has explored the motivations, experiences, and reflections of Workaway volunteers at Krämars Organic Farm through the broader lens of volunteer tourism. Incorporating Mustonen's (2007) research and Pearce's (1988) pyramid, alongside the contributions of pioneering researchers such as Dann and Crompton, a profound understanding of volunteer motivations and experiences at Krämars has been attained. The blend of altruistic and egoistic motives among volunteers is evident in their pursuit of cultural immersion, personal growth, and community connection. Their experiences at Krämars Farm resonated with Pearce's pyramid, fostering a sense of belonging and fulfilling various needs. Reflective insights revealed enduring impacts, notably in sustainability awareness and personal transformation.

While insightful, the study is not without limitations, including potential biases and sample size constraints. Future research could explore alternative methodologies to complement findings and delve deeper into long-term impacts and specific aspects of sustainability.

This study enriches our understanding of volunteer tourism dynamics at Krämars Organic Farm, offering valuable insights for research and practice. By bridging theory with real-world experiences, it informs program development and sustainable tourism practices, contributing to the broader discourse on volunteer tourism.

6.1 Limitations of the study

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, which primarily focuses on the perspectives of Workaway volunteers at Krämars Organic Farm. While the insights gathered from volunteers provide valuable perspectives on their motivations, experiences,

and reflections, it is essential to recognize that this study does not encompass the viewpoints of Workaway hosts, volunteer tourism organizations, or other stakeholders involved in the volunteer tourism industry. Therefore, the findings may not fully capture the broader context and dynamics of volunteer tourism at Krämars Organic Farm.

The study's reliance on semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method introduces certain limitations. While interviews allow for in-depth exploration of individual narratives, there is a potential for biases in self-reported experiences and perceptions. Moreover, the sample size of participants may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader population of Workaway volunteers.

Expanding the sample size to include respondents from a variety of workaway hosts could enhance the study's comprehensiveness. By incorporating participants with more diverse backgrounds and locations, future research can capture a broader range of perspectives, enriching the findings and enhancing their generalizability.

Future research could address these limitations by incorporating diverse perspectives from Workaway hosts, volunteer tourism organizations, and stakeholders, as well as employing a mixed-methods approach to triangulate findings.

Exploring the long-term impacts of volunteer tourism and specific aspects of sustainability could provide further insights into the dynamics of volunteer tourism at Krämars Organic Farm.

6.2 Suggestions for further studies

Future research endeavors in volunteer tourism could explore diverse avenues to deepen our understanding of this dynamic field. Comparative analyses across various volunteer tourism programs could shed light on the effectiveness of different models in meeting volunteer and community needs. Longitudinal studies tracking volunteers' experiences over time could provide insights into personal development and ongoing engagement. Understanding host community perspectives is essential, along with evaluating the sustainability initiatives within volunteer programs.

Ullius (2022) case study, focusing on the motivations and experiences of Workaway and WWOOF hosts in Sweden, presents the closest related academic findings to the research at hand which has previously been conducted. Alternatively, Ullius research is centered around the motivations and experiences of Workaway hosts as opposed to the volunteers. By shifting the focus to the hosts perspective, Ullius study provides valuable insights that could complement the findings of this research and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of volunteer tourism dynamics in the Nordics.

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Appendix 1. Interview guide

1. Motivation:

- What initially inspired you to become a volunteer tourist at Krämars Organic Farm through the Workaway program?
- Can you describe any specific personal or professional motivations that led you to choose this particular volunteer experience?
- How did your expectations align with the actual experience you had at Krämars Organic Farm?

2. Experience:

- What were the most memorable aspects of your volunteer experience at Krämars Organic Farm?
- Could you share any challenges or obstacles you encountered during your time as a volunteer?
- How did your interactions with the local community contribute to your overall experience?

3. Impact:

- In what ways do you believe your volunteer work at Krämars Organic Farm benefited the local community or environment?
- Did your experience as a volunteer tourist at Krämars Organic Farm influence any future travel or volunteering decisions?
- Can you reflect on any unexpected or unintended outcomes of your volunteer experience at Krämars Organic Farm?