

The Perceived Impact of a University Fieldtrips or Outdoor Learning in Tourism Education

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Abstract

Purpose: The main purpose of this is to investigate the perceptions of students to understand the value of field trips and outdoor learning activities at the university level, this study tries to investigate how learning is described into practice by describing how field trips and outdoor learning program able to cater different learning styles. Outdoor learning and field trips are mentally and culturally enriching and enhancing the memory and critically as well as practical approach in tourism study. Fieldtrips programs also have the capacity to increase interest in a particular place whether learners have prior knowledge or not (Goh & Ritchie, 2011). Field trips also enhance practical knowledge and provide them opportunities to study in the real world.

Research Design: After the detailed review of the literature about the value of field trips, the researcher has identified several indicators about the value and importance of field trips at the university level. In this study, the research used quantitative and qualitative techniques to collect data from the respondents. Primary data was collected by the means of a field survey with the help of a questionnaire. The sampling procedure adopted for the present study was simple random sampling. The pilot survey was conducted to test the reliability (*Cronbach's alpha*) of the construct. The researcher purposes to take the total sample size of 140 respondents out of

which 120 valid responses were considered for the interpretation. Chi-square test and mean the test was used for this study.

Findings: The major finding related to the value of field trips in tourism. The study at the university level is summarized in the present research paper. The result of the study revealed that numerous positive benefits could be realized from using field trips in tourism teaching especially at the university level and learning which included, providing learners with experiential learning opportunities, active involvement in their own learning,

Practical implications: this study would help to understand the various obstacles and barriers faced in field trips. The findings from the research will be very useful for universities to understand the importance of field trips in the tourism curriculum.

Key Words: *Tourism Students, Experience learning, Field Trip, Practical learning.*

Background of the study:

The field trip to Tourism and Hospitality education is a very useful learning tool for transforming learning experience beyond the old teaching traditional pedagogy (Do, 2006). Fieldtrips allow learners to strengthen classroom learning into real-life experiences and help them to improve their understanding of subject material (Sigmon, 2014). Kiesiel (2005) proposes different motivations for field trips to be: connecting field trips with curriculum, revealing learners to new and different environments, developing interest in travel, and promoting long-life authentic learning. Fieldtrips are designed to satisfy either one or more of these needs. Surprisingly, researchers in tourism and hospitality have focused very little attention on tourism and hospitality education.

There is little or no research that has been done on the educational value of field trips in the Indian context especially in the field of tourism education at the University Level.

Literature Review

The Present review of the literature discusses the viewpoints of the various scholars about the value of field trips and outdoor learning.

Adapting old traditional teaching pedagogy-based learning is a major and common teaching methodology in most of the universities and institute all over the world (Fry *et al.*, 2003). In

traditional types of learning, educators view this learning as an effective method of transfer of knowledge, and this learning having active participation (Gomes *et al.*, 2014).

Wong and Wong (2009) refer to experiential learning as learning in which learners are directly in touch with the realities being studied. Experiential learning encourages hands-on learning, and that learner should actively participate in learning (Mathias, 2014).

Dewey's (1963) theory states that education should strike a balance between the learner's interests and activities and the educator's delivery of knowledge. The process of learning rather than the outcome of learning is what differentiate experiential learning from traditional classroom education (Kolb, 1984). According to Kolb (1984) knowledge is developed through the transformation of experience and experience shapes the foundation of all learning. Therefore action, transformation, and experience are important in the process of learning, as learners can use their thinking and knowledge in the process of learning. Experiential learning is based on understanding and reformed through experience (Dewey, 1963).

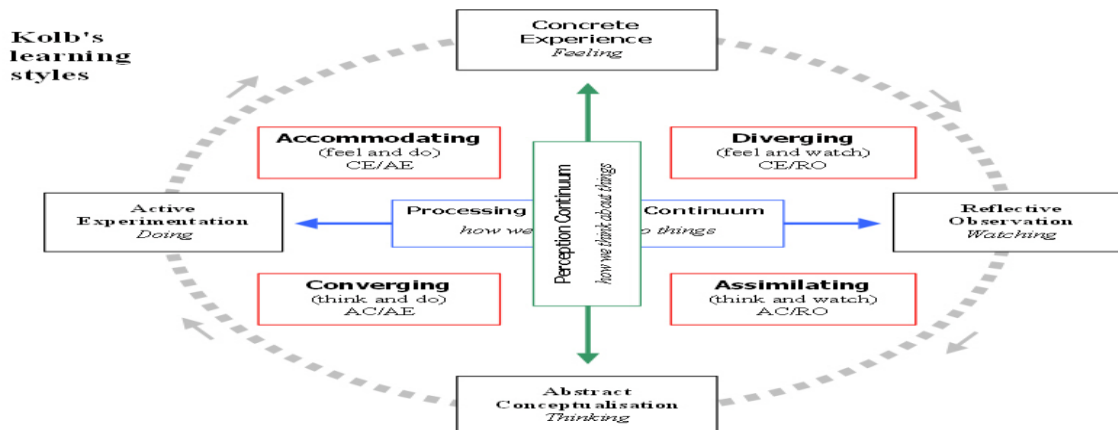
David Kolb (1984) identified four experiential learning cycles that explain the various learning styles. The first stage is the concrete experience- where experiential learning activities are developed for individual or group challenges. According to Goh (2011), this is the stage where the learner is actively experiencing the activity. This step is most important as teachers are required to develop meaningful learning activities that engage all learners in the process of learning. These activities should immerse learners in situations that are part of the subject matter, which assist them to develop skills, knowledge, and understanding (Hirsch and Llyod, 2005).

The second stage is reflection observation – in which the learners are encouraged to reflect on the activity or field trip, describes, communicate, and learn from their own experiences. This stage is important as learners can reflect on their own experiences

The third stage is linking the concept to theories – which allows the learners to use their experience and theories to conclude past and present experiences. According to Kolb and Kolb (2005), all learning is relearning, and learners need to continually re-examine their learning in the light of new learning. This is a stage where learners can see the link between classroom learning with what they are experiencing on the field trip.

The final stage is experimentation and application- where learners apply and relate new learning to preceding experience. According to Kolb (2005), learning requires learners to constantly reflect on their actions, feelings, and thinking.

Diagram 1: Learning Styles used in field trips:



Source: Chapman (2006)

Review based on Fieldtrips:

A field trip is an educator or learning exercise Sanders and Armstrong (2008) define a field trip as any place where supervised learning takes place through firsthand experience outside the traditional classroom setting. Fieldtrips involve travel away from home into tourism environments that engage participants as both learners and tourists at the same time (Power and Morgan, 2010) and allow learners to acquire knowledge (Patrick, 2010).

According to Lai (1999) field trips enhance the following three interrelated and mutually reinforcing purposes:

a: Subject-specific purposes; the principle for undertaking the field trip is to assist learners to gain a greater understanding of the subject. If learners are passionate about the subject learning will take care of itself as learners are motivated to study (Parker, 2010).

b: Learner – specific purposes; the purpose of the field trip is to develop an interpersonal relationship between learner to learner and learner to teacher. Robson (2002) states that field trips are about getting to know each other and make new contacts.

c: Learner environment purposes- the purpose of the field trip is value and appreciation of the learner’s environment. Learners can find pleasure in working and studying in a natural environment as well as the enthusiasm of discovery within their environment.

Fieldtrips are excellent methods that help learners to improve in their subject learning area (Dewitt *et al.*, 2008), and offer multiple learning opportunities as they allow time to explore while encouraging learners to engage in discussions. According to Keisel (2005), the reasons schools should conduct field trips and for learners to participate in field trips ranges from enjoyment and rewards, to be exposed to new and different experiences, for the enrichment and strengthening classroom curriculum.

Table 1: Teacher and student’s motivation for taking fieldtrips

| Researcher(s) and Year | Cognitive Motivations | Affective Motivations | Social Motivations |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Anderson & Zhang (2003) | Curriculum fit | | Amount of enjoyment |
| Kisiel (2005) | Connect with the classroom curriculum; provide a general learning experience; encourage lifelong learning | Enhance interest and motivation; provide exposure to new experiences | Provide a change in setting and routine; for enjoyment |
| Rebar (2009) | Provide a memorable learning experience; promote lifelong learning; go to a place where the subject(s) relate to the curriculum | Expose learners to new experiences; foster learner interest and motivation for the subject | |
| Gomez (2006) | Increase teaching effectiveness; relate to classroom curriculum; | Unusual perspective or new experience for Learners; Motivate | For entertainment only; for “edutainment” (entertainment with an |

| | | | |
|--|------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| | provide better visualization of concepts | learners for the topic | educational component) |
|--|------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|

Source:Adapted from Leatherbury (2011)

Review based on Educational value of Fieldtrip

Dillion *et al.*, (2006), argues that just because the learners can recall the trip does not mean that learning has happened. Therefore, learners must be encouraged to be actively involved and apply their knowledge in tourist situations that they find themselves in. According to Power and Morgan (2010), active learning implies that learners are engaged in the activity and are thinking about what they are doing. If learners are actively involved during field trips, it allows them to comprehend and appreciate their own learning. Eaton (2000) supports the statement by stating that field trips provide an environment where cognitive skills are developed rather than school-based learning. Fieldtrips also help learners to gain a better understanding of the subject in terms of vocabulary, methods, and techniques (Kerawalla*et al.*, 2012). Xie (2004) posits that field trips provide a different perspective to learners to understand the complexity of tourism as they experience it rather than learn the theories and concepts only

Research Gap and Statement of the Problem

The findings from the review of literature explain that there is prior research work that has been done on the value of field trips, but no study has been carried out in the Indian context. After examining the research gap the statement of the problem which seems to the most appropriate for the present study is “THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF A UNIVERSITY FIELDTRIPS or OUTDOOR LEARNING IN TOURISM EDUCATION”

OBJECTIVES:

- 1. To assess the value of field trips to tourism learning at the university level.**
- 2: To determine the perceptions of tourism students about the value of field trips.**
- 3: To understand and compare students towards field trips across the three stages (Pre-trip, On-trip, post-Trip).**

Hypotheses: Considering the overall objectives of the study and after the review of existing literature on the subject, the following hypothesis has been developed for testing.

H02-There is no significant relationship between the perceptions of Tourism students about the value of field trips.

Methodology:Primary Data: Primary data was collected with the help of questionnaires. Data for the present study was qualitative as well as quantitative in nature. Secondary Data: The secondary data collected from the University.

Quantitative Research:

The Cranach's alpha for the 13 items is 0.723. Suggesting that the items have internal consistency. (*Note that a reliability coefficient of .60 or higher is considered "acceptable" in most social science research situations*, Brown (2002). Hence the questionnaires for quantitative research are reliable in nature with a response rate of 87%.

Qualitative Research:

To understand and compare students towards field trips across the three stages (Pre-trip, On-trip, post-Trip). Respondents consisted of the students who attend the field trip were given a total of three open-ended questionnaires across the three stages of field trips.

1. What is your perception before going on a field trip? (Pre-Stage)
2. What is your perception during a field trip? (On-trip Stage)
3. What is your perception after attending the field trip? (Post Stage)

Validity and Reliability of the instrument: The researcher consulted with thesis experts in order to improve the face validity of the questionnaire. To check the appropriateness of questionnaires, a pilot survey has been undertaken over 5% of the total sample selected (Parfitt, 2005).

Sampling method: Present study has been undertaken at Himachal Pradesh Technical University. For sample selection, simple random sampling has been used in this study. In this, the respondents were selected from University who directly or indirectly participate in field trips. The total sample size for the present study has consisted of 120 respondents from the University.

Analysis and Interpretation:

Table 2: The value and importance of Fieldtrips and outdoor learning

| Statement | N | Mean | Std.Deviation |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|---------------|
| 1.Fieldtrips will help me think logically and critically | 120 | 4.37 | .55 |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|-----|
| 2.Fieldtrips should be a compulsory part of the tourism curriculum in all universities | 120 | 4.25 | .46 |
| 3.Fieldtrips can help me to remind and help reinforce my learning in classroom | 120 | 4.52 | .48 |
| 4. I like tourism as professional and core subject | 120 | 4.05 | .47 |
| 5. I believe that outside learning tourism activities more useful than classroom learning | 120 | 4.26 | .47 |
| 6. I think field trips are necessary as they help me learn in different ways | 120 | 4.36 | .82 |
| 7.Fieldtrips will help me enhance my practical as well as my knowledge about the subject | 120 | 4.29 | .62 |
| 8.Fieldtrips will allow me to learn about nature and culture by direct involvement | 120 | 4.28 | .72 |
| 9.Fieldtrips can increase my interest in tourism as a subject | 120 | 4.23 | .45 |
| 10.I think that fieldtrips will allow me to experience and see the content that is covered in the classroom | 120 | 4.61 | .42 |
| 11.The University should organize more fieldtrips | 120 | 4.59 | .55 |
| 12.Fieldtrips will allow me to develop closer relationship with my classmates and teachers | 120 | 4.75 | .58 |
| 13.Participating in fieldtrips is a worthwhile educational experience | 120 | 4.23 | .75 |

Source: Compiled from the data in a questionnaire using SPSS-21 and MS-Excel

The mean of all respondents lies in a common range of (4- 5) which clearly indicate that most respondents strongly agree and agree with all the statement which they learn during a field trip. The interpretation that can be deduced from these results is that the learners thought that field trips were important in their learning of tourism.

Table 3: Relationship between the variable (University Organize Field Trips for Tourism learners) versus (Have you ever participate in tourism field trip before?)

| |
|---------------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square Tests |
|---------------------------------|

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| Statement | Test | Does your University organize fieldtrips for tourism learners? | Have you ever participated in the tourism fieldtrip before? |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.Fieldtrips will help me think logically and critically | Chi-square | 2.83 | 6.8 |
| | Df | 2 | 2 |
| | Sig. | 0.23 | .032 |
| 2.Fieldtrips should be a compulsory part of the tourism curriculum in all universities | Chi-square | 0.831 | 2.064 |
| | Df | 2 | 2 |
| | Sig. | 0.66 | 0.35 |
| 3.Fieldtrips can help me to remind and help reinforce my learning in classroom | Chi-square | 6.958 | 9.780 |
| | Df | 4 | 4 |
| | Sig. | 0.138 | .044 |
| 4. I like tourism as professional and core subject | Chi-square | 1.212 | 0.097 |
| | Df | 2 | 2 |
| | Sig. | 0.54 | 0.92 |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------|-------|
| 5. I believe that outside learning tourism activities more useful than classroom learning | Chi-square | 6.29 | 4.18 |
| | Df | 3 | 3 |
| | Sig. | 0.098 | 0.242 |
| 6. I think field trips are necessary as they help me learn in different ways | Chi-square | 6.294 | 4.189 |
| | Df | 3 | 3 |
| | Sig. | 0.093 | 0.252 |
| 7. Fieldtrips will help me enhance my practical as well as my knowledge about the subject | Chi-square | 2.096 | 3.531 |
| | Df | 3 | 3 |
| | Sig. | 0.553 | 0.317 |
| 8. Fieldtrips will allow me to learn about nature and culture by direct involvement | Chi-square | 2.745 | 2.187 |
| | Df | 4 | 4 |
| | Sig. | 0.601 | 0.721 |
| 9. Fieldtrips can increase my interest in tourism as a subject | C | 6.534 | 3.492 |
| | Df | 4 | 4 |
| | Sig. | 0.163 | 0.479 |
| 10. I think that fieldtrips will allow me to experience and see the content that is covered in the classroom | Chi-square | 0.755 | 0.592 |

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------|--------|
| | Df | 2 | 2 |
| | Sig. | 0.686 | 0.744 |
| 11.The University should organize more fieldtrips | Chi-square | 8.556 | 4.784 |
| | Df | 4 | 4 |
| | Sig. | 0.073 | 0.31 |
| 12.Fieldtrips will allow me to develop closer relationship with my classmates and teachers | Chi-square | 12.246 | 12.736 |
| | Df | 4 | 4 |
| | Sig. | .016 | .012 |
| 13.Participating in fieldtrips is a worthwhile educational experience | Chi-square | 3.166 | 3.217 |
| | Df | 3 | 3 |
| | Sig. | 0.364 | 0.359 |

Source: Compiled from the data in a questionnaire using SPSS-21 and MS-Excel

From the above table 3: After testing the hypothesis, the following items are significant at 95% level of significant, There is no significant relationship between tourism fieldtrip and development of critical and logical thinking is rejected because hypotheses testing calculations yielded a score of 0.032 which was below the significant level of 0.05. The researcher could therefore state confidently that embarking on fieldtrips could help the learners in Universitiesstudents to develop critical and logical thinking in respect of tourism as a subject. That is, going on a fieldtrip did play a significant role in terms of how respondents viewed fieldtrips encouraged logical and critical thinking

Fieldtrips will allow me to develop closer relationship with my classmates and teachers:There is no significant relationship between undertaking fieldtrips and building a closer relationship with

classmates and teachers. This null hypothesis was also rejected as the test score (0.012) indicated clearly that learners felt that fieldtrips would assist in building closer relationships. That is going on a fieldtrip played a significant role in terms of how the respondents developed closer relationships with their classmates and teachers.

There is no significant relationship between going on fieldtrips and understanding of theory taught in class. This hypothesis was accepted following the hypothesis test score of 0.744, which was above the required level of significance. However, on the question of whether fieldtrips would reinforce what was being taught in class, the score was significant at 0.044. these questions could be understood to mean the same thing. On that basis the null hypothesis could be rejected.

Table 4: Reponses of All students at different stages of the field trip: (Pre-Trip)

| Respondents | Pre-Trip |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Student 1 | This trip really benefits in my upcoming exam |
| Student 2 | I think that field trip helps me to better understand about this subject. |
| Student 3 | Maybe this would clarify the practical sideof all tourism subject |
| Student 4 | I like to learn about is there any difference between theoretical and practical learning |
| Student 5 | It should be exciting |
| Student 6 | It should be eye-opener for me |
| Student 7 | I want to explore the nature and world |
| Student 8 | I want to feel like a explorer |
| Student 9 | This tour would enhance my skills |
| Student 10 | I think itwill be helpful in understanding the practical side of how to plan and execute a tour |

Table 5: Reponses of All students at different stages of the field trip : On Trip Stage

| Respondents | On Trip |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Student 1 | My knowledge about hotel industry increase |
| Student 2 | During this trip, I took pictures and aware about monuments |
| Student 3 | I can relate my assignments with suitable field example |

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| | |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Student 4 | I can learn how tourist damage our flora and fauna |
| Student 5 | I try to preserve and conserve our nature and monuments |
| Student 6 | This trip really enhances my knowledge |
| Student 7 | We can learn practical example |
| Student 8 | I can learn about the 5 As of Hotels |
| Student 9 | We also learn about the different amenities a tourist can need |
| Student 10 | Punctuality and commitment about good service |

Table 6: Reponses of All students at different stages of the field trip : Post trip Stage

| Respondents | Post Trip |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Student 1 | This trip was very practical and enriching |
| Student 2 | This trip also helps me in my exam |
| Student 3 | I am confident that, I can also start my own travel agency |
| Student 4 | I know very well how to overcome the barrier and obstacle faced in this trip |
| Student 5 | This can make me different from other students |
| Student 6 | It also enhances my communication and confident to travel alone |
| Student 7 | I can attract with anyone;I motivate me towards travel. |
| Student 8 | It makes study more easier and interesting |
| Student 9 | I can understand about the different pull factor about destination |
| Student 10 | I can see the concepts in the textbook being applied in real life. |

From the above Table 4, Table 5 and Table 6 respondents response analyzed by thematic analysis, we can conclude that, Field trip enhance knowledge and interest level of all the students. Students also viewed field trip as practical exposure and also help them in their future career.

Findings:

The respondents indicated that if they participated in field trips, they would be able to think rationally and logically which would in turn increase their knowledge in the subject.

Fieldtrips will allow me to develop a closer relationship with my classmates and teachers. Most students respond that field trips are the best opportunity to interact with a classmate. There is no significant relationship between undertaking field trips and building a closer relationship with classmates and teachers. This null hypothesis was also rejected as the test score (0.012) indicated clearly that learners felt that field trips would assist in building closer relationships. That is going on a field trip played a significant role in terms of how the respondents developed closer relationships with their classmates and teachers.

The study also discovered that all groups of respondents felt that field trips are valuable to create and strengthen relationships among learners and between them and their teachers. Important as field trips are, they cannot replace the learning that takes place in the classroom. So, these two should be viewed as complementary rather than competing. The study also reveals that students expectation and skill increase during all the stages (Pre. On, Post-trip)

It is important for all universities to organize, and academicians manage student's expectation with a clear objective and also ensure that these objectives also met the field trip during the field trips with active participation in pre to a post-trip stage of a field trip. There is no significant relationship between going on field trips and understanding of theory taught in class. This hypothesis was accepted following the hypothesis test score of 0.744, which was above the required level of significance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is certain that field trips are essential and fundamental to tourism teaching and learning

1. Tourism field trips should be planned and well-executed so that learners can be covered to these authentic experiences such as tour operation businesses, and also understand the linkage between 5 A's of tourism (Accommodation, Accessibility, Attraction, Amenities, Activities).

2. Education (subject advisor) should provide tourism teachers with the necessary resources to overcome the barriers associated with field trips.

3. It must be a compulsory part of the curriculum. After the completion of field trips, university students must submit a field report with day-to-day activities with some objective that they fulfill during this field trip.

4. Fieldtrips would allow learners to collect materials and first-hand experience of what these tourism businesses look like and do.

Scope for Future Research

1: This study does not evaluate the barriers and the problems faced by students during their field trip and how to overcome these barriers.

2: There is a huge scope of further study to find the relationship between the Tourism area students and students from the non-tourism area and their satisfaction level.

3: This study is only limited to the micro area, so the result is not generalized for all university students. Therefore, there is huge scope for further research to be carried out in the other state of India at University as well as college-level.

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