

研究論文

Exploring the Motivations of Asian Working Holiday Makers Travelling to Australia

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Abstract :

The Australian Working Holiday Maker (WHM) program provides a unique opportunity for Asian youths to have an extended overseas experience. Although the program has existed for more than 40 years, the number of Asian youths participating in the program has increased considerably since the early 2000s. Asian WHMs now represent a sizeable proportion of the Australian WHM market; however, they have received limited research attention from tourism scholars. In fact, their motivations for coming to Australia have not been well researched. To address this shortcoming, this study presents an analysis of six focus groups of Asian WHMs from the three major Asian source markets: Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Employing the push-pull framework, four push factors (improving English, overseas travel/living experience, earning money and escape from routine) and four pull factors (visa arrangement, English-speaking country, positive perception of Australia and job opportunities) were identified and the underlying reasons for each motivational factor were explored. The findings of this study extend the current understanding of Asian WHMs in Australia, a growing cohort within the WHM program. In accordance with the exploratory nature of this study, future research opportunities are also discussed.

I . Introduction

Australia's Working Holiday Maker (WHM) program has attracted young people from partner countries since its inception in the 1970s (Department of Immigration and Border Protection [DIBP], 2016; Tan, Richardson, Lester, Bai, & Sun, 2009). By obtaining special visas (i.e., working holiday visas), participants in this program are able to have up to one or two years of extended working holiday experiences in Australia. These travellers are often called working holiday makers (WHMs) to differentiate them from international visitors entering under other visa conditions. Although the program's central aim is enhancing cultural exchange among young people, WHMs are not only permitted to engage in short-term study, but also work in the country in order to supplement their travel funds, which other tourist visas would not permit (DIBP, 2016). In fact, the majority of WHMs engage in some paid employment during their stay. As such, they are considered to be important casual and seasonal employees for a range of industries, including agriculture, tourism and hospitality (Allon, Anderson, & Bushell,

2008; Steen & Peel, 2015). According to a study conducted by Tan et al. (2009), the average amount earned by a WHM during their entire trip in Australia was estimated to be more than AU\$10,000.

According to the DIBP (2016), more than 210,000 working holiday visas were issued to young people from 35 countries during the 2015–2016 program year. Traditionally, the Australian WHM market was largely dominated by European youths. However, the number of WHMs from Asian countries has increased, especially since the early 2000s. In fact, more than 65,000 young people from Asian countries were issued working holiday visas in the 2015–2016 program year, representing more than 30% of the Australian WHM market (DIBP, 2016).

Several previous studies on this subject have reported that the characteristics of Asian WHMs differ from those of European WHMs (e.g., Chen, Lu, & Chang, 2009; Kawashima, 2010; Lee & Lee, 2011; Maksay, 2007; Nagai, Benckendorff,

& Tkaczynski, 2014). However, despite recent growth in the number of Asian WHMs, their profiles and travel behaviours including their reasons for coming to Australia have not been well researched, as a large number of previous studies on WHMs have focused largely on European youths (e.g., Al-lon et al., 2008; Harris & Prideaux, 2011; Ruhanen, 2010). Asian WHMs represent a large group of independent travellers who hail from different cultural backgrounds. They may display travel behaviours, challenges and preferences that differ from those of European WHMs when staying in Australia. Additionally, since a large number of Asian WHMs arrive in Australia each year and generally remain in the country for an extended period (DIBP, 2016; Tan et al., 2009), they have a high potential to contribute to the Australian economy, including the tourism industry (Steen & Peel, 2015; Tan & Lester, 2012). Consequently, scholars have called for additional studies to be conducted on the topic of Asian WHMs to provide a more comprehensive understanding of this market (Ho, Lin, & Huang, 2014; Jarvis & Peel, 2013). This would allow scholars and tourism practitioners to better define and understand the Asian WHM phenomenon and would benefit practitioners in the development of future marketing and management strategies. This study aims to fill this gap in the literature by investigating the motivations Asian youths have for participating in the Australian WHM program.

II. Literature Review

1. Working holiday maker program in Australia

The Australian WHM program is a temporary migration program that provides young people (between the ages of 18 and 30) from partner countries with working holiday visas for up to 12 or 24 months. The WHM program started in 1975 with the purpose of enhancing the international cultural exchange between young people from Australia and its partner countries. Canada, Ireland and the United Kingdom (UK) were the first to join the program in 1975. In 1980, Japan joined the program as the first Asian partner country; this was followed by South Korea in 1995. The number of partner countries in the program remained small until the end of the 1990s, and European participants, especially those from the UK, represented the major group in the market. However, since the early 2000s, Australia has made new arrangements with many nations. As a result, there were 35 partner countries and regions across the world in the 2015–2016 program. Furthermore, Australia has signed and/or is currently negotiating new working holiday arrangements with several additional countries (DIBP, 2016). There

are two types of working holiday visas: Working Holiday visa (subclass 417) and the Work and Holiday visa (subclass 462). These are issued depending on the participant's nationality. Therefore, the term WHM refers to a person who stays in Australia on either type of visa. Table 1 presents the partner countries and regions and their commencement years up to the 2015–2016 program year.

Table 1. WHM Program Partners and the Year Commenced (up to 2015–16)

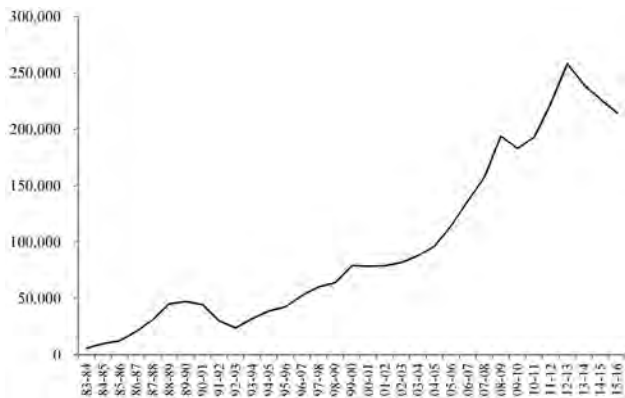
Working Holiday visa (subclass 417)		Work and Holiday visa (subclass 462)	
Country/Region	Commencement year	Country/Region	Commencement year
United Kingdom	1975	Thailand	2005
Ireland	1975	Chile	2006
Canada	1975	Turkey	2007
Japan	1980	United States	2007
South Korea	1995	Malaysia	2009
Malta	1996	Indonesia	2009
Germany	2000	Bangladesh	2010
Sweden	2001	Argentina	2012
Norway	2001	Uruguay	2013
Denmark	2001	Poland	2014
Hong Kong	2001	Portugal	2014
Finland	2002	Spain	2014
Cyprus	2002	China	2015
Italy	2004	Slovak Republic	2016
France	2004	Slovenia	2016
Taiwan	2004	Israel	2016
Belgium	2004		
Estonia	2005		
Netherlands	2006		

Source: DIBP (2016)

Both types of visa holders receive similar entitlements, such as engaging in short-term employment (maximum six months with each employer), studying for up to four months, and staying in Australia for up to 12 months. Participants have the option to extend their stay for another 12 months by obtaining a second working holiday visa if they have worked for a minimum of three months in a specified field or industry (such as agriculture or mining) in a designated regional area during their first year of stay. In addition, applicants for a subclass 462 visa must also meet education and English language proficiency requirements. No annual caps have been placed on subclass 417 visa countries; however, all subclass 462 visa countries except the United States have annual caps. For example, an annual cap of 5,000 was placed on China and 1,000 on Indonesia

(DIBP, 2016). Due to these annual caps, countries with the subclass 417 visa (i.e., countries with no annual cap) represent the dominant proportion of the Australian WHM market.

The Australian WHM program has expanded its international network since the early 2000s as shown in Table 1. The number of participants in the program has also increased. According to the DIBP (2016), a total of 214,583 working holiday visas (both subclass 417 and 462) including second working holiday visas were granted during the 2015–2016 program year, which is nearly double the 2005–2006 program year number of 114,686 visas (Department of Immigration and Citizenship [DIAC], 2010). Figure 1 illustrates the growth of the number of WHMs from the 1983–1984 to 2015–2016 program years.



Note: The number of WHMs for the program years 1983–84 to 2004–05 is based on the number of visa arrivals provided by Harding and Webster (2002) and Tan et al. (2009). For program years 2005–06 to 2015–16, data are based on the number of visas granted, according to the DIAC (2010; 2013) and the DIBP (2016).

Figure 1. Number of WHMs (1983–1984 to 2015–16)

Sources: Harding & Webster (2002), Tan et al. (2009), DIAC (2010, 2013) and DIBP (2016)

One notable change within the Australian WHM market in recent years is the increase in the proportion of WHMs from Asian countries. Although Japan has remained relatively stable for many years, the number of WHMs from Hong Kong, Korea and Taiwan has increased significantly since the early 2000s (DIBP, 2016; DIAC, 2010; Tan et al., 2009). For example, only 2,311 working holiday visas were issued to Taiwanese nationals in 2006–2007; however, 22,157 visas were issued to them in 2015–2016, representing the third largest source market after the UK and Germany (DIBP, 2016; DIAC, 2010). In addition, China joined the WHM program in 2015 with an annual cap of 5,000 visas. In their first program year (2015–2016), the maximum number of 5,000 visas were issued to young Chinese nationals (DIBP, 2016), which indicates the strong demand for

this program. In total, WHMs from Asian countries now make up more than 30% of the total WHM market in Australia. Figure 2 provides a profile of the current Australian WHM market.

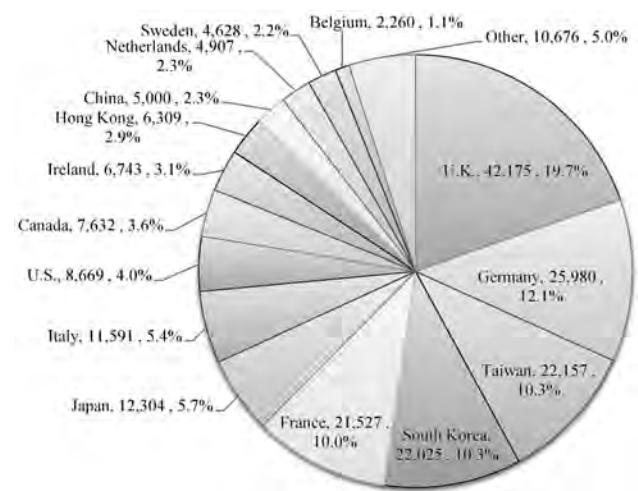


Figure 2. Profile of the WHM market in the 2015–2016 program year

Source: DIBP (2016)

2. Characteristics of working holiday makers from Asian countries

WHMs from Asian countries have received attention from scholars in tourism and other fields with respect to topics such as their travel behaviour, perceived value and satisfaction with the WHM program, labour market and roles in ethnic communities in Australia (e.g., Fujioka, 2008; Kawashima, 2010; Lee & Lee, 2013; Maksay, 2007; Nagai et al., 2014). Their motivational factors for participating in the WHM program were also studied by some scholars (Chen et al., 2009; Ho et al., 2014; Lee & Lee, 2011). Many of these studies on WHMs reported that Asian WHMs differed from European WHMs on several aspects.

Maksay (2007) conducted interviews with Japanese WHMs and identified that an extended trip during some part of their stay in Australia was a common ritual among young Japanese WHMs. A large study conducted by Tan et al. (2009) reported that WHMs from Asia (Japanese and Korean WHMs were included in their study) generally spend more time studying English language at language institutes during their stay than WHMs from European countries. This fact supported the notion that the WHM program provides an opportunity for WHMs from non-English-speaking countries to improve their English skills outside of their home countries (Cooper, O'Mahony, & Erfurt, 2004). In fact, several studies reported that improving Eng-

lish language ability was an important factor for many Asian WHMs when choosing Australia as a working holiday destination. For example, Prideaux and Shiga's (2007) quantitative study of Japanese backpackers, which included many youths on working holiday visas, reported that learning English was an important motivation for them to come to Australia. Based on their qualitative study with Taiwanese university students who have experience staying in Australia on working holiday visas, Chen et al. (2009) reported that improving English language ability, together with earning money and experiencing a different culture, were the main motivations for them to travel to Australia. In addition, Lee and Lee (2011) identified that self-development, which included improving English ability, was one of the key motives for coming to Australia among Korean WHMs.

These past studies provided some useful insights into the Asian WHM market in Australia and contributed to the literature on this market. However, as Jarvis and Peel (2013) acknowledged, there is a lack of research on Asian WHMs in the tourism literature, particularly with regard to their travel behaviour and psychographic characteristics. In fact, many previous studies have focused on European backpackers travelling with WHM visas (e.g., Allon et al., 2008; Cooper et al., 2004; Harris & Prideaux, 2011; Ruhanen, 2010; Slaughter, 2004). Therefore, as discussed, further studies have been called for to extend the current understanding of this unique cohort in the growing Australian WHM market (Ho et al., 2014; Jarvis & Peel, 2013).

3. Tourist motivation

Tourist motivation has been regarded as an important topic in tourism research for a long time because it is considered a driving force behind tourist behaviour and regarded as an essential player in the decision-making process (Heitmann, 2011; Hsu & Huang, 2008). Several theoretical frameworks have been offered to understand why tourists travel and the underlying psychological processes. Examples include the Travel Career Ladder (TCL) (Pearce, 1982, 1988), which was developed based in part on Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs theory, the Travel Career Pattern (Pearce, 2005; Pearce & Lee, 2005), which was built on the TCL, the escaping and seeking dimensions model (Iso-Ahola, 1982) and the push and pull model (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977).

Although no universally agreed theory of tourist motivation has emerged (Heitmann, 2011; Pearce, 2005), one of the most widely utilised models to explore and explain tourists' motiva-

tion is the push-pull model (Bowen & Clarke, 2009; Hsu & Huang, 2008). The push-pull model posits that people travel because they are pushed by their internal forces and pulled by external forces of destination attributes (Uysal & Jurowski, 1994). This model was first proposed by Dann (1977) who argued that push factors are those that make a person want to travel, and pull factors are those that affect a person's decision concerning a destination to fulfil his or her needs. Therefore, the push factors are mainly socio-psychological motives, on the other hand, the pull factors are motives aroused by the destination (You, O'Leary, Morrison, & Hong, 2000). Dann (1977) proposed anomie and ego-enhancement as two dominant push factors. Crompton (1979) further added to the idea and identified seven push factors including escape from a perceived mundane environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships and facilitation of social interaction. In addition, novelty and education were identified as two pull factors.

This model has been extensively accepted by many researchers as a useful framework to identify and analyse tourist motivations in different tourism contexts (e.g., Hanqin & Lam, 1999; Jang & Cai, 2002; Jeong, 2014; Phau, Lee, & Quintal, 2013; You et al., 2000). In addition, it has been adopted by previous studies to explore the motivations of Western backpackers and WHMs coming to Australia and New Zealand (Godfrey, 2011; Harris & Prideaux, 2011). In the context of WHMs from Asian countries, Lee and Lee (2011) conducted a survey of Korean WHMs staying in Australia and identified four push factors (self-development, long-term stay abroad, work and travel and escape) and three pull factors (tourism attraction, living condition and visa issue). This study contributed to extending the understanding of Asian WHMs, in particular Korean WHMs, regarding their motivations for participating in the WHM program in Australia. However, due to the nature of quantitative research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), detailed explanations of underlying reasons for each identified motivational factor were limited. Therefore, further studies that extend the understanding of this cohort are still required.

III. Method

This study aims to extend our understanding of the motives of Asian youths who travel to Australia on the WHM program. In order to achieve this aim, the push-pull framework (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977) was used to guide the research. Quantitative approaches have been widely adopted in the past to study push-pull motivations (e.g., Kim, Noh, & Jogaratnam, 2006;

Smith, Costello, & Muenchen, 2010; You et al., 2000). However, scholars have argued that certain motivational factors may be overlooked when using this approach, especially when the phenomenon under investigation is not well understood or when insufficient information is available to design a quantitative data collection instrument (Creswell, 2009; Hsu & Huang, 2008). As discussed earlier, the current understanding of Asian youths' motivations for participating in the Australian WHM program is limited. Therefore, the current study seeks a deeper understanding of the phenomenon rather than establishing the nature of truth by testing hypotheses, which is a general aim of quantitative studies (Jennings, 2010; Veal, 2006). To this end, a qualitative approach was adopted as the research strategy of inquiry, as this allows researchers to gather in-depth information and seek a deeper understanding of a given phenomenon (Creswell, 2009; Jennings, 2010). The focus group method was used as the means of data collection as it produces a rich corpus of empirical data for further qualitative analysis (Jennings, 2010; Krueger & Casey, 2009).

WHMs from Japan, Korea and Taiwan (who represent the major Asian source countries of the Australian WHM market) were identified as the sample for this study. Using a snowball sampling method, 31 WHMs from the three countries (11 Japanese, 9 Korean and 11 Taiwanese) were recruited. Within the 31, there were 20 females (seven Japanese, five Korean and eight Taiwanese) and 11 male participants (four Japanese, four Korean and three Taiwanese). To protect the privacy of the participants, each participant's name was replaced with a code from P1 to P31 with extra codes representing their demographic characteristics. For example, P1-JF represents a Japanese female participant and P12-KM represents a Korean male participant.

Each focus group was grouped by nationality because active interactions between participants were expected so they can reflect and further develop or clarify their ideas (Jennings, 2010). In addition, interpreters accompanied the researcher to overcome any language barriers between the researcher and participants when conducting the focus groups with Korean and Taiwanese groups as the researcher of this study is fluent in Japanese and English but not able to speak Korean or Mandarin. Also, following Krueger and Casey's (2009) advice, this study used smaller focus groups with between four and six participants in order to gain in-depth insights from participants.

In total, six focus groups were conducted (two for each na-

tionality) in early 2013 in South East Queensland, Australia, one of the most popular destinations among WHMs (Tan et al., 2009). During the focus groups, each participant was asked to share their reasons for coming to Australia on the WHM program with the rest of the group. The participants were also encouraged to interact with other participants for reflecting their ideas. Each focus group discussion was recorded after obtaining permissions from all participants, and the data were transcribed in English after the focus groups. The transcribed data were analysed using the thematic analysis approach suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) to identify themes within the data. The push-pull framework was then adopted to explain the identified themes.

IV. Results and Discussion

By employing a thematic analysis of the transcripts from the six focus groups, eight themes were identified within the data. These themes were then categorised as either push or pull factors using the push-pull model. Figure 3 shows both the push and pull motivational factors identified in this study.

The first push factor, 'improving English', was the most commonly voiced factor among the participants regardless of nationality. Although English is a compulsory subject at school in the participants' home countries and they had studied the language before, many participants expressed difficulties in understanding English, particularly spoken English, and self-development was a clear motive. A participant from Japan explained:

The reason I came here is to improve my English because I want to travel without having language problems. I also want to understand English movies and to communicate with people from different countries without having any language difficulties (P8-JF).

Another participant expressed a similar sentiment:

I wanted to experience living in an English environment because I am majoring in English education in my university. I had studied English for a very long time in Korea but I wanted to learn real English, not just grammar (P19-KF).

This finding is consistent with previous studies that reported Asian WHMs' desire to improve their English skills (Chen et al., 2009; Lee & Lee, 2011; Prideaux & Shiga, 2007). Im-

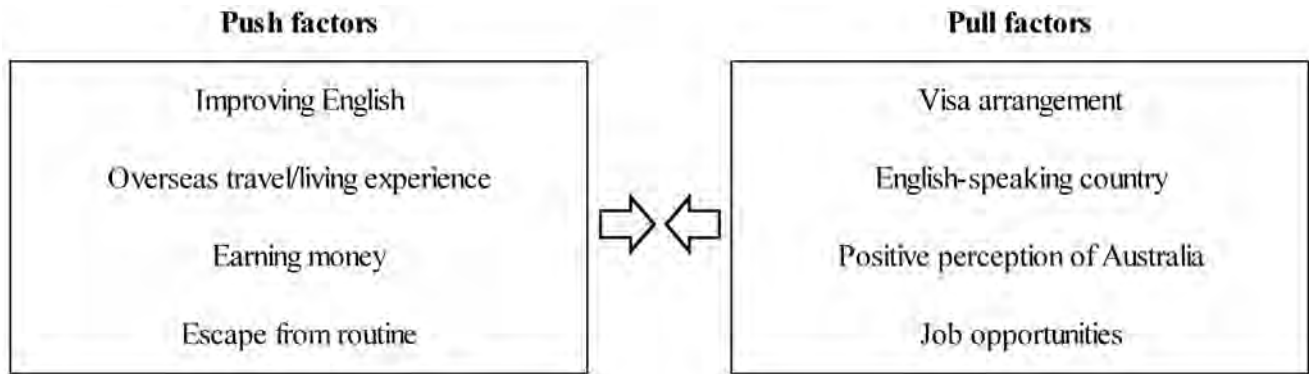


Figure 3. Identified push and pull motivational factors

proving language skills is consistent with a self-development motive. Thus, this is consistent with previous tourist motivation literature as self-development has been identified as an important motivational factor among tourists, and tourists do learn a range of topics from their travel experiences (Falk, Balantyne, Packer, & Benckendorff, 2012; Pearce & Foster, 2007; Pearce & Lee, 2005). One interesting observation identified in this study was that a strong motivation to improve English was not only due to a personal desire to master another language for broadening their horizons but also stemmed from societal demands, particularly in the job market. One Korean male participant commented:

When I finish university, I have to start working in Korea. Many of my Korean colleagues are very worried because Korean companies often want employees with good English skills. My English was not very good so I felt that I have to improve my English. That's why I came to Australia as a working holiday maker (P18-KM).

Many other participants, especially younger ones who had not finished university, shared his concern about English ability for future employment. They were concerned about the outcome of their working holiday experience in regard to their language ability. This is mainly because many companies in their home countries use English language ability as one of the major criteria for employment (Park, 2011; Rebuck, 2003).

Although many participants had an interest in travelling and living overseas, these societal expectations were also evidenced as one of the underlying reasons for the second push factor, 'overseas travel/living experience'. Participants believed that having an overseas experience would help their personal development as well as enhance their future career opportunities.

One female participant commented, 'I just graduated from a university in Taiwan. I wanted to have an overseas experience before starting work in Taiwan' (P25-TF).

The third push factor, 'earning money', was commonly voiced by Korean and particularly by Taiwanese WHMs. Due to the tough economic situations in their home countries, some WHMs regarded the WHM program that permits overseas employment as a great opportunity to not only have a holiday experience but also to earn money overseas. One Taiwanese participant commented, 'I didn't have any particular reasons to come to Australia except earning money because the wage here is very good compared to Taiwan' (P24-TM). Another participant agreed:

Studying English was an important factor but earning money was also an important factor to come to Australia. The economic situation is not very good so it is difficult to earn money in my country (Taiwan). I thought I could earn money in Australia (P22-TF).

Those participants who were motivated to earn money during their working holiday experience commonly mentioned Australia's high wage compared to their home countries. According to a report published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2015), Australia's hourly minimum wages exceeded US\$9 after taxes and social contributions in 2013, which was the highest net wage among the OECD member countries. On the other hand, both Japan's and Korea's net wages were between US\$5 and US\$6 according to the same report. Taiwan was not included in the report as it is not an OECD member, but another source reported that its minimum hourly wage was about US\$3.5 in 2012 (Chang, 2012). Because of this noticeable wage difference, working overseas was seen as attractive by some participants, and this

push factor was closely linked to one of the pull factors identified in this study 'job opportunity', which will be discussed later.

The fourth push factor, 'escape from routine', was identified by many participants especially those who had spent several years working full-time in their home countries. Several participants regarded the WHM program as an opportunity to change their work-oriented lifestyle. One Japanese participant explained, 'I really didn't have a particular reason for joining the WHM program. I was just tired of living in Japan and wanted to move to another country' (P6-JM). Another participant from Korea (P13-KM) also stated, 'I wanted to have a break. I had been working for three years in Korea and I felt that I needed a break...it is very difficult to have a long holiday in Korea.'

Similar to this study, 'escape' has also been identified as a core motive in major motivation studies (e.g., Crompton, 1979; Iso-Ahola, 1982; Pearce, 2005). In a study of backpackers from Asia (including both Japanese and Korean backpackers), Bui, Wilkins and Lee (2014) also identified escaping from pressure at home as a core motive. In addition, in his study of Japanese lifestyle migrants to Australia, Nagatomo (2008) found that escape from a work-oriented lifestyle was one of the key motives. Interestingly, some of the Japanese permanent residents in Australia he interviewed had experience being WHMs in Australia before migrating. This suggests that although the WHM program is designed for temporary migration with a strict one or two years of duration, the working holiday experience may encourage not only future visitation but also migration.

In addition to the four push factors discussed, four themes were identified within the data and they were categorised as pull factors. The first pull factor 'visa arrangements' was the most frequently expressed pull factor across all three nationalities. This confirms Lee and Lee's (2011) study, which also identified visa arrangement as one of the pull factors among Korean WHMs to Australia. One interesting finding in this study was that Australia was not always the first preference among the WHMs when planning their overseas experience as illustrated by the following quotes:

Actually, I first wanted to go to the UK, but I found that getting a visa is harder than getting an Australian working holiday visa. Also, when I tried to apply for the UK's visa, I realised that the application for the next year had already been closed. Australia was my

second preference...having the second working holiday visa option also influenced my decision (P7-JF).

I was thinking of going to Canada as a working holiday maker because I have been to Canada, but I heard that there will be an interview as part of the visa application process. I didn't want to spend much time getting a visa so I changed my mind and came to Australia (P19-KF).

As discussed in the previous section, no annual caps have been placed on visa numbers from countries under the Working Holiday visa (subclass 417), which included Japan, Korea and Taiwan. In contrast, although there is no annual quota for Japanese citizens, the working holiday program in New Zealand has set annual quotas for many Asian countries, including Korea (3,000 places) and Taiwan (600 places) (Immigration New Zealand, 2017). The number of people who can visit the UK under the Youth Mobility Scheme, a program similar to the Australian WHM program, is also limited and there are 1,000 spots available per annum from each Asian country, including Japan, Korea and Taiwan (The Home Office, 2017). Similarly, the working holiday program in Canada also has set annual quotas for these three countries (Government of Canada, 2017). Therefore, an applicant for this program may need to wait until the following year if the annual quota has already been filled. In contrast, the Australian WHM program accepts applications for the subclass 417 visa all year. Analysing the data in this study shows that the ease of obtaining an Australian working holiday visa compared to similar programs in other countries contributed to WHMs' destination choice.

The second pull factor, 'English-speaking country', also played a major role in the destination choice of WHMs. Since 'improving English' was the most popular push factor among the participants, this pull factor represents the destination attribute that can fulfil their needs. Many participants believed that living in an English-speaking environment would enhance the effectiveness of their language study and positively affect their language abilities. One male participant from Japan commented, 'It was also important for me that Australia is an English-speaking country. I thought that I should stay for a longer period in an English-speaking country in order to improve my English skills' (P11-JM). Similar comments were also made by many participants, supporting Cooper et al. (2004), who noted that the Australian WHM program provides WHMs from non-English-speaking countries with an opportunity to improve

their English abilities.

The third pull factor, 'positive perception of Australia', was mainly conveyed by female participants. They felt that Australia was a safe and familiar country. Literature on tourism risk suggests that in general a destination that is perceived as safe has a significant competitive advantage in attracting international visitors, as safety or simply feeling safe are particularly important factors for leisure travellers when deciding on an overseas destination (George, 2010; Wilks & Pendergast, 2010). Australia is generally seen as a safe country. In fact, the Terrorism Risk Index 2013 (Maplecroft, 2012) categorised Australia as a low-risk country. One Taiwanese participant (P25-TF) shared her conversation with her mother before coming to Australia: 'My mother was very worried when I decided to go abroad, but she believes that Australia is a very safe country so she allowed me to come to Australia.' In addition, several participants had travelled in Australia for a short period or had friends or teachers who had stayed in Australia as WHMs. A participant from Japan commented:

My English teacher when I was in an elementary school was a former working holiday maker to Australia...because of her background, I heard many things about Australia when I was young and I always wanted to come to Australia. This is why I decided to come to Australia as a working holiday maker (P9-JF).

Her personal experience represents how word-of-mouth affected her development of a positive image of the destination and her decision making, which supports wider discussion on the role of word-of-mouth in the travel decision-making process (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008; Murphy, Moscardo, & Benckendorff, 2007). Also, this example shows how the WHM program contributes to international cultural exchange at the grassroots level between Australia and the partner countries, which is the central aim of the Australian WHM program.

The fourth pull factor, 'job opportunities', was also an important factor for many participants to take into account before travelling to Australia because they wanted to ensure that their long-term stay in Australia would be financially feasible. In addition, this factor was particularly important among participants who had a strong intention to earn money during their working holiday experience, which was identified as one of the push factors in this study. This finding is consistent with Harris

and Prideaux's (2011) study of Western WHMs in Australia. They found that the existence of job opportunities was a significant factor in deciding on a destination. The following comments voiced by the participants illustrate this factor:

I wanted to improve my English so I first planned to go to Canada or America, but I heard that many Japanese people live in Australia so I thought it would be easier to live there and I wouldn't have many language barriers...and I didn't have much money so I thought Australia would be easier for me to get a job (P4-JM).

I like travelling and I always wanted to come to Australia. Luckily, I had an opportunity to get a job in Australia before coming here. This allowed me to work and travel in Australia at the same time so I decided to come (P31-TF).

Although securing a job before travelling to Australia (as participant P31-TF did) was uncommon, many participants had basic ideas of the types of jobs that may be available to them in Australia (e.g., farm jobs and kitchenhand at Asian restaurants) through obtaining information from several sources such as friends, the Internet and the travel or educational agents.

V. Conclusion

This study explored Asian youths' motivations for participating in the Australian WHM program by employing a push-pull motivational framework. The study makes several new and valuable contributions. By analysing the qualitative data collected from focus groups of a sample of WHMs from the major Asian source countries of the Australian WHM market (Japan, Korea and Taiwan), four push factors (improving English, overseas travel/living experience, earning money and escape from routine) and four pull factors (visa arrangement, English-speaking country, positive perception of Australia and job opportunities) were identified, and the underlying reasons for each factor were determined. These findings extend the existing understanding of Asian WHMs' motivational factors for coming to Australia, a topic that has not been well explored in the past, and further deepens the understanding of this market. The Asian WHM market is a growing segment, and therefore this study also contributes to an understanding of international travellers to Australia. Additionally, this study also encourages discussion in the tourism literature about young and independent Asian travellers such as WHMs, backpackers and young

female solo travellers, topics which have attracted increasing research attention especially in recent years (e.g., Paris, Musa, & Thirumoorthi, 2014; Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, & Arcodia, 2017; Zhang, Tucker, Morrison, & Wu, 2017).

In addition to the above contributions to the field, this study also has useful implications for tourism practitioners, particularly those in Australia. Understanding this cohort's unique profile as it relates to the current Australian WHM market may benefit future strategies aimed at attracting Asian WHMs to the country and may allow practitioners to provide better support and offer attractive products to this group. The pull factors identified in this study represent Australia's competitive advantage as a desirable working holiday destination in the international market. Although Australia's status as an English-speaking country attracted Asian WHMs, other factors such as the program's flexible visa arrangements also contributed to increased visitation. Additionally, a positive perception of a given country was a key factor when deciding upon a working holiday destination. This study suggests that perceived safety is also important to future visitation, as is familiarity with the country. Therefore, practitioners are encouraged to increase opportunities for Asian youths to gain exposure to information about the country. This should not be limited to information relating to working holidays, but should also include more general information such as the culture, natural environment and history of the country. Youths should be exposed to such information from an early age via a variety of communication channels, including social media.

Despite these insights, this study is not without its limitations. First, this study collected data from the major Asian WHM source countries, and some differences among national groups were observed. However, this study was exploratory in nature, as it attempted to seek a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and testing hypotheses was not an aim of the study. Therefore, as has been widely adopted in tourism studies, there is scope for follow up quantitative studies using an instrument developed from the findings of this study. A future study should utilise a large set of data from the same sample group, as this would contribute to an expansion of the current findings and would deepen the understanding of this cohort (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Veal, 2006). Second, the data used in this study was originally collected in early 2013. However, the proportion of Asian members within the Australian WHM market, especially those from the three countries investigated in this study, has not changed significantly to date (DIBP, 2016). Nev-

ertheless, future studies need to allow for changes in the market, including changes in motivational factors. Indeed, future generations may have different motivations as compared to previous groups due to various factors, such as changes in the economic or social situation of Australia or their home countries. Additionally, the world has experienced an increase in terrorist activity in recent years, and like many other countries, Australia is currently facing an increased threat of terrorism (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017). This may influence potential WHMs' perception and image of Australia and may affect their general interest in travelling abroad. Finally, this study only focused on the WHM program in Australia. Since Australia is a major provider of working holiday experiences to Asian youths, this market is important. However, similar WHM programs can be found in other English-speaking countries (such as New Zealand and the UK) and also within Asian countries (such as Japan and Korea). Thus, it is recommended that future studies investigate other working holiday destinations. Comparing the results of such studies with those of this study would enrich knowledge of Asian WHMs and other independent travellers, especially with regard to their motivations and behaviours.

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