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Female Leisure: The Motivations of Expats in South Korea

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Abstract

Serious leisure activities help expatriates overcome many of the challenges of living abroad but also can also improve their fitness and wellbeing. For female expats based in South Korea, leisure groups help them make friends, learn new skills, and overcome homesickness. Little research has been done to understand the motivations of female expat serious leisure, despite increasing global numbers. This research utilized 11 in-depth interviews with Korean based, female expats involved in serious leisure and details their motivations to join. Using grounded theory and in-depth, semi-structured interviews, the results showed that the social aspect was the core motivation, although a desire to join in was also strong, and also that the expat context meant that homesickness and a chance for new experiences also influenced their motivations. Overall the findings highlighted the crucial role leisure plays in the participants wellbeing and happiness abroad.

Keywords: Expat, Female, Motivations, Serious Leisure.

Social implications

Since female expatriates are increasing in their number and diversity, and leisure plays an important part in success, female leisure involvement can prove to be a strong component to a positive and productive expat life.

Originality/value

A clarification of leisure motivations for female expats is offered that helps understand the unique situation. Also by researching various leisure activities, the results show a diverse array of motivations that could relate to expats the globe over

Female Serious Leisure: The Motivations of Expats in South Korea

Serious leisure is where participants pursue an activity such that they find it fulfilling, engaging, possibly use it to foster a career, and also develop a range of specialized knowledge and skills. One of three forms of leisure identified by Stebbins (2001), serious leisure is often undertaken by collectives of individuals who “form grassroots associations (groups) that permit their members to follow their leisure passion cooperatively” (Bendle & Patterson, 2009), and these organizations are predominantly organized to create or manage the group itself (Stebbins, 2005). These leisure pursuits often appeal to a diverse range of people, including expatriates found all over the world, whose success is often linked to their open mindedness and being extraverted (Harari, et al., 2018).

Expats often seek an element of ‘home’ in leisure options (Choi, et al., 2020), and these leisure connections offer social support (Johnson, et al., 2003). Finnacord Consulting estimated global expatriate numbers at approximately 66.2 million in 2018, which was expected to reach 87.5 million by 2021 (‘Financial...’, 2018), an increase of 49% from 17 years earlier (Zaman & Das, 2019). South Korea has rapidly opened up in the last 20 years to become a popular expat location (Chung, 2020), and hosts expats who participate in a diverse range of leisure. With female expats often having different challenges when moving abroad due to cultural and organizational recruitment barriers, along with issues concerning relocation (Marr, 2016), understanding the role

FEMALE EXPAT LEISURE MOTIVATIONS

3

of serious leisure and motivations becomes important, yet female expatriates leisure motivations are under researched.

Since various leisure benefits have frequently been identified and expat lives can be challenging, understanding motivations can help leisure groups organize their activities and recruit and maintain members. This research seeks to develop an understanding of the motivations of female expats involved in serious leisure in South Korea, focusing on 11 participants involved in six pursuits. As little research has been conducted into the world of female expat leisure motivations, or female expat lives in general (Kunz, 2016), understanding their compulsion to join is of increasing importance as expat numbers continue to rise globally (“Immigration”, 2021). Understanding their drives could offer useful insights for leisure scholars and also expat community’s around the world seeking members and growth.

Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research questions

- What are the main motivations of female expatriates involved in serious leisure?
- What role did the expat context had on these leisure motivations?

By answering these questions, leisure groups that appeal to female expats can better understand their drives, design their promotions and activities, balance their activities and social components, and succeed as effective organizations. This information is important as the value of leisure for expat success abroad has been noted and, along with individual seeking leisure, organizations can also help connect expats to such groups to aid their transition to their new country.

This article is structured as follows. First, it defines serious leisure and expatriates, defining them as a migrant subsection. Then it reviews the current literature on SL motivations and outlines

examples of expat leisure and motivations. After outlining the research methodology, it will answer the main research questions. This article then discusses the implications of these findings for female expatriates. Finally, limitations of this study and directions for future research are outlined.

Literature Review

Serious Leisure Perspective

Serious leisure was defined as part of the ‘Serious Leisure Perspective’, which has its roots in research conducted by Stebbins in 1973 (Stebbins, 2017) and divides all leisure pursuits into one of three categories. Serious leisure endeavors have the potential to contribute strongly to a participant’s subjective wellbeing, may increase their physical fitness, happiness and social lives, among other benefits. *Casual leisure* activities are short term, immediately rewarding and require little or no training, allowing for ease of participation, and includes concepts of play, sociable conversation and relaxation (Stebbins, 2006). *Project based leisure* activities are more complex, goal oriented, and might be one off endeavors which often have one end goal in mind. Lastly, *serious leisure* are pursuits that are rewarding and substantial in nature and deemed interesting by the participant (Stebbins, 2009).

Serious leisure has been found to include several aspects that are also important components of SWB (Lee & Hwang, 2018), or subjective wellbeing, (people evaluations of their overall happiness and satisfaction (Diener, et al., 2018)) and has been researched substantially more than the other two (Stebbins, 2020). As leisure pursuits help make life ‘worth living’ (Elkington & Stebbins, 2014), the diverse range and scope of serious leisure activities substantially

FEMALE EXPAT LEISURE MOTIVATIONS

5

contributes to the happiness of many people. Serious leisure activities are various and defined by six distinct qualities: the need to persevere, the potential for a career, the requirement of developing new skills and knowledge, the receiving of different durable benefits, the creation of a unique ethos around the group, and the tendency for people to identify strongly with the chosen pursuit (Stebbins, 1992).

Stebbins (1982) further clarified serious leisure by outlining a range of rewards that participants receive which were divided into two categories: personal and social. The personal rewards include enrichment from positive experiences, self-development and actualization, and also the chance for self-expression via using their skills, abilities and knowledge. Other personal rewards are an improvement in self-image, self-gratification from the enjoyment of participation, a sense of regeneration and re-creation via membership, and lastly potential financial rewards. The social rewards include attraction from interacting with other members, group accomplishment from achieving group goals, and finally the contributions to the maintenance and growth of the group.

Figure 1 below outlines all of these aspects of serious leisure.

Figure 1

Stebbins Qualities of Serious Leisure (1982)

Distinguishing qualities		
1. Perseverance	4. Unique ethos	
2. Durable benefits	5. Effort/training/knowledge/skills	
3. Career progression	6. Identification with activity	
Rewards- Personal:	Rewards- Social:	Costs:
1. Personal enrichment	8. Social attraction	1. Work clashes
2. Self-actualization	9. Group accomplishment	2. Family clashes
3. Self-expression	10. Contribution to group	3. Injuries
4. Self-image	maintenance/development	4. Stage fright
5. Self-gratification		5. Frustrations
6. Re-creation		
7. Financial return		

Note: This figure outlines both the six qualities that Stebbins identified as being part of classifying serious leisure activities, and also lists the 10 rewards and 5 costs that participants in serious leisure must balance out.

Serious leisure concerns activities that are pursued to such a degree that the participants find it fulfilling, engaging, and through this activity learn and use a range of specialized knowledge and skills (2001) This concept has undergone development, expansion and reclarification for 49 years since it was first identified through fieldwork (Stebbins, 2020). Serious leisure includes

FEMALE EXPAT LEISURE MOTIVATIONS

7

traditional activities like running (Major, 2001), kayaking (Bartam, 2001), rugby (Cheng, et al., 2016), unique activities like Taekwondo (Kim, Dattilo & Heo, 2011), gardening (Cheng, Stebbins & Packer, 2017), and belly dancing (Krau, 2010), and also endeavors such as home brewing (Murray & O'Neill, 2015) and football fandom (Gibson, Willming & Holdnak, 2002). The six activities in this research were confirmed, via research and the interviews, to offer the 11 participants a 'serious' leisure experience.

Expatriates

Globalization has led to an increased number of people living and working abroad (Mittal & Singh, 2019) to meet the demand for professional and skilled employees (Dousin & Suling, 2021). Migration was defined by the UN Migration Agency as "any person who is moving or has moved across an international border ... away from his/her habitual place of residence" (N.D.), encompassing a broad range of people from refugees, seasonal workers, international students, to expatriates. The number reached 217 million in 2019 (United Nations, N.D), and is expected to continue to rise. The definition of traditional expatriates has changed and is considered a contestable concept (Kunz, 2020), and Farrer noted it often referred to "privileged, credentialed, highly-mobile, white businessman" (2018), whilst a more modern definition clarifies it as a physically relocated to different country for work reasons and a limited time duration (Vaiman, et al., 2021). Regardless, expatriation can now be labelled as 'commonplace' (Cho & Chew, 2019). Kunz noted the term 'expatriate' was deemed to have connotations of race and also power relations connected to postcolonialism (2020), something seen in this research as 10 of the 11 respondents came to Korea using an E1 teaching Visa, something only available to those from 6 specific countries.

Female expat numbers continue to rise- of the global population working abroad, approximately half are female (UNPD, 2018). Females in traditional expats roles had to overcome challenges such as issues with family, overcoming loneliness and establishing a suitable work-life balance (Shortland, 2018), also found in research on the inability of expat families to become adjusted to their new surroundings (Hung-Wen, 2007). This was backed up by research stating the important of expats social lives to help them succeed (Guttormsen, et al., 2018), a point where serious leisure can play a crucial role to reduce such failures. Research into expat managers in Taiwan noted that improved social interaction with the host community helped them adjust to their new surroundings (Chao, et al., 2019), something serious leisure often offers.

For the purpose of this research, expats are defined as those based permanently or semi permanently abroad, differentiated from immigrations, who move permanently, or refugees, who were forced from their home countries. Expats choose to relocate overseas for their own benefit, often for work, and usually for favorable changes, reasons that many other migrants and refugees are not afforded. Research found almost half of expats (46%) felt living abroad offered them a better work-life balance (“Working Hours Not ...”, (n.d.)), while success abroad was found to be more likely for those expats who are better equipped for cultural differences (Kumar, et al., 2019). As female expat numbers increase in size, and leisure can be a strong factor in their time abroad being successful, understanding leisure motivations can offer useful insights for leisure groups and organizations looking to employ international workers.

Expat Leisure

For expats, leisure offers a great opportunity to overcome the stress and anxiety that comes with moving to another country and culture (“The Benefits Of ...”, 2019), while the array

FEMALE EXPAT LEISURE MOTIVATIONS

9

of leisure pursuits expats partake in varies according to the economic, political of sociocultural sphere they exist in (Van Bochove & Engbersen, 2015). Research comparing leisure habits between host populations and expats in the UAE found significant differences in which leisure activities they partook in (Valek & Fotiadis, 2018), noting that expats preferred sporting activities. To highlight this difference, most of the leisure pursuits in this research were introduced to South Korea by expats, an idea even applying to professional sports like baseball, introduced by missionaries in 1905 (Reaves, 2004).

Walter and Ito (2017) found that leisure positively impacted the overall happiness of Chinese Canadians, similar to the experience of western migrants in South Korea (Kim, et al., 2018) offering a key motivation. Research highlighted the positive influence of leisure for migrants in South Australia (Hasmi, et al., 2014) and leisure in multi-ethnic communities helped minorities to contact other groups, share their culture and improve their health (Stodolska, 2015). Communication and interaction with the host community can be a challenge for many expats (Farh, et al., 2010), so utilizing leisure groups to overcome this offers a positive impact on their time abroad. Expat youths based in Shanghai sought leisure activities as a means to develop a connection to their new home (Sander, 2016), while Irish and New Zealand expats in Korea participated in leisure activities in order to socialize, participate, become fitter and use their leadership skills (Leathem, 2018). For expats all over the globe, traditionally considered more adventurous and likely to take risks (Morence, Esteves, Silva & Moreira, 2021), leisure can become an important part of establishing a positive experience abroad.

Female Leisure Participation

Female leisure researched often focuses on specific pursuits of participants, but frequently highlights the differences in attitudes and activities compared to men. Body image was found to be a leisure constraint for both college and middle aged women (Liechty, et al., 2006). Physical leisure amongst Latino females was influenced by factors such as physical environment and cultural values (Skowron, et al., 2008), which could also apply to female expats in new environments. For female leisure participants, the motivations may vary from those of men. Kim, Brown and Young noted that women participate more in passive leisure forms (2019), like reading, listening to music and family time. In terms of physical activity, motivations among students included fitness, fun, health, stress management, social, among others, (Cerar, et al., 2017, & Kondric, et al., 201) but female participants also include drives like weight management and their physical appearance (Biddle, et al., 2011, Egli, et al., 2011).

Among female expats dealing with different cultural influences, research noted that western influences impacted leisure participation in both China and Taiwan (Tsai & Zhou, 2015), while female migrants in China were found to have leisure constraints based on their move to a new country (Li & Stodloska, 2021). Research into female expats noted that a lack of leisure activities was one of the main reason impeding their cultural adjustment (Khalil, Jabeen, Jadoon, & Salman, 2016). Female leisure participation in Scandinavian counties was impacted by time restrictions (Thrane, 2010), and female leisure attitudes and perceptions were found to be different between Chinese and western woman (Tsai, 2010). With serious leisure offering a range of benefits for participation, yet motivations varying, understanding these drives continues

to be an interesting field of study that can be helpful for both the leisure groups and expats themselves.

Motivations for Expats Leisure

Research found extroverts ranked higher in all forms of motivation (Lin, Wang, & Cheng, 2007), which complements findings that found extraverted expats require less effort to adjust (Rafiq, et al., 2019), adjustments that all respondents in this paper demonstrated. Leisure motivations can be very diverse, and have shown to have a positive correlation to participation and satisfaction (Hsieh, 1998). Leisure needs were found to “change across situations” (Iso-Ahola, 1980), and leisure motivations can change over time or as participant’s engagement (casual to serious) or leisure roles change, both aspects that could impact expat leisure drive. Connected to this is the fact that serious leisure has increasingly become an important avenue for people to develop a sense of identity (Green & Jones, 2005), make friends (Stebbins, 2005), and improve their life satisfaction (Heo, et al., 2013).

Serious leisure was described as a pathway to growing a community (Gallant, et al., 2013 B) and the social worlds that develop around the activity not only help participants learn about and grow with the group, but also impact the identities they develop within it (Lee & Ewert, 2019). Female leisure participation in China was found to be more traditional and conservative than males (Xu, Chen & Liu, 2021) and also influenced by their lifestyle and social class. Overall, for females involved in serious leisure, it is unclear if their motivations impacted the social benefits they received from their involvement (Shupe & Gagné, 2016), highlighting a reason to further understand leisure motivations. As little research has been done on female expat leisure motivations, especially in South Korea, this research aims to contribute to this gap.

Methodology

Participants

All of the research participants are female expatriates based in South Korea involved in various serious leisure pursuits. Six different serious leisure groups were identified, three sports teams (Touch rugby, women's rugby and Gaelic football) and three arts groups (The Seoul Players, Seoul Shakespeare Group and Wordsmiths), and each group was based in Seoul and predominantly catered to expatriates. The three sports groups trained regularly and competed predominantly domestically, whilst the arts groups mixed between regular month shows and season performances. The commitment and efforts of these participants helped to define these as serious leisure pursuits. From five different countries, the respondents included various ethnicities and backgrounds.

The leisure groups were contacted to identify female expat participants who had also been involved with the groups for at least two years. Upon checking that each participant was also a consistent and committed member (this confirming their serious leisure status), eleven respondents were chosen. They were aged between 28 and 49, and most worked in education and utilized one of South Korea's E Visa's (A special Visa designed to attract foreign English teachers). Living in South Korea for an average of over five years, these respondents were well settled and comfortable living in South Korea, and were also well educated and had significant life experience prior to moving abroad. Each was contacted and given an overview of the research goals and all agreed to take part in this paper.

FEMALE EXPAT LEISURE MOTIVATIONS

13

Table 1.*Interview Respondents*

#	Age	Country of Origin	Education	Profession	Years in Korea
1	37	New Zealand	Masters (Education)	University Professor	7
2	36	USA	Bachelors (Psychology)	English Teacher	9
3	29	Ireland	Bachelors	Teacher	2
4	33	Ireland	Masters (Literature)	University Professor	5
5	49	Canada	Masters	Teacher	12
6	37	New Zealand	Masters	University Professor	10
7	37	USA	Bachelors (Film)	Voice Actor	5
8	30	USA	Bachelors	Yoga Instructor	5
9	33	USA	Masters Ethnomusicology	University Professor	6
10	28	Ireland	Bachelors Arts	Elementary Teacher	5.5
11	28	South Africa	Drama & Film	Children's Theatre	5

Note. This table outlines the main details for the 11 participants in this research.

Procedure.

Grounded theory was chosen as it fit this research topic, in that it analyses social processes that have previously received little or no research or focus (Milliken, 2010), and female expat leisure motivations is such a category. This research utilized semi-structured qualitative interviews

that allowed the respondents to share their stories in detail, allowing both time and room for them to explore topics and ideas in a spontaneous and natural manner (Pollock, 2019). Through this interview process, the respondents can share their independent thoughts, be more candid and honest, and there is also room for the interviewee to follow up different perspectives and leads as they arise (Adams, 2015). The nature of serious leisure lends itself to qualitative research (Stebbins, 2005) as previous research on female expat leisure motivations is rare, meaning that this form of research is the most useful (Boyce & Neale, 2006), with the freedom to explore the topic with the constraints that quantitative might impose, and the risk of missing key ideas (Devault, 2017). This method analyses the data and strives to find new or emerging theories, often using inductive and exploratory methods, and utilizes the interviews and analysis to find meaning (Hennink, et al., 2010).

In-depth interviews are used as the participants can share their thoughts and feelings with the freedom for self-expression (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012), an important aspect for research such as this, that requires detailed investigation and analysis, whilst also allowing for the participants are encouraged to talk in depth, offer clarifications (Showkat & Parveen, 2017). These interviews can also offer detailed narrative descriptions for analysis (Patton, 2005), gain deeper insights whilst setting an atmosphere of confidentiality that facilitates trust (Writing, 1996) and allows for more information and details than other methods (Boyce & Neal, 2006). With in-depth interviews being considered one of the efficient techniques to cumulate qualitative research in social sciences (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pedersen, 2013), such as this research. The semi-structured interview guide was compiled using an analysis of previous research into serious leisure motivations, volunteer work, and the challenges of expatriate living, and also a review about the

different groups and their history and activities in South Korea. Questions in the semi-structured guide included several on their life in Korea plus prior to arriving, some about their background as leisure participants and volunteers, many about their introduction to their leisure group, before moving into questions about their role, commitment, motivations and benefits from their involvement. There were also some about the identity of the group and challenges of the role and finally some about their future plans, thus hoping to offer an array of opportunity's for the respondents to discuss their attitudes towards their leisure experiences.

All interviews were conducted in English and utilized the semi-structured questionnaire, but were also conducted in a relaxed environment. By meeting at a location of the participants choosing, offering both an explanation of the research and a brief overview of my own history as a serious leisure volunteer in Korea, and also noting that all of their answers will be kept anonymous, the interviews were able to be completed in a calm yet productive manner. The respondents were also given ample time to express themselves when answering the questions, and also time at the end ask any questions. Overall, this process offers a sophisticated understanding of the data using grounded theory than using a theory used in previous studies (Creswell, 2012).

Data collection.

The interviews were conducted in Seoul, South Korea. Time was taken to allow the interviewees to relax, feel comfortable and also to gather background information. The interviews lasted between 50 and 90 minutes. The questions covered the participant's background, reasons for moving abroad, their situation in Korea, their serious leisure activity, their drives to become involved and their opinions about their activity and South Korea. They were all recorded into an Mp3 format via an iPhone and all specific references removed for the sake of leisure relationships.

Data analysis.

Grounded theory was utilized in this research as it is used to develop theories derived empirically from the real world (Oktay, 2021), Grounded theory allows the researched to generate new theory and contacts from the data extracted via the interviews and analysis (Chun, Birks & Francis, 2019), and then allows the researched to divide and sort the information into categories via qualitative coding (Charmaz, 2014). Quite simply, this theory allows the researcher to explain a process or scheme associated with some social phenomenon (Birks & Mills, 2015), and thus suited the goals of this paper. This research used in-depth qualitative interviews with 11 female serious leisure volunteers based in South Korea. Once collected, the interviews were transcribed into word documents and analyzed with the use of Quirkos, a program that aids in the coding and organizing of text data. This process “ensures that the search will be accurate and complete according to a publicly available defined criterion” (Life, 1994), and Quirkos helps make the process more efficient and timely. The information was coded three times to distill the words and thoughts of the respondents into usable ideas. These three levels were initial coding, focused coding and theoretical coding, which are the core steps for conducting grounded theory analysis (Adu, 2019). Coding is a process where data is “assigned a truncated, symbolic meaning” (Saldaña, 2014) and utilized emergent ones (Stuckey, 2015).

Once categorized, the focus is on analyzing the data, firstly through ‘data reduction’ (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to distill the responses into suitable components for clarification and labeling, and also to identify a clear and categorical overview of the issues and themes found in the interviews (Burnard, 1991). The process of analysis seeks to identify themes within the data and then collate the different examples of these themes (Burnard, et al., 2008), categorizing ideas and

FEMALE EXPAT LEISURE MOTIVATIONS

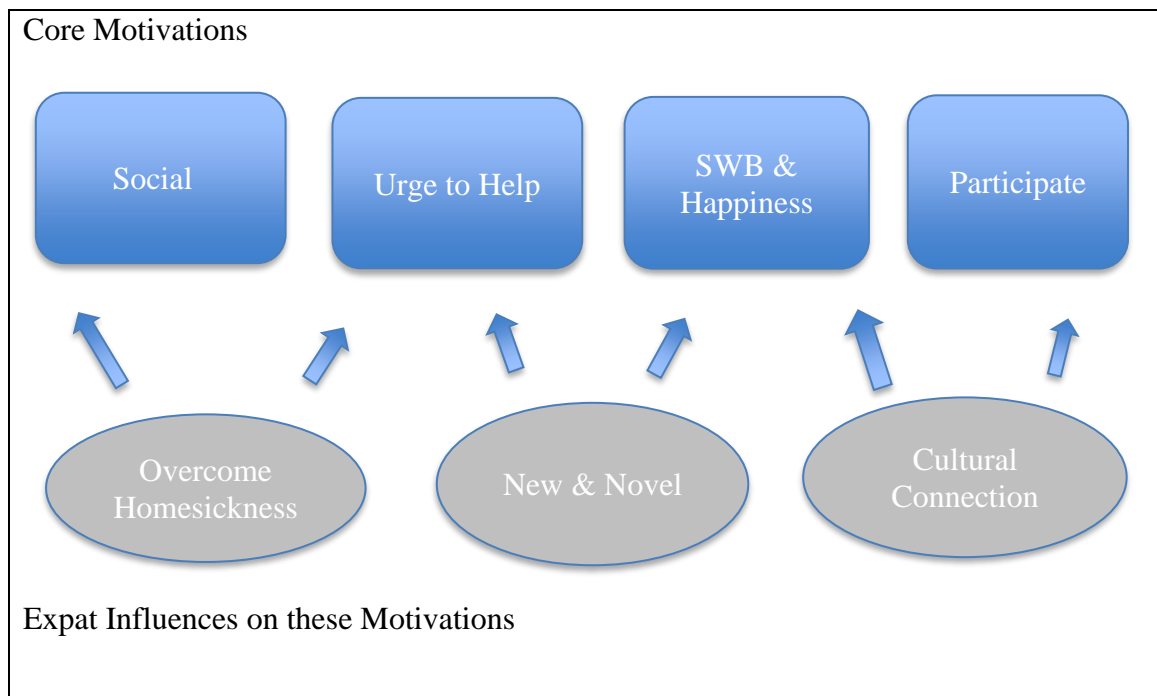
17

developing a description of each (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). By using an inductive process, where the findings are driven by the participants' experiences and descriptions to guide the analysis (Azungah, 2018), themes, categories or concepts are used to answer the research questions (Kyngäs, 2020). These emerging themes are utilized to offer an understanding and meaning of the data (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2020) Finally, the results were labelled and analyzed in a manner to offer clear insights into the key research questions.

Results

Figure 2.

Motivations of Female leisure and Expat Influence on These Motivations



Motivations.

Four distinctly different motivations were noted by the participants which drove them to join the groups.

Social.

Social reasons were the most common motivation stated and were often strongly described. Making friends was considered easy; “You’re guaranteed to walk into 15 people who HAVE to be your friends” (3). Another spoke fondly about likeminded people; “I think that’s awesome, people who are being united by health habits“ (2), and also of the ease and freedom the group offered

“The social benefits are... making friends- and getting to know them without putting on all the ‘airs’.” Another found a kinship in the group- “I was like a weird little kid, and I found people that were like me.” (7) She also noted the groups importance to her life “My whole social life is wrapped up in that group.” (7). Discussing the social component, another noted;

There is a social aspect, and friendships are obviously developed because the sport does become very important to people, you are competing on the pitch with these people to win, you have to trust each other, friendships are formed and developed (4).

Lastly, one member noted how this aspect appealed - “I think that’s what a big draw is...I also think the social side of things...a large group of people who meet up quite regularly and have a good bit of ‘craic’.” (10)

Urge to Help.

Many participants were driven to help the leisure groups maintenance or development. One desired an impact on the group’s direction; “I think when you want to be involved, if you want to have any say at all in artistic vision, you have to be involved in that level.” (7) Another was driven by frustration: “I was just kind of tired of the shitty coaches we had, just thrown in for the sake of it. And they were men who just weren’t very experienced coaches and weren’t very committed or passionate about it. I was like, fuck that, we can do this ourselves” (10). One joined with a specific goal (“I was hopeful that we could build women’s (activity)” (6)), and another driven by the enjoyment (“It’s fun to organize a work out and be able to have the reigns for a little bit” (8)). Two others noted they just wanted their leisure group to grow; “I find all I want is the best for the club...it’s about just doing what I can to develop the club” (3).

I just think if you're going to spend so much of your time, with something that you're not getting paid for, it all boils down to a love of (activity) and wanting to be involved and wanting to create things for other people (11).

Wellbeing & Happiness

Several participants discussed being motivated in a bid to improve their overall wellbeing and happiness. One stated that being involved “definitely does make me happy in my life” (1), and added;

Everything that I can do helps me to feel more at peace with myself and I don't feel like my time is being wasted... I feel that definitely when you start resenting the place that you are living in, you want to leave.

The fun aspect was also shared by this respondent- “I discovered I really enjoyed having other westerners around, especially other kiwis” (1). Another discussed being driven by the overall contribution her activity offered, “It's a way of making people stronger physically, socially and mentally” (2), whilst one simply put it that “it is one of the main reasons that I am so happy in Korea.” (4) A balanced life was also noted by this respondent, stating participating offered something outside of work- “I think, some people might just wanna be involved, just to be involved with something, To have something else going, rather than just teaching English” (4).

Participation.

Several respondents joined purely for the leisure activity. One simply joined “Because I wanted to play” (6), while another talked about being involved as an alternative to partying: “It's

about getting that adrenaline pumping in your body. It's about getting those serotonin receptors stimulated so you can get happy without alcohol." (2) She added that "I needed to control something. So that was actually my means of taking control of my life, so this hobby...was born from a need to just gain control." Another respondent noted the leisure organization impacted her decision to choose Korea. She stated "To play (activity). 100%, first, that was my first reason and still is my first reason, when I first came" (4). Whilst participation is traditionally a behavioral outcome of motivation, in this case, it was deemed to an actual driving force to motivate them to join the group

Expat Influence on Motivations

Throughout the conversations, the participants gave deeper insights into their involvements with these leisure groups, and revealed aspects that exist between smaller motivations or benefits that were impacted by the fact that they were based in a different country and culture. These insights were revealed in prolonged discussion about their lives as participants and as expats, and all of these components were discussed in reflection to their lives as expats or in relation to their lives back home.

Overcome Homesickness

Being in a foreign country brings a range of challenges, and these impacted leisure motivations in terms of dealing with their new surroundings. Whilst not an overt motivation to initially undertake these pursuits, this factor would exist somewhere between the social and wellbeing motivations mentioned above. Frequently stated words like community, support and family highlighted the importance of the groups, and these responses were amongst the clearest

and strongest given. The connection was made clear by one; “Being an expat over here, we don’t have family, we don’t have a lot of relatives, so our friends become our family, and being in a team environment definitely helps you form a different type of family” (1).

Living among 10 million people can compound these feelings, and another said the group “Gives me a sense of community that I have, a so-called family. Someone, people I can rely on, that I’m not alone, in a big city full of millions of people” (10). Two others mentioned the expat connection more clearly- “I think when you are an expat away from home, it can become your family” (4), “It gives you a community. We don’t have our families here, this becomes our family here” (7). One spoke of her fondness for joining the group- “When I found it, I felt like it was home. I felt like, just...oh these are my people... that this is my space” (8), and added “It’s my community, it feels like some family, like home.”

Reflecting on her how she feels towards the group, one noted “It made me immediately feel home here”(10). Regarding other people, she added “It’s a huge support system. I think some people who might be struggling, from being so far away from home.” The family comparison was highlighted by another, stating “This is what sports should be about, not just my team and me being competitive- this is just a family” (5). A final respondent stated proudly “We’re a massive support structure for everyone.” (11)

New and Novel Opportunities

Part of the expatriate experience is trying new things. Expat serious leisure offers many a welcome change, challenge and new experience. When discussing the expat situation group, one noted that “The lifestyle, is just fairly easy going, and (you’re) willing to try new things, open to other experiences” (10). Another noted that her participation was driven by self-development- “I

think I was able to carve out a lot of opportunities here that I wouldn't necessarily have if I was in the states, especially with coaching," (2) and added implications for her future; "I'm teaching (but) hopefully I'll be phasing that out completely once I get home- I 'll be full time coaching" (2).

Others shared chances they would not have back home as motivating factors- "We are invited to the 'China Games',.. there is the Asian Gaelic games, ...it's the 2nd biggest Gaelic competition in the world" (4). The chance to meet new people was also noted as an important aspect for participation; "I get around with people that I probably wouldn't socialize with otherwise." (1)

Two respondents spoke of being motivated by the uniqueness- "We are an expat theatre community making theatre for the people, by the people, and that takes a lot of time, a lot of effort and lot of responsibility." (11) Another was driven by its potential, "The women's (activity)...is that it's the most untapped sport." (6) Being involved in a leisure community that appealed to broad participants was noted;

We've had so many amazing performers, from... all across the LGBTQA community, and then we've got people that are Asexual, polyamorous, or not monogamous polyamorous, just people from all over the spectrum are sharing such vulnerable truths about themselves (8).

One respondent spoke fondly of being able to broaden their social horizons via the group; "You just have to open up your mind... kind of be involved with people that you'd most likely would never cross paths with" (10).

Cultural Connection

One aspects noted by several respondents was how they were driven to feel a connection to and share their home culture. It was often mentioned as an almost afterthought to their initial involvement, but a strong reason for their prolonged engagement. One remarked her activity “was something that was very familiar to me, it kind of reminded me a little of home” (1), and added “it definitely helps that when we live overseas, we try and do stuff that reconnects us to what we would be doing back in NZ.” Another New Zealander spoke to this, stating that her activity was “Something to remind you of home, cause you grow up doing that“(6). This connection to home was also a spoken of strongly by another, stating she was - “ proud of being Irish and having this sport that I can share with a girl from halfway around the world.” (10)

Discussion

Figure 2 & Overall Themes

The results from this researched were summarized by Figure 1, which outlined both the motivations of female leisure and also the expat influence on these motivations. First the four main motivating factors that drove these respondents to join these leisure groups, and these could possibly be applied to leisure participants based in their home country. Then three specific aspects of expat living that also influenced these motivations were identified separately, and were to be uniquely found in leisure taking place in a foreign country.

Motivations

Motivations for serious leisure vary, but this researched found the social aspect was most commonly mentioned and described in an array of contexts. This would be a part of the social

FEMALE EXPAT LEISURE MOTIVATIONS

25

worlds that exist around these groups, which is one of the characteristics of serious leisure activities (Veal, 2017), and are included as part of the “Unique Ethos” (one of the six distinguishing qualities). These social worlds not only help layout how members interact and behavior within the group, but also guide them as both their connection and commitment to the group (Lee & Ewert, 2019). Most respondents expressed that a majority of their social lives were “wrapped up” in their leisure groups, though whether this was a motivation factor for all of them or an outcome was not 100% clear. For some, this was not only the core motivating factor, but far exceeded the actual leisure activity as an important factor.

The urge to help was a surprising motivating factor, which would in some way be due to limited amounts of experienced people for several activities. This factor leaned more into the mixed leisure aspects, where all of the participants took on a volunteer within the leisure group. This itself offered insights into not only the group and the organization, but also about the individuals themselves, despite all having different backgrounds. For example, some were involved with these leisure activities in their home countries and others having previous experience in leadership, coaching and volunteering. Regardless, several remarked that they wanted to contribute above and beyond the role of simply participating and were driven to help out, and not for any obviously other tangible benefits. Such unselfishness can be possibly attributed to the type of personality types that many expats have, especially in leisure community’s with more limited numbers of participants and experienced leaders, such as those found in South Korea.

The desire for improved wellbeing and happiness was also noted, and whilst this factor is common across most serious leisure pursuits, it was expressed in various ways, including mental, physical and being productive. Research covering serious leisure benefits amongst older adults can

offer insights- it was found that not only did serious leisure have a positive impact on depression rates, but that their progress and growth within the activity could also reduce depression (Heo, et al., 2018). Expats move abroad for many reasons, but their new situation can compound various emotions, thus the importance of striving for happiness can be accentuated significantly. Lastly, the motivations to participate represent a core drive for any leisure pursuits, not only serious leisure. With many E1 Visa holders in Korea working 30 hours or significantly less, there is often a lot of free time, which is definitely a factor in wanting to do something else.

Expatriate Influence on Motivations

During data analysis, it became apparent that along with the main motivations to become involved in serious leisure, a subcategory was emerging based on those factors that only exist due to the respondents being expats. Therefore, it became apparent to differentiate these factors and outline them as different to their main motivations that might exist had they been based in their home country. The expatriate nature of this research was also a strong part of the social motivations. Serious leisure is one great option for expatriate females to make friends, deal with homesickness, find support, and exist in a safe space, to the point that some participants researched leisure prior to coming to South Korea. As ten out of 11 of the respondents were involved in their activity prior, they were suited to become involved as a high level. Most of these groups had strong social worlds enveloping them, a core aspect of serious leisure, and some had regular social events and even “Social Activities Officers” to help organize these activities.

Research into “sports expats” (those who had moved abroad predominantly to pursue sporting endeavors) found challenges they were faced with included language difficulties, cultural differences, and also an inability to interact with the host population (Van Bakel & Salzbrenner,

2019), all which are areas that the participants in this paper would have had to overcome and also which their leisure participation would have helped. The cultural connection aspect was noted by Stodolska (2015), offering a motivation that would only apply to expats.

Overall, the participants, despite their differing motivations, various backgrounds, and the diversity in the leisure activities, all demonstrated a strong affinity towards the activity. With people moving through an array of roles concerning their involvement with the leisure pursuit and group, and the expat nature accentuating the role the groups can play in the respondents' lives, the motivations could be less overt than they might be if they were in their home country. These results were in line with previous research on female leisure in Korea that noted the positive effects of leisure that structural facilitators (similar to what these groups had in place) provide (Kang, et al., 2017), and was also in line with the importance of leisure and social networking for female Austrian expats (Fischlmayr, et al., 2010). From the expat community perspective, these results were also comparable to research on Chinese-Canadian volunteers that found the concepts of "helping friends" and also "community contributions" are main motivating factors, similar to the social and urge to help reasons identified in this study (Yuen, 2013). These results helped offer a clearer understanding of why female expats choose to undertake various serious leisure endeavors,

Conclusion

Overview

This study looked to understand the motivations of female expat leisure participants in South Korea. Further to this, this paper sought to understand how the expat context impacted their

motivations. The results showed that although there were a range of motivating factors, the social component was the main reason to participate, and the desire to help the group was important. The social drive would have been highly accentuated by the expat nature of the respondents, who have all been living away from their family and friends for periods of over three years on average. Social support is found to help overcome home sickness, deal with culture shock and differences and provide the support that is otherwise lacking abroad. Despite the respondents being from different countries, ages, ethnicities, educational backgrounds, and involved with different leisure groups, there was consistency in their drives, and the expat nature of this study was most likely a main factor in these motivations.

As demonstrated by these respondents, many aimed to help their groups and pay little or no thought to how they could grow and develop through their efforts, something that leisure organizations could use when recruiting and selecting new volunteers. The expatriate nature of their participation (being foreigners based in South Korea) seemed to accentuate or impact their motivations to become involved in these leisure activities. Many noted how important the leisure community was for support and forming a family, yet these comments were often secondary drives and seemed to be far from initial motivations yet very important to their lives as female expats. The respondents were very proud of their participation and spoke fondly of their so perhaps their personality types lead to them not only be more likely to live abroad but also seek out leisure pursuits – truly an important component of living in a new country and culture. The research seems to indicate that it is the strength, attitudes and resolve of these participants the might have impacted their motivations, especially the drive to help the group. Overall, their motivations to be involved

in leisure were very much impacted by both the isolation and freedom of living abroad and most would be different to their drives had they not moved abroad.

Limitations and Future Research

There were several limitations for this research. The first focused on the difficulty of comparing different leisure groups, both sports to arts and also mixed and gender specific. In an effort to understand the female expat experience broadly, the various serious leisure pursuits were selected but this meant the respondents were also more varied and perhaps harder to gain commonalities. Also, several participants had a stronger history with their leisure activity prior to coming to South Korea, perhaps influencing their motivation, so focusing on either those with or without this background can offer more comparable data. Lastly, in order to gain more focused insights, perhaps quantitative research might have been better and conducted on just one group or similar groups to offer clearer outcomes.

Future research might focus exclusively on one leisure activity, or perhaps separate the sports or arts groups. Other possible areas include comparing aspects from this study with male expat participants, or comparing the experiences of leisure participants both home and abroad to determine the differences in motivations. Future research could focus exclusively on female only leisure pursuits to gain clearer insights or compare them with mixed leisure for more understanding. This paper also falls in line with a call for research to focus on how individual and collective outcomes of serious leisure can be linked, especially for female leisure (Gallant, et al., 2013). Lastly, research could focus more on South Korea as a host nation for female expats as this country is going through a period of change, and gender equality seems to be improving to a certain degree,

FEMALE EXPAT LEISURE MOTIVATIONS

30

with the country even acknowledging that it is finally feeling the impact of the #METOO movement (Bicker, 2018).

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42