

Abstract

Using social positioning theory and the concept of the liminoid, the objectives of this qualitative research project were three-fold: 1) investigate how social positioning affects the information behaviour of volunteer tourists; 2) determine what effects cultural confusion (aka “culture shock”), physical location, gender, technical skill, and previous intercultural education and/or experiences have on the information behaviour of volunteer tourists; and finally, 3) suggest how non-governmental organizations can use the research findings to assist volunteer tourists to successfully undertake their placements. These questions were explored through observation and semi-structured interviews with fifteen volunteer tourists in Thailand. Previous travel experience proved to be a significant predictor of participants’ information behaviour. Volunteer tourists reported more consciousness of the embodiment of information and the concept of face than they did at home. The results emphasize the importance of developing a theory of liminoidal information behaviour, in order to explore how people in the liminoid – a place between cultures where identities are often suspended – interact with information.