

# JOINER'S TOUR; AN ETHNOGRAPHY STUDY

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**Abstract:** This research tackles about the new trend in Tourism industry which is Joiners tour. It opens new ideas for everyone that can help to boost the tourism industry. Conducting this research of joiner's tour gives a different perspective on tour packages. What is the difference in joining between travel agency and freelance tour organizers. It also shows the reasons why they choose between travel agency and freelance tour organizer. In line with these researchers are using semi-structured questionnaires to the interviewee so that they can have a deeper conversation about the said topic that can help the researcher to know further about the joiner's tour. This research aims to help the tourism industry and other stakeholders for the growth of this Industry and acknowledge this new concept of tour in the country.

**Keywords:** Tour, Joiners Tour, Travel packages, organizer, travel agency.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

A dollar can now take you farther than you imagine. A new trend is surfacing in the traveling industry. It makes traveling possible for those who are in tight budget. It is most commonly known as "Joiner's Tour". Tour is an arrange journey wherein the participants or guest will go to a certain destination or attractions that interest them with a coordinator or organizer. The said kind of tour is always having the same concept that is only good for family, Circle of friends and couple category of participants (Cooper, C., Fletcher, J., Gilbert, D., and Wanhill, S., 2005). Tour is a kind of activity, which you will visiting places that interests you (Collins, 2014).

In the early part of twentieth century, travel was constantly changing because of the innovation in different transport systems and products. However, after the first world war international and domestic tourism decreased. By 1919 most UK domestic resorts are overflowing with guest that initiate Thomas cook to sell a new luxury travel product- a regular London to Paris air service. In 1919, Thomas cook also began to encourage tourist about coach tours throughout the UK, one example is the 14-guinea tour to the west country for a period of one week. The company also began to endorse provincial towns as emerging destinations and promotes domestic travel. Operating coach tour was developed by purchasing army vehicles that converts into coaches (Connell, J., 2012).

By the 1930s, holiday and vacation had become more essential part of living. Some took advantage of the nature-based resources such as sea and rich individuals took advantage of technological progress in transportation systems. Other early tours organized by cook are trips from Bombay to Jeddah for Muslim pilgrims. He also organized Battlefield tours that illustrates a new form of attraction and travel experience integrated in focus of the reenactment of national fallen soldiers (Connell, J.,2012). In general understanding tourist as consumer with different needs and wants are the main ingredient to comprehend underlying motivation in travelling.

This new trend in the tourism industry is now emerging on social media site especially of Facebook. Joiner's tour is a new concept of travelling wherein planned and directed by a freelance tour organizer or travel agencies who offered also this,

by creating an event or trip in affordable yet worthy travel experience that will satisfy the needs and expectations of the participants of this trip. This kind of tour are usually found in emerging tourist destination or attraction where the local community are the main host of the place where they create a budget tour in different places like in the mountains, beaches and islands here in the country. Joiner's tour comes from the word joiner who are joining or participating this event, a joiner may become a solo traveler or often called for nowadays solo joiner, a couple joiner or compose of a group of friends that wants to have a budget kind of trip and is often more on adventure type of tourism.

Tour organizer and tour coordinator are conducting a meeting and will create an event and look for his possible joiners to make it a group travel so that the budget of each person who will join will be lessen, to create a budget kind of tour. The organizer will ensure that all Joiners are informed regarding the price of the tour, its inclusion and exclusion, meeting place and the itinerary. The price of the tour will be depending on the location and the expenses that will occur on the said activity. Meeting place and pick-up time varies depends upon the chosen pick-up point and time set by the organizer. In the meeting place, most of the time in this kind of tour all of the joiners are strangers and it will be their first meeting or interaction, until they become one as a group as they exchange identity, lifestyle and the underlying reasons to travel and meet new circle of friends (Riley, S., 2010). The cultural and identity exchange and its flow are within the whole travel.

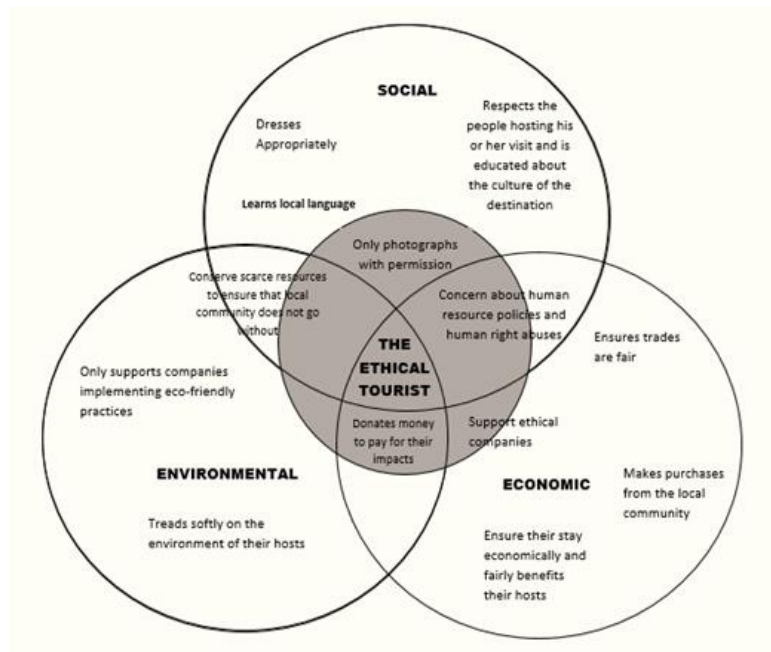
The need to research is to broaden people's understanding about this concept why people are joining this kind of tour and what are the difference between joining in Travel agency and Freelance Tour organizers in terms of Joiner's overall tour experience. Because it has shown a little attention in the research field. Also, Joiner's tour has been practiced for already two years since 2016 but it's still considered as new trend in travelling because not everyone is knowledgeable what Joiner's Tour is. As stated by Mariz Umali on I-witness "Lakbay" (a story of Joiners) Documentary 2018. Where the reporter Mariz Umali, tries to join the Joiner's tour in Mt. Ulap at Brgy. Ampucao, Itogon, Benguet. With sidetrip to Diplomat hotel in Baguio City. In addition to gain more information in this concept so that other people can experience and try this kind of budget trip.

These are the some examples of local destination that offers for joiners tour in the country: Baguio tour, La Union tour, Dingalan Aurora Day tour (Batanes of the East), Laki Beach and Five Fingers cove in Mariveles Bataan, Sagada-Banaue-Baguio tour, Abra tour, Buscalan tour, Nagsasa cove in Zambales, Bolinao in Pangasinan and etc. While in the other country, according to Michener, 1971, Van tour is where they purchased a van and try to travel independently around in Europe, and the route where they going to do is the tour itself. It also states that Van travel became popular in the 1960s and 1970s; and most of the time young people are trying this "pop-top" travelling. Van tour is better for the tourist for some reasons like the tourist had less money, they engage in local cultures also they have lots of time in sightseeing as well as having fun while on the tour like this trip, like from London they will go to Rome to experience such place. (Wilson, J., Fisher, D. and Moore, K. 2004)

Joiner's tour are created so that people with a tight budget can travel. Financial status of the possible market/joiners are the big wall that stops them from travelling, in the old days travelling are for the rich and wealthy people they are the one who can afford and experience the benefits of travelling (Riley, S., 2010). That is why it emerge from the needs of the travelers that they can travel on a budget kind of trip. This research will contribute for the others who wants to travel tight on the budget that they can look for this option also for the tourism industry that there is a new kind of marketing strategy to market the unpopular tourist destination and give revenue for the LGU of a certain community. It can also help to sustain the tourist attractions and see the positive impact and give ideas to lessen the negative impact of it to the local community.

Tourism on National Capital Region is growing and improving throughout the time, it's region as a home of historical and heritage sites, modern attractions, eleventh in the "Best Shopping Destinations" in Asia and contains several outstanding tourist destinations. There are organizers/ travel agencies that doing "Joiner's Tour" that offers tour in the said region.

Figure.1 Conceptual Framework



**Ethical Tourist Paradigm by Justin Francis**

The “Ethical Tourist Paradigm” are compose of the three main factors that has the impacts on the social responsibility of the tourism stakeholders on their decision making on a particular situation.

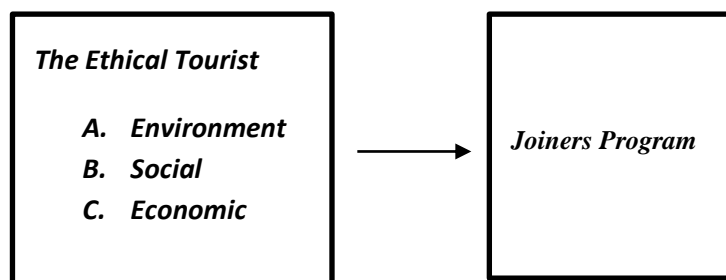
Through the use of Ethical tourist paradigm, it is applicable for the researchers to access Ethical tourist in terms of Social with regards to how they show show superiority to the organizer and how they interact to the people who belongs on it whether verbally, emotional or physical interactions that develops relationship and motivates them to patronize joiners tour and meets their satisfaction as a joiner.

Their concerns about human rights and rules within the surrounding is also considered.

It also directs the researcher to understand how Ethical tourist in terms of economic concerns access their respective hosts. According to Scheyvens’ study regarding one of the pros of backpackers in economics being reviewed that it is widely debated that a sign of a well-experienced traveler patronizes cheap lifestyle and seeks affordable travel services that results in price bargaining (Lovelock, K., 2013). The study within economical concerns covers purchases of the tourist from local products, Tourist Ensuring trades are fair and supports ethical companies.

Environmental factors that affects the social responsibility of tourism stakeholders on decision making takes consider the underlying reason why most of the Joiners enjoys unique, pristine and uncrowded destinations possessing an ethically environmental behavior that justify the tourist principles/values towards the environmental integrity (Hannam, K., Atelievic I., 2008).

Figure 2. Research Paradigm



The research paradigm is created to elaborate the connection of the chosen framework to the “Joiner’s Program” of this research. Strategically the three main factors of the ethical tourist paradigm that is shown in the figure are the specific factors that will affect the joiner’s program that this research will conclude. The chosen framework of this study theory, that every tourist and other stakeholders in this industry will affect on each and every one decision in traveling. They are connected to each other so that it will be appropriate to use as the concept of the study.

Joiner’s Tour is new kind of trend in traveling here in the Philippines. There are few studies about joiner’s tour but most of them are documentaries from reputable T.V network here in the Philippines. This research is appropriate for the researcher because we already doing or creating this kind of tour. According to the documentary of Mariz Umali on I-witness about the “Lakbay” (story of joiners) 2018, this is a new concept because not everyone is knowledgeable that joiner’s tour is existing in the industry of traveling. Also, in addition to this research wanted to study in depth understanding of the benefits of each tourism stakeholders that is scope of the Joiner’s tour.

The objective of this study is to deeply understand underlying culture and ethical factors of the Joiner’s tour and the reason why people keep on patronizing such tour even though this is not well known in Tourism Industry. Also, it aims to determine ethical tourist by the use of the chosen framework by assessing the respondents about the ethical tourist in terms of social, environmental and economic, and develop a “Joiner’s Program” that will help the joiners as well as the other tourism stakeholders such as tour organizers and the local community (see figure 1.2). Lastly, it aims to spread more correct and reliable information about this concept of Joiner’s Tour to the other tourism stakeholders that this kind of tour or trip is safe to do, and tourists are safe to join such tour. Specifically, this study will aim to answer on:

- How do the respondents access the Ethical tourist in terms of:
  - a. Social
  - b. Economic
  - c. Environmental

And furthermore, to analyze the difference in joining the Joiners tour between travel agency and freelance tour organizers,

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

The research design of this study is qualitative and ethnography research. Qualitative because it is focuses more on “why rather than the “what” of a certain social phenomenon on directly relies on the personal experiences (Jennings, G., 2010). Furthermore, it is also ethnographic because according to Simon Coleman (2010) from the book of ‘The state of Qualitative Tourism Research’, ethnography is recording and analyzing of an experience based on participant observation that comes from a written account of an individual, place or institution in addition the researchers are already doing this kind of tour and he/she can be participant of the research.

The sampling method that this study will use is purposive sampling. The researchers will collect data by the use of interview specifically Semi-structured Interview wherein the researchers will not strictly follow a formal list of interview questions hence, asking open-ended questions to gain more data is applicable. We will choose random people who already join in joiner’s tour whether on Accredited Travel Agency or not, Three on each and a total of 6 respondents. Our participants range from 18-40 years old Filipino and already joined 2 or more times in Joiner’s Tour.

The researchers will go to the Accredited Travel Agency to ask potential respondents for our research or Check their social media page and contact their customers in Joiners Tour packages. Assess whether the Joiners have previously joined Joiners tour as well as to the freelance organizers who are usually doing this kind of tour. While having the conversation of them we will record the conversation and transcribe it so that we can analyze the data collected.

Lastly to analyze the data that we collect, we will use the framework analysis. Our framework use to this study is the Tourist Ethical Paradigm, the tourist paradigm shows the interactions between three main pillars of traveling, the environment, socio-cultural and the economic (Francis, J. 2003). It will help us to determine and have the specific answer that we needed to extract the data that we collected.

### **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Many of the respondent's emphasis that joiners tour is more likely focused with meeting new people as well aside from tour itself. Subjects responses as well that joiners tour is highly recommended to everyone and anyone. It looks like a good thing for those extrovert people but surely will enjoy as well of those opposite which is the introvert.

They say that this kind of tour will help you to unwind and take a break with the reality. They are enjoying this concept because as what mentioned it is easy for everyone to share their problems, secret, and other personal things at the strangers and this is something that you can't find in any kind of tour, meaning to say this is the unique part or aspect of the joiner's tour.

And when it comes to the enjoyment it is easy to be yourself, because once again they are with the strangers who's one thing is for sure will not judge them.

When it comes to tour itself, respondents assured to the researcher that the tour is really worth it because it is the same thing with other tour concept in terms of the location that you want to visit, the activity that you want to try or to experience but once again it is just unique in other side because of the twist that you can find only in joiners tour.

According to DOT or Department of Tourism everyone should be registered so that they can have their legal papers in terms of their business and that is the advantage of registered travel agency compare to freelance tour organizer. It says that these freelance are the reason why they are having trouble in their sales because of their cheap tour packages. According to the interview that we conduct 5 out of 6 interviewee that they preferred to join in that kind of tour because they have the same offerings, but they have different tour cost.

When it comes to travel insurance some of joiner's tour doesn't have it because of the price of the tour they offer. The cheaper the more of chances that they don't include travel insurance, that's why we recommend it to have in their tours so that the guest have a security when it comes to travelling. Moreover, we suggest also that even though they are freelance tour organizer they should register their business in DOT, DTI and BIR but it may have an effect in the pricing of their tour packages.

Some of the respondents are still choosing travel agency tour packages even if it has a higher price of travel packages compare to the other one their reason is why do they compromise the tour itself if they can avail or afford such price in registered tour operator. In the other hand some of their tour are handled by freelance tour organizer if they compare it to the tours of travel agency they can't see any difference they have the same high quality of tours the only difference is the price of it.

In terms of environmental effect of this concept according to the respondents it has a big impact to the environment because joiner's tour offers cheaper price of tour meaning to say they can afford to travel but some of them doesn't have care for the destination. As this issue arise tour organizers and local tourism offices are creating ordinances or rules and regulations for this matter. They introduce some rules like leave no trace, take nothing but pictures and etc. So that they can maintain and sustain the cleanliness of the destination.

It concludes that this new concept of tour (Joiners Tour) give new ideas in tour packages. It opens new doors to local host of the destination because it gives more income for each stake holders of this industry. It helps the locals to have new business. It creates more jobs to the locals and also helps the consumers to reach their travel goals in the budget friendly cost. Having this kind of concept is unique it has shown lack of research about this study. The Joiners tour. Furthermore, it also helps the future researchers to have a foundation about this new concept. It helps other people specially tour operator that they can offer this kind of tour packages in the market.

### **IV. CONCLUSION**

According to the data gathered it has shown that although Joiners Tour is a new concept in Tourism Industry a lot of travelers especially solo travelers are patronizing it not because of its cheap price but the overall experience they can experience. This is a unique concept because Joiners or travelers will be Joining the tour together with those people they haven't met yet this will make the experience more unforgettable. All of the respondents tell that it is a lot easier for them to share their experiences, thoughts and even their problems with strangers because they feel like they won't judge them. This simply means that what makes the Tour unique is that aside from their needs of travelling their social and emotional needs have been met that resulted to their expectations to exceed. 5 out of 6 Interviewee will still choose to join the

Joiners tour even in a freelance organizer because according to them the price only varies a little and It's almost the same as long as the destination, activity and the tour itself is the same, It's good to them. The respondents assure that the tour is worth it and exceeds their expectations and even sums up that Joiners tour is unique in other kinds of tour.

Joiners Tour opens a new opportunity in Tourism Industry especially to the Travel agencies, Freelance Organizers and Travel agents even to the local host of the destination thus it not just adds incomes for every stakeholder in the industry, creates job but also one proof on how fast tourism industry grows and evolves. If this new concept is widely adapted and welcomed as long as standard procedures and protocols are observed, it will be a great advantage on every stakeholder in the Tourism industry and our edge in global tourism.

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