An analysis of responsibility in voluntourism practices

Institute	Rijksuniversiteit Groningen - Faculty of Spatial Sciences
	GEMTHCG MSc Thesis Cultural Geography
Master specialisation	Tourism Geography and Planning
Date:	22-08-2021

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Abstract

Due to the growing interest in volunteering abroad over the past years, demand for volunteer destinations grew that focused on creating more meaningful experiences in these destinations so that a deeper sense of accomplishment could be reached. However, this also lead to increasing critical questions about the actual contribution of voluntourism activities. Moreover, more critical questions were raised about the impact of these activities and about whether or not voluntourism is responsible and good and under which conditions this takes place. Qualitative methods were used to identify the general message and image about voluntourism being created by organisations, reflections on responsibility and responsible development by organisations and participants and how these are validated. The research discovered that overall, organisations had a positive message about volunteering and created a good picture. However, reflections on responsibility and responsible development by organisations and participants were at a minimum and also minimal validation of those concepts within the organisations and the participants could be found. Therefore, the key finding of this thesis is that there is a need for clear regulation on displaying reflections and validation on responsibility and responsible development to prevent bluewashing by organisations and to enhance the possibility for volunteers to make responsible choices.

Keywords*: Organisations,* responsible tourism, responsible development, volunteers, volunteering*, v*oluntourism, qualitative research.

Acknowledgement

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor dr. H.J.W (Arie) Stoffelen for the continuous support through this thesis writing process. I would not have been able to finish my thesis without the help and support of you, as you guided me through my master program and thesis period. He has given me critical feedback that was needed to turn my ideas into a well-established and coherent, final report. Thank you for your encouragement and guidance on academic and personal aspects during this past academic year.

In addition, I would like to thank the organisation Think Volunteer, for the opportunity and possibility to discuss various unclarities regarding the volunteering sector and the time they invested to explain their answers to me. Moreover, thank you for willing to share your resources and connections with me to use during this writing process that helped me get to this final report.

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2021

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Glossary of terms

SMARTER	Search Specific, Motivations, Assessing, Relationships, Transparency, Evidence, Reviews
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
DFID	Department For International Development
PPT	Pro-Poor Tourism
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
TIES	The International Ecotourism Society
FTTSA	Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa
IVPA	International Volunteer Programs Association
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
IVHQ	International Volunteer HQ
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals

1 Introduction

Voluntourism is a fusion of the two concepts of international volunteering and tourism (Van der Brink, 2015), which only over the recent years grew in demand (Serve the World Today, n.d.). As a result of this increased demand, voluntourism destinations focussed on creating more meaningful experiences and the need for a deeper sense of accomplishment from doing something worthwhile during a career break (Southan, 2016). Also, millennials, who are defined as travellers between 18 and 34 years old, are willing to travel for voluntourism experiences as they have reframed their mindset and seek more thrilling adventures during their leisure time (Marriott Rewards Credit Card, 2015). Due to this increasing demand, the increasing critical questions as to the actual contribution of voluntourism activities and the impact of these activities, questions have been raised about whether or not voluntourism is responsible and good and under which conditions this takes place.

In short, voluntourism demand is on the rise and likely to continue to grow in the coming years. Despite the ostensibly noble underpinnings of voluntourism activities, recent scholarly attention to the topic has shown that voluntourism also has important limitations when it comes to achieving development impacts. Several researchers and organisations are critical of the growing voluntourism trend. Some even argue that this trend is doing more harm than good (Budd, 2018; Cappendijk, 2019; Mousset, 2020; Rosenburg, 2018). One example that is being seen as doing more harm than good is orphanage tourism. Orphanage tourism in short can be seen as the donation of money and goods, attending performances, or volunteering on a short-term basis at orphanages as part of one's holiday (Guiney and Mostafanezhad, 2015). This trend is mostly seen as negative because children often endure negative impacts on their personal development. On top of that, at least 80% of the children in orphanages still have at least one living parent (Better Care Network, 2016 in UNICEF, 2018; Cappendijk, 2019). Parents make this decision they think is good because their kids get for example food and health care when they can't afford it (Rosenberg, 2018). This is because orphanages are seen as businesses and build upon persevering economics and money that comes in is not distributed to give the kids optimal care (Rosenberg, 2018).

Other limitations can be found regarding the responsibility issue and the responsible impact of the destination and the community. Even though thorough research on voluntourism has been done before, there is still a chance to impact a volunteer destination and community positively and negatively. The positive and negative impacts in the voluntourism destinations are caused

by volunteer organisations as well as voluntourists. Voluntourists are defined as those "who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that may involve the aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments, or research into aspects of society or environment" (Wearing, 2002, p. 240). To minimize the negative impacts on the voluntourism destinations and maximize the positive impacts, these impacts of organisations and volunteers must be "responsible". Responsible, as defined by Wearing (2002), is seen as the impact on the community and/ or destination is good instead of harmful. Also, the impacts caused by volunteer organisations and voluntourists should be supporting and benefitting the local or host community and their environment, culture, and other important aspects around this community. Creating and establishing a good bond between the organisation and voluntourists with the local community can be beneficial for creating responsible impacts in the destination or community (Festa, 2015).

Festa (2015), on the other hand, argues that organisations still pretend to offer responsible trips since there is not enough checking. Since those organisations offer these 'officially not responsible' trips, the overall statistics of emerging or existing 'responsible destinations' are increasing, while officially that is not the case. This behaviour can be seen as bluewashing. Tourists just have to be SMARTER when looking for a volunteering project overseas. Voluntourism is a type of tourism that in theory meets this criterion but fails to deliver this in reality. As defined by Festa (2015), SMARTER is an abbreviation of Search Specifics, Motivations, Assessing, Relationships, Transparency, Evidence and Reviews which help to make tourism decisions. By optimizing your Specific Search terms and not competitive search terms, it is more likely to find specialist volunteer organisations instead of "big organisations" (Festa, 2015). After finding the right specialist volunteer organisation, it is important to build Relationships with the sending organisation to help match you well to a project, as well as to the community and project you are going to support. These relationships are built on transparency and honest communication that enables everyone involved to set realistic goals. This transparency and open and honest communication will also help the voluntourist to find evidence when the operator makes a claim. Moreover, Reviews are also helpful when doing your research about the organisation. Feta (2015) believes therefore that tourists should take responsibility by looking into detail on what organisation fits their needs best. Also, organisations should take responsibility by offering information that the volunteers need to make a responsible decision.

The increasing demand for voluntourism projects goes in hand with the increasing criticism of voluntourism in the media and the literature. The development in recent years led to the creation of more responsibly developed organisations, but also to organisations that pretend to be responsible. Therefore, the relevance and aim of this thesis are to get a better overview and address the missing knowledge on how responsibility in voluntourism development is framed in the literature and in the media and how responsible development of voluntourism is validated and ensured by tourists and businesses. To address this aim, I consider the following research question: "How is responsible development framed, validated, and ensured in volunteer tourism practices by tourists and businesses?". To operationalize this question, I established the following sub-questions:

1) What general message about voluntourism is currently being sent out by volunteer organisations and what image do they create about voluntourism?;
2) How are responsibility and responsible development being reflected by organisations and participants in the voluntourism sector?;
3) How are responsibility and responsible development validated by the organisations and participants in the voluntourism sector?

The question was answered using a qualitative research approach whereby desk research and semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data that is needed to answer the research question. The collection of the qualitative data focuses on looking at the demand side (tourists), supply-side (organisations) and the external representation (sources in the media) to get a full overview of practices in this industry. I applied various strategies for analysing the collected qualitative data: for sub-question one, content analysis has been used to find relations between the content of the different websites of the organisations. Thematic analysis was used for sub-questions two and three, to make sense of patterns and identify opinions, meanings, topics, and themes.

This thesis gives societal relevance that can lead to new information which can be used to adapt and change the current developments in voluntourism and make this market more responsible in the future. This thesis also contributes to enhancing my academic background in tourism and gave me more academic knowledge on different, upcoming (tourism) trends that trigger my interest.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 **Voluntourism**

2.1.1 Reflection on the concept of voluntourism

Despite the fact that the concept of voluntourism is a relatively novel one that has gained prominence as part of the quest for less intrusive and more developmental types of tourism from the 1980s onwards, even in the 19th-century volunteer activities and tourism overlapped to some degree with the Grand Tour. The Grand Tour started at a time when tourism was not available to the masses yet and is seen as early voluntourism whereby young males were visiting other countries and seeing the world with the purpose become more cultured (Smith, 1989 in Hagan, 2017). However, since the start, the Grand Tour can already be seen as a contentious concept, as the boundaries between focus on self-help and helping others has been less clear cut than possibly assumed. Today, the concept of voluntourism is all about the rhetoric of helping others.

Volunteer tourism began well before the emergence of terms like 'alternative tourism' and 'ecotourism' (Guttentag, 2009) and started nearly a century ago as "the modern phenomenon of travelling overseas as a volunteer" (Wearing 2004, p.210). During the late 20th century, both volunteering and international tourism experienced significant growth, thereby setting the stage for increased interest in volunteer tourism (Callanan and Thomas, 2005). According to a study published by Tourism Research and Marketing (2008), the major growth of interest in volunteer tourism occurred since 1990, which was also seen by Raymond and Hall (2008). On top of that, Young (2008) states for example that voluntourism is certainly an expanding niche of the tourism industry in many developed and developing countries.

Over the years, voluntourism became this fast-growing segment in the niche tourism sector that is driven by tourists who want to '*give back*' while travelling and in many cases want to connect with the local communities while doing this (Council, 2018). Voluntourism combines tourism purposes with volunteering, where the tourist is often participating in volunteering activities. It is an act of travelling to underdeveloped locations, such as India, Nepal, Cambodia, and Indonesia (Think Volunteer, n.d.; Global Crossroads, 2016), but also locations in Latin America and Africa, with an organized group to perform service work in that location (Wearing, 2001; Guttentag, 2009; Jakubiak, 2016). As stated differently, voluntourism is a type of tourism where participants volunteer their time to some sort of "development work" (Wood, 2019). Hence, later in her work, Wood (2019) makes a distinction between the concepts and states there might

be some overlap between development work and voluntourism. According to Wood (2019, p. 6) development work "involves a longer period, remuneration, higher levels of community engagement, sector-specific skills, and language skills". Voluntourism does not necessarily require any of the mentioned points. However, some development work projects could also be considered as voluntourism, such as short-term religious mission work or certain internships abroad.

Referring back to the introduction, Wearing (2002) defines voluntourists as those who volunteer in an organized way during their holiday for various reasons and goals. Verardi (2013, p.41) interprets voluntourism as "an intersection of tourism and voluntary sectors, which enables an individual to learn about other cultures by becoming involved in short term development work". Comparing this to Stainton (2020), who mentions that voluntourism is a type of tourism whereby "an individual will travel abroad to a destination that is predominantly seen as underdeveloped or developing to offer their support to those in need" (p.1), Verardi (2013) uses a much broader definition. "Those in need" in the definition of Stainton (2020) refer to the people that are surrounded by extreme poverty, do not have adequate education and healthcare facilities, and have little building or infrastructure. Both Wearing (2001), and Stainton (2020) see voluntourism as a solution to help underdeveloped or aiding countries.

The definition that Verardi (2013) implements is especially interesting, as it is the only definition that does not use any type of hierarchy between rich/ poor or wester/ non-western and also focusses on the consumers (here the tourists) and the impacts of their experiences on local communities in the development work destinations. Here, the development impacts of the consumers (tourists) are combined with the experiential impact of the tourists.

In general, voluntourism can indeed be recognized as a form of alternative tourism (e.g., Wearing, 2001; Brown, 2005; Callanan and Thomas, 2005; McIntosh and Zahra, 2008; Matthews, 2008 – in Guttentag, 2009), since alternative tourism means to do no damage to the environment, is ecologically sound, and avoids the negative impacts of large-scale tourism developments (UKEssays, 2018). The concept of alternative tourism is defined as "an alternative to mass tourism or main tourism that can well distinguish any form of tourism centred on a small market or any product that may not be distributed or relayed by traditional travel agencies" (Theng et al., 2015, p.3). Therefore, alternative tourism, depending on how broad or specific this concept is defined, can refer to multiple approaches such as eco-tourism, green-tourism, community tourism, ethical tourism and many more (Theng et al., 2015). The

important thing is that alternative tourism refers to tourism that allows one to get out of the dominant mass tourism model (Buckley, 2009). On top of that, alternative tourism can be referred to as a variety of other names such as green tourism, sustainable tourism, and eco-tourism (Theng et al., 2015).

Since alternative tourism avoids the negative impacts of large-scale tourism developments (UKEssays, 2018), it consists of smaller-scaled developments or attractions in and organised by villages or communities that have fewer negative impacts. Adding all smaller-scaled developments up can lead to overall bigger developments that help underdeveloped or aiding countries. Lastly, some tourism is called alternative because it is not exploitive of the local people, with the benefits going to the locals or poorer part of communities. This last element lies in line with the focus points of responsible tourism that has a focus on recognizing the impact of tourism on a destination, makes sure responsibility is taken by the host and visitor sustainably and seeks to maximize positive impacts and minimize the negative (Gomez, 2020).

2.1.2 Key elements of voluntourism

Voluntourism is designed to offer different and novel experiences (Stainton, 2020) and can be seen as a similar concept as alternative tourism since it is a countertrend against mass tourism and it is a process that promotes "a just form of travel between members and of different communities" (Lerthcharoenchoke, 1999, p.24). Voluntourism experiences can be offered in various sectors and areas, striving to meet the aim of aiding and resources. In the term voluntourism, different kinds of sectors and working areas can be identified: community welfare (e.g., childcare, elderly, disability, human right/ legal), teaching (e.g., teaching a foreign language (Jukubiak, 2016), or sports coaching), environmental (e.g., nature conservation, wildlife protection, global warming), medical (e.g., hospital support, pandemic support (HIV, EBOLA), building (e.g., construction and renovation) and research (e.g., wildlife monitoring, land-mapping-zoning) (Stainton, 2020).

Voluntourism and alternative tourism are a response to the overly positive assessment of tourism's economic impacts that dominated tourism scholarship and practice around the 1960s. The fallacy of limiting impact assessment to macro-economic perspectives mainstreamed in the 1970s. Unmistakable evidence appeared that a range of negative social, cultural, and environmental externalities occurred especially in places that established boosterist tourism development (Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Triarch and Karamanis, 2017). The negative effects

included expansions of tourist activities in destinations that collided with the significant cultural, political, and environmental changes, which leads to visible impacts (Lerthcharoenchoke, 1999). To prevent the negative impacts of boosterist tourists, key elements for alternative tourism opportunities such as voluntourism were identified by Lertcharoenchoke (1999):

1) alternative tourism refers to tourism that does not damage the environment, is ecologically sound, avoids the negative impacts of many large-scale tourism developments;
2) alternative tourism is thought to consist of smaller-scale development or attractions for tourists organised by communities;
3) the question "who benefits?" is important as some tourism is called alternative because they are not exploitative of local people;
4) a shared perspective on alternative development is an emphasis on cultural sustainability.

While comparing alternative tourism and voluntourism, various similarities and differences can be identified. Similarities between voluntourism and alternative tourism are that both concepts want to give back to the community and do not want to do harm. Moreover, both want to keep in touch with locals and collaborate with them to keep their local traditions and culture intact. Furthermore, they both focus on smaller-scale developments; however, alternative tourism focuses on creating and organising attractions by locals, which is not the case in voluntourism. In voluntourism, the focus is much more on creating projects with (international) tourists, where locals and local communities benefit from in a sustainable way, and these projects are not meant to attract random visitors, but travellers who want to do good.

2.1.3 Types of alternative tourism

Although the types of tourism mentioned by Theng et al. (2015) are very similar, they all are defined differently. Soft tourism is a form of tourism that leads to mutual understanding between the local population and their guests, which does not endanger the cultural identity of the host region and strives for taking the best care of the environment as possible (Broggi, 1985 in Smith and Eadington, 1992). Soft tourism also encompasses environmental and social compatibility, optimum wealth creation and a 'new culture of travel' (Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, 2020). Moreover, soft tourism became the standard for a change of values

in tourism that resulted from the criticism of hard tourism, which is also known as mass tourism, and "its negative ecological, social, cultural and economic impact on popular destinations" (Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, 2020, p.1). Towards the end of the 1970s, the Global South also called for soft tourism in the social and tourism policy debate that focuses on qualitative growth and quality of life (Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, 2020). In the 1980s and 1990s, the concept was recognised as a form of sustainable tourism in response to the large-scale unsustainable tourism development (Lusby, 2017). Most tourists that choose this form of travel give priority to using local infrastructure, accommodation, and transport facilities to not harm the environment (Smith and Eadington, 1992). On top of that, these tourists seem to have a significant interest in the locals which results in wanting to learn more through education and organised encounters (de Kadt, 2016).

Moreover, the trend of voluntourism has various names that all refer to the same type of activities. Examples are volunteer vacation, mini-mission, vacation volunteering, altruistic tourism, and service-based vacation (Chen and Chen, 2011; Wood, 2019).

A sidestep away from voluntourism will be made to question the variety of names that Chen and Chen (2011) and Wood (2019) had given as examples. Although Wood (2019) and Chen and Chen (2011) state that voluntourism can also be seen and named as pro-poor tourism, pro-poor tourism in the academic literature is seen as a distinct academic discourse and defined as "an idea of implementing tourism for the sake of economic and financial growth of a community (from a small town to an entire country)" (Chaichi, 2017, p. 4). Another definition of pro-poor tourism that is used in academic literature and supported by multiple researchers, where more elements are added, is that pro-poor tourism is seen as "tourism that generates net benefits for the poor" (Ashley and Roe, 2001, p.2; Roe, 2013; Chok et al., 2007). Benefits in this context can be seen as economic, social, environmental, or cultural and the definition does not state anything about the *relative* distribution of those benefits (Ashley and Roe, 2001). This discourse deals with tourism impacts that should alleviate poverty. It is about how to organise tourism so that poverty is alleviated and not about a specific form of tourism activities that combine tourism with development work or with volunteer activities. Pro-poor tourism originates from a research partnership in the late 1990s between the International Center for Responsible Tourism, the International Institute for the Environment and Development, and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) (Zhao, 2016). It is very different from the goals and activities that are present in voluntourism. Moreover, the UK Department For International Development (DFID), which established the term 'pro-poor tourism (PPT)' plays an important

role in reducing poverty and is also closely linked to ODI which is part of the Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership as stated by Zhao (2016). In the past, pro-poor tourism was predominantly popular from around 2005 for the reason that the international development target wanted to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015 and to reach this target, sustainable livelihoods approaches have been developed in response (Ashley et al., 2000).

To implement and develop pro-poor tourism, the approach of pro-poor tourism is guided by the following principles that were constructed by Ashley et al (2002), DFID (1999) and Roe and Urquhart (2004) in Chok et al (2007):

1) **Participation**: Poor people must participate in tourism decisions if their livelihood priorities are to be reflected in the way tourism is developed;

2) **Holistic livelihoods approach:** Recognition of the range of livelihood concerns of the poor. A narrow focus on cash or jobs is inadequate;

3) **Balanced approach:** Diversity of actions are needed from the micro-macro level. Linkages are crucial with wider tourism systems. Complementary products and sectors need to support pro-poor initiatives;

4) **Wide application**: Pro-poor principles apply to any tourism segment, though strategies may vary between them;

5) **Distribution**: Promoting PPT requires some analysis of the distribution of both benefits and costs and how to influence this;

6) **Flexibility**: Blueprint approaches are unlikely to maximise benefits to the poor. The pace or scale of development may need to be adapted; appropriate strategies and positive impacts will take time to develop; situations are also widely divergent;

7) **Commercial realism**: PPT strategies have to work within the constraints of commercial viability;

8) **Cross-disciplinary learning**: As much is untested, learning from experience is essential. PPT also needs to draw on lessons from poverty analysis, environmental management, good governance, and small enterprise development.

It can be acknowledged that voluntourism and pro-poor tourism have similar elements, however, both terms and practices have distinct academic literature and are seen as discourses.

Due to the increasing trend of voluntourism, TourCert, which is an innovation and certification company in Stuttgart, has addressed the issue of minimizing negative impacts and maximising positive impacts and making sure locals are not exploited, and developed a product check within

the certification for tour operators, as these are the economic players who are developing appropriate offers, to evaluate this particular segment (Knopp, 2019). TourCert, together with other organisations, merged from a project collaboration with the topic of implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in tourism. The importance of CSR within organisations lies in the fact that this helps a company to be socially accountable to itself, its stakeholders and the public and can be conscious of the kind of impact they are having on all aspects of society, economic, social, and environmental (Fernando, 2021). With experts from different fields, a framework has been established to reward the certifications to organisations that pass the assessment of responsible voluntourism practices. Some of the questions that are asked in the assessment of voluntourism offers arise in de product development phase: Is the offer oriented to the actual local demand? What are the objectives of the offering organisation in the local environment and how do concrete volunteering measures contribute to this? To receive the answer to these two questions, a concept of long-term added value, as well as a well-founded analysis, are important (Knopp, 2019).

2.1.4 Limitations of voluntourism

Currently, there are issues presented that undermine the originally good intentions of voluntourism. Voluntourism is being portrayed in the literature and media as doing more harm than good (Budd, 2018; Cappendijk, 2019; Mousset, 2020; Rosenburg, 2018). Starting with the positive side of voluntourism and when being done in a good way, volunteers will get to know the local's conditions, culture and everyday life which could enhance personal growth and change in the tourists. On top of that, there is mentioned that volunteers build friendly relationships with the local population and therefore create a community of individuals with the same values and objectives that create a basis of networks (Salvador, 2019). These "positive" impacts seem to be only related to the change in the tourists themselves, and nothing is mentioned about the positive impact that the locals experience. The negative sides of voluntourism are related to the local community as well as to the organizations and the tourists that do not work with the right mindset. For example, with orphanage tourism, the children in the orphanages often still have living parents or organizations that are exposing these children to terrible conditions and sometimes even human trafficking (Mousset, 2020). Moreover, within these organizations, there is a misuse of the donations from the tourists where the money stays within the organizations that use the money to enhance the experiences of the next volunteers instead of improving the situation in the destination.

Another negative side of volunteers volunteering in destinations is the creation of dependency. The dependency theory arose in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a counterpoint to the modernisation paradigm of development (Herath, 2008; Matunhu, 2011; University of Central Florida, 2019). Its approach to understanding the economic underdevelopment that emphasizes "the putative constraints imposed by the global political and economic order" (Munro, 2015, p.1). According to the dependency theory, developing countries have internal and external structures that ensure that they will always be dependent on industrialised, wealthy countries. The problem with "an overall encompassing theory in explaining global inequalities is that it may lead to generalisations without considering the specific histories and developments of individual countries" (Farny, 2016, p.1).

Concerning the negative sides and with the goal to make voluntourism more successful, guidelines are established that can be followed when needed. When the guidelines are not followed by organisations that adopted these guidelines, Organisations such as Think Volunteer and Planeterra Foundation have established such guidelines. Think Volunteer (2021) established guidelines for the volunteer trips that they offer, which consists of 3 main steps that are formulated as questions (see figure 1). These have been created to make sure the participating travellers are well prepared for their volunteer experience by creating awareness on different levels. By creating awareness and asking the right questions, Think Volunteer tries to help and match the right volunteer to the right project to make a responsible impact. These successful experiences of the volunteering traveller as well as the stories of the traveller that will be shared with the world after they return are needed since voluntourism is not always pictured as a successful concept. To make sure that successful matches are being made to the local project as well as the expectations of the volunteering traveller, further guidelines and key elements have been established by the Planeterra Foundation (2020).

1. Which organization do I choose when I travel?

✓ Working abroad with children?

Then check whether your organization complies with the **Guidelines of the Better Care Network**

✓ For all other target groups

Think Volunteer guidelines
We are currently conducting research. We have researched what travelers consider important when they do voluntary work abroad. We hereby present the results of this research

2. What makes you a good volunteer / intern?

✓ You are aware of why you want to go abroad and what role you have as a volunteer or intern
✓ You have read about the guidelines and you will prepare yourself through the academy.
✓ You are focused on your qualities and capabilities and you are aware of your pitfalls
✓ You know which competencies are important and are willing to develop yourself (and your competences) and to reflect on yourself
✓ You are open and curious about a different culture and you are willing to adapt.
✓ You have a respectful attitude
✓ You are supportive, but never substitute staff.
✓ You never take on nurturing duties. You leave this to the permanent staff
✓ A good way to deliver impact is to share knowledge, conduct research or implement something new (demand-oriented).

3. Preparation and guidance

✓ Preparation and obtaining tools for a volunteer or student to work abroad is important. The following themes are important:

–Information about the project where you will be working: practicality, rules, expectations.
–Background information about the target group
–Culture & Faith
–Ethics & Dilemmas
–What is sustainability?
–The development of the volunteer

✓ If you are going to work with children or vulnerable target groups:

–Social work and pedagogy
–Adhesion –Trauma
–Children's
rights - and needs –Where to pay attention

✓ Guidance during a foreign experience is important.

For example, the volunteer or student must be able to rely on a contact person at all times, attention must be paid to the process and the development of the participant and, when working with **vulnerable** target groups, reflecting on own actions is central.

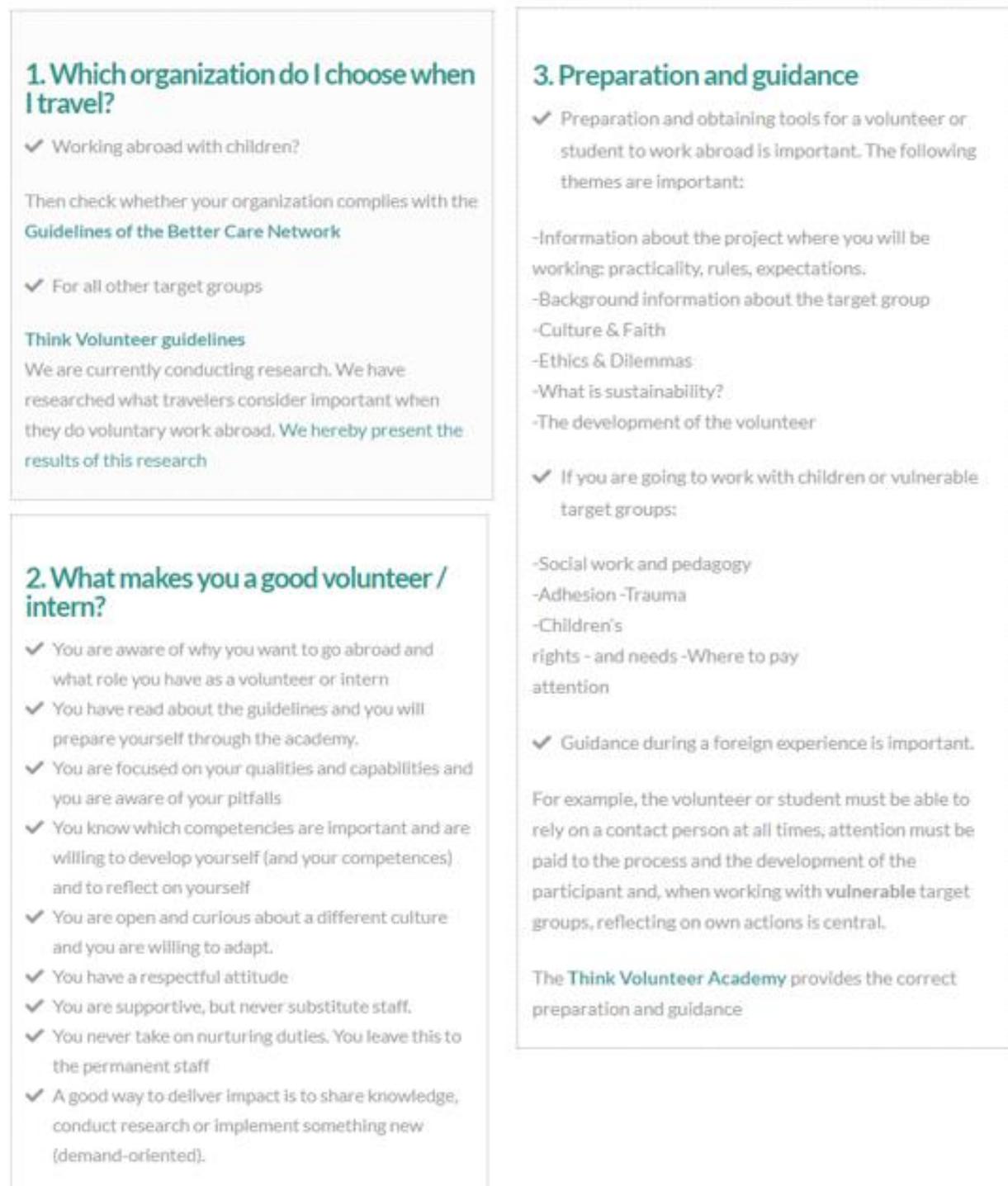The **Think Volunteer Academy** provides the correct preparation and guidance

Figure 1. Guidelines established by Think Volunteer (2021)

The Planeterra Foundation is a tourism organisation that is working to reduce poverty around the world (Planeterra Foundation, 2020) They were established in 2003 as a non-profit organisation that has contributed millions of dollars towards projects in areas of social enterprise, healthcare, conservation, and emergency response. With the support of the Planeterra Foundation, the international voluntourism guidelines for commercial tour operators

have been developed by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) and an international advisory committee (Planeterra Foundation and The International Ecotourism Society, 2012). Their goal was to develop a practical tool that helps international voluntourism providers plan and manage trips responsibly and sustainably. The voluntourism guidelines are designed to facilitate the sustainable development of voluntourism programs, to share insights into managing voluntourism programs responsibly, and to offer lessons learned from successful examples of existing voluntourism initiatives. On top of that, these are designed because voluntourism has experienced significant growth in recent years and an increasing number of commercial tour operators are adding volunteer opportunities to their itineraries. Due to this growth of popularity and awareness, many tourism businesses and travellers see the potentials of volunteering to positively impact destinations and communities around the world.

To make sure the impacts of the businesses and travellers are good; the priority of Planeterra is to develop and transform these good intentions into best practices for all those involved in voluntourism. Added to that, concerns are rising regarding cases where voluntourism programs offered by commercial tour operators are mismanaged which leads to negative impacts. Effective planning and consistent monitoring of volunteer projects are needed to satisfy the desires of the traveller to make a difference, giving back to the destinations and creating lasting impact, while at the same time ensuring that the local community needs are met. For this reason, the guidelines that are established respond to this challenge to help commercial tour operators not just benefit from people's good intentions but provide them with a practical tool to plan and manage their programs sustainably and responsibly that contributes to the long-term success of the voluntourism sector.

The voluntourism guidelines for the commercial tour operators are roughly divided into the following main steps (Planeterra Foundation and The International Ecotourism Society, 2012):

Steps	Explanation of the steps
1) Sustainable management a. Reality check	The reality check offers key advice to ask before investing time and resources to develop voluntourism programs, and questions for current voluntourism providers to assess the impact and effectiveness of their ongoing initiatives" (p.6). ➢ that the voluntourism projects must be developed with the local communities' needs, and not the

	travellers', or company's needs, as the first priority (p. 6) ➢ That the created opportunities should have a lasting impact, and not a quick change, that is sustainable (p. 7) ➢ Conduct a thorough analysis of various alternatives, and develop voluntourism programs only if voluntourism is determined as a suitable option (p. 7)
b. Marketing and messaging	These guidelines focus on recommended approaches for providers regarding marketing and messaging their voluntourism programs. ➢ Use messaging strategies that clearly convey the goals of voluntourism programs, why they are important and how they make a difference (p. 8) ➢ Avoid all forms of *poverty marketing* – such as using images or words (e.g. 'helping people who can't help themselves") which belittle or degrade local people (p. 8)
c. Selecting and working with volunteers	These provide insights into pre-trip communications with volunteers as a critical part of voluntourism providers responsibilities. ➢ Proactively assist prospective volunteers with finding projects that appropriately match their interests, skills, budgets, and availability (p. 9) ➢ Providing clear explanations on the goals and objectives of volunteer projects, to avoid unrealistic expectations or misunderstanding (p. 9) ➢ Utilize pre-trip orientation to ensure appropriate levels of cross-cultural understanding, cultural sensitivity, and understanding of gender issues among volunteers (p. 10) ➢ Provide sufficient information on volunteer opportunities that are available to travellers with special needs, as well as clear guidance on accessibility services and assistance available upon request (p. 11) ➢ Implement steps to gather feedback from participants volunteers and promptly address any negative feedback (p. 11) ➢ Clearly communicate about the possibility that volunteering is not the right option for some

	travellers due to a variety of reasons, and offer advice on other options to contribute to local community goals.
2) Measuring, monitoring, and reporting a. Defining success and measuring impacts	These guidelines focus on offering guidance on specific steps that voluntourism providers must take to define success and measure impact, which will help to make reporting on voluntourism projects effective and credible (p. 12) ➢ Conduct community needs assessment to ensure that the voluntourism program is fulfilling the needs of the community and to ensure volunteer projects' benefits for local people (p. 12) ➢ Collaborate with local partners to clearly define what the success of voluntourism projects means to the organisation, volunteers and community stakeholders (p. 11) ➢ Implement a system to conduct third-party community needs assessment on a regular basis, not only at the beginning but also throughout the project (p. 14). ➢ Establish a system to monitor progress and measure impact, taking into account local capacity-building needs and improvements (p. 14) ➢ Clearly outline and implement a consistent progress in which volunteers who behave inappropriately or unethically can be removed from a project (p. 14)
b. Transparency in financial reporting	These guidelines address key issues related to financial reporting by voluntourism providers and offer guidance on how best to ensure transparency, responsibility and accountability in financial reporting of voluntourism programs (p. 15) ➢ Implement a consistent method to calculate and report on the amount of money per trip that goes to support the community or destination and the amount that goes to support operations of voluntourism programs (p. 15) ➢ Employ a consistent method of calculating and reporting on the amount of both cash and in-kind donations (p. 15)

c. Transparency in non-financial reporting	These provide insights into best practices in non-financial reporting as an essential part of objective and transparent communications on voluntourism providers' performance (p.16) ➤ Make publicly available information on the short- and long-term impacts of voluntourism projects to help travellers make objective decisions in choosing a volunteer opportunity (p. 16) ➤ Include transparent reporting on the results and findings of regular community needs assessment (p. 16) ➤ Show, not just tell, the values of voluntourism programs (p. 17)
3) Maximizing benefits and minimizing negative footprint a. Benefits for communities and local engagement	These address issues and opportunities related to community engagement and local participation in voluntourism programs (p. 18) ➤ Ensure effective approaches to collaborating with local communities by building relationships with community groups and families (p. 18) ➤ Provide local community members with sufficient information on the effectiveness of the volunteer projects, and the expected impact of the volunteer projects both in the short and long term (p. 18) ➤ Seek feedback from local community members regarding their experiences hosting, interacting, and collaborating with international volunteers (p. 18)
b. Managing social and economic impacts	These guidelines focus on effectively managing the social and economic impacts of voluntourism programs and thereby helping maximize the benefits of voluntourism programs for the local communities and destinations (p. 19) ➤ Develop and implement a code of conduct regarding working with local and Indigenous communities, families, and children, and respecting their rights, needs and priorities (p. 19) ➤ Maximise the opportunities to provide financial benefits for local people by incorporating responsible and equitable employment, capacity building, and fair-trade practices where applicable (p. 20)

	➢ Voluntourism providers should not only comply with international standards of responsible business practices but also proactively support the efforts to combat all types of commercial sexual exploitation in destinations and tourism establishments (p. 20) ➢ Require background checks before selecting volunteers, including (but not limited to) criminal record and criminal history checks, to protect the safety of all parties involved (p. 20) ➢ Implement a strict zero-tolerance policy to ensure there is no inappropriate behaviours of volunteers when interacting with children (p. 20)
c. Supporting biodiversity conservation and heritage preservation	These guidelines focus on basic tenets of impact management and conservation practices that voluntourism providers should strive to follow to contribute positively to biodiversity conservation and heritage preservation efforts (p. 21) ➢ Develop and manage wildlife conservation and heritage preservation-related volunteer projects with the emphasis on local context (p. 21) ➢ Implement a strict code of conduct to ensure responsible behaviours by volunteers when they come in contact with cultural heritage, historic sites, or artefacts (p. 21) ➢ Implement a strict code of conduct to ensure responsible behaviours by volunteers when interacting with wildlife or working in areas close to wildlife habitats (p. 21)
4) Useful tools and resources. a. Key tools and resources for voluntourism practices	This section provides information on some of the existing tools and resources that are available for voluntourism providers, and insights on how they might be utilised as a part of strategies for planning and managing voluntourism programs in a responsible and sustainable way (p. 22) ➢ FTTSA (Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa) ➢ Fair Trade Volunteering ➢ IVPA (International Volunteer Programs Association) ➢ PEPY Tours ➢ Tourism Concern

		➢ Year Out Group (p. 22)
b.	Code of conduct and ethical principles related to community well-being	➢ The Tourism Child-Protection Code of Conduct ➢ The ChildSafe Network ➢ Fair Trade Federation (p. 23)
c.	Managing the environmental impact of voluntourism operations	➢ TIES (The International Ecotourism Society) ➢ GSTC (Global Sustainable Tourism Council)

Figure 2. Guidelines established by the Planeterra Foundation.

Source: Planeterra Foundation & The International Ecotourism Society. (2012, September 17).

2.2 Responsible tourism

In the 1980s, a more responsible form of tourism was envisioned and discussed, which became an important element in the emerging topic of sustainable tourism (Krippendorf, 1987). The idea emerged from a concept and interest in the idea that tourism-related actors could develop a focus on ethics and more responsibility that goes beyond self-interest and has the possibility to change behaviour and contributes to more sustainable development (Bramwell et al., 2009). In the 2000s, responsible tourism increased in popularity in academia and practice as it followed the global demand for companies to look beyond profit maximization and include social and environmental objectives in their strategies (Chaichi, 2017). This was due to the contribution of the Cape Town Declaration and the input of Harold Goodwin. After that, the popularity decreased somewhat, but now responsible tourism is experiencing a resurgence in and around the last year in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. On top of that, responsible tourism and travel are becoming increasingly important because the concept highlights the need to resolve tourism development around positive impacts on the local community and the destination combined with enriched tourist experiences (Gomez, 2020).

Responsible tourism mostly focuses on an increasingly responsible way of consuming tourism (Sustaining Tourism, 2019) and how this should be reached in the destination. Not only this, but there is also a shared responsibility to be responsible: the tourists (consumers) have the responsibility, but so does the tourism industry (supplier), politics (regulation) and the communities themselves. The term responsible tourism has been suggested as one way of maximizing the positive and minimizing the negative impacts of tourism (Stanford, 2006). Goodwin (2011) sees responsible tourism as a guideline for tourism that is taking responsibility

for making tourism more sustainable, by addressing economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The essence of responsible tourism, as defined by Chaichi (2017, p. 20), "is identifying tourism-related actors and attempting to alter industry behaviour towards more sustainable development through the assumption that ethical responsibility will surpass self-interest and profit".

The different terms of sustainable tourism, ethical travel, responsible tourism, and impact travel are also used to advocate organising travel in such a way that it has positive impacts rather than negative ones (Caruana, 2020). However, these terms cannot be used interchangeably (Gomez, 2020). The most important thing to remember is that responsible tourism recognizes the impacts of tourism on a destination and makes sure that the host community, tourists, politics and regulators, take responsibility to make sure tourism is addressed in a sustainable way (Gomez, 2020) and seeks to maximize the positive impacts and minimize the negative impacts. It is the responsibility of the destination, its environment, and its inhabitants as well as a shared responsibility of government, private sector, tourists, and communities to make sure this done will be one. So 'responsible' refers to two things at the same time, which is the strength of this concept. In contrast to the sustainable tourism concept, as it is not tourism that should be sustained but tourism should contribute to sustainability, responsible tourism refers to both objectives and to ways of getting this done and who should work to achieve the objectives (Gomez, 2020).

Gomez (2020) mentions that travelling is a way to open one's mind to the world and create awareness that we are all different but the same. Doing this responsibly gives opportunities through meaningful connections with local people and get a better understanding of the local culture, social and environmental issues. Chaichi also states that an increasing number of tourism organisations are becoming responsible through the development of partnerships with local communities, recruitment of local staff, marketing of fair-traded products, purchase of local products and services, encouragement of responsible visitor behaviour and generally more positive business practice in favour in the local community (DEAT, 2002 in Chaichi, 2017).

To make sure that the impacts on the community and tourists are responsible, key elements which can also be seen as guidelines have been developed during The Cape Town Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations. This conference was organised by the Responsible Tourism Partnership and Western Cape Tourism as a side event during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 (Goodwin, 2014). Responsible Tourism

Partnership is an organisation that works to support the development of responsible tourism businesses and initiatives (Responsible Tourism Partnership and Goodwin, 2014). Moreover, this partnership uses its knowledge and expertise to help out these businesses and initiatives in the forms of workshops and training, conferences, presentations, copywriting, consultancy, matchmaking and auditing and reporting. In this mentioned declaration, 280 representatives of all tourism sectors from 20 countries attended and agreed on taking measures for responsible tourism. The 2002 Cape Town Declaration agree that responsible tourism should contain the following key elements:

1) minimise negative economic, environmental, and social impacts;
2) generate greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the wellbeing of host communities; improves working conditions and access to the industry;
3) involve local people in decisions that affect their lives and life changes;
4) make positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage embracing diversity;
5) provide more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social, and environmental issues;
6) provide access for physically challenged people and;
7) is culturally sensitive, encourages respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence (WTM Responsible tourism).

Goodwin (2014) and Sustainable Tourism (2019) also confirmed using this list of criteria. Moreover, Goodwin proposes that these key elements and criteria should be used in an increased amount countries, on various amounts of scales, in various businesses and other social levels to take responsibility for achieving sustainable tourism. The relative weight of these responsibilities for implementing and applying the key elements falls on the shoulder of a variety of different actors and will also depend on the issue, the time, and the place (Bramwell et al., 2007). The strength of the shared weight of the responsibilities between different is a strength, but also requires institutional capacities, skills, time, resources, and power relations that are relatively equal, which make it hard to implement this in practice. This growing interest in responsible practices by some government agencies, industry producers, suppliers and consumers was noted down in research papers analysed by Bramwell et al. (2007). Globalisation, however, was an unstoppable force that interfered and affected the industry and tourism behaviour that perhaps limited the potential of applying responsible practices in

destinations (Bramwell et al., 2007). Also, when the impacts of these practices were left unchecked, large-scale tourism development can damage ecosystems, pollute environments, and exploit local communities (Center for Responsible Travel, 2021). In the paper of Bramwell et al. (2007), where research perspectives on responsible tourism were analysed, concerns were also expressed about "a gap between the rhetoric and the real potential of responsible tourism to reduce economic and social inequalities in developed and developing societies" (p. 256).

Goodwin (in Soulful Concepts, 2017) states that the main difference between responsible tourism and sustainable tourism is that "sustainability is the goal, a goal which can only be achieved by people taking responsibility together to achieve it" (p. 1). Responsible tourism can be seen as "taking more responsibility for making tourism sustainable and about what people do to address the many specific challenges we face" (Soulful Concepts, 2017, p. 1). Due to the many similarities in goals and pillars, the sustainable concept fits with responsibility to ensure future change and achieve sustainable-responsible impacts in host communities.

2.3 Responsible voluntourism

As for now, voluntourism is not seen as responsible as often there is a mismatch between the skills, motivation, action and expectations of the participant and the needs of the locals, or there is an unequal and unethical distribution of the incoming money and skills that the volunteers bring. By combining responsible tourism elements with voluntourism elements create an interesting view for future developments. Both tourism concepts share some similar elements that would make the collaboration between consumers and suppliers work more efficiently. For example, voluntourism and responsible tourism both aim to minimize negative footprint as well as negative economic, environmental, and social impacts. Moreover, people applying responsibility and voluntourism want to maximize the benefits for communities, regarding economic, well-being and working conditions, and to enhance the local engagement to encourage respect between the local and host communities. Also, the local engagement can in the end lead to more meaningful connections between the host and visitor that in turn can lead to local pride and confidence for the host community and a better understanding of culture, and thus educational purposes, for the visitors. These educational purposes could be beneficial for realizing culture, heritage and biodiversity are important elements to try to preserve in the future as currently environmental, social, and local cultural issues are present.

A challenge of the collaboration between people advocating for responsible and voluntourism elements is going to be the combining involving the local people in decisions with the key tools and resources that the voluntourists have since these elements need to be aligned with a code of conduct and ethical principles related to the community well-being. Therefore, managing, monitoring, and reporting but especially listening to the host, consumer, politics, and regulators, is crucial to make the collaboration work. So, volunteers and voluntourism organisations need to be selected carefully to make sure this is put into practice to ensure managing of all impacts will be done so that local people feel involved in the decision-making process that affects their life and life-changes.

Responsible voluntourism means that a potential voluntourist needs to do in-depth research on organizations and asking various questions about, for example, working conditions, details, and work of the company and/or organization of both sides of the collaboration. Also, details of the project and the country when you are in doubt about your potential volunteer trip and decisions that come with this. The organization needs to have strong values and policies based on ethical principles to ensure long term, sustainable relationships with the locals (Skilled Impact, 2018). This means, also being transparent to the potential tourists with the provided information about these principles and relationships. Moreover, the way on how to be responsible is also seen as an issue as responsible still has different meanings between countries and cultures but also within a country itself (In conversation with Think Volunteer in 2020).

3 Methodology

3.1 Research design

Considering the objective of this study to find out what message about voluntourism is being sent out and how responsibility is validated and ensured in voluntourism development by tourists and people, an interpretive research design is used. An interpretive research design assumes that reality is socially constructed and that the researcher becomes the medium through which the reality is revealed (Andrade, 2009; Cavana et al., 2001; Walsham, 1995a, 1995b). On top of that, an interpretive approach provides a detailed insight into the "complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it" (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118). As a result of this research design, a qualitative research approach is used. Qualitative methods focus on understanding and interpreting the meanings people attach to a certain phenomenon. In the context of this research, it is important to understand the experiences and opinions of people and organisations that participate in the market of voluntourism, hence the decision to follow a qualitative approach. This research consists of three empirical components for data collection. Each of these components will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

3.2 Data collection

The first component focuses on exploring the image that is created and sent out by volunteer organisations about voluntourism. To answer this component, secondary data collection in the form of desk research has been done with various data sources, ranging from social media channels of the organisations to websites of organisations to find viewpoints of voluntourism. The benefits of desk research of secondary sources are that finding information about the image of voluntourism on for example websites of organisations that offer voluntourism projects, as well as media channels that report about voluntourism, has been possible. A random sampling method has been used to establish a selection of organisations. These organisations have been found via searching for voluntourism organisations on the internet and were provided by Think Volunteer via a list that was used in their organisations to extend their network and learn from their practices. The reason for choosing random sampling and the following organisations was to create a broad overview of various organisations that offer voluntourism trips. The list that was established from the internet has been selected in various steps. From the start, the voluntourism organisations were selected after searching "international volunteer organisations" and were selected based on the search hits of Google and if it could be made clear if the organisation logo or name could be related to volunteering activities abroad. This

list consisted of 21 randomly found organisations. The second step of selecting the list consisted of reviewing the list of 21 and looking in a little more detail to the headings of the websites and if something about travel or volunteering abroad was mentioned to see if the site was useful for data collection. This list got reduced to 13 organisations with clear mentions of volunteering abroad options. The third step consisted of taking a look at the list provided by Think Volunteer, after the list on the internet was established, to prevent a bias of organisation selection happening and to make sure a list with possible diversity could be established. The fourth step to making one final and complete list for data collection was to look if there were similar organisations found by myself and the list provided by ThinkVolunteer, which was the case for four organisations. With the overlap of the 4 organisations, the sample was varied enough for independent research of Think Volunteer. In the end, the following complete list was established:

- AIESEC.org/.nl
- CIEE
- Cuso International
- Global volunteers.org
- International Volunteer HQ
- UN Online volunteering
- UNV.org
- United Planet
- Volunteerworld.com
- VSO International
- World Servants
- Yobbers

Analysing the information on the websites of the organisations regarding volunteering and voluntourism has been done using critical content analysis. Content analysis is used to find the purposes, messages, and effects of broad-ranged communication content (Luo, 2020). On top of that, content analysis helps to find correlations and patterns in how concepts are communicated in the content, helps to understand the intentions of an individual, group, or institution, helps to identify bias in communication, and reveals differences in communication in different contexts (Luo, 2020). These factors are important to find an answer to this sub-research question. Content analysis has been done using a conceptual method, which determines the existence and frequency of concepts in a text (Columbia Public Health, 2021).

The conceptual content analysis consists of a set of steps (Columbia Public Health, 2021):
1. Decide the level of analysis: word, word sense, phrase, sentence, themes

2. Decide on how many concepts to code for; develop a pre-defined or interactive set of categories or concepts. Either allow flexibility to add categories through the coding process or to stick with a pre-defined set of categories.

3. Decide whether to code for the existence or frequency of a concept. When coding for the existence of a concept, the researcher counts a concept only once if it appeared at least once in the data. When coding for the frequency of a concept, the researcher counts the number of times a concept appears in a text.

4. Decide on how you will distinguish among concepts. Does the researcher use the same category for words? And decide on what level of implication is allowed.

5. Develop rules for coding texts to keep coding organised and consistent to also ensure validity.

6. Decide what to do with irrelevant information: ignore or used to re-examine the coding scheme

7. Code the text

8. Analyse results

In this case for step 1, the level of analysis has been decided to be a word sense. Step 2, an interactive set of categories and concepts have been used, with some pre-defined terms such as volunteering, abroad, responsibility, and impact. For step 3, the frequency of the concept has been chosen to be used. Step 4, distinguishing among concepts has been done using words or phrases in one category only, which means that one word can only belong to one theme or category. For step 5, rules have been established that the main focus is on looking for the themes of responsibility, volunteering, travelling, and impact. For step 6, irrelevant information has been ignored as during coding, this text did not have the information needed to answer the research question.

The second component is focused on exploring how responsibility and responsible development is reflected within voluntourism participants and organisations. To find the answer to this research question and component, desk research has been carried out to gather information sources such as published data and websites of organisations that are needed to reflect on the responsibility and responsible development within voluntourism organisations. The same websites from the organisations that have been used for component one have been used for this second component. Research has been done by looking at the content regarding responsibility policies or responsible development or anything else regarding responsibility within the

organisations or within the projects that are offered. Therefore, other pages within the same websites of organisations have been reviewed to find their views and reflection on these concepts, which is the main difference of focus compared to the first component. The same strategy for sampling, data collection, as well as the same organisations that have been used for component one, have been used for this component too. The organisations have been sampled using random sampling from the internet and through the list of Think Volunteer. Since the organisations were not willing to cooperate in a semi-structured interview, as they wrote back they were not interested in participating or not responding even after reminders. Therefore, to find out more about responsibility and responsible development within their organisation, the data collection of organisations regarding their reflections on responsibility and responsible development could only be based on what could be found on the websites. The data of this part has, because of this, been analysed using content analysis.

For the part of the tourists/ volunteers, data has been collected using semi-structured interviews with 13 participants, that fit in the target group of volunteering abroad, ranging from the age of 23 to 38 to find out how they reflect responsibility. The participants have been sampled through snowball sampling of personal contacts, and a post on Facebook and within the Facebook pages of the volunteering organisations of this thesis. The bias of gathering data this way is that everybody who does not use this social media platform could not have participated in the study, although they might have been a good fit. Another bias in sampling is that there might have been limited participants when using snowball sampling that fit the target group requirements. To make sense of the gathered data, thematic analysis has been used. The reason for choosing a thematic analysis is because, with thematic analysis, a detailed look at perceived experiences, meanings and patterns can be identified in the semi-structured interviews.

Lastly, the third component reflects on how responsibility and responsible development within voluntourism are validated by tourists and organisations. Validated in this thesis means "the act or process of making something officially or legally accepted or approved" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). To answer this component, data about personal experiences of volunteers with voluntourism projects and organisations are needed as well as looking for policies, official documents or certifications mentioned on the websites of organisations about ensuring responsible voluntourism projects. These sources give a more understanding of their ideas, viewpoints, experiences and choices from the tourists and organisations.

To gather data from the organisations, secondary data collection in the form of desk research has been carried out, since the organisations were not willing to cooperate in semi-structured interviews. Therefore, only data could be collected about validation of responsibility and responsible development based on what can be found on the websites. This can for example be policies, certifications, or other official documents regarding responsibility and responsible development. This is a limitation as there is a lack of insight and in-depth information about their validation of responsibility, that might be present but not stated on the website. The data collected from the organisation with help of desk research has been analysed using content analysis.

To gather data from the volunteers, a primary data collection method is used called semi-structured interviewing. By doing semi-structured interviews, personal experiences, meanings, and opinions of people will be retrieved first-hand and this method gives space to the interviewee to elaborate on questions if needed. In the 13 interviews with the target group of volunteers, which are participants that volunteered abroad, questions have been asked to find out the answer for sub-question three to finalize the data collection of this thesis regarding validation of responsibility in their volunteer trip. The gathered data has been analysed using thematic analysis. This is because the retrieved interview data will be a combination of detailed and direct answers to the questions asked to possible unstructured and additional information when the participant elaborated on the questions. To makes sense of this combination of structured and unstructured data, a thematic analysis where common meanings, topics, themes, and other patterns that stand out can be examined (Caulfield, 2020). During the second step of the explained thematic analysis above, provisional coding is used instead of descriptive coding, which is based on the key elements of voluntourism and responsible tourism found in the theoretical framework of this thesis.

3.2.1 Interview

Interviews have been done for a qualitative collection of data. The interviews are done with the target group of people that went volunteering abroad, regarding if they went volunteering with or without organisation to get in-depth and specific information. The interview questions consisted of basic questions about voluntourism, responsible tourism, their knowledge about these concepts, their volunteering experiences and follow up questions. As these questions form a basic structure of the interview, more follow up questions could be asked if a participant's answers could contain crucial and interesting information.

The questions of the interview have partly been based on the literature found and used in the theoretical framework. The reason for partly basing the questions on the theoretical framework stems from the gaps and unclarities in the existing available literature. The interview questions specifically focus on the practices of volunteering abroad (voluntourism) and responsible tourism and the way responsibility was ensured in these organisational practices and volunteers. On top of that, the experiences of the participants of their volunteering trip gave extra dept in the practices. By focussing on each term, more information was drawn from the answers. This specific combination of researching organisations and volunteers was not found while creating the theoretical framework and had not been researched extensively. Therefore, the interview questions have been established to research and explore how responsibility and responsible development is reflected within voluntourism participants and organisations and how responsibility and responsible development is ensured by organisations and volunteers in their practices.

The analysis of the interviews, as described above, has been done using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is mostly applied to a set of texts, such as interview transcripts, to identify common themes – topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that are repeated (Caulfield, 2020). In the description of thematic analysis by Caulfield (2020), a total of six steps need to be followed. First of all, the researcher needs to get familiar with the data that has been collected and to get an overview of all data before the analysis can take place. This step is also known as familiarisation. The audio of the interview will be transcribed to, later on, read the text and start initial note-taking. Secondly, for this second component, a descriptive coding strategy has been used as the research strategy of this component is explorative. With coding, sections are highlighted (often phrases or sentences) that describe the content based on for example feelings or ideas and that can be relevant or potentially interesting for the research. First, more descriptive coding will be done where potentially interesting segments are summarised. After this step, more interpretive coding will be done to find the patterns that result in more meaningful units (Elliott, 2018). Thirdly, once the codes are created, themes are formed which exist of several codes. In the fourth step, the themes that are created in the third step are being reviewed to makes sure that they are useful and accurate representations of our data. In step five, you have a final list of themes that need to be defined and named so that those are understandable and to formulate what the theme means and how this theme helps us to understand the data. These themes will help you to find the crucial elements/ opinions in your

data to form conclusions of the interviews and the certain topic from all interviewees. The last step, step six, consists of including the outcome of the thematic analysis in the research paper.

3.2.2 Overview of participants

Information about participants and their volunteer trips is crucial to find out their experiences when volunteering with or without an organisation abroad and to find out how volunteer organisations work in the field. As mentioned before, the participants have been found using snowball sampling and have been contacted through means of e-mail and contact via social media platforms. The interviews have been done with videocalls. The reason for this is because most people were spread throughout the Netherlands. On top of that, since I had some symptoms of the COVID-19, although the PCR test was negative, visiting did not feel right.

The sample of participants in this research is somewhat diverse. The total number of interviews that have been conducted with volunteers/tourist is 13 people since no organisation was willing to do an interview. All participants in the interviews fitted the requirement, of having volunteered abroad, which was for the target group. From the 13 participants, 6 people identified themselves as male and 7 people identified themselves as female. The target group had an age range of 23 to 38, however, age has not been restrictive and controlled, so this age group representation has formed randomly. Therefore, it has to be acknowledged that when age had been controlled, other results could have been found. The time that the participants volunteered varied from 2 years to 2 weeks, where less than 2 months was mostly mentioned. 5 participants volunteered without the help of an organisation and 9 volunteered with an organisation (one did volunteer with and without) abroad.

3.3 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are important in every academic project and the identification of these issues is one of the core tasks of each researcher. Being aware of these ethical responsibilities is also important (Clifford et al., 2016). The main ethical issues in social research are harm, consent, deception, privacy, and confidentiality of the data (Punch, 2014). Despite the fact that the researcher does not aim or expect to do harm to the participants, it has to be considered that talking about voluntourism and the experiences, that might be negative, cause distress on the life of the participant as well as the interviewer. The researcher was aware and paid close attention to this during the data collection phase. To avoid this in the first place, questions have

been re-read and formulated as well as screening by asking introductory questions regarding their emotional and overall wellbeing. In case of distress happening, the researcher prepared to be thoughtful, pause the interview and give participants the time to feel their emotions if needed. Furthermore, during the data collection, the participants have been made aware of what type of interview could be expected, what the purpose was and what the topic was prior to the interview. In the contact letter, that was sent to possible participants before starting the interview, was stated that if they agreed with the information in this letter, they could participate in the interview and their consent was given. If they did not agree with the information and no consent was given, the interview did not take place. Moreover, the participants were made aware that contributing to this research is voluntary and that quitting is allowed during the data collection phase. The participants were also ensured of anonymity and can elaborate on questions as much as they want. Therefore, and because of some elaborated answers with personal content, the interview transcripts cannot be included in the appendix, as then no full anonymity can be ensured. Lastly, the data collected for this research (with full anonymity) will be used for this research only and has been stored on a personal laptop that is password and fingerprint-secured and only accessible for the researcher. After the project is completed, all the data will be destroyed.

To avoid all issues mentioned, the researcher will follow the "Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity 2018" (Algra et al., 2018). To ensure rigour and establish trustworthiness, the researcher will follow the incorporation of appropriate checking procedures such as triangulation among the supervisor and Think Volunteer (Hay, 2016).

4   Results/ analysis

4.1   General message and image creation of voluntourism by organisations

Starting with answering sub-question one: What general message about voluntourism is currently being sent out by volunteer organisations and what image is being created about voluntourism, all organisations were researched. It is important to acknowledge that no organisation that was used in this research mentioned the term "voluntourism" on their websites and only similar terms were found such as volunteering/ volunteer abroad and working holiday.

The focus and drive of the organisations differed amongst the organisations. However, the main idea behind their focus is to better the place or improve people, whether it be the local community or the volunteers. Most of the organisations are passionate about trying to better world issues such as inequality, poverty, and fostering peace. The organisations mostly focus on bringing people of different cultures together, to educate each other on skills, culture and other knowledge that is needed to make the project's destination develop into a better place. Organisations such as UNV and World Servants focus more on mobilising volunteers and promoting volunteering in general and do not necessarily have a focus on destination development. The main difference between the organisations is the focus of development. AIESEC, for example, is mostly focused on volunteers to explore their leadership potential and CIEE 'helps to give students, teachers and young professionals from across the world, skills that make them active and responsible global citizens' (CIEE, 2021), while volunteers going with the organisation Global Volunteers work under the invitation and direction of local people and project directors which means that local people are in always in charge to ensure genuine development by mobilising empowered people.

Another result regarding the message and image creation of voluntourism was the difference in stating volunteer development and community development on the website. As explained in the example above, the organisations most of the time displayed the impacts and development of volunteers and the importance of this during a trip. The impact and development of genuine and long-lasting impact of the destination or community have not been displayed regularly. An example of displaying the personal development of the volunteer could be seen on the website of AIESEC, where they state that "you [the volunteer] can develop yourself through cross-cultural experiences abroad, and work towards a cause you care about and for your personal and professional development". CIEE is another example, where on their website is displayed

that "thousands of people gain the knowledge and skills necessary to live and work in a globally interdependent and culturally diverse world by offering the mentioned programs" and want to "prepare future leaders that will be able to communicate across cultures to tackle issues". Lastly, IVHQ displays that through their projects they create "life-enriching travel experiences where transformation takes place in the communities and volunteers themselves". IVHQ still has a small focus on community development, but the only organisation that clearly displays community development is the example of Global Volunteers, where volunteers work under the supervision and invitation of local communities and project directors. In addition, Volunteerworld mentions ethical policies and choices for volunteering and impacts on communities and community development.

Overall, a positive image is being created and a positive message about voluntourism is being sent out. Although most organisations do not clearly mention the term voluntourism, the offers of the websites show they want to do good, and volunteering is a good way to help others. For example, World Servants has a fundamental in their belief in Jesus and their religion teaches that a believer is made to serve others. VSO and UNV have their root in the SDG's while volunteering, partnerships and collaboration during volunteering are seen as a tool for development in general. Yobbers and UN Online volunteering are an exception as Yobbers is not exclusively offering volunteer work and therefore their image is not clear. UN online volunteering is also an exception as in this case, volunteers do not need to travel to the destination, and thus the tourism part does not take place.

4.2 Reflection on responsibility and responsible development by organisations and participants

Sub-question two regarding how responsibility and responsible development are being reflected by organisations and participants in the voluntourism sector has been collected through different means of data collection and analysis. The data about the organisations have been collected through means of desk research and analysed using content analysis. This is because the organisations were not willing to participate in interviews. The data about the participants have been collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed with thematic analysis

4.2.1 Reflection by organisations

Analysing the content on the website of the 13 organisations lead to the conclusion that 11 of the organisations do not reflect on the term responsibility. Of these 11 organisations, any term

related to responsibility and any form of the word responsibility was searched on the websites and their social media pages, but nothing related to responsibility was found. For two organisations, United Planet and International Volunteer HQ, some connection to responsibility or responsible development could be found in the content on their website or social media pages. For United Planet, responsibility regarding tourism was not mentioned, however, this organisation mentions their responsibilities as a company. They have the responsibility to ensure that volunteers have a safe and successful quest (project) abroad, which includes the following elements: Selection and vetting process of all program elements, programs monitored for safety, emergency medical insurance, coordinators trained in safety and risk management. The organisation IVHQ focused even more on responsible volunteering by having different policies about ethical and responsible volunteering stated on their organisation's website. Examples of the policies stated are responsible volunteer travel policy, guidance for selecting childcare placements, child rotation policy and animal welfare policy. The reason for having these policies is also explained to ensure transparency within their organisation. IVHQ was established "to provide affordable and high-quality volunteer programs and so the implementation of responsible volunteer travel practices is paramount to any high-quality international volunteer program". On top of that, IVHQ contributes to the SDG's, that function as a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all, and address global challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. In the end, their aim is to beyond sustainability by providing a regenerative way to see the world and give back and commit to leaving the destination better than they found it together with the local community in that destination.

4.2.2 Reflection by participants

Participants volunteered with and without organisations, and in one case there was an experience with both options, between 1 and 5 times abroad. Here, they did various kinds of work varying from construction work, agricultural work, cooking, hospitality, working with (orphanage) kids and families, teaching, health work, sports and as a tour guide for tourists. The reason for volunteering abroad had also been very diverse, but the main themes that were discovered were new experiences, educational purposes, helping/ giving back, and religious reasons. The participants reflected their ideas about volunteering and voluntourism, and the main answer was that voluntourism is a good concept when it is also practised and carried out in a good and balanced way, as otherwise, it could turn very quickly into something negative.

The "balanced way" as described by the participants mostly described the time they were present at the destination and the impacts that could have on the local community. The participants that were there for less than 2 months shared the opinion that their trip was questionable regarding the actual help they gave.

Therefore, the participants also questioned their trip regarding responsibility and responsible development of their project's location. First of all, in their reflection on the concept of responsibility, the main theme was clear: for everyone responsibly is something important and was explained by being aware of your impacts, and understand that your presence and actions have consequences and make sure you hold yourself accountable for your actions, whether or not the outcomes are positive or negative. Also, respect for the community was mentioned by most of the participants. This also reflected the idea of responsible development: making sure that no unnecessary harm is done to the locals and that you are the guest in their community and should work together with them to reach long term and lasting impacts. To make sure the participants were as responsible as possible, participants would do more research on the concept, but also more research on the organisation or trips in general. Another result that was found during the interviews was that half of the people that volunteered through an organisation did not research the hosting organisation, and had no idea if the organisation matched with their value of wanting to be responsible. They assumed the organisations were responsible by arguing that the Christian background of the organisation would meet their goal, or that the organisation asked their own contribution of almost 3000 euros for the projects. Other participants argued that the organisation was well administered and were actively banning abusing missions or volunteering options or tried not to benefit from the project.

So, one can say that the volunteers in this research naturally were aware of their impacts on the project's destination and the community involved in the project. The main finding on responsibility was regarding the fact that there was a big variety in defining the concept of responsibility. On top of that, almost all participants find the concept of responsibility important and also find it important, in general, that organisations should take into account responsibility in their projects, and should be held accountable if responsibility is not being pursued. Despite this shared opinion, responsibility was not looked for when the participants searched for a volunteer organisation and chose the organisation.

4.3 Validation of responsibility and responsible development by organisations and participants

Sub-question three on how responsibility and responsible development are validated by the organisations and participants in the voluntourism sector has been a challenge to find out. As stated multiple times throughout this thesis, no organisation researched in this thesis was willing to participate in an interview to get better insights into their volunteering offers and the practices within their organisation. Therefore, the results validation and ensuring responsibility and responsible development by organisations during the projects are based on the desk research and content analysis of this desk research. Collecting data from the tourists has been done using semi-structured interviews which have been analysed using thematic analysis.

4.3.1 Validation of organisations

The only organisation that has been researched in this thesis that mentioned responsibility in any kind of form was IVHQ. This organisation has a transparent policy that prospective volunteers can find on the website. The following list has been quoted from the IVHQ website and displays how IVHQ ensures that it leads the way in responsible volunteer travel:

- IVHQ markets its volunteer programs in a responsible and ethical manner;
- IVHQ manages the expectations of volunteers before they depart through clear communication and realistic descriptions;
- IVHQ provides thorough pre-departure support for volunteers through the provision of detailed program information and dedicated program coordinators;
- IVHQ works with organisations and people living in the communities where volunteers are placed;
- IVHQ manages the number of volunteers on its programs by capping volunteer numbers when a program reaches capacity;
- IVHQ screens volunteers for age and qualifications (where relevant) upon application;
- IVHQ volunteers must provide an original or a certified copy of a criminal background check to the local organizations at orientation;
- IVHQ volunteers must provide an original or certified copy of any required qualifications for their volunteer project at orientation;
- IVHQ volunteers do not replace paid employment opportunities for local people;
- IVHQ volunteers work alongside local staff in local placements;

- IVHQ partners only with organizations that are registered organizations within that country;

- IVHQ provides all partner organizations with the IVHQ Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy for implementation on programs alongside local placements;

- IVHQ provides training and framework to local staff on best practice volunteer management upon a partnership, and continuously through regular visits to ensure programs receive maximum benefit from volunteers;

- IVHQ staff make regular visits to the volunteer programs to ensure they are running effectively, to learn more about the programs first-hand, and to collect feedback from volunteers and projects;

- IVHQ makes an effort to ensure fees are reasonable for volunteers by re-evaluating fees regularly and analysing costs with local staff;

- IVHQ requests feedback from every volunteer and evaluates programs on an ongoing basis, providing extra training and advice for local staff where necessary;

- IVHQ audits its programs to assess their effect and impact on the local community. Audit findings are used to ensure all programs are continuously improving in terms of quality, impact, and sustainability;

- IVHQ allocates a portion of the Registration Fee volunteers pay to the IVHQ Fund. This fund was established to support the placements where IVHQ volunteers work or projects set up by previous IVHQ volunteers, who are making long-term and sustainable contributions to developing communities abroad;

- IVHQ offsets carbon emissions from flying to visit programs through purchasing carbon credits and investing in clean energy, reforestation, and tree planting efforts. IVHQ also runs a local tree planting program and environmental education program in schools and encourages IVHQ volunteers to offset their carbon emissions from flying to IVHQ programs through a Carbon Footprint Calculator.

Since this is the only example from all organisations, it displays a minimal image of how the rhetoric is validated. Therefore, it cannot be seen as a concluding result since data is limited, and also shows that transparency is very limited. In turn, this increases the chances of bluewashing as some of the organisations described in chapter 4.1. strongly focus on the consumer, or in this case the (prospective) volunteer.

4.3.2 Validation of participants

With the answers of the interviews, the participants had various opinions about who should carry the responsibility during the volunteering process. Five participants think the organisation should take responsibility for the main reason that "they should have clear guidelines, conditions and rules to show the norms, values and goals of the organisation to the prospective volunteer. Also, it should be made clear to the volunteer that these requirements are mandatory and then they can place the responsibility on the volunteer too" (participant 13). The main argument is that most of the volunteers start at a young age, and do not have the knowledge about responsible volunteering yet. The organisation should be the first step to create this awareness and teach volunteers how they can be responsible. After this, the volunteer can make well balanced and well-informed choices about their volunteer trip. This vision seems to be in contrast with the limited transparency that has been mentioned in paragraph 4.3.1. On top of that, there are also 4 participants that state that the volunteer is responsible for his/her/their own actions as themselves are carrying out the work. Others are stating that both the organisation and volunteers are responsible and should ensure and validate their responsible actions.

The next result found, was that only half of the participants validated their choice of responsibility by researching the organisation they travelled with beforehand. Half of the participants researched the organisation they travelled with because they were aware that norms and values should match, or that the Christian background was represented or just to make sure it was a good company. The other half did not research due to the collaboration of the organisation with their school, or that the Christian background was good enough or simply because they were too young to think about responsibility.

Another result that was found is that participants try to validate their responsible travel through informing themselves or making sure that in the future organisations are developed that take into account responsibility, for example by having stricter volunteering applications, by creating awareness about responsibility to change mindsets of participants so that responsibility becomes the norm within volunteering practices. In the future, the participants would also consider educating themselves about responsibility, and countries with help of articles and experts to make sure they can implement their knowledge on the next trip.

5 Discussion

5.1 **Interpretation of the main results**

5.1.1 General message and image creation of voluntourism by organisations

The 13 organisations that were part of this research displayed various messaged about voluntourism and therefore created different images about voluntourism. The general message and image that are being created about voluntourism clearly are that voluntourism is a useful tool that can contribute to destination and community development. In addition to that, it shows volunteering can ensure positive reinforcement of destinations and communities. Although the main idea behind volunteering, as also is being stated in the literature, should focus on the development of the community on the destination of the project, the results display a bigger focus on developing the prospective (travelling) volunteer. This component could be seen throughout most websites of organisations and also keeps reappearing throughout the analysis. These were for example AIESEC and CIEE. On the contrary, there was less focus on clearly stating what the local impact of the volunteering project was. Only a few organisations, such as CUSO, IVHQ and Global Volunteers displayed in more detail what impacts could be present when volunteering in the destination when collaborating with the local community in projects. Especially Global Volunteers, where projects are set up on invitation of the community themselves that request help. In conclusion, different messages and images are being sent out and created by different organisations varying from more personal development to providing actual help that has long-lasting effects in the community.

This finding is in line with what has been found in the literature that there are still issues that undermine the good intentions of the voluntourism practice and that at this moment, more practices are doing harm than good (Budd, 2018; Cappendijk, 2019; Mousset, 2020; Rosenburg, 2018). On top of that, the image that is being sent out that volunteering is a personally enriching experience, by getting to know the culture and expanding other cultural experiences, for the volunteer itself can be seen as a positive side of volunteering for the volunteer (Salvador, 2019). So, in a relatively large number of organisations, the focus is on the consumer/ volunteer. However, building short term, friendly relationships with the local population can also impact the local community as trust and friendship are only there for a short amount of time without having a long-lasting effect or developing a destination in the long term. Therefore, these "positive" impacts only seem to be related to the change in the tourists themselves, and nothing is mentioned about the positive impact that the locals experience. The negative sides are on the

other hand often felt by the local community. For example, with orphanage tourism, the children in the orphanages often still have living parents or organizations that are exposing these children to terrible conditions and sometimes even human trafficking (Mousset, 2020).

5.1.2 Reflection on and validation of responsibility and responsible development by organisations and participants

In all organisations, responsibility and responsible development were mentioned on a bare minimum level. On most of the organisation's websites, the term responsibility or any form of this word was not mentioned. IVHQ was the only organisation that had a valid reflection on the responsibility of their impacts and their projects that was visible for website visitors. This was an interesting finding, as all these organisations that offer volunteers had no clear guidelines or regulations on responsibility even though they offered projects with vulnerable children or animals. In the literature, the Planeterra Foundation (2020) established a simple overview of guidelines for organisations such as the ones that were used in this research, to guide volunteering in a responsible and non—harmful way. These steps could be used for all organisations offering volunteer trips to not just benefit from people's good intentions but provide them with a practical tool to plan and manage their programs sustainably and responsibly that contributes to the long-term success of the voluntourism sector.

Think volunteer (2020) created guidelines that were focused on the prospective volunteers. In the results, most of the participants did not do in-depth research on the organisation regarding responsibility and were not always aware of their own responsibilities during their trips for various reasons. This reflection of the participants showed that responsibility was reflected minimally, due to the overall lack of knowledge. With help of the guidelines established by Think Volunteer organisations can also use this to select the right volunteers, and it creates transparency for the volunteers about the requirements and on what to expect during the application process. In general, responsibility should be on both organisations and volunteers, and not just the volunteers. It has to be taken into account that communities targeted by voluntourism often have little power to act proactively, as otherwise, voluntourism would not have been necessary. In the concept of responsible voluntourism concept, various important stakeholder groups are jointly responsible for implementing responsibly, however, it shows that these stakeholder groups largely fail to do so.

5.1.3 Validation of responsibility and responsible development by organisations and participants

The organisations in this research had minimal validation on their websites where they could ensure people responsibility was taken as a first step by the organisation. Because of this minimal effort, except for IVHQ, volunteers also had trouble taking responsibility as there was a lack of communication about this concept. In the results, the participants were most of the time not aware of the concept of responsibility on the website and made up their own definition of responsibility, which was varied too. This could be linked to the literature of Goodwin (2011), where he states that responsibility falls on the shoulder of not only one person or organisation, but on the collaboration of multiple people to make a shared responsibility. In this case, it clearly shows that no one was taking the initiative to display responsibility which left a gap and makes an impact on the destination and in the end, no one can validate this responsible development.

6 Conclusion

The main research question of this thesis "How is responsible development framed, validated, and ensured in volunteer tourism practices by tourists and businesses?" consisted of 3 sub-questions: 1) What general message about voluntourism is currently being sent out and what image do they create about voluntourism? 2) How are responsibility and responsible development reflected by organisations and participants in the voluntourism sector? And 3) How are responsibility and responsible development validated by the organisations and participants in the voluntourism sector?

The first sub-question covered what general message about voluntourism is currently being sent out and what image is being created about voluntourism. Based on the findings of this thesis, the general message that was created by all organisations is that voluntourism is a good practice that could help a lot of people in developing or underdeveloped countries. They promote becoming a volunteer as it will be a life-enriching experience for the volunteers and that the community will benefit from the actions of the volunteers. Moreover, a generally positive message is being given about all the good parts of volunteering, such as travelling and experiencing different cultures, and developing your skills while helping communities. Most of the organisations, except for IVHQ, display a typical western/ non-western hierarchy and a rich/poor difference.

The second sub-questions covered the concepts of responsibility and responsibility and wanted to find out how these concepts are reflected in organisations and the participants. Overall, the organisations in the research did not reflect on the concepts of responsibility and responsible development at all. United Planet stated responsibilities for them as an organisation, and IVHQ was the only organisation with a policy about responsibility for a variety of project themes. What appears from these findings is that not showing and addressing responsibility on the website of an organisation and thus transparency about the positive effects of their intentions is less than expected. This was confirmed when contacting the organisation to do an interview to get into more detail, and no responses were given or with an answer, they were not interested or had no time. Also, the participants had trouble with reflecting on responsibility, as during their trips, there was not a lot of information available about this concept. Moreover, the young age and year when the participants volunteered showed that at that time, responsibility was not a common topic to talk about yet and/or could not be found on the website of organisations.

The last sub-question relates to how responsibility and responsible development were validated in organisations and volunteers. The results showed that because there was almost no validation on responsibility or responsible development within the organisation or the participants. IVHQ was the only organisation that displayed some validation regarding responsibility by mentioned and posting the policy about how to volunteer responsibility. Concerning the volunteers, validation was at a very minimum with the argument that the lack of information from the organisations and their websites, the lack of information sources available and the lack of talking about responsibility in society at that time in the past played a role during their volunteer trips and the validation process.

This research has contributed to the academic literature by proving a better insight into the current voluntourism sector with a focus and in combination with responsibility and responsible development aspects. The new combination of using the elements of responsibility and responsible development provides an insight into the volunteer sector that has not been studied in dept yet in the academic literature. On top of that, using a combination of desk research with critical content analysis as well as interviews to get a better insight into the organisational practices ánd in the experiences of the participants is also a unique combination. This new approach has provided the volunteer sector with new findings that lead to closing the knowledge gap of the literature of responsible volunteering and the actual practice of responsible volunteering in the world. The findings that organisations seem to be bluewashing and have limited reflection on responsibility and also little validation of responsibility are relevant insights that there need to be more checks on information available from organisations and the practices they carry out and if those align to make sure volunteers can also make a well-informed choice.

Although this research has been carefully thought out, designed, and conducted, it is still subject to limitations. Looking at the measurement instrument, interviews could have some concerns. A threat is the concept of social acceptability, as people tend to answer identical questions differently when asked by a stranger in comparison to when a close friend would ask the same questions. This is because when a stranger asks a question, one is more likely to answer in a socially accepted way, with a friend there is more trust to express one's honest opinion. On top of that, interviews could not be done in person and had to be done via video call, which could lead back to the point of social acceptability and the level of comfort. Other limitations occur on the access to the participants' personal reflections on concepts. Participants only give a

certain number of personal experiences and data, since they do not have a good connection with the interviewer or leave out information to avoid feeling ashamed. Lastly, missing the interviews with the organisations leaves a big gap in the data collected which had to be filled in with the information that was available from the desk research. With interviews, more in-depth information could have been found to construct a more balanced conclusion, since a better understanding of the organisation could have been found.

It is suggested that future research in the field of voluntourism will learn from this research and its limitations. Looking at the methods of this study, a more reliable method of collecting data is to interview more participants and add interviews with the researched organisation to construct a total view of the organisation, instead of only basing it on the website. Therefore, future research should include this data collection method and if possible interviews with local communities from projects that are offered by the organisations to get an even more complete overview of the volunteering practices. With regards to the results, more research could be done to find out what the best way is to include responsibility and responsible development in organisations and their projects. and how this can be validated by organisations.

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8 Appendix

8.1 **Appendix 1 – Guiding interview questions**

Introduction:

1) What is your age?
2) What is your nationality?
3) Where/ what country do you currently reside?
4) What is your profession or daily activities? (e.g. student, working in../as.., volunteer)
5) What is your highest level of education?
6) Did your education/ study provide a volunteering internship? [Yes/no]
    a. If yes, was this abroad or within your country?
    b. If not, why?
7) How many times did you volunteer?
    a. How many times did you go abroad?
    b. How many times did you stay in your own country?
8) Where did you volunteer (place/ country)?
9) Did you volunteer via a volunteering organisation?
    a. If yes, which organisation and how did you find this organisation?
    b. If no, how did you plan your volunteering trip?
10) How long did your volunteer trips last?
    a. If you did multiple volunteer trips please state per **volunteering abroad** how long you resided.
11) What was your reason for volunteering **abroad**?
12) What volunteer activities did you do? (e.g. orphanage tourism, health volunteer, building etc)

Voluntourism:

13) How would you describe/ reflect on the concept of voluntourism? (Try here to get an extensive answer by asking more questions if needed)
14) What is your perception on the practice of voluntourism? (Try here to get an extensive answer by asking more questions if needed)
15) What do you know about voluntourism? (e.g., types, impact, etc. (Try here to get an extensive answer by asking more questions if needed)

16) What do you think the key elements within voluntourism are?

17) What do you think is the key goal of voluntourism?

18) Do you think development work and voluntourism can be considered the same concept? (Try here to get an extensive answer by asking more questions if needed)

19) What work can, in your opinion, be considered volunteer work? (Let the participant give examples and state why they think this is the case)

20) What would you say can be positive impacts of voluntourism on the (project's) destination?

21) What would you say can be the negative impacts of voluntourism on the (project's) destination?

Responsible tourism

22) How would you describe/ reflect on the concept of **responsibility**? (Try here to get an extensive answer by asking more questions if needed)

23) How would you describe/ reflect on the concept of **responsible tourism**? (Try here to get an extensive answer by asking more questions if needed)

24) Is responsibility important to you? Why or why not?

25) What do you think are the key elements of responsible tourism, and why?

26) What do you think is the goal of responsible tourism?

27) Who, in your opinion, should carry the responsibility of the volunteering trip and why?

28) How would you describe or reflect on the term/concept **responsible voluntourism**?
   a. What do you think is the main goal?
   b. What, in your opinion, should be done to reach this goal?
   c. How would you try to implement this in your volunteer journey?
   d. Is this term something that you find important?

If the participant volunteered with an organisation: About the organisation

29) Would you say the organisation, you went volunteering **abroad** with, promoted responsible travel?
   a. If yes, please explain why you think this organisation was responsible?
   b. If not, please explain why you think this organisation was not responsible?

30) Did you research the organisation before participating?
   a. Why/ why not?

      b. If you did research, what did you look for in the organisation and what was important to you to be convinced?

31) Did you consider other organisations?

      a. If yes, why did you choose the organisation you went with and not the others?

      b. If not, why did you not consider other organisations?

32) Did you look for responsibility in the organisations? Please explain why or why not.

33) Did you look at the goal of the organisation? Please explain why or why not.

34) Did you have an interview or conversation with the organisation before you went abroad to the project?

      a. If not, why not and would you prefer a conversation the next time?

      b. If yes, what was the conversation about?

35) Did you find all the information you need on the website of the organisation?

      a. If not, how did you manage to find more information?

      b. If yes, which components on the website did you look at?

When the participant has travelled without organisation

36) Please explain in as much detail as possible how you arranged your **unorganised** volunteer trip.

37) How did you experience the preparations for your unorganised volunteer trip abroad?

38) What were things that had to be arranged?

      a. What do you think would have been arranged easier if you went on an organised volunteer trip?

      b. What do you think would have been more difficult if you went on an organised volunteer trip?

39) Do you think your trip was responsible? Please explain why or why not?

40) Is there anything else you want to mention about your trip, the interview or in general?

Appendix 2 – Coding scheme