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Volunteer tourism: a critical explorative analysis from the tour operators’ perspective

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VOLUNTEER TOURISM: A CRITICAL EXPLORATIVE ANALYSIS FROM THE TOUR OPERATORS’ PERSPECTIVE

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VOLUNTEER TOURISM: A CRITICAL EXPLORATIVE ANALYSIS FROM THE TOUR OPERATORS’ PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT
Volunteer tourism, a popular phenomenon in the tourism industry has lately been criticized whether it does more harm than good. The majority of the research that has been conducted, place specific focus on the volunteers themselves rather than the commercialized organizations behind volunteer tourism. It seems that the volunteers are blamed for the negative impacts on volunteer tourism. However it has to be assumed that tour operators play an important role in these changes within volunteer tourism. Therefore this study will engage an explorative research on the tour operators’ perspectives regarding volunteer tourism. The studied tour operators are based in Sweden, the Netherlands, USA and Great Brittan. In which these tour operators are all very similar in their volunteer tourism packages. This study touches a new perspective of volunteer tourism that has not been researched by scholars. The main purpose of this research is to encounter the underlying motivations of tour operators. The research at hand also aims at discovering the tour operators’ importance and how they influence the negative impacts of volunteer tourism. Tour operators are the connection to both the demand and supply side of volunteer tourism therefore have a very strong and solid position to improve volunteer tourism and avoid from negative impacts. From a methodological point of view, this thesis will conduct qualitative research by means of in depth interviews with tour operators and conduct a content analysis of tour operators’ websites. The expected outcome of the research is to identify critical factors of the sustainable success of volunteer tourism. In which the outcome of the study shows that tour operators still have many improvements in order to operate in a sustainable way and prioritize the host destination’s importance rather than the volunteer tourists.

KEYWORDS: Volunteer tourism, tour operators, developing countries, commercialized tourism, sustainability
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1. INTRODUCTION

The introduction chapter at hand provides introductive information regarding this research thesis.

1.1 Study background

Search for “volunteer abroad” in the search engine and it might be understandable why helping the needy far from home seems to be the ultimate holiday for a significant growing number of people around the world, whether they are medical professionals sharing their skills in rural areas in Nicaragua, families cleaning beaches in Thailand, or students teaching English, or visiting orphanages in South Africa (Google, 2015). Volunteer tourism has become a popular niche market within the tourism industry with an increase in availability of both supply and demand. Niche tourism is a type of tourism which can offer meaningful experiences. Many tourists are seeking for such an experience rather than an ordinary holiday. For example, the recent popularity of volunteer tourism has been shown in a study from the Tourism Research and Marketing consultancy group which claims that, since 1990, volunteer tourism has witnessed a tremendous growth, estimating that 1.6 million people worldwide are participating in volunteer tourism projects annually, with a value of £832 million to £1.3 billion (McGehee, Wearing, & Nancy Gard , 2013, p. 121). According to Brown, volunteer tourism can be defined as a “type of tourism experience where a tour operator offers travelers an opportunity to participate in an optional excursion that has a volunteer component, as well as a cultural exchange with local people” (Brown S. , 2005, p. 280). Nevertheless, volunteer tourism is not only offered by tour operators. Volunteer tourism programs are also offered by non-profit organizations. More concretely, volunteer tourism is mainly offered by Western organizations and tour operators to give aid in developing countries (Birrell, 2010). Of course, there is volunteer tourism in developed countries, but this is only a minor group.

Recently, volunteer tourism has been criticized due to negative publicity (Bodbijl, 2014) (OneWorld, 2014). Volunteer tourism has been a debated concept, while, over the past years, volunteer tourism has generated mixed opinions. Research has shown that the motivations of volunteers have been changing. Volunteering that involves children is very popular amongst volunteer tourists. A research of UNICEF states that, “considerable evidence now indicates international volunteerism is increasing the rate of orphanage presence. That is, orphanages are increasing in number at a faster rate than orphans. Suggesting 75% of children in Cambodian orphanages actually are not even orphans. Three-fourths of these children have living parents. This, in turn, suggests that our demand-side for international service is developing a supply-side of children who do have other, healthier alternatives. In the worst cases, children have literally been trafficked into orphanages” (UNICEF, 2014) (Hartman, 2014).
1.2 Problem statement

The popularity of volunteer tourism has led to a growing interest of researchers in this area, studies such as ‘Volunteer tourism – involve me and I will learn’ (Conran, 2011) and ‘Volunteer tourism: evolution, issues and futures’ (McGehee N. G., 2014). Subsequently, various studies have been conducted regarding the motivations of volunteers, the criticism on volunteer tourism, and the negative versus positive effects of volunteer tourism, studies such as ‘Volunteer tourism: at the crossroads of commercialization and service?’ (Tomazos & Cooper, 2011), and ‘The possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism’ (Guttentag D. A., 2009). With such a rapid growth of the popularity and awareness of volunteer tourism, many tourism businesses seem to recognize the tremendous potential within this field. Therefore, an increasing number of commercial tour operators have been adding volunteer tourism packages to their itineraries. Many tour operators around the globe offer volunteer tourism packages to a diverse range of tourists. However, there is little evidence of information regarding the tour operators’ perspective. Research regarding tour operators has been conducted by only a minor group of researchers, such as Stevenson (2014) and Xin and Chan (Xin & Chan, 2013). Tour operators that offer volunteer tourism spend relatively much time encouraging prospective volunteers to think about ‘how’ they are going to volunteer, but only little time thinking about ‘why’ tourists should volunteer. The ‘how’ can easily be done by looking at the tour operators’ websites. By contrast, the ‘why’ is less thought of because it is simply assumed since volunteering still has a predominantly positive image amongst tourists (Stevenson, 2014). Therefore, it is important to research not only the volunteer tourists’ perspective, but also the tour operators’ perspective of volunteer tourism.

1.3 Aim and Research questions

Objectives and aim

Previous studies placed specific focus on the volunteers themselves rather than the commercial companies and non-profit organizations behind volunteer tourism. Recently, volunteer tourism regarding the tour operators actions caught the attention of the publicity with articles such as “The mysterious finances of volunteer work (Vriend, 2015),” “expensive voluntourism trips 'the least responsible (Paris, 2014)” and “Still too many campaigns portrait the image of ‘the poor African’ (Lijfering, 2015)” in which the society and researchers are looking critically on the tour operators’ actions.

If volunteer tourists decide to buy a volunteer tourism package at a tour operator rather than volunteering for a non-profit organization, the tour operator is the key stakeholder that offers the 'volunteer tourism packages' to tourists. Therefore, they have a strong influence, both on the tourists and volunteer tourism packages. Tour operators are defined as “the commercialized sector, whereby the process of non-profit organizations decides to produce goods and services with the explicit intent of earning a profit” (Noakes & Coghlana, 2012, p. 124). Indeed, the tour operator makes the connection between the supply and the demand for tourism services, having, thus, a great influence on both market sides of volunteer tourism.

This research study is aimed to determine an in-depth perspective of the tour operators that offer volunteer tourism regarding their opinion, operation, goals and strategies when offering volunteer tourism. More concretely, this research identifies the tour operators’ the role within volunteer tourism which refers to the tour operators’ behavior and communication. While keeping the aim of this research in mind, the following objectives have been articulated:
- To understand how tour operators who provide volunteer tourism communicate their strategic and ethical principles regarding volunteer tourism to their potential customers.
- To understand how tour operators operate by means of guidelines in the niche of volunteer tourism while keeping the importance of the volunteer tourism projects in mind.
- To understand the tour operators’ awareness and actions regarding the recent negative publicity of volunteer tourism.

Main focus question
The main research question of this thesis at hand has been formulated as follows:
*What are the underlying motivations for tour operators that add volunteer tourism to their tourism packages?*

Sub research questions
Sub research questions have been formulated in order to get an insight into the topic and in order to meet the aim of this thesis.

1. To what extent are the communication practices of the tour operators that offer volunteer tourism in line with social responsibilities?

2. To what extent are the tour operators that offer volunteer tourism measuring, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of each volunteer tourism project?

3. To what extent do the tour operators that offer volunteer tourism are aware about the negative footprints and how do they react on the negative publicity?

1.4 Research area
As mentioned before, volunteer tourism usually involves someone from a more developed country paying to do community development work in a lesser developed country (Voelkl, 2012, p. 17). Volunteer tourism is a form of tourism in which the tourist is engaged in the destination’s community. Tour operators play a very important role in the decision making process of the tourists. A tour operator can be described as the business that “buys, or owns in some cases, a high volume of travel services across carriers, accommodation and services. These services are then assembled into packages for purchase by the consumer. The packages are sold via travel agents or through the internet” (TTA, 2015). This research focuses on the tour operators that meet the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Rational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The focus is on the tour operators</td>
<td>Non-profit organizations will be excluded from this research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operators from developed countries offering volunteer tourism in developing countries.</td>
<td>The minor group of volunteer tourism in developed countries will not be the focus of the present research study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizations that are offering short term volunteer tourism projects (i.e. less than three months)</td>
<td>Volunteer projects over three months are generally considered as a more permanent and professional form of volunteering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operators that offer volunteer tourism programs to people who do not require any specific skills, qualifications or experiences.</td>
<td>International volunteering organizations are excluded which require people to have specific skills and experience, such as expertise in educational and medical aspects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operators that include interaction with the local community in their volunteer tourism packages.</td>
<td>During this research there will not be looked at the wildlife and environmental (i.e. ecological) aspects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operators in particular in Sweden and the Netherlands.</td>
<td>Two Western countries which are relatively easily accessible for the research to conduct interviews. Nevertheless, tour operators in other Western countries will not be strictly excluded if there is a possibility to interview the tour operator.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1.5 Thesis outline

In order to address the stated aim and objectives of this research, the thesis is structured in the following way. The second chapter will provide a theoretical framework related to the research aim, questions and objectives, respectively. The methodology part outlines the particular methodological approach of data collection that will be adopted for this study. Moreover, details of the qualitative approach and ethical considerations that are addressed in this research are also discussed.

The next part of the thesis will provide and discuss the results of the data collection, derived from qualitative research and literature research. More precisely, first of all, this research contains a web content analysis of the tour operators’ websites from which it will become more clear, how different each tour operators is and what are the tour operators’ values. Objectives 1 and partly 2 will be addressed in this chapter. Moreover, the next chapter will provide an analysis and a discussion of the results gained from the interviews. Objectives 2 and 3 will be addressed by this part of the research. The next chapter will provide a critical discussion of the outcome of the thesis. Afterwards, the conclusion can be provided. Lastly, the limitations and the agenda of future research will be discussed.
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Derived from the problem statement, relevant literature concerning the posed research question will be reviewed and critically discussed. This chapter will contain information of volunteer tourism behind tourism, information regarding volunteer tourism and the practice of volunteer tourism, the intermediates related volunteer tourism and a critical theory to study management practices and business ethics.

2.1 Neo colonialism, post colonialism and volunteer tourism

This research focuses on the first world offering volunteer tourism to the third world. The third world can be described as countries that suffer from high infant mortality, high level of poverty, low economic development, heavily depending on industrialized nations and low utilization of natural resources. “Third world countries tend to dependent economically on the developed countries and are generally characterized as poor with unstable government, high rates of population growth and diseases.” Generally, it can be said that the third world countries lack a middle class, with a major difference between the poor and a minor elite upper class that control the country’s wealth and resources (One World Nations Online, 2015).

It can be argued that volunteer tourism is a form of neocolonialism because it does little more than reinforce unequal power relationships and cultural stereotypes between tourists and hosts (Pastran, 2014, p. 45). Neocolonialism can be explained as foreign owned companies taking control and power over the local and regional levels (Williams, 2012, p. 191). The third world tourism destinations are mainly promoted and offered by multinational tour operators, travel agencies, and other intermediaries with based in developed countries (Echtner & Prasad, 2003, p. 661). Third world countries can also be defined as the developing and underdeveloped countries (Idioms Dictionary, 2012). Therefore volunteer tourism impacts can be considered as postcolonial critique. By viewing post colonialism as “ways of criticizing the material and discursive legacies of colonialism then the language of development and volunteer tourism providers can be seen to be neocolonial” (Fee & Mdee, 2011, p. 224). It is, of course, difficult to prove whether volunteer tourism organizations that offer volunteer tourism have neocolonial intentions but there are certain myths and stereotypes of third world tourism destination that are reproduced as marketing aspects to attract the customers attention (Fee & Mdee, 2011, p. 225). Conran states that the “continuing expansion of neoliberal globalization and an emerging consumer consciousness in the West, has at least in part laid the cultural groundwork for the rapid expansion of volunteer tourism” (Conran M., 2011, p. 1456).

Volunteer tourism involves a wide range of actors, places and activities therefore it can be said that some volunteer tourism businesses can be more effective than others when challenging neocolonialism. A postcolonial theoretical framework is used to analysis neocolonialism aspects (Pastran, 2014, p. 46). The postcolonial theory provides an interpretation of context that is focused on the distinctions drawn between the first and third worlds. Postcolonial theory “emerges out of a fundamental belief that colonialism has been, and remains, one of the most compelling influences on the West’s interpretations and interactions with people from different (mainly non-Western) cultures. Consequently, postcolonial theory is constantly alert to the heritage of colonialism in diverse contemporary institutional settings, including tourism and business interactions” (Echtner & Prasad, 2003, p. 666). Thus, colonialism has significant and continuing impacts on political, social and economic development from both the colonized and the former colonizer. Echtner and Prased explain that the
postcolonial theory within tourism explains a typology of three of the most common colonial myths which is used in tourism marketing, “the myth of the unchanged,” “the myth of a present-day paradise,” and “the myth of the uncivilized.” Which can be summarized as a third world tourism destination represented by timeless places (Echtner & Prasad, 2003, p. 669), the third world destination that takes tourists to the exuberant lands of the sea/sand (Echtner & Prasad, 2003, p. 672), and tourism in the third world when tourists undertake an expedition into an almost primitive place, where civilization is largely absent and of barbarian nature (Echtner & Prasad, 2003, p. 675).

The discourse that brings volunteers to developing countries is supported by a powerful neocolonial assumption that even inexperienced and unskilled Westerners can bring development to developing countries (Pastran, 2014, p. 49). There are suggestions made that volunteer tourism makes a difference to deprivation and poverty. However the reinforcement might be that volunteer tourists encounter and contribute to and over expectation on the volunteer’s part own impacts rather than the need to help, learn and respects others. While the neocolonial and negative impact critiques do have some validity, they do not account for the potentially positive aspects of volunteer tourism (Fee & Mdee, 2011, p. 226).

### 2.2 Volunteer tourism

Volunteer tourism is a relatively new commodity and wide-spread global practice. However it has its roots in previous forms of volunteering abroad, such as, people in the 20th century from all around the world traveled to Israel to volunteer in the kibbutz or an organization as Doctors without Borders (Verardi, 2013, p. 14). Volunteer tourism has become a well-known and significant phenomenon within the tourism industry. Volunteer tourism combines the non-profit, voluntary and the tourism sectors. Volunteer tourism is often referred to as ‘VolunTourism’ which refers to ‘a type of tourism experience where a tour operator offers travelers an opportunity to participate in an optional excursion that has a volunteer component, as well as a cultural exchange with local people’ (Brown S., 2005, p. 280).

![Definition of volunteer tourism](image)

**Figure 1: Definition of volunteer tourism (Wearing S., 2001, p. 30)**

Even though many researchers are interested in volunteer tourism, they do not always agree with this definition. Wearing, for instance, describes volunteers as those who “volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve 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, 2001, p.
1). Whereas the website of voluntourism.org describes ‘voluntourism’ as an equal belief to both the volunteer and travel experience as “the conscious, seamlessly integrated combination of voluntary service to a destination and the best, traditional elements of travel arts, culture, geography, history and recreation in that destination” (voluntourism.org, n.d.). Moreover, McGehee and Santos define volunteer tourism from a volunteer’s perspective, “referring to the notion that it involves discretionary time and it takes place outside of the regular atmosphere of daily life for the participant” (McGehee & Santos, 2005, p. 764). Volunteer tourism can be seen as a form of alternative tourism, ecotourism, responsible tourism and sustainable tourism with a selection of education including environmental and social aspects. Many definitions also include statements regarding poverty (Brown S., 2005, p. 280) (McGehee, Wearing, & Nancy Gard, 2013, p. 5). Volunteer tourism was traditionally preserved for non-profit charities or NGO which trained volunteers to become for instance teachers, nurses and engineers for long term projects which were suited for their skills. Nowadays, volunteer tourism has grown to a niche sector within the tourism industry that attracts a wide variety of travelers who have little time and no specific experiences, skills and education and it is often managed by tour operators (Barrell, 2014).

The tourists who are involved in volunteer tourism vary from young people who are taking a gap year, to couples that are on a two week holiday to professionals in different fields, such as doctors and teachers. Very common volunteer tourism activities include aid for children, such as teaching or helping at an orphanage, activities that include wildlife or activities that include cooperation with the local community, such as building houses. In order for a volunteer tourism project to have a positive contribution, the importance should be focused on the needs of the local community rather than the desires of volunteers. Volunteers should not be a burden for the local community, but rather, their help should really be needed by the community. Thus, volunteers should be able to make some sort of valuable contribution to the community. Moreover, volunteer projects should only be created if there is a demand for aid in a local community (OneWorld, 2014).

Even though volunteer tourism receives many negative reviews, there is still a need for volunteer work within developing countries (Stevenson, 2014). The idea behind volunteer tourism is that tourism ventures can and should bring about positive impacts to the local community in the volunteering destination (Sin, 2009, p. 481). Many charity organizations provide vital aid with skilled volunteers, such as medical volunteers who travel to rural areas in developing countries to educate the local community or provide communities with urgently needed facilities which contribute to the quality of life for individuals or the host community (Nguyen, 2012, p. 22). There is also volunteer aid provided after a natural disaster, for instance, helping to rebuild a community. Therefore, aid by volunteer tourism projects can be extremely constructive. Positive experiences as a volunteer can lead to return volunteer trips and better awareness of volunteer aid (Ellis, 2007). Furthermore volunteer tourism can create a better understanding between cultures due to the intercultural experience and interactions (Guttentag D., 2009, p. 539) (Conran M., 2011, p. 1466).

Although volunteer tourism has many positive impacts it can be questioned whether volunteer tourism does more harm than good. Therefore the negative impacts should not be overlooked as stated by many authors, such as McGehee and Coghlan & Noakes. Volunteer tourism seems to become a significant phenomenon where Western people conduct volunteer work in a new country far away from home with hardly any knowledge of the culture and history of the country. There is limited
understanding of how the volunteer’s presence effects the local community. ‘The problem of the volunteers is that they are seeking for an unforgettable/unusual experience rather than looking at the needs of the local community’ (Jose, 2014).

As Oxfam Novib points outs, it is very important to not take the work away from the local community since the local community could get paid for it. With poverty probably being a driving factor behind the need for the volunteer tourism project in the first place, it seems unfair that tourists, who do not need the work, take away potential jobs from the local community (Stevenson, 2014). It seems like the volunteers are treated as customers of the tour operator rather than aid workers. Often, new projects are created for costumers in order to solely fulfil their needs and wants even though there is no real need for their aid, for example, building houses in a community where the local community is capable of doing it themselves. The local community almost is treated like an attraction in order to take something back as the ‘poor’ from the ‘rich’ even though the community does not need such short time and unskilled aid work (Bodbijl, 2014). Finally, another issue that has been raised in the literature is the volunteer work in orphanages, since vulnerable children should not be used to sell ‘holidays’ to tourists (Hendriks, 2014).

Another reason why volunteer tourism has negative impacts, it seems that volunteer tourism projects have hardly any requirements concerning skills and education for those who want to participate. Brown and Morrison (2003, p. 77) discuss that “The only skill that is required by many of these organizations is the desire to help others.” Even though volunteer tourism has many negative aspects it is important to provide aid to developing countries. The author of the website ‘more than footprints' (Stevenson, 2014) describes the need for volunteers, “in a time when governments are cutting aid budgets, paying volunteers enable the right organizations to do extremely important work in places which genuinely benefit from them. There’s nothing wrong with the desire to give something back” (Stevenson, 2014). Many websites concerning volunteer tourism, such as “How to ethically volunteer anywhere in the world” (O’Donnell, 2013), and “How to choose the right volunteer opportunity,” by the UN, provide information to volunteers to choose responsible volunteer projects.

2.3 The practice of volunteer tourism

There are various types of tourists that contribute to volunteering projects and have different motivations, expectations and perspectives regarding volunteer tourism, but all seeking for an unusual travel experience. "Most volunteer tourists are women, they are also young adults, between the ages of 20 and 25", says the consulting group Tourism, Research and Marketing (2014). “A volunteer who can provide a needed and requested skill in a properly organized and resourced environment is absolutely a force for good.” However, it is questionable whether every volunteer is capable to volunteer at every project. Many travel organizations do not distinguish between volunteers according to their skill level. Rather, every tourist is welcome to volunteer as long as he or she is paying. The media has also contributed to target much of its criticism at the usually unskilled young gap year volunteers, branding them as the new neocolonialists (Taplin, 2014, p. 25). Clearly international development is contentious and complex, varying enormously across developing countries; volunteer tourism only forms a small portion. Volunteer tourists tend to think that they can make a difference in the developing countries while volunteering for 3 weeks.

It can be questioned whether a tourist that volunteers is called a volunteer, tourists or a volunteer tourists. How to define such a person depends on the time period of volunteering, type of volunteering, motivation to volunteer, and finally, the purpose of
the trip.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteer</th>
<th>Tourist / Traveller</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A person who voluntarily offers himself or herself for a service or undertaking.</td>
<td>A person that is traveling especially for the pleasure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: From volunteer to tourist (adapted from Tomazos 2009, Taplin 2014 and GoAbroad)

This figure is derived from volunteer tourism literature (Tomazos K., 2009) (Taplin, 2014) and the website GoAbroad that provides an overview of several tour operators offering volunteer tourism. The figure shows the position and the definition of people / tourists that volunteer. Tour operators’ websites offer professional long-term projects, however. These people should rather be defined as volunteers than volunteer tourists, since this person voluntarily provides aid to help others and is not on a holiday. Many people that volunteer during their holiday are defined as volunteer tourists; however, it can be argued whether these people are more tourists or travelers than volunteers, since the majority of the time is spend as leisure purpose. Many volunteer tourists have socio-culturally negative associations by getting defined as a tourist and prefer to be defined as a volunteer (Mostafanezhad, 2013, p. 382). Furthermore, Mostafanezhad describe that the role of authenticity and social status in the volunteer tourism experience might play a significant contribution why volunteer tourists do not want to be defined as tourists (2013, p. 383). Many tourists associate tourism with the commercial all inclusive tours therefore it can be argued whether some of these volunteer tourism trips might be very similar to the all-inclusive tours (Aware Volunteer, 2015). Some projects where tourists provide aid, are not always constructive in the long-term and do not always make a difference for the local community. Thus, it can be said that some of these projects are designed for the tourists rather than helping the local community.

2.3.1 Time period volunteering

The definition of time period while volunteering is unclear and is used in different contexts. Time periods to volunteer have been defined differently in various research papers, therefore, definitions mentioned in table 2 will be used throughout this research.
Table 2: Definition of time period volunteering

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Definition of time period volunteering</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Micro/day trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most common time period for tourists to volunteer is a short term in which tourists can combine volunteering with traveling (Sin, 2009, p. 488).

2.3.2 Motivations

The concept of motivations has received substantial attention in the tourism and recreation literature. Motivations are the internal or external reasons to visit an area or participating in an activity at a given time (Grimm & Needham, 2012, p. 488). Which motivations are important for a person depends on a person’s life stage, personality and values. Each volunteer tourist expects a meaningful travel experience, which distinguishes volunteer tourists from people who volunteer in their home country (Wearing S., 2001). It is important to understand tourism motivations in order to see the relation between the motivations of the tour operators. The motivations represent why and wherefore people travel and whether they have a specific choice in particular (Brown S., 2005, p. 483).

There are several motivation theories proposed and empirically tested while looking at tourism literature. A popular method is the push and pull, this method explains that people are pushed “to travel by internal psychological motivations (e.g. reduce stress). Furthermore, people are pulled “to a destination by its attributes (e.g. culture or beaches)” (Grimm & Needham, 2012, p. 489). Another tourism motivation theory that has been used for tourism motivation is Maslow’s ‘hierarchy of needs’. Maslow believes that individuals have human needs that need to be fulfilled in a hierarchical way. The five hierarchical aspects of Maslow contain: “self-actualization, esteem needs, love needs, safety needs, and physiological needs form the basis for further development and applications to understand travel behavior and demand for tourism” (Brown S., 2005, p. 481).

Numerous studies that have researched volunteer tourists’ motivations have often found that participants have two main motivations that can be distinguished among volunteer tourists (Tiessen, 2012, p. 2): it can be argued that volunteer tourism might be more about the self- fulfilment of western tourists than the need for aid in developing countries. In the past, volunteers mainly volunteered because of altruistic reasons. However, there is a shift taking place towards motivations of self-development, personal growth, and social status (Mostafanezhad, 2014, p. 111). Altruistic motivation can be defined as tourists that offer their services without gaining anything personal from volunteering (Tomazos K., 2009, p. 28).

Brown discusses the major motivations in her research ‘travelling with a purpose: understanding the motives and benefits of volunteer vacationers.’ A major motivation that occurs in Brown’s research is the ‘desire to give something back’, and ‘to help the less fortunate’, instead of self-fulfillment (Brown S., 2005, p. 488). Moreover, tourists have as motivation to volunteer the desire to be part of a group and finding new friends. The interactions with different people seem to be very important for the majority of the volunteers (p.288). Furthermore, Brown also describes educational opportunities
and bonding with family and friends that volunteer tourism brings along which appears also as a major motivation for volunteers (p. 289).

Nowadays, it seems to be very important to live up to the dreams of the volunteers rather than the benefits for the local community. Presently, volunteer tourism also plays a major role in social media; volunteers want to share their experiences and, thus, find it very important to post pictures of themselves with, for instance, the orphanages or other volunteer work on social media. As stated in an article online (Onion, 2014), a 22 year old girl who went on a six days trip to a remote area in Malawi said “I do not think my profile photo will ever be the same, not after the experience of taking such incredible pictures with my arms around those small African children’s shoulders.” This case, clearly shows that many volunteers choose to volunteer partly because of a social status, which seems very important nowadays. This is something that is not always mentioned when asking about their motivations, but can be seen as a major shift in the motivations of volunteers.

The desire to travel is another motivation for tourists to volunteer. Volunteering abroad seems like a good alternative and safe to travel to less developed places while being guided throughout the entire travel / volunteer experience (Sin, 2009, p. 488).

Another motivation to volunteer is to gain knowledge, experience and enrich intellectuality. Volunteering is used as a future tool for careers opportunities by gaining experience, technical expertise, networking and using an improved resume (Tomazos K. , 2009, p. 26). Many tour operators use this as a marketing tool, as big volunteer tourism quotes on its website “our international development volunteer projects are focused to offer the volunteer a valuable and practical experience for their resume.”

Table 3: Motivations to volunteer

|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
2.3.3 The local community
Volunteer projects are designed to provide aid to the local community. Volunteer tourism can truly be an effective tool for sustainable community development (TIES, 2013). The importance of the local community should be a central aspect for providers of volunteer tourism. However it can be questionable whether the volunteer tourism projects always prioritize the local community’s aid and needs. While looking at volunteer tourism websites it may look that volunteer tourism providers prioritize their focus on the volunteer tourists such as the volunteer tourists’ personal and professional development (van den Brink, 2014, p. 17). In addition, there appears to be little research into the way that the volunteer tourism industry is perceived by prospective local communities (Wright, 2013, p. 239).

2.4 Intermediates of volunteer tourism
Volunteer tourism started as highly personal and limited in scale with little assistance available and volunteer opportunities (Tomazos & Butler, 2009, p. 206). Nowadays, volunteer tourism has been provided by several different organizations and companies. Each provider of volunteer tourism has a different mission and vision, objectives and aims. As well as the rich variety and diversity in terms of how demanding they are on participants. Volunteer tourism has been growing in the tourism market therefore, there has been a transformation from non-profit providers to a mix of non-profit and commercialized intermediates (Tomazos & Cooper, 2011).

Table 4: Providers of volunteer tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteer tourism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Types of volunteer organizations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-profit organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-government organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For profit / tour operators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main focus of organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holiday / Leisure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motives of organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious motives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altruistic motives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial motives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political motives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in table 4, volunteer tourism has several providers of each their own volunteer tourism projects to offer to the clients with all different motives. The two motives that are the main drivers to offer volunteer tourism are altruistic and commercial motivations (Tomazos K., 2010, p. 45). Due to the rapid growth in volunteer tourism, there are numerous volunteer opportunities offered by both charity organizations and travel companies. The main focus of this research will be on the travel companies.

2.4.1 Tour operators

In April 2012, the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) conducted a survey of over 140 members, tour operators that are working in the adventure travel sector. According to ATTA’s report, "55% of those surveyed currently run volunteer trips. 41% of the tour operators that do not offer volunteer tourism are considering volunteer trips for the future" (Petrak, 2013). These numbers impressively show that there is a latent demand for volunteer tourism and tour operators are willing to offer this to their customers.

Tour operators are the intermediaries between the demand and supply side (Chan & Xin, 2013, p. 1), therefore, tour operators have a large impact on the developments and impacts of volunteer tourism. Many tour operators begin to add volunteer tourism to their packages in order to fulfill the needs and wants of their customers. Volunteer tourists are paying to volunteer, however there are only a few organizations that reveal information where the participant’s fee is actually going to (Tomazos & Cooper, 2011, p. 416). A recent study by Leeds Beckett University (Smith & Font, 2014, p. 959) states that “Volunteer tourism organizations that offer the most expensive products are likely to be the least responsible.” The study claims that organizations that are the least responsible tend to hide the origin of their costs. It can be questioned whether the volunteer aspects are as much important as the other needs of the tourists.

There are no regulations a tour operator is restricted to follow, nevertheless, there are some charity organizations, such as the International ecotourism society, that regularly inform tour operators about official guidelines regarding volunteer tourism. The international ecotourism society (TIES), for instance, provides in depth guidelines relating to sustainable management, measuring, monitoring and reporting to tour operators that want to offer volunteer tourism (TIES, 2012). On their websites, tour operators, tend to inform their potential tourists with some guidelines and how to be responsible, however, this information is limited. There is hardly any information about guidelines and sustainability. This information does not seem important for the tour operators. Furthermore, there is hardly any information available on how and why tour operators choose a certain project. Even though tour operators provide tourists with a range of packages concerning volunteer tourism it is unclear whether tour operators follow certain guidelines, how tour operators choose a volunteer project, whether the changing motivations of tourists are/can be influenced by tour operators and their importance of responsible tourism whether these aspects are part of the key business goals of a tour operator. At present, tourism research does not reveal any insights on these questions. Therefore, these aspects will be elaborated and further explored on in the research paper at hand. In order to research these aspects of the tour operator, it is important to gain a better insight into management practices and applied business ethics.
2.5 Corporate Social Responsibility

In order to gain information about business goals, targets, strategies, practices or processes, business ethics, the type of the relationship to shareholders and the community of the tour operators, it is useful to employ a critical theory to study management practices and business ethics.

Any actions a company undertakes will have an effect not only on the company itself, but also upon the external environment the company is cooperating with. These effects include both the business environment in which the firm is operating, the local society in which the company is located or is working with, and also more global. The effects by a company can take many forms, such as the use of natural resources, impacts on the local community, effects of competition and environmental concerns, such as climate change (Crowther & Aras, 2008, p. 13). A business that shows importance to the environment, both social and natural, will have greater success. On that account, companies must seek for new, different and unique positions regarding their competition. By doing this, corporate social responsibility theory has become a highly effective feature for a strategy of differentiation and positioning (Martínez, Pérez, & et al, 2013, p. 366). By applying this, tourism companies are encouraged, to try to offer unique, sustainable, and diverse experiences to their consumers. The growing interest of this shows the growing importance of corporate social responsibility in tourism.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be defined as "the continuing commitment by a business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large" (Baker, 2004). CSR efforts may include a broad range of activities in line with stakeholders’ interests (Mitrokostas & Apostolakis, 2013, p. 967). CSR in tourism can be explained due to the increased pressure on certain social and economic factors, the greater need for transparency in organizations, and as a reaction to social and environmental disasters (Martínez, Pérez, & et al, 2013, p. 365).

CSR has three main principles that can further explain CSR which are sustainability, accountability, and transparency. Crowther and Aras (2008) discuss that accountability “concerns an organization recognizing that its actions affect the external environment and, therefore, assuming responsibility for the effects of its actions” (p. 15). Whereas transparency means “that the external impact of the actions of the organization can be ascertained from the organization’s reporting and pertinent facts are not disguised within that reporting” (p. 16). The theoretical perspective of sustainable development has been widely applied in the field of tourism (Martínez, Pérez, & et al, 2013, p. 366). Sustainability has become a phenomenon within tourism and has been practiced by many tourism companies and organizations. Sustainable development is applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations including niche segments and mass tourism. Sustainable development must be established in tourism in order to guarantee its long term sustainability in tourism.

Sustainable development is an important aspect within CSR. CSR of organizations in the tourism sector are mainly based on sustainable development. Sustainable development can be paraphrased as “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Crowther & Aras, 2008, p. 44). Sustainable development can improve the livelihoods of the local community and stakeholders in the destination where a company is operating. This can be improved by the social, economic and environmental development which is equally emphasized in the concept of sustainable development.
tourism. By means of social development, the company can work in each community, to address local aspiration assist with training, create local jobs and give support to associations that are working towards the public good. The economic development can help develop a local scales network by making its expertise or training resources available to local businesses it can create a win-win strategy that promotes the local economy and gives access to valuable expertise. Stakeholders are directly and indirectly involved in the socio-economic relationships. Therefore it is very important to understand the net effects of socio-economic volunteer tourism activities. And by looking at the environmental development, the importance lays at the need to protect and enhance local eco systems while reducing air, water and soil admissions (Bali Tourism Institute, 2014).

2.7 Summary of theoretical framework

The theoretical framework reviews particular topics related to the aim, objectives and research questions of this thesis. Volunteer tourism is part of the alternative tourism market that is driven by a “growing demand for tourism products that are more sustainable, participatory, pro-poor, and less harmful to local communities than mass tourism products have historically been” (Pastran, 2014, p. 47). Volunteer tourism is a very complex and diverse concept which has been a common research area within the tourism industry. Volunteer tourism relates closely to post colonialism, in which this theory is focusing on the belief that colonialism has been and remains one of the most convincing influences on the Western interactions and interpretation with different cultures and people.

Volunteer tourism is a popular tourism alternative for many tourists which has been studied by many researchers. There has been an ongoing debate about the definition of volunteer tourism and which tourists are volunteer tourists. By looking at this, there should be looked at the time period of volunteering, type of volunteering, motivation to volunteer and the purpose of the trip. There has been a shift in the volunteers’ motivations from altruistic to a more self-fulfillment motivation. Nowadays, volunteer tourists find it very important to contribute in volunteer tourism due to their own personal development and social status rather than the purpose of helping others in need.

While looking at the commercialized sector of volunteer tourism, tour operators are the key stakeholder between the volunteers and the volunteer projects. Further research will encounter the tour operator aspect of the volunteer tourism industry. It is very important that volunteer tourism will be studied from a different angle than the volunteers’ perspective. The next chapter will describe the methods this research will use in order to analyze volunteer tourism for the tour operators’ perspective.

There are various organizations and companies that operate in the volunteer tourism sector and all have different approaches and motives to provide volunteer tourism. It seems that volunteer tourism has become more and more a commercialized business. Each company operates in a different way which makes volunteer tourism difficult to compare and to assess. Volunteer tourism projects worldwide reveal a growing amount of profit within the volunteer tourism market. CSR theory has become an effective characteristic for a strategy of differentiation and positioning. The importance of CSR shows a growing importance due to the fact that tourism companies want to offer a diverse and unique experience to their clients. Part of CSR is sustainable development and encourages companies to become more aware of their sustainable aspects in the company and the destination the company effects while operating which is especially important for tour operators that provide volunteer tourism.
3. METHODOLOGY

The third chapter explains the methodology that will be used to conduct this research. Furthermore, data collection and an evaluation of the methodology will be described. Lastly, ethical considerations for this research will be discussed.

3.1 Qualitative research

This thesis uses qualitative research methods and a case study design to study the phenomenon of volunteer tourism and its linkage to the tour operator’s goals and motivations when offering volunteer tourism. Explanatory research “moves beyond description to seek to explain the patterns and trends observed” (Veal, 2006, p. 4).

The research study at hand will look critically at the tour operators’ perspective, researching the individuals’ experiences, emotions, feelings and objective information of the tour operators. By employing a qualitative research framework, primary data will be collected in the field by the researcher. The tour operators that offer volunteer tourism are used as a case study. The employed case study approach allows to study and present a holistic picture and the meaningful characteristics of the events related to the tour operators’ underlying motivations of volunteer tourism. This research study partly also shows an interpretive character, thus, places reliance on people providing their own explanations of their current situation, motivations and their behaviors. Qualitative research is more flexible, allowing greater spontaneity and adaptation of the interaction between the researcher and the study participant (Mak, Woodsong, et al, 2011, p. 4). In order to accomplish this research, multiple data sources (i.e. secondary and primary research) will be used.

3.2 Secondary research

Referred to as secondary data, a fundamental part of the research is to investigate the existing published sources of information (Veal, 2006, p. 147). Secondary research will be conducted before and after the research described above. More precisely, before starting the field research, secondary research will be important in order to prepare the field research and to see which information is already available to understand the phenomena under study. By conducting secondary research it is possible to understand what has been researched already. In order to gather as much as information as possible from secondary research several sources will be used, such as databases, the Internet, and the MIUN library. An important information source, that finally will be used are the tour operators’ websites that provide information about volunteer tourism to the tourists.

3.2.1 Content analysis

Content analysis is a widely used qualitative research technique. “content analysis is a systematic technique for coding symbolic content found in communication, especially structural features and semantic themes” (Herring, 2010, p. 2), which means that this research tool is used to interpret the underlying meaning from the content of a text. For this research a comparative web content analysis will be conducted from the tour operators’ websites. The qualitative web content analysis relates to research questions 1, 3 and 4 which have been presented and discussed in chapter 1. The purpose of the web content analysis is to investigate how tour operators provide their potential customers with information, to show how different or similar tour operators are from each other, and to gather general information about the tour operators under study. The web content analysis will be conducted on websites in different languages,
such as English, Dutch and Swedish. However the results from this content analysis are summarized only in English.

The web content analysis includes 9 tour operators’ websites. The tour operators’ website that will be analyzed are the tour operators that were interviewed for this study. Additionally, for this analysis three tour operators were added. These are three international companies in which it would be interesting to see the differences between the other tour operators. All these tour operators’ meet the criteria explained in chapter 1.

Table 5: Description tour operators added to content analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour operator 7</th>
<th>Tour operator 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This tour operator is an international tour operator that is based in several countries. The target group of this tour operator is young people. Besides volunteer tourism this tour operator also offering flight tickets, hotels, organized tours and insurance for trips.</td>
<td>This international tour operator is totally focused on volunteer tourism with a wide range of variety for each target group. They claim to be one of the most affordable volunteer tourism tour operators.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tour operator 9 This is an international tour operator that is fully focused on volunteer tourism. This tour operator offers a wide range of volunteer projects.

Furthermore, video observation has been used for this study. Promotion videos of volunteer tourism from tour operators have been observed. Short videos were used to illustrate rather than analytical purposes (Veal, 2006, p. 189). Promotion videos are additional information to the web content analysis.

3.3 Primary research

The primary research will be conducted after the literature study. By doing this, it is possible to see the missing gap in the literature and see what is needed to be elaborated on and researched. The missing gap will be researched by means of qualitative research. This research uses personal interviews, observations and informal conversations. Qualitative methods give inside information about the human side of issues and perceptions that can be changed and are not constant. Creswell describes that data collection in a qualitative research context usually takes place in the natural setting of the environment that is studied with direct interaction between the researcher and actors (2009, p. 175).

3.3.1 Interviews

Qualitative research will be conducted by means of individual in depth interviews. In-depth interviews seek to encourage the interviewee to explain the answers of interview questions (Veal A., 2006, p. 197). Interviews will be conducted on the base of a purposive sampling, thus, comprising participants that have first-hand experience with the research topic which in this research are the tour operators that are involved in volunteer tourism. Qualitative tourism researchers have used interviews to understand the tourists’ point of view and to uncover the meaning of their experiences. Interviews allow respondents to describe a situation from their own perspective and in their own words. By conducting an interview a broad focus is inquired (Batat, 2013, p. 167). The interviews conducted will be semi-structured, as this method combines a prepared outlined set of topics and questions with the opportunity for the interviewer...
to ask other questions when they occur during an interview. “The interview process seemed most appropriate as it leaves space to change questions or go into depth on certain points, but simultaneously enables a relatively structured and systematic data collection” (Coll & Chapman, 2000, p. 5). The interview questions can be found in appendix 1. The interviews are divided into four groups of questions which all relate to the research questions that are explained in chapter 1:

- **General questions about the company:** Questions relating the tour operators’ social responsibilities of volunteer tourism.
  - Relate to research question 1
- **Questions about the volunteer tourism projects and their volunteers:** This subgroup of questions covers aspects of sustainability, such as the guidelines of tour operators and volunteers, use of eco-label. The type of volunteer projects and their target group. As well as how a tour operator choosing, monitor and evaluate certain projects
  - Relate to research questions 1 and 2
- **Questions related to the importance of the local community:** These questions reflect tour operators’ view on the host / local community involved in the volunteer tourism.
  - Relate to research question 2
- **Questions about the negative publicity:** Volunteer tourism has had negative publicity lately, this subgroup of questions will look at the opinion of the tour operators and how they deal with the negative publicity.
  - Relate to research question 3

During primary research 6 in-depth interviews will be conducted with tour operators that meet the criteria that were explained in chapter 1. After the 6th interview the researcher could conclude that the majority of the answers that were provided by the tour operators were very similar to each other. These are the tour operators based in developed countries that offer volunteer projects in developing countries. The providers offer short term volunteer projects to every tourist that wants to volunteer with hardly any requirements that the tourists need to meet. 25 tour operators have been contacted to request an interview however not every tour operator wanted to cooperate. The tour operators that are researched will not be mentioned by name or company name. This will be further explained at 3.6 the ethical awareness. The tour operators will be defined by numbers in which they will be referred to throughout the entire thesis.

Table 6: Description of tour operators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour operator 1</th>
<th>Tour operator 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This tour operator is only based in Sweden. This tour operator does not only offer volunteer packages. 50 percent of the packages the tour operator offers are volunteer packages. The company states that they have over 50 years of experience with volunteer tourism.</td>
<td>This big tour operator is only based in The Netherlands and offers a diverse range of tourism package to their main target group, young adults. Stated in their mission it that they want to give travelers an infinite world experience. They have specialist knowledge, confidentiality and authenticity to make the foundation of each customer an inspiring experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tour operator 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tour operator 4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The third tour operator that has been interviewed is located in the Netherlands. This tour operator is a similar company as tour operator 2. Additionally, other tourism packages as gap year, au pair and work holidays are offered by this tour operator. This company wants to create a unique experience for their potential volunteer tourists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour operator 5</th>
<th>Tour operator 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A fully focused on volunteer tourism tour operator that is based in Sweden. The company wants to support the least disadvantages youth besides giving new people a chance to meet other people and therefore increase the understanding and awareness of different cultures.</td>
<td>One of the biggest Swedish based tour operator that offer volunteer tourism. This tour operator only offers volunteer tourism trips. This tour operator wants to create trips that change people forever.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.3.2 Mediums to facilitate interviews

During the research, the researcher will be based in Östersund, Sweden and the option to conduct Skype interviews will be offered to all the tour operators that want to contribute. Tour operators that offer volunteer tourism are located geographically very widespread from each other. Therefore it will be impossible for me to visit all the tour operators that interviews will be conducted with. The interviews will be primarily conducted by Skype which is a free online telecommunications application software product that provides video chat and voice calls from electronic devices (Unuth, n.d.). The advantages of using Skype are the low cost, less time consuming and the possibility to talk face to face with tour operators all around the world (Sullivan, 2012, p. 54). Skype broke many barriers to communication and to receive more information in a short period of time. Many of the interviewees seemed to be familiar with the application due to the fact that many of the tour operators also use Skype as a tool to communicate with their volunteers which has been seen while conducting the web content analysis.

Telephone communication between the researcher and interviewee was also used to facilitate an interview. Tour operators were given a choice of either skype, telephone and if possible face to face.

### 3.3.3 Participant observation

While conducting the content analysis, I took the role of a volunteer tourist. 3 tour operator where asked about the volunteer tourism projects in order to revise the information of the tour operators’ website as well as the interviews which have been conducted. By applying for a volunteer tourism project the researcher was able to gather information that the tour operators provide to their customers. The anonymous volunteer request were sent to tour operator 7, 8 and 9. Since these tour operators did not want to contribute to the interviews another method was used to check the information of the website of the tour operator.

### 3.4 Data analysis

The data that was collected by qualitative interviews and web content analysis have been analyzed in order to link the data to the aim and the main research questions
of this thesis. To structure this study, several research questions were set up. In order to answer the research questions correctly, a research approach was determined for each of them. Throughout the research the following aspects were most important: volunteer tourism, local community, business strategy, business goals, guidelines, volunteers, influences and negative publicity. The research questions have been answered by means of the literature, a content analysis on the tour operators’ websites and interviews. The secondary data was analyzed in order to identify the area of missing literature to follow up in the interviews, as well as, to review the tour operators’ websites. In order to interpret and draw a meaning of the results, there was constant shift between the literature, content analysis and interview findings.

3.5 Critical methodology evaluation

A critical methodology evaluation was provided on the used research methods, in order to elaborate on the limitations of this research.

In regards to the limitations, it can be argued that the respond rate was too low to generalize. Only a minor group of the entire volunteer tourism industry has been interviewed (TIES & Planeterra, 2011, p. 6). Therefore this research already narrowed the research group in order to create some indication. Nevertheless, the outcome gives only a first empirical indication of tour operators’ perspectives and their perceived relevance of volunteer tourism in order to pursue their business goals.

Moreover, a mixed method approach might have yielded a more in-depth research. In this way a broader audience could have been reached. Quantitative methods could have been used to survey volunteers about their experience with tour operators and to evaluate the contribution of tour operators while offering volunteer tourism.

A critical evaluation on the data collection process and research findings can be found in the concluding chapter.

3.6 Ethical consideration

Research, at times, can cause harm to participants both intentionally and unintentionally. Therefore, it is essential that the research maintains ethical awareness at all times. The research should be respectful, responsible for the well-being of the participants and alleviate any negative impacts on the participant (Taplin, 2014, p. 68).

“Subjectivity and personal interpretation of matters of crucial importance to individuals increases the likelihood of ethical considerations” (Cassell & Symon, 2009, p. 56). There are confidentiality issues, which must be respected by the interviewer. Potential interviewees must be assured of confidentiality, and should be told clearly who the research is being carried out for and what it hopes to achieve (Cassell & Symon, 2009, p. 17). Confidentiality and the researcher’s respect towards participants is a central ethical concern in all areas of research (Cassell & Symon, 2009, p. 49).

All names of the tour operators and the interviewees will be removed during transcription prior to the analysis. In organizational research, it is important that both the participant and the organization they represent are identified with numbers. Using names is not of any relevance in this study. By removing names it is possible to avoid and prevent negative consequence for the company. This has been explained to each tour operator when conducting interviews.

Moreover, during some of the interviews other tour operators and organizations were mentioned, the names of those organizations were also removed before analyzing. This is also to avoid negative commotion amongst tour operators offering volunteer tourism.
4. ANALYSIS

This chapter covers the analysis of the results of the tour operators’ websites and the findings of the interviews conducted by the researcher in March and April 2015. The findings are categorized in two different sections. The first section of the analysis will include the findings of the web content analysis. The second part of section one includes a comparative analysis amongst tour operators’ websites while looking at two volunteer tourism projects. In total, 9 tour operators have been studied. For the content analysis, there are three tour operators included that were excluded from the interviews due to no response. The tour operators that have been included are tour operators 7, 8 and 9, which are described in more detail on page 17. These three tour operators are included in the analysis to provide a broader picture about the variety of tour operators. The second section includes the findings of the interviews that were conducted with 6 tour operators. The interviewed tour operators are explained on page 18.

Some key aspects are central throughout the web content analysis and the interviews. These key aspects were: guidelines, information provided to tourists, tour operators’ goals and objectives, information about sustainability, clarification of the money allocation of volunteer tourism projects, the selection of volunteer tourism projects and volunteers, the importance of the local community and lastly, the negative publicity of volunteer tourism.

4.1 The tour operators’ website

The tour operator’s website is a key element to assign information to the potential volunteer tourist. Nowadays, the many prospective volunteer tourists inform themselves by browsing on tour operators’ websites since this is the most accessible tool to gather information for many potential volunteer tourists. Therefore, the tour operator’s website is a very important tool to advise potential volunteer tourists about the diverse range of volunteer projects and to convince the potential volunteer tourist to book a volunteer trip at their company. Many of the tour operators that offer volunteer tourism also offer various other tourism packages to their customers. For the majority of the researched tour operators, volunteer tourism is only a part of the entire company.

4.1.1 Definition non-profit / profit tour operator

While conducting the web content analysis, an important aspect occurred. Many tour operators try to define themselves as a non-profit organization or they try to conceal the fact that the company is making profit. Rather, these companies try to create an image for potential volunteer tourists that all the money the volunteer tourists pay goes directly to the volunteer tourism projects. Conversely however, by doing some more investigation, this is not always the truth. Tour operators try to evade the company of being a non-profit organization by using a different company for the volunteer trips. Moreover, a Swedish source (Allabolag, 2015), yield that all of the Swedish tour operators that were studied were called ‘aktiebolag (AB).’ This means that it is a company with shares that do not need to be on the market. Nonetheless, tour operators 4 and 5 defined themselves as a non-profit organization, but were defined at Allabolag as an AB.

As for Sweden, a company can be defined as a non-profit organization if it is called ‘ideell förening.’ This can be defined as a “non-governmental organization for purposes other than generating profit and in which no part of the organization’s income is distributed to its members, directors, or officers. Non-profit corporations are often termed non-stock corporations” (Cornell University Law School, 2015). The other tour
operators that were researched for the web content analysis do not define themselves as a non-profit organization. However, they try to create a better image than being a commercialized company, by using words such as ‘free advice, communication costs, and registration fee and administration costs.’

4.1.2 Volunteer tourism projects

Tour operators offer mainly five common types of volunteer tourism projects: social, nature, animal, construction and health care projects, respectively. During the content analysis, the main focus is on the social projects. The majority of the studied tour operators offer another kind of tourism to their customers other than volunteer tourism. More precisely, the other products tour operators offer are au-pair, language courses, internships and a gap year abroad. Moreover, many of the tour operators provide services, such as selling flight tickets and travel insurance. The tour operators are also making profit out of these services.

Table 7: Countries where volunteer tourism projects are offered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour operator</th>
<th>Countries where volunteer tourism projects are offered*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 1</td>
<td>14 countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 2</td>
<td>30 countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 3</td>
<td>29 countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 4</td>
<td>23 countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 5</td>
<td>14 countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 6</td>
<td>34 countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 7</td>
<td>27 countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 8</td>
<td>29 countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 9</td>
<td>27 countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Volunteer tourism projects might change often however, this amount was counted in April 2015.

The table provides an overview of the amount of countries the companies offer volunteer tourism. While conducting the web analysis, attention was focused at the diversity of volunteer tourism projects that tour operators offer to their customers. Tour operators 1 and 5 are only offering volunteer tourism projects in 14 countries. In contrast, tour operator 6 offers projects in 34 countries. All the tour operators offer so many volunteer tourism projects that it is improbable to believe that all the volunteer tourism projects get the same attention and managerial support from the operators. Although the companies are very versatile with only a small number of employees, it might be impossible for the tour operators to prioritize and have sufficient knowledge to successfully conduct each volunteer tourism project.

4.1.3 CSR policy

As mentioned before, “many tourism companies are encouraged to try to offer unique, sustainable, and diverse experiences to their consumers.” The concept of CSR in volunteer tourism can been seen as synonymous with sustainability. The growing interest of this shows the growing importance of corporate social responsibility in tourism. Tour operators that offer this particular kind of tourism should commit to behave ethically and contribute to the local development while also keeping the quality of life in mind.”

In general, the studied tour operators define their view and the importance of volunteer tourism on their websites. While searching through the tour operators’
websites, many tour operators provide some information about the importance of the company in general and volunteer tourism in specific. However, these pages on the websites are not very easy to find and many potential volunteers will probably not even look at these. Every tour operator emphasizes the aspects of sustainability and responsibility differently. For instance, tour operator 1 hardly devotes any attention to these particular aspects. Responsibility is a central aspect for many tour operators’ website. As tour operator 7 states “we have a responsibility to the world we love to explore and to the wildlife that inhabits the earth.”

Moreover each mission and vision of the tour operator contains aspects to provide aid, unique experience and culture exchange. Tour operator 8, for instance, aims to “provide assistance to local communities and organizations through providing short-term international volunteers throughout the year” and wants to “market its volunteer programs in a responsible and ethical manner.” Interestingly enough, this tour operator also created a responsible volunteer travel policy for the volunteer tourists. The policy highlights the importance of the company and what a volunteer can expect when volunteering. Tour operator 2 emphasizes in its vision that they want to give as many travelers as possible the opportunity to experience and get to know an exceptional country by means of knowledge and offer support to those who need it. In this way, volunteers will experience a unique experience for life and at the same time are supporting local communities in developed countries with aid. The vision of tour operator 3 is almost identical to tour operator 2. Both of the tour operators really try to accentuate the cultural exchange in order to create a better understanding between each other. Tour operator 9 describes its mission by stating that they encourage people, young and old, to participate in meaningful volunteer projects in developing countries. They expect that volunteering will be the norm in the future. Because more and more people want to commit themselves to their company. They want to create an international society with a passion to help, to understand, to inspire and be inspired by others. Tour operator 4 describes that “when traveling as a volunteer, you are the role model for people both at home and at the destination. The volunteer tourists are participating in an enriched culture exchange. It is a small attempt to improve the world.” Tour operator 5 especially wants to support the underprivileged people while also encouraging volunteers to become familiar with different countries and people in order to create a better awareness of other countries. This tour operator also claims that “your trip with our company will be profitable for the local projects and, for the best possible price; you will get an experience of a life time.”

By reviewing the tour operators’ mission, vision, and goals, it seems that each tour operator has the best intentions and all want to contribute to the increase of sustainable tourism. Each tour operator emphasizes the volunteer tourists’ contribution to the welfare of the local community in the respective developing countries. However while browsing on the websites, this does not seem the main importance of the tour operators since many of the aspects are somehow a bit hidden on the website and do not seem to be applied to all the volunteer tourism projects. The importance of CSR will probably not be the first aspect the potential volunteer tourists will approach on the website.

**4.1.4 Marketing**

Tour operators need to attract potential volunteer tourists to volunteer at their company rather than at their competitors. To attract potential volunteer tourists, the studied tour operators make strong use of images, videos and messages on their website.

**4.1.4.1 Images**
The majority of the studied tour operators provide images and videos to illustrate the volunteer projects that are described on their company websites.

Figure 3: Images used for websites of studied tour operators (Pictures are derived from the studied tour operators’ websites)

Each tour operator makes use of beautiful images on their websites in which it can, however, be questionable whether these images give a clear view of the offered volunteer tourism project. The used footage can be seen as an easy marketing tool to attract potential volunteer tourists. Many images on the websites are with cute young children which makes it very attractive to potential volunteer tourists. The children on the pictures look vulnerable and innocent. It seems that many potential volunteer tourists want to help these children and want to take pictures of these cute children.

There are hardly any pictures shown of older and sick people. This surely gives the potential volunteer a wrong impression about the circumstances of the various offered volunteer tourism projects. While browsing on social media sites, such as Facebook, many people that have previously volunteered upload pictures of the little children and themselves. As shown in previous studies (Mostafanezhad, 2014), nowadays, this is a very important motivation to volunteer in which the tour operator is responding on.

4.1.4.2 Videos

The studied promotion videos show that many companies have a totally different approach and are emphasizing very different aspects. The analysis of the promotion videos can be found in appendix 2.1.

Some tour operators show their volunteer projects from a volunteer tourists’ perspective whereas some of the tour operators emphasized the company’s perspective more strongly. However, they all show vulnerable children in their videos since they may attract most people. Every tour operator that provides the potential volunteer tourist with videos only makes use of the beautiful scenery to attract more volunteer tourists. The tour operator might also create an incorrect image by only showing the positive sight of the volunteer tourism projects. Many videos try to make clear that volunteer tourists really make a difference and without their help, the local community would not survive so that volunteer tourists feel like a ‘hero’ when they volunteer in a developing country. The main purpose of these videos is to attract new volunteers. It is basically creating a good feeling when watching the videos in order to convince the potential volunteer tourists to book their trip at their company and to provide aid to developing countries.

Tour operators 4 and 5 do not make use of videos at their website to attract potential volunteer tourists. Conversely, tour operator 9 really tries to promote volunteer tourism trips throughout the company’s name which means that the company
really wants to secure and make the potential volunteer tourists aware of the company’s name. Other tour operators, such as tour operators 1 and 2, try to promote their volunteer tourism trips through the eyes of the volunteer tourists. In these videos, the company’s name is hardly used as a marketing tool and they provide a more trustworthy image since these videos are not perfectly filmed and can be considered to be more trustworthy. In addition to that, tour operators all want to deliver messages to their potential volunteer tourists through the use of videos. Tour operator 1, for instance, tells through the video that ‘work is much needed’, while tour operator 7 tries to persuade the potential volunteer tourists that ‘in order to make the world a better place there needs to be work done.’ Another storyline is from tour operator 8 that volunteering simply is ‘fun.’

4.1.4.4 Messaging

![Image](image.jpg)

**Figure 4:** Messages used for websites of studied tour operators

Another aspect that caught attention is the messages that tour operators use to persuade potential volunteer tourists. Travel companies state all kinds of different promises on their webpage in order to promote volunteer tourism packages. For instance quotes as: “making a positive difference to the lives of others on a much more intimate level, by donating your time, energy and experience. Learn about the people and place you are visiting on a much deeper level than a normal adventure tour.” And more quotes such as “the more you put into it, the more you get out of it,” “you can really make a difference,” “volunteer work is a heartwarming experience,” “an unforgettable experience,” “to make the world a better place” and “offering a valuable and practical experience for your resume.” These are very strong words which the tour operators cannot always meet when offering volunteer tourism packages. In order to attract new volunteer tourists, the tour operators seem to be forced to use such strong words in order to relativize the impact of the volunteer tourist after the booking. The volunteer tourist might feel fooled by the tour operator since they realize they do not make a difference as what they were promised in the messages. Due to the messages
the tour operators spread, the volunteer tourist will likely have high expectations of the volunteer work they will conduct in which some of the volunteer projects are not able to meet the expectations of the volunteer tourist. This can lead to disappointment in the volunteer tourists. The pictures that are provided are derived from the tour operators’ websites that have been studied.

It can be argued that volunteer tourists should also realize before they start volunteering, that they will not make a massive difference when just volunteering for 2 weeks. In general, the volunteer tourists seem to be misguided due to the message of the tour operators. Sometimes it is not only the messages the tour operators spread, but also the name of the tour operator says enough.

The tour operators really persuade the volunteer tourist to the belief that they conduct a meaningful act when volunteering. Therefore, it can be said that the tour operators are the ones that most likely mislead the expectations of volunteer tourists and part of the aim of volunteer tourism projects. It is deceitful to only judge the volunteer tourists on their acts while volunteering, when the tour operator makes the volunteer tourists feel like they are doing something beneficial.

It seems that tour operators are more considerate and concerned over the needs and wants of the volunteer tourist rather than the local community involved in the volunteer tourism projects. The strong words the tour operators usually use are meant to attract the volunteer tourists and to make them feel better about volunteering. The only tour operator that was studied that gave a more honest and thus, realistic clarification was tour operator 3. It states “Changing the world? Not at all; it sounds all amazing conducting volunteer work in Africa, Asia or Latin America which it also is. But no, you are not going to change the world. There is more needed to change the world. However, by doing volunteer work you improve the world it will be a bit more beautiful.” Obviously, only one tour operator (i.e. tour operator 3) tries to create a more realistic view of volunteer tourism. Even though the company might lose some potential volunteer tourists by stating this on their website, it makes them be a more honest and better company that provides more sincere volunteer tourism work in which the tour operator can achieve more sustainable and responsible aspects related to volunteer tourism.

4.1.5 Money allocation

For many potential volunteer tourists, it is unclear where the money that the volunteer tourist pays goes to. There are hardly any extensively descriptions about the financial aspects written on the tour operators’ websites. Tour operator 6, for instance, provides a brief description why people should pay to volunteer in which the company describes that “taking on volunteers to help with such efforts incurs a variety of expenses which the projects and communities themselves cannot support. Therefore, a participation fee is required from volunteers to fund these initiatives.” Moreover, the same tour operator also states that “the costs are to provide food and housing for volunteers, training, supervision and safety precautions as well as certain costs included in running the projects successfully.” Tour operator 8 also provides a concise explanation why the volunteer tourists pay for to volunteering, such as “the registration fee includes ongoing support from staff, program marketing costs, information pack, administration costs, the company’s fund, travel costs to inspect programs and communication costs with volunteers. Program fee includes airport pick-up, orientation, program supervision, accommodation and meals during volunteer program period, in-country 24/7 volunteer support and in-country administration costs.”
Nevertheless, tour operator 9 has a full description about the money that volunteer tourists pay for their volunteer tourism projects. The tour operator tries to create a very understanding image to their potential volunteer tourists. However, when looking at it critically, hardly any of the money will go to the local community. This tour operator states that 19 percent of the money volunteers pay is ‘creating awareness, communication and promotion’ in which they state that the tour operators needs to provide information by means of brochures, website, information days and trade shows. The tour operator actually means this financial part covers their marketing of the volunteer packages. Moreover, 19 percent of the money goes to the improvement of volunteer tourism projects and the innovation and investment of new volunteer projects. 23 percent of the money is needed for the guidance of the volunteers in their home country. This money is reserved for the salaries of the employees in the home countries of the tour operator. 22 percent of the money that the volunteers pay goes to the accommodation. The website stated that the homestay gets a fair compensation. However, it does not say anything when volunteer tourists stay in a hostel. Another 17 percent goes to worldwide administration which means that the money is designated for the cooperation and administration of their international partners.

Nowhere is it stated that the money goes to the volunteer tourism project where the volunteer is volunteering. Thus, it seems that only 22 percent of the money goes directly to the local community, namely if volunteer tourists stay at a homestay. However, the majority of the money is reserved for administration costs, salaries and marketing. It can, thus, be questioned how much aid volunteer tourists actually provided by spending their money to volunteer tourism projects. It is questionable how reliable this information is since every volunteer tourism project is different and needs different guidance.

4.1.6 Summary

Websites are very important for the tour operators to attract potential volunteer tourists. Tour operators are using several resources on their websites to make it very attractive for their potential customers. The majority of the tour operators have very promising policies related to sustainable or responsible tourism in order to operate volunteer tourism in a sufficient way. The use of pictures of vulnerable people is very common throughout the analyzed websites. Moreover, each studied tour operator is making use of messages with untrustworthy content. It seems that volunteer trips are good for the volunteer tourists and improve their personal growth. Of course, there are volunteer tourism projects that will improve certain aspects of the local community’s life. But in general, the tour operators are dishonest towards their potential volunteer tourists while using misleading words. Finally, it is also unclear where the money of the prospective volunteer tourists goes to. Websites do not provide their customers with sufficient information about the allocation of the money. Confusion may finally arise by not providing an extensive overview of the program fee the potential volunteer tourists pay. The interesting aspect is that only 2 tour operators explicitly state that they are not a non-profit organization.

4.2 Comparative web content analysis

In order to get a better understanding of the tour operators that offer volunteer tourism, a web content analysis has been conducted. For this web content analysis, 9 websites were analyzed. The tour operators that have been analyzed are the tour operators that were described on page 17 and 18. Tour operators’ websites have been compared in order to create an overview of the diversity of volunteer tourism providers. For the comparative analysis, different tour operators from the Netherlands, Sweden and English speaking countries were analyzed. Tour operators offer a very
diverse range of volunteer tourism projects with different budgets. Moreover, only two different projects that every tour operator offers will be looked at. The full description of the comparative analysis can be found in appendix 2.2

Several aspects will be covered when comparing the volunteer tourism projects. In order to compare the volunteer tourism projects, attention is given to the price. Included in the price are aspects such as accommodation and leisure activities. Lastly, the requirements for the projects will be observed such as if there are certain standards a tourists needs to meet before volunteering.

The first volunteer tourism project that has been compared on the tour operators’ websites is a volunteer tourism project that teaches English at a school in Thailand. Each tour operator offers some kind of English teaching project to their potential volunteer tourists. The volunteer tourism project that has been researched is a short term project from two to four weeks.

Table 8: Comparative analysis English teaching volunteer project Thailand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour operator</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 1</td>
<td>€ 35.67* per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 2</td>
<td>€ 35.72 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 3</td>
<td>€ 45.24 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 4</td>
<td>€ 46.19 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 5</td>
<td>€ 43.33* per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 6</td>
<td>€ 61.84* per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 7</td>
<td>€ 54.40* per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 8</td>
<td>€ 32.55* per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 9</td>
<td>€ 120.71 per day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, the other comparative analysis that has been conducted is a volunteer tourism project that is offered in Central America regarding daycare and orphanages. This type of volunteering seems to be very popular amongst volunteer tourists since this is offered by all of the studied tour operators. The compared volunteer tourism project is another short term project between two and four weeks

Table 9: Comparative analysis orphanages or daycare volunteer tourism projects in Central America

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour operator</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 1</td>
<td>€ 36.58 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 2</td>
<td>€ 40.60 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 3</td>
<td>€ 43.75 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 4</td>
<td>€ 57.14 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 5</td>
<td>€ 49.54* per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 6</td>
<td>€ 58.43* per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 7</td>
<td>€ 89.90* per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 8</td>
<td>€ 45.38* per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 9</td>
<td>€ 87.67 per day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The prices of some tour operators of both the comparative analysis are in different currencies however in order to get a better overview all the prices are converted into euros.
While searching on the tour operators’ websites, it occurs that the majority of the volunteer tourism projects are offered by many tour operators. The volunteer tourism projects are very similar to each other. The volunteer tourism projects that involve young children are all located in the same area in Thailand, except for one tour operator. Some of the tour operators even offer volunteer tourism projects in the same city. It is, however, unclear whether these tour operators cooperate together and if the volunteer tourists that volunteer are cooperating with other volunteer tourists from other tour operators.

4.2.1 Program fee

Every volunteer tourist needs to pay a certain amount to contribute to the volunteer tourism projects. With the exception of tour operator 9, none of the tour operators provides a comprehensive explanation of the assigned money that volunteer tourists pay. The only explanation regarding the money is that the volunteer tourism projects include some meals and accommodation. The volunteer tourism projects in Thailand have different program fees. Tour operator 8 offers a volunteer tourism project which costs €683.75. Whereas, the most expensive volunteer tourism project costs €1690.00 which is offered by tour operator 9. Moreover, the volunteer tourism project of tour operator 9 is only 2 weeks in contrast to the volunteer tourism project of tour operator 8 that is 3 weeks. This means that volunteer tourists pay €32.55 per day with tour operator 8 and volunteer tourists pay €120.71 per day with tour operator 9. When looking at the compared volunteer tourism projects in Central America the prices vary from tour operator 7 for €89.90 per day whereas tour operator 1 only charges €36.58 per day. In which there is hardly any distinction between the accommodation and other facilities while volunteering. Therefore, it can be questioned where the €88.16 and €53.32 per day extra goes to since there is no information regarding this.

Each volunteer tourism project includes almost the same facilities within the price. Hardly any of the tour operators offered leisure activities in the volunteer tourism package, expect for the orientation prior the volunteer tourism project. Tour operator 7 only includes 10 days of actual teaching English in Thailand while the entire trip is 21 days in which this volunteer tourism project is only a short term solution and does not give much benefit to the local community if each volunteer tourist only stays for 10 days at the destination.

4.2.2 Requirements

When looking at the first comparative analysis of the English teaching volunteer tourism project in Thailand, there are only minor requirements needed to become an English volunteer tourist teacher. Many of the tour operators have set a minimum age before the potential volunteer tourists are allowed to volunteer. The minimum age to teach English is 17 years old. The tour operators do not require volunteer tourists to have any experiences related to English teaching. Many tour operators state on their website that the main requirement is to be motivated to work with children. It can be questionable whether participants under 25 years old, without proper education and sufficient language skill, are capable of teaching others. Furthermore, some of the tour operators, such as tour operators 2, 3, 6 and 8, require a compulsory criminal background check. Moreover, tour operators 2 and 3 are the only tour operators that state that they will have an obligatory training prior to departure. Some of the tour operators provide some training and introduction at the destination. Moreover, certain tour operators state that they have personal contact with their potential volunteer tourists. The majority of the personal contact is by email correspondence.

When looking at the requirements of the volunteer tourism projects in Latin America related to daycare and orphanages, tour operator 4 sets a minimum age of 21
years old. This is the only tour operator that has been researched that sees the danger of teenagers volunteering at a volunteer tourism projects that need professional aid. Moreover, all the other tour operators have the same age requirements as the English teaching volunteer tourism projects.

The researcher took the role of a volunteer tourist to book a trip at the tour operator in order to verify whether the tour operator described the procedures correctly. The researcher needed to fill in a form about personal interests and the preferred type of volunteer tourism project. Tour operator 8 immediately accepted the request and the only training that was advised is an online training prior to departure. The online training is a very basic training and hardly anybody that will attend the training will learn something about the actual volunteer tourism project. Even though the researcher is not originally from an English speaking country no language requirements were asked. This tour operator claims to each volunteer tourists that they need to provide the company with a criminal background check. However during the process, the company did not request a criminal background check nor was it stated in any of the emails the researcher received. Thus, this tour operator does clearly not meet their requirements that were stated on their website.

4.2.2.1 Language

Many volunteer tourism projects often have requirements regarding language. A sufficient skill level of English of the volunteer tourists is simply assumed. However, none of the studied tour operators required a certain level of English. Nevertheless, English is the main communication language for the majority of the volunteer tourism projects. But, the volunteer tourists do not need to conduct a language test before volunteering. However, it cannot be simply assumed that the all the volunteer tourists have a sufficient level of English. For the international tour operators, such as tour operator 6, 7, 8 and 9, it might be possible to assume that the potential volunteer has a sufficient level of English, since the company is also based in native English countries. However, for the other tour operators that are based in Sweden and the Netherlands, it cannot simply be assumed that the participants have a sufficient skill level of English, especially since the tour operators offer the volunteer tourism projects to very young participants.

Moreover, the volunteer tourism projects that are offered to Latin American countries require a basic level of Spanish. The majority of the volunteer tourism projects offer language courses of several weeks. By following the Spanish course, volunteer tourists reached the Spanish level they need for the volunteer projects. However, not every volunteer tourism project that has been compared requires a basic level of Spanish. Tour operator 8 states that for that particular volunteer tourism project there is not a prerequisite to be fluent in Spanish. As well for the volunteer tourism project of tour operator 3, the volunteer tourists do not need to have any approved skill level of Spanish, although basic skills are ‘recommended.’ In contrast, tour operator 2 requires an obligatory Spanish course of 2 weeks. Even though the volunteer tourism projects seem to be very similar, the level of Spanish is very different. It can be inquired if the quality of volunteering is as sufficient of volunteer tourist that does not speak the language and a volunteer tourist that is fluent in Spanish.

4.2.3 Service included in volunteer tourism packages

Every tour operator includes almost the same facilities in the price of the volunteer tourism packages. All the tour operators include accommodation while volunteering. However, some of the volunteers do not offer accommodation during the introduction or the language course. The food is included in the price nevertheless many volunteer tourism projects only offer meals when the volunteer tourists are volunteering. During
the weekend, many of the volunteer tourism projects do not provide food to their volunteer tourists. Moreover, a transfer service from the airport is included. In order to support the volunteer tourists, some of the tour operators, such as tour operator 6 have a local team that is part of the company that help the volunteer tourists. The local team provides guidance to the volunteer tourists throughout the volunteer tourism project and also organize the leisure activities for the volunteer tourists. Each tour operator offers a 24 hours emergency number for both the volunteer tourists and the home bound.

The majority of tour operators offer a short introduction for the volunteer tourists before starting to work at the volunteer project. Furthermore, some of the volunteer projects require some training which is mainly given at the destination itself. Only tour operators 2 and 3 have a compulsory training before every volunteer tourism project that they are involved with aiding the local community. When the volunteer tourists accomplished have their volunteer tourism experience, some of the tour operators offer a volunteer certificate.

4.2.4 Summary

There are various tour operators that offer the same volunteer tourism projects. Tour operators hardly expect any requirements from the potential volunteer tourists. Some of the volunteer tourism companies set a minimum age for certain volunteer tourism projects. Moreover, volunteer tourists should be able to communicate with the society and be able to cooperate well within the volunteer tourism projects. Thus, language should not be a barrier to provide a sufficient quality of aid to the society. However, neither does every tour operator set a minimum language level before volunteering nor do they force the volunteer tourists to follow a language course. When comparing each volunteer tourism project from tour operators, it seems that they all facilitate similar aspects in which it is unclear why tour operators have different prices for a very similar tourism project.

4.3 Interviews

The second section of this chapter covers the findings of the interviews conducted in March and April 2015. 6 interviews were conducted with different tour operators. Of which 3 tour operators are located in Sweden, 2 tour operators are located in the Netherlands and 1 tour operator is located in the United States of America. As mentioned before, the tour operators are anonymous throughout the research.

4.3.1 Defining the tour operator

The tour operators that have been interviewed do not seem very comfortable with defining themselves as a tour operator. Tour operators gave various different definitions during the interviews. Even though the volunteer tourism companies do not define themselves as a tour operator, it can be argued that these companies are commercialized tourism companies and have all the characteristics of a tour operator. Since the studied volunteer tourism companies all provide a tourism product to their consumers while being in charge of the production, selling and distribution of the services.

Tour operator 3 would define their company as a commercialized exchange organization because their company guides tourists through their unique holiday or trip. Companies want to provide something extra in which a tourist experiences something different than an ordinary trip with an unforgettable experience. In the meanwhile, they also encourage a better understanding from the volunteer tourists towards cultures and the developing countries. Many companies try to avoid the word commercialized and define themselves as an exchange organization. Another definition that was given by an interviewed tour operator is an intermediate that sells
volunteer tourism packages, which actually is the same as a tour operator. The same thing occurred with tour operator 4, who defined their company as a volunteer agency. Moreover, tour operator 6 defined their company as a volunteer-sending organization. This tour operator is the administrative arm of a multitude of organizations that are in need of volunteers, and are responsible for recruiting, registering, and preparing volunteers for projects all over the world. It can be concluded that the tour operators do not feel comfortable with the definition of tour operator. It seems that tour operators somehow try to avoid the commercialized aspects of the company.

4.3.2 Selecting and informing volunteer tourists

Volunteer tourism should optimize the advantages of providing aid and to reduce the negative footprints. It is very important that tour operators offering volunteer tourism actively assist the potential volunteer tourists by choosing a project that suits their interests, skills, budget and the availability of the prospective volunteer tourist. In order to find the right volunteer tourism project, the tour operators should have personal contact with each potential volunteer tourist to create the best opportunity for both the volunteer tourist and the aid that is needed at the destination. Personal contact could be done by telephone, skype or face to face conversation. However, it can be said that personal contact is not prioritized by tour operators. Personal interviews are very time-consuming and expensive. In the end, tour operators aim to make a profit. Another tool that could be used is an online form to get an impression of the wants of the volunteer tourists. It is very important that the tour operators see the potential of the volunteer as they provide the volunteer tourism projects with aid.

The tour operators do not differentiate between the potential volunteer tourists. Even though the companies that were interviewed stated that they have some requirements, they do not refuse potential volunteer tourists from volunteering. Each tour operator claims to look at the motivation, interests and background information of the potential volunteer tourism. A few tour operators that were interviewed seem to interview their potential volunteer tourists (i.e. tour operators 2, 3, 4 and 5). However, it can be questionable whether tour operators really take this into account since each person is allowed to volunteer. Many requirements are simply assumed by the tour operators. The only aspect that many tour operators take into account is that you need to show a criminal background check, but this is only necessary when working with the local community. Tour operator 6 explains that all prospective volunteers must fill out a "why do you want to join this project" section of the application form. The company uses that information as one measure of eligibility. They also speak personally to almost every volunteer who wants to participate on a project and assess their eligibility by those means. Almost every project the company offers holds an orientation session prior to the start of the volunteering at the destination. This is for volunteers who have already signed up and have been confirmed to work at a volunteer tourism project.

Tour operator 5 defines their volunteer tourists in two different types. First off, there are the more genuine volunteer tourists that tend to stay for a longer period of time at the volunteer tourism project. These types of volunteer tourists also have a higher education and contribute more time. The other type of volunteer tourist is defined as adventure volunteer. Further, the company states that the “biggest contribution of the volunteers is that they go to a volunteer tourism project and that they get donation in order to keep good projects going.” Tour operator 8 states on their website that they actually screen volunteers for age and qualifications, when relevant upon applicant. Nonetheless, when taking the role of a volunteer, it was very easy to
get accepted to several projects with minor information about the contingent volunteer tourist.

Tour operator 2 seems to have a relatively good policy to advise the potential volunteer tourists when volunteering at their company. This tour operator has strict requirements before volunteering. Every person that wants to volunteer also has a personal interview with one of the staff members of the organization. However, the company never declines a potential volunteer tourist. Rather, the company guides the potential volunteer tourist in a different direction of volunteering. Nevertheless, the potential volunteer tourist is still able to choose the volunteer tourism project that the person initially wanted. Tour operator 2 gave an example that the company experienced recently, “2 very young girls wanted to work in an orphanage in Asia and neither of them had any prior experiences. We convinced the girls to do a group trip that involved a minor part in an orphanage.” Moreover, for some volunteer tourism projects the company requires a minimum age of 20+ as well as a minimum term of volunteering.

Every tour operator provides the volunteer tourists with information regarding the trip and the volunteer tourism project. However it is very different for each tour operator how and what kind of information is provided to the volunteer tourists. Tour operators should provide each volunteer tourist with extensive information. They should also provide information regarding preparation, country and religion, behavior, exceptions and sustainability aspects, such as long term responsibilities and responsibilities regarding the volunteer tourist’s actions. Tour operator 1 says that they provide the volunteer tourists with some “information that they need to buy their products locally rather than bringing it from home.” Even though this is good advice, this is not enough and does not make the volunteer tourists aware of all the aspects that the volunteer tourists should take into account. Other tour operators, such as tour operator 6, provide an introduction at the destination itself. Even though the volunteer tourists do get some knowledge regarding the volunteer tourism project, it might be better to educate and inform them prior to departure. This ensures that the volunteer tourists will become more aware before they start volunteering at a volunteer tourism project.

4.3.3 Selecting volunteer tourism projects

Interestingly enough, selecting volunteer projects is different at every studied tour operator. Tour operator 5 claims to visit every project beforehand, while tour operator 1 states that they also find new volunteer projects on Google. Tour operator 4 states that before the company can start sending volunteers, it is important that they can provide accommodation, food and pickup from airport. Furthermore, tour operator 6 explains that the company has several criteria that potential partners need to meet in order to begin collaborations. For example, the project must have the necessary infrastructure to accept volunteer tourists. Which includes: proper accommodations, prepared meals, extensive safety measures and sufficient on-site project coordinators. The company also makes sure that their partners’ vision is aligned with their own: “sustainable, earth-friendly initiatives that comply with our moral and ethical standards”. Tour operator 3 clarifies that the company is cooperating with partner organization worldwide who manage the volunteer tourism projects for the company. All the projects are evaluated annually and every year there are volunteer tourism project that do not meet the prerequisites of the company. Every time the company adds a new volunteer tourism project, it collaborates with partner organizations. These partner organizations are well aware of the local situations. The partner organizations are located at the destination itself. These organizations provide the tour operator with
in sight information of the volunteer tourism projects and are able to supervise the volunteer tourism projects. The majority of the tour operators cooperate with different partner organizations in order to operate in a sufficient way. The partner organizations provide advice to tour operator 3. Moreover, the partner organizations are in the meantime also the local support for the volunteer tourists. Furthermore, tour operator 3 sets requirements for the volunteer tourism projects. The participants need to have good support at the destination in order to cooperate sufficiently with the volunteer tourism project. The accommodation and meals need to meet the expected standards that have been promised by the tour operators’ website shown in the images, videos and messages. The area where the volunteer tourism projects are located also needs to be safe enough for volunteer tourists to volunteer. The United Nations (UN) provides a list of Security Council Resolutions in which they provide information about countries that are unsafe to travel to. (United Nations, 2015) More importantly, the volunteer tourists need to be useful for the volunteer tourism projects. The volunteer tourist needs to have an augmented value. The volunteer tourists should be an extra support and should never be responsible for the volunteer tourism project itself.

4.3.4 Tour operator guidelines

Tour operators do not seem to be very aware of the specific guidelines that have been created by several organizations such as ‘TIES’ that improve the commercialized volunteer tourism sector. TIES states that “satisfying the desires of travelers to make a difference, giving back to destinations and creating lasting impact, while at the same time ensuring that the local community needs are met, requires effective planning and management, and consistent monitoring of volunteer projects.” The guidelines for volunteer tourism of TIES cover several aspects such as the needs of the local community, opportunities for lasting impact, marketing and messaging, selection process of volunteers, defining success and measuring impact, transparency in (non) financial reporting and finally, benefits for communities and local engagement.

The volunteer tourist should have easily access to information regarding the volunteer tourism project as well as other information that the volunteer tourist need to know prior to departure. This information should be extensively explained to the volunteer tourists in order to make them aware of the situation and what is expected of them. Furthermore, information regarding volunteer tourism projects’ goals should be given in order to avoid unrealistic expectations of the potential volunteer tourists.

When asking this question to the tour operators, many of the interviewees seemed to be a bit confused. It seems that guidelines for the tour operator themselves are a bit forgotten or tour operators might think it is unnecessary. Tour operators, such as tour operator 1, use their own guidelines instead. However, these guidelines are not published anywhere therefore there is no evidence to back up the tour operators’ claims. This might make it very confusing for potential volunteer tourists. The company listens to brand standards and brand logos that a company that offers volunteer tourism should have. Moreover, this tour operator also said that many of the organizations or companies are also commercialized organizations which the company finds it hard to work with.

Tour operators 2 and 3 are the only studied companies that cooperate with official guidelines. The two tour operators are cooperating with the same label which is mainly focusing on the social aspects of volunteer tourism. These tour operators also cooperate with a non-profit organization to provide the mandatory training prior to the departure of the volunteer tourists.

However, none of the researched tour operators cooperate with the guidelines from TIES that were explained on page 13. These are well-known guidelines specifically
for commercialized tour operators offering volunteer tourism. Each tour operator emphasizes different aspects regarding volunteer tourism in which it might be unclear for the companies what the most important aspects are for volunteer tourism.

However, it might be possible that the tour operator is prioritizing aspects that are less important for the society. It would be more beneficial for volunteer tourism projects if tour operators would follow recognized guidelines or an eco-label. Since hardly any of the studied tour operators make use or see the importance of guidelines, it might be possible that the tour operators do not take a proactive attitude towards the success of volunteer tourism in the long term and, thus, very likely put the focus on the wrong elements of providing aid.

4.3.5 Importance of the local community

During the interviews, the tour operators answered questions related to the importance of the local community. How the local community is collaborating with the tour operators and how the tour operators try to provide aid to them. It is important that the tour operators build relationships with the local communities. The main priority of the tour operator should be the needs of the host community rather than the needs of the volunteer tourists. It is important that the host community is engaged in the volunteer tourism projects. By including them in the volunteer tourism projects, a local interest will be created for the long term. Even though the tour operators are aiming to make profit in their business, the needs of the local community should be central. In addition, it is important that the volunteer tourism projects do not risk the fundamental needs of the local community, such as access to natural sources. The volunteer tourists should never take employment from the local community away. Local knowledge and involvement is crucial for tour operators to provide successful volunteer tourism projects. Each studied tour operator finds it very important that their volunteer tourism projects have benefits for the local residents at the destination. Tour operator 1 says that some of the volunteer tourism projects can also sustain without the help of the local community because there are some people employed for these projects. However it is very important to include the local community in the volunteer tourism projects.

Hesitation occurred when asking each tour operator about the local community’s opinion of the volunteer tourism projects. As tour operator 2 says “it is a very good question, I cannot speak from everybody, but I think that the local community appreciates it.” It is simply assumed by the tour operators that the local community appreciates the volunteer tourists that help them. Furthermore, tour operator 6 explains that “from the feedback they receive from their partners on-site and their volunteer tourists, the local community is appreciative and excited about the volunteer tourists.” A very similar answer was given by the tour operator 4, that the company finds it difficult to generalize, but the most common is that they appreciate volunteers coming and find it interesting to meet people from another part of the world. They also say that, “whatever the project, we feel that volunteer tourists always bring some sort of benefit to the community, even if it means helping at least one person in some way.” Tour operator 3 says “it is very difficult to say since the company is not in contact with the local community on a daily base. But by means of the annual reports of different partner organizations, the company can see all the accomplishments of the volunteer tourism projects. Due to achievements, the company is assuming that the local community is also happy about that. Moreover, many volunteer tourists are very enthusiastic when arriving home and really have the feeling that they did something useful for the population at the destination.”
Tour operator 1 was the only operator that had a different view of the local community and the volunteer tourists. Tour operator 1 says that “it might not help the local community, the wildlife and habitation much, but volunteering does change the person that travels. The volunteer tourists will get a changed mindset and view of the world. The volunteer tourist might start living their life a little bit different. This is probably the biggest difference volunteer tourism makes. This is very important for the company.” The aspect that tour operator 1 slightly touched is an ongoing discussion in the media and by tourism researchers. This was the first and only tour operator that was honest that volunteer tourism might provide more benefits to the volunteer tourists than for the local community at the destination of the volunteer tourism projects.

4.3.6 Negative publicity

Volunteer tourism has had a lot of negative publicity. More and more research has been conducted about this particular type of tourism.

Tour operator 2 claims that the volunteer tourism market has already passed the negative publicity and already moved on in the Netherlands. However, every month new articles show up with more negative aspects (Vriend, 2015). Tour operator 3 agrees partially with the negative publicity. They say that it is good that volunteer tourism is critically looked at. The company thinks it is good that the media pays attention to aspects as this. However, their company is already spending 20 years to improve this particular kind of tourism. Even though the company is agreeing with parts of the negative aspects, they do believe that volunteer tourism is a sufficient way of providing aid although it does require much preparation. Tour operator 5 tries to face these problems and looks for different solutions. Tour operator 6 describes that they want volunteers to have an impactful experience in the community they choose to volunteer at, while also having the chance to explore the country. Tour operator 1 says that they try to face and discuss the negative publicity to improve it. The company is well aware of what they succeed at and where the shortcomings are and try to improve. For example, they did have some problems with local community matters in Nepal with one of their projects. They decided to cancel that project after the negative outcome of the project.

Tour operator 4 did not want to respond on these questions and claimed to not understand the questions correctly even though the research explained this.

All the tour operators claim to work in a very sufficient way and try to improve this kind of volunteer tourism. However, the negative publicity is mainly about the commercialized companies offering volunteer tourism.

4.3.7 Sustainability to profit

Based on the interviews and the content analysis, a figure has been created concerning the studied tour operators. The figure shows whether each tour operator is more focused on the profit to the tour operator or is focusing more on the importance of sustainability. Sustainability can be seen as the responsibility of the volunteer tourists to provide aid in sufficient way without taking jobs, giving something back to the society, supporting them economically and benefitting for the long term.

The figure below is derived from the interviews and content analysis that has been conducted with the several tour operators. By listening to the tour operators’ answers and the information published on their websites, an estimation was made of how sustainable and responsible a tour operator is or it was demonstrated that the tour operator is mainly aiming at profit and using volunteer tourism as a marketing tool to attract more prospective volunteer tourists. It can be said that tour operator 3 shows more qualifying statements to label it as sustainable even though the company is still making profit out of the volunteer tourism projects rather than investing the money
back into the volunteer tourism projects. Tour operator 3 is the only company that makes a statement that volunteer tourists do not change the world when volunteering for 3 weeks. Tour operators 2 and 3 are the only operators that provide the volunteer tourists with compulsory training. Without this training, volunteer tourists are not allowed to volunteer for these two companies.

![Diagram](attachment:image.png)

**Figure 5: Sustainability to profit tour operators**

Even though tour operator 5 gives much of the profit back to the improvement of volunteer tourism projects, it still provides less information regarding sustainability and responsibilities. It is a small company and does not offer as many volunteer tourism projects as the larger tour operators such as tour operator 6, 7, 8 and 9. However, it still questionable why this company is not listed as an ‘ideell förening’, but as an AB. Tour operator 5 also visits the volunteer tourism projects itself for further evaluation. Moreover, they also request that the volunteer tourists fill their evaluation in. By doing this, the volunteer tourists will receive a volunteer certificate from the company. Without filling in the evaluation, the volunteer tourists will not receive the certificate. It can be questionable, however, whether the tour operator will receive honest answers since some volunteer tourists want to receive the volunteer certificate.

The majority of the tour operators always send an evaluation to a volunteer when they return home and in that way can receive feedback. It seems that this is a convenient tool to receive feedback from the volunteer tourism projects. This is very inexpensive and not time-consuming.

Tour operator 4 claims to be a non-profit organization, even though the company is registered as a company that makes profit which is very misleading. The company does not show its financial aspects, making it impossible to verify whether the company is really a non-profit organization. The company hardly provides sufficient information regarding responsibility to the potential volunteer tourists.

Tour operator 6 might have the most yielding name. However besides the name, the operator does not provide the volunteer tourist with much information about sustainability and the behavior at the volunteer tourism projects. While interviewing this tour operator is seemed that the tour operator had the best intentions however that message is not delivered on the tour operator’s website.

Tour operator 8, as mentioned before, does not meet their requirements concerning sustainability either. Tour operator 7 is very similar to tour operator 8. These are very large companies that offer many volunteer tourism projects. The volunteer tourism
trips seem to be structured, so there is only a short period of volunteering at every trip. Tourists can already volunteer for micro/day trip. Many of the offered volunteer tourism projects are combined with many leisure activities. In which the volunteer aspects is not the main activity of the holiday. Even though, the volunteer tourists are able to volunteer at a wide variety of different volunteer tourism projects. These volunteer tourism projects also include work with the local community and young children which can be seen as a negative since the volunteer tourism projects are for such a short time period.

Tour operator 1 states in the interview that the volunteer tourism projects might not be very useful for the local community. It might change the volunteer tourists by ways of approaching different cultures and poverty. This is not how volunteer tourism should operate. The local community at the destination where the aid is provided should be the main importance above anything else.

Tour operator 9 is the most expensive operator for volunteer tourism project, even though there were hardly any differences with the other volunteer tourism projects that were researched. This tour operator might be able to afford requesting such a high price for their volunteer tourism projects since this is a very well-known company. When searching for volunteer tourism abroad, this company is one of the first tour operators that show up. Tour operator 9 is also located in various countries which also makes the company more familiar to various people.

### 4.3.8 Summary

The studied tour operators seem to avoid the definition of a tour operator and all have their own definition of their volunteer tourism company. This makes it confusing for prospective volunteer tourists to define whether a company is making profit or not and has the best intension while providing volunteer tourism. It seems that each tour operator sets the same requirements of what a volunteer tourism project needs to meet. These are the basic facilities a tour operator offers to the volunteer tourists. The majority of the studied tour operators have the same selecting approach of volunteer tourists. One tour operator is not even in contact with the potential volunteer tourists before booking while other operators have personal interviews. Even though each company has a different approach, in the end, every potential volunteer tourist is welcome to volunteer for their company. Informing volunteer tourists seems to be lacking by the majority of the tour operators. Some of the tour operators do not even have personal contact with their volunteer tourists. The volunteer tourists can directly book a volunteer tourism trip on the websites of the tour operator. Furthermore, every tour operator has its own approach to select volunteer tourism projects. The use of guidelines or eco-labels does not seem to be very familiar by many tour operators. It seems that many operators do not prioritize this. Moreover, the tour operators can be more familiar with the needs and wants of the local community. Many of the companies offer so many volunteer tourism projects in which it is almost impossible to generalize and easily assume that the local community is appreciating the help of the volunteer tourists. Many tour operators are aware of the negative publicity and many of them claim to face the problems and change some of the volunteer tourism projects. However this is an aspect that has only been slightly touched since the tour operators did not seem very comfortable to talk about it and did not give that much information to the researcher.
5. CONCLUSION

This chapter provides an overview of the conclusion of the study. Before a conclusion can be drawn, a further discussion of particular aspects that are provided in the analysis will be elaborated. After the discussion, a conclusion on theoretical discussion will be provided. Furthermore, a conclusion can be drawn regarding the research questions of this study. Finally, a critical review on the limitations will be provided and further research for this study is sketched.

5.1 Discussion

After the analysis of the findings, a discussion of particular aspects occurred in order to conclude the main findings of the study.

There is a significant difference between types of volunteering when comparing volunteer tourism projects at the studied tour operators’ websites. While looking at volunteer tourism, there is hardly a distinction made between the various types. It is almost impossible to compare a pensioned professional that volunteers in his or her expertise with a person that cuddles lions at a volunteer tourism project. Tour operators want to attract every potential volunteer tourist, which makes it almost untrustworthy that the companies can offer the best service and aid for the local community.

Every tour operators tries to attract potential volunteer tourists to book a trip at their company. In order to attract volunteer tourists, footage (i.e. videos, messages and pictures) from volunteer tourism projects is used in advertisement. Commercialized tourism companies make use of the vulnerable people and especially children. Tour operators have power to attract and earn profit out of the volunteer tourists. Tour operators make use of impoverishment in the promotion of the destination and the volunteer tourism projects. Vulnerable people in developing countries should not be used to make profit out of rather investing the money that is earned by the volunteer tourists in the development of the developing countries. Nevertheless, the vulnerable images of children on the website of the tour operator evoke an emotional reaction from potential volunteer tourists to help these children. By using this footage, tour operators are promoting negative stereotypes of children. Prospective volunteer tourists will only see them as vulnerable and helpless, rather than resourceful and happy. This might be very misleading for the potential volunteer tourists. It can be argued that volunteer tourism companies with a commercialized input mainly focus on making a profit rather than the vulnerable people.

Another aspect that occurred, is that the tour operators that were researched do not take the local community’s privacy into account. The volunteer tourists are also unbraid that they take pictures of themselves with the local community, to show off to their friends as a ‘hero.’ The footage of the tour operators and their volunteer tourists should be more carefully looked at.

The initial aim of a tour operator is to make profit which makes it very difficult to see the priority of the local community. Is it really possible that tour operators can provide the same aid to the ones in need than the non-profit organizations? Tour operators do not provide financial statements in which non-profit organizations can allow the audience to see all the financial aspects which makes it more reliable for volunteers. There are no numbers of which money from the tour operators actually goes to the local community in which the tour operators miss lead their prospective customers. Of course, the volunteer tourism projects do not only harm the local community. There is always a possibility that a volunteer tourist can provide aid in a
good way. But there are also various non-profit organizations that provide aid to developing countries. Moreover, it can be argued that it seems indistinct for the local community where the money of the volunteer goes to and they might be even unaware of the fact that the company they are cooperating with is making a profit.

The fact that there are so many volunteer tourists every year that want to commit themselves to provide aid to the people in need is a great idealism. This is something that should be indulged by everybody. In addition to this, people that want to help other people should be genuinely and honest treated without making profit out of them.

5.2 Conclusion on theoretical discussion

After the analysis of the research findings, a conclusion on the theoretical framework can be discussed.

As discussed in the theoretical framework volunteer tourism can sometimes be seen as a form of neocolonialism. The studied tour operators are all based in Western countries and all providing aid to developing countries. Only tour operator 6 also provided volunteer tourism projects in Israel. However, the main focus for each tour operator is volunteer tourism in developing countries (i.e. Asia, Africa and Latin America). The studied tour operators all seem to relate to post colonialism by means of the belief that volunteer tourism remains the interactions and interpretations with different cultures and people. This has been emphasized by every studied tour operator. As discussed both in the theoretical framework and the analysis, each tour operator in addition to providing aid also makes use of the developing destinations as a marketing aspect to attract the potential customers’ attention. Moreover, the tour operators that were studied might have partly neocolonialism attentions, by assuming that unexperienced and unskilled volunteer tourists can make a difference in the developing countries. Besides, one tour operator even confirmed that volunteer tourists encounter and contribute to the volunteer tourist’s own impact rather than the need of providing aid to others. Nonetheless, the other studied tour operators stated to aim for mutual benefits even though it might be questionable whether tour operators are fully able to meet the needs of the local community.

Volunteer tourism is a niche market, which has become an important subject for researchers. Volunteer tourism is an alternative form of tourism that can be seen as a more responsible and sustainable type of tourism. Researchers in the field explain that operators of volunteer tourism have various motives. In this research the tour operators that were studied are making profit out of the volunteer tourism packages in which it can be concluded that the main motive of providing this type of tourism is commercialized motives with partly altruistic motives. However the altruistic motives are not the priority for the studied tour operators. The studied tour operators all provide short term volunteer tourism projects that include community development. It can be argued that the studied tour operators are mainly providing a tourism package rather than volunteering. Even though the tour operators try to deliver a volunteer product. When looking at figure 2 and after the interviews, it becomes more clear that the tour operators seems to adapt to the needs of the tourists in which this type of volunteer tourism is designed to satisfy the tourists and give them a different experience than a normal holiday. Another aspect that has been studied by various researchers in volunteer tourism, that was mentioned in the theoretical framework the requirements regarding requirements of volunteer tourists. This study also proves that studied tour operators do not require any standards for volunteer tourists to volunteer for their company.

Moreover, it is important that the tour operator sees the importance of CSR. By prioritizing the company’s CSR, a tour operator aims to operate in a more sustainable
way. In this way, a company shows the importance of the environment both social and natural in which it is operating. The studied type of volunteer tourism (short term) that is offered by tour operators does not contributed to sustainable development that guarantees the long term sustainability in tourism. CSR from the studied tour operators puts importance on the social, economic and environmental aspects. Even though tour operators might have the best intension with their CSR it can be questioned whether they deliver their product in the same way as explained in their CSR. Even though CSR has been a wide researched topic, it can be argued whether the studied tour operators see the importance of CSR and the implementation and the communication towards the volunteer tourists.

The studied tour operators seem to prioritize the importance of the potential volunteer tourists’ motivations rather than the importance of the CSR that relates to the host destination. The information that tour operators provide to their potential volunteer tourists relate very closely to the motivations to volunteer. In the theoretical framework the motivations regarding the volunteer tourists were explained in which it seems that the studied tour operators adopt their strategies on. It seems that studied tour operators use marketing strategies that match the volunteer tourists’ motivations. As discussed by Brown, self-fulfillment is very important for a large group of volunteer tourists in which the communication towards the potential volunteers goes hand in hand. Whereas the tour operators also make use of very strong words to make the volunteer tourists feel needed which relates to the motivation of ‘the desire to give something back.’ By for example, informing the potential volunteer tourists that they will definitely make a difference. Moreover, as discussed by Mostafanezhad a communication tool plays a very important role nowadays in the daily lives of the volunteer tourists in which the studied tour operators seem to adopt their pictures and messages. In which it can be said that the studied tour operators make use of CSR strategies however

5.3 Conclusion research findings
In order to answer and conclude the main research question, several aspects related to volunteer tourism and the tour operators’ perspective needed to be clarified. This has been done by qualitative research where the researcher conducted a content analysis of 9 tour operators’ websites and 6 tour operators were interviewed.

The first sub research question relates sustainable management of the studied tour operators which includes CSR importance, communication towards volunteer tourists and the selecting of volunteer tourists.

Many tour operators that have been interviewed state aspects regarding the importance to create a positive impact on the environment, society and economy while looking at long term solutions. Some of the tour operators that have been researched pay much attention to these particular aspects whereas other tour operators do not provide the potential volunteer tourists with hardly any information. Volunteer tourism projects should aim for a permanent effect instead of short term solutions. Short term solutions are not very sustainable for the volunteer tourism projects in which not many people will profit from the volunteer tourism projects. A volunteer tourism project is more sustainable and therefore, will have effect on more people in the broader period of time. In which a volunteer tourism project is more sustainable and therefore, will have effect on more people in the broader period of time. In which the studied tour operators rather focus on the volunteer tourists motivations than the importance of the host destination. Each tour operator puts the importance of volunteer tourism somewhere else which makes it very difficult for prospective volunteer tourists to make an accurate decision about volunteer tourism. Moreover, this does not seem the most important aspect for the
studied tour operators since this is not the information the tour operator provides to the volunteer tourists. The information is somehow a bit hidden for the volunteer tourists.

Moreover, the selection and working with volunteer tourists remains unclear. The tour operators do not make a distinction between volunteer tourists when volunteering for a short period of time. The conducted interviews and the content analysis show that each prospective volunteer tourist is welcome to book a volunteer tourism trip. It seems that tour operators to find the motivation of the volunteer tourist very important even though not all the volunteer tourist may have a personal contact with the company. Although, tour operators set requirements for potential volunteer tourists, it is not very difficult for any potential volunteer tourist to meet these requirements. Tour operators seem to have an ‘everybody is welcome’ approach.

The second sub research question was focused on the importance and monitoring of the tour operators’ volunteer tourism projects, requirements and guidelines regarding volunteer tourism. In order to ensure that a volunteer tourism project is successful. This includes the guarantee that the volunteer tourism program fulfills the needs of the community as well as the financial reporting volunteer tourism projects.

Guidelines regarding volunteer tourism do not seem to be a very important aspect of the tour operators. Non-profit organizations (i.e. TIES) provide tour operators with sustainable volunteer tourism guidelines. By using recognized guidelines, the tour operator can improve the local community’s living standards in the long term. By interviewing the tour operators, it became clear that the use of guidelines by tour operators is still at the beginning and still needs to become familiar by many tour operators. The reason for this might be that the use of guidelines is very time-consuming and might require more work, such as project evaluation and monitoring. The implementation of guidelines is a large investment for many companies and, therefore they rather use their own guidelines. Another aspect is that the guidelines will need to be followed carefully which, might also be an obstacle for many tour operators.

The majority of the tour operators that were interviewed offer a wide range of volunteer tourism projects. Many of the tour operators relay on their stakeholders located at the destination. Without their partners, the volunteer tourism project would probably not exist. It is important for the tour operator to maintain a steady relationship with their partners. The partners are also the intermediates that support the volunteer tourists at the destination. After this research, it is still unclear whether tour operators collaborate with each other since many of the volunteer tourism projects are very similar. Further research regarding this should be conducted.

Each tour operator states, that they have certain standards that a volunteer tourism project should meet before volunteer tourists can travel to the destination to provide aid. Every volunteer tourism project should have adequate accommodation, prepared meals, sufficient project coordinators at the destination, proper infrastructure and safety for the volunteer tourists. But most importantly, the volunteer tourists need to be useful for the volunteer tourism projects and not take away labor from the local community. However it can be questioned whether each volunteer tourism project is always useful for the local community.

Another aspect that relates to the importance of the volunteer tourism project is the importance of the local community. The local community in developing countries is the center of volunteer tourism when looking at the social aspects of volunteer tourism. Each volunteer tourism project that involves the local community should influence the local community positively. The tour operators see the importance of the local community, but do not always seem to be fully aware of the opinion from the
local community. This is simply assumed since it may seem that providing volunteer tourism is a sufficient solution. However, tour operators should become more aware of the opinions and the needs of the local communities where volunteer tourism projects are based in order to improve the volunteer tourism projects in the long term. One of the tour operators that were researched provided a more honest answer when questioned whether volunteer tourism might benefit the volunteer tourist itself more than the local community. Even though volunteer tourism seems to be a more sustainable tourism type, it can be questioned whether commercialized organizations should be involved in this type of tourism.

Moreover, the final sub research question covers the tour operators’ awareness of the negative publicity regarding volunteer tourism and how tour operators react on this. There was only one tour operator throughout the research that honestly stated that there was something wrong with one of their volunteer tourism projects and therefore canceled the volunteer tourism project. Many tour operators try to face the negative publicity. However, further in depth research should be conducted regarding how tour operators try to improve and face the negative impacts. The tour operators did not feel very comfortable talking about this particular aspect which made it difficult to receive extensive answers.

To come back to the main research question of this study, ‘What are the underlying motivations for tour operators to offer volunteer tourism?’ And the hypothesis of this study, whether tour operators may try to make use of developing countries and communities in need of aid to promote volunteer tourism in order to make larger profit margins. It seems that tour operators providing volunteer tourism all have the intentions at first sight to provide sufficient aid to the local community in need. But it might be questionable whether this is prioritized above making a profit. Proving aid by means of volunteer tourism might not always be done in the most sufficient way, therefore it would be advisable to the tour operators to make use of recognized guidelines when offering volunteer tourism. Some of the tour operators have a very promising vision, mission, goals and policies regarding sustainability development. However, this is not transferred in a sufficient way to the volunteer tourist in which, probably not every volunteer tourist is aware of these important aspects of the tour operator. Moreover, there seems to be a lack of communication in regards to their prospective volunteer tourists since many tour operators do not even have personal contact with the potential volunteer tourists. The tour operators seem to create a very beautiful image of the volunteer tourism projects. It seems that the potential volunteer tourists are sometimes misled by information and footage that is used on the website. Tour operators might create a wrong image of the volunteer tourism projects and their company. Moreover, tour operators possibly make use of the vulnerability of the host destination to attract the volunteer tourists. From the researcher’s opinion, it can be questioned whether the profit companies can prioritize the aid such as the non-profit organizations. By evaluating all the aspects mentioned before, it seems that the studied tour operators are mainly aiming to make profit in which their product additionally provides aid to developing countries.

5.4 Limitations data collecting process and findings

During the research limitations regarding the data collecting and findings occurred. In the methodology chapter, a critical evaluation concerning the use of methods was already discussed.

The first limitation that has been raised in this research is the limited time to conduct and write this thesis. The time period for this research was from end of March
2015 until the end of May 2015. In this period of time, a request was sent to the tour operators to conduct interviews with them. This took some time, due to late responses and the information that the tour operators wanted beforehand. Due to the time limit, it was impossible to reach every tour operator that was initially planned.

Moreover, the use of Skype and telephone communications can be seen as a limitation due to the risk of unpredictable technology errors such as a poor internet connection (Sullivan, 2012, p. 59). For example that the video of Skype freezes or that the voice malfunctioned. Nevertheless, these issues occurred rarely and did not cause any significant disruption.

The interview questions that were asked to the interviewees were narrowed down than what was initially thought of. This was because there were too many questions and the interview would take too much time. By doing this, not all questions that were raised at first were asked. It was impossible to discuss and research each topic that was intended to be studied.

Regarding the interviews with the Swedish tour operators, language can be seen as a limitation since interviews were conducted in English. It might be possible that the information that was requested and was misinterpreted. However the level of English of the tour operators was very high due to their use of English daily while cooperating with stakeholders in different countries around the globe.

5.5 Further research

Recommendation for further research will be provided in order to gather more in depth information regarding the tour operators that offer volunteer tourism.

Volunteer tourism can be seen as sustainable tourism. However, it remains to be a problem whether volunteer tourism that is offered by tour operators can be seen as a serious movement or as just a marketing tool. It is very difficult to say since the tour operators have such different requirements and corporate responsibilities towards sustainable tourism. This is a very important element that should be further researched.

Accordingly, more research should be conducted regarding other tour operators that offer volunteer tourism and whether these companies really aspire to their beliefs and goals. Even though a small check has been done for part of the tour operators that were researched, more research would provide better insights.

The social corporate responsibility of the tour operators should be researched more in-depth. The researcher touches this topic in the thesis however more research regarding the practice of CSR could be conducted.

Another aspect that occurred during the study was that there were certain companies that offer volunteer tourism that are a daughter company of a very large company. Potential volunteer tourists will not associate the volunteer tourism trips with the big travel company and the potential volunteer tourists will not associate the tour operator as a non-profit organization. However, due to no response, it was impossible to gather more information about these tour operators. Therefore, it would be interesting to gather more information about issue this in future research.

It is unclear why volunteer tourists choose a commercialized company rather than a non-profit organization. Although, there are many volunteer opportunities offered by non-profit organization. This is not researched in this study, therefore future research should be conducted to gather information regarding this particular aspect.

Furthermore, more information should be collected regarding the tour operators’ volunteer tourism projects. A question commenced after the analysis whether operators offering volunteer tourism projects collaborate with other tour operators or only cooperate with stakeholders at the destination itself.
Lastly, to create a broader picture of volunteer tourism, the volunteer tourists should be researched regarding their expectations, satisfaction, and loyalty with the tour operators they book their volunteer tourism trip.


7. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview questions

- What is your position in the organization?
- How long have you been working for the organization?
- How would you define your organization? (For example a tour operator, exchange organization etc.)
- Do you define yourself as a non-profit organization? Why?

- How do you choose a certain volunteer project? What kind of standards does a project need to have before volunteers can go there?
- How do you evaluate the volunteer tourism projects? How do you know they are successful?
- Do you follow an eco-label? Or do you follow any of the guidelines from an eco-label? If so, which eco label?
- Do the volunteers need to meet certain standards before volunteering? Do they need to attend any information sessions?
- Do you provide your volunteers with any guidelines or regulations? Screening?
- How do you check if volunteer follow the regulations and guidelines?
- How does the volunteer project contribute to the organization’s long term aim?

- How important is the local community for the volunteer projects?
- Do you also try to involve the local community in the volunteer projects? How?
- What does the local community think of the volunteer tourists and the volunteer tourism projects?
- Don’t you think that the volunteers take away work from the local community?
- In what way do volunteers influence the local community? Do they really benefit from it?
- How do you try to build a relationship with the local community?

- Recently volunteer tourism got some negative publicity, what do you think about that?
- How do you prevent your projects from negative publicity?
- Your company also offers volunteer tourism with orphanages however recent studies show that this has negative influence on the orphanages, what do you think about that?
Appendix 2: Content analysis

2.1 Promotion videos

Questions observation videos

- From who is the promotion video?
- What does the video show?
- How do they make the video attractive? (use of beautiful beaches or cute children)
- Who does the company want to reach by the video?
- What is the main storyline of the video?
- How does the company try to convince the audience?
- What are the underlying thoughts of the tour operator in the video?

Table 10: Promotion videos tour operators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour operator 1</th>
<th>Promotion videos tour operators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive notes:</td>
<td>Reflective notes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No general promotion video</td>
<td>- The company is not involved in the video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Only few videos for some projects</td>
<td>- Storytelling by volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Filmed by the volunteers themselves</td>
<td>- Videos can be a bit unstructured however it gives a clear image of the projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Describe their motivation and experiences</td>
<td>- Video sounds more trustworthy due to the many volunteers that tell their story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Daily activities</td>
<td>- Don’t make it look better than it is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Happy music in the video</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Main storyline: Work is much needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour operator 2</th>
<th>Promotion videos tour operators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive notes:</td>
<td>Reflective notes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No general promotion videos</td>
<td>- The videos are not very structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Individual videos from projects</td>
<td>- Not much information in the videos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Filmed from the volunteers perspective and by volunteers</td>
<td>- Potential volunteers will not choose this company just because of this video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not one specific video for a project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour operator 3</th>
<th>Promotion videos tour operators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive notes:</td>
<td>Reflective notes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Very general video</td>
<td>- Videos is too long and not attractive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Overview of all the projects</td>
<td>- Not very convincing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Illustrated with pictures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use of very cute small children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Only happy faces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Emphasis the interaction between volunteers and the ‘vulnerable’ children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour operator 4</th>
<th>Promotion videos tour operators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive notes:</td>
<td>Reflective notes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No use of videos</td>
<td>No use of videos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour operator 5</th>
<th>Promotion videos tour operators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive notes:</td>
<td>Reflective notes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No use of videos</td>
<td>No use of videos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour operator 6</th>
<th>Promotion videos tour operators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive notes:</td>
<td>Reflective notes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Go Wild, Go Inspire, Go experience’</td>
<td>- Storytelling from the company itself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- General video to show what kind of volunteer tourism projects they have.
  - Use of very happy music which makes you happy
  - Only images no much text
  - Use of very cute animals and children
  - Main storyline: Volunteer trips around the world
  - Hardly any information
  - This video makes you happy when watching which makes it convincing
  - They try to associate everything with their name.

**Tour operator 7**

**Descriptive notes:**
- Very descriptive video
- Not much information
- Only images no voice
- The name of the company is constantly in the video
- Not a very convincing video
- Main storyline: Work to make the world a better place

**Reflective notes:**
- ‘Travel with a purpose: authentic, credible and real volunteer experience’
- Not a very convincing video
- The potential volunteer does not know much more after watching the video

**Tour operator 8**

**Descriptive notes:**
- Very short video
- Western volunteers to developing countries. Showing several sights but no idea where exactly.
- Introduction about the company, how good they are doing
- Show images from indigenous people
- Emphasis the interaction between volunteers and the ‘vulnerable’ children
- It is all about having fun, showing images of the interaction with the other volunteers
- Also trying to reach a young audience
- Main storyline: Volunteering is fun

**Reflective notes:**
- ‘Join our team and volunteer abroad’
- Storytelling from the company itself
- Not a very convincing video
- The video does not give much information more than showing some beautiful images. Lack of information.
- The videos creates a wrong image
- Potential volunteers will not choose this company just because of this video.

**Tour operator 9**

**Descriptive notes:**
- Informing about the company and how good volunteering is.
- Western volunteers to developing countries. Showing several sights
- Really proud of all their achievements.
- Try to convince potential volunteers that they make a difference for the local community while learning a new culture and have fun.
- Tell all the opportunities you will have when you volunteer.
- They will be with you every step of the way
- No experience is required
- Designed especially for you
- Many shots of cute children

**Reflective notes:**
- ‘Help, learn, explore’
- Story telling by the company itself
- Make it sound almost too good to be true
- Make use of cute children to attract new volunteers
- Try to convince you that you make huge difference for the local community by painting a house.
- Everywhere there happy faces but they keep saying how much these people need volunteers. Not showing the real picture
- Try to convince by telling how good the company is and how safe it will be when volunteering with projects abroad. Really try to make you comfortable.
- Main storyline: Ensure that it is a safe and worthwhile job

2.2 Comparative analysis overview

Comparative analysis English teaching volunteer tourism project

Country Thailand. Volunteer at a school to teach English. Three to four weeks of teaching. The information that is provided is all during the booking period of May – September 2015. Except for one volunteer tourism project all the projects are located in Singburi central or north Thailand. Many of the accommodation that is offered by the organizations in homestays. Exclusive: airplane ticket, visa and vaccinations.

Table 11: Comparative analysis English teaching volunteer project Thailand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour operator</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Times period</th>
<th>Included</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 1</td>
<td>€749* €35.67 per day</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>Information prior to departure. Detailed information about the project. Transport from airport to Singburi only Saturday and Sunday. Accommodation and meals (3 during the week, 2 weekends). Contacts person when worried. Training. 24 emergency number. Transport from Singburi to Bangkok at the end of the project</td>
<td>From 18 to 60 years old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 2</td>
<td>€1000 €35.72 per day</td>
<td>3 weeks plus 1 week introduction</td>
<td>Airport pick-up and transfer to the accommodation. Accommodation and meals during the entire trip. All the transport. Orientation week and excursions. Advice from partner organizations. Emergency number. Participation at the arrival home training. Volunteer certificate</td>
<td>Involved in an educational project: This tour operator wants to know your motivation. Therefore they call you beforehand to have an interview. After the interview will be discussed which project will suit the potential volunteer. Social projects are minimum 4 weeks. From 17 years. Criminal background check mandatory. Mandatory training prior departure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 3</td>
<td>€950 €45.24 per day</td>
<td>2 weeks introduction 1 week teaching</td>
<td>Prior departure training. Pick up service from the airport. Accommodation and meals are included. Information guide. Advice from partner organizations Emergency number. Volunteer certificate.</td>
<td>Criminal background check mandatory. Mandatory training prior departure. From 17 years old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 4</td>
<td>€970 €46.19 per day</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>Preparatory information. Transport from the airport and back. Introduction in Chiang Mai. Accommodation and food. Insurance. Emergency number. Volunteer certificate</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 5</td>
<td>€910* €43.33 per day</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>Accommodation in eco house. Meals are included. Airport pickup and transfer. Emergency number. Personal contact prior departure. Partner organization at destination.</td>
<td>No experience needed. It is important that you are interested in working with children. Every experience is an advantage but the main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Per day</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>€1298.70</td>
<td>€61.84</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>Accommodation is included. The only meal that is included is the lunch. There is a local in country team for support and a 24 hours emergency support. Airport pick up. An orientation is provided to the volunteer tourists with an introduction and some training. The travel insurance is included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>€1142.50</td>
<td>€54.40</td>
<td>21 days – 10 days of actual teaching</td>
<td>Accommodation, meals at volunteer site, transport, orientation, excursion with guide, language training, English speaking services assistant going to volunteer site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>€683.75</td>
<td>€32.55</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>Airport pick-up, orientation, program supervision, accommodation and meals during volunteer program period, in-country 24/7 volunteer support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>€1690</td>
<td>€120.71</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>Prior departure training. Pick up service from the airport. Accommodation and meals are included. Information guide. Advice from partner organizations. Emergency number. Volunteer certificate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The prices of some tour operators are in different currencies however in order to get a better overview, all the prices are converted into euros.*
Comparative analysis Orphanages or Daycare in Central America

Orphanages or Daycare in Central America (mainly Costa Rica). 4 weeks of volunteering. The information that is provided is all during the booking period of May – September 2015.

Table 12: Comparative analysis orphanages or daycare volunteer tourism projects in Central America

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour operator</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Times period</th>
<th>Included</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 1</td>
<td>€1536.74€36.58 per day</td>
<td>2 weeks Spanish and 4 weeks volunteering</td>
<td>Transfer airport. Spanish classes. Study material. Accommodation and meals.</td>
<td>2 weeks mandatory Spanish course. From 18 years. Minimum 4 weeks volunteering. Criminal background check.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 2</td>
<td>€1705€40.60 per day</td>
<td>2 weeks Spanish and 4 week volunteering</td>
<td>During Spanish course staying at a homestay. Accommodation and meals (excluding lunch). Airport pick-up and transfer to the accommodation. Advice from partner organizations. Emergency number. Participation at the arrival home training. Volunteer certificate</td>
<td>2 weeks mandatory Spanish course. Minimum of volunteering is 4 weeks. From 17 years. Criminal background check mandatory. Mandatory training prior departure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 3</td>
<td>€1,225.00€43.75 per day</td>
<td>1 week introduction, 1 week Spanish, 2 weeks volunteering</td>
<td>Introduction and Spanish courses. Accommodation.</td>
<td>Anyone who is fond of taking care of babies and young children. Level of Spanish: None, although basic is recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 4</td>
<td>€1600€57.14 per day</td>
<td>4 weeks of which 1 week Spanish course</td>
<td>Accommodation and meals are included. Orientation before volunteering. Emergency number. Airport pick up. Liability insurance.</td>
<td>Basic English. Spanish recommended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 5</td>
<td>€1387.23€49.54 per day</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>Homestay accommodation and meals. Transport from accommodation to volunteer tourism project in the evening. Orientation and introduction. Personal contact before departure. Pick up service at airport. Support from local team. 24 hours emergency. Volunteer certificate.</td>
<td>At least 21 years old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator 6</td>
<td>€1227.05€58.43 per day</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>Accommodation in homestays. Breakfast and dinner at the homestay. 24 hours emergency support. Airport pick up. Spanish course, 1st week depending on fluency level (participant</td>
<td>Basic knowledge of Spanish (Contact your advisor to discuss option of additional Spanish classes if you are a complete beginner)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
completes a placement test on first Monday). 1st week in San José includes cultural enrichment activities like cooking, dancing, etc. and Comprehensive travel health insurance with volunteer abroad coverage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour operator</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Included Services</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>€1348.57* / €89.90 per day</td>
<td>15 days</td>
<td>Airport pick up. Safe and basic accommodations (shared), all meals. Welcome meeting and orientation. Project equipment and materials. 24 hours in country support. Required transportation. Comprehensive training program.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>€952.98* / €45.38 per day</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>Airport pick-up, orientation, program supervision, accommodation, breakfast and dinner during volunteer program period, in-country 24/7 volunteer support and in-country administration costs.</td>
<td>Volunteers must be 18 years or older on the volunteer program start date. All volunteers must have adequate volunteer travel insurance and provide a criminal background check to program staff on arrival in Costa Rica. Fluency in Spanish is not a prerequisite for the volunteer program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>€2455 / €87.67 per day</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>Accommodation, meals, transfer from and to the airport, travel insurance, induction and orientation, 24 hours support in country.</td>
<td>Minimum of 4 weeks. Volunteering from 17 years old.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The prices of some tour operators are in different currencies in order to provide a better overview all the prices are converted into euros.*