



**Footprints of the volunteer tourist:
Local actors' perception of volunteer tourism**

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This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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List of Abbreviations

HM	Homestay mother(s)
LSOs	Local sending organization(s)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
SET	Social exchange theory
SOs	Sending organization(s)
VSOs	Volunteer sending organization(s)

Abstract

Volunteer tourism (VT) is one of the fastest growing sectors within alternative tourism. It sells the idea that volunteers will contribute to development, alleviate poverty and build capacity, and claims to retain an equal, unexploited relationship with the local host community. The popularity of VT lies in its discourse of urgency, the impression that it is easy and that anyone can do it. The complexity of development is reduced to a few days or weeks of helping others, set to a backdrop of exotic scenery. South Africa offers the largest range of VT activities on the African continent and is also ranked amongst the top ten destinations for VT in the world. VT is a significant source of revenue for South Africa and yet there is little understanding of the potential benefits or harms on local communities. Although the local host community is the so-called beneficiary of VT, their perspective is of essence to the debate, yet often overlooked.

This paper explores local actor's perceptions of VT using social exchange theory. The investigation is a case study of a township community in Kayamandi, South Africa. Semi-structured interviews and participant observation were conducted to understand local actors' needs, motivations, expectations and their evaluation of the benefits and costs. The findings reveal that local actors attach different definitions, and meanings, to volunteer tourists depending on their socio-economic roles. Broadly speaking, their perception of VT is positive with factors such as level of power, dependency, control, and trust, greatly influencing their perception. Social exchange theory served as a useful framework. Finally, the study highlights the potential of VT to bring change and development to a host community, especially if the communities themselves could have more control of the VT system.

Keywords

volunteer tourism, residents' perceptions, social exchange theory

Prologue

Kayamandi, South Africa: On a cold winter morning, I walk into the Zimile¹ crèche to request an appointment with the principal. I find myself in a large and mostly empty hall. My eyes scan the space: two tables with plastic chairs for children, worn carpets, bare walls and about 35 toddlers sitting, lined up against the wall. The silence catches me off guard. The children are sitting dead still, not saying a word, doing nothing. Four ladies, the crèche teachers, sit huddled over an electric heater in a corner of the room, talking in low voices to each other. They look at me startled: what am I doing here? I ask to see the principal and am directed to Didame's office. She is suspicious. Why do I want to ask questions? Who am I working for? What do I want?

We talk about her crèche, the problems she faces, her experience and frustrations with volunteers. The distrust lingers on the surface but she is eager for me to understand the desperation of her situation and the dire need of the crèche for money. "We'll grab anything we can get – we have no choice." She has learned that she cannot be open and honest to volunteers. She recounts an incident when a mature volunteer couple asked her: "Didame, what is it you *really* need?"; she replied "I need money for myself to survive; I need money to pay for my son's school, and I need money to pay my taxi". They looked at her in horror and went off complaining to their homestay mother. The homestay mother later returned, reprimanding Didame for talking about money. She shrugs, how could she know she shouldn't be honest?"

Many volunteers have passed through Zimile crèche over the past decade. Volunteers do not ask her what she needs, and if they do, they buy cheap things. She feels she is not trusted with their money. The last group of volunteers have painted stones outside with different colours. Unfortunately they used - unknowingly - water-based paints and after a week the colours are already fading: "The young volunteers feel embarrassed because they can't help me."

A few days later, I re-visit the crèche. The toddlers have gone home and seven Spanish female volunteers are painting the outside walls of the crèche. I arrive as Didame is leaving the building, on her way home. The volunteer group leader, with an enthusiastic smile and covered with paint, asks Didame whether she likes the paint-work. She shrugs, totally disinterested, and ignores the question. She hands over the keys of the building to the volunteers and tells them to lock after themselves. A commotion: the volunteers do not want the responsibility of locking up and Guydo, the local volunteer coordinator, steps in to negotiate between the principal and the volunteers. Didame sneers at the volunteers' good deed, confusing the volunteers by her animosity, and Guydo is caught in the middle. Nobody seems happy.

¹ Names fictionalised

Chapter 1 Introduction and background

International volunteering is no recent phenomenon. People have travelled for centuries to other parts of the world to assist with poverty alleviation, environmental conservation and to help those affected by natural and man-made disasters (Raymond & Hall 2008). International volunteering as we know it today gained impetus only in the 1960s, with the establishment of organisations such as United States Peace Corps and Volunteer Service Overseas (Kumaran & Pappas 2012). By the 1990s, newer (often for-profit) volunteering organisations started catering to an ever-increasing demand for travelling and volunteering experiences combined. These newer organisations differed from earlier volunteer organisations in that they required no professional experience, training or time commitment from the volunteer, and would provide the volunteering traveller with great flexibility and choice (Swan 2012:240). This combination of volunteering and tourism would set the stage for what we call today volunteer tourism.

Volunteer tourism (or voluntourism in short) is one of the fastest growing sectors within tourism. It claims to be an alternative form of tourism, retaining an equal, unexploited relationship with the local community (Wearing 2001). Furthermore, it sells the idea that volunteers will contribute to development, alleviate poverty and build capacity (*ibid.*). Whereas a few years ago it was estimated at 1.6 million volunteer tourists per annum, more recent studies estimate the number of volunteer tourists - to be nearing 10 million per year (McGhee 2014). The popularity of volunteer tourism (VT) lies in its discourse of urgency, the impression that it is easy and that anyone can do it. The complexity of development is reduced to a few days of helping others, set to a backdrop of exotic scenery.

Recently, however, a number of concerns have been raised about the possible negative effects of VT on the host community (Guttentag 2009, Coghlan & Gooch 2011, McGhee 2012, Hammersley 2014). Since the appearance of the seminal investigations of Wearing (2001) on VT, the majority of the research has focused on two out of the three major stakeholders: volunteer tourists and volunteer tourism organisations. Yet, the perspective of the third - and most important - stakeholder, the local host community, has received much less attention (Mdee & Emmott 2008; Sin 2010; Lyons et al. 2012; Wearing & McGhee 2013). Wearing & McGhee (2013) ascribe this lack of focus partly due to the difficulty of identifying the various stakeholders who may fall under the terms 'host' and 'community'. Research on host communities is also obstructed by socio-cultural, economic, or language differences which often exist between the researcher and the host community; lack of awareness of VT activities within the community; and the identification of outsiders as "voluntourists" (McGhee & Andereck 2009). Various scholars advocate more research on the effects and perceptions of VT on local communities (Sin 2009; Raymond 2011) with an increasing number of researchers taking on the challenge (McGhee & Andereck 2009; Nelson 2010; Sin 2010; Stritch 2011; Voelkl 2012; Janisse 2012; Ezra 2013).

The rationale for undertaking this study is that VT is a fast growing industry and research is needed to present a balanced view of this phenomenon. By including and understanding the experiences from the beneficiaries' perspective, it is possible to find ways of managing and improving VT. This study is therefore devoted to investigating the residents' perceptions toward VT.

Justification and relevance

Since 1994, South Africa can pride itself on having one of the world's most progressive constitutions. Yet it remains, to this day, a country of extremes. It is ranked as one of the most unequal societies in the world with much of the economic power still in the hands of the white population. Paradoxically, the extremes are also what attracts volunteer tourists to this country: the coexistence of high levels of poverty with world class cities, safari game parks, beaches and exceptional landscapes makes South Africa an ideal destination. South Africa offers the largest range of VT activities on the African continent (Rogerson 2011) and is ranked amongst the top ten destinations for VT in the world (Rogerson & Slater 2014). Furthermore, the South African government's National Tourism Sector Strategy has identified VT as "a niche form of tourism that offers competitive market opportunities for the country" (Department of Tourism 2011 in Rogerson & Slater 2014).

VT is a significant source of revenue for South Africa and yet there is little understanding of the potential benefits or harms of international volunteering on local communities. Especially as the local host community is the so-called beneficiary of VT, their perspective is of essence to the debate. Only by gaining better insight into local actors' perspectives on VT, are we able to contribute to the debate of the VT industry and evaluate whether this is a sustainable form of alternative tourism.

Aim, objectives and proposed steps of this research

This paper seeks to expand on existing research and deepen the understanding of key local actors' perception in a popular VT destination. It will explore perceptions of volunteer tourists as perceived by people living and/or working in a specific community in South Africa. It will examine and focus on the micro-level interactions that take place between volunteer tourists and local actors from different socio-economic groups; it will identify local actors with different interests in VT and therefore varying perceptions.

Research questions

The main research question in this study is formulated as follows:

How do local actors perceive the contribution of international volunteer tourists?

The sub-questions are:

1. What are the **needs, motivations and expectations** of local actors in relation to volunteer tourists, as perceived by:
 - i. Community beneficiaries
 - ii. Institutional beneficiaries
2. What are the **benefits and costs** of the contributions of volunteer tourists as perceived by the same local actors?

An additional question is vital to the discussion and that is:

3. What are the **effects** of these contributions on the host community?

Chapter 2 Literature review and theoretical framework

This chapter presents relevant literature which will provide an understanding of VT: first in a more general sense, and then more specific to existing issues, concepts and theories relevant to benefits and concerns of VT in relation to host communities.

Volunteer Tourism (VT)

The concept of VT has only recently been contextualised in tourism studies and development studies perhaps partly due to its confused identity, diverse activities and relatively recent growth (Swan 2012). The most prolific writer on VT, and widely cited, is Stephen Wearing (2001:12) who situates VT within the field of alternative tourism and ecotourism: VT “can be viewed as a development strategy leading to sustainable development and centring the convergence of natural resource qualities, locals and the visitors that all benefit from tourism activity”. VT claims to differ from mass tourism in that most of the profits are not channelled away to an external tour operator or travel industry. VT is thus promoted as a sustainable, alternative mode of travel that includes opportunities for the tourist to engage in development issues and strives for equal benefit for both tourist and local community.

Defining volunteer tourists

Wearing defines volunteer tourists as those tourists who “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 2001:1). Similarly, McGhee and Santos (2005:760) define volunteer tourists as “utilizing discretionary time and income to travel out of the sphere of regular activity to assist others in need” emphasising the altruistic side of volunteering. The voluntourist deliberately tries to distance him/herself from mass tourism practices and consciously attempts to attain an authentic-as-possible experience.

There is not one single profile that fits all volunteers but broadly speaking they share common attributes: they are well off and have free time, are from the Global North, and seek an ‘real’ experience in the Global South (Benson & Wearing 2012). They are often between 18-25 years of age, white and female, although they can also include school children from 14-18 years, people taking career breaks, retirees, and holidaymakers who want to “put something back” (Knollenberg et al 2014). These volunteer tourists are in search of “doing good”, “making a difference”, looking for a “hands-on cross-cultural experience” (Swan 2012: 240). Through VT and the act of doing voluntary work, the volunteer tourists clearly want to distinguish themselves from other mass tourists (McIntosh & Zahra 2007; Callanan & Thomas 2005; Sin 2009).

Benefits of volunteer tourism

Much of the initial literature focused on VT’s benefits: it was encouraged as a form of alternative tourism with few negative impacts on the host community, and as an effective way to help others. (Wearing 2001, 2004; McGhee & Santos 2005; Raymond & Hall 2008). Several authors claim that VT can create better cross-cultural understanding between volunteers and local communities alike; that the volunteers’ input

e.g. practical “free” help and skills, and the money generated from volunteers, can improve the living conditions of communities and promote social inclusion (McIntosh & Zahra 2007; Stoddart & Rogerson 2004). In particular the economic benefits and employment possibilities created by VT are said to be invaluable for poor communities (Brown & Hall 2008, Govender & Rogerson 2010). For VT can offer these communities, who had never had the opportunity to benefit directly from tourism, the possibility of earning much needed foreign exchange (Telfer & Sharpley 2008; Alexander 2012). The financial benefits can be substantial for the communities as volunteers usually stay longer than general tourists, and frequently use accommodation facilities in the host communities themselves (Govender & Rogerson, 2010).

Matthews (in Wearing et al 2015) argues that VT can also bring social benefits by reinstating a sense of “equality between the self and other”. VT is promoted as that of equal partnership, social justice and fair exchange between the volunteer and local communities (Wearing 2001, McGhee 2002, Zahra and McGehee 2013). Another encouraging study on the positive effects of VT is that of Zahra & McGhee (2013) which found that the presence of volunteers created a “novelty effect” which in turn lead to increased local participation in development programmes: for example, more children went to schools and host community members were inspired to get involved in the built environment due to the volunteers’ presence.

The VT literature gives many examples of *how* these benefits have been realised. According to McGhee (2014) good practices include direct involvement of host communities in the planning, preparation and management of VT. According to Wearing (2006), when decision making responsibilities involves the hosts, VT has the potential to restore power imbalances between the tourist and the host. Wearing adds that when interaction occurs in the so-called tourist Third Space it can lead to non-exploitive tourism practices, with the benefits flowing to local residents (ibid.). For Singh (2012) the potential of VT lies in a bottom up approach when the needs of the host communities determine the number, kind and length of stay of volunteers and thereby the communities retain control of the process.

Critiques of volunteer tourism

The fast growing phenomenon of VT has brought with it a number of “growing pains”: concerns about altruistic motivations, power disparities, dependency and exploitation of host communities (McGhee 2014, Guttentag 2009, Coghlan & Gooch 2011, McGhee 2012, Hammersley 2014, Simpson 2004).

Altruism and power disparities

The notion that altruistic motivations legitimise volunteer intervention has come under scrutiny and is questioned. Matthews (in Benson & Wearing 2012:244) views VT more about “doing good for self” than “doing good for other”. Lyons (2015), with reference to Nietzsche, claims that the volunteer’s altruistic acts are motivated by egoistic desire and self-interest. In particular, VT’s claim of mutual benefit is questioned within uneven power structures. For example Nietzsche in Lyons (2015) warned that reciprocity is likely to be uneven, favouring those in positions of power (Lyons 2015). The cultural elite who can afford to undertake VT will profit, thereby exacerbating inequality and power imbalances. Lyons (ibid) dismisses Butcher & Smith’s (2010) argument that VT has the potential to lead to a global positive exchange by means of a delayed reciprocity because, in his view, the relationship remains unequal and therefore favours the more powerful party.

Sin (2010:988) similarly points out the political implication and tension that this kind of volunteering entails: it sustains and reproduces existing power relations (Sin 2010:988). “Us” helping “Them” constantly emphasises the difference between “we” and “the other” (Said 1978). It reinforces the ideology of supremacy of the North versus the South; we have what they lack in power and capacity (Lyons et al. 2012). VT ignores structural inequalities and simplifies power relations. It is argued that VT’s focus on intimate experiences between host community and volunteer obscures the “structural inequality on which the encounter is based and reframes the question of structural inequality as a question of individual morality” (Conran 2011:1455). The better-off white, rich and mobile volunteer feels justified to help the worse-off non-white, poor and locally-tied community; disregarding the political implications of a caring relationship whereby the volunteer obtains a privileged position (Sin 2010).

Postcolonial thoughts and whiteness

Through a postcolonial lens, Calkin (2014) examines VT promotional material and observes how poverty is equated with a need for volunteer intervention without any discussion of the process of domination or inequality. Images portraying young white women helping non-white disadvantaged communities, reinforce the belief that the privileged Western individual has the authority and knowledge to help and “civilise” the non-Western subject (ibid.:31). As Conran (2011:1464) observes, the high status ascribed to whiteness results in intimate, yet power laden relationships between Western volunteers and host community members. White volunteers are commonly associated with privilege and social capital (Conran 2011:1465). The desire of the host community members to intentionally befriend and stay in contact with the volunteers is then also based on the assumption that a friendship with whites contributes to acquiring social capital. Thereby the cultural exchange can reinforce the stereotype perceptions that white volunteers are superior to blacks, mainly because they are white and privileged.

Due to South Africa’s racialised history, the issue of race is of particular importance in this discussion. Nelson (2012:37) notes that volunteers “are often unwitting heirs of the culture that established these power structures under first, colonialism and later, Apartheid.” The association of whiteness and power is also discussed in Swan’s (2012:252) study on VT in Ghana where “whiteness has come to symbolise power, status and the good life”. Swan (2012:249) elaborates that how volunteer tourists are perceived by host communities should be seen within a broader understanding of “whiteness”: acknowledging the variety of historical contexts such as colonialism and globalization.

Dependency

Costandius (2012) argues that altruistic human behaviour keeps power structures in place as it perpetuates dependency of the receiving group on the giving group. Similarly in VT related research, McGhee (2012) stresses that the act of giving sustains inequality and dependency. Sin (2010:990) describes how communities exposed to “caring” tourists become dependent ranging from insignificant issues such as children asking for sweets to expectations of infrastructural development. Sin (ibid.) notes that some locals felt they needed to appear “needy” to attract volunteer tourists; and therefore even perform “dependencies and desperations so as to fulfil what volunteer tourists have come to expect”.

Exploitation

In Guttentag's view (2015) VT is like tourism, a business; and volunteer tourists are the customers. With VT being driven by profit mechanisms, it implies that the host community's needs, complexities and situated contexts are not properly considered (Raymond 2011). The market-driven VT industry often puts the volunteers' interests before, and at the cost of, the host community's needs (Guttentag 2015).

Researchers heavily debate whether some of VT's claimed benefits are in fact helping. Vodopivec & Jaffe (2011) and Butcher & Smith (2010) argue that the volunteer's work contribution is negligible due to a mismatch in skills and capacity to hosts' needs. Many projects include minimal involvement of local communities or are insensitive to their needs or interests (Stoddart & Rogerson 2004). As for the financial benefits, Benson and Wearing (2012) argue that these are doubtful and difficult to determine due to the lack of transparency. And Vrasti (2013) claims that the interaction between the host community and volunteers remains superficial, while inherent power differences undermine any notions of agency. In short, the host community does not in their view, benefit from this exchange and thereby the idea of mutual benefit vanishes and locals become "merely commodified attractions" (Guttentag 2015).

VT is also blamed for commodifying and exploiting vulnerable children (Richter & Norman 2010). VT also caters for volunteer tourists who desire an emotional connection with needy young children (Mostafanezhad 2013). The short-term bonding between volunteer tourists and children happen to the detriment of the child (Norman & Richter 2010; Voelkl 2012). In the end, it is the demand of paying volunteers and not the demand of the local community that dictates (Cheney and Rotabi 2015).

Further thoughts

Post-humanitarian

Vrasti has a more philosophical take (2013:122) on VT, in that it is less about the volunteer doing good than a longing for that which is "lost in the West due to modernization: community, authenticity and spirituality". Through VT, people search for "communion with others to counteract hyperindividualism and the quotidian nihilism of modern existence" (ibid:136). Along a similar line of thought, Butcher & Smith (2015:7) describe VT "as an attempt to humanise the relationship between western affluence and global south poverty by focusing on individual in daily lives". Wang (in Clost 2011:17) suggests that VT can be an "unconscious Western drive to alleviate [modernity's] guilt [...] and simultaneous respect for difference"; thus volunteers' actions of helping relieve them of their feelings of guilt. This links into Chouliarki's (in Baillie Smith 2013:403) idea of the "post-humanitarian" which is a move away from "us" and "them" and instead "towards a 'mirror' structure where, in the absence of suffering and its justification, we are confronted with our own image as resource for making sense of solidarity".

The 'Other' as active participant

Most of the preceding literature and criticism on VT originates from Northern researchers presupposing that the Global South is vulnerable (Stritch 2011). The potential of local agency is often missing from the debate. As Lyons and Wearing (in Stritch 2011:24) suggest, researchers must "steer away from the dichotomous view that power is exercised by dominant players over oppressed actors and instead adopt an alternative analytical framework that suggest emancipation is imminent in daily power struggles". Although the commodification aspect of VT could potentially be

detrimental to marginalised people, it also brings with it untapped possibilities; commodification will also be interpreted differently by outsiders than from within (Stritch 2011). Therefore Cole (in Stritch 2011) points to the fact that we need better understanding of how marginalised groups gain power.

VT-related research in South Africa

Research on VT in South Africa is limited but steadily growing: Stoddart and Rogerson (2004), Sin (2009), Govender and Rogerson (2010), Nelson (2010), Alexander (2012), Jannise (2012), Verardi (2013), Rogerson & Slater (2014). In Erika Nelson's (2010) investigation on how South African host communities experience international volunteer tourists, one of her main findings was that community members saw volunteers more as sources of money and gifts than shared labour or training. Similarly, Govender & Rogerson (2010) noted that there was agreement that volunteers can be a significant source of funding. Janisse (2012), in her anthropological study concerning voluntourism in a coloured neighbourhood in Cape Town, suggests that VT can be a positive experience for both volunteers and the local community and observes that the contact between international (white) volunteers and the coloured/black population is favourable because it helps break down myths the local people have of whites in general. Also Rogerson & Slater (2014) in a study on an orphanage in Johannesburg observed that international volunteers were of immense value to both the orphanage and the children. Their suggested finding was that the destination - in this case an unpopular volunteer tourist destination - attracts volunteers who are more dedicated. Most recently, the Dutch foundation Volunteer Correct undertook extensive research on voluntourism practices in Cape Town in February 2015.

Research undertaken in Kayamandi

Much research has been undertaken in Kayamandi by Stellenbosch University lecturers and students. The report *Community needs assessment and asset mapping profile of Kayamandi* (Du Plessis et al 2012) identifies and lists the community members' resources, needs, and challenges - as perceived and identified by community members themselves. Le Roux & Costandius (2013) critically assess a project undertaken by volunteers and Costandius et al (2014) look closely at the University's community interaction programmes between (predominantly white) students and the black residents of Kayamandi. Petzer's (2015) study on the complexities of attaining sustainable development in Kayamandi, provides useful information on current issues. A report from Withley (2011) reflects the author's experience and challenges as an international student volunteer, working in close collaboration with members of staff at the NGO Vision Afrika.

Social exchange theory (SET)

Despite the steadily growing volume of research on volunteer tourism, there is a lack of a general cohesive theoretical framework underpinning the various debates in this field. A range of theoretical perspectives have been applied to VT in the past including neo-colonialism (Palacios 2010), social movement theory (McGhee and Santos 2005), development theory (Simpson 2004, Holmberg 2014), grounded theory (Nelson 2012) and equity theory (Burrai et al 2015).

Within tourism research, social exchange theory (SET) is one of the most widely utilised as theoretical foundation to better understand residents' perception of, and support for, tourism. It provides a suitable framework for a study whereby the host

community stands central (McGhee & Andereck 2009). John Ap (1992) was one of the first researchers to use this perspective. The advantage of social exchange theory is that it can provide clarification of how the structure of rewards and costs in a relationship affect perceptions of the interaction (Molm 1991) and can scrutinise relationships at the individual or societal level. In support of SET, several studies have shown that a positive relationship exists between perceived benefits and support for tourism (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon 2011). McGhee and Andereck (2009:39) applied social exchange theory to study residents' perception of VT and found that perceptions are determined by the positive/negative economic gain of being involved in the industry.

Social exchange theory (SET) has its origins in the works of Homans (1961), Blau (1967) and Emerson (1972). The premise of this theory is that people are motivated to establish and continue relations because they expect that the relationship will be beneficial for them; that they will profit from the social interaction without incurring unacceptable costs (Blau 1967). According to Blau (1967) people are reward-seeking creatures: trying to gain the most at the least cost. The rewards can be economic (goods, money), social (status, approval) or psychological (happiness, self-esteem) in nature. The driving force behind the exchange process is, in Ap's view (1992:671), the satisfaction of the actors' needs. Without a need, there would be no motivation to initiate an exchange with another party.

Blau (1967) argues that economic motives activate social interaction and thereby his image of social exchange is closely tied to economic exchange:

In economic transactions the exact obligations of both parties are simultaneously agreed upon[...]. In social exchange, by contrast, one party supplies benefits to another, although there is a general expectation of reciprocation, the exact nature of the return is left unspecified. (1967:454).

Economic exchange is therefore less ambiguous, shorter term, "quid pro quo, and involves weaker interpersonal attachments" (Mitchell et al 2012:101). The conditions of economic exchange are pre-arranged whereas social exchange is reliant on trust and reciprocity, with the return being unspecified. Therefore the evaluation of the benefits and costs are based on the individual's 'perception' (Kayat 2002:174) and not necessarily the reality. And as long as the individual perceives more benefits than costs, he/she will be in favour of tourism.

Mass tourism does not expect social ties to develop between host community and tourist and the nature of the encounter is thus more inclined to be an "economic exchange" (Uriely & Reichel 2000). Voluntourism however promotes, and relies on, personal relations between host and volunteer with an expectation of extended reciprocal relationships. Yet what the host community gains from the exchange will not necessarily match what the volunteers gain (and vice versa) in the units of exchange that are important to each of the actors. The unbalanced exchange may create tension and conflict, and hinder friendly relationships between actors (Ap, 1992:677). When an individual perceives unequal exchanges, they will try to restore the balance by reducing the costs and increasing the benefits, either materially or symbolically (Burrai et al 2014).

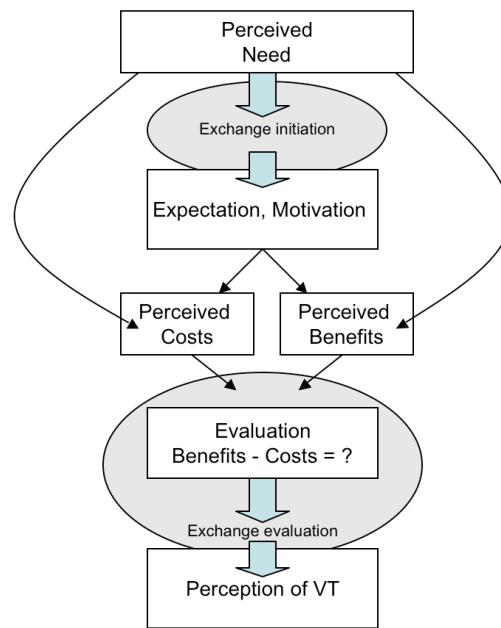


Figure 1: Conceptual framework as a model for perceptions of VT

Conceptualising power and trust

A critical variable in any exchange is power (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon 2011). Using Foucault's theoretical lens, power is seen as a relational construct and existing in all social relations (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon 2011), used not in the context of authoritarian rule but instead as a means to attain mutual benefits (Ap 1992). In an exchange situation, Ap (in Kayat 2002) argues for the inclusion of power in the study of residents' perception because power influences residents' willingness to exchange and determines the exchange partner's ability to take advantage of the outcome of the exchange. An actor with power is one who has a range of valued resources that the other actor needs for example money, language skills, job position, education and property (ibid.).

Reciprocity is based on trust between the actors and implies an equitable exchange (Blau 1964). Thus trust is also recognised as a key variable in SET as benefits in a social exchange are not based on a calculated basis but rather on a moral obligation, and are unspecified (Blau, Homans in Nunkoo & Ramkissoon 2011). Inequalities in power also make it difficult to achieve trust (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon 2011:1005). Moreover, when the exchange of resources is unbalanced, the disadvantaged host community may feel (or be) exploited yet the host community may persist in the relationship and thus be inclined to be more dependent on and committed to the exchange relation (Ap 1992:683; Kayat 2002).

Unbalanced relationships are bound to lead to friction between donors and recipients. The host community who has limited resources (i.e. "powerless") might engage in an exchange with voluntourists as they perceive it as a beneficial engagement and not necessarily because they want to (Kayat 2002). The theory posits that their desire and need to improve their situation is such that they would under-estimate the costs and overstate the benefits (Latkova & Vogt 2012).

This paper will consider these varying viewpoints with particular interest to what the perceptions are of the host community and how these perceptions are influenced.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The overarching goal of this paper is to gain better insight into the perceptions and lived experiences of a host community towards volunteer tourists. This chapter will set out the strategic approach I adopted to achieve this goal. It includes an explanation of the methods used and their limitations; the sampling strategy; issues of positionality and reflexivity; challenges and ethics encountered during the research process.

Research strategy

This research opts for qualitative methods as they are useful in attaining an in-depth understanding of how “human beings make sense of their subjective reality and attach meaning to it” (Merriam 2002:7). Since the main and sub-research questions deal with issues of ‘perception’ and ‘needs’ which are concerned with intercultural issues, deeply social and situated processes, qualitative research methods are deemed more appropriate than quantitative research methods. A qualitative approach enables understanding of what local people do (practice) and what they say (meaning) within the context in which they are situated; it allows for a wealth and intensity of detail that quantitative methods do not do (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007: 4).

The research is based on investigating subjective experiences and to that end, my research paradigm is social constructivism. It is based on the premises that there is not one objective truth, but rather multiple socially constructed realities (Coll & Chapman in Voelkl 2012). As Cerwonka and Malkii (2007:37) put it, “we only understand from a point of view that reflects our social, cultural, historical, affective location”. This study therefore aims to make theoretical and conceptual contributions towards a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. As researcher, I feel it is imperative to recognise that I carry with me the “baggage of Western thought” (McGhee & Zahra 2013) and that my socio-historical position and background assumptions unmistakably affect the research (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). To provide the reader with the broader context in which the research is taking place, I describe my positionality later on in this chapter.

Research design

A case study approach was deemed appropriate for this research as it focuses on a contemporary phenomenon; it is mostly exploratory in nature; and addresses “how” and “why” questions (Yin in Ezra 2013:38). I chose as a case study site a township in South Africa, Kayamandi. The township is a popular destination for VT, and is located adjacent to the picturesque and prosperous university town of Stellenbosch in the beautiful Cape Winelands.

Kayamandi is mostly – but not entirely – an informal settlement; it is relatively small with a total area surface of about 1.5km². Population estimates range between 50 000 – 70 000; residents are mostly black and Xhosa speaking. Despite its proximity to an abundance of financial and human capital, the highly transient population of Kayamandi is still suffering from the social injustices and socio-economic inequalities of the past. Approximately 75% of Kayamandi residents reside in informal housing (i.e. shacks) without formal access to municipal services such as water and electricity (Fuchs in Albien 2013). Unemployment rate is estimated at 62% (ibid.). High rates of crime, HIV/AIDS, poverty and malnutrition exist with limited infrastructure and ac-

cess to clinics. A stone's throw away, is a university town educating privileged students to become the leaders of tomorrow. The inequality is glaring; and the animosity from Kayamandi residents towards Stellenbosch omnipresent.

This study takes an in-depth look at a small group of local actors who are regularly exposed to VT and are living and/or working in the township:

- **non-governmental organisations (NGOs)** function as host organisations or facilitator for volunteers and sending organisations, connecting volunteers with projects within the township and offering some assurance that these are ethical and community-based. They are run and managed by (usually) white **NGO directors** who live outside the township; and **NGO members of staff** who are usually black and residents of the township. The NGOs' main tasks are to provide assistance and services to the community through social work, education, health, sports and culture; promoting sustainable, people-centred development, at grass-root level. Many of the NGOs are connected to religious institutions, with some being overtly Christian. Foreign funding accounts for more than 50% of their income.
- **crèche principals and teachers** manage and run day care centres (crèches) for toddlers and pre-school children. Of the circa 30 crèches in Kayamandi, most are overcrowded, unregistered and do not receive government funding. They make do with basic/inadequate facilities, and mostly untrained teachers. NGOs provide crèches with financial assistance and/or help with the training of the staff. Volunteer tourists regularly provide services at these crèches via sending organisations (SOs) or the local NGOs.
- 13 official homestays run by **homestay mothers (HMs)** provide accommodation - with wifi and first world living standards - to (volunteer) tourists in their private homes.
- **local tour guides** live in Kayamandi and double as local co-ordinators for SOs.

The term **local actors** will refer to the participants and beneficiaries (both community and institutional) as described above and who are directly involved in VT activities.

Additional Actors:

Host community: inhabitants of the destination; the visited community. In this paper, it refers to the collective group of people living in Kayamandi. This term will be used interchangeably with "local residents".

Volunteer sending organisation (VSO): includes for-profit organisations, NGOs, universities, religious organisations and governments and may be located within the host country (within or outside the community) or in the sending country (Guttentag 2009). In this study, the local sending organisations (LSOs) are for-profit organisations located in Cape Town, South Africa. They work in collaboration with the NGOs or at times directly with the community beneficiaries.

Volunteer tourist: a person who combines international travelling (or studying) with organised volunteering activities in a community and pays to work. This term will be used interchangeably with volunteers. There are various types of international volunteer tourists working in Kayamandi including: university exchange students; volunteers who pay VSOs or contact NGOs directly; (potential) donors and sponsors.

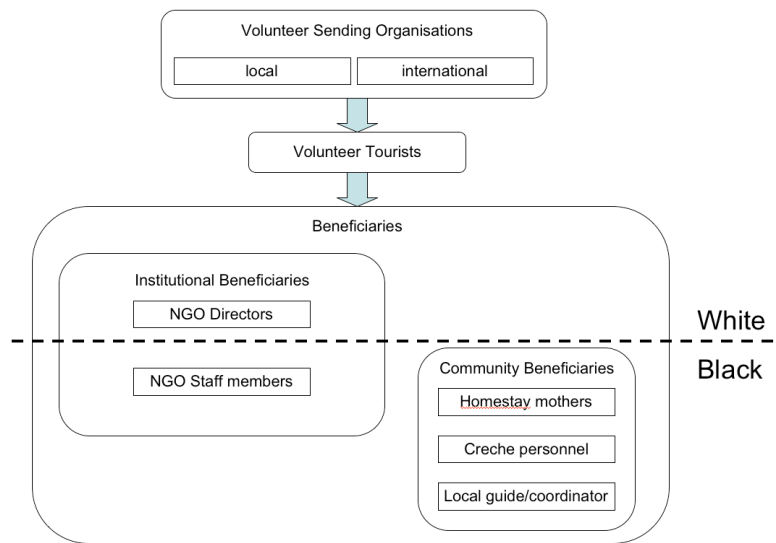


Figure 2: Principal actors and race

Key terms

- **Benefits:** a reward gained; can be economic, social or psychological in character.
- **Contribution:** something given to help a person, community or organisation; includes tangible and intangible goods including time.
- **Costs:** an expenditure (economic, social or psychological in character and includes time) made in order to achieve or get something.
- **Expectations:** a belief or hope that something will happen.
- **Motivation:** the reason to act or do something; driven by a need.
- **Need:** something that is wanted, or seen as necessary to have; can be real or perceived.
- **Perception:** the way in which one interprets something.
- **Race:** Any distinctions that are made between white and black people. Although race is socially constructed and a superficial classification of diverse ethnic and cultural groups in South Africa, it remains relevant “in part because these categories have become the basis for post-apartheid redress, in part because they retain cultural meaning in every-day life” (Seeking in Costandius et al 2014).

Research methods and data collection

For this research, the focus was on primary data. A combination of methods including participant observation, semi-structured interviews and informal conversation was used to put “the whole situation into perspective” (Smith 2012:64). This produces not only a diverse set of data but also helps to triangulate and cross-check data (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007).

Participant observation

Participant observation allows for the opportunity to observe from the inside; in this case in the role as a volunteer. In May 2015, I attended a pre-departure training session for volunteers in Amsterdam in preparation of their upcoming volunteering

trips. This in order to gain insight into volunteers' expectations and motivations for undertaking volunteering trips and to understand how SOs are promoting appropriate attitudes and behaviour. Later, the role I took on as volunteer in Kayamandi gave me the opportunity to observe community-volunteer interactions first-hand. This approach was particularly helpful as the daily activities and living conditions in black township residential areas are usually off the radar of white people. For example, staying over at a homestay gave me access into the daily lives (and worries) of the residents. Most importantly, it allowed me to establish relationships of trust. With unequal power relations prevalent between the poor black residents and white people/researchers such as myself, trust was never a given. As Rose (1997) correctly observes, through participant observation I could give away some of that power.

Whether it was helping in the kitchen preparing sandwiches, or assisting a high-school learner with his music homework; these were all valuable moments which gave me access to conversations I would not otherwise have had. On the first day of my arrival, I was introduced to the teachers and staff (25 total) as a researcher. Initially I felt awkward and feared that the introduction might hinder me taking on the role of volunteer and blend in within the organisation. But it did not. And with hindsight, I felt it was appropriate that there was 100% transparency regarding my role. I occupied this double role of volunteer and researcher for the first 2 weeks in the field.

I stayed in close proximity to the township, which allowed me to spend most of the days (three weeks) in and around the community and partake in daily activities, as well as staying two nights at a homestay within the township.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews provide the researcher with a format for collecting data while allowing for flexibility to adapt questions during the course of the interview; ranging from impromptu, informal conversations to more formally arranged meetings (ibid.). An outlined set of questions guided me through the interviews.

As with participant observation, the context in which the interviews were taken often determined the type of information I gained. Emerson (1995:117) describes interviewees' stories as "always partial, being told for many different reasons and adjusted to fit different relationships and situations". I tried to avoid formal interview settings and would instead have conversations while helping with chores at the NGO, or chat to a homestay mother after dinner at her house. Nevertheless, whether the conversations were informal or not, talking to people within their work surroundings remained constrained, in particular for crèche personnel. As I had a car, I would frequently drive NGO staff to and from Stellenbosch, giving me better opportunities to talk to them in a more relaxed situation.

Only five of the interviews were recorded. Building trust was already an issue and I felt that a recorder would seem too threatening. I therefore reverted to taking notes during or after the interviews, depending on the situation.

Sampling techniques

This study focuses on a small *n*-sample ($n=30$). The choice of stakeholders was dictated by accessibility and as a means to undertake an exploratory study; it therefore does not claim to be representative.

Purposive sampling and sampling for range:

I targeted people who are regularly exposed to volunteers (recent or on-going). As my sample was small, I wanted to maximise the sample range as to ensure that respondents with different levels of interaction with volunteers were included (Weis

1994). In order to achieve significant variation in my sample, I focused on five stakeholders with different socio-economic roles in VT:

- 1) crèche personnel, 2) a local guide, 3) homestay mothers (community beneficiaries)
- 4) NGO members of staff and 5) NGO directors (institutional beneficiaries).

As these stakeholders regularly interact with volunteers, they mostly spoke a good level of English. Problematic to this approach is that it has an “inbuilt and unaccounted for bias” (Small 2009:12) as I included only respondents who had time available, were prepared to interact with me and were willing to share their knowledge with me.

Convenience/Snowball sampling:

Snowball sampling is a convenient way of contacting respondents by asking them to recommend others (Weiss 1994). The advantage lies in the fact that people are more receptive and trusting if the contact is based on a personal referral (Small 2009).

Instrumental to this study was a senior lecturer at Stellenbosch University who has critically researched community engagement projects between the University and the township. On her recommendation, I contacted a local guide who works and lives in Kayamandi. He was an essential figure who put me in touch with homestay mothers, volunteers and the director of a LSO.

A disadvantage of snowball sampling, many argue, is that the interviewees are likely to know one another and thus the sample could possibly be “more biased” (Small 2009:14). In addition, some people are excluded because they do not share the same social network from which the snowball starts. Thus I made an effort to seek out initial informants from different social networks to ensure that my sampling is more representative of the township residents. On one occasion I made a *faux pas* in that I directly approached a crèche teacher on recommendation of an NGO employee, yet had bypassed the crèche principal. It led to a very awkward and less than useful conversation, and was a reminder to myself that snowball methods do not override existing hierarchies.

Positionality and reflexivity

Recognising positionality within the research is important because it obliges us to acknowledge our own power and privileges. I am a white South African and am acutely aware of my white skin colour and privileged upbringing. I grew up in South Africa during the 70s and 80s – the height of Apartheid - and profited, albeit inadvertently, from Apartheid. A black or coloured person my age would not have had access to the same educational system as I. Complicating things further, I have lived in Europe now for almost 20 years, making me feel like a stranger in my own home country. This problematic positionality was reinforced during an interview with a local tour guide, two weeks into my fieldwork. The guide preferred to give me a tour so we walked through the different residential areas in the township.

We are walking past shanty shacks, when I hear a loud and harsh female’s voice calling out from one of the shacks “Mlungu” – that is, white person. The woman personally knows the tour guide. At the tour guide’s suggestion, I tell her in Xhosa that my name is not Mlungu but Maria. She looks nonplussed. She interrogates me and wants to know where I am from and how come I speak Xhosa? I reply that I come from Stellenbosch and that I learned it at school. Her filthy look shows her disapproval. Knowing that the residents of the township have a strong dislike of the white rich Stellenbosch residents, I try to circumvent the awkward situation and explain that I am in fact living in The Netherlands and doing research. The answer pleases her even less. Was it because I said that I

am a researcher and researchers are not necessarily welcome in this township? Or was it the fact that I live in Europe? But then she answers with a disgusted tone: “so you had to go to The Netherlands in order for you to come to Kayamandi”. I have no answer to that. I feel numb, ashamed and utterly vulnerable. (An excerpt from my notebook.)

How can I feel proud and white in this country? Vice (2010:326) writes that feelings of guilt are difficult to avoid as “one is – even if unavoidably – a continuing product of white privilege and benefiting from it” and that “feeling uncomfortable is an ineradicable part” in the lives of conscientious white South Africans. Acknowledging one’s whiteness, according to Alcoff, is to “acknowledge that one is inherently tied to structures of domination and oppression, that one is irrevocably on the wrong side” within the South African context (Alcoff in Vice 2010:326). From the moment I drove into the township with a car, I positioned myself as a privileged person. And together with my skin colour, I immediately fulfil an “irreconcilable position of difference” for the majority of people living in the township (Sultana 2007:378). Yet, with critical reflection, Alcoff argues (1998:13), whites’ confidence can be enhanced in their own agency, counteracting fatalism.

This uncomfortable positionality does not mean that undertaking research in this context is impossible. Instead it obliges me to “conduct good research based on building relations of mutual respect and recognition” (Peake and Trotz in Sultana 2007:376). Reflexivity in research demands a “reflection on self [...], on how one is inserted in grids of power relations [and] how one relates to research participants [...]” (Sultana 2007:376). Through self-reflexivity and self-awareness, in other words a “research sensibility”, I have the opportunity to reduce my authority and power (Ceronka and Malkii 2007:30). By being aware of possible underlying feelings of guilt - which could itself be a way of retaining superiority (Costandius et al 2014) - I was constantly aware how I could be unconsciously framing my understanding.

My basic Xhosa skills were definitely an asset and often helped to bring down barriers with the residents and children alike. The smiles and laughter that my rusty Xhosa infused, was proof that language really matters. And my ability to converse in Dutch and German seemed to bridge the age gap between the 20-something old international volunteers and myself. My age, 40 plus, and work experience was at times advantageous as it helped me to gain trust with directors of NGOs and older members of the township. All in all, having grown up in South Africa, gave me a perspective and context that a foreigner would not have.

Challenges, limitations and ethical considerations

Gathering information for my fieldwork turned out to be a challenge in many foreseen, and unforeseen ways. From the outset, I was aware that undertaking this research would call for careful planning. In particular when interviewing people, the task of building rapport was a challenge in the view of my short stay (Hammersely & Atkinson 2007). What I did not foresee was that local residents would be constantly under time constraints themselves, often rushing off to the next commitment with little time to spare for interviews. I therefore often had to keep the conversations short, spontaneous, and if possible, pick it up at a later stage. I had also underestimated the fact that due to their marginalised position in society, they are not used to being asked their opinion, and do not question the presence of volunteers.

Similar to Voelkl’s (2012) experience in Ghana, power relations, financial interdependence and lack of trust were unquestionably instrumental in the responses I received; therefore the validity of the responses is uncertain. The fear that any negative statement might have direct or indirect financial implications for the interviewee, seemed omnipresent. Why would they trust a white person with information that

might in any way be disadvantageous for them? For example, a homestay mother was very cautious to reveal any information to me, as she did not understand why I would be interested in knowing how she perceived volunteers. I believe her short and only positive responses were due to her fears that she could lose customers in the future.

I was aware of the thin line I was walking between establishing trust and remaining the “other”. In an attempt to overcome the issue of trust, I brought in a black student researcher/interpreter to facilitate the interviews. I had hoped that he, as a black person and speaking Xhosa, could help create trust between the residents and myself. But this did not resolve the problem. Firstly, it became evident that our presence as two researchers was intimidating for the interviewee and caused more confusion than help. Secondly, after two days he told me that he felt the community beneficiaries’ vulnerability was so poignant, that he was uncomfortable doing the interviews. For he understood their fears that by writing up their feelings and opinions about volunteers, it might possibly be financially detrimental to them.

Without trust, I realised that the information I would have access to, would stay limited. In my attempt to build up trust, I made myself more visible within the township by: eating regularly lunch at a township snack bar where I could have informal conversations with residents; attending a social gathering organised by a local managed NGO; staying overnight at a homestay; frequenting the same crèches; driving NGO employees to or from town if they needed to do errands in Stellenbosch; helping with mundane tasks at the NGO. By the end of my fieldwork I felt that by looking at the responses I received, I had made significant progress. This does not take away that on numerous occasions certain interviewees remained relatively distant and calculating in their responses.

An ethical dilemma I faced and which I had not anticipated was that I, as a researcher, would be perceived as extracting and exploiting Kayamandi residents instead of helping. Although this was not my intention, it became clear early on in my fieldwork that a research fatigue prevails with a certain sense of animosity towards researchers. A common accusation was that Stellenbosch University has used Kayamandi as a test tube for more than 20 years and that it has not been beneficial for the residents. In a resident’s words:

We get extracted and extracted and eventually somebody goes and has a nice job through the information...and actually I’m the paper you are writing but what’s then there for me, or what is there for the community? What are we going to benefit from the paper you wrote? Absolutely nothing.

I could not claim that my research and short stay would be any different. I thus made every attempt to make the purpose of my research clear to my respondents and that my study would not necessarily benefit them, in order to not to raise any false hopes.

Pseudonyms, privacy and confidentiality

The names of all the respondents and LSOs have been changed in order to ensure confidentiality. To facilitate the analysis, I adopt the method that Burrai et al (2015) use in their study; that is, a D as the first letter for NGO directors’ names, M for members of NGO staff, G for the guide, and V for volunteers. Crèche personnel and homestay mothers are not referred to individually.

Furthermore, I assured the people I interviewed that all information would be treated confidentially and that they had the right to refuse to answer any question they did not want to respond to.

Chapter 4 Findings

The focus of this paper is on the receiving community and their perceptions of the contributions of volunteers. However, before I present the findings from the local actors' perspective, I introduce this section with brief inputs (e-mail correspondence and interviews) from a director of a LSO, three volunteers, and a sponsor family who are, or recently have been, involved in VT-related activities in Kayamandi. Understanding their intentions and perceptions of their contribution allow us to see how these overlap with, or are contradictory to, the perceptions of the local actors. In particular as VT is promoted as being mutually beneficial for volunteer tourists and host community, it is useful to include the voice of the 'givers' in the discussion and compare their perceptions with that of the host community.

Background

The local sending organisation's perspective

For the LSO the challenge was to make everyone happy. The director of We-Afrika, a South African for-profit organisation, is fully aware of the negative publicity VT has received and explains that her company does not function "on those principals". Her organisation only accepts volunteers through international sending organisations so that they know the volunteers are "here for the right reason and not just to party". The challenge is to make sure volunteer tourists do not waste their time and that they feel that they are making a difference. She admits that matching the volunteers' skills with the needs of the receiving organisation is not always successful.

We don't always get it right but we aim that both beneficiaries and volunteers are happy. I want to make a positive difference.[...]Experiential learning should be a key component of the volunteer's experience.[...]When volunteers leave, they often tell me that it has changed their lives.

The volunteer tourists and sponsor's perspective

Dutch volunteer, Vroukje (ca. 20 years old), 4 months internship in crèche facilitated by NGO; did not stay overnight in the township:

I saw the possibility of making a lot of changes and improvements at the crèche and could do what I wanted to do. I taught the teachers how to teach numbers and tell stories. I gave the children much needed attention that others didn't give[...]The NGO facilitator requested that I take more distance from the children but that was difficult[...]The children would scream of excitement when I arrived in the mornings[...]I learned about different cultures and they learned that about us too.

Spanish volunteer, Valencia (ca. 30 years old), 3 weeks at a crèche through LSO; stayed in a homestay:

The best thing was working with kids, and see how they and the teachers started to open their hearts to us. I think that the first week the teachers didn't trust in us, and kids saw us like strangers or tourist.[...]the first week the children was opening our jackets and pockets looking for something, asking us about our watch, and bracelets[...]Sometimes I receive whatsapp message from one of the teachers to say hello, it is great!...The best thing was that at the beginning we were like simple tourist for them ("like dollars with

legs”); the second week they changed their behavior, and after 3 weeks they felt that we are one member more of their community.

Dutch volunteer, Vera (ca. 20 years old), 4 weeks in Ikaya Primary School through LSO; stayed in a homestay:

The children loved me at the school. What I didn't like was to see how disinterested the teachers were; they would often leave me alone with the class of 50 learners. Because of the language barrier I couldn't do much else but play with them. I had little contact with the Kayamandi residents. I socialised with young people in Stellenbosch. As I'm disappointed in this experience, I would not do something similar again.

American sponsors, 3 members of Vickerson family, 1 week volunteering work at NGO; did not stay overnight in the township:

It's the Lord that fuels me and makes me sit 16 hours in a plane to come and paint a room in Kayamandi.[...]We call it a mission trip.[...]The best part is to play with the children and feel part of the community.[...]This is real poor that we and our children have to see to know how good we have it.

Overall, benefits for international volunteers include: they feel they made a difference, were loved and appreciated, they could teach new skills, and had an intercultural “experiential learning” experience. Disappointments varied and included: not making a significant contribution, they were treated like tourists, and did not make contact with the Kayamandi residents. No volunteer however mentioned the costs that they have incurred for their trip nor does the sending organisation mention the financial benefits these voluntary acts have for the community. Instead the emphasis is on the socio-cultural benefits. In the following section we will see how this differs significantly from the beneficiaries' perspective.

Defining the volunteer tourist – from the receiver's perspective

From the host's perspective volunteer tourists includes tourists, exchange students, sponsors, donors, ‘white people’ or potential adoptive parents. At the NGO where I volunteered, for example, the term “volunteer” was used by local black trainees to refer to themselves: they were doing unpaid work in the child care centre, as an obligatory part of their teaching training programme. They were perplexed that I used the term volunteer to refer to the two international volunteers who had been working at the NGO for more than eight months; in their eyes they were only tourists.

Volunteers are also referred to by residents as sponsors:

[...]whites who come from other countries and sponsor those who are suffering.

In fact, volunteers who frequent a major NGO in Kayamandi usually are sponsors from the U.S.A. who come and volunteer for a week, paint a room, and play with the children to ‘feel connected’ to the children they are sponsoring.

In a community leader's view, volunteers present the possibility of adoption i.e. for children from Kayamandi to escape and ‘live to their full potential’ in another country. In his words,

When volunteers come and fall in love with children and adopt them; they [volunteers] see this young child who doesn't have opportunities but has potential, they know that when they take him across the border he can be something else.

In relation to the issue of “whiteness”, I experienced first-hand that volunteer tourists were being called Mlungu [white person] and not by their names. The term

carries with it a derogative connotation: someone who has money and material belongings which blacks in general do not have; yet at the same time it is something they aspire to. Volunteer tourists are perceived as rich, powerful and privileged and are assumed to be linked to the white managed NGOs and sending organisations. Volunteers can afford the luxury of volunteering and travelling which blacks cannot; consequently perpetuating the deep-rooted perceptions of what it means to be white/black, superior/inferior. This is reflected in the words of two black youths:

Children enjoy the company of volunteers because they are white[...]if I walk outside or interact with a white person, I'm good[...]white people are the best. We don't question it[...]Our mentality is limited.

These observations on racial ethnicity tie in with Nelson (2012) and Swan's (2012) comments that volunteers were seen as first and foremost whites, and not tourists, volunteers, students or NGO workers.

The needs, motivations and expectations of local actors

In this section the findings related to the needs, motivations and expectations of the local actors in relation to the volunteer tourist are discussed. The premise is that the satisfaction of an actor's need is the driving force behind the social exchange process (Ap 1992:671). With no need to improve one's situation economically, socially or psychologically, according to SET, there would be no exchange. The need, in turn, determines local actors' motivations and expectations of the exchange.

Needs

The manner in which needs are conceptualised differ across the socio-economic groups and according to their individual roles.

Crèche personnel are the most straightforward in expressing their dependency on VT to satisfy their need for financial and material gain. For the crèches, for example, the need is less for helping or learning new teaching skills; it is really for the tangible, economic benefits that volunteers bring such as mattresses, books, toys and money. The crèche principals were eager for me to understand the desperation of their situations and the dire need and importance of volunteers to make donations – sometimes giving the impression of neediness as Sin (2010) also observes. They point to a sense of “powerlessness” by having to be submissive about accepting volunteers: ‘anything is better than nothing’.

Meanwhile the **homestay mothers** and **local guide** are not solely dependent on the income generated through VT, but they still need the income. As Guydo comments, “I need the money because I have a family to feed”.

Members of staff focused on practical matters: the need for physical help. Projects often cannot afford to employ enough people, leaving staff members feeling overstretched. Therefore the need for volunteers was frequently mentioned in terms of physical ‘support’ (Burrai et al 2015:454). For example, Miriam commented that a volunteer would assist with laminating posters, or help in the kitchen making sandwiches, thereby contributing to reducing staff members' workload.

Staff members deliberately underplay the need for skilled (teaching) help from volunteers. In this respect, staff felt that they are equally skilled (even if they were not equally educated) as volunteers. Michael for example shows his indignation,

Even if they are 3rd year [university] students – they know nothing...It is fine to have them around and help us with the children's homework but we don't need them. They need us more than we need them.

NGO directors are concerned with larger issues at hand. Their needs are explained as “collective social necessities” (Burrai et al 2015). Some of their major concerns are: the lack of government funding, malnutrition, poor educational systems, the high school drop-out rates, and the lack of perspective and role models for children. When I asked directors to tell me whether they need the help of international volunteers, a respondent replied,

We can always get access to local volunteers through the church. In any case, South African volunteers would be more helpful to solve the South African problem [...] Better than international volunteers that come in and come and look and say ‘shame’ and not understanding anything.

Their need can also be related to money. One of the biggest - and most overtly religious – NGOs, focuses on attracting sponsors for vulnerable and orphaned children, with over 200 children currently being sponsored. They do not need volunteers but offer volunteering opportunities to attract (potential) sponsors.

Motivations and expectations

Motivations and expectations vary between individuals and across different socio-economic groups as they are driven by different initial needs:

When I asked **crèche personnel** what they expect from volunteers, the standard response was that volunteers help by playing with the children, teaching English, feeding the children, and giving teachers “time to rest”. Yet the principals were quick to add that volunteers present an opportunity of material gain otherwise unavailable to them. As a crèche principal mentions:

Sometimes they give us things like mattresses, sometimes nothing. We can't ask for anything, we are just happy when we get something.

Sending organisations often – although not always – provide the volunteer, as part of the package deal, with a small amount of money to purchase, at the volunteer's discretion, something for the crèche where he/she is working. These token gifts usually include balloons, paper, stationary or paint for upgrading purposes. The general expectation is that volunteers will make these donations. Occasionally, volunteers make larger donations, e.g. mattresses or jungle gyms, which further increases the motivation and expectation crèche personnel have of volunteers.

Homestay mothers (HMs) are motivated to earn money and status through VT. For example, a HM was able to renovate her house after a volunteer stayed with her for three months - a visible change for the people in the community and something several respondents referred to during the interviews; thereby improving her house and increasing her status in the community. HMs also benefit from the cultural exchange they have with volunteers. There is a palpable pride when they recount how they teach volunteers about their culture, what ‘family’ means, and how to cook. The learning goes both ways: a HM comments “I have learned

to cook Spanish omelettes and now know how to cook something vegetarian”. HMs often say “I love my volunteers”: photos of past volunteers in their display cabinets are testimony of their experiences. They keep contact with past volunteers via Facebook and feel that their social network extends around the globe. Similar to McGhee and Zahra’s findings (2013:37), the intercultural experience brings social rewards: their self-esteem increases, they acquire more status and more power. And indeed, these friendly relationships can be financially profitable for HMs as illustrated by a former Swiss volunteer who set up his own sending organisation and now sends volunteers directly to the HM.

The local guide’s motivation and expectation of VT industry is that it gives him the possibility to expand his business. He prides himself of being an entrepreneur and tries to inspire the youth:

...not to be anti-white but rather to look at the possibilities of setting up businesses which no-one can take away; they should understand that volunteers are here to learn about our culture and life - and bring money.

But it is not only money that motivates him: he appreciates the fact that through cultural exchange he and his community are exposed to other cultures and as he points out, he has been to Germany himself as a result.

NGO staff members are motivated to accept the presence of volunteers because the volunteer’s help facilitates their work. Although the contribution, commitment and skills of volunteers are at times viewed sceptical and the expectations low, they do see the added advantage for certain tasks and having extra hands. Comments from staff:

They help us with looking up things on Internet, photocopying and printing.

A volunteer helped me write quarterly progress reports of my learners, which was very helpful.

A receptionist mentioned how a volunteer would release her every day for an hour from her duties allowing her to have a lunch break. And indeed, when the volunteer had left the organisation, the receptionist was again sitting behind her desk during her lunchtime hour – a task I happily took over during my fieldwork.

Apart from one **NGO director**, none said they gained economic benefits for accommodating volunteers in their organisation. Their motivation is based on the free help the volunteers provide. For directors the type and attitude of the volunteer is thus of essence. They expect volunteers to be hands-on, willing to participate in daily chores and - ideally - low maintenance.

We do not want volunteer tourists who only want to do the nice jobs and don’t want to wash the toilets or peel carrots.

Sponsorship is part and parcel of the NGO managed by Donathi. His organisation allows current and potential sponsors, or their family members, to volunteer at the NGO’s after school centre for “relationship building” purposes. The volunteers are usually religious believers and, according to Donathi, help the NGO’s mission to teach children the meaning of God. Religion and sponsorship go hand-in-hand at this NGO. The NGO’s choir undertakes an annual fundraising tour through the U.S.A. to attract new sponsors which is hosted by American churches.

To summarise: the needs, motivations and expectations of crèche personnel are mainly based around economic gain and receiving material goods; HMs and the guide are motivated by the economic and socio-cultural benefits such as earning more money and gaining social capital; and NGOs' are oriented towards the socio-economic benefits, i.e. the help volunteers provide and possible sponsorship.

Costs and benefits, inputs and outcomes

This section attempts to shed light on the social, economic and cultural benefits and costs of VT as perceived by the different local actors in comparison to the inputs and outcomes of volunteer tourists. As introduction and background, I will briefly explain the money matters and then proceed to discuss the perceived benefits and costs in more detail.

Money matters

Community beneficiaries are the most vocal about the material/financial benefits they gain from volunteers. What this amounts to in concrete, monetary terms, however, is rarely mentioned. There is no financial transparency whatsoever in the VSO industry. The following estimated figures are based on, and limited to, information I was able to access. (Currency rate of R13.50:EUR1 is used for the calculations.)

The following figures act as a frame of reference:

- Domestic workers' minimum wage in 2015: R2065 (EUR153)/month
- Crèche teacher/principal's wage: ca. R2200–R4000 (EUR163–300)/month
- Crèche fee per child: ca. R220 (EUR16)/month
- The basic food basket price in South Africa in July 2015: R2362 (EUR175)/month
- Mean household income R1050 (EUR75)/month

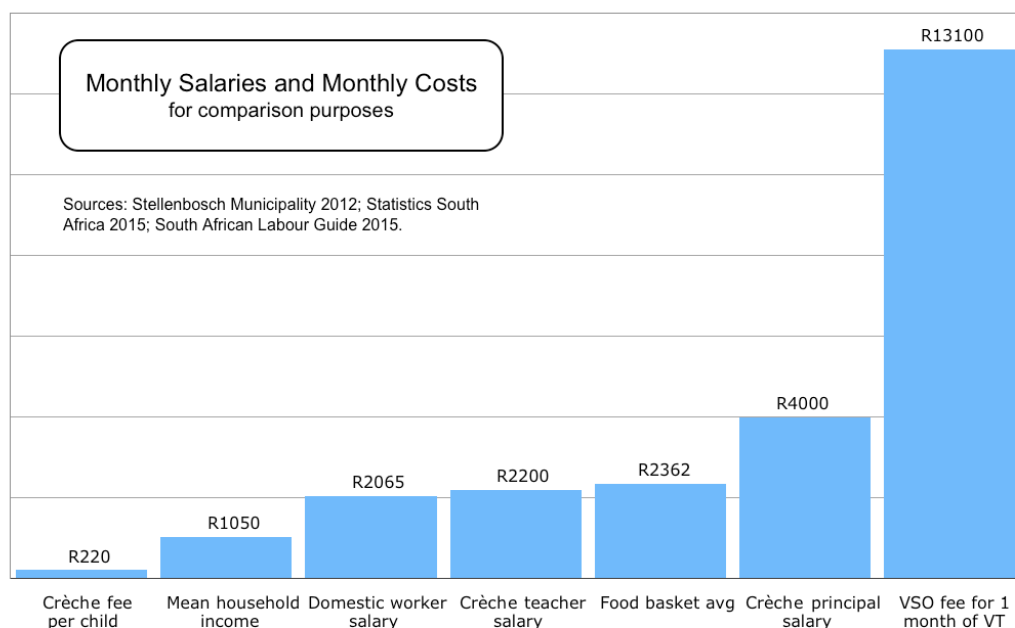


Figure 3: Comparison chart

Volunteers pay a sending organisation between EUR700-1200 (R10 000 - 16 200)/person for a 1-month stay depending on SO, including boarding, excluding flight and weekend excursions.

Homestay mothers receive amounts starting at R2700/month (EUR200) paid through LSO and depends on length of stay.

Crèches receive gifts valuing approximately R200/volunteer per month (EUR15). The LSO “allocates” this amount to the volunteer to buy gifts for the crèche. This can include toys, pencils, paint, and other token gifts. Sometimes volunteers are inclined to make *ad hoc* donations when they depart, which can range from mattresses to playground equipment.

Guydo is assigned local coordinator tasks for a group of volunteers and earns R2000 to manage seven people for one month (EUR150). For tours he earns R100(EUR7.50)/hour. His fees depend on his negotiation skills.

NGOs do not receive money from volunteers as part of their stay. If they have volunteered through an agency, there is little chance that the NGO will receive any money/donation afterwards. However, when volunteers have direct, longer-term and closer relationships with the NGO, the financial gain can be substantial. For example, a former Dutch volunteer raised nearly EUR50 000 (R675 000) between 2012-2014 for an NGO in Kayamandi, with the help of past volunteers. In addition, she now recruits and trains one or two Dutch volunteers annually to work at this NGO for a minimum stay of 3 months. The volunteers do not pay the NGO but the goal is that they will join the network of Dutch fundraisers on their return.

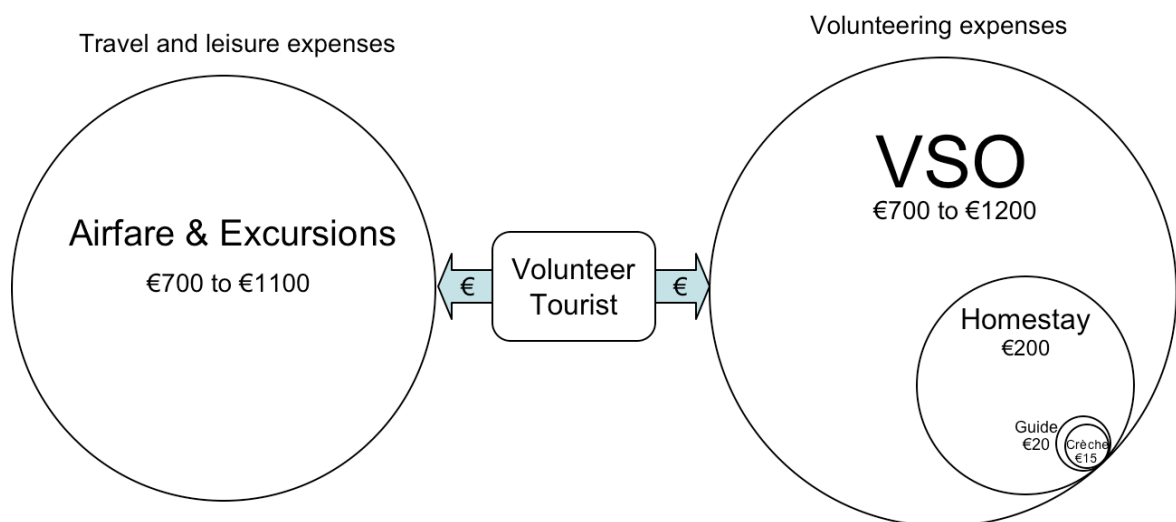


Figure 4: A proportional indication of money allocated by the volunteer tourist

All figures considered, the information reveals that in the best scenario, 25% of the total fee paid for volunteering flows into the local host community. This is based on volunteers making use of accommodation in the township. It should be noted, however, that many volunteers opt to stay in Stellenbosch, the neighbouring town, due to safety concerns; thereby drastically reducing the amount of money flowing into the township.

Perception of the benefits and costs

Crèche personnel generally expressed enthusiasm for VT: for them the perceived economic benefits outweigh the social costs, although with a critical undertone. They were reluctant to criticise VT for fear of losing the benefits from VT, that is money. Specifically the teachers adopt a passive response: they feel that they are in no position to be critical about the volunteer's presence in their crèches and often fear they will lose their jobs. They are instructed by the principals to "tolerate" them. As one of them explains,

I just tell the crèche mothers that they are exchange students; that they are coming to help them and give them a break. I don't use the word volunteer. They are not workers. I tell them they are just on holiday and come and experience.

Language, power and cultural differences are obstacles too: crèche teachers often do not speak English, feel inferior to the volunteers and perceive them as occupying a more privileged position than themselves. They comment,

They are always nice. We are the mamas for the volunteers...we don't understand (their) English.

The first day we don't feel right; but when time goes by you get used to them, but then they leave.

We can't tell them what to do.

Crèche principals feel they are in *no* position to tell the volunteers what they need.

I can't tell them what I need because I see in their faces that they don't like that.

They give us toys. Not because we ask for it. They decide. They never ask what I want [laughter].

I'll grab anything I get.

To illustrate, two Dutch volunteers donated a jungle gym (equalling nearly two months of a crèche teacher's salary) yet the principal of the crèche was not included in the decision making process and it was not something she really needed. Moreover, the same principal now complains about the plastic grass another group of volunteers have placed at the bottom of the slide: "it becomes a mud puddle when it rains" she says. Her response to this seemingly minor problem is that she will wait for the next group of volunteers to buy rubber mats – and in the process, she has become dependent on volunteers and has lost her sense of agency, as argued by Sin (2010).

Homestay mothers (HM) responded most positively to the presence of volunteers in the township. VT - in their view - did not bring any serious negative impacts to Kayamandi and they perceive volunteers as helping them change their socio-economic status. As a HM said: "I have nothing to complain about". In practice, however, the economic benefits can be substantially lower than initially expected. As a HM pointed out "...now everything is expensive, water and electricity is also expensive". Costs are important to the HM with volunteers not necessarily aware of how it affects their income "if they take a second helping of food" – thereby literally eating into their profit.

Concerning other social costs, HMs regularly complain about the time and attention the young volunteers require, especially if they are feeling homesick. The

HMs are themselves very busy, looking after their own families and usually running various side-businesses simultaneously. One HM mentioned that she prefers if volunteers came in groups because they then support each other. She does not wish to take on that role herself. It saves her time and restores a more balanced and business relationship between herself and the volunteer.

Guydo finds the volunteer's help disempowering: "it makes us lazy". He points at the piles of rubbish in the street which volunteers like to clean up; in fact neither the residents nor the local municipality are collecting the garbage. The "novelty effect" that volunteers could have (McGhee & Zahra 2013) in that they inspire locals to take action, has had no impact in Kayamandi. Instead, I sensed a general state of waiting: if not the volunteers, then the NGO, the government or somebody else will do it. The main cause, however, for Guydo's less than enthusiastic disposition is that he feels he ought to benefit, economically, more from VT. There is a distinct distrust from him towards the LSOs and he feels treated unfairly by them. Frequently his tasks are increased at no extra pay and he resents the fact that he cannot refuse the money because, as he says, "I have a family to feed". By means of internet and social media, he knows what voluntourists are paying LSOs and according to his calculations, he sometimes earns as little as 1/100 of the fee. His bitterness and unhappiness was further exacerbated one afternoon by the fact that he read on Facebook that the LSO director was "sipping champagne at the beach" with friends while he was "sweating away" in the township.

An interesting finding of this study is that internet and social media can play a significant role in determining perceptions of local residents. Local residents are far more informed than is assumed, and their access to information can influence their perceptions either positively (e.g. staying connected with former volunteers) or negatively (e.g. heightening and confirming their distrust of LSOs).

NGO staff members have mixed feelings about working with volunteer tourists: they benefit from the volunteer's help but distrust volunteers' intentions and short-term dedication thereby questioning the volunteers' altruistic motives. They feel that volunteers have ulterior motives for working in the township and that they do not share the same passion and commitment they as staff members have.

They need us more than we need them.

The type and quality of help they receive is also very much depended on the personality, skills and attitude of each volunteer.

Some are irreplaceable with their help and others just an irritation stuck to their mobile phones and Skyping home...Some are here just on holiday.

Moreover, they dislike the fact that newcomers often feel entitled to show them how to teach or interact with children.

They think they know everything but they know nothing...They don't understand how to work with our children because they don't know our culture or speak Xhosa.

In addition, friction can rise between staff and volunteers when they feel the volunteer's help undermines their own work; or feel not empowered enough to alert volunteers "going the wrong way". To exemplify, a director describes how volunteers - under the supervision of a black staff member - had made posters about 'Safe Sex' for 8 year-olds, containing sample condoms. The experienced staff member did not feel in a position to explain to the white volunteers that condoms

were inappropriate for such young children, and it was the director who vetoed the posters later. This kind of help reinforces the power structures in place of white/black, right/wrong, as Calkin (2014) observes.

Yet, when members of staff experience equal balance of power between themselves and volunteers – which does happen – it leads to appreciative cultural exchanges and even deep friendships. Maurice enthusiastically recalls how he took two volunteers to his family home in the Eastern Cape during a one-month holiday and is still regularly in contact with the volunteers via Facebook.

Many of the **NGO directors** I spoke to were less than enthusiastic about volunteers: they perceived the costs (in loss of valuable time and energy) outweighing the help and skills volunteers bring with them. In Darcey's view, the majority of volunteers are not committed or willing to work hard enough; the volunteer's experiential learning becomes the NGO director's headache.

We have only a 25% success rate with volunteers who put their heart and soul in it.[...]The young kids that come are utterly clueless. They have no idea what they're getting into [foreign culture, language barrier, safety issues, lack of public transport, cultural shock]. They wear short skirts, they get robbed and fall in love. And then they come and sit here and cry and feel homesick.[...]what a trial for me.

Volunteers sent by sponsors can be particularly awkward.

The relationship with sponsors was smooth until they sent volunteers to stay with us. We had no say on the standard of their work. Then they would Skype home and tell their parents what we do is wrong.

They used to make their programmes fit in with the volunteer's needs, but now they see how the volunteer can fit into their needs. As an NGO informant said:

We don't do anything we're not happy to do...We are now looking what we can get, not necessarily what children can get; we want to know what they [volunteers] can leave behind.[...]The better we match their expectation with our needs, the better results we'll have.

NGO directors do acknowledge and greatly appreciate volunteers that come with a specific and useful skill. An NGO informant recounts an exceptional and fruitful experience of two Belgian volunteers who came with music therapy and dance skills which "went beyond language". They brought drumming and dance lessons and the children loved it. They recorded songs with the children, and the resulting CD is still used in one of their projects. Another example mentioned is a volunteer who did a research on diabetes: for her project, she set up a gym class and tested the glucose levels of female participants before and after the trainings. Although she has left and completed her project, the gym still functions today and is run by a local resident.

The findings indicate that perceptions vary across and within the different socio-economic groups and are fairly complex as they continue to change and shape with everyday interactions. Yet, we can - broadly speaking - deduce that homestay mothers have developed the most positive perceptions of volunteer tourists. This is in line with Ap's (1992) proposition on SET and findings of McGhee & Andereck's (2009), in that the beneficiaries who perceive to personally benefit (financially) most from the exchange, are the most positively inclined. The least enthusiastic were the NGO directors who feel they gain little productive help and lose valuable time (economic costs). SET ties well in here as it posits that when an actor perceives the exchange as unbal-

anced, it leads to frustration. The same can be said for the guide who feels he earns too little (economic cost) and for staff members who feel undermined (psychological costs).

To make the exchange more profitable, NGOs are becoming more selective with which agencies they are working. Some are screening and filtering requests, implementing code of conduct policies, and thereby choosing the more “serious volunteers” with useful skills. An established and successful HM has succeeded at limiting economic costs and increasing the benefits by introducing house rules. As a volunteer grudgingly explains, she was requested not to drink milk other than use it in porridge; and also to use toilet paper sparingly. Guydo makes up for his perceived costs when he overcharges a group of volunteer tourists when they urgently need a taxi-ride and then “disappears” during the last two days of their stay in the township. Crèche personnel have fewer means to increase their benefits and resort to techniques of looking needy (Sin 2010), at times even hiding previous donations.

Chapter 5 Discussion and analysis

In this chapter, the findings will be discussed and analysed in more detail. I will refer back to my main research question (Chapter 1) and link it to literature on VT (Chapter 2). I will also reflect on SET and the influence of power, level of dependency, level of control, trust and reciprocity, as listed by Kayat (2002), and how it shapes perceptions. These factors play an important role in any exchange and are essential in understanding the *why* and the *how* of local actors' perceptions. The second part of the analysis will look into the effects of the volunteers' contribution on the host community.

Factors influencing local actors' perception

The findings indicate that the local actors perceive volunteer tourists differently depending on the expectations they have. An important finding is that the main target beneficiary of VT – the host community – perceives the volunteer mainly in economic terms. They perceive the volunteer in a positive light because volunteers offer the possibility for accessing money, donations or even sponsoring a child. This is in stark contrast to how volunteer tourists are defined in VT literature, and the VT industry in general. Non-monetary help is what the volunteer is supposed to give but money is what the community needs. Here lies a fundamental contention in the current set-up: the host community is more oriented towards the economic benefits of the encounter, i.e. “economic exchange” (Blau 1967), and the volunteer to the social and cultural exchange. The volunteer expects an extended reciprocal relationship, but there is little scope for the host community to reciprocate in the same units of exchange; neither is it in a unit of exchange important to them. The ambiguity and friction in the relationships are classic of situations in which economic and social exchange are mingled (Uriely & Reichel 2000).

Power and level of dependency clearly influence the local actors' perception of volunteers too. Kayat (2002:175) observes that the less access to resources local residents have (and the less power) the more dependent they become and more committed to the exchange. To exemplify, the low-income “powerless” crèche personnel are in favour of volunteers because they feel dependent on VT; their need compels them to be in favour of VT and not necessarily because they perceive the social exchange as fair or balanced. The danger lies in that locals may be in favour of gaining economic benefits at (nearly) any socio-economic or cultural cost. Their desire to improve their situation pushes them to underestimate the costs and overstate the benefits (Latkova & Vogt 2012). The monetary (or material) gain can even be minimal and unpredictable, and with negligible long-term impact (Vrasti 2013). From the findings, we saw that only a small percentage of the volunteer's fee actually flows into the community.

Values held by host community members also determine how the impact of VT is perceived (Jurowski et al 1997). Crèche teachers with low education skills themselves, see little need for children to be stimulated with educational activities by volunteers. They do not mention volunteers' teaching skills as important either and instead accept the discomfort of having volunteers, as long as there is a good possibility that they receive what they value most: a donation (Kayat 2002).

As for the level of control local actors have, and therefore means to maximise their benefits, it can be attested that more control leads to more positive perceptions (Burrai et al 2015). The NGO directors, for example, who are screening volunteers and selecting them according to their needs, are decidedly more positive than the

NGOs who leave much of the recruitment process in the hands of sending organisations due to lack of resources and/or lack of interest. By losing control over certain parts of the process, it inevitably leads to feelings of exploitation by the LSO and distrust towards the volunteers that they will not be committed. When the local coordinator, Guydo, cannot control his fee or the number of tasks he is assigned by the LSO, he displays negative and distrustful feelings towards the LSO and volunteers. Yet as vulnerable as the reach of his control seems, he does use his agency to develop strategies that maximises his benefits (see Findings). Another example is a successful HM who imposes house rules which gives her a sense of control on her financial costs. She treats the relationship as an economic transaction and limits her personal contact with the volunteers. As for crèche personnel, they use their agency in more subtle ways: they leave the premises and let the volunteers cope on their own with the children, assign volunteers tasks such as doing the dishes or as illustrated in the prologue, refuse to give approval when requested.

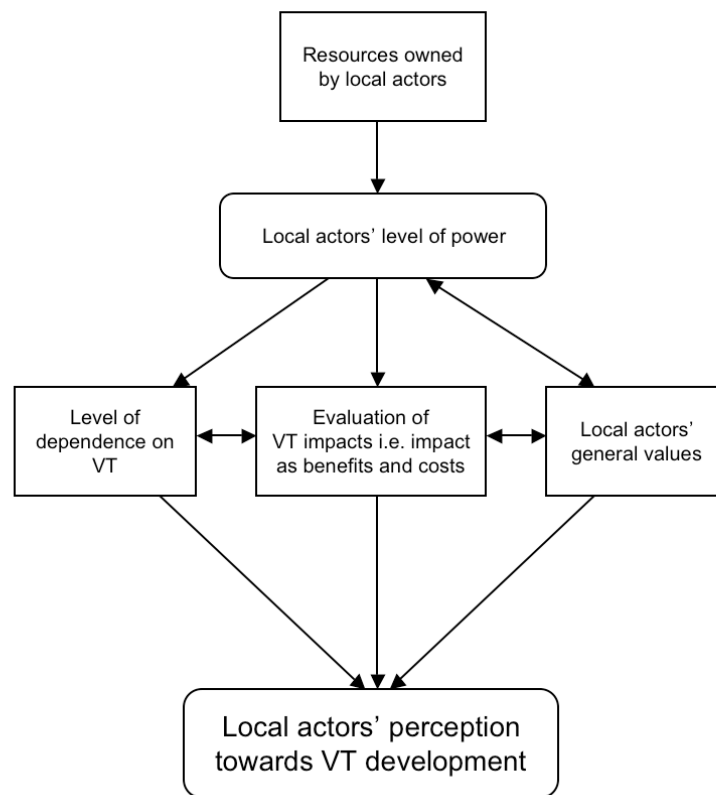


Figure 5: Interrelationships of variables that determine local actors' perceptions towards VT

Source: Adapted from Kayat (2002)

The more control actors have, the more trust there is between the giving and receiving partners, and the more positive the perception. Trust, together with reciprocity, is according to SET (Blau 1967) essential to any social exchange relationship. However, the interaction between the volunteers and host community occurs against a backdrop of an all-pervasive climate of distrust. On a structural level, racial distrust exists between black residents and the white management of NGOs. Residents accuse them of gaining financially on their backs:

The whites [NGO directors] don't stay here in the township so don't know what we need. They have their own agenda and pocket the money themselves.

The distrust and feeling of exploitation extends to the interaction between black and white local actors and the white-managed LSOs, with the volunteer tourist caught somewhere in between. To some degree, volunteer tourists can escape the animosity of black residents targeted at white South Africans. They gain trust because they stay in the townships and together with the perceived intimate help (social, economic and time) they provide, distinguishes them from the white population. However, with a critical foot note by a resident, who points out that:

Many people in the township still think everything that what a white person brings in the township is a positive thing. It is only few people that get to question the motive of that person.

All in all, volunteers remain (predominantly) white, and are assumed to be privileged. Moreover, the power inequalities complicate the forming of trusting relationships and reciprocal exchanges (Voelkl 2012; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon 2011).

The effects and perceptions of the volunteer's contributions

VT is said to be beneficial for host communities. For the following and last section of the analysis, I draw on Guttentag's (2015) writings and will briefly discuss - as observed from my findings - three benefits that VT claims to offer host communities that is: 1) work of the volunteer, 2) money generated, and 3) cultural exchanges.

Work of the volunteer

The impact of the volunteer's work is severely hindered by the volunteers' inability to speak the vernacular (in this case Xhosa), lack of skills, and the short duration of their stay as pointed out by Guttentag (2015). Volunteers who have made valuable contributions, according to the local actors, are those who have come with special skills (IT, film, dance, music) and/or who have stayed for at least 3 months at a time, yet these are in the minority. Long-term impact of volunteers' work is not mentioned by anyone other than one or two offhand remarks that children and residents speak better English, albeit in one respondents' view at the cost of their own cultural heritage. Moreover, the volunteer's work creates fear amongst crèche teachers in that they might replace them even though South Africa has clear policies that ought to prevent this from happening (Van den Brink 2014).

From the locals' perspective, work of the volunteer translates into the visible changes that volunteers have made e.g. painting of buildings and tree planting. These are popular activities for volunteers, which make them feel needed and justifies their inputs, as found also by Vodopivec & Jaffe (2011); by doing so, volunteers gain instant feelings of satisfaction. They like to mark their act of "making a difference" too by inscribing their names on the objects they paint or donate. Yet, as these acts include little or no involvement of the host community, I would agree with Sin (2010) that it tends to disempower and deprive the community of making a plan for themselves. For example, the crèche principal will wait for volunteers to fix a cupboard or paint a wall: it encourages the prevailing sense of hopelessness of the situation (Hammersley 2013) and undermines the notions of agency as described by Vrasti (2013).

The act of doing is also based on the volunteers' needs and not that of the community. The local residents in Kayamandi are barely involved in planning and preparing the VT activities, which McGhee (2014) points out is essential if VT wants to benefit the community. For example, when a group of volunteers arrived in Kayamandi with the goal of upgrading buildings, they ended up -unknowingly - painting a wall which had been painted only two weeks earlier by a different group of volunteers. Furthermore, these VT activities distract attention from the community's main concerns: lack of housing, access to water, electricity, shortage of clinics, drug addiction, education, teenage pregnancies and poverty (Du Plessis et al 2012).

Money generated

VT is said to have the potential to generate money for the host community, also in South Africa (Govender & Rogersson 2010). In Kayamandi, VT certainly offers opportunities for entrepreneurship even if only on an *ad hoc* basis. However, of the money the volunteer pays to the SO, only a small percentage flows into the community; the HMs and guide have limited control of the prices they can ask; and there is little transparency of who gets what (Benson & Wearing 2012). Furthermore, the unequal exposure to volunteers (and the resulting unequal distribution of material donations) has caused jealousy and animosity amongst crèche principals and HMs, similar to Sin's findings (2010). They are fighting amongst each other to gain access to volunteers because they need the money, not the help. A successful HM is accused of keeping the money for herself and that she does not invest it into the community. Guydo elaborates:

The idea was to train nine women and share; the idea was that business should circulate; but they become greedy and don't want to share. Some of them don't want to fight so they stop; now we are looking for new people.

NGOs have had more success at generating money through VT, especially when volunteers are recruited directly or in the case of child sponsors. Hundreds of children have benefitted from sponsoring, with a handful of children even given the opportunity to study abroad. Money in the form of sponsorship however remains problematic. It comes with strings attached e.g. sponsors feel they are entitled to meet and play with the children, and vulnerable children are sent on sponsor tours making them feel exploited. A respondent who was part of a sponsorship programme, expressed his negative sentiments towards the programme. He felt that the NGO uses promotional material to portray Kayamandi poorer than it is, and that the two trips he made through the USA as part of a choir fundraising tour, made him feel exploited and undermined.

They [Americans] wanted to know whether we are taking medicines because they think we all have HIV. They show us how to hold a spoon and use a chair. They are ignorant and I end up undermining myself.

In the end, these acts of giving and sponsoring reinforce external control: ignoring structural problems, undermining the power and agency of local residents and thereby stunting real development.

Cultural exchanges

Proponents of VT assert that VT brings about equal partnership through cultural exchange (Wearing 2004; Zahra & McGhee 2013). However, I tend to agree with Guttentag (2015) that one should question how the intercultural experience benefits the locals. This is due to the vast differences between the volunteers and host communi-

ty's socio-economic situations and capacity levels that would allow for approximate equal exchanges. Therefore, when Zahra and McGhee (2013) observe that locals could feel empowered because the foreign volunteers see the locals as equals, we should question whether the locals in fact see themselves as equals with the volunteers. My findings indicated that the imbalanced exchanges between the local residents and volunteers result rather in love-hate relationships. The locals perceive the volunteers as the "haves": they love them for what they gain from them (money and social capital); but at the same time, the exchange degrades them because they depend on the volunteer (the white privileged), to help them (conversation with NGO director). This finding links up with Conran (2011) and Sin (2010) in that VT in this context does little to break down the existing power relations and structural inequalities between white and black, rich and poor, haves and have-nots.

Thus the benefits of VT have been limited. From the literature, we know that for VT to be beneficial, involvement and empowerment of host communities is essential (McGhee 2014, Wearing 2006). This includes giving them control and choice; of which very little is currently happening in Kayamandi.

As a concluding remark to the analysis section, I do not think that VT should be seen as a colonial form of development; with a "paralytic effect" (Stritch 2011) and a "debilitating position" (Conran 2011). This view neglects to highlight the positive impacts of VT on the host community and does not acknowledge the host community's agency to benefit from it. The exploitative tendencies of VT should not be ignored, but the debate needs to critically consider and highlight positive impacts of VT too. For if we were only to criticise VT, we could undermine the value of the social rewards (improved status, self-esteem and increased power) that VT has to offer. For example, for a community like Kayamandi, VT can (and does) increase the residents' social network and social capital; it can give residents the feeling that they are connected with the world at large, and give them perspective on life outside Kayamandi.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

The main goal of this study was to investigate and create an understanding of local actors' perceptions of VT, with a focus on the dynamics involved in host community-volunteer tourist interaction. A broad range of perspectives and opinions from various local actors were included in the study. This was done by means of a qualitative approach with the aid of conversations, semi-structured interviews and participant observation, and took place in a community intensively used as a VT site. As the study is small-scale, it does not assert to make general claims about local actors' perception; the goal is rather to provide credible information and expand on existing research, and even potentially influence the way forward for VT in South Africa.

Through the application of social exchange theory (SET), the study looked into *why* and *how* local actors interact with volunteer tourists. The analysis first focused on the perceived needs, motivations and expectations of local actors and then compared it to the benefits and costs as perceived by them in order to understand how opinions and evaluations of VT are formed. Additionally, I also reflected upon the factors that influenced their perception. The advantage of SET as a conceptual framework is that it moves beyond economic exchange and looks into the social exchange process. The limitations of SET however is that human interactions and exchanges are very complex and differ according to time, place and circumstance and cannot be always schematically defined. It can also be inconsistent: someone can perceive benefits from VT and still have negative perceptions overall (Latkova & Vogt 2012). Nevertheless it can serve as a useful framework within an open stance of interpretation.

The findings reveal that local actors attach different definitions, and therefore also meanings, to volunteer tourists. This is because the socio-economic position of the individual actors is key in shaping their perceptions. For example, while the community beneficiaries perceive the volunteer tourists in economic terms based on their need for economic development, the institutional beneficiaries, the NGOs, perceive the volunteers in terms of the work they deliver. The local actors' perception of VT therefore varies among the different socio-economic groups due to their different needs and expectations. Noteworthy, is the striking difference between the local host community's conception of the volunteers and that constructed by volunteers and sending organisations, also echoed in the findings of Nelson (2012) and Ezra (2013). The locals see volunteers like "dollars with legs"; while the volunteers and VT industry deliberately avoid all reference to money as a benefit.

Broadly speaking, the perception of local actors towards VT is highly variable but largely positive, and corresponds to previous studies undertaken by McGhee & Andereck (2009), Sin (2010) and Ezra (2013). The findings indicated that, consistent with SET (Ap 1992), personal benefit from VT impacts the perceptions of local actors. Personal benefit from VT is confirmed as a notable predictor in a positive direction with perceived positive impacts of VT, and vice versa; as exemplified by the HMs who have the most positive perception of VT. Unbalanced exchanges whether on a social, economic or psychological level are seen to cause friction and negative perceptions.

The analysis section identified the following factors as good indicators of how perceptions are influenced: power, dependency, control and trust. These factors influence the perceptions of local actors at different levels depending on their individual socio-economic roles. The results suggest that power and a local actor's dependency strongly influences their evaluation of the benefits and costs of VT, and their perception of VT. The more control and trust they have of and in VT related activities, the more positive their perception.

A main contribution of this study was to address, and bring into the discussion on VT, issues related to race in South Africa: the invisible privileges of being white and how racial ethnicity influences local actors' perceptions. This builds on Ezra's (2013) impressive work regarding racial ethnicity and VT in Tanzania. Most respondents in this study recognised the potential economic and social benefits VT can bring with it. Yet the lingering distrust (between whites and blacks; and local actors, SOs and volunteers) influences local actors' perceptions negatively. The relationship of the white knowledgeable 'giver' (volunteer) and black needy 'receiver' does not contribute to restoring racial equality either and instead fosters dependency and affirms white superiority, as discussed also by Le Roux & Costandius (2013).

VT's claims to being an alternative, sustainable form of tourism is therefore questionable as the relationship between the major stakeholders is riddled with distrust, the local host community's control of VT is limited - with top-down patterns remaining in place - and the community beneficiaries are not included in the decision making process (Burrai et al 2015). A major obstacle is that giving control to, or catering to the needs of, the local community does not fit into the current business model of VT and is therefore hardly sustainable.

Further research

Further research on VT should continue to focus on the local actors' perspectives, still very much an under-researched area within VT. Understanding the host community's needs and expectations is very important in making VT a more meaningful experience for both volunteer tourist and host community. For the end goal should be to make VT a win-win activity for host community and volunteer instead of the present lose-win-lose situation. Another suggestion would be for research to focus on the role of religion and VT, as also suggested by McGhee (2014): whether the volunteer raised money through her congregation or came because she "was fuelled by God", religion seems very much part of the scenery. And a last suggestion: research concerning digital technology and VT often focuses on how VT is represented and promoted (Van Zyl et al 2015). The ways in which it informs host communities and the potential thereof for local residents to employ it to their own benefit, would be worth investigating.

Recommendations

There are numerous steps to move forward: first and foremost we should look at finding solutions within the host community, with a bottom-up approach (Singh 2012). For example, most NGOs in Kayamandi have the infrastructure and means to take control and offer VT activities in the short-term but are currently reluctant to take on the role. Yet a community-based VSO could probably employ several people and could be a sustainable project. Instead of a sending organisation, it could be an importing organisation, to attract volunteers with needed skills. Digital technology offers the possibility to effectively screen and filter potential volunteers. The beneficiaries would also need to be better informed on what volunteer tourists want, and act on it: the assurance of door-to-door airport transfers, for example, is one of the most often cited reasons given by volunteers for choosing an intermediate sending organisation. Gaining control and making it needs-based would be key.

Meanwhile, volunteers should be encouraged through social media and other channels to search for and contact local NGOs directly. Working directly with the host organisation means that the host community can benefit much more from the exchange. And if not, volunteers should choose a VSO that is able to demonstrate

that they operate in ethical ways. Also, VSOs should be transparent about the hosting organisations they work with, indicating the names and locations of the institution beneficiaries. The Volunteer Correct Foundation is currently setting up a transparency rating system of Dutch VSOs, to facilitate the volunteer's navigation process, and other countries would do well to follow suit.

As for VSOs, they should listen to the needs of the beneficiaries. Ask them for feedback and adapt the programmes accordingly. Make pre-departure training sessions and screening of volunteers standard practice.

Concluding remarks

Despite the critique levelled at VT, I argue that VT does have the potential to bring change and development to a host community: in the form of money. The economic benefits should not be seen as a criticism of VT but rather as the potential. Whether as payments to homestays, or donations to crèches and NGOs; money can make a real difference to the community and more financial benefits can positively influence the perceptions of all local actors involved in VT. This does not imply that the socio-cultural benefits brought about by cultural exchange do not count. Gaining an increase in self-esteem and status are valuable social benefits. But it can be better. To criticise VT as being exploitive or to praise it as an humanitarian encounter, is missing the point. VT is a booming business and, for the foreseeable future, it is here to stay. If local beneficiaries manage to take control, the potential economic and social gain for them could be substantial. And their perception of the potential benefits of VT would be justified.

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