



# **Voluntourism: Can Universities Make a Difference that Lasts a Lifetime?**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Voluntourism (VT) phenomenon combines volunteering with travelling. Despite the youth segment's altruism within these social actions, critics question whether their contributions adequately address the local structural concerns. Students' education as global citizens challenges universities through experiential learning opportunities that enrich the personal and professional self-development while acting towards the community development. However, the comprehension of the universities' role among the remaining stakeholders in the international context is limited. Hence, the present dissertation intends to clarify how universities can redesign co-creation experiential learning programs to promote a win-win Voluntourism scenario. In this sense, this study explores the stakeholders' perceptions of the universities' intermediation in this touristic sector. Based on the conceptual analysis through Leximancer output, results underline the positive influence of these international experiences on universities to align with the students' expectations and to include communities as part of their mission. These findings advance universities' opportunity to focus beyond the knowledge transference while accounting for the education on social, cultural and emotional intelligence competencies. Also, when accounting for the interaction with international communities, universities mostly depend on VT operators. Still, this collaboration points out a way for Voluntourism regulation and accreditation by implementing monitoring and evaluation metrics. Thus, the practical and theoretical implications contribute to the literature finding a win-win path to Voluntourism, having universities as a crucial stakeholder.

**Keywords:** Voluntourism, Sustainable Local Development, Stakeholders Engagement, Universities, Co-creation

**Título:** Volunturismo: Podem as Universidades Marcar uma Diferença que durará o Resto da Vida?

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## **RESUMO**

O Volunturismo (VT) define o fenómeno de voluntariar enquanto se viaja. Enquanto o segmento jovem vê estes atos como altruístas, vários críticos questionam-se acerca das suas contribuições face aos problemas estruturais a nível local. Como tal, as universidades são desafiadas na educação de cidadãos globais através de oportunidades de aprendizagem-serviço, que visam o autodesenvolvimento pessoal e profissional enquanto auxiliam no desenvolvimento comunitário. Por conseguinte, esta dissertação pretende compreender como poderão as universidades reestruturar experiências de co-aprendizagem entre estudantes-voluntários e comunidades locais, de modo a promover um cenário de Volunturismo mutuamente benéfico. Assim, este estudo explorará a perceção dos diversos *stakeholders* acerca da intermediação das universidades neste setor turístico. De acordo com resultados apresentados pelo Leximancer e a análise conceptual dos mesmos, evidências confirmam a positiva influência destas experiências internacionais, no alinhamento com as expectativas dos estudantes e na inclusão das comunidades como parte fulcral da sua missão. Paralelamente, as universidades deverão expandir o foco central da partilha de conhecimento, na educação e desenvolvimento de competências sociais, culturais e de inteligência emocional. Contudo, dada a componente internacional, o desempenho das universidades na interação comunitária depende da parceria com os operadores de VT. Porém, esta poderá ser vista como uma oportunidade à regulação e acreditação do Volunturismo, perante a implementação de métricas de monitorização e avaliação. Por último, as implicações práticas e teóricas visam contribuir para a literatura, ao proporcionar uma melhor compreensão de como recriar um cenário de melhores práticas no Volunturismo, através da influência académica.

**Palavras-Chave:** Volunturismo, Desenvolvimento Local Sustentável, Envolvimento das Partes Interessadas, Universidades, Co-criação

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— James Thurber

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## **GLOSSARY**

VT: Volunteer Tourism, also defined as Voluntourism

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Once introduced by Wearing (2001), Voluntourism refers to the opportunity young travellers take to be part of volunteering initiatives contributing to the social and environmental impact (Bandyopadhyay, 2019). This *vogue* movement of travelling is an opportunity to experience a transformational “hero’s adventure” that supports communities’ well-being while developing their attitude, the leadership skills and cultural awareness (Barbieri et al., 2012; Magrizos et al., 2020; Mateiu-Vescan et al., 2020). The vast range of VT programs is mostly linked to the sustainability trinity framework on the economic, cultural and environmental dimensions, with respect to local concerns (Lee & Zhang, 2020).

Over the last few years, divergent opinions have criticised the virtue of voluntourists’ intentions and their impact on local communities due to the lack of skills and training, the cultural blunder and the contextual misunderstanding associated with it (Freidus, 2017). By this reason, the involvement of local communities along these VT programs is imperative to guarantee their path to long-term development (Eckardt et al., 2020). Consequently, Voluntourism’s misled positioning as a sustainable alternative to Mass Tourism requires further attention to ensure the positive impact is preserved in detriment of the risks mitigation (McGehee & Andereck, 2009). Moreover, academic literature highlights universities as a critical stakeholder mediating these opportunities of community-engagement and sustainable development (Govender & Giampiccoli, 2018). Defined as Service-Learning, the alliance between the academic and voluntary work is perceived as occasion universities have to advance the best practices in Voluntourism while promoting experiential learning opportunities (Deeley, 2010; Hartman, 2015). It compromises a Fair Trade Learning that involves the local communities in the cultural and learning exchange, fostering the sense of local ownership and empowerment (Hartman, 2015; Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018). Eventually, this evidence aligns with universities’ current demands to internationalise the curriculum and educate students as global citizens (Kirk et al., 2018).

As such, this dissertation explores the opportunity for universities in the interface between educational and volunteer tourism in encouraging the collaborative efforts for sustainable local development. Appendix 1 outlines the tendency of academic research on “volunteer tourism”, “international volunteering” and “international education”.

Hence, this study aims to address further the challenges embedded on the integration of the different stakeholders' perspectives regarding the potential of Voluntourism as experiential learning programs to advance the global citizenship education, particularly in the context of International Service-Learning (Kearney et al., 2018; Kirk et al., 2018).

Thereby, to control the wide-ranging of involved parties, the analysis narrows its inclusion to VT operators, academic institutions, governmental bodies and host communities, in specific student-volunteers (Brosnan et al., 2015). From one side, to elucidate the correlation between education and tourism, the sending and receiving organisations comprise both VT operators and academic institutions (Ong et al., 2014). From the other side, the interchangeable application of the terms "local" and "host" communities intends to distinguish the whole-community level and the host community who participates in the VT program, respectively (Taplin et al., 2014).

In short, the main research question is defined as:

How can universities redesign co-creation experiential learning programs for sustainable local development, based on the stakeholders' perspectives?

The following research objective is framed:

- I. What are the managerial expectations and hinder barriers to position universities as an intermediary of win-win Voluntourism opportunities?

In the interest of answering this research question, this dissertation includes seven chapters in a structured way. Following the Introduction, a reflection on the existing literature creates a solid ground regarding the topic in focus. A semi-structured interview is then readapted from previous studies' eyes, and the results are graphically presented in a conceptual map throughout the Leximancer *software* support (Smith & Humphreys, 2006). Subsequently, a conceptual analysis of these findings intends to clarify the Voluntourism stakeholders' perceptions of universities in fostering a win-win scenario. Further, this research proposes practical and theoretical direction to universities, as critical mediators to the sustainable world development. In the latter end, limitations and suggestions for future research are presented.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter depicts a critical review of the relevant literature in Voluntourism and Global Education's main subjects.

### **2.1. Voluntourism, Briefly Presented**

In the 90s, the Pro-Poor Tourism's initial intention to incentivise the stakeholders' co-operation in the economic and tourism development in the emerging countries, defined the origin of the Voluntourism phenomenon (McGloin & Georgeou, 2016). Since then, this movement continues increasing reasoned by the fall of borders and the more significant power acquisition in the middle class (Wearing & McGehee, 2013).

In general, Voluntourism represents those international tourists who aim to combine travelling with volunteering actions, particularly in the social and environmental domains (Lupoli et al., 2014; Wearing, 2001). According to the literature, the doing-good belief's romanticism includes altruistic and egoistic driving forces (Guttentag, 2009; Lee & Zhang, 2020). On the one hand, voluntourists see this as a way to "making a difference" on the emerging countries' development (Freidus, 2017, p. 1307). On the other hand, it aligns with voluntourists self-interested goals to replicate these learning experience onto the personal and professional development (McLennan, 2014). With this in mind, Voluntourism reflects the ambition for a transformational change of the inner-self thru the sense of a "hero's journey" while supporting countries where the socio-cultural and economic factors are the most pronounced (Deeley, 2010; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017). In fact, voluntourists can effectively bridge the social capital to local communities, in terms of community-building and empowerment. Simultaneously, this influence is scaled up and replicated by bonding the social capital within the remaining community members (Zahra & McGehee, 2013). In addition to this latter aspect, social media's rise appears as a powerful tool to reinforce the contact between voluntourists and host communities and to monitor the VT programs (Lough & Tiessen, 2018; Magrivos et al., 2020).

Besides the positive aspects of the intercultural exchange and community-engagement programs, it is doubtful if the benefits mutually address voluntourists and local communities.

In the first instance, these transformational experiences' initial positive impact is not identically recognised after five years (Couch & Georgeou, 2017). To further understand these contradictory self-impressions, the present study will adopt looser criteria of a minimum three-year period between the student-volunteers' interview and the VT program's participation. In the second instance, critics challenge these short-term experiences' effectiveness addressing the structural concerns' inequalities (Frazer & Waitt, 2016). Besides the fact these negative connotations are often correlated to the lack of skills and cultural awareness of voluntourists, the local communities become as well colonial-dependent of these VT programs (Guttentag, 2009; Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018). Consequently, Voluntourism is characterised as an unregulated and nonaccredited industry stimulated by economic interests (McGloin & Georgeou, 2016).

Indeed, McGloin and Georgeou (2016) symbolize the chance to diverge the focus towards Development Volunteering, which stresses the importance of accounting for the social impact of the VT programs in local communities. Thus, the significant efforts to well-define the VT programs' objectives should mutually embrace local communities and voluntourists motivations (Smith & Font, 2014). Likewise, this holistic approach must ensure the shared responsibility, agency and involvement of every stakeholder within every value-laden phase, namely the monitoring and evaluating phases (Taplin et al., 2014).

All in all, the commitment of young generations to positively impact the world's socio-economic progress is evident (Butcher & Smith, 2010; Sin, 2009). Still, so that Voluntourism is appropriately fostered, a more in-depth comprehension is required about developing sustainable co-operations experiences between voluntourists and host community and the impact of the socio-cultural exchange on them (Lee & Zhang, 2020).

## **2.2. Stakeholders Engagement for Sustainable Local Development**

In the result of the altruistic motivations that distinguish voluntourists from the other tourists, Voluntourism is positioned in the Alternative Tourism sector (Sin, 2009).

Given that this classification is mostly based on the voluntourists' standing points, Voluntourism's sustainable positioning generates controversial opinions due to the insufficient emphasis provided to local communities' voice (Gilfillan, 2015). Subsequently, this urges the need to clarify the impacts and implications of the VT programs among all the involved parties and clearly define the entities responsible for monitoring and evaluating these VT programs (Steele et al., 2017).

Over the last decades, studies have entitled voluntourists, VT operators and host communities as key stakeholders (Wearing & McGehee, 2013). As far as known, these parties' engagement along the VT programs implementation maximises the best practices in this sector (Hammersley, 2014). On the one hand, it enhances the comprehension of how to plan and design a well-defined program, because it encourages the host communities to be part of the evaluation process and incentivises their critical feedback about the VT programs realisation (Eckardt et al., 2020; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). On the other hand, this multi-partnership raises the potential for the transformational change in communities due to the collaborative support to tackle the social and environmental concerns (Dentoni et al., 2018). For these reasons, adopting a proper management plan for the VT programs' structure is a crucial asset in mitigating the harmful risks associated with Voluntourism (Guttentag, 2009).

Furthermore, a growing body of literature reinforces the relevance of incorporating contextual factors on the evaluation phase (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017). This one elucidates the importance of overcoming the power relation inequalities between the developed and developing communities (Steele & Scherrer, 2018; Zahra & McGehee, 2013). By doing so, a focus in developing relationships based on the principles of trust and transparency is suggested, so the outcomes from the VT programs can reflect the social legitimacy onto communities (Barbieri et al., 2012). In alignment with the contextual influence, Taplin and colleagues (2014) developed a qualitative evaluation framework which includes five dimensions: empowerment, participatory, value-engaged, responsive and social justice. The inclusion of evaluation criteria evokes the starting point to comprehend each involving party's priorities and capabilities to develop a proper VT project (Lupoli et al., 2014). For instance, this framework will support the scope in analysis during the data collection process. In broader terms, this evaluation structure aims to advance a sense of accountability and empowerment in every Voluntourism stakeholder, taking into account VT operators, governmental bodies, host community and voluntourists (Taplin et al., 2014).

Alongside, the current literature strengthens this points by highlighting the adoption of a Flipped Principal-Agent Model, which sets beneficiaries as principals and the managerial entities of the program's implementation as agents (Steele & Scherrer, 2018). Respectively, from the principals' perspective, this includes both voluntourists and host community. Therefore, the VT program should guarantee that voluntourists share knowledge with host communities. Simultaneously, communities are encouraged to address the local structural concerns by taking ownership of the VT project's development (Gilfillan, 2015). From the agents' perspective, the managerial entities must ensure a safe working and learning environment (Lough & Oppenheim, 2017). Moreover, they should also account for the ethical and responsible promotion of the VT programs, so that voluntourists are adequately aware of their duties and the programs' structure (Smith. & Font, 2014). This is believed to minimize the often misconceptions associated with Voluntourism.

In extension to the mentioned stakeholders, governments' agency role is underlined, not only due to their position as a funder and regulatory entity but also because of the ability to establish institutional trust (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011; Taplin et al., 2014). Conversely, literature raises divergent opinions concerning this interconnection between governments and Voluntourism. As a matter of fact, Voluntourism appears as an attractive way that bypasses the local government's intervention, particularly in regards to the democratic responsibility for the local communities' development (Butcher & Smith, 2010; Zahra & McGehee, 2013). Likewise, this justifies the often-missed response from governments to address the basic needs. Subsequently, this evokes the survival efforts that local communities put in place to guarantee the basic living standards while hoping their future generations will be granted better conditions and opportunities (Carpenter, 2015). This point emphasizes the importance of developing a sense of empowerment and ownership into local communities, so the financial dependency decreases whilst it generates employment opportunities and educational programs that nurture a solid ground within those communities (Barbieri et al., 2012).

These facts bring to evidence that both governments and the Voluntourism industry share the same belief on the youth segment contribution towards world development. As such, universities appear as a critical promoter to advance the civic engagement towards the economic, environmental, political and social complexities of a globalized world (Jorgenson et al., 2012; Mason & Thier, 2018).

Aside from the importance universities have in knowledge transfer and innovation for the socio-economic development, they are distinguished for its relational role to nurture synergies among the remaining stakeholders (Valdés et al., 2019). This reinforces the importance of academic institutions at the local, regional and national level as it also raises the opportunity to acknowledge their influence on a global scale (Lupoli et al., 2014; Sklad et al., 2016). Given the scope of analysis from this dissertation, the academic curriculum on its global dimension is emphasized.

All things considered, once stakeholders collaboratively engage, their efforts to prioritise the creation of social value into communities is reflected in the local empowerment and development (Altinay et al., 2016). Therefore, the present research aims to develop an extensive analysis of the interrelation between the managerial entities and the beneficiaries. Essentially, this study seeks to understand how the collaborative managerial efforts among VT operators, academic institutions and governmental bodies can translate itself in the best practices towards host communities, in specific regards to student-volunteers.

### **2.3. The Role of Universities in a Global Education**

In recent decades, the youth travel market steadily increased, especially in the educational and volunteering programs (Hartman et al., 2014). As a result, the occasion to combine social actions with learning purposes represents the opportunistic challenge for academic institutions towards the education of “global citizens” (Butcher & Smith, 2010; Sklad et al., 2016, p. 325). However, this concept’s progress, along with the internationalisation of the academic sphere, requires closer attention (Kirk et al., 2018).

According to literature, Global Citizenship Education is an approach which aims to combines both formal and informal learning experiences in parallel to the development of proactive capabilities, so that an equal and ethical global society is accounted for (Aristizábal & Tormo, 2015; Jorgenson et al., 2012). While this concept depicts Voluntourism and Global Citizenship Education’s relation, it also enlightens the shared responsibility in transforming these sectors into a valuable social asset through the proactive contribution of youth “citizens of the world” (Butcher, 2017, p. 130).

Therefore, due to the ownership of the latest expert knowledge and the usual non-profit status, universities are considered idyllic promoters for community-based projects (Govender & Giampiccoli, 2018). In response to this tendency, the universities' transformational experiential learning with a volunteering character is developed through Service-Learning and Community-Engagement programs (Deeley, 2010; Hartman, 2015). While most of them are developed in The United States, they start reaching out to other regions such as Asia, Europe and South America (Gregorová et al., 2016). To ensure a sustainable educational program, Hartman and colleagues (2014) propose a Fair Trade Learning procedure that points out the mutual participation from students and host communities. On the one hand, it focuses on these community-engagement programs' long-term contribution regarding local communities' autonomy, ownership, and empowerment (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018). On the other hand, it fulfils the altruistic and egoistic motivations of voluntourists who aim to embrace self-development authentic experiences at the intra-personal and inter-personal level (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017).

Further, previous studies reinforce the importance of a multilateral collaboration among academic institutions, governmental bodies and the local community to properly progress these "co-transformative learnings" (Brosnan et al., 2015, p. 97). Despite the significance in promoting social action where the political response is doubtful, this academic opportunity fails to acknowledge the non-existence of a global public policy (Butcher, 2017). Subsequently, this interrelation welcomes additional coordination efforts to the involving parties, particularly regarding the contextual influence, the power relations and empowerment inequalities associated with it (Wearing et al., 2017). Also, to accomplish stakeholders' engagement, it is of primary interest to understand the added value from these educational learning experiences to each of them (Lough & Oppenheim, 2017). This calls for further consideration on the Global Citizenship Education and the alignment between the universities' objectives and its practical realisation, which is often-criticised (Kirk et al., 2018). At first instance, these doing-good educational programs might shade their altruistic impact in detriment of receiving credits and certifications for participating in them (Aktas et al., 2017). Additionally, universities' pressure to react towards the global education trend is a causal effect for being positioned on international rankings (Aristizábal & Tormo, 2015). Still, despite the significant interest in developing global citizen competencies, most universities fail to recognise the discrepancies among students who might not be equally empowered in the social, cultural and economic level (Jorgenson et al., 2012).

In broad terms, these facts not only underline the need to clarify how universities can strengthen the logistical structure to make it accessible to every student, while also to comprehend how the learning outcomes of these programs can leverage the impact in the local and global sphere (Aktas et al., 2017). Overall, further investigation is required to understand how stakeholders' collaborative engagement can support developing these transformational experiential learning opportunities for students as global citizens (Moscardini et al., 2020). Thus, this dissertation narrows its focus to comprehend how managerial co-operation can transpose itself into a proper implementation of a win-win situation between the incoming and host student-volunteers.

### **2.3.1. The Co-Creation Process**

Much of the literature in Voluntourism clarifies the positive and negative outcomes of this movement. Although, the ambiguity concerning the meaning of the intended “development aid” requires clearer understanding, particularly to how and what circumstances can leverage the mutual learning exchange between voluntourists and local communities (Wearing et al., 2017).

In light of this matter, the United Nations University (2018) calls the attention for the concept of “Knowledge Co-Creation” which should be an integral part of the university-community partnership as it promotes co-creation solutions to the sustainable local development (p. 7). Still, it requires additional comprehension of how these co-creation procedures can be applied either in the Voluntourism and the higher educational dimensions (Doyle et al., 2020; Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018). Furthermore, the concept of co-creation in the academic context is defined as an opportunity students have to benefit from a mutual learning experience which involves their collaborative participation on the development of projects comprising “people, services, environment and products” (Smørvik & Vespestad, 2020, p. 2). The focus is that the reciprocal learning exchange of competencies and skills nurtures the path for the mutual interconnection between universities, students and communities (Fleischman et al., 2015). Moreover, the co-creation process incorporates two main dimensions: co-production and value-in-use (Dollinger et al., 2018). Respectively, Dollinger and colleagues (2018) stress the significance of these dimensions in comprehending how the knowledge and skills can be transformed into innovation and what is the value proposition of these experiences.

Aside from the co-creation process, Voluntourism's focal point on its helping dimension should expand its importance for the intercultural exchange and co-operation within these experiences (Lee & Zhang, 2020; Wearing et al., 2017). Subsequently, VT programs should support the interrelation and learning exchange between student-volunteers and host communities while addressing the local structural concerns (Hammersley, 2014). Likewise, the efforts to strategically change from a top-down to a bottom-up co-creation approach are a way to enable the progress for the local empowerment and ownership (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). To further clarify these aspects, the co-creation process in this present research results in collaboration among the managerial entities responsible for implementing the VT programs towards their beneficiaries.

From the beneficiaries' standing point, the Fair Trade Learning supports the dual mission between students and host communities grounded on the values of co-operation and learning and cultural exchange (Hartman et al., 2014). In addition to the benefits from the knowledge economy, the existing literature emphasizes the central aspect in tackling the structural vulnerabilities from each location, so the social action has a long-lasting positive impact (Jorgenson et al., 2012; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2014). Parallely, from the managerial entities perspective, and acknowledging the extensive range of matters in local communities, universities must define how the knowledge transference from the different academic subjects is practically applied to the respective locations concerns at the local and global sphere (Aktas et al., 2017; Hartman, 2015). In such a manner, the existing literature reinforces the relational role of universities for the collaborative social achievement throughout the entrepreneurial ethos, which empowers the adding value based on innovation and co-creation solutions (Downing, 2005; Valdés et al., 2019). In specific regards, social entrepreneurs are recognised for the mission of responding to social concerns (Scheiber, 2016). Also, the linkage between entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur's embeddedness shows a positive influence not only in their self-commitment but also in their efforts to leverage the communities' socio-economic resources (McKeever et al., 2015).

On the whole, these circumstances call attention for universities in supporting a glocal approach as it addresses the major global structural problems, based on the development of competencies throughout local action (Sklad et al., 2016). Then, it represents an opportunity to explore how to design co-creation learning experiences and its implications within the interrelation between the sending and receiving universities.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This section describes the methodological approach to answer the previously mentioned research question. Following the adopted methodology's contextualisation, this one is proceeded by a detailed exposure of the data collection and data analysis procedures.

#### **3.1. Research Approach**

As stated in the Introduction, this dissertation aims to enhance universities' comprehension of co-creation experiential learning programs to facilitate a win-win Voluntourism scenario. With this in mind, the present research comprises the main objective to clarify the relevant stakeholders' perceptions about having these academic institutions as a critical party to advance the best practices in this industry.

Firstly, the researcher identifies the qualitative lens' adoption as the most suitable approach to elucidate about the interconnection and inter-influence among the stakeholders' collaborative efforts for a social cause (Lin et al., 2019). To explore these points, semi-structured interviews are conducted and reframed on the light from previous literature and recognisable evaluation criteria (presented in Appendices 2-5). Moreover, to apprehend the sense of mutual reciprocity and commitment to the VT programs development, the same questions are inquired to the managerial entities, concerning empowerment, social justice and value-engagement dimensions (Hartman, 2015; Taplin et al., 2014).

Further, the data collected from these interviewees is analysed through a content analysis *software*, named Leximancer. This allows capturing the main concepts and ideas resulting from the massive lexical data obtained (Tseng et al., 2015). The findings are then presented through a conceptual map, whose responsibility to proceed with the conceptual analysis of it, is from the researcher. In general terms, these findings aim to complement the existing literature on the Voluntourism and Global Education domains while exploring these sectors' interrelatedness.

### 3.2. The Data Collection

While accounting for proper targeting of the segments in analysis, extensive research was done throughout websites, social platforms or based on any referral during the interviewee. Indeed, each participant was selected based on inclusive eligibility criteria presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

Eligibility Criteria

<b>Student-Volunteers</b>	<b>VT Operators</b>	<b>Academic Institutions</b>	<b>Governmental Bodies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students who had volunteered right before or during the Higher Education period;</li> <li>• A minimum of 3-years period from the moment of the VT program and the interview;</li> <li>• Students from Developing and Developed Countries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VT operators that offer community-oriented Internship and Volunteer opportunities;</li> <li>• Programs based in emerging countries;</li> <li>• Either NGOs, Social Enterprises or For-Profit VT operators.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Entities Representants for Higher Education Development;</li> <li>• Local Universities which offer Service-Learning and/or Community-Engagement experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local or Intergovernmental Entities;</li> <li>• International Service Organisations with long-term legacy partnering with local communities;</li> <li>• Focus on Humanitarian Aid, International Co-operation, Education or Tourism fields.</li> </ul>

Moreover, semi-structured interviews reframed from previous literature defined the most suitable research method. It includes open-ended questions, giving room and incentivising the participants' self-expression in sharing opinions, thoughts, and knowledge (Horton et al., 2004). In total, the data represent the perspectives of twenty-eight participants. Initially, an online Consent Form (presented in Appendix 6) is sent to acknowledge participants for the confidential terms and request the interview's video and audio recording. Also, a section from this latter form asks for the demographic variables in the analysis: age, gender and nationality. Upon accepting the terms, interviews were conducted either in English or Portuguese, depending on the interviewee's most suitable language. Apart from the transcription of these interviewees, the ones held in Portuguese, were translated to English whenever required.

Regarding the limit of interviews, the data collection period ended when any additional data delivered new valuable insights from the different focus segments (Aquino & Andereck, 2018). Still, to validate the data collection reliability, the respective transcript was forwarded to each participant so that any adjustment or data omission was accounted for if requested (Purchase et al., 2016).

Thus, the present study grounds every research stage on ethical standards (Kvale, 2011). A numerical code identifies every person and institution interviewed to reinforce this point, so it aligns with the General Data Regulation Procedures (The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, 2016).

### **3.2.1. The Target Population**

In response to the global phenomenon Voluntourism represents, any discriminatory restriction was implemented on the demographic variables (see Table 2). A total of 28 participants are part of the interviewing process: 10 student-volunteers, 6 academic institutions, 7 VT operators and 5 governmental bodies.

From this sample, a total of 18 different nationalities' perceptions accounted for the local voice of both developing and developed countries, respectively, 10 and 8 nationalities in the analysis. Regarding the age variable, the participants with ages between 24 to 35 years old are the dominant group, followed by the segment with ages ranging from 18 to 24. This fact justifies the young travel movement analysed in the present dissertation. Further, about gender, this study includes the observation from 14 female and 14 male individuals.

**Table 2**

## Demographic Characteristics

<b>Interviewee ID</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Nationality</b>
Student-Volunteer 1	Male	25-34	Russian
Student-Volunteer 2	Male	18-24	Egyptian
Student-Volunteer 3	Female	25-34	Taiwanese
Student-Volunteer 4	Male	18-24	German
Student-Volunteer 5	Male	18-24	Indian
Student-Volunteer 6	Female	18-24	Mexican
Student-Volunteer 7	Female	18-24	Portuguese
Student-Volunteer 8	Male	25-34	British
Student-Volunteer 9	Female	18-24	British
Student-Volunteer 10	Female	25-34	Malaysian
VT operator 1	Male	25-34	Slovak
VT operator 2	Female	18-24	Portuguese
VT operator 3	Male	25-34	Tanzanian
VT operator 4	Male	25-34	Indian
VT operator 5	Female	25-34	South African
VT operator 6	Female	35-44	Brazilian
VT operator 7	Female	35-44	Ecuadorian
Academic Institutions 1	Female	45-54	Spanish
Academic Institutions 2	Female	45-54	USA - Puerto Rican
Academic Institutions 3	Male	45-54	South African
Academic Institutions 4	Male	45-54	Spanish
Academic Institutions 5	Male	45-54	American
Academic Institutions 6	Female	25-34	Italian
Governmental Bodies 1	Female	25-34	Portuguese
Governmental Bodies 2	Male	35-44	Italian
Governmental Bodies 3	Female	18-24	Portuguese
Governmental Bodies 4	Male	55 or older	Portuguese
Governmental Bodies 5	Male	55 or older	Brazilian

### 3.3. Data Analysis Tool

The Leximancer *software* is a powerful content analysis tool that exposes the main themes retrieved from the textual data, and the relational and semantic information (Sotiriadou et al., 2014).

This lexical analysis extends itself on the statistical, data mining and relational domains. Likewise, it benefits from the words' frequency and the co-occurrence of concepts, which will then be clustered into main categories (Smith & Humphreys, 2006). For the purpose of the dissertation, the qualitative results will be graphically presented through the final output in a concept map format. Its interpretation depends mainly on two features: a spectrum of colour and size (Angus et al., 2013). As specified by Leximancer (2018), the themes' significance relies on a heated-map that considers red as the most influential theme and purple as the less one. In addition to that, the greater the frequency of occurrence of each concept, the greater will be the concepts' grey dot size. In addition to it, the co-occurrence and interrelation of concepts are presented through a line connecting them. Subsequently, the closer the concepts and themes are to each other, the more often they are mentioned within the same context (Lin et al., 2019).

In sum, this conceptual analysis enables a more explicit understanding of the meaning beyond the linguistic data. These findings intend to contribute to the literature by bringing to light the stakeholders' perspectives about universities' role in the Voluntourism sector.

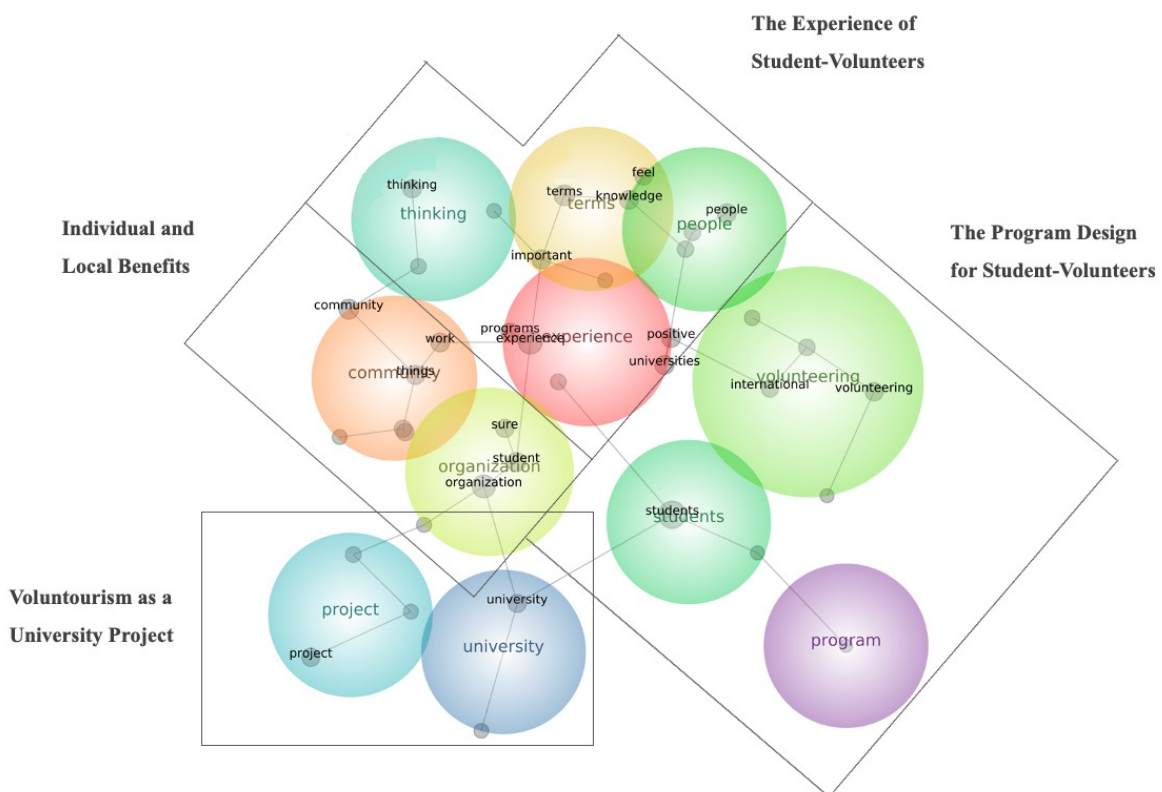
## 4. RESULTS

The succeeding chapter discloses the data collected. It includes the graphic visualization of a conceptual map obtained through the Leximancer *software* (see Figure 1) and the subsequent conceptual analysis from these findings to advance the literature's development towards a win-win Voluntourism scenario.

The different stakeholders' perceptions about universities' role in promoting a win-win Voluntourism is presented in a concept map composed of eleven themes in the analysis: experience, community, terms, organization, volunteering, people, students, thinking, project, university and program. Even though the themes' relevance is ordered based on a colour wheel system, the dissertation's emphasis is directed to analysing the four clusters grouped from the data obtained.

**Figure 1**

Concept Map about the Role of Universities for a win-win Voluntourism



As a result of the distance within themes and the alignment with this dissertation’s purposes, the clusters are: Voluntourism as a University Project, The Program Design for Student-Volunteers, The Experience of Student-Volunteers and Individual and Local Benefits (see Table 3). The respective closeness of the themes supports the validation of the expected findings. Additionally, based on the Leximancer output, an extensive list that accounts for the concepts’ co-occurrence is elaborated (presented in Appendix 7).

**Table 3**  
Themes and Concepts

Cluster	Themes	Concepts
Voluntourism as a University Project	Project	Project
	University	University
The Program Design for Student-Volunteers	Volunteering	Volunteering, International
	Students	Students
	Program	Program
The Experience of Student-Volunteers	Experience	Experience, Program, Positive, Universities
	Terms	Terms, Knowledge, Important, Feel
	People	People
	Thinking	Thinking
Individual and Local Benefits	Community	Community, Work
	Organization	Organization, Student, Sure

In broader terms, the theme “experience” is the one that has more concepts associated with it. From one perspective, it anticipates the students’ expectations for these experiential learning and community engagement programs, in terms of the knowledge acquired and the feelings involved. From the other side, it foresees universities’ leadership role to extend its mission to people, including both students and communities, while having these international volunteering programs as a way to commit to its realisation. This latter aspect is reinforced with the critical consideration for the collaborative support from the remaining “organization” -s for the VT projects’ development so that the universities can appropriately undertake their mission towards communities. This justifies the mid-position of “organization” in-between of “community” and “university”. Thus, these findings suggest the importance to explore student-volunteers’ motivations as global citizens and further comprehend universities’ managerial role into the community level. Overall, this aligns with the present study’s aim to further advance the literature to a win-win Voluntourism scenario.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The themes are divided into four clusters, as previously mentioned. In order to consolidate these findings, the discussion chapter benefits from the inclusion of the interview's excerpts and the contrast of those with the existing literature.

### **Voluntourism as a University Project**

The cluster "Voluntourism as a University Project" includes the "project" and "university" themes. The researcher perceives this cluster as reasonable to enable a clearer comprehension about universities' role to facilitate VT projects.

As shown in the conceptual map, the organisational role of "university" -ies goes beyond its mission to "students", as they also influence "community" -ies. As Academic Institutions #3 points out, "university and its stakeholders can hold itself accountable to the mission to incorporate local communities (...) as part of their mission and strategic objective". This dual-mission prospects the upcoming challenges modern education has, in broadening their commitment and mission towards local communities inclusion (Moscardini et al., 2020). From an operational perspective, besides the ability to respond to the academic and community influence, this latter is intermediated by additional "organization" -s, namely Service-Learning VT providers that ensure the VT programs align with the students' field of expertise (Zhang et al., 2011). In such a way, the Academic Institution #4 affirms "the focus is not on our students, but on their work with the community and on the community itself (...) and these two things are done together not as 'this plus that' but as 'this through that'". Apart from this, universities assume full responsibility to enhance students' sense of personal and social accountability for their civic-engagement (Myers et al., 2019). This responsibility enlightens the commitment of student-volunteers due to the fact "there is not so much that the universities can do, apart from telling the right things [to volunteers]. Then, it is up to the volunteers to decide whether they do it or not" (VT operator #3). In fact, while "students" are looking for "experiences", this opportunity to advance experiential learning opportunities brings additional efforts for universities to step into "the clear evolution of students who are growing faster" (Student-Volunteer #7). This interviewee adds that students expect the concept of teaching "as more dynamically (...) with a focus on developing people and thoughts rather than just techniques".

In this context, both personal and professional motivations are fulfilled and supported by real-world challenges and transposed into a positive impact on societies (Ruhanen et al., 2013). Furthermore, Student-Volunteer #2 believes this is a way to create a “win-win situation [since] it takes advantage of highly motivated and high potential candidates who are willing to volunteer in exchange for just having this opportunity, as the new currency”. Also, this interviewee perceives this experiential learning experiences as an occasion to culminate “the lack of experience. [Students] keep on falling into a loop. How do you [students] get work without experience or experience without work?”.

Considering these facts, universities should align the academic curriculum with the current requisites from students who expect to apply the knowledge in practical terms, and most preferentially at the international level. Further, student-volunteers find relevant to discover their better-self while supporting others. However, to ensure a proper alignment between the students’ expectations and these experiential learning opportunities, universities are responsible to “connect with the different stakeholders and provide all the pre-departure information” (VT operator #7).

### **The Program Design for Student-Volunteers**

In virtue of the dissertation objective and the proximity of “program”, “students” and “volunteering” themes, these will explore “The Programs Design for Student-Volunteers”.

Regarding the “volunteering” theme, Voluntourism’s concept is distinguished from this one due to the VT programs’ intercultural capital (Wearing et al., 2017). Voluntourism reflects a way of “getting to know people from different religions, ethnicities and countries (...) having a different set of eyes” (Student-Volunteer #5). Once associated with the educational input, its influence extends in developing the “human level and career path” (Student-Volunteer #4). Firstly, these facts provide evidence about the experiential learning opportunities’ object authenticity in cultural immersion, integration and involvement domains (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2016). Secondly, it aligns with the current pressure on students in having a “check-mark on international and volunteer experiences (...) [which is] a “differentiator factor” on the curriculum” (VT operator #2).

Overall, these programs progress the chance to enrich the development of emotional intelligence and social consciousness competencies, which are essential features that recruiters perceived as value-added when recruiting for professional positions (Manring, 2012; McGloin & Georgeou, 2016).

Aside from the international characterization of these programs, “universities should offer the option to students who want to travel and those who do not want” (Student-Volunteers #8). This explains why “volunteering” appears separately from the “international” concept, in the conceptual map. Consequently, this underlines two perspectives. On the one hand, VT operator #1 reinforces that universities should financially support every student, so the participation goes beyond the “never-ending cycle that prestigious universities and privileged students” (Aktas et al., 2017). On the other hand, this strengthens the opportunity universities have to progress their “third mission” to local communities which broadens their impact from the teaching and research contributions into the concept of “entrepreneurial university” (Fijałkowska & Hadro, 2018). In practical terms, universities are responsible to “bring together public administration, private companies, social entities (...) to identify the main problems in the community and how-to solution them” (Academic Institution #2). Hence, to externalize the theoretical inputs into the socio-economic development, its realisation is suggested through “micro-enterprises” (Academical Institution #2), “micro-consultancies” (VT operator #2), spin-offs, start-ups, et cetera (Valdés et al., 2019). Universities are personalized as “incubators for the young professionals (...) given the human capital, voluntourism and technical co-operation as a vector to transfer the knowledge to local communities” (Governmental Body #2). Moreover, and while allowing for the altruistic and egoistic motivations, it is crucial that “[students] committed to local needs before trying to look out what others needs are around the world” (Academical Institution #4).

This underlines the importance to look at the Voluntourism phenomenon in its glocal dimension so that, the efforts for world development are provided through local and global actions. Thereby, the direct linkage between universities with the local partners in each respective location is suggested, plus the bridge between the sending and receiving universities to account for the curriculum’s internationalisation through these experiential learning programs.

## The Experience of Student-Volunteers

Regarding “The Experience of Student-Volunteers”, this considers the themes “experience”, “terms”, “people” and “thinking”.

“Experience” is the primordial theme concerning the inclusion of these experiential learning programs in the academic context. From the graphic interpretation, this theme highlights the “positive” impact of “universities” in using “volunteering” as a way to connect “people”. Also, it states how “important” it is the impact to every participant in “terms” of “knowledge”, “feel”-ing and “thinking” self-development, both in student-volunteers and host communities. About the interaction with local communities, this experience is described as a “two-way street” (Student-Volunteer #5) that enables volunteers to “see the world differently through the clash of realities and simplicity (...) and to give the world new worlds to them [local communities]” (Student-Volunteer #7).

Further, the Student-Volunteer #8 explains that the direct and indirect impact into community-building and capacity-enhancement is ensured by the volunteers’ capabilities and responsibilities to transpose the socio-cultural capital towards “opening their minds to possibilities and self-belief” (Zahra & McGehee, 2013). Alongside, this chance for personal impact and to be the impact on others aligns with the “martyrdom effect”, which suggest that the more pain and effort felt, the greater will be the transformational development and purpose taken from these programs (Magrizos et al., 2020; Olivola & Eldar, 2013). For voluntourists, this cultural contact translates as a mean to acknowledge each own expectation and needs (Erdurmazlı, 2019). Besides these emotional drivers for a meaningful experience, these programs’ duration points to time as a critical factor (Cunha et al., 2019). In fact, student-volunteers themselves acknowledge the limitation of short-term experiences in “building connections (...) while getting into the rhythm of things” (Student-Volunteer #8). Additionally, Academical Institution #3 compares them as the “honeymoon phase when everything looks amazing. But it is when you start feeling uncomfortable, that your experience enhances”. Consequently, the longer these experiences are, the more accurate the influence on their social and civic behaviour is, while contributing to nurturing a sense of adaptability, tolerance and self-development (Gregorová et al., 2016).

In accordance, this author adds the benefits of Service-Learning programs as a path to progress skills on “communication, leadership, co-operation, cultural understanding, responsibility, learning, problem-solving and development of critical thinking”. This reinforces the importance of educating for adaptability and cross-cultural dissimilarities (Lough & Tiessen, 2018). Hence, these outcomes are concretised into the personal and professional development as “the intangible things you learn (...) and you will notice in the work ethic, as people are more motivated, energetic and willing to go out of the box” (Student-Volunteer #2). When educating for global citizenship, it is also essential to externalize the respective knowledge by sharing the importance of addressing the different global perspectives and performing it within a practical study plan (Myers & Rivero, 2020). From the student-volunteers standing point, they state that the impact of these programs is enriched with the participation of other “volunteers [who] speak the same “language” because of the closeness within generations” (Student-Volunteer #7). This enhances the importance of the “touristic *communitas*” in creating bonds between volunteers who are strangers and who equally accept and allow for an authentic self-discovery journey (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017, p. 2). It also underlines the interpersonal push factors to interact with minded people who share common interests and perceive these experiences through a feeling of shared responsibility to act towards sustainable global issues (Pan, 2012).

In broad terms, these facts prove the dual motivations of experiences: the “knowledge” and “feel”. Indeed, the opportunity for knowledge transference is leverage due to relatedness with the academic field of expertise. Nevertheless, the feelings of respect, openness and trust of student-volunteers and host communities, set the favourable environment to prosper these experiential learning programs, through the learning and cultural exchange.

### **Individual and Local Benefits**

The closeness between the themes “organization” and “community” emphasizes the opportunity to comprehend the “Individual and Local Benefits” from this multi-partnership, at the academic and community level. Besides the direct impact of universities to “students”, so these have a positive influence in “community” -ies, they must collaborate hand-in-hand with other “organization” -s.

Apart from that, the stakeholders' engagement appears "sure" -ly as the ideal scenario to progress these programs. Still, this raises challenges when creating a reciprocal relationship in the international context (Lough & Oppenheim, 2017). At first instance, Academic Institution #3 prioritises the need to "recognise Voluntourism as something that comes with risk (...) [and adopting] an approach that looks for risk while mitigating it, is heading in the right direction". In this sense, Governmental Body #1 reinforces the requirement to "ensure safety and provide insurances for students" given the far distance to the country where the program is set. To control for this matter, the engagement between universities and local partners is incentivised while having the latter "to take the lead and identify where those areas [in need for assistance] or who the community leaders are" (Academic Institution #2). This supports the evidence for the stakeholders' engagement in a bi-directional dimension, between sending and host organisations (Eckardt et al., 2020).

About the VT operators, they should act following "the logic to support and not replace" (Governmental Body #3) so the transformational change is sustainable encouraged. This interviewee further adds the value to structure these programs based on the "bottom-up approach" that fosters the long-term impact towards local communities empowerment, capacity-building and social learning opportunities (United Nations University, 2018; Zanotti et al., 2016). Accordingly, the importance to sustain the relationship with communities reflects a way to avoid jeopardizing the VT operator's trust and their contribution to the local development, at the cost of any student-volunteers' inappropriate behaviour (Hammersley, 2014). In this sense, VT operator #2 sees its role "not as an agent of change, but as supporters of local communities to be the agent of change". This mirrors the "step-by-step" process which the VT operator #5 exemplifies as having "volunteers contributing to short-term objectives that speak for the long-term project" (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 6).

From another perspective, because the Local Government is responsible for setting the regulations and incentive policies for implementing socially responsible projects, VT operators should account for this entity (Lin et al., 2019). Therefore, as suggested by VT operator #7, it is crucial to involve the local entities in the elaboration of "the Terms & Conditions to be a volunteer (...). There are rules and regulations established, either by us but also with local governments and municipalities, the National Park, and other local organisations we work with, and they ask us to have volunteer signing these forms".

Further, these entities should be involved in creating a customized risk management plan to each participant, programs' objective and the respective communities in focus.

Moreover, universities are positioned as facilitators for effective communication between stakeholders (Fijałkowska & Hadro, 2018). Accordingly, Academic Institution #3 justifies that due to “the virtue of the size of its mission, and the power dynamics that always exist in their favour [of universities] (...) everything that we do is co-owned, co-developed, co-constructed”. However, to foster these agreeable spaces between the involved parties, universities should be represented by “[a person] that is empowered to properly address and explain what everyone is trying to achieve (...) someone with capabilities of negotiation, that ensures the mutual benefits” (Governmental Body #5). However, when promoting these programs, they should be consistent with the student-volunteers' expectations and universities objectives. Therefore, the academic institutions must firstly “execute the due diligence [of the VT operators' programs] (...) which involves the elaboration of an impact assessment” (Governmental Body #3).

All in all, the opportunity to bridge the Global North-South universities and the subsequent respective local communities and local partners, is seen as a way to progress a collaborative synergy between stakeholders (Jotia et al., 2020).

## 6. CONCLUSION

This section presents the conclusion of the conceptual analysis by answering the research question and its objective previously defined in the Introduction chapter. Accordingly, the practical and theoretical contributions are underlined.

### 6.1. Main Conclusion

Universities are a relevant stakeholder developing trust among the remaining stakeholders on the curriculum's internationalisation (Bowen & Dallam, 2020). In response to the existing literature, this dissertation aims to enlighten universities' role in the intersection between educational and volunteer tourism, to make the long-lasting impact on world development. The data collected from 28 interviewees intends to provide a transparent and critical analysis of the involved segments' perception regarding the topic in discussion. As follows, a conceptual analysis from the obtained results thru the Leximancer *software* is elaborated.

The findings advance universities' dependence on "students" and "organization" -s while promoting experiential learning opportunities, namely International Service-Learning programs. The request for a direct linkage between universities with VT operators is underlined so that the expectations of student-volunteers and local communities are aligned and subsequently transposed into developing a structural program that matches the educational field. Furthermore, to enrich the co-production between both beneficiaries, universities should focus on teaching students as global citizens by including social and cultural aspects in the academic programs. This reflects Voluntourism's current vision as a cultural immersion experience that enables to create bonds among different nationalities and replicate its concretisation on the value-in-use from these experiences.

In addition to this, the fulfilled research objective clarifies the different stakeholders' perspectives about the universities' intermediation in this tourism sector:

- I. What are the managerial expectations and hinder barriers to position universities as an intermediary of win-win Voluntourism opportunities?

Once the commitment of universities is extended from the primary mission towards “students” into a broader focus on developing “people” through these international volunteering “experiences”, the universities’ positive influence is highlighted to both students and communities. From the managerial perspectives, universities are responsible for ensuring the communication process among stakeholders, including clarifying each expectation. However, from the operational procedures, universities are dependent on VT operators, which increases the academic institutions’ risk and commitment for not having total control over these programs. Then, due to the universities’ long-term legitimacy, these have the leadership role in supporting the path towards a win-win Voluntourism scenario, yet also extending its mission towards communities.

## **6.2. Practical Contribution**

The present dissertation explores the interface between the existing literature on Voluntourism and the academic curriculum’s internationalisation.

Previous authors have acknowledged the role of universities on global citizenship education, having International Service-Learning programs as a type of program that coordinates the academic with the volunteering components (Aktas et al., 2017). Still, this study challenges the universities’ operational ability to control the entire value-chain of these programs. Therefore, this suggests the direct connection between the sending and receiving universities and the respective local partners. Concerning the latter, Service-Learning VT operators appear as the most qualified organisations to ensure the co-creation process and alignment between student-volunteers and local communities. Still, both entities should coordinate programs’ rotativity to guarantee the continuous long-term development of communities. Additionally, the respective universities should perform due diligence to these VT operators to ensure their mission is consistent with the experiential learning programs’ mission and the intended positive impact on communities. Subsequently, once the linkage between universities with VT operators is set, a proper VT program can be structured. Consequently, it is expected for student-volunteers to be aware of their commitment and responsibilities of the knowledge transference to the communities’ development. This fact can be reinforced thru a “Terms & Conditions” agreement, which also ensures these programs’ metric evaluations.

Posteriorly to the due diligence procedures, it is fundamental to elaborate on a risk management plan and assess these programs' evaluation regularly. This latter should involve the impacts either on student-volunteers and local communities. Further, it is proved that every academic curriculum can correspondingly assist professionals of the specific learning field in each country in focus. This extends the image of universities for its entrepreneurial actions that cooperate with the local communities' concerns. Apart from the fact that universities are responsible for the knowledge transference in terms of technical skills, they should ensure the education of social competencies, which are believed to maximise the co-production between beneficiaries. Consequently, apart from the technical knowledge, which is already expected from universities, a further focus on social, leadership and emotional intelligence skills is required.

This mirrors the universities' opportunity to lead the positive influence in building future professional as global citizens and empowers them with social and cultural soft skills about diversity respect, cultural awareness, and adaptability to challenging real-world concerns.

### **6.3. Theoretical Contribution**

The findings endorse previous literature in stating the crucial role for the collaborative effort between stakeholders to properly advance International Service-Learning programs (Lough & Oppenheim, 2017). Further, this dissertation enhances universities' position to a win-win Voluntourism among the stakeholders' engagement spectrum.

Indeed, universities' lasting role within communities brings a significant value to these academic institutions when building a win-win Voluntourism scenario, together with the remaining involving parties. This fact translates itself into the influence of the long-term institutional legitimacy and the associated power dynamics. In other words, universities are empowered to mediate a transparent, reliable and respectful environment among stakeholders, both on the local and international sphere. In consequence of the legitimate power embedded in the university's status, universities are responsible for proper communication. Likewise, they must ensure an accurate alignment between their mission and the VT programs they promote. Concerning the opportunities that universities have, these also support developing a structured program by sharing with VT operator the technical and managerial skills, to reinforce the know-how and qualification in monitoring and evaluating the VT programs.

In the long term, universities are the prospect to enable the Voluntourism evolution towards an accredited and regulated industry, together with the evaluation metrics as previously mentioned. Additionally, the relation between universities and VT operators increases these service providers' credibility and trustworthiness when establishing contact with the local government. Regarding the latter, both universities and VT operators should involve this entity to comprehend the social and environmental concerns that should be locally prioritised and addressed. Besides these opportunities, universities are mostly challenged on the financial and operational level, compromising the universities' responsibility and commitment. Respectively, universities must ensure the accessibility of these VT programs to every interested student, including the financial support, such as subsidies, insurance and the logistics associated with this international experience, in terms of accommodation, travel expenses, et cetera. It is also essential to establish a direct partnership between local universities-local VT operators due to the lack of universities' operational competences. Hence, once accounting for the coordination between these two entities, the VT programs' plan and implementation can adequately project students and local communities' expectations.

Further, while the program is set on the local level, both sending and receiving universities should be in continuous contact to ensure that the incoming and host student-volunteers are part of a structured program. Henceforth, these programs should be structured so that student-volunteers bring added-value to communities at the same time that, these are aligned with their prospects to self-development. These facts prove the role of universities in setting local programs and connecting with the international context. Lastly, the risk's magnitude is amplified to those sending university due to the country's distance where the VT program is located. In this sense, the coordination between universities and VT providers is considered significantly essential to be appropriately set. Then, once these programs are adequately established, the harmful risk associated with Voluntourism is expected to decrease. Subsequently, the universities feel more safeguarded regarding their legitimacy and responsibility to students, their relatives and the remaining involving parties in the academic sphere.

All things considered, universities' long-term legitimacy positions themselves with a critical role to support the path towards a win-win Voluntourism scenario while promoting an environment of mutual commitment, transparency, and respect among the stakeholders.

## **7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

This last chapter underlines the limitations that arose along with the research and indicates future research proposals to foster a deeper comprehension of the impact from these experiential learning programs, as a way to mitigate the risks of Voluntourism.

### **7.1. Limitations**

The research is aware of four main limitations of this study.

Firstly, since Voluntourism represents a global phenomenon, the data collection sample is not representative of every nationality as it should (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018). Therefore, additional research on this topic is incentivised. Secondly, any analysis was done about the cultural and intercultural dimensions resultant from the interviewees' relationship with the respective participants on each VT programs. This fact presents a gap in clarifying the cultural influence of power dynamics on VT programs' implementation and realisation. Thirdly, because of the lack of global policies in place, the focus on the bureaucratic requirements to be applied in this industry was not accounted for (Wearing et al., 2017). Lastly, the research interpretation excludes the quantitative components as it sharpens the conceptual analysis of its qualitative dimensions.

### **7.2. Future Research**

This dissertation aspires to contribute for a deeper comprehension of how universities can foster the path towards a win-win Voluntourism scenario throughout these experiential learning opportunities, namely International Service-Learning programs. Hence, during the data collection process, three additional aspects rouse as an occasion to continue exploring the long-term impacts on these programs' object authenticity.

Besides the fact that this study contributes to understanding the development of these experiential learning programs, it is essential to explore student-volunteers' impact on those who prefer to volunteer with their local communities. These findings could help realise if the cultural exchange is equally established on national student-volunteers throughout the contact with incoming student-volunteer. Plus, this would also bring evidence if the impact replicates itself on the personal and interpersonal level and their commitment to communities.

Also, Voluntourism is usually associated with short-term programs in which “making a difference” is immediately perceived. In this way, it is crucial to verify if student-volunteers’ impact and emotions would have the same self-realisation when being part of long-term programs that address challenging structural problems. This could clarify the volunteers’ sense of personal realisation, persistence and resilience in contrast to those programs when the emotional impact is felt immediately. Lastly, future research is required to understand these academic programs’ influence in nurturing global citizenship competencies and decision-making on a senior professional context. This could assess these experiential learning programs’ long-lasting impact on reshaping the student-volunteers’ character in personal and professional growth.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: The Research Gap

Field of Research/Author	Research Objective	Methodology	Research Gap
<b>Voluntourism</b>			
(Magrizos et al., 2020)	The study aimed to comprehend the effects of the transformative experiences in voluntourists and how they occur.	Mixed Methods <i>(Quantitative Survey + Qualitative In-Depth Interviews)</i>	The clarification about the collaborative transformational influence in Voluntourism among voluntourists, local communities and the environment.
(Wearing et al., 2017)	The evaluation and conceptualization of Voluntourism.	Literature Review	To explore the decommodification and sustainability of Voluntourism in terms of the intercultural exchange.
(Kontogeorgopoulos, 2016)	The object authenticity of VT programs in Thailand.	Qualitative <i>(Semi-Structured Interviews + NVivo )</i>	Recommendations are exposed, but any research gap is identified.
(Steele et al., 2017)	The Monitoring and Evaluation phases of the VT programs development, from the VT operators' perspectives.	Mixed Methods <i>(Quantitative Questionnaire + Qualitative In-Depth Interviews)</i>	Lack of acknowledgement from the VT operators about the impact of their programs on host communities.
<b>Sustainable Local Development</b>			
(Lee & Zhang, 2020)	The Sustainable Voluntourism within the economic, cultural and environmental domains.	Qualitative <i>(Semi-Structured Interviews + Participant Observation)</i>	Further studies should focus on the perspectives from local government about the progress of Voluntourism. Also, statistical analysis should endorse the findings. Lastly, a longitudinal study should be conducted to reinforce the comprehension of sustainable effects.
(Eckardt et al., 2020)	Develop a realistic evaluation among the stakeholders and understand the influence of context-mechanism-outcomes along the VT supply chain.	Literature Review	Field data to endorse the reliability of the model for a systematic analysis of the supply chain.
(Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018)	The impacts of Voluntourism on host communities, based on a managerial perspective.	Qualitative <i>(In-Depth Interviews + NVivo)</i>	Further comprehension of the VT managers' role as stakeholders. Additionally, the term "volunteer tourist" should be reconsidered. More studies should focus on a systematic and professional approach to avoid the commodification of VT programs.

## The Research Gap

(Continued)

<b>Global Education</b>			
(Bowen & Dallam, 2020)	The development of experiential learning in a sustainable international context, based on the Fair Trade Learning standards	Mixed Methods <i>(Quantitative Evaluation Assessment + Qualitative Online Open-Ended Survey)</i>	Recommendations are exposed, but any research gap is identified.
(Lough & Tiessen, 2018)	The influence of the VT programs' characteristics.	Quantitative <i>(Online Survey)</i>	Explore other characteristics such as power dynamics, decision-making and to assess the volunteers' competencies.
(Butcher, 2017)	A critical analysis of the position of Voluntourism as a promoter of ethical global citizenship.	Literature Review	Any research gap is identified.
(Sklad et al., 2016)	The conceptualization of the development of Global Citizenship Education, based on a project "Going Glocal".	Mixed Methods <i>(Quantitative Evaluation Questionnaires + Qualitative Semi-Structured and In-Depth Interviews)</i>	Contrast the impact of Global Citizenship Education between international and non-international universities and respective students.
(Hartman et al., 2014)	The standards for the relation between university-community.	Primary and Secondary Data Analysis	Further analysis of the implementation of Fair Trade Learning standards for the International Volunteering programs and involving parties.

## Appendix 2: Interviewing Schedule – Student-Volunteers

<b>Issues of Interest</b> <i>(Based on The Literature)</i>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Reframed Question</b>
<b>Motivations of Student-Volunteers:</b>		
Duration of placement	(Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Cunha et al., 2019)	For how long have you volunteered? Was time a restriction to not enrol in a long-term program?
Where there any skill requirements to do this project?	(Speijer, 2018)	Have you volunteered in an area related to your university career?
Was the destination of the program driven by development-related motives?	(Kontogeorgopoulos, 2014)	Why did you decide about going volunteering?
Are volunteers providing skills that are unavailable on the local labor market?	(Gilfillan, 2015)	Would the local population have had the skills to execute the task without your support?
Do you think your volunteer work will still affect the local community in 20 years?	(Speijer, 2018)	Do you think your volunteer work will still affect the local community in 5 years? How?
<b>Dissertation Related: The Opinion from Students-Volunteers</b>		
<b>PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION</b>		
Duration of participation permitted by the academic course.	(Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Cunha et al., 2019)	What is your opinion, if universities would promote a career-related international volunteer program as an integral part of the academic curriculum plan? Would you instead enrol for a short-term experience or a long-term experience? Why?
<b>RESPONSIVE EVALUATION</b>		
Skills fit (whether the selection based on skills is relevant)	(Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Cunha et al., 2019)	What would impact the local development if you could provide career-related skills on your volunteer placement?
<b>EVALUATION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE</b>		
How might transformative learning be enhanced in Community-Based Ecotourism?	(Walter, 2016)	Do you think your career-related volunteer work would now bring more impact to the local community in 5 years? How?
<b>EMPOWERMENT EVALUATION</b>		
The importance to clarify what is “global citizenship” in association with the education sphere.	(Jorgenson et al., 2012)	What are the expectations you have on the futuristic academic curriculum as a "global citizen"?
<b>VALUE-ENGAGED EVALUATION</b>		
How can foreign medical volunteers best collaborate/work together with the local healthcare workers?	(Loiseau et al., 2016)	What are the expectations you have from the host community towards yourself?

### Appendix 3: Interviewing Schedule – VT Operators

<b>Issues of Interest</b> <i>(Based on The Literature)</i>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Reframed Question</b>
<b>VT Operators' Impact for Development:</b>		
Were the project community initiated and driven?	(Gilfillan, 2015)	How does the development of the project occur?
Can you comment on the relationship between the foreign volunteers and the local health care workers?	(Loiseau et al., 2016)	Can you comment on the relationship between the volunteers and the host community?
Do volunteer tourists ever come into your village with some misconceptions or misunderstandings about the project, environment or local people?	(Ezra, 2013)	Do volunteers ever come to the project with misunderstandings about the program itself, and the local communities' context?
What do you think are necessary components of partnerships between people from different countries?	(Loiseau et al., 2016)	What are the required components for the partnership between different countries, regarding volunteers and local communities?
Do you think that the work that volunteers do is relevant to the local community?	(Loiseau et al., 2016)	Do you think that the voluntourists' performance ensures relevance, and is seen as best practices for the local community?
How can foreign medical volunteers best collaborate/work together with the local health care workers?	(Loiseau et al., 2016)	How can a more positive relationship be promoted with local communities?
<b>Dissertation Related: The Opinion from VT Operators</b>		
<b>PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION</b>		
		What is your opinion, if universities would promote a career-related international volunteer program as an integral part of the academic curriculum plan?
Did the project form part of a boarder development program? Did the organization host volunteers repeatedly?	(Gilfillan, 2015)	How could universities strategically coordinate the short-term experiences towards continuous local development?
<b>RESPONSIVE EVALUATION</b>		
What do you think are the positive and negative effects of volunteer tourists on the environment and the host community?	(Ezra, 2013)	What are the crucial aspects and hinder barriers universities should take into account to impact communities positively?
<b>EVALUATION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE</b>		
How will this impact the synergy among members of the group, host communities and the staff?	(Andereck et al., 2012)	How can universities facilitate the mitigation of the risks associated with the Volunteer Tourism?
<b>EMPOWERMENT EVALUATION</b>		
What is the relationship between all stakeholders' views of the immersion program?	(Kearney et al., 2018)	To which extent, do you feel universities can be a key player, bridging the relationship between the stakeholders (VT operators and governmental bodies) towards this project implementation?
<b>VALUE-ENGAGED EVALUATION</b>		
In terms of community impact, are the reasons for the partnership understood and embraced by multiple and diverse stakeholders?	(Hartman, 2015)	Do you believe this partnership could be understood as mutually beneficial and equally embraced by the multiple stakeholders in community impact?

## Appendix 4: Interviewing Schedule – Academic Institutions

<b>Issues of Interest</b> <i>(Based on The Literature)</i>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Reframed Question</b>
<b>Dissertation Related: The Opinion from Academic Institutions</b>		
<b>PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION</b>		
Were the project community initiated and driven?	(Gilfillan, 2015)	In which context are communities involved in the development of the programs?
Active Participate, through the engagement of students to improve projects and cooperate with project partners.	(Cunha et al., 2019)	How you do perceive and measure the impact universities create to local communities through career-related volunteer programs?
What comprises the informal experiential learning curriculum for visitors participating in Community-Based Ecotourism?	(Walter, 2016)	What are the crucial aspects and hinder barriers universities should take into account to impact communities positively?
<b>RESPONSIVE EVALUATION</b>		
What are the expectations of the host community, and how do they relate to the institutional goals?	(Ezra, 2013)	How do universities coordinate the dual-mission and impacts between students and local communities?
<b>EVALUATION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE</b>		
How will this impact the synergy among members of the group, host communities and the staff?	(Andereck et al., 2012)	How can universities facilitate the mitigation of the risks associated with the Volunteer Tourism?
<b>EMPOWERMENT EVALUATION</b>		
What is the relationship between all stakeholders' views of the immersion program?	(Kearney et al., 2018)	To which extent, do you feel universities can be a key player, bridging the relationship between the stakeholders (VT operators and governmental bodies) towards this project implementation?
<b>VALUE-ENGAGED EVALUATION</b>		
In terms of community impact, are the reasons for the partnership understood and embraced by multiple and diverse stakeholders?	(Hartman, 2015)	Do you believe this partnership could be understood as mutually beneficial and equally embraced by the multiple stakeholders in community impact?

## Appendix 5: Interviewing Schedule – Governmental Bodies

<b>Issues of Interest</b> <i>(Based on The Literature)</i>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Reframed Question</b>
<b>Dissertation Related: The Opinion from Governmental Bodies</b>		
<b>PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION</b>		
-	-	What is your opinion, if universities would promote a career-related international volunteer program as an integral part of the academic curriculum plan?
<b>RESPONSIVE EVALUATION</b>		
What are the expectations of the host community, and how do they relate to the institutional goals?	(Kearney et al., 2018)	What would be your recommendations to guarantee the mutual benefits to students and the local communities?
<b>EVALUATION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE</b>		
How will this impact the synergy among members of the group, the host community, and your staff?	(Andereck et al., 2012)	How can universities facilitate the mitigation of the risks associated with the Volunteer Tourism?
<b>EMPOWERMENT EVALUATION</b>		
What is the relationship between all stakeholders' views of the immersion program?	(Kearney et al., 2018)	To which extent, do you feel universities can be a key player, bridging the relationship between the stakeholders (VT operators and governmental bodies) towards this project implementation?
<b>VALUE-ENGAGED EVALUATION</b>		
In terms of community impact, are the reasons for the partnership understood and embraced by multiple and diverse stakeholders?	(Hartman, 2015)	Do you believe this partnership could be understood as mutually beneficial and equally embraced by the multiple stakeholders in community impact?

## Appendix 6: Consent Form for Research Participant



### **Voluntourism: Can Universities make a Difference that lasts a Lifetime?**

A Master's Dissertation from the International MSc in Management at Católica Lisbon SBE

Dear Participant,

I would like to thank you in advance for your availability being part of my Dissertation's research investigation.

As follows, kindly find below a brief introduction to the purpose of the study, so it provides a clearer understanding of how the reason it is being conducted. Sequentially, the confirmation of your participation consent will be requested to your validation.

Please note, participants should be at least 18 years to be part of this interview. Otherwise, if under 18 years old, the parents or guardians must send an informed consent on behalf of the minor to the email [catheeabreu@gmail.com](mailto:catheeabreu@gmail.com).

#### **Purpose of The Study:**

The Volunteer Tourism industry has been increasing over the last decades due to youth generations' eagerness to impact the world while embarking on a self-development journey positively. Controversially, some critics argue whether the international volunteering mission has designed following a local community-centric approach. In this way, this study focuses on understanding what position universities can adopt to promote a win-win voluntourism to sustainable local development.

#### **I understand that:**

- This interview administrated by the researcher will be digitally recorded, and it is expected to take no longer than 20-30 minutes;

- This interview is entirely voluntarily. I can withdraw the participation at any time without proving any reason for its justification be provided, and consequently, the audio recording and transcripts will be destroyed;
- In the event of feeling uncomfortable replying to the questionnaire, during the interview, I may refuse to answer it with no justification being given;
- All information will be solely for the Master Dissertation, and it will be kept private, while also your identity will be maintained confidential;
- Data will be protected on a personal digital folder and posterior it will be deleted 1 year after the research's conclusion (expected date: on the 31st January of 2021).

In case of any further question about this research, please contact me and I would be more than glad to clarify it with you.

**Student Researcher:**

Catarina Abreu

catheeabreu@gmail.com

Under the Supervision of Professor Dra. Helena Rodrigues.

**First and Last Name:**

**By completing this consent, I do agree to be part of this interview:**

- Yes, I do agree in participating in this interview.
- No, I don't.

**Age:**

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55 or older

**Nationality:**

**Email:**

## Appendix 7: The Co-Occurrence of Concepts

	Co-Occurrence of Concepts	Thesaurus-Based Concepts
1	Knowledge - Development	Knowledge, terms, need, positive, international, universities, communities
2	Volunteering - Experiences	Volunteering, international, internship
3	Important - Experience	Important, student, party, third
4	Experience - Work	Experience, need, party, programs, things, third, useful
5	Local – United States	Local, communities, terms, look, thinking
6	Organization - Government	Organization, project
7	Sure - Party	Sure, things, third, doing, programs, useful
8	Able - Open	Able, local, thinking
9	Communities - Program	Communities, person, international, world
10	Internship - Important	Internship, need
11	Look - Doing	Look, particular, thinking
12	Programs - Government	Programs, universities, useful
13	Terms - Knowledge	Thinking, look, particular
14	United States - Programs	United States, development, international, knowledge, look, need, positive, terms, universities
15	Communities - World	Communities, development, knowledge, positive
16	Doing - Different	Doing, universities
17	Example - Able	Example, United States, terms, positive
18	Example - Different	Example, particular
19	Internship - People	People
20	Open - University	University
21	Particular - Organization	Particular
22	People - Knowledge	People
23	Positive - Experience	Positive
24	Work - People	Work
25	Able - Work	Work
26	Different - Useful	Different, example
27	Experiences - Particular	Particular
28	International - Sure	International, internship, person, positive
29	Local - Experiences	Local
30	Local - Sure	Sure
31	Open - Internship	Open
32	Person - Example	Person
33	Person - Internship	Person, international, positive
34	World - Different	World