

**Thesis title:** **How to make the grass greener on the side of Green Life Volunteers?**

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# PREFACE

In front of you is the thesis “How to make the grass **greener** on the side of Green Life Volunteers?”. It has been written to fulfill the graduation requirements of the Vitality and Tourism Management Program at the HZ University of Applied Sciences. I was engaged in researching and writing this thesis from November 2015 to May 2016.

The project was undertaken at the request of Green Life Volunteers, where I undertook an internship. Green Life Volunteers is a starting non-profit volunteer organization. Volunteering has been always an interesting subject to me, because I like the idea of helping people to get nothing in return.

I will use this opportunity to thank some people who have helped me with obtaining “How to make the grass **greener** on the side of Green Life Volunteers?”. I would like to thank all the volunteers who I have interviewed during the research, because of them I could write this thesis. I would also like to thank my Internship supervisor Janina Schan for the opportunity to do an internship and research in Costa Rica, and I also want to thank her for her help and support during my thesis. To my other colleagues of Green Life Volunteers, Carlies Bervaes; I would like to thank you for your wonderful cooperation as well, you were always helpful, and you kept me motivated. Furthermore, I would like to thank my university supervisor Enno van der Graaf for his advice and patience during my research.

My dear parents deserve a particular note of thanks. They have always supported me in realization that I have to follow my dreams. They always have had confidence in me, and I can always count on them, which is proven again during my graduation internship. Finally, I would like to thanks Lieke Beezemer who has given me advice and support during finalizing my thesis.

**Thyrza Moes**

*Puerto Jimenez, May 2016*

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# ABSTRACT

Green Life Volunteers offers various volunteering projects, but Green Life Volunteers is not the only organization that offers volunteering projects in the region. Despite the fact that the competitors from Green Live Volunteers commercialized organizations are and that they receive a lot more for their programs, and they attract more volunteers than Green Life Volunteers. To increase the number of volunteers by Green Life Volunteers, they want to find out how they can improve the projects adapt to the needs of the volunteers. Analyzing the projects, volunteers, Green Life Volunteers and other NGO's, will give an insight of how and where Green Life Volunteers can distinguish themselves from other competitors in Costa Rica.

The general objective of this research is to gain knowledge and understanding of the motives and arguments why volunteers chose for a volunteering project and which volunteer projects Green Life Volunteers could add to gain more value. Here for, is the following research question drafted; *"How can Green Life Volunteers improve the volunteer projects adapt to the needs of the volunteers?"*, and four sub-questions.

To answer the main question and sub-questions there is used a qualitative research; semi-structured interviews and observation. The results of the semi-structured interviews has shown the motivations of the volunteers to participate in volunteering projects, which

services and values they find important, and which projects of Green Life Volunteers need improvements. The most important motivation to volunteer is to gain experiences. Volunteers are interested in volunteering abroad because they want to immerse themselves in a different culture, and they want to learn or improve their language skills. They choose for a certain project because they have a good feeling about it, and which offer advantageous conditions to their volunteers. Decisive factors for a volunteer to choose for a certain volunteer organization are the affordable prices of the projects, locations and the intentions. However, the most important service a volunteer organization could offer to their volunteers is lodging, and the most important value for a project is the educational aspect according the volunteers. Furthermore, volunteers have various improvements and recommendations for the projects of Green Life Volunteers, and for Green Life Volunteers itself. Finally, the observation has shown which projects are interested for Green Life Volunteers to add to their assortment. These projects are focused on wildlife, sea turtles and the local community. Based on the results, the recommendation is to provide more customer service, provide more information to the volunteers, focus more on promotion, and improve the projects of Green Life Volunteers and add new projects. Follow-up research should be focused on more projects in whole Costa Rica, and more focused on the community.

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# INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER 1

*“Volunteer do not get paid, not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless.”*

- Sherry Anderson







### 1.1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Volunteering is an interesting concept, working without getting paid. The volunteers have to pay for the work that they are doing, is that not strange? So, what is tourism volunteering exactly?

Volunteering or tourism volunteering is a sector that is growing particularly rapidly. Growth of conscientious travelers is being driven by a confluence of lifestyle trends that suggest that the demand for responsible tourism is likely to remain strong into the future. As for volunteer tourism the volunteers are searching for fulfillment. They want a 'green' experience as an escape from the stress of urban life, and they are also searching for a deeper meaning in their vacation experiences. Travelers and the volunteer tourist donates time, money, and/or goods to support worthy projects in the host destination. Value-added components of leisure holidays are the opportunities for personal growth and fulfillment (CREST, 2013). Volunteer tourists face an increasing choice of suppliers who offer an undifferentiated choice of projects abroad. These suppliers ask a lot of money for the volunteers to pay for their projects (Tommy, 2015). Because of the fact that volunteers have more choice, it is difficult to stand out for organizations. Non-profit organization Green Life Volunteers experiences this as negative and want to recruit more volunteers.

### 1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

As mentioned before Green Life Volunteers offers various volunteering projects, but Green Life Volunteers is not the only organization that offers volunteering projects in the region. The content of the projects from Green Live Volunteers are focused on economic support of non-profit organizations and local communities. However, projects of Green Life Volunteers differ from other volunteering organizations. Competitors of Green Live Volunteers are more commercialized organizations and these organizations offer volunteer projects who are run by foreigners and the financial profits are often transferred into the company instead of the community. Green Life Volunteers has many other competitors in the whole country. Despite the fact that the competitors from Green Live Volunteers commercialized organizations are and that they receive a lot more for their programs, they attract more volunteers than Green Life Volunteers.

To increase the number of volunteers by Green Life Volunteers, they want to find out how they can improve the projects adapt to the needs of the volunteers. Analyzing the projects, volunteers, Green Life Volunteers and other NGO's, will give an insight of how and where Green Life Volunteers can distinguish themselves from other competitors in Costa Rica. After this research, Green Life Volunteers comprehends the motives and arguments of volunteers to choose for a certain program, which criteria are important to the volunteers regarding the projects, which kind of projects the volunteers attract and which projects will increase the value of Green Life Volunteers in order to have a better market position regarding other volunteer companies in Costa Rica.

### 1.3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND AIMS

The general objective of this research is to gain knowledge and understanding of the motives and arguments why volunteers chose for a volunteering project and which volunteer projects Green Life Volunteers could add to gain more value. The results of this research provide recommendations for Green Life Volunteers to be applied in practice to gain more volunteers.

### 1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

*How can Green Life Volunteers improve the volunteer projects adapt to the needs of the volunteers?*

- ✎ What are volunteer's motivations and arguments when choosing a volunteering project?
- ✎ Which criteria are important to volunteers regarding the projects that are provided by non-profit volunteer companies in Costa Rica?
- ✎ What are the experiences of volunteers during their time at Green Life Volunteers?
- ✎ Which volunteer projects in Costa Rica will increase the value of Green Life Volunteers?

### 1.5. RESEARCH STRUCTURE

This research project is divided into seven chapters, which are as follows: The first chapter is the introduction. The introduction describes the background information of the research, the problem statement, the objectives and the research questions. The second chapter introduces the company profile in order to get to know Green Life Volunteers better. The third chapter is a theoretical framework, outline existing theories and information of prior research. The theoretical framework is divided into different subjects which are relevant to the main question. The subjects are as follow: volunteer tourism, motivation for volunteering, important criteria, impact on local community, environmental, social and economic impacts, and last best practices volunteering project. Furthermore, the fourth chapter, methodology, contains the research method. The population and sample are identified, as well as the data collection method. Moreover, the data analysis method is explained along with the reliability and validity of the research results. The fifth chapter, results, displays the obtained results from the research. Chapter six concerns the discussion in which the results of the theoretical framework are compared with the obtained results. The seventh chapter shows the conclusion and at last, chapter eight deals with the recommendation. The recommendation provides Green Life Volunteers with ideas on improving the projects and the organization of Green Life Volunteers.

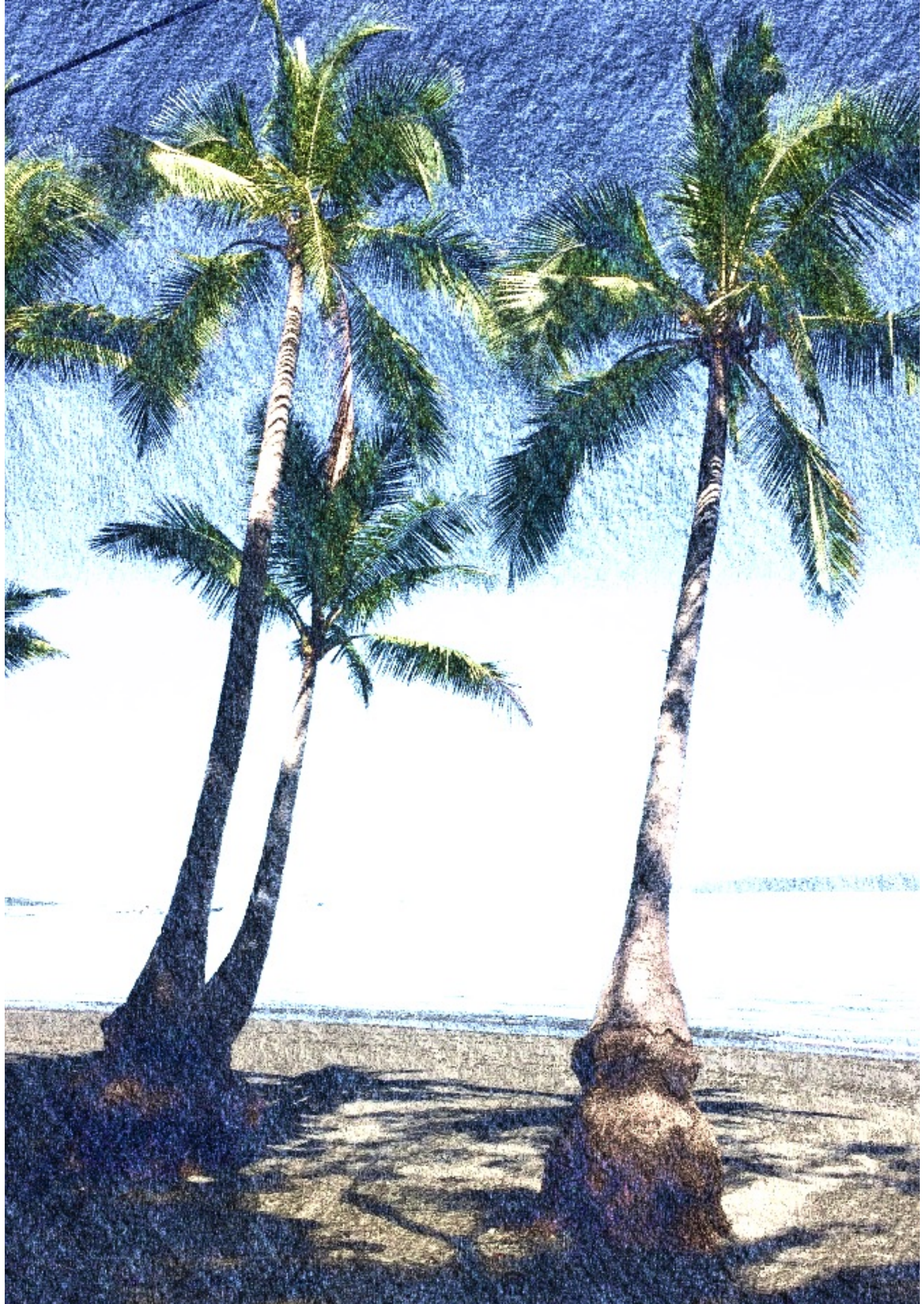
# COMPANY PROFILE

## CHAPTER 2

*“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much”.*

*- Helen Keller*









## 2.1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Company	Green Life Volunteers
Address	60702 Puntarenas, Golfito Puerto Jimenez, Costa Rica
Email	<a href="mailto:info@glvolunteers.com">info@glvolunteers.com</a>
Website	<a href="http://www.glvolunteers.com">www.glvolunteers.com</a>
Telephone number	+506 8570 0710

## 2.2. GREEN LIFE VOLUNTEERS

Green Life Volunteers offers a personal and great service. It is a small non-profit organization that is run by a few volunteers but still offers the same services and projects as the 'big organizations' in Costa Rica. Green Life Volunteers is different from those big organizations because at Green Life Volunteers the volunteers are not just a number, every volunteer is unique and different and Green Life Volunteer works hard to create volunteer projects that fits everybody. Green Life Volunteers is a flexible organization because they do not offer certain start dates, here can the volunteers start whenever they like and for how long they want on most projects. It is even possible to volunteer for just a couple of days on certain projects. The costs to volunteer by Green Life Volunteers are low, the fees that volunteers pay go directly into the projects, the accommodation, the food, the staff, the airport pick-up, the transport to the projects, and the orientation. The projects which Green Life Volunteers offers are projects which are in need of actual help. The projects which Green Life Volunteers collaborate with have years of experience with volunteers.

The host families are handpicked by local staff and all of them have years of experience hosting foreigners and volunteers. The projects are all explored by Green Life Volunteers to see if it benefits the volunteers as well as the local community.

## 2.3. HISTORY

Green Life Volunteers is a non-profit volunteer organization located in the Osa Peninsula in Puerto Jimenez, Costa Rica. In the beginning of 2011 Green Life Volunteers is founded by Janina Schan. Janina Schan, also the manager of Green Life Volunteers, was born in Germany and decided to move to Costa Rica. Her educational background is in Environmental Studies and Biology, and she has a Master in Environmental Studies focused on tropical ecology. During her master she studied for six months in Costa Rica. First she was employed in the tourism and volunteer industry. The idea of Green Life Volunteers came much later, but she wanted to make a difference. She always had the desire to help out, especially in development projects and nature conservation.

## 2.4. PROJECTS

Green Life Volunteers offers various projects. The projects which they offer at the moment are: Solar Project, Dog Rescue Project, Large Parrot Breeding & Research Centre, Organic / Sustainable Farming, Reforestation & Recycling, Teach English, Serpentarium, Turtle Conversation, Environmental Education, Veterinary Volunteer, Volunteer in a Hostel, Your Skill is Needed, Spanish Class and two new projects, Bird Conversation Project, and National Park Volunteer. The costs of these projects vary between \$299.- to \$599.- US dollar per week and Green Life Volunteers offers lower costs for additional weeks. The project fees included the following: the volunteer projects, accommodation with a host family, food (usually two - three meals a day), a local coordination team to oversee the program, an orientation on arrival, the services of the Local Partner Organization, and 24-hour emergency support during the volunteering project. It is optional for the volunteers to get a letter of recommendation and reference.

## 2.5. MISSION AND VISION

The mission of Green Live Volunteers is to offer real and meaningful voluntary projects in which the volunteers only pay for what is needed, such as food, accommodation costs and a small part for services of setting up the volunteer projects for the volunteers. The vision of Green Life Volunteers is to be a leading non-profit volunteer organization in Costa Rica that understands the needs of volunteers and the local community. The majority of the participants in the volunteering industry are students. Green Life Volunteers is focused on (potential) volunteers from all over the world. One target group that Green Life Volunteers definitely want to attract are students from all over the world. Moreover, volunteers at Green Life Volunteers are mainly from Europe, United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.



# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## CHAPTER 3

*“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime”.*

- *Chinese Proverb*







To answer the research question: ‘How can Green Life Volunteers improves their volunteer projects adapt to the needs of the volunteers?’ it is important to explore different existing theories. The theoretical framework will discuss different scientific and non-scientific theories from other researchers. The latest trends and developments are discussed which are interrelated one to another. The following concepts are used: Volunteer tourism, motivations for volunteering, important criteria, impact on local community, environmental, social, and economic impact, and best practice of a volunteering project.

### 3.1. VOLUNTEER TOURISM

(Lee, Reisinger, Kim, & Yoon, 2014) define volunteering as “any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or organization”. Volunteering is a non-salaried service requiring a sense of obligation on the part of volunteers in terms of time, effort, and skill development (Holmes, Smith, Lockstone-Binney, & Baum, 2010). Moreover, volunteer tourism is one of the fastest growing alternative tourism markets in the world. Volunteer tourism could also be defined as “an activity in which people pay to volunteer in development or conservation projects” (Conran, 2011). (Tomazos & Butler, 2012) describe volunteer tourism as follows:

“Volunteer tourism refers to tourists who pay to travel to another location where they choose to use their free time to engage in meaningful experiences. They are involved in helping communities by such means as distributing necessities and other resources, restoring and conserving environments, or assisting in field research related to protecting the environment or endangered species of animals. Volunteer tourism is a personal experience where people engage in to fulfill intrinsic motivation which can benefit the participant’s life and the host community” (Tomazos & Butler, 2012).

Christopher Hill states that the volunteer tourism industry is favorable for the world. People who experience volunteering while on vacation are inspired to volunteer long-

term, passionate proponents or donors of their own community. This is a benefit for the volunteer tourism industry because the volunteer tourism experience offers a routine holiday with a bit of volunteering. More people are seeking fulfillment, meaning and a sense of purpose in life, and that is the reason why this industry is rapidly growing. Volunteer tourism and aid work are two different markets. Aid programs perform an essential role where volunteers or participants are long-term involved. Volunteer tourism is appealing for people who are going on vacation and who do not have the time to be involved with traditional aid programs. It is dependent on the skill of the volunteer if volunteer tourism has benefits for the host communities. The volunteers should look for an organization that considers the local community, and that guarantee that the needs of the projects have been sourced by the community rather than imposed on it externally (Clothier, 2010).

Mark Jacobs states that the growing volunteer tourism industry is unfavorable for the world. To figure out which volunteering organizations are doing good and which are not, is almost impossible for the volunteers. Organizations can cost a lot, but the local communities see only a few of the benefits. Mostly small organizations are doing good because they cannot afford to engage and mass marketing. However, this means that the smaller organizations have struggles to compete with big organizations which spend a lot more money on advertising. The smaller organizations do not fill the

capacity to take volunteers on the projects. A lot of travel companies which offer volunteering opportunities do not fit with what is truly needed. Before a volunteer choose a volunteering project, they have to ask the organizations some questions about the projects; if they are needed, if it is a charity or a profit-making company, etc. To keep the industry honest there is a regulatory body needed that assesses the validity of different organizations. Easy access to information is essential, so individuals know their time and money will be put to beneficial use (Clothier, 2010).

In conclusion, there are multiple ways to define volunteering and volunteer tourism. All the manners are focused on given freely to benefit another. Volunteer tourism is one of the fastest growing alternative tourism markets in the world. Some people say that volunteer tourism is good for the world, while other say that it is bad for the world. To know if volunteer projects are beneficial, the volunteer should look for an organization that acknowledges the local community, and that guarantee that the needs of the projects have been sourced by the community rather than imposed on it externally. Therefore, every volunteer has their own motives to join a volunteering project.

### 3.2. MOTIVATIONS

#### 3.2.1. Volunteering

Research shows that there are various motivations for volunteers to participate in a volunteering program. Individuals who have a desire to help others are more likely to become volunteers. The central motives for individuals to participate in volunteer work include selflessness and doing something meaningful. However, volunteers have egoistic motives as well. Volunteering can provide an opportunity

for individuals to satisfy their social and psychological needs (Bussel & Forbes, 2002). However, (Lo & Lee, 2011) identified five major motives to participate in a volunteering project. "Cultural immersion and interaction with local people, desire to give back, seeking a shared experience and an educational opportunity, religious involvement, and escaping from everyday life."

Tomazos and Butler (2012) describe that the motivations of volunteer tourists can be divided into three categories. Material and utilitarian is one of them. Material and utilitarian apply to motivations into rewards that have economic value. The volunteer may strive to gain knowledge and intellectual improvement that will provide them to get new skills which could generate career opportunities (Tomazos & Butler, 2012). However, research show that educational cultural immersion a key motive is for volunteers to participate in a volunteering project (Broad & Jenkins, 2009), while others have explored that development of new skills a motive is to participate (Tomazos & Butler, 2012). The second category according to Tomazos and Butler (2012) is solitary, affective and social. This category applies to motivation derived from interpersonal relationship, group status, social interaction, group identification and friendship. The social rewards of volunteering are crucial for volunteers and the most types of volunteers shared a strong preference for group activities and meeting new like-minded people (Bruyere & Rappe, 2007). The third, and last category according to Tomazos and Butler (2012) is purposive, normative and altruistic. These are motivations based on global concerns. People gain pleasure from doing a good deed even if it gives them no material benefit in return. Selflessness is a key motive for volunteers to participate in a volunteering program. Moreover, other

motives for volunteers to participate in a volunteering program are more tourism specific. The place and the nature have been recognized as motivating factors. Besides that, also the experience that could transform the volunteers as individuals is a motivating factor (Tomazos & Butler, 2012).

(Wearing, 2004) states that, “The internal push motives of discovery, education, and personal growth are important to volunteer tourists, but benefits for destinations are more than simply pull motives to this group, for volunteer tourists see physical locations in developing countries as motivations in themselves”.

### 3.2.2. Abroad

Research show that there are different motives why volunteers choose for a specific country and/or continent, organizations and projects. Some reasons why they choose a specific country and/or continent are; travel, un-visited, safety, culture, familiarity, etc. The belief that ‘developing’ countries need help, desire to learn a language and cultures, the unknown, and personal recommendations is the reason that volunteers chose for certain countries or continents.

### 3.2.3. Projects

The reputation, project opportunities, marketing efforts, perceived safety, opportunity for independent research, and organization type are the reasons that specific organizations attract volunteer tourists. Pull motivations are related to destinations and projects because managers and operators can directly control these factors and recruit potential volunteers through advertising amenable attributes or altering projects. Volunteers motives may differ among various project types because there are different volunteers. For example, the gap-year

travelers, youth traveling or working between secondary school and university, chose organizations with programs that include additional benefits like excursions and language courses (Grimm & Needham, 2012).

### 3.2.4. Organization

The reasons why volunteers choose for a specific organization are the costs, program variety, legitimate, recommendation, organization type, professionalism, chance, and promotional material. Recommendation, project variety, activities, location, services, ecosystem, goals, family owned, and flexibility are some reasons why volunteers choose for a specific project (Grimm & Needham, 2012).

### 3.2.5. Expectations

Research shows that volunteers have high expectations for pre-trip services from the volunteer tourism, especially for trip preparation services such as packing lists and cultural information and less so for skill building and language classes. Volunteers have higher expectations of observing local activities and purchasing products than participating in activities. Volunteers expect to get well informed regarding clothing and items to take on their trip, as well as culturally appropriate behavior (Andereck, McGehee, Lee, & Clemmons, 2011).

In conclusion, there are different motivations for volunteers to participate in a volunteering program. People who are more likely to become volunteers have a desire to help others. Cultural immersion and interaction with local people, desire to give back, seeking a shared experience and an educational opportunity, religious involvement, and escaping from everyday life are several motivations to participate in a volunteering project. With this research there will be find out which

motives the volunteers have to volunteer in Costa Rica. There will also be researched if the volunteers only volunteer for their own value or also for the ecological and social value, like for the local community.

### 3.3. IMPORTANT CRITERIA

Research shows that volunteer tourism projects that provide a variety of pre-trip services, incorporate varying degrees of resident interaction, include different levels of emotional and physical intensity, and have a range of types of accommodations and other services available, can appeal to diverse kinds of people and result in satisfying and fulfilling volunteer tourism experiences (Andereck, McGehee, Lee, & Clemmons, 2011).

However, travel experience has a great influence on volunteers. It enabled them to experience to live off others, which changed the way they looked at life and the world. They want to give back to host communities, and want to do something meaningful in the hope to make a difference in the world. It is important to determine travelers' perceived value, because it constitutes the most important determinant of repurchase intention. Values are enduring beliefs about the desirability of particular modes of conduct or end states of existence. Research shows that the perceived value of visiting a destination or engaging in a specific type of travel strongly influences the future intention of travelers to return to the same destination or re-engage in a similar travel experience (Lo & Lee, 2010).

Research shows that volunteers prefer financial gain to benefit destinations rather than the first world profit makers and attach value and trust to the status of non-profit or charitable organizations (Tomazos & Butler, 2012).

During this research, criteria that are important to volunteers regarding the projects that are offered in Costa Rica will be examined.

### 3.4. IMPACT ON LOCAL COMMUNITY

The main idea of volunteering abroad is benefitting the host community. However, the relationship between volunteer tourists and the host community is complex. Research shows that there are two sides of volunteer tourism. On one side, positive relationships are created between the volunteers and the host communities. On the other side, these relationships are not equal and thus place the volunteer in a powerful position right from the beginning (Domingues & Nojd, 2012). Volunteer tourism is most beneficial when they aim to provide long term effects to host communities. For example, rebuilding or improving physical facilities, and teaching English. Especially education- related volunteer projects are preferred since these provide more sustainable and long-term effects that will in time enable the local population to break out of the poverty cycle (Sin, 2010).

Volunteer tourism also creates a number of benefits like, employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, revenue generation for governance at every level improvement in handicraft and hand loom industries, improvement in infrastructure, exposure of outer-world among locals, improvement in literacy rate, awareness about conservation of heritage and environment (Singh, 2014).

However, volunteer tourism literature pays less attention on the local community and more on the volunteers. Most community-centered research in volunteer tourism focuses on how volunteer tourism is beneficial. In addition, many volunteer tourism activities have a negative effect on tourism development in host

communities (Zahra & McGehee, 2013). Currently there are plenty of organizations which provide opportunities for well-meaning individuals to participate in a more humanitarian form of tourism, giving tourists an opportunity to give back to the communities they visit. Volunteer participants pay a fee to cover their accommodations, food, and the project where they want to participate. Most people believe that participate in a volunteer project is only a good thing, but the reality of volunteer tourists' work is often less noble than their intentions. In some cases, volunteer work causes more damage than good. Volunteer tourism could influence the communities negatively. They intend to help through a neglect of locals desires, a hindering of work progress and completion of unsatisfactory work and disruptions of local economies, a reinforcement of conceptualizations of the other, and an instigation of cultural changes (Guttentag, 2009)

Volunteer tourism also creates a negative impact on dependency on volunteer tourists, underestimation of locals' dignity and use of local resources beyond carrying capacity (Guttentag, 2009). However, many volunteer tourists see their work as beneficial and do not consider the possible negative impact of their presence on indigenous communities (Marktwardt, 2012). Host communities can become dependent upon volunteer tourism; it could also damage the dignity of local residents. Volunteer tourism could exceed the carrying capacity of the community and impeding the need of host communities in terms of tourism development (Zahra & McGehee, 2013). National Geographic puts is best in stating, 'Helping is not always helpful' (Schott, 2010). (Hannam & Knox, 2010) stated:

"There are two types of volunteer tourism: volunteer minded and vacation minded. Volunteers that are volunteer minded are more likely to have a positive impact on the destination as they are more interested in the volunteer side of the holiday. However, volunteers who are being vacation minded are more interested in the vacation side of the holiday and likely to cause more harm than good".

A potentially negative impact is that popular destinations for volunteer tourism are usually less developed countries, and they generally have less resources. Furthermore, another negative impact is the impact on the environment. The transport that the volunteers have to use to travel to get to the country where they will do the volunteer job have a negative impact on the environment. Instead of travelling to the country far away, they could also choose for volunteer projects close to their home, this will minimize the environmental impact. Volunteers could also choose to send money to the destinations, this will still benefit the locals, but it will minimize their own environmental damage (Heal, 2011).

To sum up, many volunteer tourism activities have a negative impact on tourism development in host communities. These days there are plenty of organizations which provide opportunities for well-meaning individuals to participate in a more humanitarian form of tourism, giving tourists an opportunity to give back to the communities they visit. Most people think that participate in a volunteer project is only a good thing, but the reality of volunteer tourists' work is often less noble than their intentions. Volunteer tourism also creates a number of benefits. This research will ask the volunteers if they know what the benefits are for the local community, and if they find it



important, and how Green Life Volunteers could adapt to this.

### **3.5. ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS**

Volunteering can give volunteers the opportunity to undertake new roles and responsibilities. They are given the opportunity to use skill they never have used before. Volunteering prove a safe environment in which volunteers have the opportunity to practice social action and witness the outcomes of their engagement. However, powerful the social motivation to volunteer, it could be a dead end if the outcome is not connected with a clear sense, they can become quickly disillusioned if they cannot see tangible results. However, people are less likely to volunteer in areas that have low social capital. Volunteering can thus be seen as an indicator of social capital; it is necessary in order to create an upward spiral rather than a downward spiral. People need to see tangible outcomes from the work of volunteers in order to support those activities and continue to engage with them.

Moreover, in international development work is one of the biggest challenges to minimize dependency and support sustainability. There is a need for work to be rooted in communities in order to be sustainable, but also suggested that long-term relationships can often aid sustainability not diminish it and that volunteers can play a role in facilitating long-term relationships. Dependency has seen as a problem because there could be culture of reliance on NGOs. This can result in an impact on communities after the project finishes. It is important to create long-term relationships with local communities and organizations which are not dependent on short-term project cycles (Burns, 2015).

At the expense of sustainable use of natural resources, poorly planned tourism-related coastal developments have taken place. Illegal and uncontrolled development has caused shortages of fresh water, pollution of ocean waters and beaches, illegal destruction of forests and mangroves, and stopping of public access to beaches. The international image of Costa Rica as a green and sustainable destination is damaging through this process. Tourist experiences will be aggravating, and it will cause a decline in quality of life for residents in a number of coastal communities. Local conflicts around natural resources and environmental issues have become more frequent in recent years. The ability to prevent damage remains weak while there is more public awareness of environmental problems. However, coastal tourism has created jobs. The government takes advantage of the construction and investment brought on by the global economic crisis to examine the impact of coastal tourism development, as well as the costs and benefits of different models of tourism. Costa Rica's nature tourism sector built on environmental and social standers and good practices, has demonstrated both its profitability and its capacity to meet changing consumer trends. Costa Rica's outstanding biodiversity has earned Costa Rica a well-deserved international reputation as a leading eco-tourism destination (Durham, Honey, & Vargas, 2010).

In conclusion, volunteering proves a safe environment in which volunteers have the opportunity to practice social action and witness the outcomes of their engagement. At the expense of sustainable use of natural resources, poorly planned tourism-related coastal developments have taken place. Illegal and uncontrolled development has caused shortages of fresh water, pollution of



ocean waters and beaches, illegal destruction of forests and mangroves, and stopping of public access to beaches. The international image of Costa Rica as a green and sustainable destination is damaging through this process. However, coastal tourism has created jobs. The government takes advantage of the construction and investment brought on by the global economic crisis to examine the impact of coastal tourism development, as well as the costs and benefits of different models of tourism. Costa Rica's outstanding biodiversity has earned Costa Rica a well-deserved international reputation as a leading eco-tourism destination. That is the reason why there are volunteer organizations with several projects.

### 3.6. BEST PRACTICE VOLUNTEERING PROJECT

The Talamanca Marine Turtle Conservation Program, which is founded in 1985 by ANAI. Asociación ANAI is a Costa Rican nonprofit organization that has pioneered some of the world's most successful and highly participatory community based conservation and development initiatives. Sea Turtle Conservation Project helps to protect the three species of endangered sea turtles. In 1990 the project incorporated two new elements: formal research activities and a volunteer program (Gray & Campbell, 2007). Nonprofit organization ANAI describe:

“The Talamanca Marine Turtle Conservation Program protects some of Central America's nesting beaches for endangered sea turtles and has saved thousands of leather-back, green, and hawks bill turtle eggs from human predation and animals. Sea turtle conservation has become the economic motor for several communities, generating up to seven times more income than was

previously generated from the harvest and sale of turtle eggs, through funded research and the provision of services to project volunteers and eco-tourists” (ANAICR, 2011).

The Talamanca Marine Turtle Conservation Program is one of the most successful projects of its kind in the world. Marine biologist, Didiher Chacon-Chaverri is the winner of the 2005 Whitley Award, which is sponsored by WWF-UK. Didiher is committed to the establishment of Marine Protected Areas and the effective protection of coral reef ecosystems in order to prevent the extinction of sea turtles. Didiher is also educating Costa Ricans about the impact people have on turtle numbers. Together with the Costa Rican government, other NGOs and international volunteers, they are focusing on protection against poaching, illegal trade and habitat fragmentation. As Didiher strongly believe:

“Nature conservation is not merely a biological issue, but also a socio-economic and human concern, which in Costa Rica depends upon convincing local people to modify their behavior patterns in order to allow coexistence with sea turtles” (Nature, 2011).

This program has become a living example of how a conservation project can improve a local economy and way of life, which in turn fuels further conservation efforts (ANAICR, 2011). The volunteer activities and the project's research are there from March until July, this is the duration of the leather-back turtle nesting season. This project tends to attract young travelers (often students) on a small budget, similar to other volunteer research eco-tourism projects (Gray & Campbell, 2007).

To sum up, the Talamanca Marine Turtle Conservation Program, which is founded in 1985 by ANAI. Asociación ANAI is a Costa

Rican nonprofit organization that has pioneered some of the world's most successful and highly participatory community based conservation and development initiatives. The Talamanca Marine Turtle Conservation Program is one of the most successful projects of its kind in the world. Together with the Costa Rican government, other NGOs and international volunteers, they are focusing on protection against poaching, illegal trade and habitat degradation. Nature conservation is not merely a biological issue, but also socio-economic and human concern, which in Costa Rica depends upon convincing local people to modify their behavior patterns in order to allow coexistence with sea turtles. This program has been a living example of how nature conservation can improve a local economy and way of life, which in turn fuels further conservation efforts. This is just one example of a project in Costa Rica. During this research there will be defined which projects are offered in Costa Rica, which Green Life Volunteers could add new, additional projects which will add value to Green Life Volunteers.

### 3.7. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, volunteering is a non-salaried service requiring a sense of obligation on the part of volunteers in terms of time, effort, and skill development. Moreover, volunteer tourism is one of the fastest growing alternative tourism markets in the world. However, to figure out which volunteering organizations are doing good and which are not, is almost impossible for the volunteers. Organizations can cost a lot, but the local communities see only a few of the benefits.

Furthermore, research shows that there are different motivations for volunteers to

participate in a volunteering program. Individuals who have a desire to help others are more likely to become volunteers. The central motives for individuals to participate in volunteer work include selflessness and doing something meaningful. However, volunteers have egoistic motives as well. Volunteering can provide an opportunity for individuals to satisfy their social and psychological needs.

Furthermore, volunteer tourism literature pays less attention on the local community and more on the volunteers. Most community-centered research in volunteer tourism focuses on how volunteer tourism is beneficial. In addition, many volunteer tourism activities have a negative effect on tourism development in host communities. Volunteering can give volunteers the opportunity undertakes on new roles and responsibilities. They have the opportunity to use skills they never have used before. Volunteering prove a safe environment in which volunteers have the opportunity to practice social action and witness the outcomes of their engagement.

Moreover, international development work is one of the biggest challenges to minimize dependency and support sustainability. There is a need for work to be rooted in communities in order to be sustainable, but also suggested that long-term relationships can often aid sustainability not diminish it and that volunteers can play a role in facilitating long-term relationships. However, the international image of Costa Rica as a green and sustainable destination is damaging. Furthermore, nature conservation is not merely a biological issue, but also socio-economic and human concern, which in Costa Rica depends upon convincing local people to modify their behavior patterns.

# METHODOLOGY

## CHAPTER 4

*“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”*

*- Winston Churchill*







In this chapter, the motive of the chosen research method is described and the way research is conducted.

The research is based on answering the sub questions, which will give an answer on the main question. **“How can Green Life Volunteers improves the volunteer projects adapt to the needs of the volunteers?”**. The outcome of the research will be further used in the implementation phase. Here are the sub questions that need to be answered:

- ✎ What are volunteer’s motivations and arguments when choosing a volunteering project?
- ✎ Which criteria are important to volunteers regarding the projects that are provided by non-profit volunteer companies in Costa Rica?
- ✎ What are the experiences of volunteers during their time at Green Life Volunteers?
- ✎ Which volunteer projects in Costa Rica will increase the value of Green Life Volunteers?

#### 4.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

To answer the main question and sub-questions there is used a qualitative research. There has been chosen for qualitative research because there is a main open question in this research. The objective of this research was to create new ideas for projects or improvements for projects. Qualitative research allows researchers to observe and analyze things as they are, rather than how they are related to a specific framework (Baarda, 2009).

There has been chosen for qualitative research as semi structured interviews and observation. There has been chosen for semi structured interviews because it is a

good manner to enhance obtaining valuable knowledge of volunteer projects. With the help of a semi structured interview, the volunteers had the possibility to explain their motivations and arguments for choosing a specific volunteer project. There has been chosen for participated observation, because it was a good applicable to get insight and to develop a full understanding of the setting.

##### 4.1.1. Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews are conducted with volunteers. These volunteers were volunteering at Green Life Volunteers, or at new projects which Green Life Volunteers could add to their projects. There has been chosen for interviewing volunteers because Green Life Volunteers want to recruit more volunteers and because of this fact, it was important to get to know the volunteers better. Volunteers have told their motives why they have chosen for a certain organization and a certain project. Volunteers from new projects which Green Life Volunteers could add, have told their motives about those projects. With this information, Green Life Volunteers has the opportunity to improve their projects to recruit more volunteers.

The semi-structured interviews were held face-to-face, and were documented with a voice recorder. This was extra support for the plausibility and reliability of the results. Data saturation was needed whereby all relevant information was obtained and no new findings were occurred. The semi-structured interviews consisted of open questions, and the interviewer spoke clearly and with a neutral tone, which limits the chance on bias. Data were recorded and transcripts

were kept in special categorized Microsoft Office Word file.

The semi-structured interviews were held with volunteers from several projects. Volunteers from the following projects from Green Life Volunteers were interviewed:

- 🌱 Organic Farming
- 🌱 Dog Rescue
- 🌱 Environmental Education
- 🌱 Teaching English National Park
- 🌱 Turtle Conservation

There were also volunteers from Alturas Wildlife Sanctuary, Reserva Playa Tortuga, Widecast, OSA Conservation, and the Interactive Gardens interviewed.

#### 4.1.2. Observation

The observations have been made located at projects which Green Life Volunteers can offer in the future. With this observation, there was a good insight in the projects and there was developed a full understanding of the projects. The

observation gave a clear vision of what the new project will be like and if they will add value to Green Life Volunteers. There were several observations by different volunteer projects.

The following aspects have been observed:

- 🌱 Variety in the program
- 🌱 Safe environment
- 🌱 Accommodation facilities
- 🌱 Volunteer coordinator
- 🌱 Learn/improve Spanish
- 🌱 Self-development
- 🌱 Minimum volunteer time
- 🌱 Affordable price
- 🌱 Benefit local community

Those aspects are observed at seven projects in Costa Rica. This is observed through visiting the projects, obtain information through personal contact with staff of the project, and visiting the websites.

The observation list can be found in appendix III.

Sub questions	Method
🌱 What are volunteer's motivations and arguments when choosing a volunteering project?	Semi-structured interviews
🌱 Which criteria are important to volunteers regarding the projects that are provided by non-profit volunteer companies in Costa Rica?	Semi-structured interviews
🌱 What are the experiences of volunteers during their time at Green Life Volunteers?	Semi-structured interviews
🌱 Which volunteer projects in Costa Rica will increase the value of Green Life Volunteers?	Observation

## 4.2. RESEARCH POPULATION

The population of this research were volunteers, this including former and potential volunteers. There was chosen for volunteers because they have participated in the projects. The population of this research were volunteers from different volunteer organizations and volunteers who participated in different projects. Because of this, the situation has been observed in different perspective, which made the research more plausible. However, the population of this research also consisted of volunteer projects. The volunteer projects are observed to see if they could be added at Green Life Volunteers. The logbook of the interviews and the observations could be found in chapter 4.8. Logbook.

## 4.3. DATA ANALYSIS

The coding process will be started after that the semi-structured interviews have been carried out. The coding process has taken place as follows:

*Transcript:* The interviews have been literally written down. This is based on the voice recording fragments that were recorded during the interviews.

*Open coding:* Every interview questions are answered with relevant and suitable information. All the irrelevant information is shortened. This information is known as fragments. Appendix V shows the open coding from each interview.

*Axial coding:* Every fragment got a specific label. The subjects were similar for every interview, only the labels are different with each interview. All the interviews are categorized with a topic list, which is shown in appendix II. Because of the axial coding, the interview got more structure and gave a clearer view on the answers.

Appendix VI shows the axial coding from each interview.

*Selective coding:* All the subjects are shown in a table; after every subject the labels are placed, which could be found in appendix VII. This gave a clear view which had made it easier to write the results. The results of the research will come out when the coding is finished.

## 4.4. ETHICAL ASPECTS

- ✔ All respondents were asked before if they were willing to participate in this research, and for that they were volunteering to help with this research.
- ✔ Before the interview started, all the respondents were verbal clarified what the purpose and the procedure of this research were.
- ✔ The personal information of the respondents of this research is confidential and anonymous processed.
- ✔ Before the interview started, there was asked permission for recording the interviews.
- ✔ The results did not have detrimental consequences of the respondents.
- ✔ The research was conducted honestly and objectively (Baarda, 2009).
- ✔ Discrimination was avoided on the basis of race, ethnicity, sex or other aspects.

## 4.5. LIMITING CONDITIONS

Time was a limited condition because Green Life Volunteers is a small organization and there are not so many volunteers at Green Life Volunteers, thus at the time that the interviews are held, there were not that many volunteers. If there was more time, more people could get be interviewed.

Number of participants was a limited condition because Green Life Volunteers do not receive many volunteers, and if there are volunteers, most of them are volunteers at projects which are located in Puerto Jimenez. Because of this, the most participants volunteered at the same project.

Place was a limited condition because Puerto Jimenez is a small town in Costa Rica. There are a few volunteers here, but there are more volunteers further away in Costa Rica. More places are visited but because of the distance not as much as wanted.

Safety was a limited condition because there were two burglaries during the research. Burglars has taken a laptop, money, a phone and a photo camera from the house while sleeping. Because of the fact that the house was not safe enough to live, there has been moved four times. This has cost lot of time, money, and concentration.

Climate was a limited condition because Costa Rica, especially Puerto Jimenez, has a high humidity and it is plus 30 degrees Celsius, and therefore it is hard to concentrate on the research.

Workplace was a limited condition because Green Life Volunteers does not have an office. The office is in the living room of the house and that makes it hard to concentrate on the research, because the researchers live in that house and there are always other things to do like household, etc.

#### 4.6. PLAUSIBILITY

There are different techniques which could promote the validity and plausibility of quality research. Robson stayed in Real World Research (2002) that there are

multiple ways to promote the validity of qualitative research (Baarda, 2009):

##### ✿ Triangulation

During the research, there is used for multiple data analysis. Semi-structured interviews are held as well as observations, which could be found in appendix VIII. Furthermore, the theoretical framework was also a part of the triangulation to get a higher plausibility.

##### ✿ Audit trail

An audit trail was done during the research. The audit trail is noticed with who was spoken, by which volunteer organization the person was volunteering, in which project they participated, and their duration of stay, this could be found in appendix IV.

#### 4.7. OPERATIONALIZATION

In this research, there are several concepts which accrue to the research questions.

- ✿ Volunteer motivations
- ✿ Abroad motivations
- ✿ Project motivations
- ✿ Organization motivations
- ✿ Volunteer expectations
- ✿ Services volunteer organizations
- ✿ Profit / Non-profit
- ✿ Value projects
- ✿ Awareness local community
- ✿ Awareness project value
- ✿ Improvements projects Green Life Volunteers
- ✿ Other projects Green Life Volunteers
- ✿ Recommendation for Green Life Volunteers

The operationalization can be found in appendix I.



## 4.8. LOGBOOK

## 4.8.1. Logbook Interviews

Volunteer	Organization	Project	Duration of stay	Date	Duration
1	-	Alturas Wildlife Sanctuary	5 weeks	29-12-15	10:40
2	-	Alturas Wildlife Sanctuary	Few months	29-12-15	12:13
3	WorkingAbroad	Reserve Playa Tortuga	4 weeks	30-12-15	13:43
4	Green Life Volunteers	Dog Rescue	4 days	06-01-16	17:19
5	Green Life Volunteers	Turtle Conservation, Dog Rescue, Spanish School	Few months	09-01-16	08:53
6	Green Life Volunteers	Organic Farming, Turtle Conservation	4 weeks	15-01-16	10:32
7	Green Life Volunteers	Dog Rescue, Turtle Conservation	10 weeks	21-01-16	10:48
8	Green Life Volunteers	Organic Farming	3 weeks	26-01-16	11:02
9	Green Life Volunteers	Veterinary Internship	11 weeks	27-01-16	13:06
10	Green Life Volunteers	Organic Farming	2 weeks	29-01-16	14:13
11	Green Life Volunteers	Organic Farming, National Park	2 months	10-02-16	16:45
12	Green Life Volunteers	Teaching English, Organic Farming	3 weeks	11-02-16	11:04
13	Green Life Volunteers	Organic Farming, Alturas Wildlife Sanctuary	4 weeks	15-02-16	09:56
14	Green Life Volunteers	Organic Farming	2 weeks	15-02-16	11:02
15	GoProwald	Arboretum	1 year	26-02-16	13:21
16	Green Life Volunteers	Internship	7 months	07-03-16	15:34
17	Green Life Volunteers	Dog Rescue	1 week	08-03-16	16:32
18	Green Life Volunteers	Internship	7 months	11-03-16	12:08
19	Green Life Volunteers	Internship	7 months	11-03-16	14:29
20	GoProwald	Environmental Education	1 year	18-03-16	12:04
21	GoProwald	Environmental Education, Interactive Gardens	1 year	18-03-16	09:27
22	Widecast	Turtle Conservation	2.5 months	22-03-16	19:26
23	Widecast	Turtle Conservation	2.5 months	22-03-16	14:03
24	OSA Conservation	Turtle Conservation	2.5 months	22-03-16	11:54
25	Widecast	Turtle Conservation	2.5 months	22-03-16	09:33
26	OSA Conservation	Turtle Conservation	2.5 months	22-03-16	08:54
27	Widecast	Turtle Conservation	3 months	22-03-16	11:08
28	Green Life Volunteers	Dog Rescue	1 week	23-03-16	13:39

## 4.8.2. Logbook Observation

Observation	Project	Date
1	Interactive Gardens	19-12-15
2	Alturas Wildlife Sanctuary	29-12-15
3	Reserve Playa Tortuga	30-12-15
4	Jaguar Rescue Center	14-03-16
5	Parismina Turtle Conservation	14-03-16
6	Centro de Rescate Paraiso Carlissa	14-03-16
7	OSA Conservation	22-03-16

# RESULTS

## CHAPTER 5

*“The world is not dangerous because of those who do harm,  
but because of those who look at it without doing anything”*

- *Albert Einstein*







This part of the research will explain the results gathered through the coding of twenty-eight face to face interview transcripts with student volunteers. The observations has taken place at potential new projects where Green Life Volunteers could send new volunteers.

## 5.1. RESULTS INTERVIEWS

### 5.1.1. Volunteer motivations

The results have shown that gain experience a very important motivator is to volunteer. Gain experience in field work, related to their future study or career, or to gain experience to develop themselves. However, another main motivator for volunteers to volunteer is to help the community and do something good for someone else, by giving something back. Furthermore, traveling is also a big motivation for volunteers to start with volunteer activities, they want to see another country, learn the language, experience a different environment and get to know a different culture. People are also interested in volunteering because it feels rewarding, especially while working with animals.

### 5.1.2. Abroad motivations

The main motivator that volunteers want to come abroad for their volunteer activities is to travel. Volunteers want to see the world; they want to immerse themselves in a different culture, and they want to learn or improve their language skills. Because of the fact that the volunteer activities are abroad is it more interesting to volunteer. In addition, people choose to come abroad to volunteer to gain new experiences and to learn new things which cannot be learned back at home. However, there are also people who come abroad for other reasons than to volunteer, for example a yoga program is very popular in Costa Rica. Volunteers feel guilty when they are only in a country for themselves, they also want to do something meaningful for the community. People choose specifically for Costa Rica, because of the high biodiversity in this country. The people who come to Costa Rica to volunteer are really interested in the environment and the Costa Rican wildlife. Furthermore, there are also volunteers which choose to come to Costa Rica, because of the fact that they are familiar with the country, they have family living here or they have been here before, which made the choice easier for them to come back. However, there are volunteers that did not planned to come to Costa Rica, or even to come abroad, it just happened because their organization arranged it that way.

*“I have been always interested in wanting to help people, and in that aspect I feel like you are born to the life that you are born to, and some people are born in a real privilege life like I was in America. Other people are born to a life where they do not have that much. It is important to give back to these people who do not have that much”.* (Volunteer 4, Dog Rescue Project)

*“Volunteering is a good change to open up your horizon, to see something and to learn something and to get to know another country, and learn about the language, the nature, the culture and the way how they live”.* (Volunteer 15, external organization)

*“I wanted to experience something new and go somewhere else, make new experiences, learn something about a new culture. And when you see all those things, you come back in your own country with another perspective”.* (Volunteer 21, Interactive gardens)

*“You make a direct impact when you are working abroad because you are more working on a local level and less on a national organization stand point and because I already was in Costa Rica for a yoga and meditation training, so the next stop was that I did something good”.* (Volunteer 4, Dog Rescue Project)

*“I volunteered here before, and I choose to come back to Costa Rica, because I loved the people. Everyone is very nice and this community is like a second home for me. So it is very an inviting country”.* (Volunteer 22, Widecast)

In addition, people are very sensitive to recommendations from other people. This is also a reason that people come to Costa Rica to volunteer. They have heard good stories about the country or the organization and decided to see it with their own eyes. Finally, volunteers also choose for Costa Rica because the volunteer activities are not that expensive compared to other countries in the world.

### 5.1.3. Project motivations

Research has shown that most volunteers find their project, where they participated in, online. This through searching on the internet by Google search engine, or a database at school or even at LinkedIn. Volunteers also find their projects through a recommendation from friends or family. There are also volunteers who find their project through personal contacts. Volunteers who are traveling for a period of time want to do something good and get in touch with the projects itself, while they are already in the country. Volunteers who did not participated at a project of Green Life Volunteers, mentioned that they could not find Green Life Volunteers on the internet.

When people wants to experience a volunteer project, they have different thoughts before they really start searching for projects. The volunteers know what they want and where they are looking for. The research has shown that volunteers want to find a volunteer project that is not too expensive, and a place where they will have contact with local people and do something for the community. The project has to be meaningful and the volunteers want to make a difference. Volunteers also want to benefit the organization where they are volunteering for. However, when thinking about a volunteer project, volunteers also think about themselves. They want to develop themselves during the volunteer activity. Volunteers are thinking about their future career, they want a project which will fit into their interests and will give them the skills and experience to help decide what they want to do in their future. The volunteer also keeps in mind for choosing a project where they can learn or improve their language skills (Spanish).

According to the research, volunteers often look at several projects before they make a decision on which project they want to participate. Research has shown that volunteers choose a project which fits the best with their interests, and budget. Some examples of their interests are; working with animals, working in the environment, and educate the

*"I found it through my friend. She told a lot of good experiences and then I searched for it on the internet and I was very positive about it". (Volunteer 5, Turtle Conservation Project)*

*"I was already in Puerto Jimenez, and I saw so many dogs that I had the feeling that I needed to do something. I asked if there is a project, so I got really quick into her contact". (Volunteer 28, Dog Rescue Project)*

*"I wanted to find a cheap place and a place where there are only local people". (Volunteer 8, Organic Farming Project)*

*"Bloody hell, this is expensive. How am I going to make this money? But my second thought was, it would look nice on my CV if I could fundraise for this". (Volunteer 27, Widecast)*

*"I just wanted to make a difference somewhere. The work that I am going to be doing is important to someone, so that is where I looked for in a project". (Volunteer 22 Widecast)*

*"Just anything that could give me some hand on experience. When I was looking for volunteer, I was looking for a project that could gain me some experience, and that could help me with job applications". (Volunteer 23, OSA Conservation)*

community. Furthermore, volunteers choose for volunteer projects where they have a good feeling about, and which offer advantageous conditions to their volunteers. They choose for a project where they can learn and develop themselves. However, the project has needs to have a safe environment, and it has to challenge the volunteers. Also the location of the project is an essential aspect for the volunteers. In addition, the project also has to be affordable for the volunteer. However, not all the volunteers look at several projects, there are also volunteers who see a project and know directly that this is the project that they want to be a part of it.

#### 5.1.4. Organization motivations

The research has shown that when volunteers find a volunteer organization, they choose the first one they find. A lot of volunteer are not familiar with finding volunteer organizations, and do not know where they have to pay attention to. When volunteers are searching for organization on the internet, they look at the websites. If the website is informative, looks appealing, and they get a quick response, the volunteer is already interested. However, when choosing a volunteer organization, volunteers search for reviews on the internet. If the reviews are positive in general, the volunteer is more interested in the organization. Furthermore, the price of the projects, location and the intentions are also decisive factors why a volunteer would choose for a certain volunteer organization. Financial support is also an organization motivation for volunteers to choose for a certain organization. When the organization is specific to the country where the volunteer wants to do volunteering activities, the volunteers have a better feeling about it, because they have the feeling that the organization really have a relation with the city and the country where it is in. If the organization is all over the world, the volunteers feel it as less personal. Smaller organizations are more appealing for volunteers because volunteers have the feeling that the organization really want to make a difference, and the smaller organization are mostly more affordable. In contrary, some volunteers prefer bigger organizations, because they have the feeling that it will be better organized, and that there is a bigger diversity of projects.

However, not all the volunteers are focused on the organization. Some volunteers just want to gain experience and it does not matter with which organization.

*“You hear ‘volunteering’ and you think it should be cheap or maybe free, it was a big reason that I chose this project because it was cheaper and I stay long abroad”. (Volunteer 3, Reserva Playa Tortuga)*

*“It was the first one and I think it also had a good homepage. It was hard to find a homepage that looked really serious and that is why I chose workingabroad.com. I had mail contact with a girl there and she answered very fast and it was a good impression, that is why I chose them”. (Volunteer 3, Reserva Playa Tortuga)*

*“No I did not compare with other organizations because when I found Green Life Volunteers, I knew that this was the organization which I would work with”. (Volunteer 14, Organic Farming Project)*

*“Once I began talking with Green Life Volunteers, I did not even consider another organization. Green Life Volunteers is specific to Costa Rica. Janina is responsive and tremendously helpful in answering my questions and helping me find the projects that were in my best interests. Also, the price comparison was not even close. Green Life Volunteers was the best option”. (Volunteer 11, National Park Project)*

### 5.1.5. Volunteer expectations

The research has shown that volunteers do not have a lot of expectations before starting with their volunteer program. There are volunteer organizations which immediately send information about what to expect, which will make it easier for the volunteer. Volunteers expect to work hard at their volunteer project, and to work with animals or nature, depended on the kind of project. Moreover, volunteers expect to be helpful to their project, and the local community. They also hope to learn a lot during their volunteer time. Volunteers also expect to live with a host family and to experience the real Costa Rican Life. In addition, volunteers who came to Costa Rica expected to learn Spanish, that it would be a highly humid climate, meet like-minded people, and travel to see a bit of the country instead of working all the time. However, not all of the expectations of the volunteers come true during their volunteer time. For example, with the Dog Rescue Project, volunteers expected to work at a Rescue Center with a lot of kennels where the volunteers could live nearby. This is not how the project is, so that expectation did not come true. Volunteers also expected that Green Life Volunteers a bigger organization is, and it is not. Green Life Volunteers is only Janina and sometimes an intern. Volunteer expected that there was an office stationed at the organization, where they would work at, and that there would be more structure at the projects.

### 5.1.6. Service volunteer organization

As the research has shown, the most important services for a volunteer organization regarding the volunteers is lodging. The volunteer organization should provide a reliable, and clean house where the volunteers could stay during their volunteer activity. Besides lodging; transportation, safety and providing meals are also important to volunteers while choosing a volunteer organization. Furthermore, is it also important according to the research to provide the volunteers with all the information that is needed before they come abroad for a volunteer activity. The organization has to explain very well the tasks of the volunteers during their volunteer time, also showing pictures how it looks like, what the volunteer can expect, and what the possibilities are in their spare time. The organization should also provide reviews from former volunteers, an informative website, and need to quickly response to any asked questions.

*"I did not have any expectations other than that I would be working with a local veterinarian and I would be living with a host family. She also put together a handbook that outlined everything that I needed to know beforehand. This was not only very helpful for my pre-trip planning, but it also made me even more excited"! (Volunteer 9, Veterinary Project)*

*"I was able to get a lot more one-on-one time with the host family. I also expected Green Life Volunteers to be a much bigger organization that it was. I was a bit shocked when I got there and realized it was just Janina, by herself pretty much". (Volunteer 6, Organic Farming Project)*

*"Janina is really helping the dogs and she puts a lot of effort in it, but I was expecting more an organization which has a building or a place where all the dogs were. All the dogs are at several foster homes, which is good but I do not see a lot of dogs who are rescued, I only saw a few of them but there are a lot of them. I thought there would be one place where the dogs were and that they could recover from their surgeries and help them." (Volunteer 17, Dog Rescue Project)*

*"I really think the most important part is lodging and transportation. It is a huge service that volunteer organizations can and should provide that for volunteers, obviously for a fee, but it makes it a much easier when you arrive in a foreign country". (Volunteer 22, Widecast)*

*"I think the most important services of a volunteer company, especially when it involves going abroad, are quick, thorough response; a genuine relationship with the projects they are coordinating you with; pictures and details of what to expect; and most importantly providing reviews and first-hand accounts". (Volunteer 11, National Park Project)*



Moreover, regarding to the research, volunteer organizations should be affordable for volunteers. It has to be a fair project, and the organization has to be sure that the money is spent on the community. Therefore, the organization should provide an explanation where the money goes to. Nonetheless, the organization has to make sure that the volunteers enjoying their time, and that the overall experience is positive. The overall experience will be positive if the volunteer experiences their time as valuable times. Finally, the customer service is also important. The organization should take care of the volunteer, before, and during their volunteer time. The organization has to make sure that the volunteer will learn anything during their volunteer activity, that the organization provides quality and the facilities that are needed for the job. The research revealed that also financial support, sustainability and sciences research are important services for a volunteer organization according to the volunteers.

#### 5.1.7. Profit / non-profit organization

The research demonstrated that most of the volunteers do matter if it is a non-profit or a profit organization. Volunteers prefer a non-profit organization, because that way they know that all the money that they paid to the project is actually going to the project and is not filling somebody's pockets. Furthermore, research has shown that volunteers prefer a non-profit organization because they believe that non-profit organizations are truly committed to their projects. They also prefer non-profits because volunteers are looking for a company which is really focused on helping others and helping animals, and not to gain money.

Research has shown that there are also volunteers who do not matter if they volunteer for a non-profit or a profit organization. It does not matter for them to volunteer at a profit organization, as long as the organization a charitable organization is, and the organization and project have to have good intentions. As the research have shown, there are volunteers who did not pay attention to that when choosing an organization, they just want to gain experience, learn Spanish, and help the community.

#### 5.1.8. Values project

The research has shown that volunteers the educational aspects of the projects one as the most important values to participate in a volunteer project find. The volunteers want to learn a lot during their volunteer project. Volunteers

*"The money should go to the projects instead of going to the company but these projects should also need to have good impacts on the local community. Secondly, they need to be enjoyable as well for the volunteers. It is the overall experience that counts for volunteers" (Volunteer 16, Internship GLV).*

*"I think providing quality, listening to the volunteers, and making sure that my volunteer time is as valuable as can be. Not sitting and doing nothing or doing to much". (Volunteer 17, Dog Rescue Project)*

*"I think the most important thing is to prepare the people before their volunteering. And I think it is really important to stay in contact with the organization and that they always can help you in an emergency and that you are not left alone". (Volunteer 20, Environmental Education Project)*

*"I would prefer non-profit. Just because I want most of what I am paying for, like the funds that they are going to get from me to come down as a volunteer, should be paying for the things that I need while I am here, so a place to stay, food, but also for materials for the project side where I am going to be working at, and the few staff people that there are, needs to be paid". (Volunteer 22, Widecast)*

*"Non-profit, it should be enough that someone comes and just want to give their work and they should not have to pay a lot of money to an organization. I already give my help, and time, and commitment and I do not know why I should pay so much money". (Volunteer 21, Interactive Gardens)*

*"I think that the most important value is that the project has a connection with the local community, and the local community have a benefit about it". (Volunteer 4, Dog Rescue Project)*

choose their projects based on the fact that they could learn about the environment, animals, and/or the language. Furthermore, another important value for the volunteers to choose to participate in volunteer projects is that it a project is that is fair, sustainable and that it helps the local community. However, volunteers also consider volunteer projects which provide accommodation, have an affordable price, a safe environment, and a friendly atmosphere as an important value. Due to the research, the location is an important criterion for volunteers to choose a project, also the fact that the project seems serious, and that the project is commitment of their mission. In addition, the value of a project also consists of a degree of productive work, and the variety of work. However, a quick response, a meaningful project, a comfortable place, enthusiasm, flexible, adventures, and transparency are also mentioned values. Finally, volunteers think that a project gain more value when it is supportive, that volunteers can work independently and that the project appreciate volunteers.

#### 5.1.9. Awareness local community

The research has shown that most of the volunteers know what the benefits are of the project, where they participated in, according to the local community. Most projects focus on helping the community and educate the community. According to the research, helping the community is mostly helping the wild animals, dogs, and helping at a farm which is property of a local family in town. Educate the community is mostly based on educating children with the projects, teach them and introduce new aspects to them. Some projects are only focused on education, but there are also projects which are focused on for instance the environment and wants to educate the community about the environment. However, besides education and helping aspects, there is also a benefit for the local community by making money. Volunteers have to live in the place where they participate in volunteer projects. Here for, the community receives money from the volunteers. Host families receive money to accommodate the volunteers, but also the local shops receive money from the volunteers. Furthermore, the volunteers benefit the local community through preserve the country. This is more a long term benefit for the community, but not less important. The local community is not always aware of the benefits of the project itself. These projects need to get more awareness to trigger the interests of the local community. The research has shown that there could be more projects who are more focused on town, so the local community will benefit from it

*"I think the volunteers should be safe and comfortable as much as possible". (Volunteer 6, Turtle Conservation Project)*

*"I choose the project because I liked the organization and their mission and projects. I choose them because I thought that I could fit in it as well". (Volunteer 24, OSA Conservation)*

*"I think the most important value of this project is that they work with all aspects that is possible. We are making sure that the work we do is making a difference and is impact full". (Volunteer 25, Widecast)*

*"We go to schools where the children often do not even have like theater or something. It is the first time they see a theater, or it is the first time that they play a game, with different people than the teachers". (Volunteer 20, Educational Environment Project)*

*"We do a lot of work with the community, in terms of spreading the word, working with children, the next generation of people that will be living here, educate them as much as we can, and involve them in the project or get ourselves involved in community education events like the Arboretum and the other non-profits in the Osa". (Volunteer 25, Widecast)*

*"We do a lot of work with the mangrove reforestation, that is an indirect impact in the community environment. It is a direct benefit, but it is a long term benefit. We do a lot of education work with the local community, and all over the Osa Peninsula. And also the volunteers here put a lot of money in the local shop here. There are different levels of benefitting the local community". (Volunteer 27, Widecast)*

directly, and when the town will be improved, there will be more tourists which will result in more job opportunities and more money for the community.

On the contrary, there are also volunteers who do not know the benefits of their project according to the local community. They are not aware of the benefits, because it is never explained to them or they have never thought about it.

#### 5.1.10. Awareness project value

The research has shown that most of the volunteers choose to volunteer due to personal value. They want to volunteer to gain experience, develop themselves, and because they have to for their education. Furthermore, other personal values of volunteers are that they love animals, they want to travel and see the world, and the volunteers would feel good about themselves when they can help others. However, a social value is to take care of the animals, because the animals are a big part of the society, and it is important for the society that the animals are safe. A social value is also that volunteers want to leave something behind, and not just give something as a tourist. The most seen ecological value is to protect the environment, due to the research. These projects are mostly focused on animals and the environment. With helping the animals, the volunteers have the feeling that they are really doing something for nature. Volunteers are interested in the way how Costa Rica protects their environment. However, volunteers also see the education of the local community as an ecological value. Volunteers are convinced that there has to be changed something in the world, and when the local community gets an education about the environment, the circumstances can be changed. Finally, volunteers are concerned about the future of the environment, and there have to be changed something to make a positive difference.

#### 5.1.11. Improvements projects

The research has shown that projects which Green Life Volunteers offers need some improvements. The dog and cat rescue projects needs more donations. With those donations they could purchase more kennels. When there are more kennels, the volunteer could work closer to the dogs which will make the work more efficient and the volunteer could work more independent. To get more donations, Green Life Volunteers should use more social media and create more awareness.

*“No, I do not know it. It is not very well explained to me”. (Volunteer 17, Dog Rescue Project)*

*“I guess personal value. It makes me feel good about myself. Feeling like you are doing general helpful is really valuable”. (Volunteer 1, Wildlife Sanctuary)*

*“All three. Personal, because I really want to develop, I really want to do something different and to give something back. Social because, I think the balance is not right in the world. I had the privilege to live in Germany and to have good education and now it is my task to give that back. Ecological because, we really have to change something as I said before, for me the most important step is to educate the people and to change the circumstances”. (Volunteer 20, Educational Environment Project)*

*“I think the dog and cat rescue project is doing a great job with what they have. They could probably use more kennels but that is al depended of the donation money. Also a Facebook page is a good idea or another social media to get the attention of the community” (Volunteer 4, Dog Rescue Project).*



Furthermore, at Organic Farming Project the volunteers are satisfied, but there are also a few things that could be changed. There is not always that much work to do, which is frustrating for the volunteers, because they come to help and work. There is also a cold shower at the organic farming, which is available at most projects, but it was not told, and this could be significant for health issues.

The results have shown that volunteers were not always happy at the Turtle Conservation Project. The volunteers are not satisfied about the accommodation facilities; the accommodation is too hot, and too small. Furthermore, the turtle conservation project is not good organized according to the research.

According to the research, teaching projects are good organized, there is only an improvement aspect about the teachers. The teachers are not always doing their work while there is a volunteer present. The research has shown that teachers disappear when there are volunteers available.

National Park Project is a relatively a new project from Green Life Volunteers, and the first volunteer that is sent there, is not very happy about the experience. The volunteer was not very welcome and was not that well treated, here for the National Park should change their view on volunteers.

Finally, the internship at Green Life Volunteers also need some improvements. The results have shown that volunteers appreciate the time that Janina invest in them, however they believe that it could be more organized, so volunteers could work more efficient. When it is more organized and efficient the volunteers feel that there would be more accomplished, which will help Green Life Volunteers grow. However, tasks at the internship project could be more varied, especially when there are volunteers for a longer time period.

#### 5.1.12. Other projects

The research has shown that most volunteers are happy with the projects which Green Life Volunteers offers. A volunteer even said that there is too much choice. In contrary, there are also volunteers who like to see more projects at Green Life Volunteers. Green Life Volunteers already offers a turtle conservation project. According to the research, volunteers would like to have a sea turtle conservation project a year round, and not only in a certain season. Volunteers are also interested in projects with wild animals of Costa Rica.

*“For the organic farming, I wish I was told beforehand that the shower is cold. That was really important for due to health issues”. (Volunteer 8, Organic Farming Project)*

*“I just think the sleeping quarters could be improved. I had such a hard time sleeping at both projects. I have been in Costa Rica twice before and have lived with families, slept in hostels, etcetera. The Turtle project was the worst as far as comfort goes. The beds were awful and the heat was unbearable”. (Volunteer 6, Turtle Conservation Project)*

*“With the Park Ranger project, they need to improve their view of volunteers and see them as more than a way to make more money so they are treated with respect”. (Volunteer 11, National Park Project)*

*Janina is a really nice persons and do everything to help us on personal level, a lot of internships could learn from her. Only the work activities are not very positive for me, because she does not work very structured, and that is sometimes frustrating. It could be so much more organized and efficient”. (Volunteer 19, Internship GLV)*

*“I missed a turtle project at this time of year, but it was not the season for it so I could not participate in it”. (Volunteer 4, Dog Rescue Project)*

*“I miss a project which are really involved with the community. And I also would like to do a project with wild animals or turtles, which we do not have at home. But at this moment there was*

Furthermore, projects which are really community based are also projects which volunteers prefer.

### 5.1.13. Recommendations Green Life Volunteers

The research has shown that Green Life Volunteers need to promote more to gain more awareness. To gain more awareness Green Life Volunteers should get an office, so the community and tourists in town know that Green Life Volunteers exists. To gain more awareness, Green Life Volunteers should also write more consistently on their social media, if there would be a new article published every week, more people will follow and word of mouth will go fast. Also the writing style need more content management. The articles on social media and the website should not be written in capital letters, because the research has shown that it looks more like a cheap commercial advertisement. According to the research, volunteers recommend Green Life Volunteers to get more partner to collaborate with, so there will be more income streams. However, the organization could be more organized, and the founder should be more focused on Green Life Volunteers itself if she wants to grow. Volunteers also want to know what happens with the money, they want to see a clear description of the fees where they pay for. Furthermore, volunteers want to get more preparation pre-departure. They can better prepare themselves before they come to volunteer. Finally, volunteers were not satisfied about the Turtle Conservation project, and volunteers recommend Green Life Volunteers to quit with this project.

Contrary, the research has shown that the majority of the volunteers are satisfied with Green Life Volunteers, and they did not have any recommendations for Green Life Volunteers.

*not much for that". (Volunteer 17, Dog Rescue Project)*

*"Janina need an own office, it would work more efficient and it will gain more awareness from the local community and the tourists. with this awareness she could recruit more volunteers and even maybe volunteers from the local community. To recruit more volunteers, she should use more promotion. She is really focused on the dog and cat rescue project, but she should also do that for Green Life Volunteers itself". (Volunteer 19, Internship GLV)*

*"A little more preparation pre-departure. For example, I was unaware that rain boots would have been helpful on the farm. I personally like to know what I am getting myself into a little more, so more information is always handy". (Volunteer 12, Organic Farming Project)*

*"Janina and I have talked about it, but I would really recommend her to quit with ASVO. ASVO takes way too much money for way to less service"! (Volunteer 7, Turtle Conservation Project)*

## 5.2. RESULTS OBSERVATIONS

### 5.2.1. Varied program

Variety in the program is important for the volunteers. When there is variety the volunteers will not get bored and will experience the project as more positive. The observation has shown that all the projects which are observed offer a varied program, which means that every day is different. Although a lot of activities come back every day at some of the projects. These projects are wild animal related, and animals could be unpredictable, therefore a day will never be the same while volunteer with animals.

### 5.2.2. Safe environment

A safe environment is needed when there will be volunteers. Volunteers come to volunteer to experience and help the local community. Due to the observation, all the projects are in a safe environment. The projects are located separately with good protection behind them. Because of the fact that the volunteer will be working with animals, is the possibility that the volunteer would not be safe, because animals can do unexpected things.

### 5.2.3. Accommodation facilities

The observation has shown that not all the projects provide accommodation facilities for the volunteers. The Jaguar Rescue Center has no accommodation facilities at the project, but they have contacts of hostels and other accommodation facilities where the volunteers could stay. The other project of the Jaguar Rescue Center, La Ceiba does provide accommodation facilities. However, also Interactive Gardens do not provide accommodation facilities at the project site, but because this project is located in Puerto Jimenez there will be host families available. Parismina Turtle Conservation also do not have accommodation facilities

at the project, but they offer host families stays and they have contacts with resorts, lodges and campsites. All the other projects provide lodging at the project sites. All those lodging facilities provides three meals a day for the volunteers.

### 5.2.4. Volunteer coordinator

The research has shown that all the projects provide a volunteer coordinator for the volunteers. The volunteer coordinator will actually take care of the volunteer during their volunteer time at the project. The coordinator will be helping the volunteers with preparing the meals, and make sure that all the groceries are available. The coordinator is also responsible for the introduction to new volunteers.

### 5.2.5. Learn / improve Spanish

The observation has shown that the most observed projects give the volunteer the chance to learn or improve Spanish. However, at OSA Conservation are more volunteers from all over the world, and fewer volunteers from Costa Rica. Also the management staff is not from Costa Rica, so in this project it is less customary that the volunteer will actually learn or improve Spanish. Also at the Wildlife Sanctuary is it more common to speak English, because the owner is also native English speaking, and there are a lot of foreign volunteers. However, at the Wildlife Sanctuary there is the opportunity to take Spanish classes, which will be provided by the volunteer coordinator. For the other projects is it recommended to speak basic Spanish, because the management is Costa Rican and do not speak all fluently English.



### 5.2.6. Self-development

All the projects have the possibility that the volunteers can develop themselves. At most projects, the volunteer will get the freedom to decide what they prefer to do. Of course, there are tasks that have to be done, but the projects let the volunteers free to make the best possible experience out of it. The volunteers are allowed to work individually, with assistance of a staff member. At most projects the volunteer needs to be serious, disciplined, ordered, and hygienic because they will be working with animals.

### 5.2.7. Minimum volunteer time

At most projects, there is a minimum volunteer duration time. This is because of the fact that the volunteer will be working with animals, which need also a routine. Besides that, the tasks need to be explained and that takes some time. At the Wildlife Sanctuary, the volunteer should stay at least one week. At the Jaguar Rescue Project, the volunteers have a minimum time for three weeks. After those three weeks they are allowed to go to the other project, La Ceiba. At the Centro de Rescate Pariaso Carlisa Project, the regular volunteer has a minimum stay of three weeks, and a maximum stay of six weeks. The professional volunteer has a minimum stay of three months and a maximum stay of one year. At Osa Conservation, the volunteers have a minimum stay of two and a half months. At the Reserva Playa Tortuga it is possible to volunteer for just one day, this is excluding accommodation. If the volunteers need accommodation facilities as well, the volunteer has a minimum stay of one week. At Parismina Turtle

Conservation the volunteer does not have a minimum volunteer time, they only recommend the volunteers to stay longer than a week to get to know everything. At the Interactive Gardens there is no minimum volunteer time.

### 5.2.8. Affordable price

The observation has shown that most of the projects offer an affordable price, however projects with animals are mostly more expensive. The Wildlife Sanctuary, Parismina Turtle Conservation, and Interactive Gardens ask an affordable price lower than 30 USD per day. The Jaguar Rescue Center is also affordable but it is excluding accommodation. Reserva Playa Tortuga and Centro de Rescate Paraiso Carlisa are more expensive, they ask between 35 USD and 40 USD per day to volunteer. The Osa Conservation is most expensive, 49 USD per day plus once a 300 USD administration fee.

### 5.2.9. Benefits local community

All the projects are benefitting the local community somehow. Most projects are focused on animals, which are also benefiting the local community but then when an indirect way. Those projects take care of the animals which are hurt, or need help to survive. So the projects will take care of the ecological aspect of the community. Osa Conservation is also focused on reforestation the environment, which will have an indirect impact on the local community. At most projects, they provide also education to the local community and go to schools to teach the children about their project, which will make the community more educated and more aware



# DISCUSSION

## CHAPTER 6

*“We can not help everyone, but everyone can help someone”.*

- Ronald Reagan







This chapter describes the discussion of the research. The discussion shows the validity of the research, compares the results and the theoretical framework with each other, shows the limitations, and gives recommendations for follow-up research.

## 6.1. INTERPRET RESULTS

### 6.1.1. Volunteering

The results have shown that gain experience is a very important motivator for the interviewed volunteers. Gain experience in fieldwork, related to their future study or career, or to gain experience to develop themselves. Which is confirmed by Tomazos & Butler (2012), who stated that the volunteer may strive to gain knowledge and intellectual improvement that will provide them to get new skills which could generate career opportunities. This is also confirmed by Wearing (2004) who said that push motives of discovery, education, and personal growth are important to volunteers. However, another main motivator for the interviewed volunteers to volunteer is to help the community and do something good for someone else, by giving something back. As Bussell & Forbes (2002) already mentioned that people who have a desire to help others are more likely to become volunteers. Which is also mentioned by Lo & Lee (2011), which identified a desire to give back as one of the five major motivations to volunteer.

Furthermore, traveling is also a big motivation for the interviewed volunteers to start with volunteer activities, according to the research. They want to see another country, learn the language, experience a different environment and get to know a different culture. Tomazos & Butler (2012) confirm that the place and the nature are recognized as motivating factors. As Broad & Jenkins (2009) endorsed, that educational cultural immersion is a key fundamental motive for

volunteers to participate in a volunteering project. The research has shown that people are also interested in volunteering because it feels rewarding, especially while working with animals. Tomazos & Butler (2012) confirm that people gain pleasure from doing a good deed even if it gives them no material benefit in return. Selflessness is a key motive for volunteers to participate in a volunteering program.

### 6.1.2. Abroad

The main motivator, regarding to the research, of the interviewed volunteers is that they want to come abroad for their volunteer activities is to travel. Volunteers want to see the world; they want to immerse themselves in a different culture, and they want to learn or improve their language skills. This is also confirmed by Grimm & Needham (2012) who stated that the volunteers have a desire to learn another language and cultures, travel to the unknown and un-visited countries.

However, the interviewed volunteers choose specifically for Costa Rica, because of the high biodiversity in this country. The people who come to Costa Rica to volunteer are really interested in the environment and the Costa Rican wildlife, according to the research. Furthermore, there are also volunteers which choose to come to Costa Rica, because of the fact that they are familiar with the country, which is approved by Grimm & Needham (2012). In addition, people are very sensitive to recommendations from other people. This is equally a reason that people come to Costa Rica to volunteer. Grimm & Needham (2012) confirmed this as well with previous research.

### 6.1.3. Project

The research has shown that most volunteers find their project, where they participated in, online. Volunteers also find their projects through a recommendation from friends or family. Grimm & Needham (2012) stated in previous research that volunteers choose their projects on recommendations of others. The research has shown that the interviewed volunteers want to find a volunteer project that is not too expensive, and a place where they will have contact with local people and do something for the community. Grimm & Needham (2012) has shown that goals and services from the project are motivations too chose for a certain project.

However, the project has to have a safe environment, and it has to challenge the volunteers. Also the location of the project is an important aspect for the volunteers, according to the research. Here, there could be made a connection with Grimm & Needham (2012) who stated that location is one of the reasons why volunteers choose for a specific project. According to Grimm & Needham (2012) there are more reasons why volunteers choose for a specific project; variety, activities, ecosystem, family owned and flexibility.

### 6.1.4. Organization

The research has shown that when volunteers find a volunteer organization, they choose the first one they find. A lot of the interviewed volunteers are not familiar with finding volunteer organizations, and do not know where they have to pay attention to. When volunteers are searching for organization on the internet, they look at the websites. If the website is informative, looks appealing, and they get a quick response, the

volunteer is already interested. However, when choosing a volunteer organization, volunteers search for reviews on the internet. If the reviews are positive, the volunteer is more interested in the organization. Research of Grimm & Needham (2012) has shown that the reputation, recommendation and the promotional material are reason to choose for a specific organization. Furthermore, according to the research, the price of the projects, location and the intentions are also decisive factors why a volunteer would choose for a certain volunteer organization. Grimm & Needham (2012) confirm that price is a reason for volunteers to choose for an organization. Also safety, opportunity for independent research, program variety, professionalism, and organization type are reasons according Grimm & Needham (2012).

### 6.1.5. Volunteer expectations

The research has shown that volunteers do not have a lot of expectations before starting with their volunteer program. While Andereck, McGehee, Lee & Clemmons (2011) stated that volunteers have high expectations before they start with their volunteer activity. Especially about the pre-trip services from the volunteer organization, which also is confirmed during the research, because there are volunteer organizations which immediately send information about what to expect, which will make it easier for the volunteer.

### 6.1.6. Service volunteer organization

As the research has shown, the most important services for a volunteer organization regarding the volunteers is lodging. Besides lodging; transportation, safety and providing meals are also important to volunteers while choosing a volunteer organization. Furthermore, is it



also important according to the research to provide the volunteers with all the information that is needed before they come abroad for a volunteer activity. Andereck, McGehee, Lee & Clemmons (2011) confirm that accommodation, pre-trip services, interaction with the volunteer, and other services available are important factors for volunteers to choose a volunteer organization.

#### 6.1.7. Profit / non-profit organization

The research demonstrated that most of the interviewed volunteers do matter if it a non-profit is or a profit organization. Furthermore, the research has shown that volunteers prefer a non-profit organization because they believe that non-profit organizations are truly committed to their projects. They also prefer non-profits because volunteers are looking for a company which is really focused on helping others and helping animals, and not to gain money. However, Tomazos & Butler (2012) confirmed that volunteer prefer financial gain to benefit destinations rather than the first world profit makers and attach value and trust to the status of non-profit or charitable organizations.

#### 6.1.8. Values project

The research has shown that volunteers the educational aspects of the projects one as the most important values to participate in a volunteer project find. Volunteers choose their projects based on the fact that they could learn about the environment, animals, and/or the language. Furthermore, another important value for the volunteers to choose to participate in volunteer projects is that it a project is that is fair, sustainable and that it helps the local community. Lo & Lee (2010) stated that volunteers want to give back to the host community, and want to do something meaningful and hope to make a difference in the world.

#### 6.1.9. Awareness local community

The research has shown that most of the volunteers know what the benefits are of the project, where they participated in, according to the local community. Most projects focus on helping the community and educate the community. This is confirmed by Sin (2010), who stated that volunteer tourism is most beneficial when they aim to provide long term effects to host communities. For example, rebuilding or improving physical facilities, and teaching English. Especially education-related volunteer projects are preferred since these provide more sustainable and long-term effects that will in time enable the local population to break out of the poverty cycle.

On the contrary, there are also volunteers from the research who do not know the benefits of their project according to the local community. They are not aware of the benefits, because it is never explained to them or they have never thought about it. It is remarkable that volunteers do not think about that, because Zahra & McGehee (2013) stated that there are many volunteer tourism activities have a negative effect on tourism development in host communities.

#### 6.1.10. Awareness project value

The research has shown that most of the volunteers choose to volunteer due to personal value. They want to volunteer to gain experience, develop themselves, and because they have to for their education. Furthermore, other personal values of volunteers are that they love animals, they want to travel and see the world, and the volunteers would feel good about themselves when they can help others. Tomazos & Butler (2012) confirm that Volunteer tourism is a personal experience where people engage in to fulfill intrinsic

motivation which can benefit the participant's life and the host community. However, a social value for the volunteers is that volunteers want to leave something behind, and not just give something as a tourist. Burns (2012) define that volunteering prove a safe environment in which volunteers have the opportunity to practice social action and witness the outcomes of their engagement. The most seen ecological value is to protect the environment, due to the research. Volunteers are interested in the way how Costa Rica protects their environment. Finally, volunteers are concerned about the future of the environment, and there have to be changed something to make a positive difference. Durham, Honey & Vargas (2010) confirm that Costa Rica's nature tourism sector built on environmental and social standers and good practices, has demonstrated both its profitability and its capacity to meet changing consumer trends. Costa Rica's outstanding biodiversity has earned Costa Rica a well-deserved international reputation as a leading eco-tourism destination.

## 6.2. LIMITATIONS

There were a few limitations during the research. Because of the lack of volunteers at each projects which Green Life Volunteers offer, there could not mentioned improvements for all the projects. To get information of all projects, Green Life Volunteers could send online questionnaires to each volunteer after finishing their volunteer project. However, because of the remote location of Green Life Volunteers, Puerto Jimenez, was it difficult to get more volunteers interviewed from other projects.

## 6.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOLLOW-UP RESEARCH

During this research, the focus was on volunteer projects which Green Life Volunteers already offer. Only a few of the projects are analyzed, because of the limitations. Follow-up research should be hold on all the projects of Green Life Volunteers. However, Costa Rica offers a lot of volunteer possibilities, and there are more projects which Green Life Volunteers could offer, because of the limitations it did not happen during this research. Follow-up research should focus more on all projects in Costa Rica, which might be interesting for Green Life Volunteers to offer as well. Another recommendation for follow-up research is about projects which are only focused on the local community.

# CONCLUSION RECOMMENDATION

## CHAPTER 7

*“Helping is its own reward. It is surprising how it just feels right”.*

- *Paul Newman*







This chapter describes the conclusion of the research. The conclusion gives an answer to formulated sub-questions which arise from the theoretical framework and the results. The research question of this research is: **“How can Green Life Volunteers improve the volunteer projects adapt to the needs of the volunteers?”** The sub-questions will give an answer to the research question. This chapter provides also the recommendations with regard to the findings from the research. The recommendations give insight on how Green Life Volunteers could improve the volunteer projects adapt to the needs of the volunteers.

## 7.1. CONCLUSION

### 7.1.1. Sub-question 1

#### **What are volunteer’s motivations and arguments when choosing a volunteering project?**

There are many motivations to participate in a volunteering project. Gain experience is one of the most important motivator to volunteer. However, another main motivator for volunteers to volunteer is to help the community and do something good for someone else, by giving something back. Furthermore, traveling is also a big motivation for volunteers to start with volunteer activities. They want to see another country, learn the language, experience a different environment and get to know a different culture. Because of the fact that the volunteer activities are abroad is it more interesting to volunteer. People are also interested in volunteering because it feels rewarding, especially while working with animals.

Furthermore, volunteers choose for volunteer projects where they have a good feeling about, and which offer advantageous conditions to their volunteers. They choose for a project where they can learn and develop themselves. However, the project has needs to have a safe environment, and it has to challenge the volunteers. Also the location of the project is an essential

aspect for the volunteers. In addition, the project is required to be affordable for the volunteer.

However, the price of the projects, location and the intentions are also decisive factors why a volunteer would choose for a certain volunteer organization. Financial support is also an organization motivation for volunteers to choose for a certain organization. When the organization is specific to the country where the volunteer wants to do volunteering activities, the volunteers have a better feeling about it, because they have the feeling that the organization really have a relation with the city and the country where it is in. If the organization is all over the world, the volunteers feel it as less personal. Smaller organizations are more appealing for volunteers because volunteers have the feeling that the organization really want to make a difference, and smaller organization are mostly more affordable. In contrary, some volunteers prefer bigger organizations, because they have the feeling that it will be better organized, and that there is a bigger diversity of projects.

### 7.1.2. Sub-question 2

**Which criteria are important to volunteers regarding the projects that are provided by non-profit volunteer companies in Costa Rica?**

Most of the volunteers do matter if it is a non-profit or a profit organization. Volunteers prefer a non-profit organization, because they believe that non-profit organizations are truly committed to their projects. They also prefer non-profits because volunteers are looking for a company which is really focused on helping others and helping animals, and not to gain money. The most important services for a volunteer organization regarding volunteers are:

- 🌱 Lodging
- 🌱 Transportation
- 🌱 Safety
- 🌱 Providing meals
- 🌱 Providing information about the tasks
- 🌱 Providing reviews from former volunteers
- 🌱 Affordable
- 🌱 Fair project
- 🌱 Money spend on community
- 🌱 Explanation where the money goes
- 🌱 Customer service

Furthermore, volunteers find the educational aspects of the projects one as the most important values to participate in a volunteer project. Volunteers choose their projects based on the fact that they could learn about the environment, animals, and/or the language. Furthermore, another important value for the volunteers to choose to participate in volunteer projects is that it a project is that is fair, sustainable and that it helps the local community.

### 7.1.3. Sub-question 3

**What are the experiences of volunteers during their time at Green Life Volunteers?**

The majority of volunteers are satisfied with Green Life Volunteers. However, volunteers have improvements and recommendations for Green Life Volunteers as well. The Dog Rescue project needs to create more awareness. At the Organic Farming project there was not always much work to do. The accommodations at the Turtle Conservation were really bad according the volunteers, also the project was not good organized. At the Teaching Children project, the teacher was not present while the volunteer was there. The National Park should change their view on volunteers. Last, the internship at Green Life Volunteers also need some improvements. The work and time load could be more organized, so the work will be more efficient. Furthermore, volunteers missed projects with wild animals, also turtle projects where volunteers could participate a year round, and not only in a certain season. Projects based on the community are also missing in the assortment of Green Life Volunteers.

Furthermore, Green Life Volunteers could promote more to gain more awareness. To gain more awareness Green Life Volunteers should get an office, so the community and tourists in town know that Green Life Volunteers exists. To gain more awareness, Green Life Volunteers should also write more consistently on their social media, if there would be a new article published every week, more people will follow and word of mouth will go fast. Volunteers also want to know what happens with the money, they want to see a clear description of the fees where they pay for. However, volunteers want to get

more preparation pre-departure. They can better prepare themselves before they come to volunteer. Finally, volunteers were not satisfied about the Turtle Conservation project, and volunteers recommend Green Life Volunteers to quit with this project.

#### 7.1.4. Sub-question 4

##### Which volunteer projects in Costa Rica will increase the value of Green Life Volunteers?

There are various projects in Costa Rica which will increase the value of Green Life Volunteers. These projects offer a varied program, safe environment, accommodation facilities, and a volunteer coordinator. These projects give volunteers the chance to improve / learn Spanish, and develop themselves. There is also observed the minimum volunteer time, the price, and the impact on the local community. There are seven projects which will add value to Green Life Volunteers. There are three wildlife projects; Alturas Wildlife Sanctuary, Jaguar Rescue Center, and Centro de Rescate Pariso Carlisa. There are three turtle projects which operate in different seasons; Reserva Playa Tortuga, Parismina Turtle Conservation, and OSA Conservation. And there is one other project which help the local community; Interactive Gardens.

#### 7.5. RECOMMENDATION

##### 7.5.1. Customer service

###### 7.5.1.1. Showing Interest

It is important to keep the volunteers happy. This could be achieved through customer service. Green Life Volunteers should inform the volunteers before their volunteer experience. They have a handbook of the certain project online, but they should send it directly to the volunteer, including information about

Green Life Volunteers, the project, the trip, and the country. Green Life Volunteers should also take care of their volunteers during their volunteer activity. They should inform at the volunteer how it is going and if everything is okay. If not, then Green Life Volunteers knows it on time, and could help to solve the problem. After the volunteer time it is also important to have contact with the volunteer. Green Life Volunteers should send the volunteer after their volunteer time questionnaires. With the questionnaire, Green Life Volunteers know how the experience was of the volunteers and if it made their expectations true. If not, Green Life Volunteers could improve or make it more clear for next volunteers.

###### 7.5.1.2. Providing reviews

Volunteers are sensitive to recommendations from other peoples. If they have heard or read good things about the project or organization, the volunteer is more interested in it. Therefore, Green Life Volunteers should provide more reviews from former volunteers to attract new volunteers. To obtain reviews from former volunteers, Green Life Volunteers should put more effort in it. Green Life Volunteers could do that through sending a questionnaire to former volunteers about their volunteer experiences. This questionnaire could be sent online by e-mail, or even to put it on the website. With this information Green Life Volunteers could learn what need to be changed, and Green Life Volunteers get to know what the volunteers like about the organization and projects. With this information, there could be written reviews for new volunteers.

##### 7.5.2. Providing information

###### 7.5.2.1. Explanation money

Volunteers want to know what happens with their money after they paid. Green



Life Volunteers have a non-profit certificate but volunteers still have to pay a fee for the projects where they want to participate in. Volunteers want to get a clear explanation what happens with the money. They understand that they have to pay for accommodation and food, but they do not know for what the rest of the money is. Green Life Volunteers should make a clear explanation which they could show to their volunteers, to get the volunteers more satisfied.

#### 7.5.2.2. Explanation local community

Green Life Volunteers is a local organization and claims that it is benefiting the local community. Nevertheless, volunteers do not know what all the benefits are for the local community. Green Life Volunteers should clarify the benefits of the local community from the projects to the volunteers.

#### 7.5.3. Promotion

##### 7.5.3.1. Online

Green Life Volunteers should invest more money in promoting the organization and the projects. The organization is hard to find on the internet according to the volunteers, and the internet is the main tool for volunteers to search for organizations. More promotion will attend to more awareness for Green Life Volunteers. Green Life Volunteers already promote a bit on the internet, but on the wrong way. The text looks more like cheap commercials, which could be improved. They need to strengthen their writing skills, they should not write in cap locks, and they should write more consistent. Green Life Volunteers need a content management online.

##### 7.5.3.2. Publicity

Not only the promotion on the internet is of importance, also promotion in town.

Puerto Jimenez receives tourists which do not know about Green Life Volunteers. Green Life Volunteers could get their attention to present itself more in town. This could be achieved to get an office, so tourists and potential short term volunteers could visit, to see what Green Life Volunteers offers. If Green Life Volunteers get an office, they have to make sure that people can find them, through signposts or advertisements through town. With more awareness, Green Life Volunteers get the change to grow and develop as a bigger and well-known organization.

#### 7.5.4. Projects

##### 7.5.4.1. Project Green Life Volunteers

The work could be more efficient at Green Life Volunteers. The Dog and Cat Rescue project need more kennels and space for the dogs and cats. On this way the volunteer could work more efficient and will make it more enjoyable for the volunteers. Green life Volunteers should invest their money better to obtain this. It is important that Green Life Volunteers knows that there will be enough work and support when sending volunteers. Green Life Volunteers should have more contact with the projects, even when there are no volunteers. On this way the organization knows if there is work to do, and if the volunteer could do useful work during their volunteer time. Green Life Volunteers should stop with the Turtle Conservation ASVO. Volunteers are not happy about this project at all, and this is not a good project to link your name with. Green Life Volunteers could achieve more if the focus was only on Green Life Volunteers and not other things as well. If the manager will invest more time and money in the organization, the organizational structure of the organization would be much better, and the interns would work more efficient.

#### 7.5.4.2. New projects

Green Life Volunteers should work together with projects focused on wild animals. Volunteers are interested in these kind of projects. Green Life Volunteers need to invest time in this to obtain this collaboration. Alturas Wildlife Sanctuary, Jaguar Rescue Project, and Centro de Rescate Paraiso Carlissa are projects which she should work together with. Sea Turtle Projects are also interesting for volunteers, because Green Life Volunteers should stop with ASVO, they need other turtle projects; Reserva

Playa Tortuga, Parismina Turtle Conservation, and OSA Conservation are projects with sea turtles, and those projects are located in Costa Rica on different sites of the country, so in every season there are turtles available, which means that Green Life Volunteers can always offer a turtle project with turtles to their volunteers. Community based projects are also interesting for volunteers. Interactive Gardens is a project that is focused on the local community, which is an extra addition for Green Life Volunteers to work together with them.

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