

Managing Voluntourists: Insights from Organisational Practices in North-South Voluntourism

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Abstract

This study explores how sending organisations manage and coordinate voluntourists in voluntourism programmes. Through qualitative research, North-South voluntourism operations were explored by analysing publicly available organisational information and interviewing staff members (n=13) from (inter)national non-profit and for-profit organisations operating from Belgium or the Netherlands. Thematic analysis investigated managerial aspects and organisational contexts, using insights from human resource models on planning, recruitment, training, performance management, and retention strategies. Findings show diverse management approaches, ranging from passive to active and from more structured and formalised to more individually and personally adapted, with no clear distinctions by organisation types such as for-profit versus non-profit or international versus national sending organisation. Instead, differences emerge in the scale of voluntourism operations: between small-scale organisations offering voluntourism in only a few projects and/or countries and large-scale ones managing broad and diversified project portfolios. Generally, most sending organisations focus on pre-entry activities, with limited involvement during or after voluntourists' trips. A more holistic management and coordination approach, emphasising ongoing support and long-term relationships with both voluntourists and local partners, could enhance the benefits for voluntourists and local communities.

Keywords: volunteer tourism; voluntourism; volunteer tourists; management; coordination; qualitative interviews

Citation: Colpin, N., & Jegers, M. (2026). Managing Voluntourists: Insights from Organisational Practices in North-South Voluntourism. *European Journal of Tourism Research*, 43, 4302. <https://doi.org/10.54055/ejtr.v43i.4164>.

Publication history:

Received: 27/02/2025; Revised: 24/09/2025; 09/12/2025; Accepted: 18/12/2025; Published online: 01/06/2026;

Volume date: 01/07/2026

Coordinating editor: Jessica Mei Pung



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1. Introduction

Voluntourism, also known as volunteer tourism, is an organised practice that combines travel and volunteering (e.g., Foller-Carroll & Charlebois, 2016; Pompurová *et al.*, 2020; Wearing *et al.*, 2016). While domestic and South-South voluntourism exists, the prevalent pattern follows geo-political divisions of North and South: individuals from Western industrialised countries (global North) travel to post-colonial countries (global South) for volunteer work (Baillie Smith *et al.*, 2018; Butcher, 2024; Chen, 2021; Georgeou & Haas, 2019; Loiseau *et al.*, 2016; Pompurová *et al.*, 2020). This article focuses on this *North-South* flow of international voluntourism and examines the management and coordination of its participants, known as volunteer tourists, voluntourists, or international volunteers. The study investigates how (inter)national non-profit organisations (NPOs) and for-profit organisations (FPOs) structure and oversee their North-South voluntourism operations through organisational characteristics (such as form, identity, and goals) and human resources management mechanisms (such as communication, training, and supervision).

Various types of organisations, whether (inter)national or global, for-profit or non-profit, facilitate diverse voluntourism programmes, sending voluntourists abroad to support the day-to-day operations of volunteer projects and partner organisations in host countries while contributing financial resources and skills (Abreu *et al.*, 2021; Tiessen & Lough, 2019). Situated at the intersection of tourism and volunteerism, the discourse surrounding this market emphasises opportunities of positive development for both voluntourists and local host communities (Coghlan & Weiler, 2018; Magrizos *et al.*, 2021; Melles, 2019).

Despite its potential positive outcomes, voluntourism raises concerns about sustainable development in host countries and ethical issues when working with vulnerable local communities, particularly in short-term engagements (Dolezal & Miezelyte, 2020; Pan, 2017; Park, 2018; Strohmeier & Heleta, 2020). Critics highlight the limited involvement of local communities in programme design and the insufficient preparation and coordination of skilled and competent voluntourists, especially when their contributions are short-lived (Banki & Schonell, 2018; Kahana, 2023; McAllum & Zahra, 2017; Melles, 2019; Strohmeier & Heleta, 2020). These concerns reflect broader critiques of seeing *development as modernisation* (Butcher, 2024), which positions the global North as developed and the global South as underdeveloped, thereby potentially reinforcing stereotypes of Northern voluntourists as privileged individuals aiding impoverished Southern communities (Dolezal & Miezelyte, 2020; Eckardt *et al.*, 2022; Kahana, 2023; Park, 2018).

Professional management and coordination practices related to voluntourists, such as task and project alignment, continuous guidance, and impact assessment, may help mitigate these challenges (Eckardt *et al.*, 2020, 2022; Hechenberger, 2019; Kirillova *et al.*, 2015; Steele & Dredge, 2017). Strategically coordinating voluntourists is crucial for sending organisations but remains complex, especially in an international context (Barrett *et al.*, 2017; Charleston *et al.*, 2018; Tiltay & Islek, 2020).

Although scholars propose alternative models for managing volunteers and international workers, research on the management of voluntourists and voluntourism operators – and specifically on the role and responsibilities of sending organisations and organisational characteristics in international and development contexts – remains limited (Avolio *et al.*, 2024; Barrett *et al.*, 2017; Hammersley, 2014; Sinervo, 2015; Steele & Dredge, 2017). Research on this is important, given the ambiguity of sending organisations' responsibility to operate at the intersection of market responsiveness in a commercialised voluntourism market and service orientation in their mission to support local communities (Avolio *et al.*, 2024; Steele & Dredge, 2017). To address this gap, the paper examines the role of organisational context for management and coordination processes (Research Question 1) and the management and coordination techniques of voluntourists (Research Question 2) by analysing the volunteering

operations of (inter)national NPOs and FPOs with operational units in Belgium or the Netherlands. Ultimately, the paper contributes to the understanding of the management and coordination of voluntourists in North-South contexts and proposes strategies to enhance these practices. The article describes consecutively the literature and theoretical background, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *The Voluntourism Market*

International voluntourism can be understood from different conceptual perspectives (Butcher, 2024). First, it can be linked to international volunteering practices, where global development organisations and other non-profit and non-governmental organisations send individuals to foreign projects (Conran, 2011; Harris *et al.*, 2016) aimed at contributing to local communities and fostering intercultural exchange and understanding (Foller-Carroll & Charlebois, 2016; Wearing *et al.*, 2017). Second, voluntourism can be situated within the broader trend of alternative tourism, where tourists seek to travel more responsibly and sustainably as a response to mass tourism's negative consequences – combining altruistic aspirations of supporting others with intrinsic goals of authentic experiences and personal development (Foller-Carroll & Charlebois, 2016; Gilfillan, 2015; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017; Proyrungroj, 2020; Wu *et al.*, 2018). Regardless of the conceptual origin, international voluntourism practices often consist of one-time, short-term voluntary work (Georgeou & Haas, 2019; Loiseau *et al.*, 2016; Wu *et al.*, 2018), aligning with the concept of episodic volunteering. Driven by personal, study, or professional goals (such as balancing work-life or accommodating time constraints), volunteers increasingly choose well-defined short-term commitments on specific occasions (such as during holidays) that contrast with traditional long-term voluntary engagement (Barnes & Sharpe, 2009; Cuskelly *et al.*, 2006; Dunn *et al.*, 2022; Holmes *et al.*, 2010; Pompurová *et al.*, 2020). Reflecting patterns observed in organised event volunteering (Pompurová *et al.*, 2020), voluntourists similarly participate within clearly defined time frames, often during holidays or study breaks, and increasingly engage internationally.

Driven by the growth of episodic and international voluntary engagement, combined with the growing demand of tourists for alternative tourism experiences, voluntourism gained popularity and created a diversified sector with both new NPOs and FPOs entering the market and competing to attract voluntourists (Campbell & Warner, 2016; Park, 2018; Tiessen & Lough, 2019). Especially short-term voluntourism practices gained rapid popularity, which are often offered by tour operators and other commercial providers that sell and promote pre-packaged programmes (Foller-Carroll & Charlebois, 2016; Park, 2018). Whereas voluntourism was once primarily organised by NPOs, it is now facilitated by a wide spectrum of organisations, ranging from small to large non-profit, for-profit, and social-profit providers (Colpin *et al.*, 2025; Steele & Dredge, 2017; Taplin *et al.*, 2014). Commercial organisations today have a secured place in this industry, marketing voluntourism as a vacation experience that simultaneously contributes to personal development and host community benefits (Gilfillan, 2015; Tomazos & Butler, 2010). This pressures NPOs and smaller providers to adapt to a commercialised market by adopting similar marketing practices (Keese, 2011) or by collaborating with commercial operators (Coghlan & Gooch, 2011; Steele & Dredge, 2017).

Sending organisations, often based in the global North, are responsible for recruiting and preparing voluntourists for placements abroad (Bone & Bone, 2018; Lough *et al.*, 2018; Strohmeier & Heleta, 2020; Taplin *et al.*, 2014). Voluntourists are then connected to receiving (host) organisations, often located in the global South, which oversee on-the-ground activities in volunteer projects (Lough & Oppenheim, 2017; Taplin *et al.*, 2014). Together, they constitute a dynamic voluntourism market, offering programmes that vary widely in work domain, project objectives, targeted voluntourists, and logistical arrangements such as the duration and location of placements, living conditions and accommodation abroad, related costs, and options for individual or group travel (Colpin *et al.*, 2025; Georgeou & Haas,

2019; Proyrungroj, 2020; Schneller & Coburn, 2018; Schwarz, 2018; Tiessen & Lough, 2019; Wu *et al.*, 2018).

Looking at the voluntourism market from a development perspective and given the prevalent North-South structure of the market, sending organisations are typically positioned as the primary gatekeepers of ethical voluntourism practices. Yet the diversity in the voluntourism market and the complex dynamics between sending and host organisations generate fluid and fragmented roles and responsibilities (Steele & Dredge, 2017). Extant research, often stemming from a development perspective on North-South structures, reinforces this positioning and further situates sending organisations as the main actors for coordinating and managing voluntourists and voluntourism programmes (Burrall *et al.*, 2017; Butcher, 2024; Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Steele & Dredge, 2017; Steele & Scherrer, 2018). However, this research tends to treat sending organisations as a monolithic entity (Steele & Dredge, 2017; Steele & Scherrer, 2018), neglecting how differential organisational configurations and operational contexts shape voluntourism practices and their management and coordination.

2.2. Conceptual Hybridity of Voluntourism

Although scholars recognise the complexity of the voluntourism market, often distinguishing between *international volunteering* (frequently associated with longer-term commitment) and *voluntourism* (typically referring to shorter-term engagement), practical realities of the market often blur these distinctions (Frazer & Waitt, 2016; Loiseau *et al.*, 2016; Wearing *et al.*, 2017). For clarity and consistency, this article adopts the terms *voluntourism* and *voluntourists* to encompass both practices, addressing the broader complexity of the market irrespective of the duration of the voluntary participation.

This definitional ambiguity is a central feature of the voluntourism market, which is why it is best understood as a multidimensional and contested concept with no universally accepted definition (Frazer & Waitt, 2016; Proyrungroj, 2017; Wearing & McGehee, 2013). However, all perspectives recognise the duality of leisure/tourism and volunteering (Avolio *et al.*, 2024; Pompurová *et al.*, 2020; Proyrungroj, 2017, 2020; Seher *et al.*, 2015), although some position it primarily within tourism, while others stress its proximity to development aid (Dolezal & Miezelyte, 2020; Sinervo, 2015; Wearing *et al.*, 2016; Wearing & McGehee, 2013). This hybridity reflects a fundamental tension at the intersection of tourism and volunteerism, producing competing narratives of meaning and value. Often framed as an alternative form of tourism, voluntourism is distinct from other forms of niche and sustainable tourism (such as gap year, backpacking, ecotourism, green tourism, and community tourism) in its combination of leisure and volunteering (Gilfillan, 2015; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017; Proyrungroj, 2017). When practised responsibly, it can support the economic, social, and environmental development of host countries and local communities (Avolio *et al.*, 2024; Gilfillan, 2015; Proyrungroj, 2017, 2020) and provides opportunities for positive development for intercultural exchange and transformative learning for both voluntourists and host communities (Coghlan & Weiler, 2018; Magrivos *et al.*, 2021; Melles, 2019). However, the growing commercialisation of the sector has raised concerns about unequal power relations and limited benefits for host communities (Campbell & Warner, 2016; Coghlan & Gooch, 2011; Keese, 2011).

Voluntourism can thus be situated on a continuum from superficial to deep engagement (Callanan & Thomas, 2005; McGehee, 2014; Schwarz, 2018; Wearing & McGehee, 2013), balancing market-driven tourism and (commercial) service provision, on the one hand, and altruistic volunteering and development aid, on the other. Such hybridity underscores both the conceptual and practical complexity of voluntourism and the organisations that facilitate it, which is why understanding sending organisations requires situating them within this context of contested institutional logics. This study acknowledges and engages with this as a defining characteristic of the voluntourism market. Therefore,

this study proposes a first research question: “*What role do organisational characteristics and contexts play in the management of voluntourists by sending organisations?*”

2.3. *The Importance of Attracting and Coordinating Voluntourists*

The commodification of voluntourism has increased competition for voluntourist engagement (Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Dolnicar & Randle, 2007), while the shift to international and episodic volunteering reflects a change in how individuals offer their time, with distinct motivations and expectations compared to traditional volunteers who commit to regular or long-term national programmes (Pegg *et al.*, 2012; Wearing *et al.*, 2017). These changes highlight the need for tailored strategies to manage and coordinate voluntourists (Cnaan *et al.*, 2022; Hyde *et al.*, 2016).

Scholars in volunteerism research indicate how organisational characteristics can play an important role in this process. Elements such as mission, field of activity, task structure, and operational flexibility directly shape voluntary participation, while aspects like organisational size, financial and human resources, and membership composition indirectly influence the design of voluntary opportunities, thus affecting individual experiences and outcomes (Dunn *et al.*, 2022; Ridder & McCandless, 2010; Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013). Voluntourists not only seek authentic leisure experiences but also meaningful engagement with local communities and opportunities to contribute to societal needs (Boretti & Fairer-Wessels, 2014; Pompurová *et al.*, 2020; Wilson, 2015). Voluntourism programmes become attractive when they align with voluntourists’ diverse motivations, which may range from altruistic goals to personal growth, cultural learning, or study and career development (Boretti & Fairer-Wessels, 2014; Keese, 2011; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017; Pompurová *et al.*, 2020; Proyrungroj, 2020).

Since voluntourists are not a homogeneous group – as personal backgrounds, experiences, and expectations vary widely (Foller-Carroll & Charlebois, 2016; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017; Tomazos & Butler, 2010; Wu *et al.*, 2018) – sending organisations face challenges of managing voluntourism programmes in ways that address this diversity. Effective management includes providing flexible guidance, structured support, and opportunities for meaningful interaction with local communities, ensuring that voluntourists contribute effectively and benefit according to their motivations (Coghlan & Gooch, 2011; Tomazos & Butler, 2010). Conversely, a lack of organisational practices – such as inadequate planning and pre-departure orientation, poor on-site coordination and arrangements, or insufficient linkage with destination communities – can undermine voluntourism initiatives, leading to negative effects for both voluntourists and local communities (Burrai *et al.*, 2017; Kumaran & Pappas, 2012; Strohmeier & Heleta, 2020).

To address the evolving nature of the engagement of voluntourists, sending organisations should examine their overall management and coordination processes – that is, how they build robust relationships with their voluntary workforce and coordinate them throughout the time they are committed to the sending organisation and host project or organisation (Chen, 2021; Dunn *et al.*, 2022; Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008; Kumaran & Pappas, 2012; Taylor *et al.*, 2006). Beyond attracting suitable participants by clearly communicating their organisational context, organisations should provide continuous guidance, support, and coordination during voluntourists’ placements (Dunn *et al.*, 2022; Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008; Jassawalla *et al.*, 2006; Kumaran & Pappas, 2012; Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013; Tiltay & Islek, 2020). When voluntourists are effectively matched with projects and supported through ongoing coordination in international contexts, while simultaneously involving host perspectives in voluntourism development, voluntourism could create mutual value, improving project outcomes abroad while enhancing volunteer satisfaction, commitment, and the sustainability of long-term projects (Banki & Schonell, 2018; Eckardt *et al.*, 2020; Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008; Kumaran & Pappas, 2012; Sin, 2009; Taylor *et al.*, 2006).

While research acknowledges the importance of organisational characteristics in voluntourism, it does so mainly from voluntourists' or hosts' experiences and the impact of voluntourism on them (e.g., Aquino & Andereck, 2022; Colpin *et al.*, 2025; Kirillova *et al.*, 2015) or to understand sending organisations' roles and perceptions while organising voluntourism and its monitoring and evaluation for sustainable development (e.g., Burrai *et al.*, 2017; Eckardt *et al.*, 2022; Sinervo, 2015; Steele *et al.*, 2017). This leaves the role of management and coordination of voluntourists – and the role of sending organisations more broadly – not fully understood (Hammersley, 2014; Sinervo, 2015), particularly as to the challenges of strategically managing human resources within the international context and the hybrid organisational context characterising the voluntourism market. This study addresses this gap by investigating how sending organisations manage and coordinate voluntourists.

2.4. Management Models for Voluntourists

Managing and coordinating voluntourists requires approaches distinct from traditional volunteering and human resource management. While organisations often apply classical human resource practices to paid employees and volunteers (Dolnicar & Randle, 2007; Studer, 2015), fundamental differences exist between managing paid and voluntary workforces (Barrett *et al.*, 2017; Cuskelly *et al.*, 2006; Studer, 2015). Organisations have little or no formal power to impose performance standards on those who engage voluntarily, as they are primarily intrinsically motivated (Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013) and, furthermore, are located abroad (Anderson, 2001; O'Sullivan, 2010). Moreover, business techniques, often developed for larger for-profit organisations, are not necessarily a good match for small and possibly voluntary-based organisations, although very common in the voluntourism market (Cuskelly *et al.*, 2006; Taplin *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, organisations should manage and coordinate volunteers and voluntourists following a tailored approach before, during, and after travel (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008; Waikayi *et al.*, 2012).

Despite recognition of the importance of communication and relationships between sending organisations and voluntourists (Eckardt *et al.*, 2022), voluntourism research remains fragmented. Scholars connecting organisational characteristics with voluntourists and their management often focus on either voluntourists' experiences or the monitoring of voluntourism as a sector (e.g., Gilfillan, 2015; Steele *et al.*, 2017; Steele & Scherrer, 2018; Taplin *et al.*, 2014), leaving voluntourist management – specifically the full management process including processes spanning pre-, peri-, and post-trip phases – not fully understood. To address this gap, this study proposes a second research question: “*Which management and coordination practices of voluntourists do sending organisations apply in an international context?*”

Given that international voluntourism operates within challenging cross-border contexts and encompasses both NPOs and FPOs, insights from volunteer and expatriate management might inform this process. Table 1 provides an overview of management and coordination across these phases (pre-, peri-, and post-trip), drawing from voluntourism research, (international) volunteering in both NPOs and FPOs, and expatriate management literature addressing international human resources challenges.

Table 1. *Management process.*

Management activities		References
pre-trip	Planning	Identification / evaluation of voluntourists' needs, role description (Cuskelly <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Hager & Brudney, 2011; Hager & Renfro, 2020; Kumaran & Pappas, 2012; O'Sullivan, 2010).
		Marketing/advertising voluntourists' role (Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Hager & Brudney, 2011; Kumaran & Pappas, 2012; Waikayi <i>et al.</i> , 2012).
	Recruitment	Application, screening, selecting, matching (Anderson, 2001; Cuskelly <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Dunn <i>et al.</i> , 2022; Hager & Brudney, 2011; O'Sullivan, 2010).
	Voluntourist performance management	Orientation, training, guidance (Anderson, 2001; Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Cnaan <i>et al.</i> , 2022; Cuskelly <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Hager & Brudney, 2011; Jassawalla <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Kumaran & Pappas, 2012; Linardi & McConnell, 2011; Strohmeier & Heleta, 2020; Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013).
peri-trip	Voluntourist performance management and assurance	Introduction, training, development (Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Cnaan <i>et al.</i> , 2022; Cuskelly <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Hager & Renfro, 2020; O'Sullivan, 2010; Waikayi <i>et al.</i> , 2012).
		Psychosocial guidance/support (Banki & Schonell, 2018; Jassawalla <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Strohmeier & Heleta, 2020; Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013; Tiltay & Islek, 2020).
		Cultural, material context (Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Hager & Brudney, 2011; Schneller & Coburn, 2018; Tiltay & Islek, 2020).
		Supervision, monitoring, evaluation (Cnaan <i>et al.</i> , 2022; Hager & Renfro, 2020; Linardi & McConnell, 2011; O'Sullivan, 2010; Strohmeier & Heleta, 2020; Tiltay & Islek, 2020).
	Quality assurance foreign project and partner organisation	Evaluation project/organisation, processing complaints, feedback (Eckardt <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Schneller & Coburn, 2018; Tiltay & Islek, 2020).
	Risk management	Health and safety measures, repatriation (Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Kumaran & Pappas, 2012; O'Sullivan, 2010).
post-trip	Voluntourist retention	Recognition and compensation (Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Cuskelly <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Hager & Brudney, 2011; O'Sullivan, 2010).
		Psychosocial support (Baillie Smith <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Banki & Schonell, 2018; Jassawalla <i>et al.</i> , 2006).
		Registration/deregistration, communication former voluntourists (Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Freidus, 2017; Kumaran & Pappas, 2012; Waikayi <i>et al.</i> , 2012).

Note. The authors' own elaboration, drawing on insights from expatriate management, volunteer management, and voluntourism scholarships.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Approach

This study examines the management and coordination practices of diverse sending voluntourism organisations operating in a North-South context. As the voluntourism sector encompasses organisations with varied operational modes and organisational missions, the population of interest included both touristic and non-touristic FPOs and NPOs, as well as *dedicated/specialist sending organisations* that focus exclusively on facilitating voluntourism programmes and *multi-purpose organisations* for which voluntourism constitutes only one component of broader activities. For example, development and humanitarian (non-governmental) organisations that integrate sending voluntourists abroad within sustainable development missions, youth organisations and educational institutions that mediate voluntourism placements within broader educational development programmes, or tourism operators that offer voluntourism alongside other travel products. For these multi-purpose sending organisations, voluntourism (placements) represents only part of their operational activities to fulfil their organisational mission.

Organisations were eligible for inclusion if they (a) had operational units in Flanders (Belgium) or the Netherlands, (b) sent voluntourists to structured volunteer projects or receiving partner organisations abroad (hereafter referred to as host organisations), and (c) sent voluntourists at least annually. They were excluded if they (a) acted simultaneously as both sending and host organisations, (b) engaged in sending voluntourists only incidentally (e.g., one-off projects or without structured partnership), or (c) outsourced the full management and coordination process to external tour operators without retaining responsibility for voluntourists during and/or after placements abroad.

To identify organisations meeting these criteria, the first author conducted a comprehensive online search between January and March 2020 using forums and databases listing voluntourism opportunities, thereby following procedures outlined by Barnes and Sharpe (2009). All identified organisations were cross-checked using their official websites to confirm eligibility. Thus, only organisations maintaining an active online presence were considered, consistent with earlier research on sending organisations' established recruitment practices (Wearing & McGehee, 2013). This process resulted in an initial overview of 101 organisations and their respective organisational attributes; 15 with uncertain eligibility were removed.

The first author invited the remaining 86 organisations to participate. After two rounds of outreach, 34 organisations responded, 16 of which agreed to participate. Subsequent verification excluded three organisations that did not send voluntourists annually, yielding a final sample of 13 eligible organisations. Given the small sample size and the heterogeneity of organisational types, all remaining organisations were included rather than undertaking additional sampling, acknowledging the inherent generalisability limitations.

One respondent per organisation was recruited, chosen based on knowledge of organisational management and coordination practices (Anderson, 2001; Bremer & Graeff, 2007; Kumaran & Pappas, 2012; Taylor *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, respondents held managerial, strategic, or operational roles with sufficient insights into management and coordination within the respective sending organisations.

The rather limited extant research on the full process of voluntourist management and coordination justified a qualitative research design (Jassawalla *et al.*, 2006; Yin, 2016). Given the exploratory character of this study and the need to understand not only what management and coordination practices sending organisations employ but also how the chosen mechanisms are perceived, explained, and experienced within the specific organisational contexts of respective sending organisations, this study employs semi-structured interviews with staff members of sending organisations (Connelly & Peltzer, 2016; Gioia *et*

al., 2013). This not only allowed the discovery of emergent themes but also captured the contextual diversity and complexity that characterise the voluntourism market and its operators. To accommodate respondent preferences and maximise participation, both synchronous oral and asynchronous written interview modes were used. This mixed approach addressed logistical constraints, as some organisations indicated a preference for written communication over real-time interviews (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014).

3.2. Procedure

In June and July 2020, interviews were conducted either through video calls to enable spontaneity or asynchronously through online forms with additional questions to ensure data equivalence (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Hewson & Laurent, 2008; O'Connor *et al.*, 2008). The sample included 13 respondents: 5 strategic managers and 8 operational coordinators working in organisational divisions responsible for developing and/or managing partnerships with foreign volunteer projects and/or host organisations. Three participants were executives and/or founders.

The sample related to three FPOs (one tour operator and two non-touristic companies) and ten NPOs (five foundations and five associations), three of which were *youth-led volunteer organisations* operated solely by young adult volunteers focused on youth development and cultural exchange for youth. Five organisations had international structures extending operational entities to three or more countries globally (including Belgium or the Netherlands), while the others were based in Belgium (n=3) or the Netherlands (n=5) with agreements to send voluntourists to specific partner projects and/or host organisations abroad.

Overall, the sample related to eight multi-purpose organisations for which voluntourism placements were only part of their operations: six NPOs had broader educational goals for their candidate voluntourists and developmental goals for local communities, and two FPOs also offered other forms of travel. The other five organisations were fully dedicated to placing voluntourists abroad, students for internships, and other tourist groups abroad. Annually, organisations send anywhere from a handful to dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of voluntourists abroad. Their operations range from supporting only a few projects within a single country (n=3) to projects in several neighbouring countries within one continent (n=1) to projects spread across multiple countries and continents (n=9). Detailed information on the respondents is available in Appendix I.

Table 2. *Interview topics*

<i>Main topic</i>	<i>Subtopic</i>
Organisational characteristics and their perceived influence on chosen management and coordination mechanisms	For voluntourism operations within the organisation: characteristics, objectives, role/responsibility division, standardisation/formalisation
Management and coordination aspects in an international context	Pre-, peri-, and post-trip: recruitment, screening, selection, matching, orientation, preparation, communication, guidance/support, training/reflection, complaints-handling, supervision, evaluation, feedback, recognition

Participants interviewed by video call (n=10), which lasted 48 to 102 minutes (average 70 minutes), provided informed consent at the beginning of the interview. Respondents who completed open-ended questions via online forms (n=3) received a modified consent by email after agreeing to participate. The semi-structured interview schedule, informed by, among others, Anderson (2001), Dunn *et al.* (2022), and Waikayi *et al.* (2012), addressed organisational, management, and coordination aspects throughout the processes of travel and voluntourism. Table II lists the main topics and subtopics questioned in the interviews.

3.3. Analysis

Video call interviews were transcribed verbatim, while interviews conducted through online forms generated their own transcripts. All personal data in the transcripts were deleted or anonymised to ensure respondent privacy (see Appendix I for the applied codes). Before beginning the coding process, the first author explored the data to create a classification of organisational and respondent characteristics, which was organised into worksheets for subsequent thematic analysis. These sheets were enriched with information collected from previously studied and analysed web pages during the sampling process.

The transcripts were then thematically analysed following Braun and Clarke's (2013, 2020) guidelines using NVivo Pro 12. The initial coding phase applied a deductive approach, using pre-existing nodes based on literature related to the management and coordination processes: 'planning', 'performance management and assessment', 'recruitment and selection', and 'training and development'. The transcripts were coded according to these categories, which aligned with the structure of the interview guide. An inductive approach followed, whereby the already organised data were examined for new nodes and connections within the respective management and coordination processes. This iterative process continued until all segments of the transcripts were assigned nodes and no new themes could be delineated. The first author developed schemes outlining all identified themes and their explanations, which the authors then discussed and interpreted to ensure precision and coherence. This constituted the basis for restructuring, redefining, and re-analysing the data, leading to the final results through an iterative analysis process (see Appendix II for the thematic framework).

4. Findings

To explain how sending organisations choose and apply certain practices and tools to manage and coordinate voluntourists, the findings section is structured along the travel process (before, during, and after travelling abroad) and highlights various managerial practices identified in the interview data. First, the general organisation of voluntourism programmes is described, along with how their planning varies across different organisational contexts. We then illustrate the ongoing coordination of voluntourists by illustrating the divergent roles of sending organisations, host organisations, volunteer projects abroad, and voluntourists themselves.

These managerial practices – as described by managers and coordinators within the sending organisation – reflect the perspectives of the sending organisations on how to ensure voluntourist satisfaction and the “*successful completion of volunteer projects*” (V₅) in host countries in terms of “*support [delivered] to local communities [by] the sending organisation*” (V₁₀). These varied practices range from passive, unstructured, and non-formalised to more active, structured, and formalised activities. Following the structure of the management activities in Table I, all managerial practices in the interview data are listed in Appendix II and are structured according to the management phases (planning, recruitment/selection, training/development, and performance management/assessment) and the travel process (before, during, and after travelling abroad).

4.1. *Voluntourism Programmes on a Tourism-Volunteering Continuum*

In general, the goal of organisations sending voluntourists to foreign projects is to facilitate intercultural exchange and learning, where voluntourists “gather new experiences while exchanging knowledge (...) that idealism is what should be important [for voluntourists]” (V9), fostering “their individual development” (V1). At the same time, the reciprocity inherent in such intercultural exchanges also contributes to local communities through global citizenship. Managers illustrate how “the interaction that unfolds abroad as they [voluntourists] live and work there, interacting with culture and politics” (V9), and “through their [voluntourists’ and local communities’] different cultural approaches and backgrounds” (V5) leads to “more understanding of and a broader perspective of each other [North-South], individual development of both sides, and international collaboration” (Q1), thus benefitting both voluntourists and host communities to a certain degree.

As voluntourists generally stay for a short time, they are expected to only hold complementary roles within largely independent and self-sufficient projects. Their contribution should be understood in terms of mutual exchange and collaboration between equal partners rather than as development aid. Despite describing the necessary independence of local projects, managers acknowledge that these projects depend to a certain degree on the financial funds and voluntourist participation made available through these collaborations. One manager elaborates on this perspective, depicting what voluntourism should represent:

They [voluntourists] are not going to work on major development projects or anything similar. It’s [voluntourism] an intercultural exchange based on equality and reciprocity, where both sides have something to contribute. They [local citizens/society] benefit from you, and you [voluntourists] benefit from them. Through this mutual sharing, both truly meet. That should be the most important principle [of voluntourism]. (V8)

Noteworthy, the respondents do not use the terms “voluntourists” and “voluntourism” but refer to the participants as “our volunteers” (V3) who participate in international volunteering (except Q2 and V10, who frequently use the terms “tourists” and “travellers”). When a link with tourism is acknowledged, managers mainly frame it in terms of the necessary travel aspect of international volunteering or in relation to leisure activities undertaken by voluntourists during their stay abroad (i.e., touristic activities during weekends or after completing project work) (V2, V4, V5, V6, V7, V8). Tourism is therefore not described as an inherent component of voluntourism programmes offered by sending organisations but rather as incidental to volunteering experiences abroad.

Web searches further show this two-fold goal: sending organisations advertise opportunities for authentic international experiences through travel and volunteering while supporting the development of local communities abroad through volunteer commitment.

4.2. *Voluntourists Demonstrating Ethical Commitment and Genuine Motivation*

There is widespread agreement that only voluntourists who have ‘correct’ motivations and intentions to participate in voluntourism programmes should be sent. Managers appear convinced that they attract “rightfully motivated” (V6) voluntourists both through candidate-voluntourist self-selection and through recruitment via appropriate channels, where they provide comprehensive information on programmes offered and on the anticipated experiences when volunteering abroad. One interviewee elaborated on this ‘right motivation’ criterion:

Before applying, potential participants already have specific motivations. If they preferred a sunny beach trip, they would not sign up for this. They are already selecting themselves based on motivation.

We also believe that candidates who have the right motivation but seem less suitable at first sight can still learn a lot. (V10)

However, sending organisations do not always feel the need to actively recruit. Although managers describe how they (or their colleagues) present their organisation at externally organised information fairs about going abroad, they also note that active recruitment is not always necessary, as there are “constant flows of [voluntourists]” (V4). Many NPOs recruit their voluntourists through partnerships with national universities and colleges (V1, V2, V4, V5, V6, V7, V8), as these educational institutions seek to arrange internships abroad in collaboration with sending organisations. Both NPOs and FPOs highlight the importance of word-of-mouth advertising from alumni-voluntourists, since “[voluntourism] is a big step, and, although they may have seen us online [website/social media], they do not know us. Hearing about it through friends or family makes that threshold less relevant, making them more willing to participate” (V3). Managers further underscore the role of their online presence, illustrating how information on the different organisation modes of their voluntourism programmes (such as accommodation, host family, transport, and local contact person) and financial transparency concerning costs of and funding for host organisations and projects attracts voluntourists with the correct motivations and intentions. One manager explains how “offering a broad organisational framework is important for the peace of mind of both [voluntourists] and [sending] organisations. We take care of almost everything, so we know that they are safe” (V2).

To provide full and accurate information to prospective voluntourists, organisations conduct a formal or informal interview or introductory meeting. While for some this is merely a formal step focused on informing candidate-voluntourists, others go further by engaging in one or more follow-up meetings. These managers (V1, V2, V3, V4, V6, V7, V8, Q1) describe this as the starting point of a more extensive and individualised matching process: through additional conversations, they assess voluntourist intentions, motivations, competences, and knowledge. Drawing on this personal understanding, they recommend a project or set of tasks that aligns with the voluntourists’ motivations and enables them to succeed and contribute meaningfully.

To further ensure that voluntourists have the ‘right’ intentions to participate in these trips, managers from both NPOs and FPOs highlight that presenting official certificates of good conduct (V1, V2, V4, V5, V6, V7, V9, Q2) and possibly signing a ‘letter of intent’ or a written work agreement (V1, V2, V6, V9) are seen as indicators of commitment and responsibility. However, some NPOs go further by emphasising the importance of mandatory participation in preparatory activities and the collection of funds prior to departure (V3, V4, V5, V6, V7, V10). These funds can (in part) cover travel costs or be fully directed toward the operation of local volunteer projects. In these cases, such requirements are explicitly imposed on candidate-voluntourists as a condition of participation in the voluntourism programme. However, most organisations do not formally assess voluntourist skills or knowledge of voluntourists before departure. Only two youth-led organisations (V1, V6) and one international NPO (V9) use multiple application rounds and standardised procedures to systematically evaluate knowledge and competencies, which in some cases can result in the exclusion of candidate-voluntourists.

4.3. Sending Organisations as Primary Actors for Pre-departure Guidance and Preparation

The interview data shows variation in the degree of pre-departure guidance provided by sending organisations. Managers of nearly all NPOs (V1, V2, V3, V4, V5, V6, V7, V9, V10) and one small-scale FPO (V8) emphasise that sending organisations are directly and primarily responsible for intensive preparation before departure. To foster voluntourists with realistic expectations concerning both voluntary tasks and cultural differences, many of these organisations design extensive preparatory programmes. These trajectories typically consist of multiple sequential activities – organised over consecutive days or at different time intervals – intended to equip voluntourists with knowledge and

tools to work and communicate in environments where unfamiliar cultures and languages dominate, often leading to a “culture shock” (V2, V6, V8, V9). One manager highlighted the importance of cultivating an appropriate mindset within voluntourists:

Their [voluntourists] attitude is also a very important theme [in preparation activities]. How do they intend to behave when they arrive? Will they act as if [they are implying], “I am [from the North], I studied, and I will explain how it should be done here”, because that is not the right attitude; Or do they intend to go abroad with a curious, open view, showing, “What can I learn from how things are done here, and what can I share with them, and what can we discuss together”? That is the attitude we want to foster in our participants, and it is reflected in many components of the preparation phase. (V10)

Across these managers, there is widespread agreement that such preparations are crucial for ensuring that voluntourists depart with the right intentions, particularly in terms of intercultural awareness and setting realistic work expectations. As one FPO-manager stressed: “Before leaving, they receive an extensive training weekend (...) it is extremely important to prepare them well” (V8). Similarly, one NPO-manager stressed: “As soon as practical things are arranged, they are prepared for the different culture and the possible culture shock that most will go through, and it is indicated that while everything may seem positive in the beginning, they will encounter difficulties, and they need to be ready for this.” (V1)

In contrast, the managers of two FPOs (Q1 and Q2) and one smaller NPO (Q3) describe a much lighter approach. They position their organisations primarily as providers of general information through written documentation about the project, volunteering abroad, and approaching other cultures. As one manager explained: “Independence is expected. We are not here to hold their hands, but they can always ask for support and information” (Q2). These organisations expect voluntourists to demonstrate self-initiative already before departure and therefore did not facilitate extensive preparatory trajectories.

Within the group of highly involved organisations pre-departure (V1, V2, V3, V4, V5, V6, V7, V8, V9, V10), those whose voluntourism operations mainly involve placing groups (of young people) abroad often organise preparations in the form of collective get-together sessions (V2, V3, V5, V6, V8, V10). These sessions aim to build group cohesion, sometimes supported by the appointment of a “group leader” (V3, V5, V10), who also receives additional training: “On-site, [the group leader] is our contact person, and that person receives extra training on group dynamics” (V3). Some of them also describe fundraising activities as mechanisms to strengthen group dynamics within teams (V3, V5, V6).

Preparation is further enriched through interactive sessions with alumni-voluntourists, who share their experiences to support new participants. Several organisations also incorporate external expertise, such as “professional intercultural trainers” (V4, V8). As one manager explained:

Various preparatory events are organised. Important is the training by [another development co-operation organisation], as they are experts in the key cultural preparation for travelling to a country with a completely different culture and income balance [than here]. Afterwards, we organise our own training, focusing on local customs, project-specific information, and practical issues (...) so that they have all the knowledge and skills necessary to depart well prepared. (V4)

Despite the intensity of these preparation processes, only half of the organisations (V1, V4, V5, V6, V8, V9) mention facilitating direct communication between voluntourists and host organisations/projects prior to departure. Among these, the managers of two youth-led NPOs (V5, V6) illustrate how they facilitate close collaboration with local partners to align expectations regarding work activities. This stands in contrast to most other organisations, which limit work-related preparation to more superficial

information, such as highlighting the tasks to be performed without a deeper discussion of how they should be carried out and without incorporating the perspectives of the hosts. Others, of which two are international (V1, V9) and one is a national NPO (V4), implement more directive and formalised approaches. Their preparatory activities go beyond cultural awareness to also include detailed guidance on the content of the work and on how to perform tasks appropriately in a foreign context.

The interviews further reveal that the involvement of sending organisations in guiding voluntourists changes from being highly engaged during the preparation phase to taking a more background role once voluntourists are abroad. Managers who earlier described their rather high involvement prior to departure (V1, V2, V3, V4, V5, V6, V7, V8, V9, V10) elaborate on how their involvement decreases substantially during voluntourists' stay abroad. They illustrate how they (and their colleagues) adopt a more passive stance once voluntourists are on-site, intervening only when voluntourists explicitly request support. They further explain that responsibility for guidance is gradually transferred: while sending organisations take the lead prior to departure, the role shifts to local partners (host organisations and volunteer projects) and peers once voluntourists arrive in the host country.

4.4. *The Emergence of Local Partners and Peers as Actors of Guidance On-site*

There is widespread agreement among managers that the role of sending organisations diminishes once voluntourists are abroad. As a manager explained: *"After the first introduction, they are set free"* (V7). Guidance and supervision on-site are often described as *"not streamlined"* (V5) or involving *"little control"* (V6), reflecting the reality that representatives of sending organisations are rarely present abroad in the host countries where projects take place. As V6 elaborated: *"The only power we have is to ensure that those with the right motivations are selected and that they receive the appropriate preparations"* (V6). Some managers frame their reduced role as unproblematic, as guidance and supervision are embedded within well-established local practices. Through long-term partnerships (V4) or coordinated organisational networks (V1, V7, V9), responsibilities for guidance and supervision are automatically activated once voluntourists arrive in host countries. Local partners are familiar with the procedures, ensuring established routines of coordination that are both streamlined and grounded in the local context.

However, alongside these practical considerations, several FPO- (Q1, Q2) and NPO-managers (V3, V4, V7, V10, Q3) emphasise their role as 'remote communicators'. They primarily respond when voluntourists themselves raise questions or concerns about project operations, while responsibility for most day-to-day communication and guidance is directed to local contact persons: *"In the first instance, [guidance and supervision] goes through the local contact person in the project; when [problems occur], it also goes through us"* (Q1). One FPO-manager elaborated on their limited role as an online communicator:

Everything goes through local project coordinators, except for financial or administrative questions, which may be handled by coordinators in the Netherlands. Project coordinators are very open; they give tips and tricks, and participants can always contact them and ask for support and help. (Q3)

Beyond practical explanations, other managers describe reduced participation as a deliberate pedagogical strategy aimed at fostering transformative learning through direct engagement with challenges, such as cultural difficulties (e.g., cultural shock) or conflict situations (e.g., with host families, peers, or on the project) (V1, V2, V5, V6, V8, V9). As one manager emphasised: *"You need to let them go when they arrive; they need to do it on their own"* (V8).

Some small-scale organisations (V2, V4, V5, V8) maintain “regular communication to ask them how they are doing” (V5), while simultaneously reinforcing voluntourists’ responsibility to address difficulties independently. As one manager recalled:

Whenever they are dealing with something, they can always [contact] me. I will give advice. We had [some student-voluntourists] who, after just two days, called me saying they wanted to change projects. That is not possible, I laughed and said: “No, that’s not how it works. You’ve only been there for two days; you’re experiencing culture shock. You need to get through it.” We eventually changed projects maybe twice, as there was really no match. But first of all, I want to try everything. It is also important to know that we often send students from the social sector [internship abroad]. (...) Also, in difficult and conflicting situations they face with host families or on the project, they need to learn. (V2)

Across all interviewees, managers underscore the crucial role of host organisations once voluntourists are abroad. Host organisations typically provide on-site coordinators or guides, often local staff embedded within the project. While only a few NPOs (V5, V6, Q3) facilitate contact with these local coordinators before departure, most rely on host organisations to initiate contact upon arrival. Although all managers describe how these local coordinators guide and introduce voluntourists to projects and host countries/cultures, it is particularly NPO-managers who assign greater roles to them, acting as “buddies” (V1, V9) who not only facilitate initial introductions but also provide ongoing support and, more importantly, create “opportunities for reflection” (V4).

Reflection and peer support are consistently described as essential mechanisms for helping voluntourists navigate cross-cultural challenges by all NPO-managers and one small-scale FPO (V8). They emphasise the role of peers – and in some cases group leaders (V3, V5, V10) – in fostering group cohesion and psychosocial support abroad. As one manager noted: “Group dynamics are also important for us, bringing the group [of voluntourists] together as much as possible and together with the [local] community” (V10). This further highlights the focus of many NPOs on group dynamics during preparation activities.

Although all managers (except Q2) acknowledge that they (or local partners) may need to intervene reactively at the request of voluntourists, such instances are described as infrequent. Managers therefore conclude that their reduced involvement on-site is justified, as local partners should – and peers could – hold responsibility for guidance and support abroad. Consequently, they position themselves firmly in the background, relying on the guidance of hosts and on peer support mechanisms to carry voluntourists through their experience abroad.

4.5. *Post-return Actions: Limits of Voluntourist Engagement and the Strength of Partnerships*

Post-return activities for voluntourists are limited across the organisations studied. Only NPOs report facilitating physical get-together sessions for reflection and evaluation purposes (V1, V3, V4, V5, V6, V7, V9, V10). There is widespread agreement among managers from both NPOs and FPOs that extensive guidance or developmental activities upon return are unnecessary. Voluntourists are widely perceived as having “no need” (V2, V3, V5, V6, V8, Q2, Q3) or “no desire to be involved anymore” (V6). Managers describe how, for many voluntourists, the experience abroad is “a once-in-a-lifetime experience” (V8) and “once they are back, it is closed” (V2, V6), with participants quickly resuming their lives at home (V8, Q3).

Although some NPO-managers recognise the potential value of follow-up activities in helping voluntourists “place their experiences abroad in perspective” (V3, V4, V5, V6, V7, V9, V10), all managers

report very low levels of participation in either physical or online gatherings. Communication efforts similarly result in low response rates, with evaluation forms often left incomplete and concerns or complaints rarely raised. One manager of a large NPO reflected:

We organised evaluation days after their return, but attendance was so low (...) It's no longer needed. The bond that [volountourists] have with our organisation is not that strong. They develop stronger ties with local projects than with us. (V3)

Nevertheless, many NPOs continue to distribute evaluation forms despite low return rates, particularly those receiving government or donor funding (V1, V3, V4, V5, V6, V7, V9, V10). While physical gatherings may be scaled back in response to low participation, evaluation forms remain important tools for assessing both the experiences of volountourists (e.g., the quality of preparatory activities) and the functioning of partner projects. As one NPO-manager explained:

We receive money from the government; hence, we must meet specific programme-related targets. These targets are established through developed methodologies and systems, including training, monitoring, and evaluation, which can be applied across various projects and countries (...). Our receipt of government funds necessitates the demonstration of tangible results. (V9)

Similarly, another manager noted that European project-based subsidies “come with certain conditions that extend to project implementation, volunteer engagement, and organisational operations” (V7).

A further indication of the limited perceived need for post-return engagement is the absence of demand for formal recognition of volountourists' contributions. Managers note that volountourists seldom request certificates or letters of recommendation (V1, V2, V4, V9, V10, Q2, Q3). Instead, expressions of gratitude typically originate within host organisations and projects, where local partners develop their own informal practices, ranging from “thank-you emails” (Q1) to symbolic gestures such as murals where volountourists' handprints collectively form a tree (V4). These limited practices further reinforce the perception that there is little reason to formalise or expand follow-up processes.

Some managers, however, express a desire to expand post-return activities, both to improve future volountourist experiences (V1, V2, V5, V10) and to strengthen the continuity of projects abroad (V6, V7, V9). Although acknowledging that it is “difficult to motivate” (V6) returned volountourists, they emphasise the strategic importance of engaging them “in the long term, as ambassadors for the organisation” (V9). Such efforts typically involve inviting alumni-volountourists to contribute blog posts, provide reviews of the sending organisation and host projects, or participate in preparatory activities for new volountourists. In doing so, alumni are seen as valuable both for recruitment and for helping set realistic expectations for prospective participants, as well as for strengthening alignment with, and involvement in, local projects.

Yet, sustained communication with host organisations and projects, essential for strengthening continuity, is more variable. Only a subset of organisations describes regular exchanges with their partners, typically those facilitating medium- to long-term collaborations (V2, V4, V6, V8, V10, Q1) or rotating projects (V5). These organisations emphasise direct, personal, and informal relationships with local partners, often reinforced through annual on-site visits and frequent communication. As one manager explained:

The connection with the projects remains due to lots of communication with the projects and the fact that we go there every year. It is important to sit together to adjust the needs in our approach of sending [volountourists] and how we support the projects to host them. The people on the projects we have been working with for years have almost become a family to me. (V2)

These relationships can extend beyond project staff to long-standing community partners, such as local guides, host families, and transportation services, sometimes spanning more than a decade (V8). Such long-term relationships enable organisations to address issues and adapt practices more effectively. One manager noted “*ongoing alignment between local coordinators and leadership teams within projects, although maybe calling it supervision and evaluation is too heavy*” (V10).

In contrast, larger international NPOs report relying on more formalised communication through their operational units and international or global networks (V1, V7, V9). Although these structures allow for coordinated oversight across multiple countries, they appear to lack the individualised and relational qualities observed among smaller NPOs and FPOs that work with only a handful of projects or have intensive collaboration with local partners to develop projects.

The sustainable continuation of voluntourism programmes – and especially the inclusion of host perspectives – therein seems to hinge less on formalised post-return practices than on the quality and durability of interorganisational and interpersonal connections. Organisations that maintain strong long-term relationships with local partners may be better positioned to sustain host perspectives in the sustainable continuity, while others may deprioritise continuity once voluntourists have returned, as a manager of a large international NPO stated: “*When a project is finished, it is done, so we are always looking for new ones*” (V3).

5. Discussion

By collecting data from web pages and qualitative interviews with representatives from diverse sending organisations, this study explored the role of organisational context for voluntourist management and coordination processes (Research Question 1) and the chosen management and coordination techniques by sending organisations (Research Question 2). In doing so, it sought a deeper understanding of voluntourism operations from sending organisations’ perspectives and their management and coordination processes that shape voluntourism operations.

5.1. *Dynamic Interplays in Voluntourists’ Guidance*

Extant research underlines the importance of pre-entry and post-departure coordination activities to ensure positive voluntourist experiences and mutual benefits for both voluntourists and local communities (Strohmeier & Heleta, 2020). In addressing Research Question 2, most organisations studied prioritise intercultural preparation over work-related training, while some primarily focus on information transfer. Although all organisations in this study provide some form of orientation and training, concentrating mainly on preparations for intercultural differences, it is primarily NPOs and small-scale FPOs that report a more thorough engagement with cultural preparation. However, preparation for work-related activities is typically limited to basic information, falling short of the in-depth training required for voluntourists to contribute meaningfully to local communities.

Although extant research stresses the importance of thorough preparation (Hammersley, 2014; Strohmeier & Heleta, 2020), including the development of realistic expectations (Kumaran & Pappas, 2012), such preparation is often inadequately implemented in practice. Consequently, voluntourists are not always well prepared for cultural differences and, especially, their work responsibilities. Other organisations treat preparation more transactionally, reducing it to the transfer of logistical information rather than using it as a means to foster ethical and effective engagement abroad.

This contrast reflects the tourism-volunteerism duality characterising both the voluntourism market and voluntourism scholarship. Tourism-orientated voluntourism programmes are typically associated with participant (voluntourist) enjoyment, convenience, and structured touristic experiences; providers

often inform participants of prepackaged touristic experiences, with limited investment in rigorous work-related preparations. In contrast, volunteerism-orientated programmes are framed in terms of global solidarity, personal growth, and cross-cultural learning, with organisations emphasising ethical contribution and intercultural learning (Burrai *et al.*, 2017; Callanan & Thomas, 2005). Yet, tourism-orientated organisations may still highlight intercultural and experiential experiences as part of voluntourism practices (Sin, 2009), and volunteerism-orientated organisations may also underemphasize technical work training stemming from the assumption that projects require only unskilled volunteer support (Guttentag, 2009).

Against this background, critiques frequently position for-profit operators on the tourism-orientated side (Foller-Carroll & Charlebois, 2016; Park, 2018). This study shows that both FPOs and NPOs – regardless of orientation – primarily emphasise intercultural preparation over work-specific training. This reflects broader tendencies in the voluntourism market rather than differences between organisational forms alone (such as between FPOs and NPOs). In particular, few NPOs in this study require the participation of voluntourists in predeparture activities (such as fundraising or get-together sessions), and in doing so, they highlight intercultural preparedness and the cultivation of ‘good’ intentions and motivations, thus framing voluntourism as a reciprocal intercultural exchange rather than humanitarian and development aid. These patterns illustrate how the organisational goal and mission can shape management practices (Research Question 1), though not always in ways predicted by conventional tourism- orientated versus volunteerism-orientated categorisations. This finding partially aligns with Dilette *et al.* (2017), who, from the perspective of host communities, argue that voluntourism serves the personal development more than it contributes to local needs. Taken together, these parallels highlight the need for more multi-perspective research that considers both sending and receiving organisations’ views on voluntourist preparation and its reciprocal intercultural impact.

Once abroad, coordination is largely shifted to local guides, who assume responsibility for intercultural integration and support in voluntary work activities. Sending organisations maintain irregular contact with local partners and voluntourists, and structured or developed training and performance evaluation are mostly absent. Although earlier scholars describe the importance of mentors or contact persons (Anderson, 2001; Jassawalla *et al.*, 2006), this research mainly assigns responsibility to sending organisations as the responsible actor to facilitate any type of on-site coordination (Boluk *et al.*, 2017). However, the managers in this study emphasise this on-site coordination as organically and informally developed. In particular, the managers in this study also assign voluntourists themselves for peer support and intercultural reflection on-site, aligning findings from tourism research on the role of fellow travellers (Brown, 2005; Colpin *et al.*, 2025; Kim & Jamal, 2007). Being located in the home countries, managers emphasise the difficulties of coordinating people who are abroad, which is consistent with existing research (Barrett *et al.*, 2017; Charleston *et al.*, 2018; O’Sullivan, 2010). On-site coordination thus relies largely on local guides and peer-voluntourists, reflecting how sending organisations mainly expect these management practices to emerge organically rather than enacting it themselves, providing insights relevant to Research Question 2. Recognising these challenges, future research should explore how sending organisations might more deliberately leverage the roles of local guides and peer-voluntourists to strengthen coordination, guidance, and evaluation during voluntourism placements.

5.2. Sustained Voluntourist Engagement

In addressing Research Question 2, the findings show how both NPOs and FPOs merely rely on word-of-mouth to attract voluntourists, with social networks, educational institutions, and alumni playing a central role. This aligns with Pompurová *et al.* (2020), who describe how domestic voluntourists similarly depend on direct sources of information. Interestingly, some NPOs in this study view alumni-voluntourists as ambassadors for their organisation and therefore invest in their alumni network. However, follow-up with returned voluntourists remains limited across all organisations studied, an

observation already made by Anderson (2001). While most organisations studied request online evaluations or blog contributions, only those NPOs that depend on external funding and see alumni as organisational ambassadors consistently emphasise the value of these activities and actively encourage voluntourists to participate. Notably, although they frame alumni as valuable ambassadors for recruiting new voluntourists, they do not discuss or encourage alumni engagement in terms of repeated participation in voluntourism programmes. This stands in contrast to tourism (e.g., Andersen *et al.*, 2024; Hudson *et al.*, 2004) and volunteerism (e.g., Cuskelly *et al.*, 2006; Taylor *et al.*, 2006) scholarship describing how organisational strategies might encourage customer and location loyalty, or volunteer retention, respectively.

To some extent, this variation shows how the organisational context influences management practices (Research Question 1). However, in general, most NPOs and FPOs in this study stress their assessment that voluntourists do not need strong follow-up processes. An explanation may lie in the heterogeneity of voluntourists. As Brown (2005) and Han *et al.* (2020) argue, voluntourists range from volunteer-minded to vacation-minded, having varied motivations, expectations, and demographic profiles. Thus, while some may value structured coordination and continuity, others may prefer greater independence and flexibility. This diversity complicates post-return practices and warrants further exploration that contrasts the perspectives of sending organisations and voluntourists and their respective needs. This future research could take note from research on volunteering and expats in describing the importance of follow-up processes to allow participants to feel that they actually contributed (Brudney & Meijs, 2014; Cuskelly *et al.*, 2006; Jassawalla *et al.*, 2006), yet the difficulties of managing (voluntary) workforces in challenging international contexts (Anderson, 2001; O'Sullivan, 2010).

Additionally, insights from NPO research suggest potential avenues to strengthen alumni engagement. Long-term relationships with volunteers are vital not only for retention but also for recruitment (Hopkins & Dowell, 2022). Sending organisations could similarly leverage returned voluntourists as ambassadors, both to set realistic expectations for future participants and to attract candidates with appropriate motivations and intentions.

5.3. *Facilitation and Continuation of Voluntourism*

The findings demonstrate how sending organisations shape voluntourism by drawing simultaneously on principles of tourism and volunteerism. Across organisations, hybrid volunteerism-tourism objectives are pursued, reflecting the long-recognised duality in voluntourism literature (e.g., Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Taplin *et al.*, 2014; Wearing & McGehee, 2013). This duality is particularly visible in advertising and recruitment efforts, where some organisations focus on the touristic product and logistical arrangements, demonstrating their different prepackaged voluntourism programmes, while others stress project-related activities. Both NPOs and FPOs emphasise the complementary role of voluntourists in largely independent local projects while recognising the financial and voluntary inputs these projects may need. This reflects earlier descriptions of the partial dependence on voluntourism operations along with their desire and ability to operate independently (Burrai *et al.*, 2017). However, mechanisms to monitor and evaluate this independence are often absent, mirrored in a wide range of practices to communicate with local partners. Following the volunteerism-tourism duality but seeing it along a continuum, we take note of Callanan and Thomas's (2005) classification of voluntourism in 3 categories.

Deep voluntourism. Our findings show how small-scale NPOs and FPOs – with modest numbers of partnerships in only one or a few countries – do not rely on highly structured procedures but instead build long-term, trust-based relationships with local partners. Their approach facilitates closer alignment with host needs and reflects Steele and Scherrer's (2018) model of direct partnerships, in which sending organisations view their primary obligation as serving host communities. However, the

findings also show that they tend to coordinate volountourist affairs on a more individualised and personal basis, owing to the small scale of their volountourism operations. Thus, these organisations value the needs of intercultural exchange for both volountourists and host communities, suggesting a bottom-up orientation toward reciprocity. This informal approach aligns with NPO research stating how a personal approach may enhance volunteer experiences in NPOs (Brainard & Siplon, 2004). Still, little is known about the facilitation in bottom-up versus top-down dynamics between sending and host organisations, a topic that warrants further research given ongoing debates about the moral obligations of sending organisations in framing volountourism responsibly (Burrai *et al.*, 2017). Further investigation into these implicit ‘management models’ could be useful, as this may enhance both the experiences as well as how volountourism effectively contributes to local communities.

Intermediate volountourism. Our findings show how large-scale international NPOs – arranging volountourism opportunities through operational entities abroad – and youth-led NPOs adopt more structured and developed approaches to screening, communication, and monitoring of both volountourists and local partners. While these organisations often do not entail personal, trust-based relationships as small sending organisations may develop, they align their operations with local partner projects through their multilayered organisational structures. Their primary objective remains intercultural learning rather than development aid (Dillette *et al.*, 2017), yet more structured selection and monitoring procedures appear to hold potential to improve contributions to local communities. Although previous studies have described more structured procedures in cases of long-term volountourism (such as Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Taplin *et al.*, 2014), it is mainly research in for-profit settings and on internationally paid workers that emphasises selection and monitoring using clear criteria (Anderson, 2001; Hechenberger, 2019; O’Sullivan, 2010). Hence, scholars could explore the applicability of for-profit selection practices in the volountourism sector to enhance the quality and accountability of volountourism practices.

Shallow volountourism. Our findings show how NPOs and FPOs with extensive project portfolios (and often only short-term engagements) operate in a more transactional manner through their coordinated network structures. These sending organisations function as providers of volountourism experiences as authentic tourism experiences, offering pre-departure guidance but engaging little in ongoing communication or coordination with both volountourists and local partners. They prioritise the experiences and satisfaction of volountourists over sustained collaboration with host communities, aligning them more closely with the ‘tourism’ end of the continuum (Callanan & Thomas, 2005; McGehee, 2014; Schwarz, 2018; Taplin *et al.*, 2014).

Together, these findings add insight to Research Question 2 by identifying the communication strategies that sending organisations implement and to Research Question 1 by illustrating how organisational context – whether small- or large-scale volountourism operations and more volunteerism- or tourism-orientated organisational foci – partly shapes these practices. In doing so, the findings may add to Callanan and Thomas’ (2005) model of shallow, intermediate, and deep volountourism by showing how the sending organisations’ selection, monitoring, and evaluation procedures of volountourists and their ‘communication models’ with local partners resonate with the volunteerism-tourism continuum. While scholars oftentimes conceptualise volountourism in dichotomous terms, the findings thus suggest the need to view organisational practices as hybrid and fluid (Steele & Dredge, 2017; Steele & Scherrer, 2018). Future research should examine more closely how different partnership models are embedded in the full management process of volountourists and projects. A multi-perspective approach that includes the voices of sending organisations, local partners, and volountourists is eventually essential to evaluate the sector’s practices and assess its potential for genuine reciprocal outcomes.

6. Practical Implications

The findings suggest several implications for rethinking the management of voluntourists and voluntourism programmes.

A first step for sending organisations is to recognise what partnership structure – direct partnership with local projects or through intermediate host organisations – they entail and where they stand along the continuum of shallow, intermediate, and deep voluntourism models. Based on organisational goals and needs – and as a response to critiques on the voluntourism industry – sending organisations should not only be transparent about their structure and positioning but also develop management strategies appropriate to that positioning. This further helps in addressing the diversity of voluntourists, who form a heterogeneous group with varied motivations, expectations, and coordination needs. For example, small-scale organisations can capitalise on their strength in cultivating long-term trust-based partnerships, while large-scale international organisations can leverage their diverse programme portfolios and structured systems.

In general, sending organisations should acknowledge their important role in facilitating the coordination, guiding, and evaluation of voluntourists and learn from each other's practices. By rethinking the tools in their 'management models', sending organisations can improve not only voluntourists' experiences but also the experiences of host communities by promoting reciprocal intercultural exchange, ethical practices, and sustainable programme outcomes, while (actively) involving local partners in the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of voluntourism. Local guides and peer-voluntourists are central to intercultural integration on-site but their roles remain under-recognised and informal. Therefore, the role of local guides should be enhanced, as they can serve not only as mentors but also as coordinators and evaluators of voluntourists and project outcomes. Clarifying and formalising the roles of local guides could improve the contribution in foreign projects while also incorporating the perspectives of hosts, thus addressing a pertinent critique within the sector. Further, drawing on the findings of voluntourists' group dynamics and alumni-voluntourists seen as organisational ambassadors, sending organisations should formalise structured reflection sessions on-site with fellow-voluntourists and local people with whom they collaborate, and further invest in sustained communication and relationships with alumni-voluntourist. Such practices not only foster intercultural learning through reflection but also encourage voluntourists to situate their contributions within broader community needs. Similarly, alumni-voluntourists can be mobilised more strategically, not only as ambassadors for recruitment, but also as peer-trainers, intercultural mentors, and critical reviewers of voluntourism placements and organisational practices. Sending organisations could strengthen their competitiveness and sustained partnerships with host organisations by fostering alumni-voluntourists' loyalty and repeat visitations. This could not only enhance voluntourism continuity and knowledge-exchange – particularly where long-term partnerships are prioritised – but also advantages the mutual benefits for host communities.

Additionally, governments and associations of sending organisations could play a pivotal role in formulating policies and light-touch accreditation schemes that support and monitor voluntourism practices without bureaucratic entanglements. Best-practice repositories and guidelines could equip smaller-scale sending organisations with tools to professionalise their management, while larger sending organisations may share more structured approaches and simultaneously learn from the personalised, trust-based practices of smaller organisations. At the same time, policymakers must strike a difficult balance: avoid over-bureaucratising funding requirements, recognise the limits of regulating for-profit voluntourism providers, and ensure that regulations incentivise ethical and sustainable management across the sector.

7. Limitations

As in all studies, some limitations should be outlined. Although the qualitative research design with individual interviews was applicable to address the research questions, it is not without its constraints.

First, despite drawing the sample from a long list of eligible organisations (86), the final sample consisted of a limited number of organisations (13), with only three FPOs, of which only one tour operator offers broader forms of alternative and sustainable tourism, limiting the representation of for-profit actors. Consequently, the generalisability of the study's findings to the broader North-South voluntourism market, and even to organisations with operational units in Belgium or the Netherlands, is restricted. Nevertheless, the inclusion of a wide range of sending organisations, particularly the diversity among NPOs, may enhance the value of the findings. While critical debates frequently position FPOs as more tourism-orientated and NPOs as more volunteerism-orientated (Foller-Carroll & Charlebois, 2016; Park, 2018), our data suggest that this distinction is not always clear-cut. Several NPOs in our study offered voluntourism programmes and adopted management mechanisms that closely resembled those of FPOs.

Second, given the limited sample size and the qualitative and exploratory nature of the study, it is not feasible to make validated statements regarding whether organisational type and context shape management and coordination approaches. Nonetheless, the exploratory design allowed the identification of various management and coordination practices and tools that may be of interest to sending organisations and that warrant further research. Moreover, in a semi-structured design, interviews vary to some extent, thereby potentially compromising the validity of data analyses compared to more structured interviews. To enhance the validity, both authors made their comments on the coding schemes and preliminary findings to promote objectivity in the analyses.

Lastly, this study specifically investigated the perspectives of administrators, coordinators, and managers within sending organisations, thus focusing on their views of the coordination and management of voluntourists and voluntourism programmes. Although this perspective is often under-represented in voluntourism research – which typically prioritises voluntourists' experiences or sending organisations' evaluations of local community outcomes (Avolio *et al.*, 2024) – it nonetheless provides valuable insights into an overlooked dimension of managerial practices. At the same time, the focus on the perspectives of sending organisations in the entire management and coordination processes meant that not all phases and aspects of management could be explored in depth, nor could the diversity of the voluntourists' own preferences be captured. Although scholars advocate for viewing management as a process encompassing pre-entry and post-trip dimensions, a longitudinal research design depicting sequential stages could be an added value. Future research adopting a multi-perspective approach, combining the voices of voluntourists, host organisations, local projects, and sending organisations, would further enrich understandings of coordination practices and their implications for sustainable and ethical voluntourism.

8. Conclusions

Voluntourism continues to thrive despite travel setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing conflicts and wars. Yet the sector faces challenges for the monitoring of voluntourism programmes, amongst others related to the management and coordination of voluntourists stemming from the international and episodic nature of voluntourist participation and increased criticism of the industry. This study examines how various sending organisations – NPOs and FPOs operating at national, international, and global scales – manage and coordinate voluntourists.

Sending organisations often adopt passive approaches to managing and coordinating their voluntourists. Yet, NPOs and small-scale FPOs tend to be more involved in pre-entry activities, emphasising the selection of voluntourists with the 'right' intentions and motivations and preparing them for intercultural encounters abroad. These preparatory activities often engage alumni-

voluntourists as ambassadors and providers of insights on volunteering abroad. However, preparations frequently lack concrete information about host countries/communities and specifically about volunteer work in local projects. Only a few NPOs – mainly youth-led or those embedded in international/global networks – employ more structured managerial approaches with clear annual cycles.

While sending organisations emphasise voluntourists' individuality and responsibility abroad, they rely heavily on host projects and receiving organisations for local coordination, often depending on organically developed initiatives and peer-to-peer support among voluntourists. Small-scale NPOs and FPOs, despite lacking formalised management structures, invest in long-standing (often personal) local partnerships to coordinate voluntourists' and customising their approaches to meet individual needs.

While the predominantly passive and informal management approaches show advantages of more personal tailored strategies, they also poses risks. The absence of rigorous selection and screening processes for prospective voluntourists, often combined with limited involvement of host perspectives in programme design and continuation, may undermine the development of both voluntourists and host communities. Such practices risk creating mismatches between voluntourists' skills and host communities' needs, potentially compromising programme effectiveness and the quality of intercultural exchange.

To strengthen voluntourism management, sending organisations could learn from good practices of more individualised approaches while engage more in integrating host perspectives into programme planning and monitoring. In doing so, voluntourist management could be strengthened, benefitting intercultural exchange between voluntourists and local communities while ensuring the ethical continuation of voluntourism.

Authors' contributions.

The first author conceptualized the study in close collaboration with the second author. The initial data analysis was conducted by the first author but was redone based on insights from the second author. The first author wrote the first draft of the manuscript on which both authors made revisions. Both authors gave their final approval of the manuscript before submitting it.

Acknowledgements.

The authors wish to acknowledge Prof. dr. Sarah Dury (Free University of Brussels - VUB) for thoughtful feedback on an earlier version of this manuscript, which prompted a substantial reanalysis and rewriting of the findings section. We also gratefully thank the respondents of the study reported in this paper. Finally, we thank the editors and two anonymous reviewers for critically reading the manuscript and suggesting substantial improvements.

Appendix I. Overview of the respondents

Respondent		Sending organisation		Host organisation and foreign projects		
No. ¹	Function (nationality) ²	Type ³	Organisational scope	Partnership model	Scale ⁴	Geographic spread
V ₁	operational coordinator (BE)	international NPO (association), youth-led volunteer organisation	multi-purpose: broader educational mission for the personal and professional development of their participants, a.o. via internships and volunteering	coordinated global non-profit network; indirect partnerships with projects, mediated via their global network	>10,000 VTs travelling to >1,500 projects (global numbers)	multiple countries and continents; Africa, Americas (Central and Southern), Asia (Western Pacific and few Middle Eastern countries), Europe
V ₂	strategic manager (BE)	national NPO (association) (BE)	dedicated sending organisation (international internships, volunteering)	direct and fixed partnership with projects and small-scale development organisations	<50 VTs travelling to ±10 projects	one country in one continent; Africa
V ₃	operational coordinator (BE)	international NPO (association)	dedicated sending organisation (international internships, volunteering)	coordinated European non-profit network; medium-term (up to a few years) partnerships with projects outside of the EU, mediated, and designed via their network	>600 VTs travelling to >55 projects (global numbers)	multiple countries and continents; Africa, Americas (Central and Southern), Asia (Western Pacific), Europe
V ₄	operational coordinator (NL)	national NPO (foundation) (NL)	multi-purpose: broader developmental mission for local communities in host countries	direct and fixed partnership with a local project designed and implemented in close collaboration with the local community	<10 VTs travelling to one project	one country in one continent; Asia (Western Pacific)
V ₅	operational coordinator (BE)	national NPO (association) (BE), youth-led volunteer organisation	multi-purpose: hybrid sending organisation, embedded in an educational institution; broader educational mission for their Belgian participants and development mission for local communities in host countries	direct short-term (one-year) partnerships with projects designed and implemented in close collaboration with local communities	<15 VTs travelling to one project	rotating place, different countries/continents; Asia (Southern), Africa (Western and Southeastern)
V ₆	operational	national NPO	multi-purpose: broader educational mission for	direct medium-term partnerships (up to a few	±30 VTs travelling	multiple countries and continents;

	coordinator (BE)	(association) (BE), youth-led volunteer organisation	their Belgian participants and development mission for local communities in host countries	years) with projects and small-scale, financially independent sister organisations designed and implemented in close collaboration with local communities	to ±10 projects	Africa, Americas (Southern), Asia
V7	strategic manager (BE)	international NPO (faith-based foundation)	multi-purpose: broader educational mission for participants in their network via both national and international programmes, and developmental mission for local communities in host countries	coordinated European non-profit network; projects outside of the EU mediated via their network	>10 VTs travelling to ±1-2 projects ⁵	multiple countries and continents; Africa, Americas (Southern), Asia, Europe (Eastern and Southern)
V8	strategic manager/owner (NL)	national FPO (non-touristic, one-man company) (NL)	dedicated sending organisation (international internship, volunteering)	direct and fixed partnerships with local projects and small-scale development organisations designed and implemented in close collaboration with local communities	<50 VTs travelling to ±10 projects	multiple countries in one continent; Africa
V9	operational coordinator (NL)	international NPO (foundation)	multi-purpose: broader educational mission for Dutch and local participants (connecting international and national volunteers) and developmental mission for local communities in host countries	coordinated global non-profit network; direct and fixed partnerships with local projects, small-scale development organisations, and governments	<100 VTs travelling to >50 projects (global numbers)	multiple countries and continents; Africa, Asia
V10	operational coordinator (NL)	national NPO (faith-based foundation) (NL)	dedicated sending organisation (international internships, volunteering)	direct and medium-term (7 years) partnerships with local projects, designed and implemented in close collaboration with local small-scale development organisations	<900 VTs travelling to ±20 projects	multiple countries and continents; Africa, Americas (Central and Southern), Asia (Southern), Europe (Eastern)
Q1	strategic manager/owner (NL)	national FPO (non-touristic, one-man	multi-purpose: tourism operator, offering multiple forms of travel (international internships, volunteering, group	direct and fixed partnership with local projects and small-scale development organisations	±10 VTs travelling to 5 projects	multiple countries and continent; Americas (Central and Southern), Africa, Asia

		company) (NL)	travel, reflection and leadership retreats)			
Q₂	operational coordinator (NL)	international FPO (touristic travel company)	multi-purpose: tourism operator, offering multiple forms of youth travel packages	coordinated global for- profit network; semi- fixed partnerships with local projects mediated via network	>300 VTs travelling to >50 projects ⁶	multiple countries and continents; Africa, Americas (Central and Southern), Asia, Europe (Southern)
Q₃	strategic manager (NL)	national NPO (foundation) (NL)	dedicated sending organisation (international volunteering)	direct and fixed partnerships with local projects and small-scale development organisations	<50 VTs travelling to ±10 projects	one country in one continent; Americas (Southern)

¹ Video call (V) and questionnaire (Q) interviews

² Belgian (BE) or Dutch (NL)

³ Organisations within the non-profit sector (NPO) or for-profit sector (FPO); national ones denoted with country codes Belgium (BE) or the Netherlands (NL)

⁴ Annual average numbers of voluntourists (VTs) and local projects

⁵ Numbers for the operational unit in Belgium

⁶ Numbers for operational units in Belgium and the Netherlands

Appendix II. Managerial activities and influencing factors identified in sending organisations in this study

<i>Managerial activity</i>	<i>Organisational aspects</i>	<i>Individual and societal aspects</i>
	<i>Sending organisation (SO) and/or host organisation/local volunteer projects (HO)</i>	<i>(Fellow) voluntourists and/or host citizens/society/environment</i>
Planning	<p>Role Sender. SO as facilitator of varied voluntourism programmes and organisational modes¹; Constitutes dynamic and organic relationships with voluntourists and HO (mainly without formal and standardised structures)</p> <p>Role Host. HO facilitates locally created projects or SO's predesigned projects</p> <p>Mission & Vision. Ranging from a focus on voluntourists' learning/satisfaction to hosts' development</p>	<p>Role. Complementary voluntourists bring knowledge and money and may support (sustainable) development in hosts</p> <p>Goal & Aim. Reciprocity in intercultural learning</p>
Recruitment and Selection	<p>Marketing & Advertisement. Focus on organisation modes¹</p> <p>Recruitment. Partnerships with existing organisations and/or projects in need of voluntary engagement and financial support, or SOs create their own projects in collaboration with local individuals</p> <p>Screening, Matching, & Selection. Self-sufficient projects with minimal reliance on</p>	<p>Marketing & Advertisement. On the volunteering-tourism continuum (from planned as touristic travel to cultural immersion); Emphasise intercultural/transformational learning of voluntourists and their support in the development of poorer countries</p> <p>Recruitment. Different channels (social media profiles, website, newsletter,</p>

sending organisations and voluntourism operations; Some dependence on financial flows stemming from voluntourism operations accepted

information fairs); Active and passive recruitment strategies; Partnership with universities who send students on internships abroad

Screening, Matching, & Selection.

Voluntourists with ‘good’ intentions/motivations and age prerequisite; Tools: certificate of good behaviour, informal meeting or formal interview, resume, motivational letter, assessment tests (rare), questionnaires; Informal ‘feeling’ and request for voluntourists’ needs and wishes to find the best match with a project

Training and Development

Before. SO as a provider of information (flyers, webpages, contact person) and organiser of practicalities; Ranging *from* passive forms of irregular communication and delivery of information *to* active preparatory trajectories; Preparatory activities online/physical, individual/group organised by SO or external; Rarely direct communication between voluntourists and HO

During. HO for psychosocial/practical guidance, often physically present; SO as communicator, ranging *from* passively (being available on request) *to* actively reaching out to voluntourists (regular updates, psychosocial guidance)

After. SO as facilitator of voluntourist-organisation relationships; Ranging *from* short and superficial communication *to* long-term investment in the alumni network of voluntourists

Before. Preparatory activities directed at cultural/socioeconomic context and related difficulties (culture shock), voluntourism activities, and work ethics; Aiming at realistic expectations, independence, and group bonding/dynamics; Orientation by alumni-voluntourists via preparatory activities and blogs/forums

During. Other voluntary colleagues and appointed leaders in the voluntourist group for introduction and guidance in HO and host countries’ cultural and material differences; Host families for introduction into country/culture

After. Perceived (by SO) redundancy of guidance and profound connection between voluntourist and sending organisation

Performance Management and Assessment

Before. SO-HO: *from* rare communication *to* close collaboration for coordination of voluntourism activities and projects; SO-voluntourists: *from* often informal/subjective appraisal of voluntourist motivations/intentions throughout preparatory activities *to* seldom formal assessment of voluntourists’ competences during extensive preparatory trajectories and formal contracts

During. Evaluation of HO and partnership based on (non-obliged) reporting of voluntourists’ experiences; SO- voluntourists:

Before. Informal and subjective assessment more directed towards voluntourists’ motivations/intentions than knowledge, expertise, and skills; Appraisal through obligation to collect donations and to participate in preparatory activities

During. High degree of self-reliance and autonomy is expected from voluntourists; Complaints, feedback, and problems are reported to SO/HO on voluntourists’ own initiative; Seldom clearly defined supervision, monitoring, and evaluation of voluntourists,

from rare communication **to** regular updates; Organisation mode as 'safety measure/barrier' for possible health and repatriation problems (e.g., well-known accommodation and transport); Informal processing of volontourist complaints and feedback

After. SO as facilitator of evaluation forms and return activities; Evaluation HO and partnerships are based on reporting of volontourists combined with informal processing of complaints and without reporting back to volontourists

but can gradually and informally develop within HO

After. Rarely material compensation (e.g., payment, goodie bag, voucher) from SO, more often informal/indirect recognition from HO/SO by visibility of work activities in host country; Upon request, formal recognition from SO in the form of a certificate of acquired competences or letter of recommendation

1 From the workplace in a foreign project only to more elaborated modes (a.o. accommodation or host family, flight tickets, transportation from airport to accommodation and project, meals, and cultural/touristic activities)

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