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Introduction

- The rationale for conducting this study arises from the current literature defining volunteer tourists based on the perspective where the majority of volunteer sending organizations and volunteer tourists come from – the primarily Western, developed country perspective (Wearing, 2001; Lyons & Wearing 2008.
- Focusing only on volunteer tourists represents "only one half of the story and therefore this imbalance must be addressed (Gray and Campbell, 2007).
- Little work regarding the perception of volunteer tourists from the perspective of host communities in a developing country (McGehee & Andereck ,2009; Sin, 2010)

Purpose Statement

- The purpose of this qualitative and phenomenological study is to explore volunteer tourism from the perspective of host communities in a developing country context

Research Objectives

- To examine the perceptions of the local communities, private sector, non-profit sector and the public sector towards volunteer tourists.
- To examine the host communities' attributes that influence their perceptions towards volunteer tourists.

Materials & Methods

- **Research strategy** :Qualitative and case study approach
- **Research Paradigm**: Social constructivism
- **Selection of Research Participants** :
- Purposive sampling & Snowball/chain sampling

Secondary Data collection
- Official publications and reports, personal diaries and photographs

Primary Data Collection
- In-depth semi-structured interviews in both English and Swahili,
- A total of 40 interviews conducted
- Two sets of pilot interviews were conducted as 'dress-rehearsal' of the actual data collection
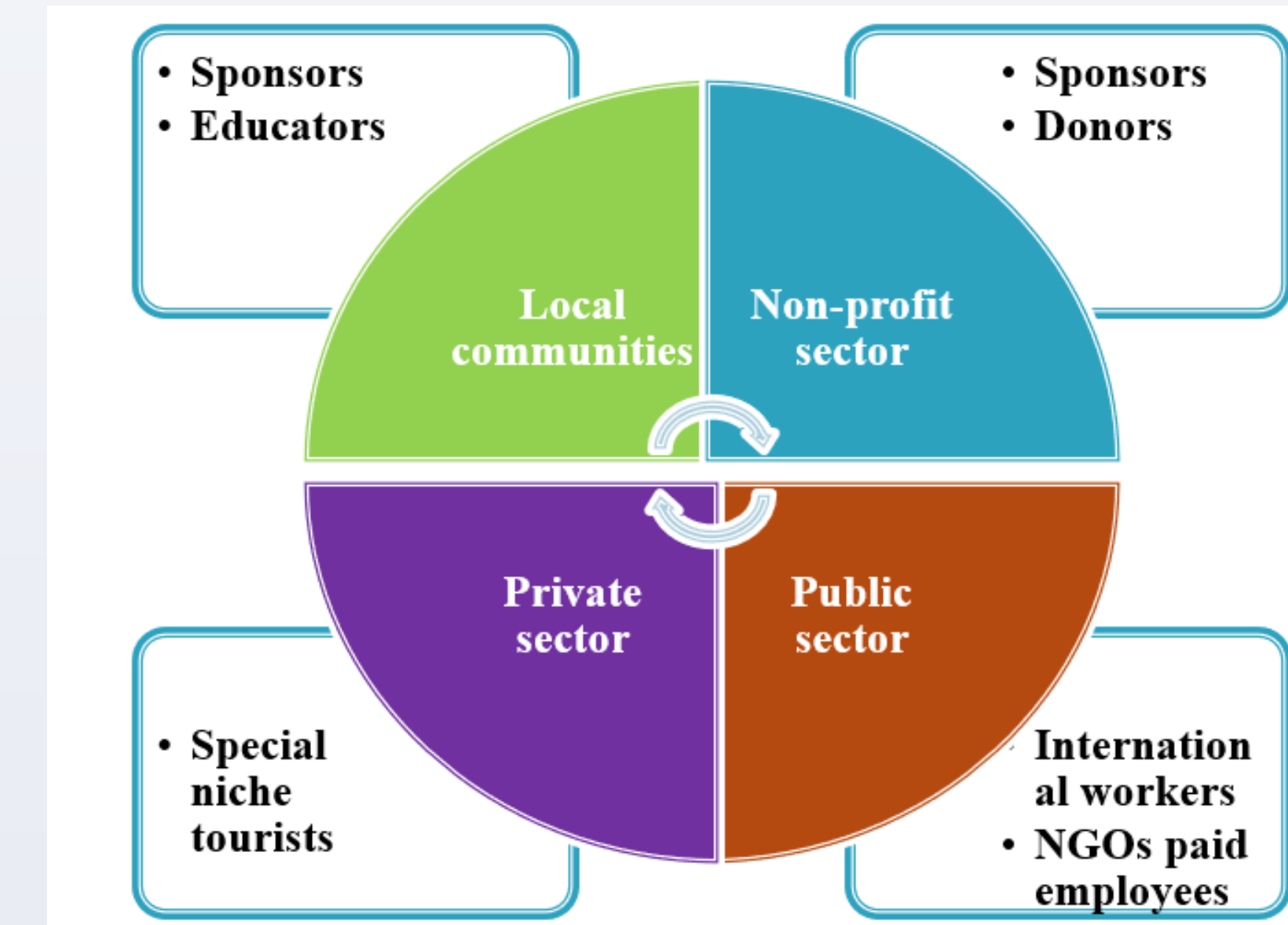
Data Analysis
- Inductive approach
- Transcription and translation of interviews
- Identification of the emerging themes using Nvivo
- Identification of relevant quotations to support the themes

Qualitative Results

Host Communities Conceptualizations of Volunteer Tourists

- Host community stakeholders struggled with the term '**volunteer tourist'** and different conceptualizations were exhibited by different groups of respondents.

Themes	Key Quotes (Pseudonyms used)
Volunteer Tourists as Sponsors (Local Community)	*Volunteer tourists contribute a lot in educating our children in terms of teaching English and other related skills. Also most of the volunteers who come here eventually become sponsors to some children in our centre. For instance, some children in our centre have been sponsored by volunteer tourists from their primary school level to university –Munuo*
Volunteer Tourists as a Special Niche Tourists (Private Sector)	*Some of the centers are not doing the real thing which is to help the needy people in the community; but rather they are there for business purposes because they know that when volunteer tourists come in their centers, they are pretty sure of getting some cash from their contributions and donations - Nassari*
Volunteer Tourists as Donors (Non-Profit sector)	*Since 2007 to date we have been having different numbers of volunteer tourists who come and work with us and of course from them the goals are reached. They are really supportive in terms of their time, their finances, their donations that they really helped us to reach where we are at this time - Minishi*
Volunteer Tourists as International Workers (Public Sector)	*A big number of international travelers are coming here under the umbrella of volunteering. I think the government has just realized this trend and has increased the costs of the volunteer visa to regulate the number of volunteers flowing to the country - Mrisho*

Photo Credit: Peter Ezra

Volunteering

VOLUNtourism
Drivers
Altruism/philanthropic desire
Volunteer-minded mission
Activism
Time
Long-term
Areas of Activity
Poverty alleviation
Environmental awareness
Education & public health
Organizational settings
Volunteer-based
Decommodified

volunTOURISM
Drivers
Serious Leisure
Vacation-minded mission
Egocentric
Time
Mostly short-term
Areas of Activity
Poverty alleviation
Environmental awareness
Organizational settings
Tourism-based
Commodified/
Commercialized

Tourism

Photo Credit: Peter Ezra

Conclusion

- This study reveals that the meanings attached to 'volunteer tourists' by the host community stakeholders significantly differ from the meaning that is attached to the volunteer tourists when viewed from the developed country perspective.
- It underscores the need for tourism education and research to adopt a balanced and more inclusive approach to conceptualizing volunteer tourism.

Implications

- The findings serve as a poignant reminder for tourism educators & practitioners to refrain from operating on the assumption that the host community is a **homogenous** group of stakeholders.
- There is a need for tourism research to adopt a broader, **unbiased and global approach** which underpins volunteer tourism and multitude of perspectives and interests in the host communities.

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Acknowledgements

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