



University of  
**Strathclyde**  
Business  
School

# Volunteer Tourism an Ambiguous Phenomenon

Dr Konstantinos Tomazos  
Macau 2009  
Guest Lecture



## Introduction

Currently there are many tour operators, environmental and humanitarian NGOs and academic groups who offer travellers the opportunity to participate in projects that can assist in community development, scientific research or ecological and cultural restoration (Wearing, 2004; Wight, 2003).

***This presentation explores how the growth of interest in volunteer tourism and the large scale expansion of opportunities have altered the nature of the activity.***

# A New Hope or Further Exploitation?

Tourism literature sees tourism development as a means of addressing the chasm between the rich and the poor, since tourism products can be sustained by natural resources and culture which often could be the only resources some countries may have.

But...

Substantial injection of resources needed to help poor communities overcome their social and economic problems...Anything less is not only ineffective but also self serving opportunism

Charity should not replace the market (Butcher, 2005)

# Volunteer Tourism

*“....for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that may involve aiding or the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society and environment”*

(Wearing, 2001: 1)

But how did it all begin?.....

# Pacifism and the Birth of Volunteer Tourism

## **World War 1 1914-1918**

Traumatic experience which brought levels of misery and destruction beyond that which had been previously encountered.

## **Pacifist Movement**

International Fellowship of Reconciliation

1919 Conference in the Netherlands

“Human ingenuity designed to alleviate pain rather than causing it”

**Pierre Ceresole**

# Ceresole and his volunteers



**Ceresole (on the left) and two of his volunteers in Verdun (summer of 1920)**  
SCI Archives 2007



# Examples of Volunteer Activities

**1920**

First work camp in the village of Esnes near Verdun

**1924**

First Voluntary work camp of conscientious objectors in Switzerland to clear rubble after avalanches

**1928**

Volunteers clear the Rhine Valley in Liechtenstein after heavy floods

**1930**

Voluntary work camp in Lagarde (France) to clear up flood devastation

**1931**

Work camps to restore self-confidence in mining towns in England during depression

**1937**

Assistance to civilians during the Spanish Civil War



# Historical review of Volunteer Tourism

**1920-1945**

**The Early Years- A Pacifist's Vision**

**1946-1968**

**A Second Boost- Cold War and a Booming Economy**

**1969-1990**

**Transformation and Turmoil- New Political and Ecological Movements and the Rise of Mass Tourism**





# GROWTH AND CONFUSION

A growing industry segment but lacking a Universally-recognised brand name

- A “Google” search for “volunteer abroad” yields over 1 million hits
- More than 3,000 projects
- 150 countries
- Over 300 providers

Within the Sphere of Alternative Tourism?

- All encompassing nature due to entrepreneurial activity

Impossible to determine the exact number of volunteers. No national statistics on volunteer tourist arrivals

Most statistics derived from volunteer organizations for marketing reasons



## Volunteer Tourism Destinations and Assumptions

### Volunteer Tourism Expansion (2003-2007)-Top 10 Countries

Country	Projects 2007	Projects 2005	Projects in 2003
India	241	185	51
Costa Rica	201	133	43
Peru	193	122	1
Ecuador	188	150	47
Kenya	183	102	21
Thailand	176	138	3
Ghana	171	149	37
South Africa	148	135	3
Nepal	144	117	2
Brazil	96	91	15
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1741</b>	<b>1322</b>	<b>223</b>



# Destinations and Need

## The Most 'Needy Countries'

Country	HDI SCORE	No of Projects in 2007	No of Projects in 2005	No of Projects in 2003
Afghanistan	0.229	1	1	1
Sierra Leone	0.336	1	0	0
Burkina Faso	0.37	3	2	4
Niger	0.374	3	2	0
Mali	0.38	2	0	0
Mozambique	0.384	10	7	1
Ethiopia	0.406	7	7	5
Congo Dem Rep	0.411	1	0	0
Ivory Coast	0.432	1	1	4
Zambia	0.434	13	13	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>17</b>

# Destinations and Need

## The Least 'Needy Countries'

Country	HDI SCORE	No of Projects in 2007	No of Projects in 2005	No of Projects in 2003
Iceland	0.968	9	5	6
Norway	0.968	1	1	1
Australia	0.962	25	29	12
Canada	0.961	14	28	11
Ireland	0.959	6	5	2
Sweden	0.956	2	3	1
Switzerland	0.955	3	3	1
Japan	0.953	12	11	8
Netherlands	0.953	2	3	2
Finland	0.952	3	3	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>77</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>51</b>

## Population and number of Projects

Country	Population in Millions	No of Projects
1-China	1,320	89 (3)
2-India	1,290	241 (1)
3-USA	301	47 (4)
4-Indonesia	234	25 (5)
5-Brazil	190	96 (2)
6-Pakistan	165	2 (10)
7-Bangladesh	150	6 (9)
8-Russia	141	19 (6)
9-Nigeria	135	8 (8)
10-Japan	129	12 (7)



## Project Groups and Activities

<b>Group</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Total of Cases</b>
Community Welfare	Community Development Children Care Elderly Disability Peace Human Right/ Legal	805
Teaching	Teaching a Foreign Language Sports Coaching	572
Environmental	Nature Conservation Wildlife Protection Global Warming	502
Medical	Hospital Support Pandemic (HIV, Ebola) Support Drug Rehabilitation	236
Cultural	Arts Cultural Exchange Empowerment of Women Heritage Conservation Museum Support	131
Business Development	IT Support Accounting Support Farming/ Organic	91
Building	Construction Renovation Water Management	54
Research	Wildlife Monitoring Land-mapping/Zoning	47
Other/ Miscellaneous	Catastrophe Relief Olympic Games	28

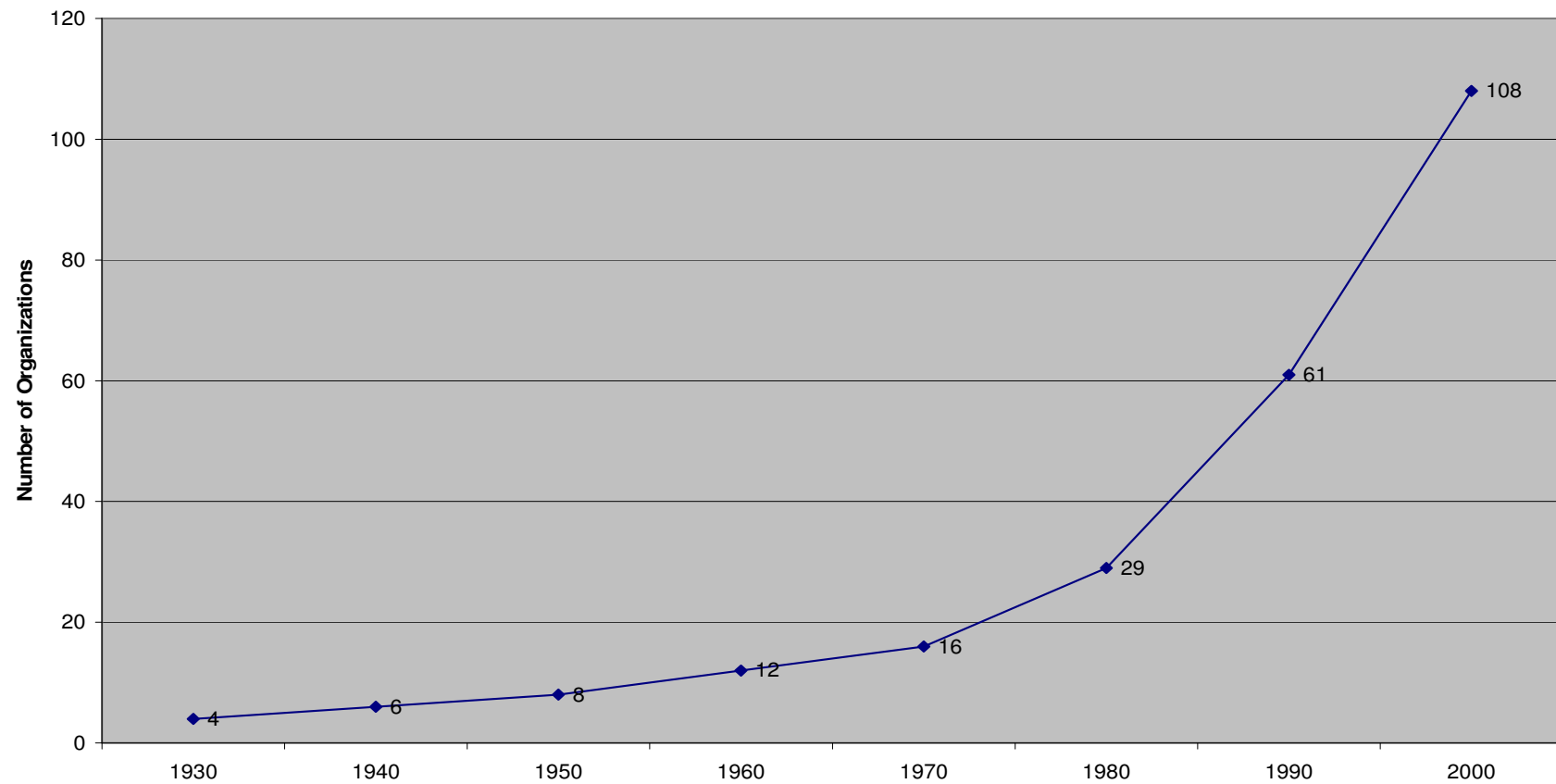


# Countries and Types of Projects

Destination	Total Projects Listed	Community Welfare	Teaching	Environmental	Medical	Cultural	Business Development	Building	Research	Other/Miscellaneous	Pure Volunteer Tourism Projects	Internships/Paid positions/Adventure tours
India	241	68	46	8	24	21	15	1	2	1	186	55
Costa Rica	201	36	27	55	8	3	0	3	3	0	135	66
Peru	193	57	30	15	14	7	4	4	6	3	140	53
Ecuador	188	36	28	47	11	5	5	1	1	0	134	54
Kenya	183	17	28	30	16	1	6	3	2	0	103	80
Thailand	176	36	41	26	8	4	3	4	4	4	130	46
Ghana	171	34	23	5	25	11	4	1	1	0	104	67
S Africa	148	30	20	46	10	0	5	2	1	0	114	34
Nepal	144	32	33	7	19	5	1	2	1	0	100	44
Brazil	96	23	17	12	4	7	1	5	0	0	69	27
	<b>1741</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1215</b>	<b>526</b>

# Growth of Volunteer Tourism

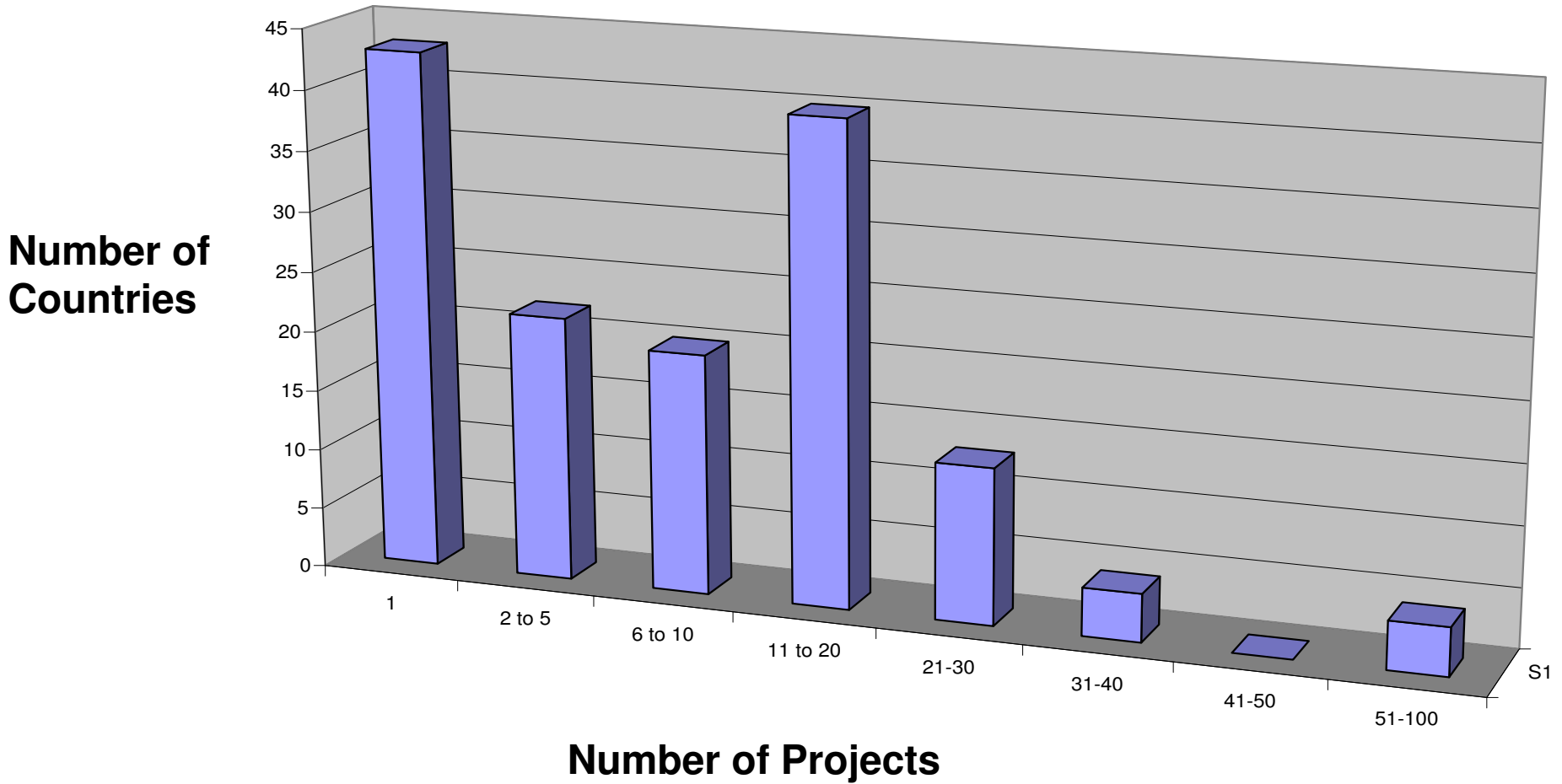
Growth of Volunteer Tourism



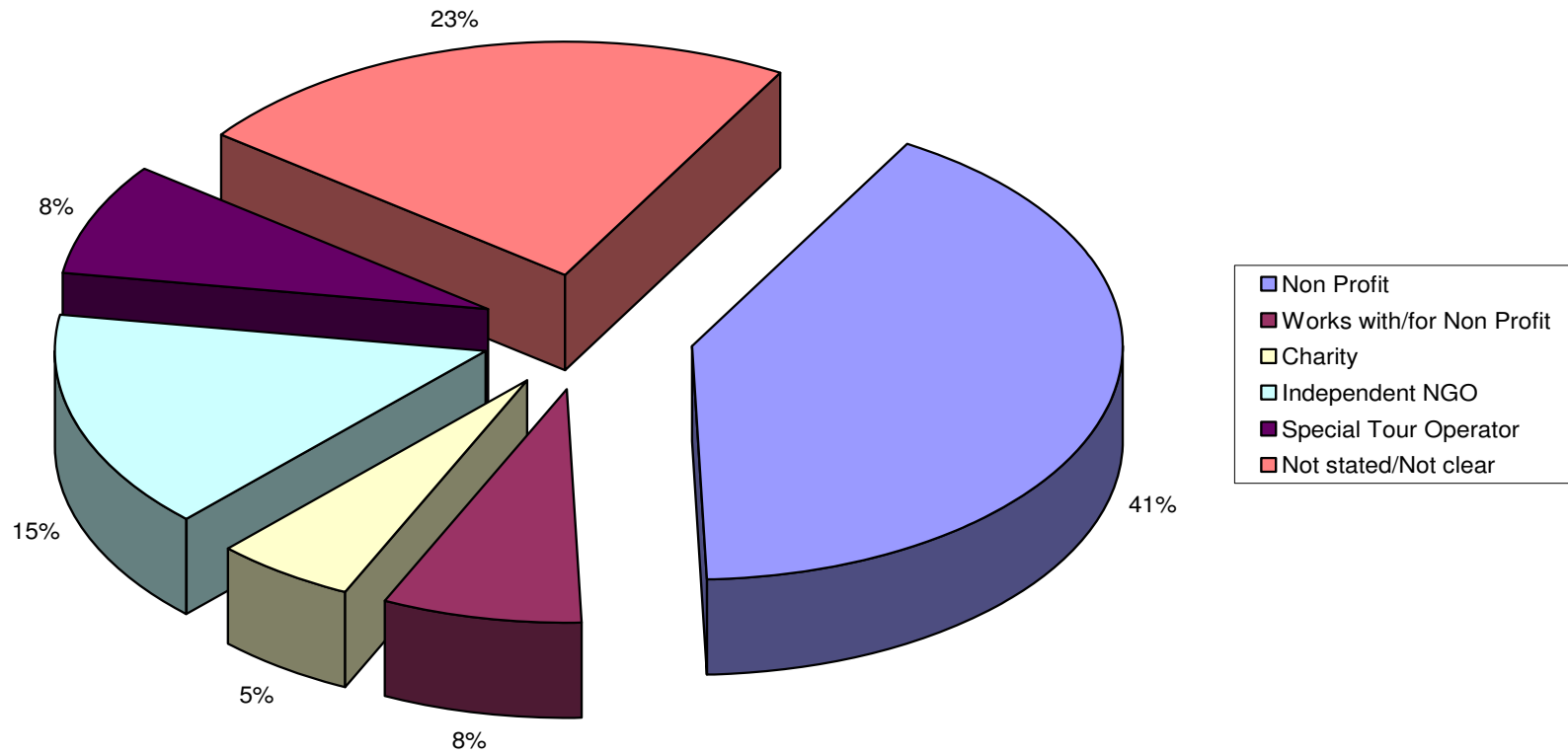


# Global Expansion

## Volunteer Organizations Expansion

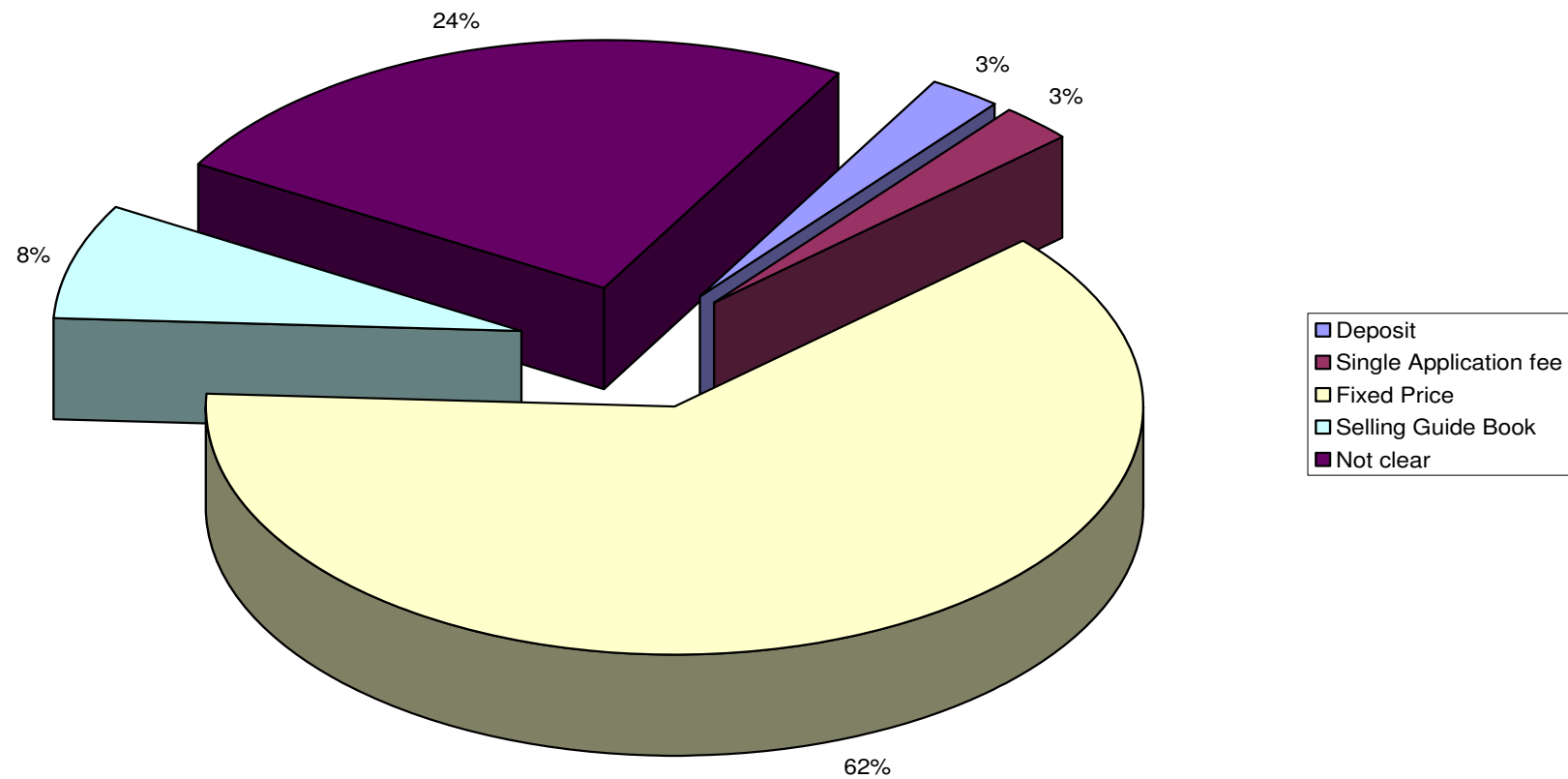


## Declared Status



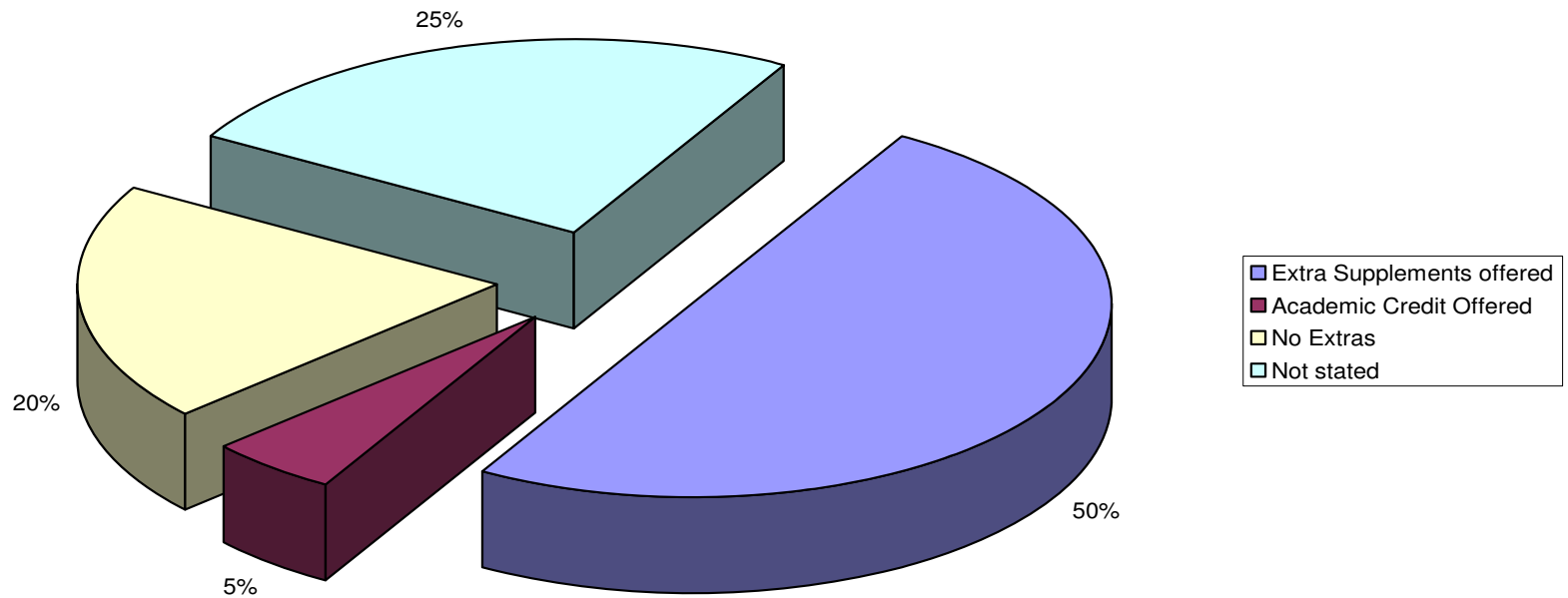
# Pricing Policy

On line Pricing Policy

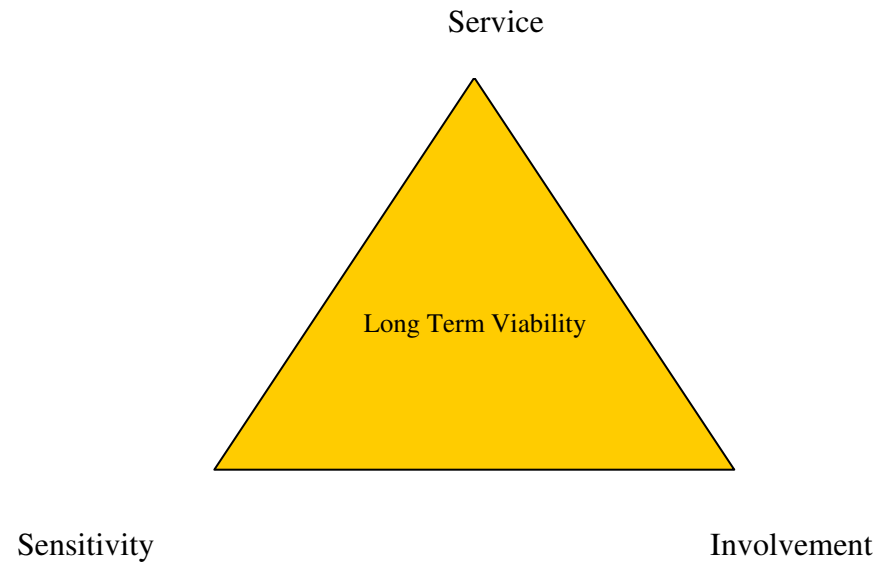


# Extras on Offer

Extras on Offer

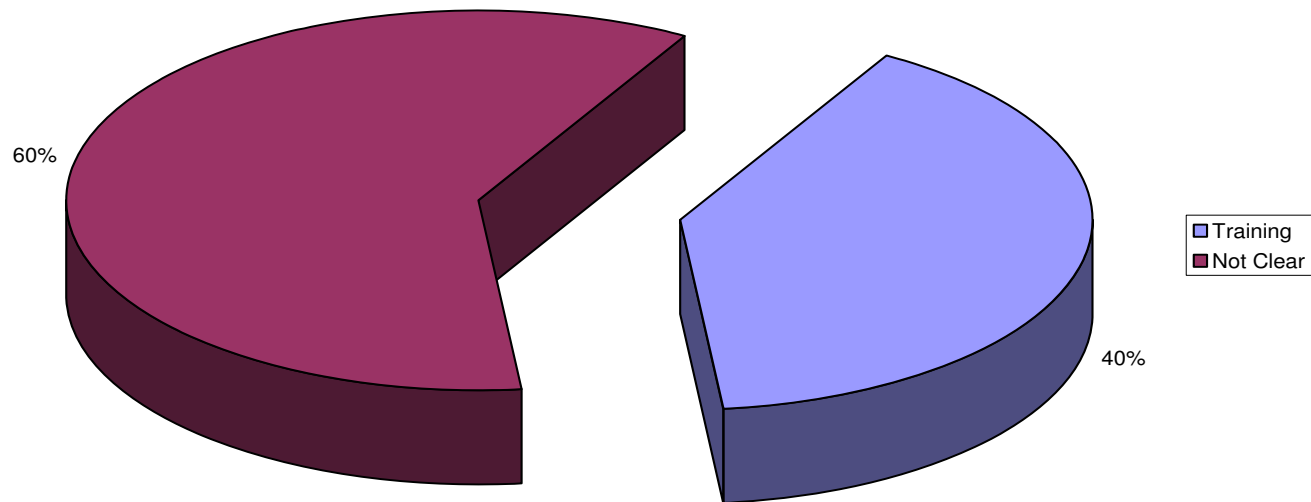


## Elements of Good Practice



# Volunteer Training

Volunteer Training

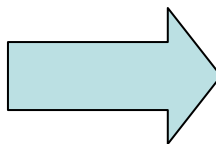




# Financial Handout Policy

Hesitation

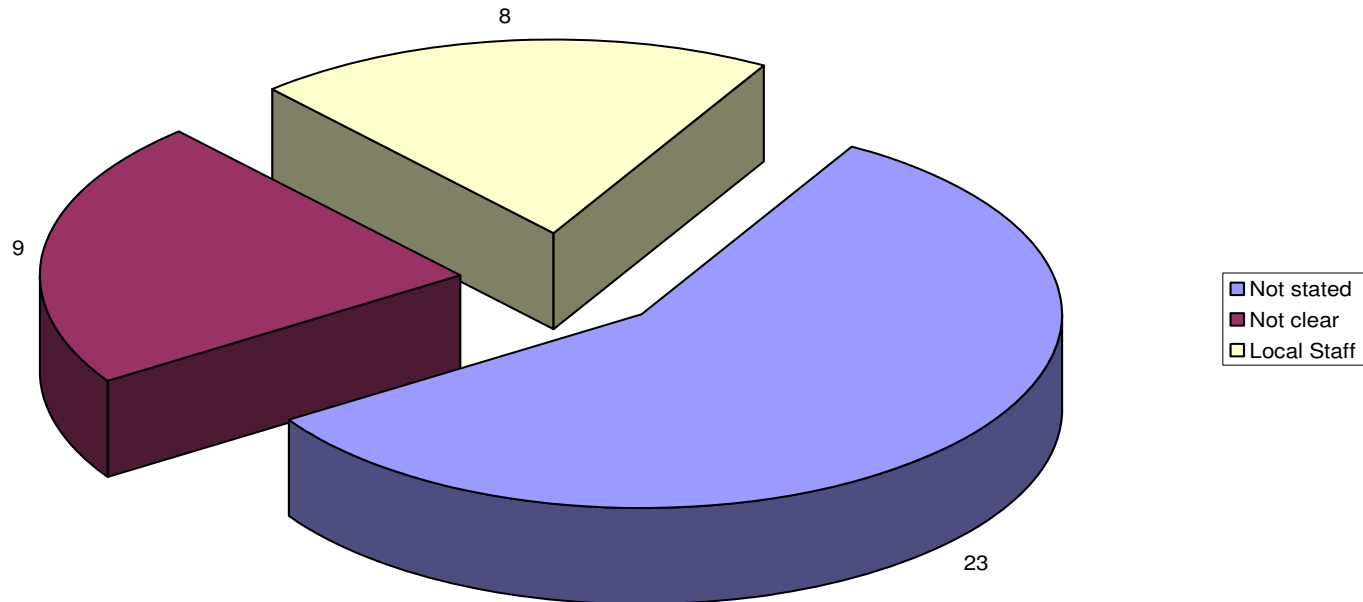
Colonial Stereotypes  
Overdependence  
Drip-fed projects  
Destabilising Effect



**COLLAPSE**

# Involvement of Locals

Employment of Local Staff







## Good Intentions and Profit

Impossible to overlook the role of individual business initiative

Demand on customers' **Time, Labour and Money**

Packaged and Segmented

Effective Marketing

Non Profit Organisations

## Is there room for both?

# Profit and Altruism Continuum



# Volunteer Tourism as Catharsis

Cathartic experiences are activities that facilitate change and make a difference to an individual's outlook towards life

Recent research has put volunteer tourism under the microscope as a form of “cathartic tourism” (Zahra and McIntosh, 2007)

Volunteer tourism participation as “Turning point in their lives” (Starr, 1994)

Tourism industry seeks to atone for its past sins (Turner and Ash, 1975)

# Balance Shift...

Balance shifting from altruistic philosophy and commitment to a cause to more hedonistic and profit oriented business model.

Has volunteer tourism drifted away from its founding principles and its message has been corrupted by commercial success....

If this is the case..then whom does it benefit?

To what degree the organisations (supply) are creating and shaping the demand (participants)?

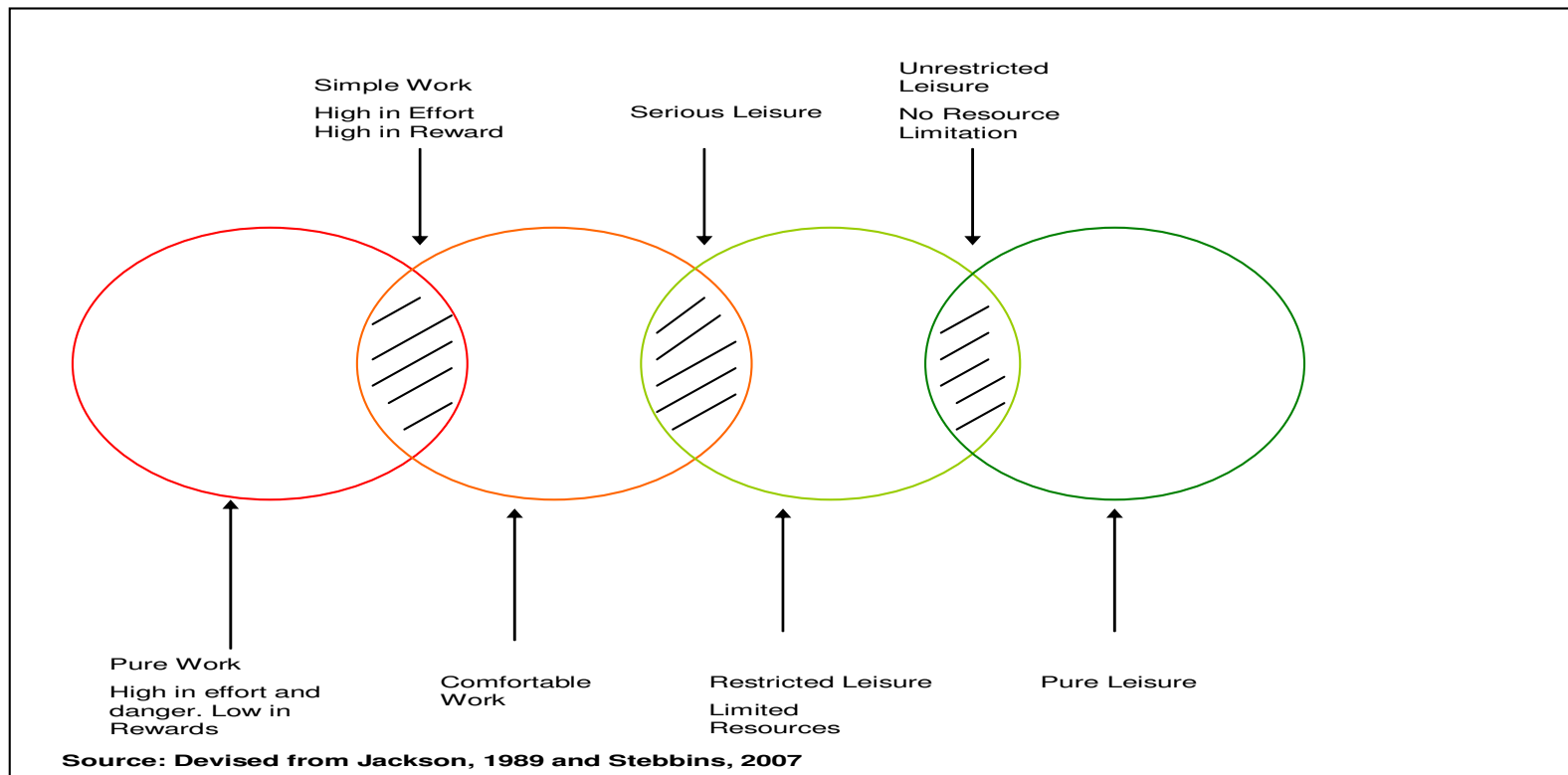
Is the marketing of volunteer tourism dominating the selection process of participants?

Organisations offer far more than just volunteer opportunities

# What about the Participants?

Volunteer tourism is both volunteering and Tourism ...but also work and leisure

This makes volunteer tourism a legitimate, distinctive and unique form of tourism which merits special attention and study

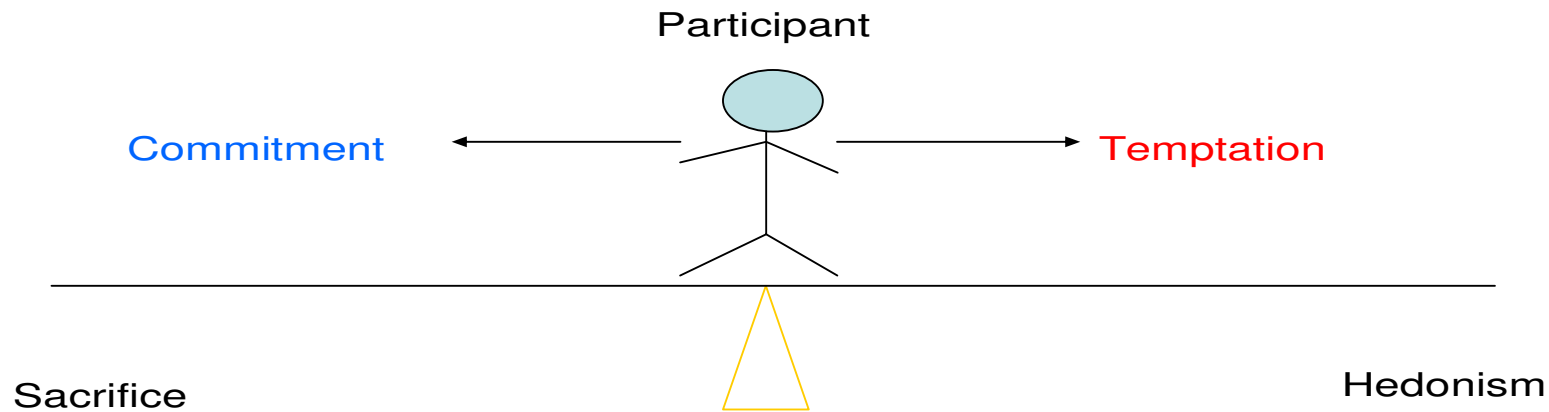




# Deconstructing Motivations...

Tourist Motivation in the Literature	Volunteer Motivation in the Literature	Participant Motivation in the Study
Escape	_____	✓
Special Interest	Special Interest	✓
Social Facilitation	Social Facilitation	✓
Experience	Experience	✓
Personal Development	Personal Development	✓
Relaxation/Fun	_____	✓
Cheap	_____	✓
_____	_____	Timing
_____	Warm Glow	High on Volunteering
_____	altruism	✓

# Volunteer Tourism Participation as a Balancing Act



# Conclusions

- Inconsistency and ambiguity
- Rapid expansion due to internet effect
- Organisations create public goods where the government has failed to do so
- No clear relationship between actual need and project establishment
- Organisations not regulated...opportunity for “mischief”
- Need for further research



**Thank you for your Attention**

**Any questions?**