

Broadening Horizons: 'Discover the world, discover yourself!'

A qualitative web content analysis of the representation
of the gap year product in the Netherlands

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Emy van Trijp

Registration Nr.: 900725842120

Examiners: dr.ir. Karin Peters (Wageningen University)

prof. Claudio Minca (Wageningen University)

External Supervisor: dr. ir. Inge Hermann (Saxion Hogeschool)



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However, the topic really suited me, and coming across several Dutch gappers myself during my travels, it came alive. While looking back on the last seven months I can say that I enjoyed the whole experience and learned a great deal along the way. Writing this thesis was therefore a rewarding experience and has especially contributed to my skills as a researcher.

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SUMMARY

The phenomenon of 'taking a year off' and 'going on a gap year' is becoming a frequent practice for high school graduates from Western countries (Simpson, 2004; Heath, 2007). Although the beginning of a research agenda has been established around the phenomenon, this research mostly focuses on the gap year experience in the context of countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia (see Simpson, 2004; Heath, 2007; Lyons, Hanley, Wearing & Neal, 2012). As for these countries, the popularity of taking a gap year is increasing amongst young people in the Netherlands (Nuffic, 2013; Hermann, 2013). However, despite the growing popularity of the gap year amongst young people, the research into the phenomenon is fairly scarce in the Dutch context. Therefore, this research aims to contribute to earlier research by Hermann (2013) on the moralising practices of the gap year industry in the Netherlands and to ultimately contribute to unravelling the gap year phenomenon even further and contribute to this 'new' research agenda. In the theoretical framework for this study it is argued that the gap year is no longer seen as 'wasting time' or a 'taking a year off' (Butcher & Smith, 2010). The gap year has become a time where you can broaden your horizons through travel; one can 'become a better person' or 'do something good for the world', the gap year product has become moralised (Hermann, 2013). In addition to this moralization, the gap year experience is seen as being part of new moral tourism and ethical consumption (Butcher, 2003). At the same time it is argued that the gap year will foster personal development and enhance skill development, adding value to one's resume in the form of the 'personality package' in order to compete on the job market or get into the university desired (Heath, 2007). It is also argued that a gap year would turn young people into global citizens, as travel would create cross-cultural understanding and respect (Lyons et al., 2012). Where gap years were first for the drop-outs, the rebels and the people with nothing better to do, the settings is now changed to create global citizens, ethical consumers, better students and perfect professionals (Simpson, 2004). The aim of this research was to examine if Dutch gap year providers represent, encourage and promote the gap year principally through altruistic acts and the desire to benefit the places visited or whether this representation and promotion it is based on creating global citizens through more self-centred values of gaining cultural capital, skill-development and in doing so distinguishing themselves from peers. A qualitative content analysis of the websites of 33 gap year providers in the Netherlands was carried out in order to investigate this. Three different groups were found which offer products suited for the gap year; the specialized gap year providers, the volunteer work providers and the language course providers. Findings showed both similarities and differences between these groups. Most providers emphasised the benefits of skill-development and the added value a gap year would give to one's resume. The first two providers had a higher focus in representing the gap year product as 'adventurous', 'ethical' and 'alternative', while the language course providers put a high emphasis on the added value the resume and the benefits for one's future career. Notions of the Western gapper as the 'helper' and the local third world citizens as the 'receiver' came back too, especially for providers that offer volunteering possibilities. The Dutch providers represent the product as 'alternative' and 'adventurous', however their products resemble those of tour operators that sell mass tourism products; packaged tours filled with activities and including airport pick-ups, meals and accommodation. The product is also promoted as the perfect way to self-development and resume enhancement, which combines volunteering during the gap year with the notion of 'reciprocal altruism'. It seems that the gap year products is represented as the 'alternative' and 'adventurous', not per se with the underlying thought that it would be more 'moral' or ethical', but that it would lead to great personal development to create global citizens with skills that make them stand out from their peers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of “taking a gap year” is becoming a frequent practice for students from Western countries (Simpson, 2004; Heath, 2007). Although it is still a rather ambiguous term, a gap year in most cases refers to taking ‘time out’ between secondary school and university or between bachelor and master to emerge in travelling, volunteering and/or working abroad (Hermann, 2013). In Great Britain for instance, taking a pre-university gap year is seen as increasingly acceptable and a common aspiration amongst young people (Heath, 2005) and it is here that the boom in the gap year industry was most evident (Lyons, Hanley, Wearing & Neal, 2012). With the education sector, governmental institutions and the tourism industry encouraging and promoting the practice, the gap year is no longer seen as ‘wasting time’ or a ‘year off’ (Butcher & Smith, 2010). Nowadays the gap year has become a time where you can broaden your horizons through travel; one can ‘become a better person’ or ‘do something good for the world’. In doing so, it is argued that gappers will learn cross-cultural understanding, soft skills and a higher dependency than their not-gapping peers (see Lyons et al., 2012; Heath, 2005). Taking a year off and travelling abroad is therefore not only seen as doing something good for the world, but it would also foster self-development and personal enrichment. As university-recruiters and employers favour the skills that gappers acquire, it can be a way to distinct yourself from your peers when applying for university or even looking for a job after graduation (Heath, 2005; Lyons et al., 2012). An example of this is Princeton University, which offers a select number of accepted students the possibility to postpone their freshman year and sponsors them to travel abroad for nine months to one of the university-sponsored volunteer projects:

“In addition to supporting community-based initiatives at each program site, Bridge Year aims to provide participants with greater international perspective and intercultural skills, an opportunity for personal growth and reflection, and a deeper appreciation of service in both a local and international context.”
(Princeton University, 2014)

The project places the emphasis on both the skill development of the student as well as the act of ‘doing something good’ while working for one of the pre-selected projects. The tour operator Xtreme Gap also sees the potential in offering skill-development to their gap year travellers:

“You want to travel, but also do something? Something meaningful, something fun? Get your gap year qualifications abroad!” (Xtreme Gap, 2014a, translated by author)

They offer their, often young, clientele various courses while being abroad, for example diving courses, placing an emphasis on ‘doing something useful’ and on the fact that most of these include an international recognized qualification certificate.

The above two examples illustrate that doing a gap year is not seen as ‘wasting time’ or ‘taking a vacation’, the gap year is a time to do something good and work on one’s personal development. As Hermann (2013) mentions, the higher education sector,

the governmental institutions and the tourism industry are starting to grasp the potential of promoting the benefits of taking a gap year and in doing so moralizing the gap year practices as 'being ethical' and 'doing good'. Lyons et al. (2012) argue that promoting a gap year as uncritical and morally-right, in where travelling can lead to being a 'better person' through cross-cultural understanding and broadening horizons, can associate with ideologies of global citizenship. Taking a year off and travelling or volunteering would lead to citizens that are more active and, as encouraged through schools, universities and the government, it is often seen as a part of developing global citizenship leading to the creation of young citizen that act more ethically in their future lives (Jones, 2004). The cultural capital that young travellers gain during their trips can be turned into economic capital when the traveller returns, as their new-gained cross-cultural skills give them a competitive advantage over others when applying for university or looking for a job. According to Simpson (2004) the gap year is represented as something that could turn young people into managers and businesspeople that act more ethically in their business decisions. Then again, this cultural capital gained while on a gap year, is seen as desirable by employers.

Like in Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand, the popularity of taking a year off is increasing amongst young people in the Netherlands (Hermann, 2013). However, despite the growing popularity of the gap year amongst young people, the research into the phenomenon is fairly scarce, especially when referring to gappers from the Netherlands.

After an initial look at the Dutch online content regarding the gap year, I noticed that, next to moralising the gap year experience as an ethically right choice (Hermann, 2013), it is also promoted as the perfect way to self-development, skill acquirement and better decision-making competencies. Most of this is aimed at students that desire to do a gap year between high school and university. The skills that a gapper will develop are especially emphasised in regards to getting accepted into the chosen study program or university or making well-grounded decisions on which future education or job to go for. As the tour operator Travel Active describes on their website:

"With some travel experience abroad and other extra curricular activities, you definitely have an advantage over students who do not have this experience. Especially when your experiences are relevant for the type of study you want to start." (Travel Active, 2014a, translated by author)

The tour operator describes six advantages of doing a gap year, including having an advantage over your peers in the selection process of your university (een streepje voor bij de loting of selectie van je vervolgopleiding). Five out of the six advantages relate to skill or competency development, for example enhancing intercultural communication skills, mastering a second language, acquiring international contacts, improving social skills and creating a more interesting resume. The tour operator also notes that a year abroad can result in making the right choices for the future, such as selecting the type of bachelor (Travel Active, 2014b). This trend is also noticeable on the website of Wil Weg, an initiative of Nuffic and the Europees Platform. On this website students who are unsure of their choice in bachelor or master are advised that taking a year off and go abroad might help them in making this choice:

“An increasing number of studies have a selection procedure and the study pressure is increasing for years now. It is therefore important to make the right decision regarding the type of study and do not acquire study delay. A well-thought-out gap year can help you with making this decision.” (Wil Weg, 2014, translated by author)

Especially in the political climate of the Netherlands, where cut backs are being made by the government in the financial support for students, choosing the right bachelor or master stated to be important by providers such as Travel Active. In line with this Heath (2005) argues that a gap year can help students making this choice and if the choice is made, gappers will get accepted more easily into the bachelor or master desired.

The gap year product is seen as the perfect opportunity to do something good for the world, while at the same time it is doing something good for the gapper. The gap year can be filled with activities that are seen as morally right, in line with new moral tourism, such as working on an eco-project in South Africa or teaching English to children in Cambodia (Butcher & Smith, 2010). However, the morally-right goal is not always the only one, the gapper can also get something out of it on a personal level. Going abroad while working, volunteering or travelling can not only turn the gapper into someone more independent and better capable of making decisions, it comes with a range of new skills as well. This in turn is a boost for the gapper's resume and will give him or her advantage over peers while applying for jobs or university education. Therefore, this research is trying to understand how the gap year product in the Netherlands is represented and promoted by analysing the web content of Dutch tourism providers who offer gap year products.

2. RESEARCH SCOPE

2.1. The Preliminary Problem Statement and Relevance

Thus, as taking a gap year is no longer perceived as ‘wasting a year’, it is perceived as a valuable year where young people can develop skills and do ‘something good’ for the world. This can found back in the way the tourism industry, but also the educational sector and the governmental institutions in the Netherlands have been moralising the practices of taking a gap year. However, considering the emphasis is not only laid on the ‘being ethical’, but also on the self-development of young travellers it is questionable what the exact product is that gap year tour operators want to sell: the ethical product or the product of self-development and self-enhancement. Although there has been a growing interest in the gap year phenomenon over the past years by academics (see Simpson, 2004; Söderman & Snead, 2008; Snee, 2013), not a lot has been known yet about the phenomenon in the Dutch context.

Therefore, the following aim is formulated which focuses on the context of the Netherlands: *if the gap year discourse represents, encourages and promotes the gap year principally through altruistic acts and the desire to benefit the places visited or whether this representation and promotion it is based on creating global citizens through more self-centred values of gaining cultural capital, skill-development and in doing so distinguishing yourself from your peers.*

As there is a growing trend noticeable in the popularity of taking a year off (Nuffic, 2012) amongst young Dutch people, this research might be a good step towards understanding the broader scope of gap year tourism in the Netherlands. Hence, it would be interesting to explore this topic more in-depth and to understand the way the gap year is represented or promoted by the so-called ‘gap year tour operators’ and other tourism providers that offer gap year products. Therefore, this research hopes to contribute to earlier research by Hermann (2013) on the moralising practices of the gap year industry in the Netherlands and it aims to ultimately contribute to unravelling the gap year phenomenon even further and contribute to this ‘new’ research agenda.

2.2. The Scientific Research Objectives

As mentioned before, this study seeks to understand how the phenomenon and the product of the gap year is represented and promoted in the Netherlands. More specifically, I will explore and analyse the on-going discourse representing gap year tourism. The study looks at the ways in which gap year tourism is represented and what concepts are used to produce and distribute knowledge on the concept. In turn, this will help interpreting why gap year tourism is represented the way it is. Therefore, the following scientific objectives have been developed.

This research is carried out in order to explore and understand:

- how the product of gap year tourism is produced, distributed and discussed in terms of new moral tourism, ethical consumption, global citizenship, skill-development and gaining (cultural) capital;

- and, how these understandings help to comprehend the way the concept of gap year tourism is represented and characterized by the tourism sector, specialized in offering gap year products.

2.3. The Research Questions

The above scientific research objectives lead to the following main research question:

How is the concept of the 'gap year' represented and promoted by the tourism industry taking into account the concepts of new moral tourism, ethical consumption, global citizenship, self-development and gaining (cultural) capital?

The sub-research questions below will help in answering the main research question:

1. What are the types of gap year products offered by various Dutch tour operators (gap year providers) and how can the concepts of new moral tourism, ethical consumption, global citizenship, self-development and gaining (cultural) capital help in understanding the phenomenon?
2. In what way is gap year tourism represented in websites of gap year providers in the Dutch context in terms of:
 - (a) What are the main concepts and the main themes used in the representation of the concept of the gap year by the gap year providers?
 - (b) How are the broader concepts of new moral tourism, ethical consumption, global citizenship, self-development and gaining (cultural) capital reflected in promoting and representing the concept of gap year tourism?

2.4. The Phenomenon of the Gap Year

To construct a theoretical framework concerning the gap year, it is firstly important to take a look at the theoretical notions of the phenomenon and what is happening in the Netherlands. Therefore, what exactly is the phenomenon of the gap year and how can it be defined?

The contemporary gap year is believed to be a legacy of the 'year out' in order to travel the 'hippie trails', once undertaken in the 60's and 70's to travel from Europe to Asia (Hermann, 2013). During these times thousands of young people travelled to the East in search for adventure, new impressions and self-exploration (Heath, 2005). Additionally, the gap year has been compared with the 'Grand Tour' of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, when young European noble youth travelled for the sake of gaining an education and opening one's mind (O'Reilly, 2006). Embarking on a 'Grand Tour' was considered to be an educational activity that formed the individual's character, making him a more cultural being while broadening one's horizons (Simpson, 2004; O'Reilly, 2006). With the accounts that going on a gap year would lead to self-development and better cultural understandings (Heath, 2007; Butcher & Smith 2010), one might see why these two phenomena are compared. Nowadays the construction of the gap year is not solely about sightseeing and discovering oneself. Activities such as volunteering, learning a different language and just simply working abroad are put in the mix of, the seemingly endless, possibilities the gap year has to offer (Hermann, 2013). Jones (2004) divides the different activities that could be included in a gap year into six categories: organized travel, learning, paid work, voluntary work, independent

travel and leisure activities. He also mentions that many gappers will combine these different activities in a complex mixture when they take a year off. The composition of this mixture of activities will ultimately depend on the kind of gapper, what the ultimate goal is for taking a year off and the ideals that he¹ associates with this. This may be the ideal of freedom or of personal development, it may be seen as part of some form of education or even as just a period of fun and independence before entering the 'real world' of adulthood (O'Reilly, 2006). This wide range of possibilities can include activities that might be seen as hedonistic and solely pleasure seeking, such as taking a budget coach tour through European countries or island hopping through South East Asia (Simpson, 2004).

However, what is noticeable is that gap year activities increasingly include doing 'something good' for the world, also known and marketed as: doing volunteer work (Lyon & Wearing, 2008; Butcher & Smith, 2010; Lyons et al., 2011). Volunteering is a fast growing phenomenon to combine with other activities during the gap year (Söderman & Snead, 2008) and most of the gap year organizations' websites include volunteering as part of the gap year product (Lyons et al., 2008). The volunteer projects can be of short, medium or long term and are mainly organized to alleviate poverty of certain groups, enhance community well-being and conserve the environment (Wearing, 2001; Callanan & Thomas, 2005). Mostly the volunteer sending nations are the ones where the gap year has become popular, such as Western European nations and Canada and the United States (Lyons et al., 2012). The possibilities to include volunteering as part of the gap year shows that it can be filled with activities that have the aim to 'do something good for the world', or it can be of hedonistic nature or variations in between. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, it will depend on one's personal motivations and goals what kind of activities they will undertake during their gap year.

As mentioned before the term 'gap year' is still a rather ambiguous term, which has an abundance of different definitions (Hermann, 2013). On top of this, Jones (2004) argues that there is no clear definition for what can be seen as a gap year and the definition of the gap year differs across studies. It has been defined as "a nominal period during which a person delays further education or employment in order to travel" (Millington, 2005, as quoted in, Lyons et al., 2012, p. 363). Others define it as a period of time for young people to travel and engage in a range of activities including combinations of paid and unpaid work and leisure (Simpson 2004; Heath 2005). The gap year has also been defined as a specific period of time, between 3 and 24 months, in which an individual under the age of 25 takes time out of formal education, training, employment, or a combination of these (Jones 2004). This ambiguity is also noticeable when trying to define the people who undertake a gap year, taking into account the extensive mix of activities gappers undertake and in what point in their lives they find themselves, such as high school graduates or career breakers. Simpson (2004) asks the question if gappers see themselves more as travellers, tourists, or volunteers, while Jones (2004) tries to categorize gappers in terms of where they stand in their study careers. He divides gappers in eleven categories ranging from the gapper in between high school and university and the young (graduated) gapper that takes a break from paid employment. O'Reilly (2006) takes a different approach and looks at the gapper in

¹ Here the gapper is referred to as being male. However, when the gapper is mentioned, it concerns both male and female gappers.

the light of the backpacker experiences, in which he sees the gap year backpacker as a traveller who uses “the end of a significant phase of their lives as an opportunity to travel, usually after finishing secondary school or university” (p. 18).

These definitions of the gap year and gappers might all have points in common, but still there is no academic agreement on what a gap year defines. Jones (2004, p. 24) even goes as far as stating that: “clearly the current academic areas of interest in gap years are not adequate to provide a broad enough understanding of all groups of young people taking a gap year, nor the diverse range of activities that they undertake”. For the sake of the research question and research objectives of this thesis, the following definition of Hermann (2013) will be used when referring to the gap year:

“A gap year corresponds to a specific, transitional period of ‘time out’ between school and university, spend abroad, including activities of independent travel, leisure and/or (organized) work placements” (p. 4).

During this research, the case of the gap year will be examined in the Netherlands, looking at students that take time off between high school (middelbare school) and university (universiteit or hogeschool) before starting their higher education. The next section will elaborate more on the phenomenon of the gap year in the Dutch context.

2.5. The Case of the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, taking a year off is found increasingly popular amongst young Dutch people (Hermann 2013). However, only a small amount of research is done in the Netherlands, not necessarily solely on an academic level. Nuffic and the Europees Platform, in cooperation with ResearchNed (Nuffic 2012) conducted a research amongst high school students who were planning to take a year off between high school and university. The research found that most of the respondents are not looking for a full year abroad, only 26% would like to spend nine to twelve months abroad. Results also showed that Australia and New Zealand are the most popular gap year destinations for Dutch youth and that 64% would like to travel during the gap year. Other popular activities are working (39%) and doing volunteer work (36%). The most important reason for taking a year off to go abroad is for personal development and gaining international experience, and improving foreign languages is also found to score high as a reason to go abroad. When asked what that personal development would be, the respondents’ answers ‘learning to be independent’ and ‘self-confidence’ scored the highest. The respondents who stated that they are not interested in taking a year off, argue this is due to the high costs of doing so.

This will take us to the next point, because it is questionable if the gap year’s popularity will still be rising with the recent government cutbacks in funding for students. At the moment of writing, all students of higher education institutions in the Netherlands who start their studies before 1 September 2015 receive a monthly amount of funding from the Dutch government. The amount received is €100,25 for students who live at home with their parents and €279,41 for students who live by themselves (DUO 2014a). In addition, students also receive a public transport pass with which they can travel for free during either weekends or weekdays. At the moment of graduating this funding and public transport pass are considered a gift, the student is not in debt with the government anymore. However, this is all about to change on the first of

September 2015 with the start of the new academic year. In May 2014 the Dutch government agreed upon a new budget plan for the Dutch education sector and part of this plan is to revise the current funding for students. The funding that students now receive is going to be changed into a 'social loan' (Start Studeren, 2014). This means that the money students now receive as 'gift' will be turned into a permanent loan, where every student can borrow a maximum of €986 a month from the government. 'Social' about this loan it that it will include a low interest percentage, a repayment period of 35 years and it is only obligatory to start repaying if graduates earn the minimum wage or higher (Start Studeren, 2014) The free public transport card for students keeps its current form and students with underprivileged parents will receive the funding nevertheless. The Dutch government expects that this will lead to budget cuts of €800 million to €1 billion and aims to use this to invest in enhancing education such as innovation in online education, more contact hours between students and teachers and international study chances for Dutch students (Start Studeren, 2014). Needless to say, students are not really pleased about these plans. The Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg, an organisation that supports and protects the interest of Dutch students, thinks the new plans will make sure that less people will make the decision to study: "we are concerned about the accessibility of education, the group of students who receive less financial support from home and who wants to and is able to study, do they dare to take the step to start studying?" (translated by author from ISO, 2014). Another organization who protects the rights of students in the Netherlands, the Landelijke Studenten Vakbond, has also raised its concerns, with the costs of studying getting €12.000 to €15.000 more expensive, students would be stuck with huge loans, which is seen as unacceptable (Telegraaf, 2014).

With the selection and application procedures of Dutch higher education institutions getting tougher (DUO, 2014b) and the new 'social loan plan' it is questionable if students will still think taking a year off is a good idea. Nevertheless, various Dutch gap year organizations are promoting and branding the gap year as a good way to make a grounded choice for the next study or the future (Travel Active, 2014a).

Hermann (2013) argues that the popularity of the gap year has being noticed by the tourism industry, noting that there are around 15 organization in the Netherlands that cater for this specific type of tourist. The activities that are offered are paid working opportunities, leisure activities, travel packages or volunteering opportunities, and a combination of these is also possible. Hermann (2013) also notes that there is a growing number of gap year guidebooks available for the Dutch market, although published in English. In addition, she mentions that this growing market of gap year organizations and services is visible when looking at educational fairs and promotion tours to secondary schools. Hermann (2013) states that the practices of the gap year industry in the Netherlands can be looked at in line with Butcher's (2003) 'moralization of tourism'. She argues that the gap year industry moralizing its practices as 'doing something good' and as the 'new moral superior alternative' over mass tourism. Hermann (2013) states that the Dutch gap year providers contribute to the representation of mass tourism as negative and a 'distorted sense of global citizenship amongst young people' (p. 17). The next chapter, the theoretical framework, will go into this deeper and looks into the issues and introduce theoretical notions of mass tourism, new moral tourism and global citizenship.

2.6. The Structure of the Report

In the remaining part of this report the theoretical framework will be discussed, elaborating on the notions of mass tourism, new moral tourism, global citizenship, self-development and gaining (cultural) capital. The conceptual framework is also introduced in the next chapter and will function as the theoretical backbone of the study. In the fourth chapter 'Methodology' the nature of the research, the research design and the methods of data collection and data analysis will be discussed. The researcher choose to collect web content data and a content analysis was carried out to analyse the data and reach the findings. The fifth chapter, therefore, is the 'Findings' chapter, which will go deeper into the data found and represents the empirical findings retrieved from this. Finally, the 'Discussion and Conclusion' chapter will link the theoretical notions discussed in chapter 3 with the research findings. This chapter complies the main findings of this study as well as it introduces themes for further research.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this part of the report the different constructs and notions of new moral tourism, ethical consumption, gaining capital, self-development and global citizenship will be elaborated on to create a good theoretical base in order to understand the phenomenon of the gap year.

3.1. New Moral Tourism

Tourism is seen as a major global economic force that keeps growing and growing (Milne & Ateljevic, 2001). According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2014), “over the past six decades, tourism has experienced continued expansion and diversification, becoming one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world” (p. 2). According to the UNWTO (ibid.) tourism was responsible for 1 out of every 11 jobs in the world and had a value of 1.4 trillion in US dollars in 2013. Therefore, around the world the development of tourism is generally perceived as a way to achieve economic growth, resulting in employment and job creation, the growth of the GDP and attraction of foreign investments (Butcher, 2003; Wahab & Cooper, 2010; Jones, 2005). This is in line with the UNWTO’s (2014) statements in which tourism is seen as the key to development, prosperity and well-being; it would lead to socio-economic process in terms of export revenues, job creation and infrastructure development.

While first only possible to the privileged few, in the last century tourism has transformed into a mass movement of people. Emerging with the industrial society in the nineteenth century, economic development and technical progress have made it possible for an increasing number of people to travel for leisure purposes, often to even further destinations (Butcher, 2003). International tourism has grown from 25 million international tourism arrivals in 1950 to 1087 million international tourism arrivals in 2013 (ibid.), this is expected to rise to 1.8 billion in 2030 (UNWTO, 2014). These tourists all have the urge, although in different levels, to explore the unknown, discover new places and experience new things (Murphy, 1985).

However, while benefiting local economies around the world, it is argued that tourism does not solely reaches these widely promoted positive outcomes. When taking a looking into the academic literature on tourism, one could see that in the past few decades a good deal has been written on the negative effects of this industry. As before the 80s the literature on tourism was mostly on cost-benefit analyses, tourism flow predictors and tourism destination strategies (Britton, 1982), in the years thereafter questions were raised on whether tourism is at the same time harming the environment and local people in tourism destinations. Consequently, the phenomenon of mass tourism, and its growth, has been well published over the recent years, pointing out the negative effects on our ‘Mother Earth’ and the people and communities that occupy her (Tribe, 2002, 2009; Macbeth, 2005; Fennell, 2006; Feighery, 2011; Pritchard, Morgan & Ateljevic, 2011).

In this academic critique on mass tourism the concentration has been more towards the impact in third world countries (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). While the rapid invasion of tourists from industrialized Western countries goes on, problems of environmental destruction, cultural differences, unequal distribution of financial

benefits and social tensions keep emerging (Wheeller, 1991; Mowforth & Munt, 2009). A major part of these critiques is focused on the social consequences of mass tourism; highlighting the impacts on third world tourist destinations and the people who are living at these places. Gmelch (2003), for example, takes an inside look in the world of the tourism workers in Barbados, offering an insight in the complex issues surrounding tourism at this major tourist destination. Furthermore, the impacts of tourism on the global environment are prevalent in other critiques. Gössling (2002) looks at the five aspects of environmental change that relate to tourism, one of being land and soil degradation, arguing this has a substantial impact on the environment and natural resources. Week (2012) states these forms of environmental degradations will eventually lead to social problems, and in doing so impacting the local communities and economies while maintaining unequal structures of power and distribution of benefits. Therefore, the tourism product is no longer seen as only innocent and fun, it is has been associated with unethical consequences and in need for a more moral form of travel in order to preserve the environment and cultural diversity (Butcher, 2003). Not merely scholars have been raising critiques; the tourist himself is experiencing a growing discomfort. And out of this discomfort, the tourist has been looking for more meaningful, sensible and sustainable travel experiences (Week, 2012).

Moving further into the 21st century, it seems new and alternative forms of tourism are proposed to counter the negative effects of so-called mass tourism and create more meaningful and sustainable experiences (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). The mass tourism product is increasingly seen as unethical, whereas alternative forms are perceived to be more moral and better for the environment or host-community. In this way, tourism has become a product that has been highly moralised over the past decades (Butcher, 2003). If notions of responsible tourism, ethical tourism and new tourism pop-up, the notions of irresponsible, unethical and old suggest to counter this. All these new forms of tourism, “aimed at the dissociations from mass tourism” (Mowforth & Munt, 2009, p. 174), are used by scholars and the industry in a plethora of terms, e.g. ecotourism, sustainable tourism, community-based tourism, fair trade tourism, ethical tourism and pro-poor tourism. Mowforth and Munt (2009) argue that the study of new forms of tourism is still young and that there is no clear agreement on the definition and conceptual boundaries. Butcher (2003) follows this reasoning and suggests ‘new moral tourism’ as a term of which he argues covers all the forms of new tourism, helping to identify what is distinctive about them when taken together. He defines it as:

“Tourism that is justified less in terms of desires of the consumer and more from perspective of its perceived benign influence on the natural world and on the culture of the host” (Butcher 2003, p. 5).

In the remainder of this research this definition of new moral tourism will be used as an umbrella term for the many different types of new tourism.

The notion of new moral tourism and the moralisation of tourism combines to mutually reinforcing notions. Firstly, mass tourism is perceived as bad and new forms of tourism are the alternative to counter this. This is understood in the sense of tourism including ‘doing something good’ for the world by for example sleeping in an eco-lodge on a safari in Kenya or volunteering building schools in Nepal during the summer break.

Secondly, new moral tourism is believed to be better for the tourist too, “more enlightening, encouraging respect for others ways of life and a critical reflections on the tourist’s own developed society” (Butcher, 2003, p. 7) are believed to be positive outcomes. In this way new moral tourism is not only to be perceived as having a (more) positive effect on the world, but also on the tourist. This is noticeable in the following statement on the gap year organization Xtreme Gap:

“What do you think of working with baby baboon-monkeys who do not have parents? Or would you rather be involved in the care for wild tigers, so that they can go back into the wild nature. Do you like the ocean more, then you will choose the turtle project in Sri Lanka. All unforgettable experiences that will enhance your life!” (Xtreme Gap, 2014a, translated by author).

Emphasis is laid on the volunteer giving a helping hand to the improved the condition of the environment, while in doing so creating unforgettable experiences that ‘enhance’ one’s life. Simpson (2004) argues that especially third world gap year programmes fit in the typology of ethical tourism and states it is important to look at these phenomena when understanding the evolution of the gap year. Also Butcher (2003) argues that the notions of new moral tourism and ethical travel can be linked with gap year practices, as the above quote also illustrates. He states that the gap year is getting associated more and more with being ethical and gap year companies are emerging, providing the perfect ethical trip for the idealistic gapper (ibid.). Experiencing different cultures while travelling the world, learning new languages and doing volunteer work along the way are claimed not only to enrich one’s life, but also enrich the world (Butcher, 2003). Hermann (2013) follows this line by stating that combining humanitarian and volunteering efforts (e.g. teaching, medical work, building schools) with travelling and sight-seeing still constitutes the majority of the contemporary gap year programmes. Mowforth and Munt (2009) follow this statement by mentioning that many of the gappers often volunteer in projects abroad, such as building schools, teaching English, beach clean-ups, wildlife censuses or national park maintenance work. As Simpson (2004) suggests, taking a gap year is seen as developing global citizenship amongst young people through ‘broadening their horizons’, this might especially be true when volunteering. Butcher and Smith (2010) argue that volunteering is often seen as developing citizenship, or, in the case of international volunteering, global citizenship. Global citizenship in the sense of the gap year is seen as gappers who are developing themselves, making them more mature, independent and confident, and potentially more employable (Simpson, 2004). For these reasons, gap year activities are often encouraged through schools, universities and the government (Jones, 2004).

Consequently, it would be reasonable that with new forms of tourism a new form of tourist is associated too, the so-called ‘new moral tourist’. This new moral tourist is assumed to be more educated, more independent of mind and more aware; considering the environment and culture of their trip’s destinations as a key part of the whole travel experience (Butcher, 2003). There is an extensive amount of research published on in-depth typologies of tourist who engage in this new moral tourism (see Cohen, 1988; Riley, 1988; O’Reilly, 2005). The new moral tourist would be more individual, less following-the-crowd, distancing themselves from mass tourist and

looking for authentic and real experiences (Butcher, 2003; Week, 2012). Butcher argues that new moral tourism and mass tourism are seen as a series of oppositions:

Mass Tourism	New Moral Tourism
Sameness	Difference
Crude	Sensitive
Destructive	Constructive
Modern	Critical of modern 'progress'

Table 1. Mass Tourism versus New Moral Tourism, Modified from Butcher (2003 p. 22)

Where as the mass tourist consumes mass-marketed products in build-for-tourist resort complexes, not open for experiencing cultural differences, the new moral aims to experience cultural and environmental diversity in a responsible and sustainable way. This includes learning about the host's culture and language while in the meantime adopting a cautious approach and a sensitive behaviour. While the mass tourist can be seen as only pleasure-seeking, and in doing so having destructing effect on the local environment and culture, the new moral tourist chooses to have an constructive attitude. This can be displayed in for example buying products from the region or getting involved with volunteering activities. Mowforth and Munt (2009) also introduce criteria that are often used to examine or access whether a tourism product or activity is operating sustainable, ethical or moral. These criteria focus more on the tourism providers rather than on the tourist himself in terms of sustainable practices. Mowforth and Munt (2009) argue that the inclusion of the local population is an important attribute of new moral tourism, this can include local communities having a say in decisions regarding tourism or tour operators collaborating with local providers to enhance profits returning to the community. Another criteria that Mowforth and Munt (2009) point out is aid to conservation, and state that it is often argued that new moral tourism "should assist in the conservation of specific aspects of the biodiversity or culture of a given area, and hence that an essential element of news forms of tourism is or should be such conservation" (p. 107). New moral tourism therefore does not only label the practices of the tourist as morally right, also the practices of the industry can be examined as morally right or wrong.

Tourism is seen as a way to enhance international and cross-cultural understanding, it could build tolerance, get over stereotypes and could lead to a global citizenry (Lyons et al., 2011), similar to comments of proponents of gap year tourism (see Simpson, 2004; King, 2010; Lyons et al., 2011). Hence, it could be argued that new moral tourism would make a better and more ethical person out of the tourist and as Butcher (2003) mentions it can be seen as a form of ethical consumption and life style politics. These concepts will therefore be elaborated on in the next sections.

3.1.1. Ethical Consumption

New moral tourist is represented as a form of ethical consumption, and in this way it is also part of a wider pervasive agenda of people that are trying to make a difference in the world through what they buy and where they buy it (Butcher, 2003). Proponents of the ethical consumer argue that consumers can put pressures on companies to adapt to a more ethical agenda by choosing products that are seen more sustainable and 'better'. Examples of this might be buying cosmetics from companies like The Body Shop, buying

Fair-Trade chocolate or going on an ethical 'right' holiday with a 'sustainable' tour operator. The growth of ethical consumption shows shifts in the broader society, what issues people may feel as important and how they choose to react on these issues. The way in which people consume reflects on the way they form their identities and how social issues are debated (Butcher, 2003). Where identities were first formed through the realm of production, collectively or work, in contemporary society people can form their identities through a world of choice, freedom and consumption. Many argue that this shift is part of changes in the wider economy and the changes in workforce, the so-called shift from Fordism to Post-Fordism (Butcher, 2003; Mowforth & Munt, 2009). Here the politics of production, the collective and the social class system shifted to consumption and individual identity. Under Post-Fordism, what many believe to be the current economic regime, there has been qualitative shift from mass-production and mass-consumption to more flexible systems of production and flexible work patterns (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). Rapidly changing consumer tastes and the emergence of niche markets are said to be linked to the way goods and services are consumed. In this current economic regime, the consumer is more dominant and the producer has to adapt to be more consumer-oriented, markets are segmented and new products are developed, many of them with a shorter life span. Another aspect of Post-Fordism is that the preferences of the consumer are increasingly going towards more non-mass forms of production and consumption (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). In the tourism contexts this shift is noticeable through the following examples:

- There has been a rejection of certain forms of mass tourism, such as packages holidays.
- The type of holiday is now based on certain lifestyles, e.g. trekking, sport-based or bird-watching.
- Tourism sites, experiences and destinations have a fast turnover, popular places and must-do activities are ever changing.
- Along with the rejection of mass tourism, there has been a growth in 'new and alternative' tourism and other niche markets.

Where Fordism stood for mass tourism, packaged holidays and irresponsible travelling, Post-Fordism stands for the individual, flexible holidays, the real and responsible travelling (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). Especially the last point is emphasised by Butcher (2003), who argues that the emerge of new moral tourism is in line with the developments in ethical consumerism under the Post-Fordism regime. According to Butcher (2003), the shift has gone from consumption as a problem to consumption as a solution. Over-consumption of world's resources in mass tourism has gone from ethical consumption in new moral tourism. In this way the tourist has the freedom to choose for more sustainable and more ethical types of holiday. The consumption of alternative forms of tourism is seen as one of the examples of ethical consumption (Paterson, 2006).

An additional way to look at ethical consumption and new moral tourism is through the notion of life(style) politics (Butcher, 2003; Butcher & Smith, 2010). Based on Giddens (1994) it is argued that ethical consumption has a strong affinity with life politics: what and where we buy the things we need and desire is not only a part of the process of negotiating one's own identity, but can also connect with the lives of others who have produced these same things, as well as with other issues such as the

environment (Butcher & Smith, 2009, p. 30). Life politics refers to attempts of individuals to see themselves and their identity as the key site of political change. For individuals the grand political narratives like the 'Right' or the 'Left' have lost meaning (Butcher & Smith, 2010) and these individuals look within themselves in order to change or have influence on broader societal issues. People are trying to reposition themselves in the context of their own lives, and through this try to make a difference to their immediate and broader environment. Therefore, how people act and the way they consume have become quite central in the debate on sustainability (Butcher, 2003), an individual's lifestyle can be seen as morally right or not sustainable at all. The way tourists choose how to consume their holiday or gappers choose the activities they will do during their year off, is therefore seen as a way in which these individuals try to make a difference or maybe not at all. An example of this might be the volunteer tourist, trying to make a difference in participating in 'ethical travel'; Butcher and Smith (2010) argue that this is where life politics are channeled through in order to create more morally justified lifestyles. In this sense, the ways in which people consume are linked to their life styles and their broader ideologies. And, as mentioned before, these ways of consumption have become increasingly 'right' and 'ethical' in the realm of Post-Fordism.

The gap year product can be seen as part of new moral tourism and would fall into the realm of ethical consumption and production. As this research is trying to understand how the gap year product is represented, it is necessary to think about how the gap year providers frame this ethical consumption and life style politics in regards to their products. For instance, is a great deal of attention paid to the rejection of mass-marketed products and is emphasis laid on the gapper as an individual who can personally make a difference?

3.1.2. New Moral Tourism and Ethical Consumption – All Good?

Although Butcher (2003) introduced the term new moral tourism, this does not entail that he is not critical about the notion. In addition to the critiques on mass tourism, similar critiques have been raised around alternative tourism, volunteer tourism and new moral tourism (see for example Butcher, 2006; Sin, 2009; Butcher & Smith 2010; Lyons et al., 2012). As Wheeler already argued in 1991:

"We have, on the one hand, a problem of mass tourism growing globally, out of control, at an alarming rate. And what is our answer? Small-scale, slow, steady controlled development. They just do not add up" (p. 92).

The critiques that have been raised towards new moral tourism are varied in focus. Zavits and Butz (2011) for example, give a strong critique on volunteer tourism, stating that even though the claims of the volunteer tourism industry and the hopeful articles on volunteer tourism from the academic side, international short-term volunteer tourism turns out not achieving many of the desired goals at all. Another critique that is raised is that new moral tourist, wandering around and exploring outside tourist zones can have certain consequences on the local environment and the host community, in a sense that travelers can 'extend the psychological impact of economic inequity' by taking tourism to areas that were previously not penetrated (Week, 2012, p. 197). Next to this, new moral tourists are often seen as the pioneers in exploring new destinations, making way for mass tourism to follow (Butcher, 2003). Thus, wherever this ethical

tourist will go, the crowd will follow, most definitely in bigger numbers. The question is asked then: what is worse on the long-term? The mass tourist in the Mediterranean beach hubs or the sustainable tourist tramping through the Amazon or the Himalaya (Wheeler, 1991)? Other critiques include a focus on the consumer-side of the story, where it is mentioned that travelling 'alternative' and 'ethical' is only for the privileged few, especially while talking about volunteer tourism or gap year tourism (Heath, 2005; Butcher & Smith, 2010; Lyons et al., 2011). With a lot of gappers and volunteers travelling to Third World countries, Simpson (2004) argues that this type of ethical travelling might even identify dichotomies between the 'developed' and the 'undeveloped' world and the 'helper' and the 'receiver', like Sin (2009) notes, volunteers often see the aid-receivers as inferior. In addition, Sin (2009) found in her research is that "many volunteer tourists are typically more interested in fulfilling objectives relating to the 'self'" (p. 497). This can be self-development and learning, but also simply the desire to travel, rather than the altruistic perception of helping and doing something good. This raises the critical point if ethical, volunteer or new moral tourism is a form of morally right tourism or it still resembles mass tourism. The next section of the literature review shed light on how these notions of self-development and learning in the perspective of volunteer and gap year tourism can be seen.

3.2. Broadening Horizons: The Way To Self-Development

The phenomenon of the gap year has changed from an alternative activity, once inspired by the hippie trails in the 60s and 70s and backed-up by the charity sector, to a commercial product. Where gap years were first for the drop-outs, the rebels and the people with nothing better to do, the settings is now changed to create global citizens, ethical consumers, better students and perfect professionals (Simpson, 2004). According to Simpson (2004) what was first an act of rebellion against education or the working life, is now considered to enhance just these things in a competitive market place. Now at the centre of the gap year experience, is the notion of 'broadening horizons', which can be achieved through travelling and volunteering abroad. This so-called broadening of your horizon sees the concepts of learning and education as central themes in taking a year off and presumes that the gap year experience offers opportunities for self-development, learning about other cultures, creating more mature and responsible citizens and promoting global awareness (Simpson, 2004). Gappers are presumed to learn so much, about themselves and others, that they will have a competitive advantage in applying for university or even later on when applying for jobs (Heath, 2005; Heath, 2007; Butcher & Smith, 2010). The idea is that though travelling and participation in new cultures and new places, especially in the Third world, a young gapper would gain experience and knowledge of the world. According to Simpson (2004), this is exactly what the gap year is selling: a package of knowledge and experience which will promote job competitiveness. The presumed benefits of taking a gap year can be said to have strong links with self-development. Similar findings can be found in Heath's (2007) content analysis of gap-year literature, websites of gap year providers, gap year advise websites and published guide books in where she found five interrelated themes:

- "the gap year provides an opportunity for self-reflection, enhancing students' sense of perspective and facilitating better-informed decisions about their

- degree plans and future career options;
- the gap year provides an opportunity for self-development and personal enrichment;
- ‘gappers’ adapt particularly well to university life as they have greater maturity than non-gappers, are less distracted by the freedoms of university life and are less likely to drop out, rendering them attractive to admissions tutors;
- gappers acquire ‘soft skills’ that are not necessarily acquired during their formal education, such as communication skills, organizational skills and team working skills;
- for all these reasons, employers favour gappers” (p. 94).

Drawing on these findings, Heath (2007) introduces the term ‘the economy of experience’, arguing that gap year experiences are offered as a product to improve one’s compatibility in the education sector and the job market where high value is placed on the acquisition of soft-skills. Overseas experiences during the gap year can be quite impressive to employers and university admission tutors, providing ‘proof’ of the person’s independence and initiative (ibid.). In a world where competitiveness amongst students and graduates is the real deal, students are required to recognize the importance of this offered ‘personality package’ consisting of credentials, skills and charismatic qualities (Heath, 2007). Therefore, students who can take the opportunity to go on a gap year, gain significant advantage over those who are not able to do so, where soft skills such as communication skills, organizational skills and team working skills seem to be important outcomes (Heath, 2005).

3.2.1. Gaining Capital

A part of the gap year product is that gap year experiences seem to be a marketable commodity that would lead to economical and cultural capital (Simpson, 2004; Heath, 2007). A gap year can therefore be a keen investment in one’s future. Drawing on the different forms of capital, the notion of cultural capital is used most in relationship to the gap year experience. According to Simpson (2004) it is the cultural capital in travel and gap year experiences that makes an individual more of an ‘interesting’ person. Especially relating to the sort of gap year a person undertakes, with gap year experience rated at different values, especially relating to volunteering and learning activities (Heath, 2007). According to Simpson (2004) the concept of cultural capital “is held by an individual and is a product of his or her education and experiences. Capital that is a product of what they can do and the knowledge they possess” (p. 60). In defining cultural capital, she draws on Bourdieu’s (1990) notion of capital, arguing that forms of cultural capital can be enhanced when improving oneself (Simpson, 2004). According to Lyons et al. (2012) travelers gain cultural capital through the collection of knowledge and the experiences while travelling. As mentioned before, gap year experiences offer gappers possibilities to self-improvement, through which they are able to increase their personal cultural capital (Simpson, 2004). Furthermore, cultural capital can be translated into terms of economic value (ibid.). Travelling, and ‘gaining experience’ from this, can be used to enhance the social status of a person. As Bourdieu argues, a better rank in the social hierarchy can improve one’s economic position. As Tickell (2011) states, the cultural capital gained through traveling can be used as a competitive advantage in job markets and in this sense converts into economic capital. Simpson

(2004) agrees with this reasoning by stating that this cultural, and ultimately economical capital gained during a gap year, can be used as a form of social dominance in terms of more global knowledge and better personal skills. As travel and gap year products can be seen defining the sort of person you are, it also says something about purchasing your social status when travelling or purchasing gap year products. The gap year product is therefore seen as an access to the status of being well-travelled or experienced (Simpson 2004). Consequently, Simpson (2004) introduced the term of 'corporate capital' as an extension to Bourdieu's cultural capital:

"Corporate capital, like Bourdieu's incorporated or embodied forms of cultural capital, is held by an individual in the form of experiences and education" (p. 142).

Employers recognize the benefits associated with taking a gap year, providing potential employees with skills including maturity, problem-solving capabilities, leadership skills and teamwork experience (Simpson, 2002). For that reason, the assumption is that those who are able to gain the capital during the gap year experience, are able to accumulate corporate capital and will have an competitive advantage in the work place. Whether this capital is used to be individually more competitive in the job market, or it is used to bring competitive benefits to the businesses in which former gapper will work, the value of this type of capital is definitely noticed by the corporate sector (Simpson, 2004). As more students are entering the labor market, only graduate qualification is not enough to be competitive and better personal qualities gain importance and popularity with prospective employers (Heath, 2007). These personal qualities not only please universities and future employers, but governments are also keen on citizens with gap year experiences, associated with creating active and global citizenship through shaping social values and sense of community (ibid.).

However, a hierarchy is noticeable in which certain gap year experiences are viewed more valuable or gaining more capital than others. As Heath (2007) argues:

"a hierarchy of gap-year experiences has emerged within the 'economy of experience' surrounding the gap year, which positions certain 'types' of gap year as more worthwhile than others" (p. 91).

It seems that in order to give it a go in the 'economy of experience' the gapper needs to have a gap year experience that is well-planned and well-structured. (Simpson, 2004) Therefore, not all gap year experiences are seemed to be of equal benefit, where the standard of a good year out would be to make it a purposeful and well-organized out. Consequently, prospective gappers are encouraged to make the gap year matter and bring a fair level of seriousness into the planning of the gap year in order to maximize the possible benefits (Heath, 2007). Island-hopping and partying though South-East Asia for four months does not seem be part of the serious gap year experience while having a meaningful experience volunteering in South-Africa for the same amount of time is. A justification of a year off is therefore expected of gappers if they would like to be seen as the owners of that cultural and corporate capital university admissions and the corporate world appreciate. If not, it seems that the gapper will face claims like 'time-wasting' and 'just putting of serious life' (ibid.).

3.2.2. Selling Self-Development: The Personality Package

However, 'luckily' gap year organizations exist to put together the perfect gap year experience for the gapper to get the most out of it. As Simpson (2004) argues, to have a well-structured and beneficial gap year, planning and organization is required. This means that the gap year is no longer for 'drifters seeking freedom' but for youth seeking self-development and usable capital (Jones, 2004). Therefore, as Simpson (2004) states "the promotion of the gap year as a 'structured' experience fits into a broader agenda of making the gap year a market compatible commodity" (p. 141). Gap year organizations offer total gap year packages for the whole gap year period, including transfers, flights, hostesses and accommodation. The product that is sold here is not only a sort of 'packaged product', but also cultural capital, world-knowledge, soft-skills and a more compatible place on the job market. As Heath (2007) states: "the experiences that students have on their year out and the skills they are thus assumed to develop are a vital component, then, in the construction of an enhanced 'personality package'" (p. 93). As Simpson (2004) argues by turning a year abroad in to a 'structured' gap year experience and seeing it as training ground for prospective students and professionals, it becomes a product for the neo-liberal commercial market, with many eager to sell it and buy it. The sentence that captures this idea perfectly would be: "A gap year can represent a shrewd investment, consequently 'capital' has become one of the primary products the gap year industry can sell" (Simpson, 2004, p. 150-151). In the context of this study it would be very interesting to see how the product of the gap year is promoted and represented in the Netherlands.

3.3. Creating Global Citizens

As mentioned before, taking a year off, travelling and 'doing something good' would 'magically' turn the average high school graduate into a global citizen and ethical consumer. As Simpson (2004) argues, taking a gap year is seen by educational and governmental institutes as developing global citizenship amongst young people through 'broadening their horizons'. Global citizenship is seen as a product that is associated with globalization and is said to be related to cosmopolitanism, which has the broad goal for the people of the world to have harmonious relations (Carter 2004). From a moral viewpoint cosmopolitanism rejoices cultural diversity, human rights, social justice and an active concern for the needs of others (ibid). Therefore, people who consider themselves 'cosmopolitan' will feel obligated to others in a global perspective, whatever their race, religion, ethnicity, social status, or their connection to a nation-state might be (Stokes, 2008). Martha Nussbaum (1996), a moral philosopher, as summarized by Schattle (2009), puts it quite simple: the well-being of distant strangers should concern everyday people as much as the well-being of their closest neighbours. Nussbaum (1996) is well known for linking this stance of cosmopolitanism to global citizenship, where educating people to be citizens of the world would help in promoting self-awareness, solving global problems with a spirit of cooperation and acknowledging moral obligations between the wealthy and not so wealthy nations. According to Schattle (2009), in present day this stance on cosmopolitanism is often used in terms of classical liberal principles such as liberty, equality and justice. Schattle researched the public discourse on global citizenship and found that the notion is associated with awareness, responsibility and participation as primary concepts (Schattle, 2009). Cross-

cultural empathy, personal achievement and international mobility were also concepts found important in relation to global citizenship.

Urry (2000) provides a subset of various kinds of global citizenship depending on ideologies and aims. He introduces the 'earth citizens' as people who are looking to take responsibility for the globe through an 'ethics of care' stance towards, often local, problems. Then he links the global cosmopolitans who are about openness towards 'the other'; other cultures, other people and other environments. Urry (2000) argues that these global cosmopolitans often create this openness as a result from extensive travelling. Global citizens seem to be open-minded people, who are looking for social justice and equal human rights, care about the world and often are active in their own communities due to the 'think global, act local' slogan.

Urry (2000) argues that being a global citizen and being part of the global community comes with a range of duties and responsibilities. One of these responsibilities is for people to demonstrate a cosmopolitan attitude towards other environments, people and cultures. Travelling across the globe and consuming these environments might be part of this, and on another note, even refusing to travel across the globe for the concern of the environment can be part of this. Another responsibility is to behave sustainably in regards to the environment, different cultures and other places and being an ethical visitor. Seeing people as highly differentiated citizens of the world, rather than as members of a specific of a nation, ethnic group, gender, class or generation Urry (2000) points out to be part of global citizenship as well. In addition, real global citizens would act in regards to the global public interest, rather than out of local or national interests.

As Mark Twain said: "travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness", all notions that global citizenship seems to advocate as well. In line with this Lyons et al. (2011) argue that therefore tourism is seen as an important contributor to the creation of global citizens, it would enhance cross-cultural understanding, developed a high level of tolerance, disable stereotyping and the exchange values. In line with Urry's (2002) arguments, travelling to other cultures and learning about them might be a good way for people to achieve their global citizenship status. Simpson (2004) argues that travel always had the power to educate people, and combining travelling with ethical right choices such as doing volunteer work would broaden one's horizons and enhance ideas and competences that are seen to be great assets for the global citizen. One could see that claims about developing intercultural understanding by proponents of the gap year are similar to components of what global citizenship would be. Gappers would be more open and accepting to other cultures, create good intercultural skills and empathy towards others after they travelled around the world, whether volunteer work would be included in this or not.

However, global citizenship in the sense of the gap year is also seen as gappers who are developing themselves, making them more mature, independent and confident, and potentially more employable (Simpson, 2004). Taking a gap year would not only turn the gapper into a global citizen, but it would lead also to great personal growth for the gapper himself. It could be said becoming a global citizen through travelling also comes with creating some form of social and cultural capital for oneself (Butcher & Smith, 2005). And it is exactly this kind of capital that scores so good at university administration offices and future employers (Simpson, 2004). Therefore, educators and governments are not the only ones who praise global citizenship, with its intercultural

skills and competences it comes with being a global citizen is also increasingly highly valued as an plus on one's resume (Jones, 2004). It seems that in present day, taking a year off and travel is not seen as a sign of dropping out anymore, it is seen as signing up for global citizenship (Butcher, 2003). Where gap years were first for the drop-outs, the rebels and the people with nothing better to do, the settings is now changed to create global citizens, ethical consumers, better students and perfect professionals (Simpson, 2004).

3.4. The Conceptual Framework

In the previous sections theoretical notions concerning the gap year have been discussed. However, it can be quite hard to get a grip of these concepts and the relations between them in regards to this specific study. Therefore, this section will elaborate on how the concepts of new moral tourism, ethical consumption, self-development, gaining capital and global citizenship are related and how the research objectives and research questions play a role in this. To summarize what has been discussed in the previous sections and to operationalize these concepts and show their relations in a more simple way, the visual on the following page will be of help.

This study tried to understand how the phenomenon of the gap year is discussed in terms of new moral tourism, ethical consumption, global citizenship, self-development and gaining capital. It therefore tries to comprehend the ways the gap year product is represented, promoted and characterized by the tourism sector taking the discussed theoretical notions into account. As one can see from the figure 1., for this study the theoretical notions of new moral tourism, self-development and global citizenship are key components.

The gap year can be seen as a form of alternative tourism, new moral tourism, and is argued to be part of the wider concept of ethical consumption. In this way, I argue that it might be possible that the gap year product is promoted as an ethical product. In this scenario gappers are seen as ethical tourists, who want to venture off the beaten track, engage in the local and are looking for authenticity. In this case the gap year is seen as a rejection of mass tourism, in where travel is undertaken with respect for the host culture and the environment and the gap year providers are the sustainable providers of this product.

As discussed in the theoretical framework, taking a gap year, travelling and broadening your horizons can also be seen developing global citizenship. It is argued that travellers who are open to other cultures and have experienced what is going on in the world are more likely to be open-minded, self-aware and have a concern for this world and others, no matter what race, nationality or ethnic group they belong to. In this sense gappers would acquire a good amount of cross-cultural understanding and intercultural communication skills. It is the mentioning of 'skills' that takes us to the other key component, skill-development.

Just as broadening one's horizons and going a year abroad leads to developing global citizenship, it is argued that it creates forms of capital as well. The gap year can be seen as the perfect way to self-development and personal enrichment; during a year abroad one can expand their language skills, improve their practical skills and acquire soft skills such as intercultural communication skills and problem-solving skills. The gapper would come back more mature, with a vast amount of flexibility and a greater

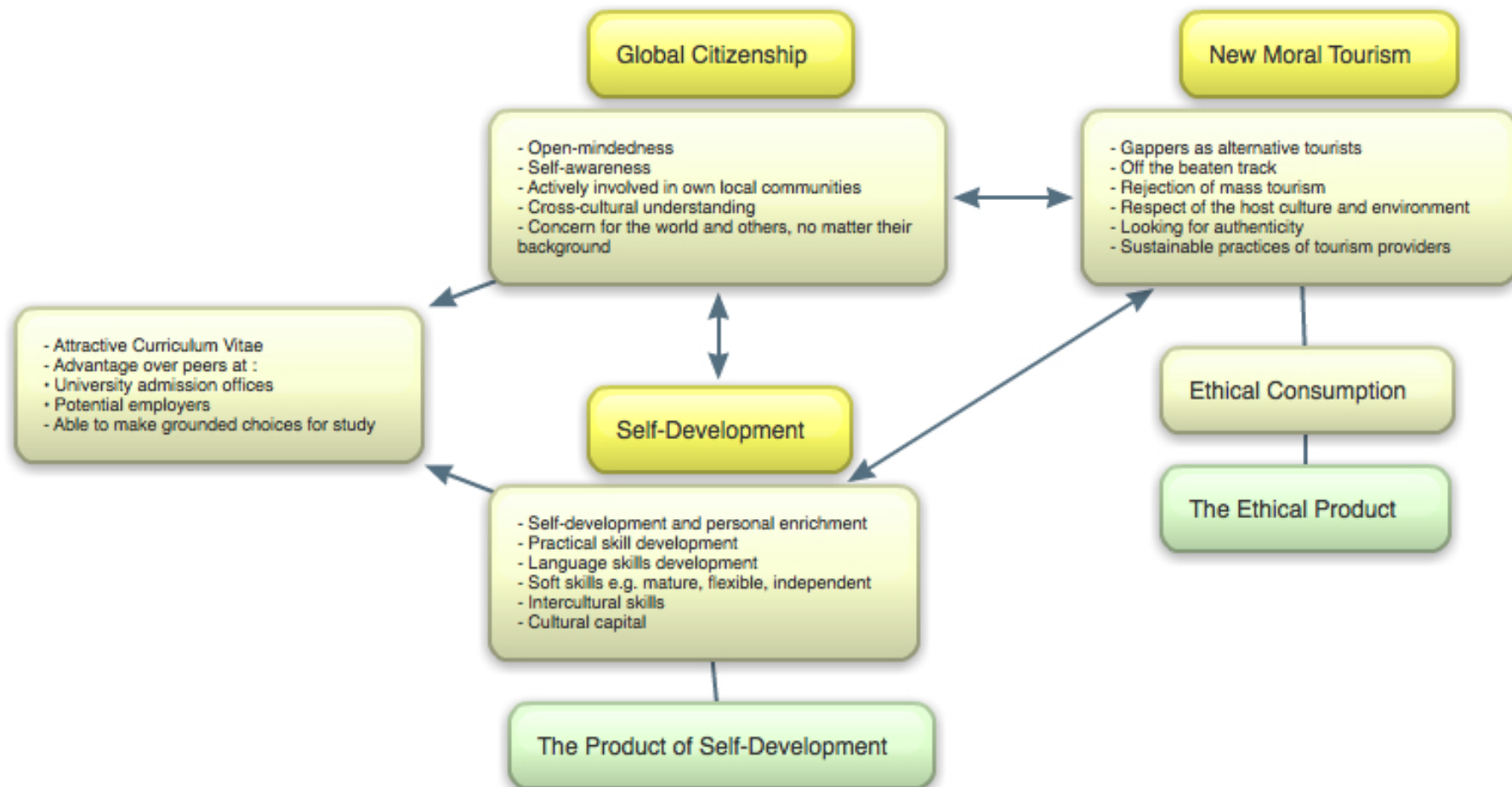


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

sense for responsibility. After engaging, working and living with other cultures, cross-cultural understanding is developed and the gapper acquires a form of cultural capital with which he can distinguish himself from peers. All these skills and cultural capital can be turned into corporate capital in where his curriculum vitae is seen as attractive when applying for universities or even jobs, where university administrators and potential employers prefer the gapper with the global perspective and its soft skills over the peer with the one-in-a-dozen resume who did not have the guts to broaden his horizons.

It is here where the global citizenship comes in again, on the one hand it seems that has a relationship with new moral tourism and ethical consumption, both promoting respect for different cultures and taking care of the world. On the other hand, global citizenship is also related to the product of self-development, in where the soft skills and cultural capital related to the global citizen scores good with university administrators and future employers. Global citizenship is therefore related to both the notion of new moral tourism and the notion of gaining capital.

For the aim of this study was to investigate how these theoretical concepts are represented the distribution, promotion and representation of the gap year product in the Netherlands, the online content of gap year providers' websites are analysed in terms of these notions. The next chapter will go into the methodology and explain how the data collection and data analysis was done.

4. METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the research questions it was necessary to look for a way to make sense of the complex theoretical notions described in the previous chapter. There is also a need to relate this theoretical framework with empirical data. Therefore, in this chapter the research methodology is introduced and described. The nature of the research, the methodological framework, the data collection, the data analysis and the possible limitations of the study are elaborated on.

4.1. The Nature of the Research

As there is relatively little academic research concerning gap year tourism in the Netherlands, this study is exploratory by nature. By looking at how the gap year product in Dutch context is represented, it is not aimed to represent a new form of theory, rather it is to understand and interpret the phenomenon. According to Boeije (2010) a study is exploratory by nature when there is a new field is emerging or when the researcher wants to look into a topic that is not been extensively examined. As for the gap year, the topic has gained some attention from academics over the last decade (see for example Simpson, 2004; Jones, 2002; Heath, 2005; 2007; Butcher & Smith, 2010). However, this research is mostly focussed on Anglo-Saxon countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia. In the case of the Netherlands little academic research regarding the phenomenon is carried out. The purpose of this study is therefore not to test new theories or even contribute a new theory, it is to explore and understand the gap year phenomenon in the Dutch context.

Next to the exploratory nature of the research project, it also needs to be mentioned that this will be a qualitative study. According to Boeije (2010):

“the purpose of qualitative research is to describe and understand social phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. The research questions are studied through flexible methods, enabling contact with the people involved to an extent that is necessary to grasp what is going on in the field. The methods produce rich, extensive data that need to be interpreted through the identifications and coding of themes and categories leading to findings that can contribute to theoretical knowledge and practical use” (p. 11).

As this study is trying to understand the phenomenon of gap year tourism, and through qualitative content analysis see how organizations represent it and bring meaning to it, qualitative research would fit well within these aims. In order to grasp the representation of the gap year in the Netherlands it is necessary to rely on data that will provide a good base for content analysis. Further down in this chapter, the data collection and data analysis will be explained more in detail.

In considering the nature of the research it is also important to look how the researcher thinks the world, the truth and knowledge is constructed. According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) studying a discourse can fall under the social constructionism umbrella. This paradigm looks at reality as if it is socially constructed in

through discourses and in people's minds. Social constructionist argue that our knowledge and the ways we represent the world are products of discourse and the way we understand the world is created and maintained by social processes (Burr, 1995). The approach is critical to taken-for-granted knowledge; our knowledge of the world should not be seen as objective truth (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Therefore, there is not a fundamental truth about the gap year out there; rather our knowledge about the phenomenon is constructed through historical and cultural interchange amongst people. This aims at the view in which we are historical and cultural beings and the ways in which we understand and represent our world are contingent, our worldviews and our identities can be different and they can change over time (Gergen, 1985). Thus, all knowledge is seen to be contingent and there is no fundamental truth out there. Furthermore, a discourse is seen as a form of social interaction that plays part in shaping the social world and therefore the way we see reality and the truth. This research therefore does not aim to explore the fundamental truth or reality about the Dutch gap year representation, as according to the social constructionist view this does not exist. The representation of the gap year and the discourse surrounding it is seen as a fluid and dynamic way of seeing the world that might change over time and through social action.

4.2. Content Analysis and the Discourse

Although we take a look at the discourse surrounding the gap year product in the Netherlands, especially focussing on the gap year organizations, this study cannot be referred to as a discourse analysis. A content analysis was used to make sense of the discourse surrounding the gap year, however investigating the discourse, and how this is socially constructed is not part of this research. Rather, the content analysis gave a broad overview of the discourse concerning the gap year product promotion and representation of gap year organizations with the aim to create understanding and knowledge about the phenomenon. As Van Dijk (2011) stresses, discourse analysis is not of method in doing research, rather it is a cross discipline. He argues that in order to analyse a discourse, researchers use a range of different methods such as descriptive, ethnographic and experimental methods. Consequently, in this study qualitative content analysis has been chosen to take a look at the of the gap year product in the Netherlands.

However, in the following section, the notions of discourse and content analysis and will be elaborated on shortly in order to give a ground to the discussed methods for data collection and data analysis later in this chapter.

Over the last decades, the terms 'discourse' and 'discourse analysis' have been widely used in academics as a quite fashionable terms, without often being totally defined (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; van Dijk, 2011). Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) argue that it is become a vague and ambiguous concept, having rather diverse meanings in different contexts. Potentially, these different meanings are used by academics according to the advantages they bring to the aims of their research (Gee, 2011). Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) explain that for many cases: "underlying the word 'discourse' is the general idea that language is structured according to different patterns that people's utterances follow when they take part in different domains of social life, familiar examples being 'medical discourse' and 'political discourse'. 'Discourse analysis' is the analysis of these patterns" (p. 1). Since this thesis is focussing on the discourse

concerning the gap year in the Dutch context, it is looking to define the particular ways of how the phenomenon is understood and talked about. And as Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) mention, specific forms of discourse analysis can be applied in the analysis of “many different social domains, including organizations and institutions, and in exploration of the role of language use in broad societal and cultural developments” (p. 2). As mentioned before, in this thesis I would like to conduct a research that explores the themes and concepts used in representing and promoting the gap year and look into the contemporary discourse relating to this in the context of the Netherlands, the next part will elaborate more on how this will be done.

Although the aim of this research is to investigate the promotion and representation of the gap year product in general, a strong focus is laid upon how the industry represents the product of the gap year. As will be explained in the data collection section, this will be done by qualitative content analysis of gap year provider’s websites. Content analysis is used to analyze informational contents of text, is one of the numerous methods to analyse text data and can be used for quantitative and qualitative studies (Mayring, 2004). Qualitative content analysis is widely used in health and nursing studies, therefore most referencing material is published in health related journals (Forman & Damschroder, 2008). In quantitative content analysis the data is organized using predetermined and set categories, which will be analysed through counting specific words or themes rather than through really reading the data (Forman & Damschroder, 2008). Qualitative content analysis on the other hand, “focuses on the characteristics of languages as communication with attention to the content of contextual meaning of the text” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278) and has the goal to provide knowledge and understanding about the phenomenon that is researched. Qualitative content analysis is about finding meaning, intentions, consequences and context within the text analysed (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). Therefore, qualitative content analysis goes beyond just counting words in text data and tries to examine the language intensively in order to classify large amounts of text into categories that represent similar meanings (ibid.). In order to investigate the representation and promotion of the gap year product in the Dutch context, it was necessary to get a grip on which meanings and themes can be arrived from text material from websites. This was a large and vast amount of data to work with, therefore qualitative content analysis and the categorizing and grouping of different themes extracted from this data did not only help to get a better insight in the meaning behind the texts and words, but also made it easier to work with this vast amount of data. The categorizing and grouping of data in themes will be elaborated on extensively in the data analysis part of this chapter.

4.3. The Data Collection

The theoretical framework shows that understanding the way the gap year product is represented in the Netherlands is related to many concepts that could be of contesting or of relating nature including new moral tourism, ethical consumption, global citizenship, self-development and gaining cultural capital. To comprehend these theoretical notions in the context of the gap year empirical data is necessary. Therefore, this section will elaborate on the methods that were used for data collection.

The data

The aim of the data collection is to gather as much data in order to understand the way the gap year product is represented in the Dutch context. A content analysis is carried out with the data described below, of which all include primary data. It is important to seek for ways to understand how the gap year industry is providing information about the gap year product and how the gap year is represented by providers. Therefore, in order to see what is happening on this level the data consisted of:

- text content on gap year providers' websites, including offered products, possible product reviews and news letters.

The data consisted of these text contents that were mostly Dutch, therefore after the data collection and where necessary the data was translated into English.

Search Terms

In order to find these forms of online content search engines were used and search terms were employed to find the necessary data. These search terms were in Dutch as the context of the Netherlands will be explored. The terms that were used are: tussenjaar (gap year), gap year, wereldreis (worldtrip), in the buitenland werken (working abroad), in het buitenland werken voor jongeren (working abroad for youngsters), vrijwilligerswerk in het buitenland (volunteering abroad), vrijwilligerswerk in tussenjaar (volunteering in gap year), tussenjaar in Amerika (gap year in America), tussenjaar in Zuid-Amerika (gap year in South America), tussenjaar in Latijns Amerika (gap year in Latin America), tussenjaar in Afrika (gap year in Afrika), tussenjaar in Azië (gap year in Asia), tussenjaar in Australië of Nieuw Zeeland (gap year in Australia or New Zealand), taal - Frans, Italiaans, Spaans, Engels, Duits, Chinees - leren in tussenjaar (learning a language - French, Italian, Spanish, English, German, Chinese - in gap year), taal leren in het buitenland (learning a language abroad), tussenjaar organisatie (gap year organization), bemiddelingsorganisatie tussenjaar, tussenjaar touroperator (gap year tour operator).

The search terms were used separately or in combinations to look for web content on the gap year phenomenon in the Dutch context. Some of the terms came up during the data collection as a reaction to previously found data, others were already formulated before the data collection started based on possible gap year activities found in gap year literature (see for example Simpson, 2004; Heath, 2005; Herman, 2013).

Sample

As described above, the data sample exists of text content related to the gap year. Since the internet contains a vast and almost unimaginable amount of information and text (Herring, 2010), it was hard to collect an exhaustive and fixed sample. During the data collection several new links were found to other websites, the date from these newfound websites was also taking into account if they linked with the research aims. During the data collection it was therefore already determined which pieces of text will be of relevance to the research. The inclusion of certain texts or exclusion of others was based on for example whether the text showed broad connections to theoretical notions

discussed in the theoretical framework chapter or the research questions. Web content that did not bare resemblance with this, such as information on travel insurances, was excluded from the data in the sample. Since the data is not gathered in an international context, only from Dutch websites, a point of saturation was reached after a full-time week of data collection from 26 August 2014 until 3 September 2014. According to (Boeijs, 2010), the researcher can stop the data collection when the point of saturation has been reached, and when newly selected cases do not give further information in regards to the research topic. In the last phase of the data collection no new websites of gap year providers, language course providers or volunteer work providers were found that were not included already in the sample, therefore after this point of saturation the data analysis started.

In the Netherlands many providers offer activities suited as gap year activities (e.g. language courses abroad, volunteering projects). However, when there was no specific mentioning of a gap year or a “tussenjaar” on the website, these providers were not taken into account. The reason for this is that this research is focussed specifically on how the gap year as a product is represented and promoted by providers that focus on selling the product as a gap year product, not activities of other providers that might be suitable to include in the gap year product. Furthermore, since this studies tries to grasp the representation of the gap year product in a Dutch context, only gap year providers that cater for the Dutch market and have an address in the Netherlands were included in the sample. In total there were 33 websites found that were included in the data analysis, these websites were from specialized gap year providers, volunteer work providers and language course providers, a complete list of these websites can be found in appendix 1.

The types of providers found

During the data collection three types of providers could be identified, gap year providers, volunteer work providers and language course providers. Although all providers offer some form of gap year activities, the core business for them might be different. Three categories were found; the gap year provider, the volunteer work provider and the language course provider. These providers were also separated in different groups during data analysis and put into Atlas.ti separately with the understanding that they might offer different insights and different results might derive from this.

The gap year providers can be characterized by the fact that they are offering different types of activities that are suitable for gap years e.g. round trip activities, excursions, language courses, and volunteer work placements. Many of them offer products that can be used in order to construct a whole gap year. For example, a work placement in Australia for four months, bus passes to travel around South-East Asia for three months, a Spanish course in Buenos Aires for three months and topped off with a volunteer placement in Bolivia for two months. Although the activities are all suited to be included in a potential gap year, most of the websites also target a young audience that might purchase these products separately. A couple of them also market themselves as specific gap year providers and target people who are considering taking a year off and going abroad for a minimum of three months. The reason for separating this type of provider from the other types is that the gap year providers offers a little bit of

everything, the other providers focus more on a specific target group and offer a more specific product.

Volunteer work providers are different from gap year providers in that their core product is the volunteering experience. These providers therefore offer an activity that can be part of the gap year experience; for this research gappers are seen as part of their target group. They might offer volunteer experiences to different kinds of target groups, but a rule to include them in the data collection is that they spend a part of their website discussing the gap year (see section 4.3. the data collection). The same accounts for the language course provider; they as well offer an activity that can be seen as a part of the gap year experience. The rule here again is that they mentioned the concept of the gap year somewhere on their website, and therefore also cater for gappers. In this research the different providers are therefore seen as distinctive from each other in regards to the kind of core product they offer and what kind of target group they cater for. For a complete list of providers please see appendix 1.

4.4. The Data Analysis

The text data retrieved through the data collection was first entered Microsoft Word and then into random order into Atlas.ti, forming the complete dataset using software for analysing qualitative data. There was a large amount of web content derived from the different websites, by putting this together in Atlas.ti it made it easier to handle the data in the stage of the data analysis when categories and themes were identified.

Elo & Kyngas (2008) argue that in terms of content analysis, no insights or theories can be generated without the researcher being completely familiar with them. Therefore, to become fully immersed in the data, the dataset was read through two times before analysis started. The data was then analysed using different codes, since at first the data appeared to be quite bulky and without any coherence what so ever, coding is a tool that helps to create order in the dataset (Boeije, 2010). A code in this sense is then a label on segment of text, which can be a paragraph, section or sentence, which depicts the core topic of the segment. A full definition of qualitative coding can be given as follow:

“Coding means categorizing segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data. Your codes show how you select, separate, and sort data to begin an analytic accounting of them. Coding is the first step in moving beyond concrete statements in the data to making analytic interpretations. We aim to make an interpretative rendering that begins with coding and illuminates studied life” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 43, as quoted in Boeije, 2010).

Already while coding, the researcher is looking for descriptions and links to the theoretical statements that go beyond just concrete observations of the text (Boeije, 2010) and in that way is already making a start with the data analysis. There are two general ways to do coding, one through which codes are derived from theory before the data analysis starts and the other codes are made during the data analysis from the raw data. These two types of coding are also called inductive coding and deductive coding (Boeije, 2010). These different approaches, come back as well when looking at content

analysis; figure 2 below illustrates the different two different forms of qualitative content analysis according to Elo & Kyngas (2008).

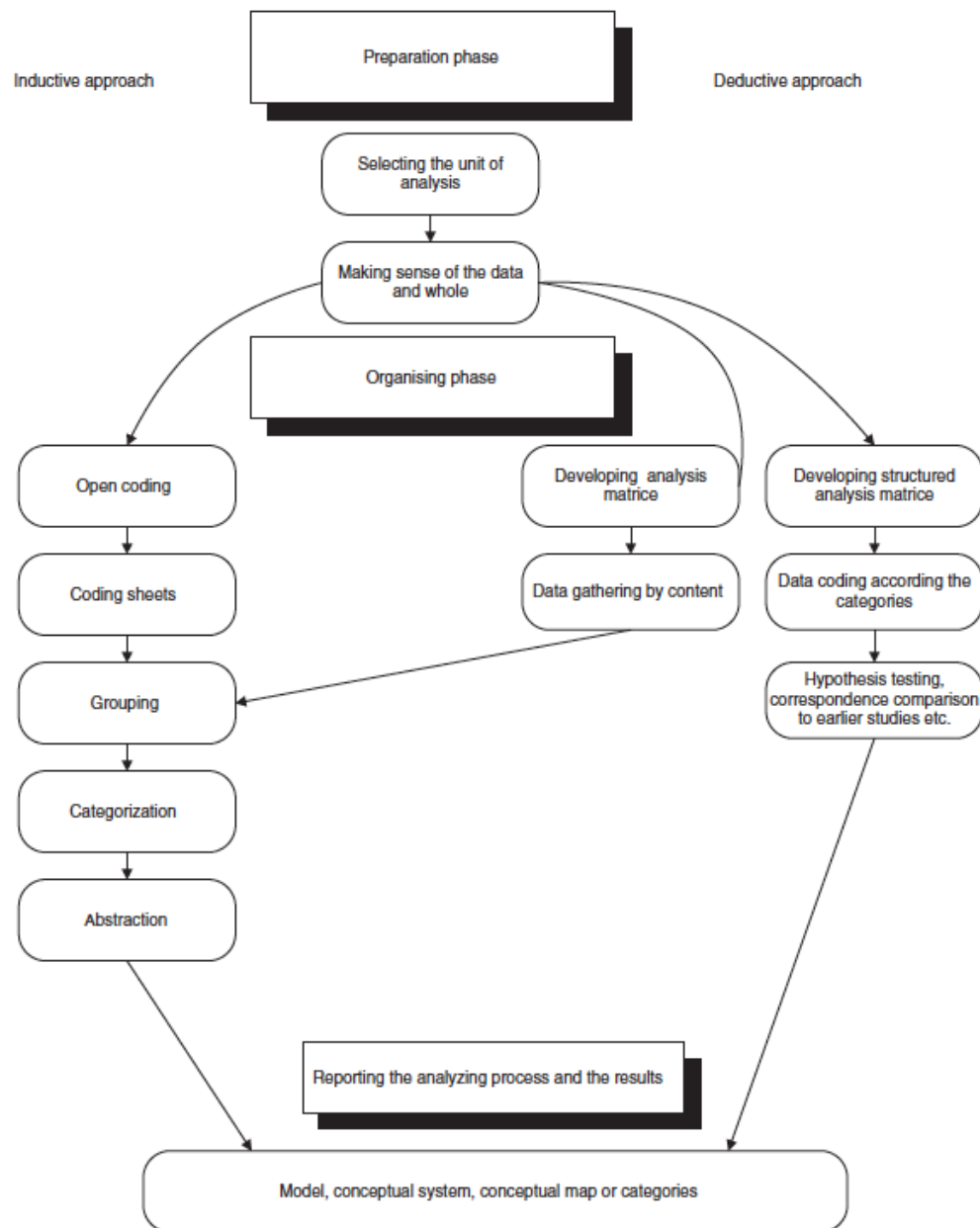


Figure 2. Preparation, organizing and resulting phases in the content analysis process (Elo & Kyngas, 2008).

If there is not enough knowledge yet about a phenomenon or if this knowledge is fragmented, inductive content analysis is recommended (ibid.), here the categories will be derived from the data. The deductive approach is used when the researcher wants to test theories, categories, concepts, models or hypothesis. Generally, this is based on earlier work, for example, theories, models, mind maps and literature reviews (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). In this approach codes will be formed prior to coding the data set, thereafter the data will be coded according to these predetermined codes. In the case of this study theoretical concepts were found in the literature review that were aimed to be investigated in relationship to the gap year representation, it was therefore useful to

already determine codes from the literature review before the data analysis started. Hence, a categorization matrix was made in advance with codes derived from the literature review. Table 2 below shows the codes derived from literature including details.

Code	Theoretical connection
Volunteering: making a contribution to the project and making a contribution to your self-development	Presumed positive outcomes of new moral tourism (Butcher, 2003)
The new moral tourist: more individual, less following the crowd. Experience the host culture in a sustainable way.	The new moral tourist (Butcher, 2003), the alternative tourist (Week, 2012)
Organisation mentions and practices sustainable tourism	New moral tourism (Butcher, 2003; Mowforth & Munt, 2009)
Global Citizenship; cross-cultural understanding	Cosmopolitanism and global citizenship (Nussbaum, 1996; Urry, 2002; Schattle, 2009)
Volunteering: trying to make a change on an individual level, as a volunteer “you” can help.	Life-style politics (Giddens, 1994; Butcher, 2003; Butcher & Smith, 2010)
Volunteering: minimum duration to make adequate difference	Critiques on short-term international volunteer tourism (Zavits and Butz, 2011)
Volunteering: differences between the “helper” and “receiver”	Volunteer tourism leading to increased dichotomies between the “helper” and the “receiver”, the “developed” and the “undeveloped” world (Simpson, 2004; Sin, 2009).
Taking a gap year is good for the self-development and personal enrichment	Presumed benefits of taking a gap year (Simpson, 2004; Heath 2007; Butcher & Smith, 2010; Lyons et al., 2011)
Skill development: learning about new cultures, creating cross-cultural understanding and intercultural communication skills	Presumed benefits of taking a gap year (Simpson, 2004; Heath 2007; Butcher & Smith, 2010; Lyons et al., 2011)
Skill development: more flexible, mature and independent	Presumed benefits of taking a gap year (Simpson, 2004; Heath 2007; Butcher & Smith, 2010; Lyons et al., 2011)
Skill development: learning new languages and improving language skills	Presumed benefits of taking a gap year (Simpson, 2004; Heath 2007; Butcher & Smith, 2010; Lyons et al., 2011)
Skill development: enhancing social skills and improving practical skills	Presumed benefits of taking a gap year (Simpson, 2004; Heath 2007; Butcher & Smith, 2010; Lyons et al., 2011)
Taking a gap year and getting experiences abroad enriches ones curriculum vitae	Presumed benefits of taking a gap year (Simpson, 2004; Heath 2007; Butcher & Smith, 2010; Lyons et al., 2011)
Companies, organizations and universities see experiences abroad during a gap year as an advantage over peers.	Presumed benefits of taking a gap year (Simpson, 2004; Heath 2007; Butcher & Smith, 2010; Lyons et al., 2011)
Taking a gap year can help choosing the right next step in education and gappers are less likely to drop out.	Presumed benefits of taking a gap year (Simpson, 2004; Heath 2007; Butcher & Smith, 2010; Lyons et al., 2011)

Table 2. Categorization Matrix Coding

However, the gap year phenomenon in the context of the Netherlands is scarcely researched and therefore certain themes occurred during the data analysis that did not link with any category derived from the literature. Therefore, when analysing the text data, open coding or inductive coding was used as well when need arose. In this way the data analysis was not necessarily steered into the direction of the notions discussed in the literature review, but there was room for new inputs from the data as well.

When all the data was categorized in the different codes and new codes were not necessary, also called the point of saturation (Boeije, 2010), the initial phase of coding finished. Thereafter, the researcher scanned and checked the codes ones more and combined codes with resembling features together in a new code or group different sub codes under main codes or main themes. The outputs of this coding are the results: categories and themes that helped the researcher to report the findings (Boeije, 2010) and later helped in discussing these findings in relation to the research objectives and research questions.

4.5. The Research Limitations

In every research design and during all undertaken research there will be some barriers and constrains. Therefore, it is important to shed light on what limitations arose during this study. First, the role of the researcher in the data collection and data analysis can be of importance. Jørgensen & Phillips (2002) argue that a researcher is often part of the culture and phenomenon under study, therefore it they share many of the common-sense and taken-for-granted understandings expressed in the data. This may cause the research to not be an 'outsider' looking into a phenomenon and not grasping fully what is need to be captured (ibid.). In this case, the researcher is Dutch, a student herself and has certain experience that can be related to gap year experiences. Therefore, there might be fragments of text that she took for granted concerning the gap year discourse and consequently did not include these fragments into the collected data. Consequently, valuable data might got lost. Van Dijk (2007), in addition states that the own values and truths of the researcher influence the way data is perceived or analysed. As this research project is based on the social constructionist perspective, it is believed that all 'reality' is socially constructed. The way the researcher makes sense of the reality and the truth is therefore also partly socially constructed and the researcher is part of this construction. Furthermore, Elo and Kingas (2008) argue that each researcher interprets data according to their own subjective perspective and that different researcher can come up with different interpretations of the data. Jørgensen & Phillips (2002) give a quite amusing, but potentially good advise on how to distance oneself for the material, that is imagining yourself "as an anthropologist who is exploring a foreign universe of meaning in order to find out what makes sense there." To check if the researcher did not influence the data too drastically a quantitative word count was done in Atlas.ti. This counted the words that popped-up in the data and in this way was a double check to verify the main themes that were found from the data by the researcher. This word count was done for the three different providers separately and for each provider the 100 most mentioned words are shown, this quantitative word count can be found in appendix 2.

Considering that the gap year phenomenon is not extensively research and still an ambiguous notion it was hard to clearly define the notion for this research. A gap

year experience, a gap year product or a gapper is differently defined across a range of studies. However, clearly to at least define the phenomenon in terms of this research helped especially during the data collection, when determining which content was suited for data analysis.

Another barrier in the research was the vast amount of information that the internet has to offer (Herring, 2010). The danger is to find oneself in an overload of information and possible data and it is hard to find a focus. However, the search terms and the limitations for the sample, described in the data analysis part of this chapter, were of help when collecting data and finding a way to the extensive amount of text the internet offers.

Another limitation concerns the translation of the data. The raw data that will be gathered during the data collection will be in the Dutch language, however this research project will be conducted and written in English. Therefore the raw data needs to be translated from Dutch to English by the researcher. It is necessary to take into account that specific sayings, words or concepts in Dutch could have different meanings when translated into English. Although the researcher is fluent in writing, speaking and reading in Dutch as well in English, translation might have caused meaning to be lost from the data.

5. RESEARCH FINDINGS

In the following chapter the results of the data collection and data analysis will be outlined. As mentioned before, the data analysis is done on text content from websites of gap year providers, volunteer work providers and language course providers. The research findings therefore will be discussed according to these categories and the themes that occurred in data analysis. For each type of provider there will be a brief section on what kind of products they are offering to their young clientele. This is done in line with the sub-question: What kind of 'Gap Year' products are offered by the various tour operators and how do these relate to the concepts of new moral tourism, ethical consumption, global citizenship and gaining (cultural) capital? Thereafter, per type of provider, the research findings from the text analysis will be discussed. The different categories and themes found during the data analysis will serve as a lead through this part of the chapter. The reason for dividing the providers in three different categories is discussed in the methodology chapter. The next section outline the results derived from the analysis of these three groups of providers and goes deeper into what kind of products they are offering.

5.1. The Gap Year Providers

This section of the research findings chapter will outline the type of products and activities the gap year providers offer, how they are promoted and how the gap year phenomenon is represented in general. Firstly, more insight is given in the type of organizations and after this the research findings regarding the content analysis of the text data of the gap year providers are discussed.

5.1.1. The Gap Year Providers and Their Products

Out of the twelve providers found in this category, three of them cater especially for gap year students; young people who take a year off between high school and university. One of these providers who clearly targets this group is *Xtreme Gap*, the organization offers "challenging and adventurous" programs and claim to help people in following their passion, making friends, learning new skills and having the experience of a lifetime. The products *Xtreme Gap* offers are widespread; from language courses, to Thailand Bucket List group trips, to volunteering opportunities with baby monkeys in Africa. They even offer trips around the world where activities, hotels and pick-ups are included for several different destinations. Noticeable as well is that the organization is part of the *Xtreme Gap UK* group, who operate on the UK market. Another provider that focuses on young high school graduates, although in a totally different way is *Gap Year At Sea*. This gap year experience is created by the Dutch organizations At Sea Sail Training and the Sailing Training and offers gap year products in which youngster can sail around the world. The journeys can be of various lengths and destinations and ships differ. With *Gap Year At Sea* the gapper can get off the ship in different ports, while learning Spanish in South America for a couple of months or volunteering in South Africa. Here it is good to mention that for these services the organization works with *Activity International* and *ESL Taalreizen*, two providers that were also analysed for this

study. The last provider that specializes in high school graduates is *Bienvenido Gap Year*, this provider offers gap year programs and student internships in South America. The organization works together with local partners and places young students (17-25 years old) in schools and organizations in South America for a Spanish or Portuguese course, volunteer work or an internship. Although these three providers state they offer activities for people on a gap year, with all providers it is possible to book activities separately, e.g. a two-month Spanish course during summer holidays.

Another group of providers that could be identified were the tour operators that offer various activities suited to include in a gap year, but not solely cater for this target group. The first example of this type of provider is *Activity International*, an organization that offers a wide range of products. Included in their product range are working holidays, volunteer work, au-pair possibilities, languages courses, internships and flight tickets. The organization offers “starting-packages” for different destinations, including for Sydney for example; airport transfers, accommodation, activities, an emergency hotline and a help desk for finding a job in Australia. The second provider, *Travel Active* is an organization that is rather similar to *Activity International*, although it also offers young high school graduates the chance to spend a year of high school in the United States, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, New Zealand or South Africa. Otherwise the two providers are comparable in the clients they target for and products they offer. Another provider that is similar is *Kilroy*, which offers a wide range of tours and activities all over the world. The organization offers volunteering possibilities and also has an extensive range of different flight tickets, bus passes, train tickets and rental options.

An organization that was quite different from the groups found was *Joho*, a development organization who tries to stimulate and help people and organizations with talent development and international collaboration. Their aim is to contribute to a better, more tolerant and sustainable world through getting people and organisations to work together. The organisation created local centres all around the world where initiatives regarding international collaboration, development aid, sustainable tourism and nature conservation can be helped and linked. *Joho* offers help and support in various sections, such as volunteering abroad, working abroad, travelling and even emigrating. The organization also facilitates in finding plane tickets and insurances.

Two other providers that came out of the search for gap year providers were *Bureau Buitenland* and *Weg Wijs*. These providers are essentially facilitators and mediators; both companies offer the gapper rather personal help and support while putting together an experience abroad. This can be a gap year consisting of a wide array of activities or simply a volunteer project or language course abroad, a personal and costume-made advise and product will be given to the client. Both of these providers work with contacts and partners on different locations, e.g. language course providers and local volunteer projects.

Two other providers that were noticed during the data collection were *Stage Nepal* and *Asia Backpackers*, however they are both quite different. *Stage Nepal* offers their clients the chance to do an internship or do volunteer work in Nepal. Their type of project differ greatly; from building schools to handling administration for middle size companies. The provider offers custom-made gap year projects in Nepal, who are designed by the organization and the gapper himself. Activities included in this gap year

can be a mixture between interning, volunteering and travelling. *Asia Backpackers* on the other hand is more similar to providers such as *Travel Active* and *Activity International*, although it only operates in the South East Asia region. It offers ready-made group trips and start packages through the region, but also volunteer possibilities in Thailand, Cambodia and Indonesia. The organization notes that for the volunteering possibilities they only work together with trust-worthy organizations that are under Dutch management.

The last provider in this category is *Full Bright Center* and is a bit different from the others. This is a commission founded in collaboration by the state of the Netherlands and the United States of America and has the aim to improve mutual understanding between the people of both states and strengthen the international collaboration. In order to do so the *Full Bright Center* offers scholarships and support for graduate students and doctoral students who want to study or do research in the United States. However, the centre also offers a campus scholarship program for high school graduates who want to do a gap year in the United States. They offer different kind of exchanges and possibilities, from Ivy League universities to community colleges and all is custom-made.

Looking at the various providers, it is clear that no standard type of gap year provider can be defined. The products of offer might differ, however the target group for all of these providers are young people who just came out of school and want to explore the world and explore themselves. The next section will go into the data derived from the websites of these different providers.

5.1.2. New Moral Tourism: The Gapper as the New Moral Tourist?

In about half of the websites of the gap year providers some form of reference can be found that is in line with “not being a normal tourist”. Most of the gap year providers aim to represent the gap year product as something “new and adventurous”. The gap year is represented as an activity that just an ordinary tourist would never think about doing, it is rather something for the ‘adventurers’. The gapper will be introduced to a totally different form of travelling. *Activity International* mentions that their clients are adventurous, flexible and curious; they are looking for ways to broaden their horizons and are searching for more than a normal and easy holiday. The next quote of *Gap Year at Sea* illustrates this as well:

“Yes, you can book a flight to Thailand, and spend a few months in South-East Asia among thousands of backpackers who all do the same stuff. For sure, you'll get a tan. And see some nice beaches. But if you're up for a life enhancing experience that truly bridges the gap between youth and adulthood, this is your moment” (from the website of Gap Year At Sea, accessed on 27/8/2014, 11.55 AM).

This suggests that the tourist, in this case the backpacker, is seen as a mass that is looking for the same old experience. Flying to Thailand and backpacking, something that was seen as the ultimate adventure in time of the hippie trails (Heath, 2005; Hermann, 2013) or even ten years ago, is now seen as the same old and associated with mass tourism. Spending time on beaches and getting a tan is assumed to be an activity the real traveller would not do. In this quote, the gapper is also represented as a person who

breaks free from this mass. As Butcher (2003) argues, the new moral tourist is rejecting the mass and is searching for a more individual experience, which is in line with the above quote. The notion of being free and roaming around is also mentioned by the majority of the gap year providers. For example, *Asia Backpackers* sees the backpacker as someone who can travel at his own speed and does not have a lot of prefixed plans. The organization mentions as well that it is certainly not selling organized bus trips to Spain, weekend trips to Germany or all-inclusive packaged holidays to Turkey. Again, this illustrates a clear distinction between the mass or ordinary tourist and the gapper. And according to Butcher (2003), Mowforth and Munt (2009), and Week (2012) the new moral tourist or alternative tourist is someone who turns away from mass-marketed products and build-for-tourist resort enclaves and is ready to experience the local culture and to get off the beaten track. The claims of *Asia Backpackers* concerning not selling organized trips and all-inclusive packages could therefore imply that they are targeting the more moral and alternative travellers and are rejecting certain forms of mass tourism, such as bus trips and all-inclusive packaged holidays. This is also illustrated in the following quote of *Xtreme Gap* concerning the type of clientele they want to attract:

“Young people who are a bit more adventurous than the average ones that go to Greece or Spain. And young people who do not get excited anymore by spending the day screaming on an inflatable banana behind a speedboat or drunk on the beach.” (from the website of Xtreme Gap, accessed on 25/8/2014 10.44 AM, translated by author)

This is an obvious negative reference to the masses of Dutch youth travelling to Mediterranean destinations every summer while spending time clubbing, drinking and lying on the beach. The word ‘average’ claims that, similar to the claims of *Asia Backpackers*, the normal young tourist can be regarded as one of the masses. In this sense, the gap year providers are rejecting the mass tourist and suggest that their clientele will do the same when travelling with their organization. Another point Butcher (2003), Mowforth and Munt (2009), and Week (2012) stress about the new moral tourist or alternative tourist is that they would be looking for more authentic and real experiences and go off the beaten track to experience the local. On this note, notions of “exploring the real and authentic Thailand/Laos/South America” came back numerous of times during the data analysis. From this notion two interesting sub-notions can be derived: the verb “exploring” and the adjective “real”. The first one suggest that there is much more to discover in the world than the beaten track, the last one suggest that ordinary tourists might never see the real and authentic part of the globe. In line with this, the gap year provider *Kilroy* is asking its young clientele: are you living your life on the beaten path or do you determine your own route? The provider states they offer services for people who do not only dream about going abroad, but also really have the guts to do so. On their website not only the ‘discovering’ part is mentioned, but also the quest for the real and authentic experience, as can be seen in the below quote:

"This specialized project allows you to experience genuine Cambodian life and culture, well away from the tourist trail, living alongside enthusiastic, passionate and experienced staff and volunteers" (from the website of Kilroy, accessed on: 26/8/2014, 3.34 PM).

This quote implies that the gapper could only experience the genuine and real Cambodian life if staying well away from the tourist trail. Again, this is not only a rejection of mass tourism but also a claim that the gap year, in this case including volunteering, is the opposite of being that mass tourist. *Xtreme Gap* also claims that the products they offer stand for authentic and real experiences:

"Umphang is situated in the limestone valleys of the Tak province in North Central Thailand, in the middle of misty rice fields with views on the Burmese horizon. There where the Thai life is still authentic and the locals are still surprised by seeing Westerners." (from the website of Xtreme Gap, accessed on 25/8/2014 10.44 AM, translated by author)

Again, the real and authentic is automatically assumed to relate to the absence of western tourists. The gap year providers therefore not only assume that their clientele wants to go off the beaten path and experience the authentic, at the same time they reject mass tourist and encourage their clientele to do the same. The new moral tourist would be more individual, less following-the-crowd and distancing themselves from mass tourist while looking for authentic and real experiences (Butcher, 2003; Mowforth & Munt, 2009; Week, 2012). This notion is in line with the representation of the gap year and the gapper in the data found. However, as adventurous as it might sound, most of the gap year providers are offering their young clientele a 24-hour emergency number, pick-ups and drop-offs and the airports and local staff available for questions. *Xtreme Gap* mentions the following is part of the package of the four-week 'Bali Experience':

"Extensive pre-departure information package, transport from airport to accommodation, accommodation, meals are inclusive for the first three weeks of the trip, a surf class including material and insurance, visit to the Tanah Lot Temple, optional: island tour or beach tour, yoga or massage session, local English speaking coordinator, introduction week, hiking route monkeystreet and Ubud, traditional Balinese dance performance, Indonesian cooking class, tour through rice fields with amazing views, hiking tracks through local villages and their inhabitants, Batik class, excursions to temples and spiritual places, getting to know the culture through 5 days of volunteering within the local community, day trip to the beaches of South Bali and Turtle island, biking tour through the volcanic landscapes, breakfast on Mount Batur, traditional Balinese massage, and transport between all these activities and locations" (from the website of Xtreme Gap, accessed on 25/8/2014 10.44 AM, translated by author)

This quote illustrates that the gap year experience as represented by *Xtreme Gap*, bares similarities with the traditional tourism packages to for example the Mediterranean. This package includes excursions, activities, meals, accommodation, transport and a

local English speaking coordinator. In addition, the provider even has a part of their website dedicated in convincing future gappers that travelling by yourself is not scary at all. Therefore, it is questionable if the gap year experience is really 'off the beaten path' and 'adventurous' if gappers have access to 24h local support. This was also found for the volunteer work providers and section 5.3. will elaborate on this.

5.1.3. The Providers of the New Moral Tourism Product: Sustainable Practices?

Six of the thirteen gap year providers that were analysed mention some form of sustainable practices they are involved in, may it be just donating to a good cause or working with only local organizations as their partners. *Activity International* for example is supporting non-governmental organizations that stand for the rights of children and the environment, while working with local partners as well. *Kilroy* mentions that the understanding and respecting of other cultures is absorbed in all of their business practices and has a part of their website dedicated to the company's CSR policies. With their volunteer projects, *Travel Active* argues that they are supporting the development and employment in their destinations while working with projects that are of local partners only and volunteer projects that are initiated by the local population only. Two of providers mention that they prefer using sustainable accommodation options if possible, and are trying to support their clientele in making more sustainable decisions. The majority the organizations are also supporting some kind of good cause or have their own charity they are investing money and time in. *Activity International* for example works with Trees for All, an organization that manages and supports sustainable nature and energy products, with the aim to compensate the CO₂-emissions from their clients who are taking the plane. *Stage Nepal* has started the Footprints2Freedom charity to help and educate Nepalese children in a practical and sustainable way so they have a path towards freedom and away from poverty and human trafficking. Although many of the gap year providers have partly sustainable business practices and support good causes, none of them really try to persuade their clientele to travel more sustainably, except for maybe compensating CO₂ when flying. The new moral tourist notion is therefore only partly applicable to the gap year providers and the services and products they represent. The claims that can be related to new moral tourism are mostly focussed on the promotion of the gap year activities as off the beaten track and more authentic in order to reach the adventurous clientele. Very few claims focus on the importance of morally-right and sustainable travelling in the sense of working with local providers, being open for culture differences and treating the visited environment well, points that are associated with new moral tourism (Butcher, 2003; Mowforth & Munt, 2009; Week, 2012). The above quote from *Xtreme Gap* for example, does not mention the effects on the real Thai life of the 'westerners' travelling to the still real and authentic province of Tak, or the effects that this will have on the misty rice fields in the limestone valleys in sense of environmental damage. Therefore, it is questionable how moral the gap year experience really is. And as Wheeler (1991) argues: what is worse on the long-term? The mass tourist in the Mediterranean beach hubs or the sustainable tourist tramping through the Amazon or the Himalaya?

5.1.4. The Gapper as Volunteer: All Good?

Out of the eleven gap year providers examined ten offer some form of volunteer placements. Most of them elaborate on how working as a volunteer can help the project while at the same time also enhance one's life and contribute to personal development. This is also the strongest notion that came forward out of the analysis of these providers' websites in regards to volunteering and volunteer work. As Butcher states: "more enlightening, encouraging respect for others ways of life and a critical reflections on the tourist's own developed society" (2003, p. 7) In this way new moral tourism and volunteering are not only perceived as having a (more) positive effect on the world, but also on the tourist himself. This is illustrated in the following quote of *Activity International*:

"By doing volunteer work you can leave the world a little bit better and more beautiful. And if done right, it will bring you also something beautiful. You will have a unique experience abroad and that is something no one is going to take away from you! It fills your backpack with life experience, respect and the understanding for other cultures. Mission accomplished!" (from the website of Activity International, accessed on 26/8/2014 at 11.44 AM, translated by author)

In this quote the notion of doing good for the world and doing good for yourself are combined, it notes that doing volunteer work will also do good for the volunteer. *Kilroy* states it in a more practical way, and claims that while doing volunteer work in Africa, one could develop skills and practical experiences or practice the skills one already possesses in the context of third world countries. *Stage Nepal* states it quite blunt and gives volunteers the opportunity to teach children in Nepal various subjects while receive practical experience in return. To summarize, *Gap Year at Sea* puts it simple: "help out others, enrich yourself" (from the website of Gap Year At Sea, accessed on 27/8/2014, 11.55 AM). By putting emphasis on the self-development for the volunteer it can be questioned what the main goal of volunteering during the gap year is. As Sin (2009) notes: 'many volunteer tourists are typically more interested in fulfilling objectives relating to the "self" '(p. 497). She argues that this can be self-development and learning, but also simply the desire to travel, rather than the altruistic perception of helping and doing something good. This raises the critical point of the motivations of gappers while doing volunteer work. Is the aim of volunteering in the gap year to developing one's skills and enhancing one's resume or solely doing something good for the world? It seems that the gap year providers promote the volunteering experiences as not solely doing something good, but also put an emphasis on the enhancement for the gapper himself.

Another theme that came back frequently in the data was the fact that the gapper is addressed personally as the individual who could make the small difference and who could be of help. The gapper is addressed with 'you' and sentences such as 'you can help to save the environment' and 'you can make the difference' were found regularly in the web content of the gap year providers. *Bienvenido Gap Year* states:

"The work is hard, but it is also fun and the result of your work is very satisfying; you and your colleagues are making sure that a whole family has a roof above their head" (From the website of Bienvenido Gap Year, accessed on 27/8/2014 1.37 PM, translated by author).

This piece of promotion tries to appeal to the individuals who want to make a small difference through the way they consume travelling; volunteering. It states that the gapper as an individual can have a physical output; giving a family a house. This is in line with the life(style) politics that Giddens (1994) introduced and Butcher and Smith (2010) link to ethical consumerism in tourism, namely individuals trying to make a change in their direct environment. Giddens (1994) describes life politics as the way individuals see themselves and their identity as the key site for political change and look within themselves to make a little change or influence on broader societal issues. The gap year providers try to appeal to these types of individuals who want to make that little difference in the world and through volunteering see this as a creating a more moral and justified lifestyle. In line with this the providers also state that you cannot heal the whole world, but you as an individual can make a little difference, this can be seen in the following quote:

"Of course you cannot change the whole world, but with your contribution you can surely make it a little bit better. Your help can make that little difference where people are looking for. Focus on that and go for it!" (from the website of Kilroy, accessed on: 26/8/2014, 3.34 PM, translated by author).

A different theme appears from these quotes as well, the volunteer is seen as the 'helper' while the family is seen as 'in need for help' or the 'receiver'. As Simpson (2004) and Sin (2009) argue, volunteer tourism can lead to growing dichotomies between the Western world, where volunteers often come from, and the world of the 'needy'. This notion is related to the statements such as 'help is necessary', and 'you can help'. It assumes that the Western volunteer needs to help the underdeveloped third world countries in need. *Asia Backpackers* even states:

"The local organizations are especially in need for donations and help from abroad regarding volunteer work. Volunteers from Western countries are especially welcome because they bring a lot of knowledge with them where the organizations can profit from" (From the website of Asia Backpackers, accessed on: 27/8/2014 3.02 PM, translated by author).

This quote does not only imply that help from abroad is truly needed, it also implies that the local knowledge is subordinate to Western knowledge. Following this, it can be noted dichotomies between the 'developed' and the 'underdeveloped' might strengthen if volunteering by gappers is represented in this way (Simpson, 2004; Sin, 2009).

Noticeable as well are the claims of the gap year providers that in order to be a volunteer one does not need any specific skills. However, the volunteer must be flexible, proactive and in for some hard world. This is illustrated in the way *Travel Active*

answers the question surrounding required working experience or specific skills partake in volunteering projects:

“No, this is no requirement! It is an advantage when you would have specific working experience, however it is more important that you have the right attitude and motivation. To do volunteer work you have to be flexible, have mature and independent mentality, be innovative and have to be able to withstand a primitive environment.” (from the website of Travel Active, accessed on 26/8/2014 11.34 AM, translated by author).

This quote illustrates that gappers are not required to have any specific skills to join volunteering projects, something that is raised by Simpson (2009) as problematic. She states that this is what volunteering during a gap year makes so interesting for young people; the freedom to join the projects they want without required qualifications. The gapper is therefore seen as a customer who pays for his or her custom-made volunteering experience, not as a skilled volunteer. Other gap year providers mention that the volunteer needs to be interested in getting to know other cultures, to be willing to live in less luxury for a while and to be open to adjust to different norms and values. Two of the gap year providers work with Stichting Muses, a foundation who trains volunteers before they go abroad and also supports them when getting back into the Dutch environment after their trip. The volunteer projects offered mostly have no minimum duration, however two providers mention that when working with children it is important to at least stay for three weeks or a month, as the following quote illustrates:

“When working with children it is certainly important to stay for a minimum of three weeks. Spending more time on a project makes sure that you can make a real contribution and your help is seen as a added value to the project” (from the website of Travel Active, accessed on 26/8/2014 11.34 AM, translated by author).

Volunteering is therefore possible for most people no matter their educational backgrounds, as long as they have the drive to work hard and be flexible. Consequently it can be said that volunteering is promoted as doing something ‘good’ in combination with doing something ‘fun’, for instance volunteering as an English teacher for two weeks in Bali, where two weeks of surfing will follow. Simpson (ibid.) also argues that volunteering without required skills will give the gappers an opportunity to ‘practice’ on the local people involved in the volunteering projects, rather than to learn from them. Whereas young people would never get the chance to teach children in schools in the Netherlands, volunteers just over 18 years old can do so while volunteering as an English teacher in for example Cambodia or Peru. This can be seen as a form of practicing and gaining skills, without the requirements of any previous experience or qualifications. This stresses the importance to evaluate the real motivations behind volunteering during a gap year; for the self or for the good of the world? But also important, it assumes that the condition of the healthcare or education in developing countries are in such a bad state that volunteers without any previous knowledge can be

of help there (Simpson, 2009). Again, help from the “West” seems to be needed and dichotomies are strengthened even further.

5.1.5. A Year Abroad: The Way to Self-Development and Personal Enrichment?

The one theme that comes forward in all of the websites analysed is that taking a gap year and broadening one’s horizons would lead to personal enrichment and self-development which would not be possible when staying home for a year. A year abroad is an investment you make in yourself it seems. Gappers would be more aware of themselves and what they want in life. It is argued that you really get to know yourself and you learn to develop yourself as a human-being in all kinds of ways. *Gap Year at Sea* takes it a step further:

“The ports will open up new worlds, the programs will enrich you. In essence, on board Gap Year at sea you’ll grow a completely new you” (from the website of Gap Year At Sea, accessed on 27/8/2014, 11.55 AM).

This illustrates that taking a gap year and travelling around the world for a year might turn you into a completely different, and better, person. In line with the above quote, the personal motto of *Bureau Buitenland* is: “discover the world, discover yourself” (from the website of Bureau Buitenland, accessed on 27/8/2014 11.34 AM, translated by the author). The gap year is therefore promoted as not just a product that allows you to explore the world, but also discover yourself. However, it also assumes that there are worlds out there that can offer the gapper ways to see the world through an alternative gaze (Simpson, 2004). A gaze where the gapper is Western and the world to discover is not, and following the paths to the undiscovered will assumingly make sure the gapper discovers himself. In line with arguments of Simpson (2009), Heath (2005; 2007) and Butcher and Smith (2010) the centre of the promotion of the gap year experience seems to be the notion of ‘broadening horizons’. This broadening horizons and discovering new worlds would lead to opportunities for self-development, learning about other cultures, creating more mature and responsible citizens and promoting global awareness (Simpson, 2004). As *Travel Active* puts it:

“Searching for adventure, independency, personal development and an unforgettable experience. But especially, how does my future look and who am I exactly?” (from the website of Travel Active, accessed on 26/8/2014 11.34 AM, translated by author).

This quote goes a bit further than the quote of *Gap Year At Sea* above and implies that through travelling the gapper will get to know his or her real identity through gaining independency and developing oneself. The above quote already illustrates that this personal development is in many cases promoted in a way that is closely related to skill-development, may it be soft-skills or practical skills (Heath, 2007). Skill-development is therefore seen as being a key part of self-enhancement and as an investment in yourself, this will be discussed in the next section.

5.1.6. A Year Abroad: The Product of Skill-development

The notion of skill-development comes back in nearly every website analysed. The gap year providers also have a fair amount of 'advertisement' related to this. The idea that came forward is through travelling and participation in new cultures and new places, especially in the Third world, would make a young gapper gain experience and knowledge of the world (Heath, 2005; Heath, 2007; Butcher & Smith, 2010). This is exactly how the gap year providers represent the advantages of taking a year off and going abroad. Most of the providers therefore sum up the different skills gappers will acquire during their time abroad, for example *Stage Nepal*:

"What will you achieve with volunteering or interning abroad?

- Acquiring practical and theoretical knowledge.

- Developing of intercultural skills.

- Developing communication skills related to patients and colleagues.

- Enhancing your management and organization skills." (from the website of Stage Nepal, accessed on 27/8/2014 3.25 PM, translated by author).

This quote implies that the gapper will achieve this goals certainly, using the words 'you will achieve', when going abroad and volunteering. Simpson (2004) argues that the promotion of this skill acquirement is done by a great deal of gap year providers and this is found back in the analysis of the Dutch websites as well. Firstly there are the gap year experiences that can improve your social and practical skills. This can for example be a working holiday in the tourism sector in Australia or a volunteer project where the gapper acts as an English teacher for children. Quite some gap year providers therefore also offer special courses and certificates to enhance these skills, for example training courses to be a dive instructor. Simpson (2004) argues that these types of certificates only institutionalize the idea of the gap year even further; the year off needs to be filled with activities and experiences that are worthwhile and well-structured and gap year providers claim to be perfect to assist in this. It is stated that by these experience the gapper not only improves their practical knowledge on the subject, but it also boosts one's social skills. As *Travel Active* states:

"While working abroad you will learn totally other skills than the ones you learned in high school. It is the perfect way to develop some practical experience, next to discovering new countries, and make some extra money" (from the website of Travel Active, accessed on 26/8/2014 11.34 AM, translated by author).

Working or volunteering abroad during a gap year is assumed to therefore increase one's practical knowledge and skills and it is promoted as a great addition to normal education, as Heath (2007) mentions "gappers acquire 'soft skills' that are not necessarily acquired during their formal education, such as communication skills, organizational skills and team working skills" (Heath, 2007, p. 94).

Another point that is emphasised by many of the gap year providers is closely related to self-development and personal enrichment: the soft skills that the gapper acquires simply by having the courage to start travelling and spending a year abroad. It is claimed that the gapper will come back more independent, more mature and with a

great sense of flexibility (Heath, 2007; Butcher & Smith 2004). Eight gap year providers mention that these competences will be certainly increased during the time abroad. On the website of *Bureau Buitenland* a personal review of the parents of a returned gapper captures this:

"Our son learned a lot, not only the English language, but he also became more independent, can take care of himself made plenty of new friends. Thank you!" (from the website of Bureau Buitenland, accessed on 27/8/2014 11.34 AM, translated by author).

And *Travel Active* mentions in regards to this:

"You will develop yourself into an independent person who has perseverance, is able to adapt and has an open and flexible mentality" (from the website of Travel Active, accessed on 26/8/2014 11.34 AM, translated by author).

These quotes both assume that the gapper will come back more independent and flexible; competences that are not easily tangible as acquiring work experience, but are seen to be important tools to attract young clientele (Heath, 2007).

Learning new languages or improving ones language skills is also on top of the list of reasons to go abroad. There are numerous of statements about how quick one could learn a language while being abroad. Most of these statements also mention that you learn a new language best when you are totally surrounded by it, in the real environment where it is spoken. As *Bienvenido Gap Year* mentions:

"Spanish or Portuguese you learn best while working in the country itself and living amongst the local population" (from the website of Bienvenido Gap Year, accessed on 27/8/2014 13.37 AM, translated by author).

This living amongst the local people might also enhance skills related to being able to deal with different cultures. Positive outcomes of the gap year, as mentioned by the providers, therefore also include: learning new cultures, creating cross-cultural understanding and acquiring intercultural communication skills. According to *Xtreme Gap* the following is a positive outcome of one of their volunteering projects in South Africa:

"South Africa is a melting pot of different cultures. This gives you the opportunity to interact with different people and through this interaction with all these diverse cultures you will grow as an individual yourself" (from the website of Xtreme Gap, accessed on 25/8/2014 10.44 AM, translated by author)

This quote implies that through travelling you can interact with different people and through this interaction enrich yourself, again this is linked to the notion of 'broadening horizons, improving yourself' (Simpson 2004, Lyons et al., 2012). This interaction with different people while travelling is also said to enhance the gappers personal network. Statements such as 'you will make many new friends from different parts of the world' were found regularly and the gap year product is certainly seen as a good way to

enhance the gapper's international network. The different forms of skill-development discussed above which are promoted by the Dutch gap year providers can be linked to the notion of cultural capital, introduced by Simpson (2004). She states that cultural capital "is held by an individual and is a product of his or her education and experiences. Capital that is a product of what they can do and the knowledge they possess" (p. 60). Thus, the forms of skills the gapper can acquire, according to various providers, will add to their cultural capital. According to Lyons et al. (2012) travelers gain cultural capital through the collection of knowledge and the experiences while travelling. Although none of the providers claim that taking a gap year will enhance one's cultural capital with these exact words, the claims they make in regards to skill development most certainly send this message. This skill-development is in turn seen as very desirable by future employers and university administrators and therefore, this theme will be discussed next.

5.1.7. The Gap Year Experience: The Personality Package

Simpson (2004) states that claims surrounding travelling making people into more of an 'interesting' person demonstrate that cultural capital is embedded in gap year experiences and these claims are certainly found in the promotion of the gap year product in the Dutch context as well. The skills that the gapper develops during their time abroad are seen as added value for the gapper's curriculum vitae. It is claimed by the gap year providers that the soft skills gappers acquire, together with the practical experiences and newly acquired languages are seen as very desirable by companies and universities. This is in line with the arguments of Simpson (2004), Heath (2007), Butcher and Smith (2010) and Lyons et al. (2011) regarding the positive outcomes for young people who take a gap year and is very well illustrated by the following quote of *Activity International*:

"When you choose to travel or work abroad, you learn so much. First, you learn to deal with different cultures. Especially when you travel to a developing country you will get introduced to very different norms and values. A very special experience. You will also meet people from around the world. Because of this you will enhance your network, something you can use well in your later employment. And of course it is good for your CV. Companies think it is a definite advantage when you possess experiences abroad. This means you are flexible, independent and you can easily adapt to new environments" (from the website of Travel Active, accessed on 26/8/2014 11.34 AM, translated by author).

A gap year is therefore not only represented as a tool for develop and enhance skills, but also to become more independent and mature and all these experiences will in turn yield a better resume and better job possibilities. This theme came forward in all of the analysed websites of gap year providers and is therefore seen as an important part of the findings. Another note on the above quote is the fact that *Travel Active* claims the experience abroad to be very special. This is a point Heath (2007) also raises in her statement that only a graduate degree will not be enough, the modern graduate should also be well-travelled and have gained some working or interning experience abroad. The cultural capital collected while travelling and gaining experience can be turned in to economic capital and used as a competitive advantage in job markets (Simpson, 2004;

Tickell, 2011), a point that is certainly stressed by the different gap year providers. For that reason, those who are able to gain the capital associated with the gap year experience, are able to accumulate corporate capital and will have an competitive advantage in the work place (Simpson, 2004; Heath, 2007). The quote below perfectly illustrates these statements:

“Not only during their study do students who went on a gap year experiences advantages. Also with many future employers a CV with an experience abroad is seen as an advantage. Fluently speaking a foreign language is a great benefit in the Netherlands, we, as a country of trade are often in business with foreign countries. In addition the personal traits you will develop while abroad, such as independency, flexibility and perseverance, are asked for and valued by almost every employer.” (from the website of Travel Active, accessed on 26/8/2014 11.34 AM, translated by author).

This quote puts the emphasis on both the skills the gapper will develop abroad and the advantages this will give the gapper while studying and looking for a job. The personal skills mentioned in the quote above can be turned into cultural capital and even corporate capital in the gappers future search for a job and will make him “a more interesting” person for future employers (Simpson, 2004). Moreover, in seven of the analysed websites it is mentioned that the gap year is a good plan B for people to think about what kind of field they want to proceed their study career. As *Stage Nepal* puts it:

“In case you do not know what you what to study and you want to explore what your possibilities are in a fun and new way, then the gap year is the school of life!” (from the website of Stage Nepal, accessed on 27/8/2014 3.25 PM, translated by author).

A few of the gap year providers that mention that the gap year is a good tool in order to choose one’s study and also mention that former gappers do better in school and university and are less likely to drop out. Two of them even relate to the research of Nuffic (2012) who found that gappers are indeed better at making grounded study choices and are less likely do drop out. These arguments are in line with Heath’s statement that gappers adapt well to university life and have a higher sense of maturity than non-gappers, and again are less likely to drop out (2007). Although most of the gap year providers promote the gap year as an investment in oneself, only one of them mentions the new government funding as something the gapper should not worry about. *Travel Active* mentions that with the upcoming cutbacks in the student grants it is especially important to make the right decision regarding ones future study. It states that people who are unsatisfied with this choice might drop out or switch and this will result in an extra year of studying and all costs related to this. The organization then promotes the gap year as the perfect way to make the right decision for the future.

5.2. The Volunteer Work Providers

The second group of gap year providers, whose web content was analysed, were the volunteer work providers. This part of the findings chapter will elaborate on the findings from this analysis. First, the various providers will be discussed in terms of the

products they offer and what kind of groups they cater for. Next, the different themes that were found in the analysis of the data will be elaborated on.

5.2.1. The Volunteer Work Providers and Their Products

A total of eleven volunteer work providers were analysed during this research. Offering volunteer positions in developing countries is the core businesses for most of these providers. Although most of them are commercial enterprises, some of them are also foundations; the line between this can be quite blurry. *Be More*, for example, states that they are a “social enterprise”; a financial sustainable organization, who has the goal to have the maximum amount of social impact. Their mission and vision is to build a strong bridge between people from different backgrounds, cultures and continents and the organization strives to create a better world where everybody is involved with the lives of others, especially those who are less fortunate. *Be More* offers volunteers the possibility to do work in different locations in Africa and Asia and has a wide range of different projects, from educating children to building and repairing houses. The organization also offers non-stop support, before, during and after the volunteer’s journey. Another similar organization is *Dare 2 Go*, who in addition to Asia and Africa also offers volunteering possibilities in South America. However, this organization is created by the foundation Stichting Jongeren & Missie, a collaboration of 45 Dutch religious institutes. The organization has the goal to inspire, motivate and activate young people to create a more human and more fair world together. According to *Dare to Go*, they try to do this by working with locally initiated projects.

Projects Abroad, is considered as one of the bigger volunteer organizations, because it is part of the international *Projects Abroad* organization and it offers a very wide range of volunteering possibilities of any sort. Included in this are volunteering possibilities for professionals, for families, for companies, for people on a sabbatical and as an internship or thesis assignment. The company also offers custom-made trips for groups and *Projects Abroad* even has projects where students can be a volunteer as part of their international minor in university. The organization offers a wide range of kinds of projects, from building schools to educating children a specific sport. It is needed to remark that the organization employs a special and separate website that is totally dedicated to the gap year and the advantages of taking a gap year, www.tussenjaar.nl. The Dutch website of *Projects Abroad* also has a separate section on the gap year and volunteering which is quite extensive as well. Another provider that was analysed during this research is *Commundo*, this organization offers volunteering possibilities and internships abroad, totally customized to the wishes of the volunteer. *Commundo* claims to work with small-scale development organizations that are happy with the help they receive from volunteers. Volunteering with the organisation can be done at social projects, for example teaching children, helping small business, giving sport classes or giving computer classes.

The web content of *Travel 4 Change*, a smaller organization, was analysed as well. This organization offers young and older people the chance to volunteer, travel or intern in Uganda or Burkina Faso. Most of the projects revolve around educating children in school or adults about for example HIV and AIDS, however helping out as a nurse, doctor or physiotherapist is also possible. The projects of *Travel 4 Change* range from two weeks to long term, however the organization claims that a good preparation

of the volunteer is of utmost importance to really make a difference at the local level. Another smaller organization is *Global Spirit* who offers trips that are specialized in volunteering with animals. The website of *Global Spirit* lets the visitor choose between different countries where volunteer work is possible – in Asia, Africa, South America or Europe – but also the specific type of animal the volunteer would like to help. *Global Spirit* is a young organization and offers extensive information on their website for each project. They also note that they want to stimulate volunteers to stay as long as possible on projects, therefore, it is cheaper to do eight to twelve week placements compared to three to six week placements. A third provider that is a bit smaller is *Het Andere Reizen*, who offers volunteering possibilities, language courses and tours and roundtrips in South America, Asia and Africa. The organization claims that travelling is an experience and that travelling with them means completely submerging in another culture. *Het Andere Reizen* claims to promote sustainable and ethical-right travelling; fair and honest tourism in where the organization tries to use local expertise as much as possible and where respect for the local culture, customs and values are seen as important.

A volunteer work provider that is a bit different from the others is *AFS Interculturele Uitwisselingen Nederland*, this provider is part of AFS, an international non-governmental and non-profit volunteering organization. It offers young people in the Netherlands intercultural learning and tries to improve cross-cultural understanding in order to create a more peaceful and fair world. In the Netherlands, *AFS* tries to do this with intercultural exchanges for high school students and it offers 18-25 year olds the possibility to do volunteer work abroad for six months. It offers placements in Asia, Africa and South America and offers projects that deal with social, cultural or natural societal questions. Another provider that is a non-profit organization is *SIW*, who has the aim to stimulate people to broaden their horizons. The organization tries to do this through bringing people in contact with different cultures, this way the organization is looking to enhance the intercultural understanding and the personal development of the volunteers. The organization offers volunteering possibilities in the Netherlands and abroad.

Two volunteer work providers that were analysed did not have offices in the Netherlands, but were taken into account because they cater for Dutch volunteers and their websites are offered in Dutch. One of them is *WLS International*, who offers volunteering possibilities in Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam for people from 16 years old and over. The organization states that it is originally British, however they claim that they also help a lot of Dutch and Belgian volunteers, therefore their website is in Dutch. Their projects range from working with elephants to working with children. The other provider is *Volunteering Solutions*, with their head office in India, the provider offers various types of products. They offer summer programs and volunteering possibilities around the world, but also medical internship abroad. The organization mentions that most of their volunteers are high school students, teenagers, corporate groups and individuals on their summer or career break.

Although most of the volunteer work providers offer various types of projects in a wide range of destinations, identifying the standard volunteer work providers is not possible for this research. The providers differ greatly in how they are financed and with what kind of organizations they work on a local level. Some of them are foundations;

some of them are financial enterprises. However, what they all have in common is that they seem to state that they strive towards a better world and towards a better intercultural understanding between people from different backgrounds. This will be illustrated in the next section, which will go deeper into the findings concerning these providers on a text level. The different themes and categories that were derived from the data analysis in regards to these volunteer work providers will be discussed below. These themes are in line with the main themes discussed in the above section on the findings concerning the gap year providers. However, the content might differ.

5.2.2. New Moral Tourism: The Gapper as the New Moral Tourist?

One might say that the volunteer tourist is already a step ahead of the ordinary mass tourist as they made the choice to spend their holiday or time abroad in a more meaningful way. This was also found in the data analysed for volunteer work providers. Half of the providers make a reference that can be seen as a rejection of the mass tourist or the ordinary 'human'. As *Projects Abroad* mentions:

"Take a gap year! This is a year where you can choose what you do. What you could do is work, hang around on the couch all day or party with your friends. But are you looking for a more special kind of challenge? Then be a volunteer abroad with Projects Abroad. You're not only helping others, but also yourself!" (from the website of Projects Abroad, accessed on 1/9/2014 1.03 PM, translated by author).

In this comment the tourist who would just hang around or only party with friends is rejected and the volunteering abroad is seen as more special. For most of the volunteer work providers the volunteer is seen as someone who spends his or her holiday in a more meaningful and moral way. *Be More Travel*, for instance, has the slogan: "travel with your heart!" Not only this is in line with Butcher's (2003) comments on the new moral tourist, but also Week's (2012) comments are found back in the web content of the providers; the new moral tourist is more individual, less following-the-crowd and looking for real and authentic experiences. A good example to illustrate this in regards to how the providers frame the volunteer tourist is the following quote:

"When doing volunteer work you will get to know the local people in a different way and you really get to know the country. Not through the eyes of a tourist, but through the eyes of a local. Want to get this unique experience? Challenge yourself and make yourself useful at one of our volunteering projects" (from the website of Het Andere Reizen, accessed on 3/9/2014 9:20 PM, translated by author).

This quote does not only imply that people who are looking to do volunteer work are looking for authentic and local experiences, it also implies that doing volunteer work will provide these unique experiences. Lyons et al. (2012) argue that volunteer tourism is seen as a form of alternative travel, and an experience that "moves the tourist beyond simply visiting or passing through a place as an outsider" (p. 368) and this statement is certainly in line with how the providers promote volunteering. As *Be More* states on their website:

“Do you want to travel and really get to know the local culture and local people? Contribute to a better world? Then become a volunteer in one of our countries in Asia and Africa” (from the website of Be More, accessed on 2/9/2014 1.44 PM , translated by the author).

The above quote implies again that volunteering is the way to really emerge in the culture of the host. Similarly, most of the providers mention doing volunteer work as really getting to know the locals and the country, in going off the beaten track where normal tourist would never come. However, it is questionable if the volunteering experience really leads to cross-cultural understanding and mutual benefits, which is also something Callanan and Thomas (2005) ask themselves, and which will be reviewed later in this chapter. Claimed by the volunteer work providers, having an authentic experience is linked with being a volunteer and linked again with doing something morally right or “doing something good”. Matthews (2008) also argues that instead of a tourist passing through, a volunteer is someone who experiences mutual benefit; the chance of an authentic travel experience and living with locals and the possibility to contribute to the locals’ environment. In line with this, six of the providers analyzed also mention that volunteering is not only useful for the local population or the environment; on top of this the volunteer gets the chance to discover different parts of the world. The following quote illustrates this:

“Volunteer work offers you the unique opportunity to help people and to travel to different parts of the world. For most volunteers it has been a life changing experience. Come on and discover the world, while you try to create a better place for other people at the same time!” (from the website of Volunteering Solutions, accessed on 3/9/2014 9.40 PM, translated by author).

This quote illustrates that volunteering can be combined with discovering the world at the same time. Volunteering is therefore not only framed as doing the right thing, but it is also a combination of doing the right thing and doing something fun. Most likely to be combined with a round trip through the country you are staying in, including lots of sight-seeing activities and a beach holiday at the end. Most of the providers offer custom-made volunteer packages where the gapper’s wishes can be fulfilled and he or she can make a choice from an extensive list of different countries and types of projects. *Projects Abroad* asks the gapper the following:

“To really put together your adventure you have to orientate yourself about what possibilities Projects Abroad is offering you. Answer the questions below in order to find out what your wishes are:

- 1. To what destination I want to travel?*
- 2. What types of volunteer projects do I fancy?*
- 3. Do I want to add a language course?*
- 4. What start and end date do I choose?”*

(from the website of Projects Abroad, accessed on 1/9/2014 1.03 PM, translated by the author).

In this quote is it not only assumed that volunteering is an adventure, it also shows that the gapper, as a consumer, can choose from a wide array of volunteering possibilities and get the whole package in one trip – volunteering, travelling and even learning a language. Therefore, as Mowforth and Munt (2009) also mention, the promotion of these kinds of volunteering packages, containing flights, airport transfers, accommodation, support at the destination and an 24h emergency line, might have more in common with the packaged holidays of the masses then really making a difference. In this regard, *Volunteering Solutions* is not only trying to convince the gapper themselves, the organization also has a part of their website dedicated to parents of volunteers named ‘*Message to Parents from Volunteering Solutions*’, which includes statements such as this:

“24x7 Emergency Support. All our country coordinators have mobile phones and can be contacted any time in case of an emergency. We also provide direct phone numbers for all host families to the volunteers before departure so that parents can have those details if they require. In Country Support. Our country coordinators visit volunteers at projects once in 2 weeks to check their well-being. They can also be contacted anytime if required by volunteers” (from the website of Volunteering Solutions, accessed on 3/9/2014 9.40 PM, translated by author).

Similarly, *Projects Abroad* has a separate part of their website reserved for parents of gappers, which gives them information on what a gap year exactly is and what the benefits would be for their child. The organization states:

“Your son or daughter is thinking about taking a gap year and you would like to know more about this. This is understandable, it is not normal to ‘just’ let your child go abroad by his or her self. We have put the frequently asked questions of parents online and answered them ... Hopefully this will give you enough information for you to let your child go abroad for a while” (from the website of Projects Abroad, accessed on 1/9/2014 1.03 PM, translated by the author).

Hence, it might be questionable how ‘off the beaten track’ and ‘adventurous’ these products and experiences are. The products that are offered are mainly part of packages which mostly includes emergency support and local guidance that can be contacted at anytime in case anything goes wrong. Therefore, after taking a closer look at the products on offer and although these are advertised as ‘adventurous’ and ‘alternative’, it does not seem that the products are that different from holiday packages booked with a tour operator. The gapper as volunteer, although looking for authentic and local experiences, might therefore not be so adventurous or moral at all. Again, as mentioned in the finding section for gap year providers, it is then questionable what the ultimate motive for volunteering during a gap year might be. The chance to really make a difference or to discover the “real” and “authentic” destination while volunteering (Simpson, 2004; Sin, 2009)? It seems that the volunteer work providers are promoting the experience as doing something good, but mostly in combination with what the volunteer can get out of it.

5.2.3. The Providers of the New Moral Tourism Product: Sustainable Practices?

Five of the volunteer work providers actively mention that they are working with local organizations in the volunteer projects they are offering to their clientele. *Commundo* for example states that they only work with local organizations and local NGO's, also for excursions and sight-seeing activities they work with local agents. They state that in this way direct income for the local communities is generated. *Be More* mentions that it is important that the volunteer thinks about what kind of organization they would like to volunteer with and gives some tips and questions the volunteer might ask in choosing a good or 'sustainable' volunteer work provider. One of these questions is:

"What is the role of the local projects? Ask the organization how they are dealing with the local projects they are working with. Did they think about their wishes and interests? Can the organization make decisions by themselves and have control over their programs? Do volunteers really make a contribution or does the organization just put volunteers somewhere to make them happy?" (from the website of *Be More*, accessed on 2/9/2014 1.44 PM , translated by the author).

These questions concern the well-being and the interest of the local organizations and questions western volunteer organizations in their intentions to really make a difference or just sell a volunteer product. Although all projects evidently support foundations or local projects, two of them mention especially that they are supporting a good cause. *Be More* is split into a foundation and enterprise itself; to have a commercial enterprise on the one side, but on the other side really make a social difference. *Commundo* offers their clients to compensate for the CO2 emissions of their flights and works together with Green Seat. Although one might expect that volunteering operations would persuade their clients to travel in a more sustainable way, this is not quite evident in the websites of the volunteer work providers. However, respecting other cultures is mentioned on the websites of the majority of the providers, as *Het Andere Reizen* mentions:

"Het Andere Reizen promotes sustainable travelling, this means fair tourism where we make use of local expertise as much as possible. Respect for the local culture, customs and habits are top priority for us" (from the website of *Het Andere Reizen*, accessed on 3/9/2014 9:20 PM, translated by author).

The quote illustrates that the provider finds it important that local expertise is used; this is in line with Wearing (2001), who claims that in this way both the visitors and the locals can benefit from tourism activity. However, it is not questioned here if the volunteer from the West possibly takes over jobs from the locals as e.g. nurses or teachers. Consequently, it can be wise to raise this as an issue and question if this is also the case for the volunteer work providers from the Netherlands.

5.2.4. The Gapper as the Volunteer: All Good?

According to Lyons et al. (2012) undertaking volunteering activities during a gap year is an increasingly popular phenomenon. While examining the providers specialized in volunteer work, of course a lot of findings relate to volunteering during a gap year. As Lyons et al. (2012) note, "there has been a proliferation of volunteer projects" (p. 367), this can also be said for the volunteer work providers in the Netherlands. As mentioned above in section 5.3.1., various volunteer projects are offered, for various time frames

and the volunteer can choose from destinations worldwide and go there with the help of non-profit, non-governmental or simply commercial volunteer work providers.

Firstly, like for the gap year providers, it was found that providers represent volunteering as the perfect way to make a moral contribution to a project and a good contribution to the volunteer's self-development. Six volunteer work providers mention that volunteer work is not only good for making a societal contribution, but also a great opportunity to get to know new cultures, see new places and enrich oneself. Eight providers also mention that volunteering abroad is a unique life changing experience. *Travel For Change's* mission is therefore:

"creating chances [for volunteers] to professional and affordably get to know new cultures, broadening their horizons and making a positive contribution to projects through knowledge exchanging knowledge, collaboration and mutual understanding" (from the website of Travel For Change, accessed on 3/9/2014 1:34 PM, translated by author).

The focus of this quote is not only on doing something good, but the volunteer also gets something positive out of doing volunteer work. As Lyons et al. (2012) state the volunteer products as for the gap year experience is offered as a product where mutual benefit can be derived from, benefits for the hosts and benefits for the volunteer. These benefits will be discussed later on this chapter.

Another theme that comes back in both the web content of gap year providers and volunteer work providers is the attempt of the providers to address the volunteer personally and individually in the sense of 'you can make a difference' and 'you can help'. As mentioned for the gap year providers, this as well is in line with the lifestyle politics that Giddens (1994), Butcher (2004) and Butcher and Smith (2010) discuss. As *Projects Abroad* mentions on their website:

"Education in most developing countries is not comparable with education here [in the Netherlands]. For the development of a child, good education is necessary. You can make a contribution in this development through taking part in a teaching volunteer project. You will teach English or another subject where there is the need and in return you get enthusiastic students who get the chance for a better future" (from the website of Projects Abroad, accessed on 1/9/2014 1.03 PM, translated by the author).

This quote does not only illustrate that help is necessary but also that the volunteer personally can contribute to a better future for his or her students. Just as Giddens (1994) states, the individual is looking to make a difference on an individual level and is trying to make a change in the environment around them. Butcher and Smith (2010) see volunteer tourism in this sense as a product of these life politics; the individual who is looking to make a difference 'buys' a volunteer product and in this way justifies his or her lifestyle as morally right. The buying of this ethical and right product of volunteering can therefore be seen as being part of the more wider agenda of ethical consumption. The volunteer work providers in this sense address the gappers with 'you can make a

difference' to target that specific individual that feels the need to have a more justifiable lifestyle, this is also evident in the quote below:

"Uganda is a country that is has a great deal of poverty. The quality of the education and healthcare is – in our western eyes – low. Travel 4 Change offers a couple of fun, informative, but mostly useful projects in which you as a volunteer or an intern can make a difference in the development of the Ugandans and the Ugandan society" (from the website of Travel For Change, accessed on 3/9/2014 1:34 PM, translated by author).

This quote illustrates a whole range of notions that can be looked at from a critical viewpoint. First, similar to the quote from *Projects Abroad* above, this quote implies that 'you as a volunteer or an intern' can make a positive difference. Again addressing the gapper as someone who can make a change through their personal decisions, which is line with Butcher and Smith's (2010) notion of life politics and the way gappers seem to consume ethically: "through individual experience we can develop, decision by decision, a more ethical world, with less suffering and more fairness and greater opportunity" (p. 34). However, how much difference one individual volunteer might make is questionable (Simpson, 2004). In addition, this quote as well as the above quote from *Projects Abroad*, illustrates that there is a distinction between the education in the Netherlands and the education in the developing country and that help is needed to change this around. Just as it was found for the gap year providers, this might increase dichotomies between the volunteer and the "those in need for help" (Simpson, 2004; Sin, 2009). For more providers comments such as these were found, *Commundo* for example states:

"On so many places on this globe there is a need for extra support and solidarity. We are convinced that a lot of Western citizens would like to contribute to a better world" (from the website of Commundo, accessed on 1/9/2014 5.03 PM).

This clearly illustrates that Western citizens are seen as the providers of such support and solidarity. This might be seen as quite questionable, since *Commundo* also claims to try to create mutual cultural understanding. It gives the impression this understanding cannot be mutual if the Western citizens are seen as the helpers and the developing countries as the receivers of such care. Thus, in line with Simpson (2004) who claims that gap year providers reference to volunteers as being 'useful' and 'needed', this can also be found back in the web content of Dutch providers. The help of Westerners is therefore needed to make the developing world a 'better place'. Simpson (2004) talks about this promotion as the 'geography of need' as: "a pandemic series of communities who have needs that can best, or only, be met by gap year volunteers" (p. 115) and states that there is always a notion of 'otherness' involved in these kind of statements. As mentioned in the findings for gap year providers, this might lead to strengthening dichotomies, where the third world is portrayed as 'needy'. For example, *SIW* states about teaching abroad:

“The beautiful thing about teaching abroad is that you get so much in return. For example, the enthusiasm from the students and their eagerness to learn. Not only the students will show you their appreciation, also the local teachers can and want to learn from you and improve their English language skills” (from the website of SIW, accessed on 2/9/2014 1.44 PM, translated by author).

This quote implies so many different things; that there is eagerness to learn in developing countries, that English is something that should be learned in those countries, that the locals will be so grateful towards the volunteer and that local teachers are subordinate to the Western volunteer. This is a clear example of how the spaces of the third world will be defined by needs and as less developed in the eyes of the gappers and their organizations, needs that are ‘curable’ by non-skilled volunteers (Simpson, 2004).

This non-skilled volunteer that can cure the ‘needy’ is another theme that came out of the data frequently, as there were ten volunteer work providers who mentioned there are no special requirements for selecting volunteers. The volunteer is not required to hold special knowledge or special skills in order to start at a project. None of the volunteer work providers mentions that they will not send the gapper somewhere where locals can do a better job than them. Although it depends on the type of projects the volunteer wants to work on, activities like helping out at a day care or school are always possible. However, most providers mention that even though it is not required from the volunteer to have special skills or experience, they have to be enthusiastic, have a great drive and be flexible, like the below quote illustrates:

“We believe in the collective power of volunteers who are willingly, who maybe do not have a lot of experiences, but who are willing to make this up in energy, enthusiasm and optimism.” (from the website of Projects Abroad, accessed on 1/9/2014 1.03 PM, translated by the author).

This quote perfectly illustrates that skills are not needed, but enthusiasm is. Butcher and Smith (2010) argue that volunteers can therefore experiment with their identity and can take, and pay for, the role they want within the host community while no attention is paid to their lack of experience or qualifications. As mentioned before, the 18 year old high school graduate can help out as a teacher at a little school in Cambodia without any qualification, something that most certainly would not be possible in the Netherlands. The quote below illustrates this:

“Teaching abroad mostly comes down to teaching English to children or adults in developing countries. If you want to teach abroad, it is therefore important that your English is up to basic standards. However, experience with teaching is certainly not necessary” (from the website of SIW, accessed on 2/9/2014 1.44 PM, translated by author).

Apparently, the only thing that a volunteer needs in order to teach English is a basic understanding of the language, understanding of how to be a teacher or to educate children is certainly not required. Again, as for the gap year providers, this can be seen as reason for concern (cf. Simpson, 2004). Once more, young people without any skills

will ‘practice’ on children in third world countries. Butcher and Smith (2010) also stress this point, stating that in the past volunteers for Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) or the United States’ Peace Corps were not seen as tourist, but as skilled and committed people. This urges again the importance to evaluate the real motivations behind volunteering during a gap year; for the self or for the good of the world? However, three of the providers require a ‘Verklaring Omtrent Gedrag’ of their potential volunteers. This is a testimony which the judicial history of a person is described; a personal will receive a ‘Verklaring Omtrent Gedrag’ from the government if he was not involved in criminal behavior relevant for the function or position he is applying for. This basically means that the providers check if the potential volunteer has a criminal record, which can be important if the volunteer will work with vulnerable groups such as children. Another noticeable matter is, similar to some of the gap year providers, only one of the volunteer work providers works with Stichting Muses. *Het Andere Reizen* describes a training day with Stichting Muses where attention is given to issues such as how to deal with culture shocks. Although they do not work with Stichting Muses, four other volunteer work providers offer their clientele an extensive preparation before the start of the project, may it be in form of a booklet or a whole training weekend. Another theme that came back in for the volunteer work providers, is that for working with children often a minimum duration is required to really make a difference. *Projects Abroad* describes that the longer you stay at a project the higher your contribution might be. Another important thing that is stressed is that is not considered ideal for children to have to get used to new volunteers every week. This shows this provider thinks about the issues at stake while working with children, however most of the providers do not make any claims about this on their websites.

This section of the findings is trying to illustrate that volunteer tourism in general or as part of a gap year might not be all good or morally-right. As Lyons et al. (2012) argue, tourism and volunteer tourism must be understood in terms of a power relationship, and where first world tourist travel to developing countries to ‘help the ones in need’ critical questions need to be raised. These findings illustrate that the promotion of the volunteering product within the gap year experience revolves around dichotomies such as ‘the helper’ and ‘the needy’, while trying to sell a possibility to justify an ethical lifestyle. As Lyons et al. (ibid.) mention, traditionally volunteer projects were developed and offered by non-governmental and non-profit organizations that had direct ties to the host community, however “commercial providers are developing volunteer tourism products and services that do little to serve the needs of either the volunteer tourists or the host communities they seek to serve” (p. 372) The aim of these commercial providers is in the end to make profits from the experiences they offer. As this experience becomes commodified there is a need to look critically to what has happening around the gap year volunteer experience.

5.2.5. A Year Abroad: The Way to Self-Development and Personal Enrichment?

Five of the volunteer work providers state that an experience abroad and volunteering abroad is especially good for the personal development of the gapper or volunteer. As *SIW* states:

"Almost graduated and in need for a gap year? Looking for a challenge to develop yourself and making a contribution? Then custom-made volunteer work might be something for you!" (from the website of SIW, accessed on 2/9/2014 1.44 PM, translated by author).

Just as the gap year providers, the volunteer work providers see volunteering abroad as the perfect way to broaden horizons and enriching one's life. They state that after volunteering the volunteer will never look at the world the same again and that her or his meaning in life will change after the volunteer comes back home. Moreover, Butcher and Smith (2010) argue that these types of experiences link closely with the narrative of personal growth. The volunteer will probably end up in a totally different environment that he or she is used to, where other norms and values are seen as important and dealing with this is seen as an enormous boost to one's personal development. Like for the gap year providers, the volunteer work providers also relate this personal development to skill-development and an investment in one-self. The next sections will elaborate more on this.

5.2.6. A Year Abroad: The Product of Skill-development

Heath (2007) argues that mostly the gappers choice to participate in a volunteer project turns around altruistic values; gaining cultural capital and enhancing one's CV are said to be motivations for volunteering. Similar to the gap year providers, the notion of skill-development, definitely comes forward on all websites of the volunteer work providers. The volunteer work providers claim that not only social and practical skills will be enhanced, but the volunteer will also become more mature, independent and flexible. These claims are quite of the same nature as the claims of the gap year providers, they focus on how an individual can develop themselves not only on a personal level but also on a practical level. This is in line with claims of about presumed benefits of the gap year product (see Simpson, 2004; Heath, 2007; Butcher & Smith, 2010; Lyons et al., 2012). *Projects Abroad* states for example that doing volunteer work can be a boost for your practical experience, something that might come in useful in the future. Other providers mention that volunteering also offers a kick-start for language skills. Most of these promises of skill-development are similar to the ones described in the findings section for the gap year providers above. However, unlike with the gap year providers, on the websites of the volunteer work providers skill-development in terms of intercultural competences comes forward the most. This is demonstrated in the quote below:

"Spending time in Africa, Asia or Latin America is an enormous informative adventure. Through making a contribution to a project, you are living and working for a while within local communities and with young locals. You will get to know a different language and a different culture. Because you are making a contribution to a project of your choice, you will make a contribution to something that you think is valuable and important. You will learn more about the country, intercultural aspects and about yourself. Being a volunteer and world citizen is a big plus on your resume!" (from the website of Dare 2 Go, accessed on 3/9/2014 3.33 PM, translated by author).

This quote illustrates that by doing volunteer work, the volunteer will acquire intercultural skills through working within and with local people of different countries and different cultures. In line with comments of Wearing (2001), in which he claims that volunteering would lead to cross-cultural understanding and mutual respect, this illustrates that providers made these same statements. It also implies that *Dare 2 Go* believes that volunteering would turn people into world citizens and that this is seen as a special advantage for someone's resume. Another quote on the possibility of skill-development comes from *Projects Abroad*:

"When you are doing volunteer work or an internship with Projects Abroad this will lead to an added value for your resume. Not only because of the work experience you will acquire, but also because it shows that you possess perseverance, empathy and responsibly. These qualities, combined with your work experience and the references you will receive from us, will give your resume an unique enrichment" (from the website of Projects Abroad, accessed on 1/9/2014 1.03 PM, translated by the author).

This quote illustrates that not certain skills will be developed, it assumes that these skills will be of added value to the gapper's resume. Lyons et al. (2012) see this promotion of skill development through gap year experiences as another commodification of the experience. They argue that gap year tourism and volunteering can be seen as self-serving consumer travel activities. Simpson (2004) argues that the commodification of these activities also lead to the institutionalization of the volunteering industry. The above quote illustrates these self-serving motivations behind volunteer tourism; the desire to build one's resume and strengthen qualities, and as Sin (2009, p. 489) states volunteering is seen by volunteers as: "to gain cultural capital through the collection of knowledge and experience". The soft skills mentioned in the quote above can be seen as part of this cultural capital. The volunteering activity is therefore not only promoted as self-less and doing something good, it is also presented as the way to self-development and gaining valuable skills.

5.2.7. Gappers as Global Citizens?

As discussed in the theoretical framework of this report a global citizen is someone who is self-aware, knows what is happening in the world, cares for others no matter their background and has a cross-culture understanding (see Nussbaum, 1996, Urry, 2002; Lyons et al., 2011; Schattle, 2009). Eight of the eleven volunteer work providers analysed had claims that were in line with this notion of global citizenship. *AFS Interculturele Uitwisseling* for instance promises to help clients to become real global citizens through creating mutual understanding between cultures during their projects. *Be More* has quite a lyrical mission statement: "Building a strong bridge between people of different backgrounds, cultures and continents; inspire them to walk this bridge and creating a bond between both sides" (from the website of Be More, accessed on , translated by the author). Many providers mention that the deep and intense contacts the volunteer will have with the local population in working together on projects will lead to sharing of backgrounds and cultures and creating cross-cultural understanding. *Dare 2 Go* mentions that during volunteering the gapper will learn what is the Dutch culture characterizes and how the country of the project is connected with the

Netherlands. *Projects Abroad* states that they believe in the power of cultural exchanges between people from different communities, these exchanges would help to create a world with a higher amount of mutual understanding and respect. *AFS Interculturele Uitwisseling* captures this in the following quote on what to expect when going abroad:

“You will probably discover that most of the things go totally different than you are used to. Tip: first observe these cultural differences, see them objectively and then try to act as the others around you. It can help you a lot if you sympathize with the local population. Think: if something is different, it is not right or wrong, it is just different. Try not to judge and stay open towards others. This can help you a lot from being the tourist or guest to someone who is really part of it” (from the website of ASF Interculturele Uitwisseling, accessed on 3/9/2014 9.59 PM, translated by author).

This quote illustrates that clients that go abroad with *AFS Interculturele Uitwisseling* will encounter new cultures and might have trouble with this, however the provider encourages being open and understanding and therefore not being a guest but someone who is really part of the host culture. Part of global citizenship is also caring about others, knowing what is happening in the world, caring about injustice trying to make a change (Urry, 2002). *SIW*’s mission statement sheds some light on how people could achieve this:

“It is SIW’s mission to stimulate people to broaden their horizons. SIW tries to do so in bringing volunteers in contact with other cultures. In this way SIW wants to enhance intercultural understanding, contribute to the personal development of the volunteer and encourage them to make them useful to create a better society” (from the website of SIW, accessed on 2/9/2014 13.44 PM, translated by author).

Thus, according to *SIW* volunteering could lead to intercultural understanding and people who are actively working towards a better world. Both of the quotes above however introduce a critical point; in order to create cross-cultural understanding it is necessary to have ‘another’ culture that can be compared to one’s own culture. Lyons et al. (2012) argue that in order to discover new places and meet new ‘others’ the concept of ‘othering’ slinks in again. The global citizen caring for the people of the world, therefore first labels them as ‘others’, ‘underdeveloped’ and ‘in need to be cared for’. This is a point Simpson (2004) stresses as well when she mentions that this might lead to an improvised notion of global citizenship amongst young people who volunteer during their gap year. As *Dare 2 Go* even states that volunteering and being a global citizen would be a great plus for one’s resume, this notion is ready to be marketed yet again. Being a global citizen and volunteering, as explained in the conceptual framework, might therefore not only be seen as a product that is good for the world, but also a product that is good for the gapper. This is elaborated on more in the section below.

5.2.8. The Gap Year Experience: The Personality Package

Just as for the gap year providers, the volunteer providers represent the volunteering experience as a great addition to one’s resume. However, as where most gap year providers make this statement, for the volunteer work providers only half of them

mention this. *AFS Interculturele Uitwisseling* states that volunteering abroad, where the volunteer learns a different language and creates intercultural communication skills, this would be a noticeable addition to one's resume. *Projects Abroad* mentions that a volunteering experience can be seen as an added value to one's resume and this is described as one of the advantages of going abroad:

"Added value to your resume: an experience abroad suites really well on your resume and your future employer will see this as a definite advantage, because it shows independency, engagement and flexibility" (from the website of Projects Abroad, accessed on 1/9/2014 1.03 PM, translated by the author).

The organization states further that not only the development of soft-skills but also practical ones while volunteering, is seen as a positive advantage over others who might not have had these experiences. Heath (2007) calls this 'the personality package' and states present day more and more graduates enter the market with the right graduate qualification, the soft skills the gapper will learn during the experience abroad is therefore used to rank individuals "in a climate of increased competition" (p. 100). The quote above illustrates this in stating that soft-skills will add value to the gapper's resume, not specifically the practical work experience from volunteering. Jones (2004) states that participating in activities abroad on a gap year will improve a range of skills that are seen by employers as important. Following this statement, it was found that two of the volunteer work providers explicitly mention that university administrators and future employers might find a volunteering experience abroad to be an advantage over others. One of the volunteer work providers, *Projects Abroad*, mentions at least seven times that doing a gap year and volunteering with them will lead to the ability to make a better grounded choice for future education and the future in general. Some of the other providers state that volunteering might lead to getting to know yourself and your goals in a more general sense, but *Projects Abroad* is the only provider that links this to choice of study. Choosing to do some voluntary work might even be a good preparation before this study might start according to the provider; this is illustrated in the quote below:

"Are you planning to study medicine, nursing or physiotherapy after graduating high school? Then doing volunteer work is the perfect preparation. You can have your first medical experience while seeing how local doctors and nurses work and maybe you might also assist in operations or child-births." (from the website of Projects Abroad, accessed on 1/9/2014 1.03 PM, translated by the author).

Having experiences abroad and volunteering is therefore not only seen by the providers as an advantage over peers when entering universities or future jobs, it is also seen as a great way to get to know oneself and make grounded choices for the future. Butcher and Smith (2010), therefore argue that the gap year experience is seen as a "training ground for future professionals who accumulate cultural capital through their volunteer work" (p. 30). The quote above implies that the volunteer will have advantages over others who do not have medical volunteering experiences when entering university. Volunteering during the gap year is therefore not only seen as doing something good, but also the chance to create a personality package and build an identity in order to

handle the competitive job market and get into the university or study program desired (Heath, 2007). According to Lyons et al. (2012), this embracing or creating of the self, including new skills, might be disguised as 'helping others', however it is necessary to take a close look at how this 'reciprocal altruism' is part of the representation of the volunteer gap year experience by Dutch providers.

5.3. The Language Course Providers

Next to gap year providers and volunteer work providers, a third analysis was done on the web content of providers that offer languages courses. In the last section of this chapter the findings from this analysis will be discussed. Just as in the previous sections, more information will be given about the type of language course providers and their products before going into the research findings regarding this group.

5.3.1. The Language Course Providers and Their Products

A total of ten language course providers have been analysed, most of them offering courses all around the world. *Easy Languages* for example, offers a wide range of different courses, from one week in the summer holidays to a whole semester or year abroad. The organization offers programmes such as a high school year abroad, a gap year abroad or the possibility to totally emerge in the culture and language of a country while staying at the home of a private teacher. Doing volunteer work in addition to a course can also be arranged by the provider. *ESL Taalreizen*, *Plus Taalreizen*, *Education First*, *Study Travel*, *Study Globe* and *Inter Language* offer the same kind of services to their clientele. These organizations are all similar, offering courses in mainly in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian and Chinese ranging from one week to a year. Most of these language course providers work with local partner school, although *Education First* has its own schools all over the world. Spending a year abroad at a high school in addition to a Dutch high school diploma was found to be offered quite often, *Into* is a provider that specifically offers this type of gap year experience around the world in countries from South America to Africa. All of these organizations also arrange the accommodation for their clients in the country where the courses take place; this can be in a host family, a student apartment or a hotel. For most of the organizations the client can choose what kind of courses will be effective for them, for instance classical in small groups or one-on-one classes. The providers mentioned above all have a special section on the gap year, where gappers can take a multi-language year divided over different destinations or a one-year intensive course to specialize in one specific language. Two of the providers focus on one specific language only. With *Don Quijote* the gapper can learn Spanish in Spain or South America, while with *Italstudio* the gapper will be emerged into the Italian language. Most of these providers offer quite similar services and opportunities, with six of them adding volunteering possibilities to the side. Therefore it was hard to really distinguish them from one another while solely looking at the products they offer. However, when looking at the text level of their web content more meaning could be derived, this will be discussed in the next section.

5.3.2. New Moral Tourism: The Gapper as the New Moral Tourist?

As the language course provider has quite a different target group than the other providers discussed above, statements that could be related to new moral tourism were not found very extensively in the web content of the different language course

providers. However, most of the providers mention that in order to discover the 'real' and 'authentic' one must speak the language of the local people. *Italstudio* mentions this as follows in the below quote:

"A language truly comes to life when you – next to grammar and vocabulary – also get to know the culture, history and the customs of the local population. An Italian course in Italy is therefore the way to totally emerge yourself in the Italian society. You will see: when you speak Italian, doors will open and it gets way more fun!"
(from the website of Italstudio, accessed on 29/8/2014 3.56 PM, translated by author).

Most of the providers cannot be described as providers for new moral tourists or providers who offer an ethical product. However, they do promote going abroad and learning a new language as the perfect way to get to know the local population, learn more about the local culture and get to know the 'real' Peru, Spain, Italy or Australia. It might be said that they are therefore not the providers who sell a more moral or ethically right product; they sell the tool to really reach the more morally right, authentic and ethical experience; the language in order to create intercultural experiences.

5.3.3. The Providers of the New Moral Tourism Product: Sustainable Practices?

Sustainable practices of most language course providers do not go further than working with local schools or supporting charities or good causes. Although, only three of the eleven providers analysed mention this on their website. *Education First* supports three good causes, one of them founded by the organization itself; the Mentor Foundation tries to prevent drug use and abuse worldwide. The provider also offers help and donates to those in need after disasters strike, for instance rebuilding libraries after hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana and donations to help victims of the earthquake on Haiti. The organization states that supporting children and orphans is a part of their Kids First champagne. *ELS Taalreizen* on the other hand offers clients to compensate their CO2 emissions from flying through supporting the My Climate foundation. *Study Travel* supports Unicef and asks every client to donate two euros in order to support a schooling project for kids in need in Bolivia. More than these providers supporting good causes was not found during the analyses, therefore it might be said that promoting sustainable travelling or attracting the new moral tourist is not really high on the agenda for these providers. However six of the eleven providers analysed offer the option to do volunteer work next to a language course. These providers will be discussed more in detail in the following section.

5.3.4. Learning a Language plus Volunteering: Added Value?

Out of the eleven language course providers six of them offer volunteering projects as part or in addition to their language course products. *Easy Languages* for example offers volunteer projects through partners of the languages schools they work with, the student can for example learn Spanish in the mornings and work at an animal shelter or orphanage in the afternoon. Although not a lot of language course providers offer volunteer activities next to their core business, the findings were quite similar to the

ones found in the web content of the gap year providers and the volunteer work providers regarding volunteering. Most of the providers mention that doing something good for the community or the country, is easy to combine with learning a language. *Plus Taalreizen* offers various volunteering opportunities and states:

“Next to learning Spanish, would you like to make yourself useful for the local population, the nature or the animals in Costa Rica? Then work as a volunteer for one of the projects in Costa Rica! Volunteer work in Costa Rica is the perfect opportunity to travel around the country while learning Spanish and helping others” (from the website of Plus Taalreizen, accessed on 29/8/2014 12.24 PM, translated by author).

Doing volunteer work is not only promoted as making a valuable contribution to the place you are staying in, but is also seen as a great way to learn the language faster. Students can combine both language courses and volunteering in the same time period, but also first learn the language for a couple of weeks followed by a period of volunteer work. For some of the volunteering projects it is even necessary to already have a basic understanding of the language in question. Questions surrounding the real motive for promoting these volunteering possibilities can be asked, to really try to make a difference or because it makes a more attractive product in combination with the language course (Simpson, 2004; Butcher & Smith, 2010; Lyons et al., 2012)? Similar to the gap year providers and the volunteer work providers, for the language course providers it is examined how they promote and represent volunteering. Although in smaller numbers, similar statements to both other providers have been found. The language course providers especially note there is need for help and that the student or volunteer can make a personal difference. *Easy Language* mentions the possibility to do volunteer work with a foundation that tries to help children living on the streets in Phnom Penh, Cambodia and states:

“The foundation is founded to help children who are living on the streets and who cannot feed themselves because their family does not have enough money or they do not have a family. The most important task is to serve meals to hungry children” (from the website of Easy Languages, accessed on 28/8/2014 10.34 AM, translated by author).

Just as stated in the earlier sections, this might lead to increasing dichotomies between the volunteer and the ‘hungry and needy’ children (Simpson, 2004; Sin, 2009).

5.3.5. A Year Abroad: The Way to Self-Development and Personal Enrichment?

Although in lesser sense as the gap year providers and the volunteer work providers, the language course providers analysed also mention that learning a language abroad is good for the personal development of the client. *Education First* mentions this as one of the advantages of doing a gap year with them:

“Personal development – students who did a gap year developed a higher amount of maturity, self-confidence and independency” (from the website of Education First, accessed on 28/8/2014 9.53 AM, translated by author).

The provider *Into*, who offers high school gap years and study exchanges in the United States also mentions the personal development students might go through when leaving home in the Netherlands and going for an adventure to the USA:

“One thing is sure: you will learn a lot of new things that will be of value in your further life. Next to the ‘high school experience’ you will experience living in a host family, your temporary home, and learn about the social-cultural life in that country. This period will absolutely add some to your personal development. Understanding for other people and other cultures is becoming increasingly more important in this world” (from the website of Into, accessed on 29/8/2014 4.11 PM, translated by author).

Going abroad, living in another environment and learning a new language is therefore promoted as an experience that is of great added value in the a future life. Most of this is mentioned because the student will learn a totally different language, which will be of value when studying or looking for a job. These language skills are therefore the main product the language course providers sell, more on the development of these and other skills will be discussed in the following section.

5.3.6. A Year Abroad: The Product of Skill-development

The language course providers mention that the student might develop skills that are in line with being more flexible, more independent and being able to adjust to every situation when going abroad to study a language. Improving one’s social and personal skills are also found to be reasons mentions to go abroad, *Interlanguage* mentions all of these in the following statement concerning a high school year in the United States:

“A high school year will change your life. You will notice that you will get more confidence, be more independent and be more mature. You will learn about new subjects in school, join new activities and discover hidden talents. You will broaden your horizon and your possibilities for the future and will develop a totally different perspective towards the world and your home country” (from the website of Interlanguage, accessed on 29/8/2014 11.06 AM, translated by author).

Developing soft skills and personal skills are therefore seen to be great additions when learning a language abroad. And even if eight of the eleven providers analysed mention developing intercultural communication skills and cross-cross cultural understanding, the main skills that students will develop are of course the language skills. Learning another language can be done by studying books and following classes in one’s home county, however five of the providers explicitly say that a language is learned best in the country where it is spoken. As *Study Travel* mentions:

“Communication is not only speaking a language. Also the customs, habits, interpretations and the ways of thinking often have an effect on communication.

You can learn, understand, and experience this solely in the country itself (from the website of Study Travel, accessed on 29/8/2014 1.22 PM, translated by author).

Also the importance of speaking multiple languages for one's future career or study is encouraged by many of the providers. *Study Travel* mentions again the importance of learning another language and developing language skills in the quote below:

"A good knowledge of modern languages is getting increasingly important every day. After all, fast communication media are making the world ever smaller. This is not only noticeable related to business; Dutch universities expect from their students that they are able to follow classes in English and read French study books. Information found on the internet is often in another language as well. People are going on holidays increasingly more and further away. Altogether, a good knowledge of modern languages nowadays is assumed" (from the website of Study Travel, accessed on 29/8/2014 1.22 PM, translated by author).

Not only is it found to be important to have knowledge over different languages, having a certificate to prove this is found to be of equal importance. Five of the providers examined state that there is always a possibility to partake in an exam and receive an official and internationally accepted certificate such as Cambridge English certificate, TOEFL certificate or DELE certificate. These certificates are mentioned not only to be an added value to one's resume, but also important when trying to apply for jobs or getting into certain university programs (Heath, 2007). The next section will go into the ways providers claim learning a language abroad can help students in their future life.

5.3.7. The Gap Year Experience: The Personality Package

Similar to the gap year providers and the volunteer work providers, the language course providers mention the importance of an experience abroad for the student's future life. All of the providers state in one way or another that an overseas experiences is of added value to one's resume and that university administrators and future employers see young people with experiences abroad as more mature, independent and therefore more desirable. Of course, the language course providers emphasize and promote the ability to speak different languages as a plus on one's resume. As *Education First* puts it:

"Learning a language is a serious matter. Give a boost to your career with one of our programs that introduce you to a specific subject or acquire international work experience through one of our internship options. We will always make sure that you will add value to your resume during your experience abroad" (from the website of Education First, accessed on 28/8/2014 9.53 AM, translated by author).

On the importance of speaking foreign languages in terms of future careers the provider *Easy Languages* mentions:

"An experience abroad is very beneficial to your resume. Most of our students finish the program with a greater knowledge of the English language. Your language and cultural skills will improve in different fields and your future employers will

definitely appreciate this" (from the website of Easy Languages, accessed on 28/8/2014 10.34 AM, translated by author).

Like the gap year providers and the volunteer work providers, a good deal of the language course providers mentions going abroad for a while is a good way to think about what the students really wants in life. It is also stated that this time off is a good way to think about the future career or future study, as *Into* mentions:

"A year abroad offers the young students the opportunity to think about their studies and help to make a better grounded choice for their future study. Research has shown that these students are less likely to drop out during the first year of their studies" (from the website of Into, accessed on 29/8/2014 4.11 PM, translated by author).

A year abroad is not only said to be good for making decisions on what and where to study, but also students who went on a gap year are less likely to drop out. *Interlanguage* and *Education First* share this opinion with *Into* and even mention Nuffic's (2012) research concerning the gap year in the Netherlands to support their claims. *Education First*, includes Nuffic's (2012) research into a list of benefits of the gap year:

"Research shows that students who went on a gap year will have better study results and graduate sooner" (from the website of Education First, accessed on 28/8/2014 9.53 AM, translated by author).

On the website of *Interlanguage* the visitor can even download the research summary of Nuffic's (2012) research:

"Research of Nuffic shows that a gap year can lead to amongst others less drop-outs [in university] and a better grounded study choice. See the research: [link to pdf]" (from the website of Interlanguage, accessed on 29/8/2014 11.06 AM, translated by author).

These quotes show that the language course providers promote the gap year as a good choice between high school and university; the gapper would make better grounded decisions for the future. Considering that *Education First* also lists the costs for dropping out of university after one year and compares them to the costs for the different gap year options, the organization does not only try to persuade the young high school graduates into doing a year abroad, it seems the it also tries to convince the parents.

5.3.8. Gappers as Global Citizens?

There are not a lot of claims made that are directly applicable to this theme, only the following statement of *Education First* comes quite close:

"Through the mission to break though language barriers, cultures and geography, Education First has helped people from different ages and nationalities to become

world citizens” (from the website of Education First, accessed on 28/8/2014 9.53 AM, translated by author).

Besides, around a quarter of the providers mention how learning a language abroad can help create cultural understanding. Most of the other providers point out that going abroad to learn a language comes with a wide array of new international friends and is a great opportunity to broaden one’s horizons. However, further than building an international network for the sake of one’s future career, not a lot has been mentioned on creating cross-cultural understanding or mutual respect which can relate these claims to global citizenship.

5.4. Summary of the Most Important Themes and Findings

To make a better sense and a overview of the findings discussed in this chapter, the table below summarizes the most striking points from these findings. It shows a summary on how the different providers represent the gap year and how certain aspects of this are promoted. This table will lead the way for the discussion in the next chapter.

Core Concepts	New Moral Tourism	Global Citizenship	Self-Development	Noticeable
<i>Gap Year Providers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The gap year product is represented as ‘off the beaten track’ and authentic. The gapper is positioned as a person who breaks free from the masses, looking for more individual and real experiences. A negative image and rejection of the “ordinary” mass tourist is presented e.g. packaged holidays and organized trips. Volunteer possibilities within the gap year are seen as the real way to go off the beaten track. <u>However</u>: the gap year product is highly organized e.g. airport pick-ups and local support services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting and working with people with different backgrounds and cultures all around the world is emphasised as a benefit of the gap year experience. The gapper as volunteer is concerned for the societal position of others and helping others. <u>However</u>: this can be seen as ‘reciprocal altruism’: by helping others, one receives intercultural skills. <u>And</u>: helping the less fortunate and striving for justice assumes that the ‘other’ needs to be ‘helped’; strengthening dichotomies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great emphasis is placed on the self-development and self-enrichment a gap year experience might bring. Part of this is the promotion of developing skills in going abroad, working abroad and volunteering abroad The ‘product of self-development’ is sold in order to enrich one’s resume and have advantage over peers This commodifies the gap year experience and institutionalizes it even further. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a strong focus on both representing the gap year as going ‘off the beaten path’ and as an ‘authentic’ experiences, which are the perfect opportunity to gain skills and capital that can be of added value for one’s professional future. Notions related to global citizenship, helping others and creating intercultural understanding had a limited occurrence for gap year providers. The representation of the gap year by the providers encourages or strengthens dichotomies. <u>But</u>: the ethical part of the new moral tourism notion does not come forward strongly in the websites of these providers.
<i>Volunteer Work Providers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong focus on rejecting the ordinary tourist and instead doing something ‘adventurous’ and ‘useful’ during a year off. Volunteering can provide these experiences. Volunteering is portrayed as the perfect way to an 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting and working with people with different backgrounds and cultures all around the world is emphasised as a benefit of the gap year experience. The gapper as volunteer is concerned for the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great emphasis is placed on the self-development and self-enrichment a volunteering experience might bring. Part of this is the promotion of developing skills in going abroad, working abroad and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High focus on the volunteer as “doing something good” and helping out others. Therefore, notions related to global citizenship, helping others and creating intercultural

	<p>authentic experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The volunteer is needed as an individual to help the “needy”. • <u>However</u>: this can be seen as ‘reciprocal altruism’: by helping others, one can enrich oneself. • <u>And</u>: the volunteer product is highly organized e.g. airport pick-ups and local support services. 	<p>societal position of others and helping others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>However</u>: this can be seen as ‘reciprocal altruism’: by helping others, one receives intercultural skills. • <u>And</u>: helping the less fortunate and striving for justice assumes that the ‘other’ needs to be ‘helped’; strengthening dichotomies. 	<p>volunteering abroad</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ‘product of self-development’ is sold in order to enrich one’s resume and have advantage over peers • This commodifies the volunteer experience and institutionalizes it even further. 	<p>understanding occurred abundantly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The representation of the gap year by the providers encourages or strengthens dichotomies. • Volunteering also promoted as a chance to ‘really’ experience the local culture • Skills-developed through volunteering was mentioned plenty, with a focus on developing intercultural skills. • <u>However</u>: can the volunteering product be bought by non-skilled youngster to enrich oneself and try on a different identity?
<i>Language Course Providers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning a local language is seen as the perfect way to discover the “real” and “authentic” • Volunteering activities are offered as a ‘side’ to the • <u>However</u>: providers do not promote their product as ethically-right. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers argue that learning a different language can help creating mutual understanding between cultures. • The product ‘learning a language’ is again seen as a way to have a more authentic experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strong focus on developing language skills while abroad • The ‘product of self-development’ is sold in order to enrich one’s resume and have advantage over peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very strong focus on promoting language skills that the gapper will acquire when going abroad • This is promoted as the perfect way to have a more local and authentic experience, but also as a product of skill-development and having advantages over peers.

Table 3. Summary of Findings

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter the findings for the different gap year providers will be evaluated and when applicable be discussed in relation to the notions discussed in the theoretical framework earlier in this report. Three different groups were examined, gap year providers, volunteer work providers and language course providers and as discussed in the previous chapter differences and similarities in the representation of the gap year between these groups were found as well. In the latter part of the chapter these differences and similarities will be discussed and concluding remarks will be made.

6.1. Discussion

REJECTION OF MASS TOURISM: THE ALTERNATIVE PRODUCT?

In line with Butcher (2003) and Simpson (2004) stating that notions of new moral tourism and ethical travel can be found back in the gap year practices, it was examined if these notions indeed come back in the way the Dutch gap year providers represent the product. First of all it was noticed that the Dutch gap year providers seem to reject the 'normal' and 'average' tourist and promote their product as more adventurous and alternative. It is claimed that the gap year tourist will have a more enriching experience and will move away from 'mainstream' tourism. Where Butcher (2003) argues that the mass tourist would consume mass-marketed products, not being open for culture experience and only would be pleasure-seeking, the new moral tourist is looking for cultural exchange and authentic local experiences. The gap year product that is offered by the providers in the Netherlands is represented as an opposite of these mass tourists; it is represented as an alternative to it. Several of negative critiques are raised by providers around the 'ordinary' tourist, most of them aimed at how 'normal' the holidays and lives of these people are in comparison to the adventurous times the providers are offering. The findings are therefore in line with Simpson (2004) who argues that the gap year experience is promoted as an alternative form of tourism. It seems that the gap year product in the Netherlands is promoted as an alternative to mass tourism and as a 'real' experience, whatever 'real' might be. Another point Butcher (2003), Mowforth and Munt (2009), and Week (2012) stress about the new moral tourist or alternative tourist is that they would be looking for more authentic and real experiences and go off the beaten track to experience the local and the authentic. As a rejection of the mass-experience, indeed the gap year providers claim their experience to be more local, more real and more authentic. Especially the volunteer work providers state that going abroad and working with the locals would lead to experiences the normal tourist would never have.

However, taking a deeper look into the products on offer, it is questionable how adventurous, authentic and real these experiences are. Most of the providers have different products and activities, which the gapper can turn into a custom-made gap year experience. This experience can including volunteer work, a language course and some pub crawls to make new friends along the way. Flying to the other side of the world to do volunteer work might seem adventurous, but especially after noticing that most of the providers offer packaged experiences, including accommodation, flights,

airport pick and drop-off, an introduction week, local staff at the destination and a 24-hour emergency support it seems a little less adventurous after all. Seeing how many gap year products are on offer in the Netherlands in combination with Simpson's (2004), Butcher and Smith's (2010) and Lyons's et al. (2012) arguments of the commodification of the gap year experience, it seems that the gap year product is turned into a packaged and mass-marketed product which combines the desire to see the 'real' world not as an adventurous individual, but with a organization who has everything comfortably arranged. Following this the gap year in the Netherlands seems to be institutionalized, just as Simpson (2004, p. 143) states: "the gap year has evolved from an alternative activity inspired by tales from the hippie trail and dominated by the charity sector, into an industry of commercial companies". Both Simpson (2004) and Lyons et al. (2012) mention this in regards to the British and the Australian gap year market and it can be said that the findings of this research on the representation of the gap year in the Netherlands is in line with what is happening for these markets. The providers try very hard to promote their product as alternative, however it seems that this product has more in common with the mass and packaged holidays after all.

CAN THE GAP YEAR BE PROMOTED AS ETHICAL?

In order to answer this question we have to look at Butcher's (2003) notion of new moral tourism:

"Tourism that is justified less in terms of desires of the consumer and more from perspective of its perceived benign influence on the natural world and on the culture of the host" (Butcher 2003, p. 5).

New moral tourism is used in this research as the umbrella term for forms of tourism that are aiming to dissociate themselves from mass-tourism and trying to bring a more positive influence to the environment and culture of the host (Mowforth & Munt, 2009), for example ecotourism, sustainable tourism, community-based tourism, fair trade tourism, ethical tourism and pro-poor tourism. Argued by Simpson (2004), Butcher and Smith (2010) and Lyons et al. (2012) the gap year product is also promoted to be in line with these notions; it can be seen as an alternative form of tourism, especially if volunteer tourism is included in this product. However, just as these authors claim, there is a need to critically examine this. Very few claims of the gap year providers focus on the importance of morally-right and sustainable travelling in the sense of working with local providers, being open for culture differences and treating the visited environment well, points that are well associated with new moral tourism (Butcher, 2003; Mowforth & Munt, 2009; Week, 2012). Apart from donating to good causes or offering volunteering products, not much is done to persuade the gapper to travel more sustainability. The gap year provider keeps going on about how good it is to go off the beaten path and experience the local, but not tell the gapper how to do this in a moral and ethical way. For example, an off the beaten track Indonesian island is represented as the place to go local and have an authentic experience, however the possible negative effects of tourist travelling here, in a cultural or environmental sense, are not mentioned. Wheeler (1991) argues that this might even be worse on the long term; alternative tourist visiting places where no tourist has been before might do more harm

than the mass tourist who goes to the beach of Benidorm every year for fun and pleasure. As Hermann (2013) and Simpson (2004) state, the gap year, that was seen as associated with these notions of fun and pleasure before, is now represented as an experience that has to be 'good', 'worthwhile' and 'useful'. This idea of usefulness was especially noted from the plethora of volunteering opportunities that are offered as part of the gap year experience. The possibility to include volunteering into the gap year experience might point out that the gap year in the Netherlands is indeed represented as moral or ethical product by the providers. However, the way the product is represented does not mean it is actually sustainable, moral or ethical.

The way the volunteering product is presented raises concerns. As Simpson (2004) and Sin (2009) argue, volunteer tourism can lead to growing dichotomies between the Western world of the volunteer and the world of the 'needy'. The volunteering product for the Dutch market is often presented with statements as 'help is necessary', and 'you can help'. The underlying assumption of these statements is that the Western volunteer is needed to help the underdeveloped third world countries in need. According to Sin (2009) this increases dichotomies between the 'helper' and 'receiver' even more. Not only notions of 'need' came back in the representations by the Dutch gap year providers, there were several statements found that imply knowledge, education or healthcare in the parts of the world where volunteer projects are situated is seen as subordinate to Western knowledge. If this message is given to young people in the Netherlands through gap year experiences, it will only lead to a strengthening of dichotomies. Dichotomies where Western young volunteers stereotype the 'needy' people in the global South and see their own identity in the light of 'helper'. Simpson (2004) talks about this promotion of volunteer work as the 'geography of need': "a pandemic series of communities who have needs that can best, or only, be met by gap year volunteers" (p. 115). The emphasis that is laid on the fact that 'individual' and 'you' apparently can make all the difference, in line with life politics (Giddens, 1994) and notions of ethical consumption (Butcher, 2003), is only enforcing the representation as the volunteer as superior. Therefore, the way volunteer tourism is promoted as part of the gap year product in the Netherlands might not be in line with Butcher's (2003) view on new moral tourism, in which respect for other cultures seems to be one of the conditions.

Another noticeable point in the promotion of this product is that young volunteers are often not required to have any work experience or qualifications in order to join volunteering projects. This is especially surprising when considering that the volunteer often works with children, vulnerable groups or even acts as medical staff and treats patients. In the Netherlands a young 18 year old would not have the chance to be a teacher or an operation assistant without the required qualifications, but in Bolivia or Vietnam this is apparently not considered to be a problem? Butcher and Smith (2010) and Simpson (2004) argue that this is why the gap year experience might be so appealing to young people: the chance to get to practice different roles and try on various identities. Again, this would lead to creating dichotomies; the volunteer can 'practice' on the people in the developing countries, rather than learn from them. If gap year providers promote the volunteering possibilities in such a way that the Dutch youth gets the idea that volunteering is the way to practice their skills or decide what type of study fits best for them, it is reason to raise concern. In addition it needs to be

mentioned that the gap year providers represent the volunteering product as an experience that benefits both the local projects as well as the volunteer. Matthews (2008) argues that instead of a tourist just passing through, a volunteer is someone who creates mutual benefits; the possibility to make the world a better place and in for this an authentic travel experiences. The gap year providers in the Netherlands give a strong emphasis to the benefits not only the local projects will receive, but also the benefits the volunteer will get out of the whole experience, especially related to skill-development and personal enrichment.

The gap year volunteering product is promoted as ethical by the Dutch providers, however a strong emphasis is laid on the benefits of this being 'ethical' for the gapper himself; skill enhancement and personal development. Therefore, it is questionable what the gap year providers is really trying to sell; promoting a ethical product and trying to make the world a better place, or promoting this product as part of a product of self-development to target young people who are looking to enhance their resumes. Furthermore, by promoting these volunteering possibilities as part of the commercial gap year product it seems that for some of the Dutch gap year providers their volunteering projects in the third world have become just as commodified as the packaged holidays to the Mediterranean.

THE GLOBAL CITIZENS AND THEIR SKILLS

The slogan of Bureau Buitenland is: "discover the world, discover yourself" (from the website of Bureau Buitenland, accessed on 27/8/2014 11.34 AM, translated by the author). It seems that the gap year providers are putting a great deal of effort in outlining the positive benefits of doing a gap year to the potential gappers and for some even to their parents. The gap year is promoted as not just a product that allows you to explore the world, but also allows you to discover yourself. In line with arguments of Simpson (2009), Heath (2005; 2007) and Butcher and Smith (2010) the centre of the promotion of the gap year experience seems to be the notion of 'broadening horizons'. This broadening horizons and discovering new worlds would lead to opportunities for self-development, learning about other cultures, creating more mature and responsible citizens and promoting global awareness (Simpson, 2004). Especially the practical skills and soft skills the gapper would develop during a year abroad are emphasised. According to the Dutch gap year providers the gapper would develop soft skills, which apparently cannot sufficiently be obtained during the formal high school education or higher education, and this would give the gapper an automatic advantage over others when applying for jobs or universities. Heath (2005) claims that she found the same kind of statements during her content analysis of promotional material of UK gap year providers. Lyons et al. (2012) and Butcher and Smith (2010) argue that the gap year product, and volunteer product, is promoted as having both benefits for the local community as for the gapper himself. Söderman and Snead (2008) also found that volunteers often see the experience as useful for themselves, not only for the project. They (Söderman & Snead, 2008) argue that developing language skills and networking are seen as positive outcomes by volunteers. The representation of this 'reciprocal altruism' is also present in way the gap year is presented by Dutch gap year providers. The slogan seems to be: 'help out others, enrich yourself!' Questionable is then how altruistic is the deed of volunteering really for these gappers? As Sin (2009) notes:

“many volunteer tourists are typically more interested in fulfilling objectives relating to the ‘self’ “(p. 497). She argues that this can be self-development and learning, but also simply the desire to travel, rather than the altruistic perception of helping and doing something good. Is the aim of volunteering during the gap year to developing one’s skills and enhancing one’s resume or solely doing something good for the world?

The way this ‘reciprocal altruism’ is represented in the gap year product by the providers is in order for a volunteering activity to be fulfilling, it needs to give the gapper something positive as well. This ‘something’ positive is represented by the providers as the chance to have a real and authentic experience and the personal enrichment and skill-development that will derive from this. Heath (2005) and Simpson (2004) also argued that it is expected from gappers that they will spend their year productive, useful and worthwhile and it is seen as a year where identities are created, especially concerning citizenship. Butcher and Smith (2010) link the volunteering aspects of a gap year abroad to developing a sense of global citizenship. As Mark Twain said: ‘travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness’. In line with this Lyons et al. (2012) argue that tourism and travelling is seen as an important contributor to the creation of global citizens, it would enhance cross-cultural understanding, developed a high level of tolerance, disable stereotyping and the exchange of values. Especially the gap year providers who offer volunteer products emphasize that the volunteering experience would lead to these types of benefits; cross-cultural understanding, respect for other cultures and tolerance for those who are different. It could be said that becoming a global citizen through travelling also comes with creating some form of social and cultural capital for oneself (Butcher & Smith, 2010). And it is exactly this kind of capital that adds to the ‘personality package’ and scores so good at university administration offices and with future employers (Simpson, 2004). Being a global citizen would therefore not only be a proof of one’s intercultural skills and competences also an increasingly highly valued as a plus on one’s resume (Jones, 2004). This is especially emphasised by the gap year providers; how being a global citizen will lead to the required skills to stand out from the crowd on the job market. Again, the notion of ‘reciprocal altruism’ is represented by the providers; broadening horizons by volunteering leads to development of global citizens and skills that are considered to be useful for the future. However, Lyons et al. (2012) state that claims that link gap year tourism with global citizenship are empirically unsupported. Nonetheless, the Dutch gap year industry is certainly picking up on the potential to represent the gap year product in this light. Where gap years were first for the drop-outs, the rebels and the people with nothing better to do, the settings seem to be changed to create global citizens, ethical consumers, better students and perfect professionals (Simpson, 2004). And the gap year providers certainly know how to present these benefits to the young people of the Netherlands.

6.2. Conclusion

The contemporary gap year is believed to be a legacy of the ‘year out’ to be able to travel the ‘hippie trails’, once undertaken in the 60’s and 70’s to travel from Europe to Asia (Hermann, 2013). In this time thousands of young people travelled to the East in search for adventure, new impressions and self-exploration (Heath, 2005). This search for adventure and self-exploration seems to continue in the present day gap year

experience many young Western people undertake every year. With the accounts that going on a gap year would lead to self-development and better cultural understandings (Heath, 2007; Butcher & Smith 2010), one might see why these two phenomena are compared. However nowadays the construction of the gap year is not only about sightseeing and discovering oneself anymore. Activities such as volunteering, learning a different language and just simply working abroad are put in the mix of, the seemingly endless, possibilities the gap year has to offer (Hermann, 2013). And with the education sector, governmental institutions and the tourism industry encouraging and promoting the practice, the gap year is not seen as 'wasting time' or a 'year off' any longer (Butcher & Smith, 2010). Nowadays the gap year has become a time where the young high school graduate can broaden his or her horizons through travel; and along the way one can 'become a better person' or 'do something good for the world'. This so-called volunteer tourism is a fast growing phenomenon to combine with other activities during the gap year (Söderman & Snead, 2008) and most of the gap year organizations websites include volunteering as part of the gap year product (Lyons et al., 2008). Hermann (2013, p. 16) argues that the gap year experience was first seen as "an arena of unstigmatised tourist performances, based on personal choice or preference and related to pleasure, fun, relaxation, hedonism and adventure" and now the experience is turned into an area which is increasingly moralized, where 'making a difference' seems to be needed in order for it to be fulfilling. In making this difference, it is argued that the gapper will learn cross-cultural understanding, soft skills and a higher dependency than their not-gapping peers (see Lyons et al., 2012; Heath, 2005). Taking a year off and travel abroad is therefore not only seen as doing something good for the world, but also to foster self-development and personal enrichment. As university-recruiters and employers favour the skills that gappers require while abroad, it can be a way to distinct yourself from your peers when applying for university or even looking for a job after graduation (Heath, 2005; Lyons et al., 2012). It is here where the question arises: is the gap year a chance to do an array of altruistic acts in make the world a better place or is the perfect place for self-enrichment?

In the Netherlands, taking a year off is found increasingly popular amongst young Dutch people (Hermann 2013). Although there has been a growing interest in the gap year phenomenon over the past years by academics (see Simpson, 2004; Söderman & Snead, 2008; Snee, 2013) in general, not a lot has been known yet about the phenomenon in the Dutch context. Only a small amount of research is done in the Netherlands, not necessarily solely on an academic level. Therefore, this study tried to contribute to this research gap and looked at the phenomenon of the gap year in the context of the Netherlands. The study tried to understand if the gap year product is represented and promoted as a product that principally encourages altruistic acts and the desire to benefit the places visited or whether this representation and promotion is based on creating global citizens through more self-centred values of skill-development and resume enhancing. Therefore, the representation of the gap year product in the Netherlands is analysed through a content analysis of Dutch providers who link their activities to the gap year experience. New moral tourism, global citizenship and self-development were the leading (theoretical) notions that were used to understand how the gap year product is represented and promoted by these providers.

Three type of providers were found that offered products that they linked suitable for the gap year; the gap year providers, the volunteer work providers and the language course providers. These providers differ due to the core products they offer and although there were some differences between them in the way the gap year product is presented, approximately the same findings came forward in analysing their web content. For the gap year providers strong emphasis was laid on the promotion of the gap year experience as an 'adventure' and 'alternative'. This is the same for the volunteer work providers, where great amount of emphasis is laid on the chance the gapper will have get the 'local' and 'authentic' experience. However, apart from benefiting the local community or environment while volunteering, not much is mentioned on the sustainable practices of the companies nor is the gapper encouraged to travel in a sustainable way with respect to the host and the environment. This is least noticeable for the language course providers; which have an very high focus on the fact that gap year experiences would lead to skill-development and added value to one's resume. The emphasis on this skill-development and the enhancement of not only one's life but also their 'personality package' is certainly also done by the other two providers. As asked in the discussion and above, how is the gap year product then really represented as an ethical product or as a product to self-development?

AN EMPTY PROMISE?

This question is not easy to answer, since as noted above, the answer would differ per provider. However the general line in the promotion of the gap year experience is the representation of the product as alternative; that is an alternative to mass tourism. The gap year industry represents the alternative in a sense that experiences revolve around "greater contact with locals or opportunities to do or visit that which the 'average' tourist cannot" (Simpson, p. 144) and in this way the industry seems to try to dislocated themselves far away from the normal tourism products. Essentially, by representing the product as alternative this the industry is trying to market a product that is based around authenticity. As claimed before, it is very questionable if this product is really an alternative one; given the fact that most of the providers offer ready-made tourism experiences to the young gappers. In this sense, the gap year industry in the Netherlands is trying to represent a product as different to tourism, but offers one that is made up from the same building stones as the packaged tourism experience, namely flights, airport pick-ups, accommodation, local support and tours and activities. The only 'new moral' about this tourism product is the chance the gapper gets to do something good for the world in the realm of volunteer work. However, it is also questionable if this is really the good and moral product it is presented to be. As mentioned above the way the gap year providers represent the gapper as 'helper' and the local hosts as 'needy' this would only lead to the harmful stereotyping and the strengthening of dichotomies between the Western and developed world and the underdeveloped and needy world. The promotion of the volunteering product as possible for non-skilled, unqualified and young gappers is also a critical point. If the gap year volunteer experience is promoted as something moral, research is needed verify these claims. Consequently, it might be that the gap experience is undeservedly promoted as an ethical product. This seems to also be the case in the public discourse of the Netherlands at the time of writing. As a response to the newly launched campaign in cooperation with Unicef 'Children are no

tourist attractions', abundant media coverage has been given in the Netherlands to the possible flaws in volunteer 'holidays'. The campagne of Unicef critiques these types of holidays and raises concerns that the effects of volunteer tourism might not be all good for the local children involved (Unicef, 2014). It seems that after the academic world raises its concerns for over some years now (see Söderman & Snead, 2008; Sin, 2009; Butcher & Smith, 2010; Zavitz & Butz, 2011), a critical public discourse around volunteer tourism is on the edge of breaking through as well.

It seems that the product of the gap year in the Netherlands is promoted as the perfect way to self-enrichment and a great resume, topped off with a little sauce of new moral tourism; which includes being a global citizen, doing some volunteer work and trying to make a 'difference'. The gap year product can be seen as an empty promise of not only an alternative experience, considering the 24h emergency service and airport pick ups, but also the difference the volunteer work really gets to make is questionable. It seems that the providers moralize their product with volunteering options, not only to make them sound more adventurous, but to show that these volunteer experiences can make great resumes too, as the following quote illustrates:

"Spending time in Africa, Asia or Latin America is an enormous informative adventure. Through making a contribution to a project, you are living and working for a while within local communities and with young locals. You will get to know a different language and a different culture. Because you are making a contribution to a project of your choice, you will make a contribution to something that you think is valuable and important. You will learn more about the country, intercultural aspects and about yourself. Being a volunteer and world citizen is a big plus on your resume!" (from the website of Dare 2 Go, accessed on 3/9/2014 3.33 PM, translated by author).

The emphasis is not on making a contribution to the volunteer project, but on the added value on the gapper's resume by being a global citizen. The gapper himself in this sense no longer constructs the gap year experience; it can be bought as a product. The key characteristic of this product is the promise of structured experience that is worthwhile and useful and provides individual self-development and the potential to compete in the competitive job market; it sells the personality package. In this representation of the gap year product the gapper is not a global citizen looking for cross-cultural understanding and doing a good deed, it is a liberal global citizen who can buy the gap year experience and can add the skills that come with it in his personality package. It seems that the gap year experience, that was once said to be adventurous and alternative, is now commodified and sold as a packaged tourism product, a package that includes self-development.

However, since the whole phenomenon of the gap year is quite underresearched in the Netherlands, it is necessary to further examine the phenomenon. As this research solely takes a deeper look into the production side of the whole gap year product, is also necessary to take a look at the consumption side; the gapper himself and what is happening in the countries visited. This research solely focussed on how the gap year product is represented by Dutch gap year providers, concluding that it was promoted as 'alternative' and 'more ethical'. However, further research is necessary to investigate if

the claims made by the gap year providers, especially those who offer volunteering possibilities, are really valid. It is important to get an understanding of 'the other' in this whole gap year experience and empirically examine what is really happening in the receiving space; the local, the host, the help-receiver. For example, can the gap year activities that the providers promote really be considered as ethical? What is happening in the orphanages in the third world countries, where every year numerous of volunteers arrive and leave again? And what are the motivations of gappers going abroad; solely helping out, becoming a global citizen or purely self-development? An analysis of how the gap year industry's practices in third world locations are carried out is therefore needed, not only for the Dutch context, but for the wider scope of Western gapper and volunteer sending countries.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. List of Providers

Gap Year Providers

Activity International	http://www.activityinternational.nl/
Asia Backpackers	http://www.asiabackpackers.nl/
Bienvenido Gap Year	http://www.bienvenidogapyear.com/
Bureau Buitenland	http://www.bureaubuitenland.nl/
Full Bright Center	http://www.fulbright.nl/
Gap Year At Sea	http://www.gapyearatsea.com/
Joho	http://www.joho.nl/studie/tussenjaar/ http://www.wereldreis.nl/
Kilroy	http://travels.kilroyworld.nl/
Stage Nepal	http://www.stagenepal.com/
Travel Active	http://www.travelactive.nl/
Weg Wijs	http://www.weg-wijs.net/
Xtreme Gap	http://www.tussen-jaar.nl/ http://www.xtreme-gap.nl/

Volunteer Work Providers

AFS Interculturele	
Uitwisselingen Nederland	http://www.afs.nl/
Be More	http://www.be-more.nl/
Commundo	http://www.commundo.nl/
Dare2go	http://www.dare2go.nl/
Global Spirit	http://www.globalspirit.nl/
Het Andere Reizen	http://www.hetanderereizen.nl/
Projects Abroad	http://www.tussenjaar.nl/ http://www.projects-abroad.nl/
SIW	http://www.siw.nl/
Travel For Change	http://www.travel4change.nl/
Volunteering Solutions	http://www.volunteeringsolutions.com/nl/
WLS International	http://www.vrijwilligerswerk-buitenland.com/

Language Course Providers

Don Quijote	http://www.donquijote.nl/
Easy Languages	http://taalreizen.com/
Education First	http://www.ef.nl/
ESL Taalreizen	http://www.esl-taalreizen.com/nl/
Inter Language	http://www.interlanguage.nl/
Into	http://www.into-highschool.nl/
Italstudio	http://italstudio.nl/
Plus Taalreizen	http://www.plustaalreizen.nl/
Study Globe	http://www.study-globe.com/nl/
Study Travel	http://www.studytravel.nl/

Appendix 2. Code List Data Analysis

Gap Year Providers

1. Taking a gap year is good for the self-development and personal enrichment
2. The new moral tourist: more individual, less following the crowd. Experience the host culture in a sustainable way
3. Skill development: learning about new cultures, creating cross-cultural understanding and intercultural communication skills
4. Taking a gap year can help choosing the right next step in education and gappers are less likely to drop out
5. Taking a gap year and getting experiences abroad enriches one's resume
6. Skill development: more flexible, mature and independent
7. Skill development: learning new languages and improving language skills
8. Skill development: enhancing social skills and improving practical skills
9. Volunteering: making a contribution to the project and making a contribution to your self-development
10. The possibility to meet new friends and create an international network
11. Volunteering: making a change on an individual level, as a volunteer "you" can help
12. No qualifications or special skills required to join volunteer project, however motivation, flexibility and dedication are important.
13. Companies, organizations and universities see experiences abroad during a gap year as an advantage over peers
14. Volunteering: combining the fun with the useful
15. Broaden your horizons and live your life to the max
16. Illustrates differences between Western volunteers and locals: dichotomies
17. Booking with an organization is less stressful
18. A new language is best learned surrounded by the local speakers and the local culture
19. Take a gap year is good if you do not yet know what you want in life or do not want to grow up yet
20. Companies, organizations and universities see speaking several languages as an advantage over peers
21. As volunteer you can not make the whole world a better place, but you can always make a small contribution
22. Organisation mentions and practices sustainable tourism: supports charities and good causes
23. Volunteering: the volunteering product is custom-made according to the wishes of the volunteer
24. Volunteering: minimum duration to make an adequate difference
25. Organisation mentions and practices sustainable tourism: works with local providers
26. Organisation mentions and practices sustainable tourism: tries to persuade the client to travel ethically

27. Organisation mentions and practices sustainable tourism: active CSR policy
28. Provider mentions upcoming governmental cutbacks in education
29. Selection of volunteer based on skills, workexperience and time available
30. Organization works with Stichting Muses: training for volunteers before their trip

Volunteer Work Providers

1. Skill development: learning about new cultures, creating cross-cultural understanding and intercultural communication skills
2. Skill development: learning new languages and improving language skills
3. The possibility to meet new friends and create an international network
4. No qualifications or special skills required to join volunteer project, however motivation, flexibility and dedication are important.
5. Global Citizenship; cross-cultural understanding
6. Volunteering: making a change on an individual level, as a volunteer "you" can help
7. Skill development: enhancing social skills and improving practical skills
8. Taking a gap year is good for the self-development and personal enrichment
9. Volunteering: an unique and life-changing experience
10. Volunteering: making a contribution to the project and making a contribution to your self-development
11. Taking a gap year, including volunteering, and getting experiences abroad enriches one's resume
12. The new moral tourist: more individual, less following the crowd. Experience the host culture in a sustainable way
13. Organisation mentions and practices sustainable tourism: works with local providers
14. Taking a gap year can help choosing the right next step in education and gappers are less likely to drop out
15. Volunteering: the volunteering product is custom-made according to the wishes of the volunteer
16. Skill development: more flexible, mature and independent
17. Volunteering: combining the fun with the useful
18. Illustrates differences between Western volunteers and locals: dichotomies
19. Selection of volunteers: Verklaring Omtrent Gedrag
20. Organization offers extensive preparation to volunteers before their trip
21. Volunteering: minimum duration to make an adequate difference
22. Organisation mentions and practices sustainable tourism: supports charities and good causes
23. Companies, organizations and universities see experiences abroad during a gap year as an advantage over peers
24. Take a gap year is good if you do not yet know what you want in life or do not want to grow up yet
25. Organization works with Stichting Muses: training for volunteers before their trip

Language Course Providers

1. Skill development: learning new languages and improving language skills

2. Skill development: learning about new cultures, creating cross-cultural understanding and intercultural communication skills
3. Taking a gap year, including language course, and getting experiences abroad enriches one's resume
4. The possibility to meet new friends and create an international network
5. Skill development: more flexible, mature and independent
6. Taking a gap year is good for the self-development and personal enrichment
7. Companies, organizations and universities see speaking several languages as an advantage over peers
8. Skill development: enhancing social skills and improving practical skills
9. Skill development: official certificates and examinations for language skills
10. A new language is best learned surrounded by the local speakers and the local culture
11. Volunteering: combining the fun with the useful
12. Global Citizenship; cross-cultural understanding
13. Taking a gap year can help choosing the right next step in education and gappers are less likely to drop out
14. Companies, organizations and universities see experiences abroad during a gap year as an advantage over peers
15. Organisation mentions and practices sustainable tourism
16. Volunteering: making a contribution to the project and making a contribution to your self-development
17. Volunteering: making a change on an individual level, as a volunteer "you" can help
18. Provider offers language course in combination with volunteering possibilities
19. Booking with an organization is less stressful: organization arranges accommodation
20. Provider mentions upcoming governmental cutbacks in education
21. No qualifications or special skills required to join volunteer project, however motivation, flexibility and dedication are important.
22. The new moral tourist: more individual, less following the crowd. Experience the host culture in a sustainable way

Appendix 3. Quantitative Word Count Web Content Providers

Gap Year Providers

Total:	32935	cultuur	46	vrijwilliger	27	culturen	17	duurzaam	11
Words	Count	organisatie	46	vrijwilligersprojecten	27	cv	17	kwaliteiten	11
vrijwilligerswerk	155	studie	46	vaardigheden	25	volunteering	17	opleidingen	11
buitenland	105	goede	42	week	25	backpackers	16	spaans	11
kinderen	104	mogelijkheden	42	zorgen	25	ervaringen	16	unieke	11
ervaring	96	reizen	41	learn	24	toekomst	16	vloeiend	11
werken	86	studeren	38	leer	24	cursus	15	westerse	11
vrijwilligers	80	stage	37	skills	23	onderwijs	15	ervaren	10
projecten	74	helpen	36	opleiding	22	volunteers	15	gedurende	10
andere	73	mogelijkheid	36	tevens	22	conservation	14	onvergetelijke	10
project	73	natuur	36	verder	22	community	13	weeshuis	10
tussenjaar	71	work	36	biedt	21	ontwikkelen	13	werkzaamheden	10
studenten	62	engels	34	even	21	backpacken	12	betekenen	9
mensen	61	help	34	jezelf	21	combineren	12	buitenlandervaring	9
travel	60	kennis	34	student	21	culture	12		
leren	52	jongeren	33	avontuur	20	dieren	12		
leven	52	volunteer	31	language	20	hulp	12		
lokale	52	international	30	studiekeuze	20	lesgeven	12		
reis	52	krijgen	30	vrienden	20	ondersteunen	12		
taal	52	ontwikkeling	27	praktische	19	stages	12		
bevolking	51	persoonlijke	27	local	18	wildlife	12		
school	49	programma	27	bijdrage	17	taalcursus	12		

Volunteer Work Providers

Total	29835	mogelijkheden	26	engelse	17	gastgezin	13	scholieren	10
Words	count	vrijwilligersprojecten	26	oriëntatie	17	netwerk	13	verschil	10
vrijwilligerswerk	241	willen	26	veiligheid	17	ontwikkelen	13	vrouwen	10
vrijwilligers	128	jongeren	24	voorbereiding	17	studie	13	weeshuis	10
tussenjaar	86	nodig	24	ervaringen	16	vrijwilligersproject	13	zorgt	10
kinderen	76	onderwijs	24	helpt	16	dieren	12	betrokken	9
lokale	76	kennis	23	ouders	16	ontdekken	12	communities	9
ervaring	75	ontwikkeling	23	wereldwijd	16	opdoen	12	experience	9
vrijwilliger	67	stage	23	avontuur	15	sociaal	12	groepsreis	9
leren	64	bijdrage	22	bijdragen	15	support	12	inbegrepen	9
werken	60	internationale	22	persoonlijke	15	werkervaring	12		
volunteers	58	help	21	toekomst	15	betere	11		
cultuur	51	engels	20	volunteering	15	blijven	11		
helpen	47	local	20	zorgen	15	contacten	11		
reizen	47	kind	19	cv	14	natuur	11		
samen	45	stichting	19	middelbare	14	spaans	11		
kennen	35	unieke	19	mogelijkheid	14	steentje	11		
school	35	bijzondere	18	organiseren	14	taalcursus	11		
taal	34	children	18	plezier	14	vrij	11		
volunteer	33	hulp	18	studeren	14	actief	10		
werk	30	lesgeven	18	uitwisseling	14	gastgezinnen	10		
geven	29	begeleiding	17	vrienden	14	opleiding	10		
sociale	28	culturen	17	culturele	13	scholen	10		

Language Course Providers

Total	16515	maanden	29	kans	15	tussen	12	Unieke	10
Words	count	niveau	28	talen	15	vloeiend	12	Verbeteren	10
taal	109	werk	28	culturele	14	wereldwijd	12		
buitenland	108	gap	27	engelse	14	advies	11		
leren	97	studeren	27	internationaal	14	beschikbaar	11		
spaans	70	verblijf	26	mogelijkheid	14	bevolking	11		
jaar	68	activiteiten	25	overbruggingsjaar	14	combineren	11		
taalreizen	67	kennis	25	samen	14	culturen	11		
studenten	64	cv	24	spreken	14	erkend	11		
studytravel	52	cursussen	23	taalcursussen	14	examen	11		
ervaring	47	kiezen	22	amerika	13	iedereen	11		
school	44	scholen	22	deelnemers	13	latijns	11		
taalcursus	43	geven	21	diploma	13	omgeving	11		
vrijwilligerswerk	43	lokale	21	onderwijs	13	persoonlijke	11		
studie	42	spanje	21	vaardigheden	13	project	11		
werken	42	highschool	20	vrienden	13	reizen	11		
internationale	38	italië	20	vrijwilligers	13	werkgevers	11		
land	38	kinderen	20	italiaans	12	aanbod	10		
tussenjaar	38	leert	20	leer	12	academische	10		
nieuwe	36	mogelijkheden	18	les	12	chinees	10		
wereld	34	high	17	projecten	12	ervaren	10		
engels	33	keuze	17	sabbatical	12	excursies	10		
master	30	stage	17	stad	12	onderdompeling	10		
cultuur	29	professionele	16	steden	12	ontdekken	10		
sociaal	11	volgen	16	toekomst	12	studies	10		

