



## The influence of volunteer motivation on satisfaction, attitudes, and support for a mega-event



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### ABSTRACT

Although there are numerous studies on volunteering in tourism, little research has been done on volunteer support for mega-events. This study develops a theoretical model investigating the relationship between volunteer motivation and support for the Expo 2012 Yeosu Korea through mediating effects of satisfaction and attitudes toward volunteering and the Expo venue. An onsite survey of 489 volunteers at the Yeosu Expo was conducted. The structural equation model reveals that patriotism and intrinsic motivations significantly influence volunteer satisfaction, which in turn exerts a significant effect on attitudes toward volunteering and the Expo venue. Also, volunteer attitudes toward volunteering significantly influence volunteer attitudes toward the Expo venue, which in turn have a significant effect on support for the Expo. The study suggests that patriotism and intrinsic motivations can leverage support for mega-events through enhancing mediators of satisfaction and attitudes.

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### 1. Introduction

Mega-events have been studied in terms of their tourist attractiveness, image-making or developmental roles (Getz, 2008). Relatively little research has been done on volunteering for mega-events. Volunteers play an important role in hosting mega-events; they represent staff, visitors, and consumers. Volunteers are also supporters of mega-events who help to make these events successful (Ralston et al., 2005). Identifying volunteer motivation for participating and supporting mega-events is essential for organizing and hosting these events. Thus, it is vital to explore volunteer motivations to participate in mega-events. Many studies have been conducted on volunteer motivation in the area of sports mega-events (e.g., Bang and Ross, 2009; MacLean and Hamm, 2007; Strigas and Jackson, 2003). It was found that volunteers

for mega-events are motivated by the opportunity to socialize, obtain material rewards, enhance the local community status, connect with personal hobbies and interests, and express altruism (Carpenter and Myers, 2010; Elstad, 2003; Hoffman, 1981; Warner et al., 2011).

Warner et al. (2011) argue that motivations alone are poor predictors of volunteer support for mega-events; one should explore volunteer satisfaction with mega-events (Warner et al., 2011) that affects attitudes toward volunteering and event venues (Pearce, 1983) and ultimately reflects support for the events. For example, it was found that volunteer motivations highly influence satisfaction with sports mega-events (e.g., Farrell et al., 1998; Reeser et al., 2005). Volunteer satisfaction, on the other hand, affects attitudes in organizations (Boezeman and Ellemers, 2009). Also, volunteer attitudes toward volunteering and event venues significantly change over time and affect support for events (Gallarza et al., 2013; Ralston et al., 2005).

A theory of self-determination is utilized in this study. Self-determination theory can explain volunteer intrinsic and extrinsic motivational needs (Ryan and Deci, 2000a). Based on this theory, this study identifies volunteer motivation in the context of the Expo 2012 Yeosu Korea (hereafter “Yeosu Expo”) – a cultural mega-event. The study examines the relationships between volunteer motivation and attitudes toward volunteering and the Expo venue through

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a mediating effect of satisfaction, and between satisfaction and support for the Expo through mediating effects of attitudes.

The paper consists of several sections. The literature review section describes the analyzed concepts, followed by the development of the hypotheses to be tested. The methodology section explains construct measurement and the data collection procedure. The results section describes the findings of the confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling in reference to the hypotheses tested. The last section discusses theoretical and practical implications of the study results.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Mega-events

A special event is “a one-time or infrequently occurring event outside normal programs or activities of the sponsoring or organizing body” (Getz, 1997, p. 4). There are different types of special events depending on their form, purpose, and program; some are for public celebration (community festivals), while others are planned for purposes of competition, fun, entertainment, business, or socializing (e.g., sports, Expos) (Getz, 2005). Jago and Shaw (1998) categorize special events according to their size and impact on tourism (e.g., minor events, major events, hallmark events, festivals, mega-events). Mega-events are very large events that affect entire economies and reverberate in the global media; they include Olympic Games (e.g., mega-sports events) and international exhibitions (e.g., world expos, international expos, specialized expos) (Bureau International des Expositions, 2012; Lim and Lee, 2006). Mega-events stimulate tourism and play a vital role in destination marketing (Getz, 2008).

The term “Expo” refers to exposition and is also known as a World Fair. There are various types of Expos, including trade, computer, convention, or home shopping. Tourism developers at international, national, and local levels show a great deal of interest in cultural Expos (Lee et al., 2013). This study examines volunteer motivation for participating in the Yeosu Expo, which has been recognized as an important international cultural mega-event by the International Exhibitions Bureau (Bureau International des Expositions, 2012). The Yeosu Expo focused on preservation and sustainable development of the ocean and coast, new technology, and creative marine activities.

### 2.2. Theoretical foundation of the study

The present study utilizes self-determination theory as a theoretical framework. This theory distinguishes between different types of motivation based on the different goals that encourage people to a specific behavior (Deci and Ryan, 1985, 2008; Ryan and Deci, 2000b). The most basic distinction is between “intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, and extrinsic motivation, which refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome” (Ryan and Deci, 2000a, p. 55). Intrinsic motivation provides satisfaction of innate psychological needs (e.g., for competence, autonomy, relatedness) (Hull, 1943), whereas extrinsic motivation is not inherently interesting and must be externally stimulated (to be valued by others, to feel connected, to belong, and to relate) (Ryan and Deci, 2000a). Self-determination theory can explain the importance of fulfilling volunteer motivational needs. Intrinsically motivated volunteers behave based on self-determination and engage in volunteering because they find it interesting and enjoyable (e.g., fun and challenging) and perceive volunteering as being important (Oostlander et al., 2013). Externally motivated volunteers behave based on external conditions (e.g., to avoid

punishment, guilt or shame, or to gain social recognition and protect self-worth) (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Oostlander et al., 2013). Volunteers who are autonomously (self-) motivated, acting based on interest and fun because of underlying personal values, usually report higher satisfaction (Millette and Gagné, 2008) than individuals who are motivated and controlled by external conditions and act based on external pressure to avoid guilt or punishment (Oostlander et al., 2013). According to Bang and Ross (2009), individuals are likely to volunteer for events to the extent that they experience psychological need satisfaction with the events. The satisfaction with the volunteer experience can lead to positive commitment to the organization (event) (Bang and Ross, 2009). Self-determination theory offers the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the quality of volunteer motivation and the importance of self-determination and personal values as opposed to the importance of external pressure. In addition, this theory emphasizes the role of the external social environment in developing motivation.

### 2.3. Definitions of volunteering and volunteer

Volunteering is “any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group, or organization” (Wilson, 2000, p. 215). Volunteering is a non-salaried service (Cnaan et al., 1996) requiring a sense of obligation on the part of volunteers in terms of time, effort, and skill development (Holmes et al., 2010). Volunteering is “a skill- and knowledge-based activity in which people can have a career in a special social world” (Stebbins, 1982, p. 264). This activity offers the opportunity for socializing, improving professional competencies and interpersonal skills, and contributing to learning and personal development. Volunteering enhances individual and community well-being (Stebbins, 1982). It can create feelings of achievement and self-satisfaction and enhance self-esteem.

A volunteer devotes leisure time to public or client interests (Stebbins, 1992) and performs an unpaid and planned activity, within a formal structure (public, private, or non-profit), involving some type of time commitment (Gallarza et al., 2013). A volunteer engages in activities that are beneficial for the helper as well as the helped (Wilson, 2000). Many doctors, teachers, or emergency rescuers volunteer their services in various contexts and circumstances.

An intention to volunteer for an event is a function of the perceived contribution of volunteering and the rewards an individual expects to receive as a result of volunteer experience (Bang et al., 2009b). Through a volunteering experience, an individual evaluates own psychological needs, such as the desire to express one’s values, enhance one’s career, and enjoy being involved in certain activities (Bang and Ross, 2009). Wearing (2001) insists that in the context of volunteer tourism, volunteering provides benefits to both participants and local communities. Smith and Holmes (2012) assert that volunteers contribute to tourism as consumers of tourism experiences as well as participants in tourism activities such as events.

### 2.4. Definition of volunteer motivation

A wide variety of volunteer motivations have been identified in the literature on volunteering (e.g., Clary et al., 1998; Khoo and Engelhorn, 2011; Lai et al., 2013; Pearce, 1983; Warner et al., 2011). Volunteer motivation can be defined as a drive of individuals to seek out volunteer opportunities, to commit themselves to voluntary helping, and to sustain their involvement in volunteerism over extended periods of time (Clary et al., 1998; Pearce, 1983). Khoo and Engelhorn (2011) characterize volunteer motivation as a five-factor model including solidarity, altruistic factors, commitments, external traditions, and family traditions. Clary et al. (1998) and Lai et al.

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