



Heterogeneity of sport event volunteer motivations: A segmentation approach

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ABSTRACT

This study identifies specific sport event volunteer motivations, and then segments sport event volunteers based on their motivations. It investigates the distinct features of four motivational clusters in terms of their socio-demographics, their volunteering-related experiences, and the type of sport event at which they volunteered. The data comprises a sample of 337 volunteers from three sport events in Queensland. The Volunteer Motivation Scale for International Sporting Events (VMS-ISE) questionnaire is used and data are analyzed using exploratory factor analysis and hierarchical cluster analysis on standardized variables. Chi-square tests are then undertaken to explore relationships with other variables. The results indicate that motivations differ among the four main groups identified. Event organizers will be able to use this understanding of differing motivations to develop more effective volunteer management strategies.

1. Introduction

Volunteering is an important part of the tourism and leisure sectors and can take a variety of forms. Volunteer tourism, which involves people travelling to participate in volunteering activities, often in developing countries, is an important and growing trend (Guttentag, 2009) which is attracting more research attention (Elliott, 2008). About 1.6 million people worldwide join volunteer tourism projects annually and these volunteer tourists spend between £832 million and £1.3 billion per year (equivalent to AUD 1.5 billion–2.3 billion) (Tourism Research & Marketing, 2008).

A more established trend in volunteering is locals who volunteer at attractions and events that help bring tourists to a destination. These volunteers provide important human resources to tourism and event organizations and are therefore an important component of the tourism industry. As mainstream tourism researchers have argued for the need to better manage tourism-related business (Barbieri, Santos, & Katsube, 2012; Benson & Henderson, 2011; Tribe, 2008), effective volunteer management is an important dimension that needs to be informed by research.

Recruitment of volunteers is a significant part of the human resource management processes and critical to hosting many successful sport events (Shariffar, Ganjouie, Tondnevis, & Zarei, 2011). The International Labor Organization (2011) argued that volunteer work is most effective when properly managed. Event organizers rely on the assistance of volunteers, often in large numbers, in the lead up to and

particularly during the staging of events. Therefore, it is important to build a mutual relationship between volunteers and event organizers to promote strong volunteer engagement. Such a close and well-established relationship between volunteers and event organizers would be expected to make a meaningful contribution to the event and influence volunteers to be more involved in volunteering. The quality of the relationship can be influenced by how well volunteer management processes are implemented at a sport event (Taylor, Darcy, Hoye, & Cuskelly, 2006).

Volunteers, however, are a highly diverse group and frequently represent different nationalities and cultures, gender, age, career backgrounds, personal characteristics and previous volunteer experiences. Such diverse backgrounds and characteristics are likely to affect motives, needs, desires, and behavior of volunteers (Alexander, Kim, & Kim, 2015). An understanding of the motives and characteristics of individual volunteers or groups of volunteers would best inform decisions about the most appropriate approaches and strategies regarding volunteer management. By segmenting volunteers, sport event organizers might gain a better understanding of the range of factors that influence sport event volunteering and be able to use these factors to recruit, support, and manage volunteers more effectively (Alexander et al., 2015; Schlesinger & Gubler, 2016).

Although a substantial number of relevant studies have investigated sport event volunteerism with regard to characteristics of volunteers and volunteer management (e.g. Bang & Ross, 2009; Bang, Alexandris, & Ross, 2008; Bang, Won, & Kim, 2009; Dickson, Benson, & Terwiel,

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2014; Dickson, Benson, Blackman, & Terwiel, 2013; Dickson, Darcy, Edwards, & Terwiel, 2015; Hallmann & Harms, 2012; Khoo & Engelhorn, 2007, 2011; VanSickle, Pierce, & Diacin, 2015), there are few studies of volunteer segmentation, even though many researchers recognize that volunteers are heterogeneous (Schlesinger & Gubler, 2016). This research has attempted to address the problem of heterogeneity amongst volunteers using a segmentation approach. Because motivation is one of the main concepts applied to understanding the decisions of individuals to become involved in volunteer activities, an understanding of different profiles of sport event volunteers' motives would help event managers design more advanced and effective volunteer management strategies tailored to the different needs within the volunteer group. Thus, the purpose of this study is to profile and segment sport event volunteers based on their motivation. Further, this research investigates the distinctive features of sport event volunteer clusters based on socio-demographic and volunteer-related experiences across three different sport events.

2. Literature review

Given the substantial contribution of volunteers to events generally and sport events in particular, it is important to try to ensure the sustainability of this valuable resource. Volunteers are more likely to continue to engage with events if they are satisfied with their experiences, and they are more likely to be satisfied if their needs are met. For this reason, it is important to understand motivations for volunteering and the needs that volunteers are seeking to fulfill through their participation in an event. This literature review identifies appropriate theoretical bases for this study and summarizes the previous research which has segmented sport event volunteers on the basis of their motivations. It also describes the range of existing volunteer motivation scales in an effort to inform the design of the study.

2.1. Theoretical background

"Theory, or a statement of constructs and their relationships to one another that explain how, when, why, and under what conditions phenomena take place, is a critical element in the advancement of an academic discipline" (Cunningham, 2013, p. 1). Researchers apply theory to develop research questions, determine methods, analyze data, discuss results, and draw conclusions (Sutton & Staw, 1995). Several theoretical frameworks provide unique ways of approaching critical topics in the field with regard to the motivations of sport event volunteers.

Clary et al. (1998) used functional theory to hypothesize six functions (i.e. values, understanding, social, career, protective motives, and enhancement) potentially served by all kinds of volunteerism and they designed an instrument known as the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) to measure these functions. This functional approach proposed that people involved in similar acts may have different underlying motivations with respect to different functions for doing so. Clary et al. (1998) found that volunteers who were driven by their personally desired functions tended to be more satisfied with their volunteer work and had stronger intentions to continue volunteering. Their investigations provided empirical support for a functional approach focusing on the psychological purposes served by doing volunteer activities and highlighted the active role of individuals that reflect important features of self and identity to match the person and the situation.

The Special Event Volunteer Motivation Scale (SEVMS) developed by Farrell, Johnston, and Twynam (1998) and Motivation To Volunteer (MTV) for Special Events identified by Monga (2006) are based on the incentives approach of Knoke and Prensky (1984). Knoke and Prensky (1984) identified three underlying volunteer motives which they labeled: normative incentives (referred to as purposive incentives, which are genuine concern for others and a desire to help); affective incentives (referred to as solidary incentives, which are social benefits derived

from relationships with a group); and utilitarian incentives (referred to as material incentives, which are benefits from volunteering—such as gaining work experience, skills and tangible benefits). These incentives seem to lie at the core of the mechanisms for volunteering by which individuals exchange valued incentives for engaging in volunteer activities. These three dimensions appeared to be useful in exploring the motivations of volunteers for sport events (Farrell et al., 1998). Farrell et al. (1998) reasoned that volunteer satisfaction with overall experiences is not only a function of fulfilling their expectations, but is also associated with their satisfaction with the facilities and the organization of the event. The incentives approach of Knoke and Prensky (1984) has been applied in several sport event volunteer studies (e.g. Dickson et al., 2013; Dickson et al., 2014; Khoo & Engelhorn, 2011; Twynam, Farrell, & Johnston, 2002). Using Principal Components Analysis (PCA), Dickson et al. (2013) and Dickson et al. (2014) found six factors that influence sport event volunteering from 36 motivation items, with the most important factors entitled 'all about the games' and 'altruistic'. Khoo and Engelhorn (2011) identified a five-factor model with the altruistic factor (purposive incentives) being the most important. Twynam et al. (2002) found that special event volunteers indicated motivations across four factors with purposive, commitment, and solidary being stronger motivations than external traditions. Monga (2006) recognized the unique characteristics of special events and highlighted a five-dimensional framework including two additional explanatory dimensions such as affiliatory and egoistic motivations.

Giannoulakis, Wang, and Gray (2007) argued that studies of volunteerism in non-sport sectors have been unable to identify aspects of volunteering that are unique to sport volunteerism. They suggested that additional research should be conducted in order to establish a conceptualized theory that would identify the significance of motives to volunteer in sport settings. Strigas and Jackson (2003, p. 121) argued that theory "... needs to take under consideration the size, location, purpose, composition of the volunteer labor, and impact of the sport event on the hosting community, and create a taxonomy of sport events for volunteers based on the presiding factors". Based on this theoretical approach, Giannoulakis et al. (2007) developed an instrument known as the Olympic Volunteer Motivation Scale (OVMS) to particularly examine volunteer motivation in the context of the Olympic Games.

The Volunteer Motivation Scale for International Sporting Events (VMS-ISE) by Bang and Ross (2009) suggested that 'love of a sport' appeared to be a unique motivator of sport event volunteers. This concept is related to 'mere love of sport' as an incentive for volunteer activity. The notion of 'love of sport' was drawn from sport fan involvement research grounded in social identity theory (e.g. Jenkins, 1996; Laverie & Arnett, 2000; MacClancy, 1996). Based on a sport fan involvement approach, the love of sport dimension was conceptualized such that individuals may want to volunteer for sport events because they enjoy sports and love being engaged in activities associated with sport. Also, individuals may have an intention to volunteer at sport events as they have positive feelings and passion for a specific sport (Bang et al., 2008). In this sense, the VMS-ISE added attractiveness of sport as one of sports volunteers' strong motives. Adaptations of the VMS-ISE have been used in several empirical studies (e.g. Bang & Ross, 2009; Bang et al., 2008; Bang et al., 2009; Hallmann & Harms, 2012; Schlesinger & Gubler, 2016; VanSickle et al., 2015).

The incentives approach of Knoke and Prensky (1984) is likely to help identify general incentives aspects of volunteer motivation that can be applied not only to volunteer activities generally, but also to sport event volunteering. In addition, aspects of sport-specific incentives such as 'love of sport' or 'community involvement', may contribute to predicting intention to volunteer in sport events (Bang & Ross, 2009). This study is based on these underlying theoretical foundations.

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