

An Examination of the Primary Motives of Volunteers at Two Elite Professional Golf Events

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Volunteerism plays an integral role within organizations in the United States. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2005), 65.4 million adults or 28.8%, volunteered their services to an organization, event or program from September 2004 until September 2005. While it is difficult to quantify, the value for this labor, which is the equivalent to over 9 million full time employees, has been estimated at \$239 billion (Independent Sector, 2001). As a result, volunteering represents a substantial social and economic contribution within our society (Finklestein, Penner, & Brannick, 2005).

In relation to sport, volunteers continue to be an integral part of organizing and managing events of all types and sizes. In many cases, without the personal investment of volunteers, sport events would not happen (Williams, Dossa, & Tompkins, 1995). The growing need and use of volunteer labor within sports has created a necessity to explore the demographics as well as motives behind why individuals are volunteering their time and efforts to sport events. Sport events are a unique entity as they provide a relatively short term (15-20 hours) but intense experience for volunteers (Green & Chalip, 1998). Furthermore, volunteering for a sport event provides a brief opportunity to immerse oneself deeply into the subculture of the sport industry. Farrell, Johnston, & Twynam (1998) suggest that motivation for special event volunteers are different than other volunteers as they generally have an attachment to the sporting event activity and therefore are motivated for purposive reasons.

Previous research has examined a variety of single events including curling (Twynam, Farrell, & Johnston, 2003), marathon running (Strigas & Jackson, 2003), international events (Karlis, 2003), and golf events (Hamm & MacLean, 2005). The research has focused on the demographics, primary motives, as well as the uniqueness of volunteering within sports as compared to other sectors. Existing research has each utilized different instruments and focused on the uniqueness of individual sport events; however, it has not become possible to define a typical profile of someone who volunteers within sports. Pearce (1993) noted that each volunteer-based organization operates within an individualized industry that attracts volunteers for a variety of reasons. It is necessary for an organization to develop an understanding of the factors that appeal to volunteers in order to retain their services year after year (Hamm and MacLean, 2005). It is important to explore the demographics and primary motives of volunteers from multiple events within the same sport in an effort to potentially develop a profile for a given type of sport event. It is also important to examine for a given sport, whether the gender of the event impacts the demographics and motives of the volunteers.

There were three purposes to this study. The first purpose was to examine the demographics of volunteers for golf events, specifically the 2005 Professional Golf Association (PGA) Championship and the 2005 Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) Solheim Cup event. The second purpose was to evaluate the primary motives to volunteer for an elite golf event. The final purpose was to evaluate whether there were significant differences between the primary motives of the volunteers of the PGA Championship and the LPGA Solheim Cup based on selected demographic characteristics (gender, age, income, educational level attained, and sport participation).

The study consisted of eight hundred and seventy seven participants which included 470 volunteers from the PGA Championship and 407 from the LPGA Solheim Cup events. Volunteers paid \$150 and \$125 respectively to volunteer for the PGA Championship and LPGA Solheim Cup events. Prior to serving as a volunteer for the respective golf event, participants completed a demographic questionnaire and the Sport Volunteer Motivation Scale (Strigas & Jackson, 2003).

The results indicated that the volunteers did differ in regards to demographics on the basis of gender for the two events. Overall 84% of participants indicated that they participated in golf on a regular basis. Furthermore, volunteers averaged 5.78 prior experiences volunteering for a sport event and 96.70 hours. In regards to the level of motivation for the two events, LPGA Solheim Cup volunteers had significantly higher motives than PGA Championship volunteers on all five subscales (purpose, leisure, egoistic, external, and material). Purposive motives were the most highly endorsed motive for volunteers from both events. External motives proved to be endorsed the least among the participants. A series of 2 x 2 MANOVA's revealed significant differences by gender, women scored significantly higher than men on purposive, egoistic, external, and leisure motives ($p < .05$). Significant differences were also found for household income as those with an income of less than \$75,000 had higher motives for material, external, leisure, and egoistic factors ($p < .05$). Furthermore, significant differences were found for age as those younger than 56 years old had higher motives for material, leisure, and egoistic factors ($p < .05$).

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The findings from the present study, as well as previous literature, can be of assistance to volunteer managers within the sport industry by increasing their awareness of why individuals volunteer, particularly for the sport of golf. Golf event organizers have the task of recruiting, coordinating, and retaining volunteers at different locations throughout the United States. Therefore, it is vital for each professional golf event, volunteer organizers understand the uniqueness of the event, the demographics of the volunteers, as well as how each of these factors related to the motives to volunteer. The results from the present study have the potential to improve planning, management, and recruitment strategies for maintaining a strong volunteer base which will in turn create a better overall event. Additionally, by having such knowledge, golf volunteer management can tailor the assignments and tasks to align more closely with the motives of the volunteers. Volunteers will be more likely to have a positive experience, aiding in their satisfaction and retention for future events. Recommendations for mechanisms to align with each of the volunteer motives and implications for further research will also be discussed.