

Modeling motivation and fit among sport event volunteers: Toward a better understanding of the volunteer satisfaction and commitment

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Volunteers are an invaluable workforce in sport organizations. They are particularly critical for successful operation of many sporting events (Williams, Dossa, & Tompkins, 1995). It is necessary for sport organizations to manage their volunteers based on in-depth understanding of entire process of volunteering (Bussell & Forbes, 2002). Sport organizations must accurately assess how volunteers evaluate their participation and how this affects satisfaction with the volunteer role and likelihood of volunteering again in the future. For example, individuals may participate in a certain volunteer work to achieve specific personal needs/goals or to access other opportunities through the activity. If these motivations are met through the volunteer experience, it is more likely that she/he will feel satisfied and continue the volunteer work (Keith, 2003).

Our paper proposes a conceptual model of the volunteer process that enables organizations and researchers to better understand how sporting event volunteers evaluate their experience by comparing their expected and actual fit with the volunteer opportunity across three dimensions: organization, event, and sport. We show how fit mediates the influence of motivation and effects post-volunteering levels of satisfaction and commitment. We conclude by illustrating how this model can inform future research.

We adapt prior literature regarding the person-organization fit to create a model specific to volunteer activity in sport. Person-organization fit refers to the compatibility between person and organization, and can be specified as supplementary fit and complementary fit (Kristof, 1996). Supplementary fit is explained with a relationship between fundamental characteristics of an organization and a person (e.g., value congruence and goal congruence). On the other hand, complementary fit is about supply and demand exchange between the organization and individual, which are influenced by the characteristics of both (Hogan, 1991; Schein, 1992). We adjusted the met-expectations and expectation-confirmation model for assessing volunteer experiences to highlight the discrepancy between expectations and perceptions of volunteers. Met-expectations and expectation-confirmation model have been used in management and marketing literature. Met-expectations are defined by the discrepancy between what an individual experiences in an organizational role and what she/he expected to encounter (Porter & Steers, 1973; Wanous, Poland, Premack, & Davis, 1992).

Expectation-confirmation model has been frequently used in marketing research for predicting future consumption of customers (e.g., Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1998). This model highlights how discrepancies arise through the processes of formation of expectations and disconfirmation of expectations through performance comparisons (Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988). According to this model, there are three possibilities in the judgment of results from the comparisons; (a) simple confirmation, which means the case that the product/service performs as much as expected, (b) positive disconfirmation, which happens when the product/service performs better than expected, and (c) negative disconfirmation, which occurs when the product/service performs worse than expected (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Oliver, 1980).

We propose that sport event volunteers consider the discrepancy between their expectations and perceptions of their activity. We assume that volunteers possess differing levels and types of motivation that lead them to first consider and then to undertake volunteer opportunities. However, motivation operates through expectations of fit, which varies by level and type based upon past experiences, their assumptions and knowledge about the available opportunity, or factors exogenous to the volunteer process (i.e., demographic, cultural, economic, or other factors). After their volunteer involvement, they assess how closely their experience matched their initial expectations.

We specify fit across three foci: (a) fit with the organizational aspects, (b) fit with the event related things, and (c) fit with the sport-related factors considering the complex structure of and opportunity provided by sporting events. We draw upon both met-expectations and expectancy-disconfirmation perspectives to explain how volunteers may articulate the gap between expected fit and actual fit. Then we show how met-expectations and expectancy disconfirmation can be used as the critical variables indicating overall satisfaction of volunteers, commitment to future volunteering, and organizational effectiveness.

This conceptual model illuminates how we can better assess volunteers' own evaluation of their experience between expectations and perceptions of fit. Using this model, we suggest it is possible to examine how specific characteristics of the organization, the

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event, and the sport can differently influence various groups of sport volunteers. That is, this model allows us to examine mediating effects of fit on motivation among sport volunteers in more accurate ways. We intend for this model to allow sport organizations to improve their volunteer planning, managing, recruiting, and retention strategies while more efficiently segmenting volunteers to address critical needs (Chambre, 1987; Williams, Dossa, & Tompkins, 1995).