A Cross-National Comparison of Sport Volunteer Motivation

Chanho Kang, Texas A&M University
Jon Welty Peachey (Advisor), Texas A&M University

Volunteers are a crucial and indispensable set of human resources regardless of the level of sport (i.e., from youth to professional sport) or the size of events (i.e., from community to international events) (Green & Chalip, 1998; Kim & Trail, 2010). They provide numerous service activities to assist with spectator, medical, and administrative services (Strigas & Jackson, 2003; Taniguchi, 2010). Moreover, the large number of volunteers engaged in sporting events has financial implications for sport organizations. Based on 2005 data, the total monetary value of volunteer time in the U.S was estimated at approximately $280 billion (Independent sector, 2007). Given the huge contribution of volunteers’ work to sport events, practitioners and researchers have expressed interest in the motives that drive volunteers to participate in volunteering their services at sporting events. In general, motivation is an important tool for understanding volunteer behavior. Motivation is described as the reasons, purposes, plans, and goals that cause and continue individual action (Clary et al., 1998). In recent years, researchers have studied volunteer motivation to understand volunteer behavior in various areas, such as social, business, and organization (Johnston, Twynam, & Farrel, 2000; Strigas & Jackson, 2003). Understanding what motives drive individuals to engage in volunteer activities is crucial to administrators or organizers of sport events. Researchers have provided several reasons why it is important to understand the motivation of volunteers (Strigas & Jackson, 2003). First, practitioners can use knowledge of motives to recruit volunteers (Clary et al., 1998; Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991). Second, by understanding motives, practitioners can assign tasks to volunteers more effectively. As a result, volunteers could be more satisfied with the entire volunteer experience (Clary & Orenstein, 1991; Swizer, Swizer, Stukas, & Baker, 1999). Third, certain motives could be utilized to predict the retention of volunteers (Clary & Miller, 1986, Swizer et al., 1999). Finally, if volunteers’ initial motives are matched with their experience, volunteers will tend to participate more in the work and provide their services again in the future (Clary et al., 1998; Switzer et al., 1999).

However, there is no conclusive set of volunteer motivations that have been determined for any specific area of sport, such as volunteering for marathon events. Further research is needed to determine specific volunteer motivation to enable managers to better understand the needs of volunteers. Moreover, sport volunteering has not only become a critical issue in the United States, but also an important issue in other countries. Several authors have examined volunteer motivation for international sporting events in South Korea, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom (Chun, 2003; Downward & Ralston, 2005; Pi, 2001). For example, Chun (2003) examined volunteer motivation and satisfaction at the 2002 FIFA World Cup. Moreover, Pi (2001) examined motivational factors influencing volunteering for international sporting events in Taiwan. Pi concluded that personal issues were a significant factor in motivating one to volunteer. In addition, volunteering has entered the age of globalization. (Anheier & Salamon, 1999). Therefore, researchers and practitioners need to understand how volunteers vary across countries, and what drives volunteers to participate in specific types of sport events, such as international marathon events. To do so, more cross-national research examining the differences in sport volunteer motivation is needed to not only identify differences that exist by culture and location, but to also refine existing volunteer motivation theories. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to explore differences among American and Korean volunteers’ motivation to work for marathon events.

Broadly speaking, American culture is highly individualistic, while Korean culture is collectivistic (Cha 1994; Uleman & Lee). This leads to our first hypothesis, where it is posited that Korean sport volunteers will have a more collectivistic orientation than American sport volunteers, and that American sport volunteers will have a more individualistic orientation than Korean sport volunteers. Since motivations of volunteers might differ across cultural orientations (i.e., individualism and collectivism) (Barrett et al., 2004; Han, 2009), we expected that sport volunteer motivations would be different between American volunteers (i.e., individualist) and Korean volunteers (i.e., collectivist). We believed that collectivists would place greater emphasis on collectivistic motivation than would their more individualistic counterparts. We utilized a five factor model of motivation to examine the relationship between individualistic (i.e., egoistic, material, and leisure) and collectivistic (i.e., purposive and external) motivation and American/Korean motivation. Thus, for our second hypothesis, we advance that American sport volunteers will place greater emphasis on individualistic motivation than Korean sport volunteers, and that Korean sport volunteers will place greater emphasis on collectivistic motivation than American volunteers. In addition, several researchers have found that volunteer motivation influences one’s intention to remain as a volunteer (Clary et al., 1998; Knoke & Wright-Isak, 1982; Maclean & Hamm, 2007). This leads to our third hypothesis, that each of the five factors of motivation for American and Korean sport volunteers will have a significant influence on intention to continue volunteering.

Data will be collected from volunteers at marathon events in the U.S and South Korea. Random sampling techniques will be used to select subjects for the study. In order to measure individualism and collectivism, the study will use a reduced version of a horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism scale developed by Sivas, Bruvold, and Nelson (2008). Moreover, a five-
factor motivation scale with 40 items (i.e., material, purposive, leisure, egoistic, and external) developed by Strigas and Jackson (2003) will be employed to measure sport volunteer motives. However, because there was no scale available to measure the motives of Korean volunteers, refinement of the existing English instrument is needed. Thus, these scales will be translated into Korean. A panel of experts who are Korean professors in sports management, sports psychology, and English literature will be used to confirm the validity of the revised instrument. For measuring intention to continue volunteering, three items of the future behavior scale will be used (MacLean & Hamm, 2007; Kim et al., 2009).

Multivariate analysis of variance will be used to evaluate Hypotheses 1 and 2. Confirmatory factor analysis will be performed through AMOS 16.0 to examine construct validity of the scale items for five factors of motivation and intention. Following Kline’s (2005) recommendation, five fit indexes will be used to evaluate the model’s fit: the model chi-square (χ²/df), the Steiger-Lind root mean square error of approximation (Steiger, 1990) with its 90% confidence interval, the Bentler comparative fit index (Bentler, 1990), non-normed fit index (Bentler, 1990) and the standardized root mean square residual. For the third hypothesis, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) will be used to test the influence of the five motivational factors on intention to continue volunteering.

At the time of this presentation at NASSM, the study will have been completed. Thus, the results will be discussed relative to volunteer motivation theory and the extant literature. Practical implications for the management of sport volunteers derived from the results will be discussed. Limitation and suggestions for future research will also be provided.