Impact of Perceived Event Prestige on Volunteering Commitment and Satisfaction

Seungmo Kim, Hong Kong Baptist University
Changha Lee, Korea Olympic Committee
Jintaek Lee, Korea Olympic Committee

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Sport volunteers are essential human resources in the hosting of successful sporting events, especially mega sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup and Olympic Games, because those events require a large number of volunteers to provide various services to a large and varied demographic of sport consumers. For example, the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games needed 100,000 game-time volunteers (BOCOG, 2007). Given this pressing need, most studies regarding sport volunteers have focused on volunteer motivation and satisfaction for recruitment and retention (Andrew, 1996; Bang & Ross, 2009; Farrel, Jonshon, & Twynam, 1998). Recently, several studies (Andrew, Kim, & Kim, 2011; Bang, 2011; Kim, Trail, Lim, & Kim, 2009) have expanded to explore the psychosocial aspects of volunteers through positive or negative volunteering experiences, such as perceived organizational support (POS) and leader-member exchange (LMX) and their subsequent influence on volunteers' satisfaction, commitment or turnover intention. In addition, sport and community identity (Kim, Kim, & Odio, 2001) and the sport organization's reputation (Bang, 2009) have been examined for resulting impacts on volunteering satisfaction and commitment.

The framework of the current study was designed to incrementally advance the knowledge base in this area through the examination of perceived event prestige (PEP) of a mega sporting event (2011 Daegu IAAF World Championship) on volunteering commitment and satisfaction along with previously studied outcome variables of volunteers. Thus, the model consisted of seven variables: PEP, LMX, POS, Training, Empowerment (meaning, independent, and impact), volunteer commitment, and volunteer satisfaction. The other variables were included because previous research (Andrew et al., 2011; Coast, Chalip, Green, & Simes, 2006; Park, Cho, & Jung, 2009) has determined their impacts to be relevant on volunteer commitment and/or satisfaction in sporting events. Consequently, the inclusion of these other variables allowed for an analysis of the relative contribution of each respective independent variable on the identified outcome variables.

The population of the current study consisted of volunteers at the 2011 IAAF World Championship in Daegu, South Korea. Data collection was conducted during the last three days of the nine-day event after the participants had experienced the event for a week as volunteers. Among 300 survey questionnaires distributed to the volunteers at the event, 265 questionnaires were returned (88.3% response) and 202 were usable. A total of 103 males (50.9%) and 99 females (49.1%) participated in the survey. The majority of the volunteers at the event were students (n = 138 for 68.3%). Fifty-two items from previously validated instruments were used to collect data on PEP (5 items), POS (7 items), LMX (7 items), training (6 items), empowerment (9 items), volunteer satisfaction (8 items), volunteering commitment (8 items), demographic profiles (e.g., gender, age, and vocation). Respondents indicated the extent of their agreement with each item on a 7 point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) in each section.

Cronbach Alphas for each construct were calculated and coefficients ranged from α = 0.809 (PEP) to α = 0.945 (training). The highest rated independent variables were empowerment: meaning (M = 5.52) and LMX (M = 5.05). The participants also indicated relatively high levels of volunteering commitment (M = 5.62) and satisfaction (M = 5.15). Two separate backward deletion linear regression analyses indicated that empowerment: meaning (β = .278), PEP (β = .186), training (β = .154), and empowerment: independent (β = .105) were significant predictors of volunteering commitment \[ F (7, 194) = 60.45, p < .001 \], while POS (β = .223) empowerment: meaning (β = .223), training (β = .169), LMX (β = .153), and PEP (β = .137) were significant predictors of volunteering satisfaction \[ F (7, 194) = 67.18, p < .001 \].

Based on the results of the current study, PEP appears to be a relevant predictor of both volunteer commitment and satisfaction. Though PEP was not the strongest predictor of either outcome variable, it is clear the perceived prestige of the event plays a significant role on the commitment and satisfaction of volunteers. Consequently, event
organizers should engage in sufficient internal and external marketing strategies that positively impact the perceived prestige of their event.