

UNDERSTANDING GENDER DIFFERENCES IN SPORT EVENT VOLUNTEERING

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Abstract

Event studies are an emerging academic field, and each sport event is unique and requires a substantial volunteer labour force. The volunteers are fundamental to the success of the event. The focus here is the FIS World Cup 2010, which was the trial event for the FIS Nordic World Ski Championship in 2011. Volunteering is changing concurrently with individualization processes in society (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003). The different roles of the volunteers vary in complexity. The sport event can be viewed as a meeting place between a traditional volunteer culture mainly dominated by males and a modern and "new" type of volunteer dominated by younger females. The traditional volunteers are represented by members of sport organizations, and they reinforce the social composition of sport in general. They tend to be associated with older age cohorts. A majority of the studies of sport event volunteers are atheoretical and include little analysis of the implications for volunteer management (Cuskelly, Hoyer & Auld, 2006). Downward, Lumsdon and Ralston (2005) looked into the gender differences and found that the expectations of the female volunteers were different from those of males and that they used the opportunity to increase their social and personal capital.

The objective of this paper is to understand the gender difference among sport event volunteers and generate knowledge that can be used directly in relation to female volunteers in the future. A key question is: Are female sport volunteers modern reflexive/pragmatic volunteers with weak ties to organized sport and instrumental motives?

Methodology, research design and data analysis

The data were generated from a survey sent out to all volunteers by e-mail prior to the event in March 2010 with a response rate of 77 % and a post-event questionnaire with response rate of 71%. Only the answers from those

659 persons who have responded both on the pre- and post-event questionnaire on-line were included. The response rate was then 66%. This sample was found by merging the two samples in SPSS. Statistically significant results were acquired that show the differences between the female and male volunteers.

Results, discussion and implications/conclusions

The gender distribution among the volunteers is 54.6 % male (N= 359) and 45.4 % female (N=299). Most international findings show a balanced or more female centered core of volunteers. One reason may be that many of these investigations have looked at women's sport activities. The ratio among volunteers in Norwegian sport in general is 58 % male (Wollebæk & Sivesind, 2010).

The average age of female volunteers is 40.06 years (SD=13.764) and men 49.91 (SD=13.774). Independent sample t-test shows that the average age of men is significantly older than that of women. There are more females in the age groups below 34 and more males from 55 years and above. Between those two ages there are no significant differences between the genders. Among those without a membership in a sports club, the average age is considerably lower than among those who are members of a sport club. The percentage of people with a high income is lower among those who have no experience as sport event volunteers both among the members and non-members of a sport club. Non-members of sports clubs have a higher percentage with higher education. Women are in majority (58 %) in the group which is new to sport events.

Women's motivation for volunteer work was more instrumental than that of men. Men more often volunteered because of their own interest in sport (intrinsic motivation), while women sought to redefine their identities and challenge obstacles faced in the labour market and within the sports activity. Our results confirmed this: the male volunteers had more often an attachment to sporting organizations and were more strongly motivated by their interest in the sport or the happening represented by a large ski competition. Similar to what Downward et al. (2005) found, women searched specifically for events in order to strengthen their human and social capital which can be used in the labour market. Young women, who often carried out support functions for the event, had an emphasis on outer (extrinsic) motives. Four factors emerged from the explanatory factor analyses of the 20 items of motives by using Varimax-rotation, and they explained 53,1% of the variance. For the non-members and those without sport event experience the motives of competence and experience increased as well as the social motive for the latter group after the trial event. The females were overrepresented in these two groups.

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