

AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG COMMITMENT TO RUNNING AND VOLUNTEER MOTIVATION WITH INVOLVEMENT WITH BACK ON MY FEET: SYMBIOTIC OR SUBSTITUTIONARY?

Author:
Kevin Filo

email:
k.filo@griffith.edu.au

Co-authors:
Funk, Daniel: Temple University and Griffith University
Jordan, Jeremy: Temple University Inoue, Yuhei: Temple University

University:
Griffith University

Faculty:
Department of Tourism Leisure Hotel and Sport Management

Abstract

Research Aims

The trend towards volunteering continues to increase in different countries around the world (Dekker & van den Broek, 2005). An understanding of volunteer motivation and involvement remains critical for organisations reliant on volunteers. This understanding can be extended to comprehension of specific factors unique to the volunteer context.

The current research examines the relationships among factors distinctive to a volunteer organisation and involvement with that organisation. Specifically, this research examines the relationships among commitment to running and volunteer motivation with involvement with a running-based non-profit organisation designed to help homeless individuals. Back on My Feet (BOMF) is a non-profit organisation that engages the homeless population through a structured running program in order to build self-efficacy among participants.

Theoretical Background

Volunteer motivation has been examined in many contexts and has been found to vary based upon volunteer activities. Sport volunteers have been deemed distinct from traditional volunteers due to the unique nature of the sport context. The current research defines volunteer motivation as the needs and wants satisfied through the goal-directed behaviour of volunteering for BOMF.

Involvement is an important construct in the leisure context (Havitz & Dimanche, 1990) and can be defined as an evaluation of participation in an activity as an integral aspect of a person's life that provides hedonic and symbolic value (Beaton, Funk, Ridinger, & Jordan, in press). The current research defines Involvement with BOMF as: a volunteer's evaluation of engagement with the organisation as a central aspect of his or her life providing hedonic and symbolic value.

BOMF represents a unique volunteer opportunity in that volunteers must run in order to be considered active volunteers. As a result, a volunteer's attitude towards running could also be a primary driver of Involvement with BOMF. Accordingly, the current research defines commitment to running as a reflection of an individual's psychological connection to running revealed through resistance to seek alternative activities, and advances this construct as an additional primary driver of Involvement with BOMF. This research examines the relationships among volunteer motivation and commitment to running and involvement with BOMF through the collection of data from BOMF volunteers.

Research Design

An online questionnaire was administered to 700 active BOMF volunteers, and a total of 214 responses were deemed usable (response rate = 30.5%). The questionnaire included 18 items to assess Volunteer Motivation; three items to assess Running Commitment; and nine items to assess Involvement with BOMF. A battery of demographic questions were also included.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed through a multiple regression analysis. This regression specified motives for volunteering and commitment to running as the independent variables and involvement with the BOMF as the dependent variable. Additionally, to examine the conditional relationship between the two independent variables, their interaction term (volunteer motivation \times running commitment) was included as an additional predictor of BOMF involvement.

Results

The regression results indicated that volunteer motivation positively influenced BOMF involvement ($b = .78, p < .001$). Further, running commitment was found to have a positive effect ($b = .23, p < .001$). These results support the study's prediction that volunteers are more actively involved with the BOMF if they have higher levels of volunteer motivation and/or running commitment. Also, the interaction variable had a significant negative effect on BOMF involvement ($b = -.16, p < .02$). The interpretation of this negative interaction effect is that the positive effect of one of the two independent variables (i.e., volunteer motivation and running commitment) on BOMF involvement will gradually decrease as the level of the other variable increases.

Discussion

The findings show that BOMF involvement is an increasing function of volunteer motivation and running commitment. However, the effects of the two variables are conditional upon each other. When volunteers are low in both volunteer motivation and running commitment, an increase in each variable will likely contribute to an increase in BOMF involvement. Once they achieve sufficiently high

levels in either of the two variables, however, the other variable will be less influential in enhancing the level of BOMF involvement. These findings present implications for BOMF management effectively leveraging the distinct components of volunteering to optimise the experience of volunteers.

References:

- Beaton, A. A., Funk, D. C., Ridinger, L., & Jordan, J. (In Press). Sport involvement: A conceptual and empirical analysis. *Sport management review* (2010), doi:10.1016/j.smr.2010.07.002
- Dekker, P. & van den Broek, A. (2005). Involvement in voluntary associations in North America and Western Europe: Trends and correlates 1981-2000. *Journal of Civil Society*, 1, 45-59.
- Havitz, M. E., & Dimanche, F. (1990). Propositions for testing the involvement construct in recreational and tourism contexts. *Leisure Sciences: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 12(2), 179 - 195.