

Session: **Project management of big sport events II.**

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Do sport events attract other types of volunteers?

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Background

Volunteering in sport is changing and traditional ways are being challenged. Traditional or “collective” volunteering as a lifelong and demanding commitment to a sport organization is declining and a transition is taking place towards to a “new” or more “individualistic” type of volunteer participation, which has been described as a late modern type (Wollebaek, 2010; Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003). This project focuses on the pattern of volunteering among the ad hoc volunteers at the FIS Nordic World Cup in Holmenkollen in March 2010 (test world championship), which may be described as situated at the cross-roads of collective and traditional volunteerism. The project will also examine the degree to which the volunteers are willing to volunteer again for the World Championship in Nordic Skiing in 2011. Most volunteer experiences consist of two key components: training and task execution (Carla et al., 2006). Therefore the volunteers evaluate their experience in terms of the quality of their training and the satisfaction they obtain from the job (Elstad, 1996).

Objectives: Our aim is to examine the process of volunteering at sport events at the beginning of the 21st century; more specifically, our aim is to understand the factors that motivate and contribute to the satisfaction of volunteers during the FIS Nordic World Cup, and to examine the retention patterns of volunteers for 2011. Are people who volunteer in sport events different from other volunteers? Literature in this field has been lacking and has been largely atheoretical, with the notable exception of the work of Allen & Shaw (2009). Central to the definition of volunteering is the notion of free will and hence Self-determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) is well suited to understand volunteer motivation and retention.

Methods

All volunteers (1045) were asked to complete a questionnaire by e-mail (Questback) designed to bring out information about their motives for volunteering and the factors that contributed to their volunteer experience. Norwegian Social Science Data Services gave permission to conduct this study, and reminders were sent three times to the volunteers. The response rate was 76, % (N=

800) for the pre-event round at FIS Nordic World Cup in Holmenkollen in March 2010 and 71, % (N= 752) for the after-the-event round. 106 people did not reply on the first round, but answered the second. A few interviews at the site were added during the two days of the competition.

Results

The volunteers were divided into two groups according to whether they had any connection to a sport club, which almost two thirds of them had. 46% of those with a sport club connection had been volunteers at a sport event. Among those not connected to a sport club, nine percent had been volunteers in a sport event, and altogether 55 % of the volunteers had previously taken part in this kind of event. On average, event volunteers were more highly educated, and had higher incomes than traditional sport volunteers. The percentage of females taking part in non-sport events is much greater than the percentage which takes part in sport events. Men tend to be more frequently involved with sport-based events (Pold, 1990). Among the first time volunteers there is a surplus of women. These volunteers were also younger and the composition concerning ethnicity was more varied. Those who were connected to sport and had event experience from previous sport events had a stronger intrinsic motivation than the first time volunteers.

Conclusion/Application to practice

Results from the research will be fed back to the organizer of the FIS NWC 2011 event and will help to inform the organization of volunteering of that event. Event managers need to be clear before the event about the reciprocal expectations of volunteers and organizers in terms of rewards. Volunteers had expectations concerning work-load, commitment, tasks and related event responsibilities For next year they need 1000 more volunteers and it is therefore important for the organizer to retain the volunteers from this year's event. The findings emphasize the importance of incorporating the needs and perspectives of volunteers into the planning and management of NWC 2011.

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