

Chapter 15

Perceived Importance and Extent of Implementation of Volunteer Management Practices: Comparison between National Sports Associations and Event Management Companies

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ABSTRACT

Effective volunteer management practices have been shown to be linked to performance, commitment, satisfaction, and retention of volunteers. In addition, it has been shown that organisational contexts are crucial to successful implementation of such practices. Using a volunteer management framework comprising four main stages of management practices (concept, planning, implementation, review), the volunteer management practices of non-profit national sports associations are examined against those of for-profit event management companies. Findings reveal some differences in the level of perceived importance, and the extent of implementation between non-profit national sports associations and for-profit event management companies. Themes that emerged from the content analysis of the interviews conducted with key management staff in the organisations support the notion that the reasons underlying the perceived importance of volunteer management practices are associated with volunteer retention, and with support organisations' objectives. Implications for decision-makers are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

The launch of the Committee on Sporting Singapore (CoSS) Report in 2001 was a critical milestone in the development of sport in Singapore, and the current vibrancy of the sport industry and the growth in sport volunteers can arguably be attributed to it. The committee added the strategic thrust of sports industry development to the existing two strategic thrusts of promoting sports to the masses (sports for all), and grooming elite athletes to achieve accolades in the international sports arenas (sports excellence). Initially focusing on the hosting of marque sports events, the economic spinoffs generated by the sport industry are expected to contribute to the gross domestic product of the nation. For almost one and a half decade after the launch of the CoSS Report in 2001, sport in Singapore has gain greater prominence and popularity. This is evidenced by the number of marquee events hosted by Singapore. These include the inaugural Youth Olympic Games 2010, Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Women's Champions, Barclays Singapore Open, Aviva Ironman 70.3 Singapore Triathlon, and the Li-Ning Singapore Open. With the upcoming official opening of the new S\$1.33 billion Singapore Sports Hub in the second half of 2014, more world class events are set to be featured. For example, Singapore won the right to host the prestigious 2014-2018 Women's Tennis Association Championships under a record-setting five-year agreement (World Sport Group, 2012). The World Club 10s Rugby, and the Asean Football Federation Suzuki Cup will also be held in the Singapore Sports Hub. In addition, participation in sporting events such as the Standard Chartered Singapore Marathon, Sundown Marathon, Vertical Marathon, Singapore International Triathlon, and Overseas Chinese Banking Corporation (OCBC) Cycle Singapore has grown over the years. For example, the OCBC Cycle Singapore event began in 2009 with 5,400 riders, attracted more than 10,000 riders in 2011 (Channel NewsAsia, 2009;

TODAY, 2010). With the number of riders rising to 11,500 in 2013, the organizer decided to cap the number of participants at 12,000 for the 2014 edition for safety reasons and to ensure that riders have an enjoyable race experience (Channel NewsAsia, 2013). Another event that has seen phenomenal growth is the Standard Chartered Singapore Marathon which was started in 2002 with 6,000 runners, grew to 21,000 runners in 2005, attracted 60,000 participants in 2010, and recorded 54,000 participants in 2013 (Singapore Sports Council, 2006, 2011, 2013).

The contribution of volunteers towards the success of such sporting events, and to sport in general, is getting more substantial and crucial. At the 2010 Singapore Youth Olympic Games, over 45,000 volunteers were engaged to help ensure that the world-class event run smoothly (MyPaper, 2010). The involvement of over 4,000 volunteers in staging the 2013 edition of the Standard Chartered Singapore Marathon also signified the importance of volunteers in sport. The increasing need for volunteer means that sport organisations (e.g., national sports associations which are the national governing bodies of their respective sports) and sport-related companies (e.g., events management companies) that engage volunteers face the challenge of attracting, managing and retaining volunteers. At the same time, it is important that they ensure that volunteers have a positive experience. Recognising the need to better manage volunteers in sport, and to make the best use of this pool of human capital, Sport Singapore (formerly known as Singapore Sports Council) and the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (formerly known as Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports) included developing a sports volunteer framework as one of the recommendations in the Vision 2030 Report (Singapore Sports Council, 2012). The aim is to create a high standard in sport volunteerism as part of the capabilities development plan supporting the Vision 2030 by working with the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre (NVPC) and

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