

Chapter 5

Small-Scale Event Volunteering: Insights From Three Greek Running Events

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ABSTRACT

Volunteers are the main driving force and absolutely necessary for the smooth organization of small-scale events. Through the description of the volunteering concept regarding the events, the readers are getting deeper into the volunteerism perception. This chapter presents the volunteering motivational factors based on selective bibliographical sources. It also gives emphasis to the volunteerism link with the community. Insights from three small-scale sport events are provided with a view to helping the reader comprehend the working areas where volunteers may offer their services and the package that they gain after their contribution.

INTRODUCTION

Every day volunteers provide their time and services to several organizations and projects around the world, including events; they undertake a wide range of roles in order to carry out very important tasks, they face challenges and gain new experiences. Without them a small scale event is not possible. The organizers highly rely on volunteers to provide their valuable services for the event. If they are carefully

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managed, they can become a rich resource and an important human support for the event as they usually work at every level to prepare a successful result.

The definition of volunteerism is difficult given the variety of roles and the difference of operations that volunteers may participate (Bussell & Forbes, 2002). According to the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2011, p. 13) volunteer work is defined as *“unpaid non-compulsory work; that is time individuals give without pay to activities either through an organization or directly for others outside their own household”*. Stebbins (1996) approaches volunteering as *“an uncoerced helping activity that is engaged in not primarily for financial gain...different in definition from work, slavery or conscription”*. Another definition is provided by Monga (2006, p. 47) as following: *“volunteers are the people who offer their labor, knowledge, skills, and experience at no wage cost to the utilizing organization”*. Omoto & Packar (2016) define volunteerism as *“an active and intentional process in which individuals and groups seek out opportunities to assist others”*. They state that the volunteers' actions are based on freewill and are undertaken by choice.

Volunteerism is assumed as a leisure activity, providing relaxing and/or exercising and learning opportunities (Doherty, 2005; Stebbins, 1996) with little or no particular training to enjoy it (Stebbins, 2009) but not all its forms (like giving blood) are really fun, even if they may be satisfying (Stebbins, 1996).

Regarding events, we can say that volunteering is the contribution of labor, time, skills, energy, efforts and services from the part of the individuals, that enables them to experience several benefits (and costs) and provides to the event managers the opportunity to perform well-organized and successful events (Bang et al., 2009; Doherty, 2009; Kervin et al., 2015).

There is a consensus in the existing academic literature that the contribution of the volunteers to the events is substantial (Bang & Ross, 2009; Hallmann & Zehrer, 2017; Kervin et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2018). Their work is regarded as one of the main pillars of special events (Leigh et al., 2013). Their help for the operations of an event is absolutely necessary (Hallmann & Zehrer, 2017; Kerwin et al., 2015) through the important responsibilities that they usually undertake (Lockstone-Binney et al., 2015). Their support is essential not only for mega-events but also for smaller local ones (Kerwin et al., 2015).

Indeed, volunteers have been developed into a valuable aspect of the events (Bang & Ross, 2009; Kim, 2018; Kim & Cuskelly, 2017; Pauline, (2011). As a central part of the event, they play a very important role in its success and they may even become the face of the event (Schlesinger & Gubler, 2016), let alone the fact that they may provide the organizers with very special services including legal advice, financial and marketing support and other (Warner et al., 2011).

Volunteers seem to be an extremely useful resource for any event. Their commitment, the time they will spend and the tasks they will undertake will

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