



# Segmenting volunteers by motivation in the 2012 London Olympic Games



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## HIGHLIGHTS

- We conducted a survey of a total of 11,421 London Olympic volunteers.
- We employed a combined factor-clustering method to extract distinct volunteer segments.
- We found three meaningful distinct segments.
- The obligated group contained the largest number of volunteers among three groups.
- The enthusiastic group had the highest satisfaction and the highest retention.

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## ABSTRACT

The present research employed seven motivational factors to delineate sports-event volunteer segments for the 2012 London Olympic Games. The investigators conducted a survey of 11,421 volunteers in the 2012 London Olympic Games and used the factor-clustering method to identify three distinct segments (i.e., the obligated, the enthusiastic, and the semi-enthusiastic). In addition, these segments' overall satisfaction, behavioral intentions for other future events, and socio-demographic backgrounds were assessed, uncovering significant differences among the segments. An ANOVA and a chi-square test found the segments to differ significantly from each other in all of these regards.

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## 1. Introduction

Across a myriad of public activities, from mega-events to local and regional get-togethers, sports-event volunteers are a crucial source of labor and support. Sports-event volunteers have become an indispensable component of the workforce during large athletic events, mega-events, like the Olympics (Reeser, Berg, Rhea, & Willick, 2005), and sports events rely on a large number of volunteers to help (Fairley, Kellett, & Green, 2007). Volunteering means non-salaried service (Cnaan, Handy, & Wadsworth, 1996) requiring a sense of obligation on the part of volunteers in terms of time, effort, and skills development (Holmes, Smith, Lockstone-

Binney, & Baum, 2010). Volunteering is a discretionary activity that is essentially a donation of time, even though the spectrum of activities can be seen as volunteering is broad (Cnaan et al., 1996). Volunteers are as diverse as the events in which they participate, with multivariate nationalities, races, ages, career backgrounds, and personal characteristics represented amongst them. Given this plethora of activities and characteristics of individuals, there must be diverse motives, needs, desires, and behavioral characteristics in play among volunteer groups. Better efficiency in the categorization of volunteers is essential to the organizations and industries that employ volunteers to support and operate their events.

At the same time, empirical studies have long considered motivation to be one of the key elements of segmentation research within the event context (e.g., Oyedele & Simpson, 2011). Motivation is stressed as an important precondition for satisfaction and behavioral intention (e.g., Pan & Ryan, 2007). Adapting these lines of research to the Olympic milieu, this study identifies specific volunteer motivations for the Olympics and provides a

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segmentation of the volunteer pool based on these motivations. This research is vital as selecting sports-event volunteers who are not only competent but who are drawn to the Olympics by appropriate motives that will be important to the success of future Olympiads. Since satisfaction plays a significant role in employee retention, it will also be useful to identify factors that relate to positive volunteer satisfaction (Costa, Chalip, Green, & Simes, 2006). Satisfied employees—and satisfied volunteers—are more likely to stay with their organizations (e.g., Borzaga & Tortia, 2006). Therefore, this research investigates the distinctiveness of clusters on satisfaction, future behavioral intentions, and socio-demographic variables.

Even as related studies on sporting-event volunteerism have investigated various motivations, levels of satisfaction, and behavioral intentions extensively, there has yet to be a produced specific study of volunteer segmentation and motivation employing a large sample of volunteers for a mega event such as the 2012 London Olympic Games. This failing leaves a crucial knowledge gap where volunteers are concerned. Further, relatively little of the research that has investigated volunteering for mega-events has been conducted using volunteers. To fill this gap and verify the characteristics of volunteers in advance of future Olympics, this research examines the motivations, satisfaction, and behavior of volunteers to develop meaningful volunteer segments. Moreover, to create a profile of the emerging clusters, this research presents socio-demographic profiles to design appropriate strategies for the organizations to target key audiences. Accordingly, the research evaluates the strategic importance of understanding the sports-event volunteer segments and profiles. Using different characteristics on each segment, this research will make suggestions for a targeted-communication approach for each volunteer group.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Volunteer-motivation research

Motivation is considered to be one of the strongest psychographic variables affecting segmentation as it is a personal inner state that directly satisfies a felt need and triggers a behavioral intention (Park & Yoon, 2009). Motivation is therefore a key construct when attempting to understand an individual's decision to become a volunteer (Kim, Zhang, & Connaughton, 2010). Overall, event managers can benefit from establishing and developing an organizational process for recruiting, selecting, and retaining volunteers. Identifying the unique motivations of volunteers can help managers—including Olympic Games managers—to organize sports events that maximize volunteer participation, satisfaction, and retention. Knowing the motivations of volunteers can contribute to hosting a successful event and ensure the volunteer experience is worthwhile for both volunteers and organizers.

Among the dimensionalities addressing sport event volunteer motivations, the volunteer functions inventory has been used in various settings including sport volunteering (Eley & Kirk, 2002; Kim et al., 2010). This inventory includes six functions of volunteer motivation (i.e. value, understanding, social, career, protective, and enhancement) that have been identified by Clary et al. (1998). The value function refers to altruistic and humanitarian concern for others and distinguishes between volunteers and non-volunteers. The understanding function represents the opportunity to use knowledge, skills, and abilities that would otherwise not be used, while the social function implies developing relationships with new individuals or existing friends or engaging in an activity that is viewed favorably by a peer group. The career function means preparing for a new job field or volunteering so as to remain current in career status, as with résumé building. Finally, the protective

function refers to reducing negative emotions, and the enhancement function entails the positive aspects of building oneself up.

Some scholars (e.g. Farrell, Margaret, & David, 1998) have stated that motivations for special-event volunteerism are different from motivations for human-services volunteerism, such as that studied by Clary et al. (1998) and Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991). It is, however, logically assumed that volunteers' have common motivations regardless of the types of events because volunteering is ultimately based on altruistic commitment to carry out assigned tasks without receiving payment or rewards of any other nature (Moreno, Moragas, & Paningua, 1999). In related veins, Güntert, Neufeind, and Wehner (in press) studied event volunteering in the context of a 2008 European football championship, making explicit use of the functional approach and modifying it to address sports-event volunteers' motives.

### 2.2. Motivation research in mega sport event volunteerism

Recently, volunteer motivation studies have more focused on mega sport events (e.g., Bang & Ross, 2009; MacLean & Hamm, 2007). In relation to Olympic volunteers specifically, the greatest motivations have been reported to be the desire of volunteers to associate themselves with the Olympic movement, to be involved in the Olympics, or to meet with Olympic athletes (Giannoulakis, Wang, & Grey, 2008). Bang and Ross (2009) added and validated another motivation category: Olympic values. That is, Olympic volunteering may also be motivated by pride in one's own country, social contact and friendship, or a desire to feel needed and valued by society (Minnaert, 2012).

Wang (2004) used five constructs—altruistic value, personal development, community concern, ego enhancement, and social adjustment—for volunteers at the Sydney 2000 Olympics. Edwards, Dickson, and Darcy (2009) surveyed volunteers of the Sydney World Masters Games 2009 using motivations including Olympic-related ideals and personal-development goals. Karkatsoulis, Michalopoulos, and Moustakatou (2005) explored the case of volunteers in the Athens 2004 Olympic Games. The Karkatsoulis study demonstrates that national identity was the major motivational factor for the 2004 Olympic volunteers. They found that, from the younger group (15–17 years) through to the older (over 65), volunteers expressed patriotic reasons for volunteering; the 18–24 year-old group—which constituted the hard core of volunteers—focused on this widely-held motive.

In addition, Kemp (2002) surveyed volunteers in the Lillehammer 1994 Olympic Winter Games and the Sydney 2000 Summer Olympic Games and found that volunteers in both events were strongly motivated by pride in their countries and culture, social contact, and friendship. Bang and Chelladurai (2009) validated the volunteer motivation scale (i.e., expression of values, patriotism, interpersonal contacts, career orientation, personal growth, and extrinsic rewards) for international sporting events in a study of the 2002 FIFA World Cup in Korea. Khoo and Engelhorn (2011) investigated motivational differences (i.e., commitments, external traditions, family traditions, purposiveness, and solidarity) in different demographic and experiential groups in an American national Special Olympics event. Ralston, Downward, and Limsdon (2004) found that three factors (altruism, involvement, and the uniqueness of the event) motivated volunteers in the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games; Reeser et al. (2005) found similar motives among volunteers at the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympic Games.

### 2.3. Satisfaction and behavioral intentions

The satisfaction levels of volunteers have been examined in a variety of contexts including sporting events such as the Olympic

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