Volunteer emotions and motivations during mega events: the case of Rio 2016 Olympics

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Paper presented at the 11th Regional EMAC Regional Conference, Zagreb (online), September 16-19,2020

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Two studies analyze volunteer emotions and motivations in the context of mega events. Study 1 shows that volunteers experienced 4 main motivations, in line with what was previously reported in other Olympic Games study (Bang, Alexandris & Ross, 2009). These motivations can be used in order to help future organizers attract volunteers. Study 2 presented the main problems faced by volunteers during their experience. By going deeper into the negative emotions that volunteers faced we can highlight several managerial suggestions that could boost morale within the volunteer group such as an active hotline for volunteers; the existence of a system in place to solve issues volunteers have with their work equipment; and work with volunteers during the process of their exiting role (Gellweiler, Fletcher, & Wise, 2019), allowing for more positive emotions to arise and improve chances of volunteering in the future.

Key-Words: Volunteer, Emotions, Motivations

1. Introduction

According to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Committee (Tokyo, 2019), "Games volunteers will be directly involved in assisting Games' operations before, during and after the Tokyo 2020 Games, and will be expected to play an active role in helping to create a positive and exciting atmosphere, to contribute to the overall success of the Games". This opening statement at the volunteer page of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games clearly states how important the role of these people are for the Games.

Hosting mega events requires the organization and coordination of uncountable activities, ranging from managing the competition to dealing with athletes (Farrel, Johnston and Twynam, 1998). This process relies heavily on volunteers (Williams, Dossa, & Tompkins, 1995; Kim, 2018), that is people that do "unpaid non-compulsory work; that is time individuals give without pay to activities performed either through an organization or directly for those outside their own household." For instance, during the first Olympic events of this century the participation of volunteers have the profile and number of volunteers involved in the Olympic Games have changed considerably since the start of the Olympics Modern Age, in Athens, 1896. They were Scouts and members of the military force responsible for this work, according to Moreno, Moragas, Paniagua (1999), and the number was nothing more than a few hundred. The political and social evolution that the world experienced throughout the twentieth century brought with it a significant increase in this number and this function in the Games began to be exercised by another kind of people, with other motivations as well.

There was some stagnation around 30,000 volunteers between Los Angeles 1984 and Barcelona 1992, according to Moreno, Moragas, Paniagua (1999). However, this number grew from then on, reaching 100,000 people in Beijing 2008 (Yan & Chen, 2008), 70,000 in London 2012 (International Olympic Committee, 2013) and 52,000 at the Rio 2016 Games, with 90,000 participation expected in Tokyo 2020. The last two data, according to Tokyo (2016).. The role these volunteers have range from guidance at venues and drive athletes and affiliated with the Games between venues by car, through work on registration, doping control, media support, language services and touristic information, among many others duties required to allow everyone is involved to the Games to have a satisfactory experience (Tokyo, 2016; Khoo and Engelhorn,2011).

Services marketing theory posits that customer satisfactions is related to employee satisfaction (Chung-Herrera, Goldschmidt, Hoffman, 2004; Bitner, Booms, Mohr, 1994), therefore the management of volunteers for mega events, such as the Olympics and World Cups, is crucial for the success of the Games. The study of volunteers is key for developing more effective volunteer management strategies" (Kim, Fredline, and Cuskelly, 2018, p.1). Kim, Kim, Kim, Zhang (2019) identified that organizational support is key for future volunteering.

These management strategies are especially relevant in Olympic sports because most participants will be episodic volunteers, as opposed to long-term volunteers (Kim, 2017). These episodic volunteers have little of no knowledge on how to be a volunteer. Additionally, despite being from the home country of the event, most of the time these volunteers come from different cities, therefore facing additional hurdles from living and extended time in a different location (Chen, Zheng, Dickson, 2018).

Kim's (2017) systematic review shows that extant research has focused mainly on quantitative, survey-based studies. There is a lack of qualitative studies that focus on the underlying factors that can shape volunteer participation, retention and willingness to volunteer again.

Based on the discussion presented, the main goal of this research is to analyze the motivations and emotions that volunteers experienced during Rio 2016. In order to accomplish

this goal, we analyzed the comments of volunteers of Rio 2016 Facebook group. Results indicate several points of attention that could improve management of volunteers during mega events, therefore contributing to the overall success of the event.

2. Literature review

In this section we present and discuss the main drivers that motivate volunteers in mega events. We also highlight the discussion of emotions related to the process of volunteering, since this sheds light on how the organizing committee of a given sport can work to provide a better volunteering experience. This will be the base for creating a coding guide in order to analyze the data collected.

2.1 Volunteers and motivation

According to Cnaan, Handy, and Wadsworth (1996), pure volunteers can be defined within four dimensions: (1) free choice/ (2) remuneration; (3) structure - context where work is performed; and (4) the beneficiaries. These volunteers are an essential aspect of the sport service delivery, since they provide support for games logistics in areas such as protocol reception, transportation, security, medical aids, game operation support, venue operation support, news operation support, and cultural activity organization support (Giannoulakis, Wang, and Gray (2007).

Studying volunteers of Sidney 2000 Olympics, Wang (2004) identified that motivations for volunteers are fivefold: (1) Altruistic Value – prosocial and altruistic values, (2) Personal Development – desire for learning, knowledge, and experience, (3) Community Concern – obligation to community, (4) Ego Enhancement – enhancing oneself positive feelings, and (5) Social Adjustment – relationship with people.

When gathering the expectations of volunteers before the 2002 Commonwealth Games, Ralston, Downward, Lumsdon (2004) identified the main drivers of participation: connect to something special; have empathy with the event; commit as a member of the region; improve the image of the region; the experience itself.

2.2 Volunteer management and episodic volunteers from non-host region

The process of managing volunteers can be understood in seven stages: The process of managing volunteers can be understood in seven stages: (1) planning – identify potential volunteers, provide role or job descriptions for individuals, (2) recruitment – match the skills experiences and interests to roles, (3) screening – verify the accreditation of coaches and officials, (4) orientation - Encourage volunteers to operate within a code of acceptable behaviour, (5) training and support – mentor volunteers, manage the work and provide resources, (6) performance management – monitor and provide feedback to individual volunteers, and (7) recognition - Recognise and thank outstanding work or task performances of individual volunteers (Cuskelly, Taylor, Hoye, and Darcy, 2006). Ralston, Downward, Lumsdon (2004) identified that training should be given especial consideration, because expectation before the actual event are highly influenced by the type of training provided. Organizations can benefit from giving volunteers the chance of choosing their tasks, schedule, or with whom they are going to work with (Allen & Bartle, 2014).

Additionally, Gellweiler, Fletcher, and Wise (2019) introduce the concept of "role exit", where volunteers experience the ending of the volunteering experience. This process impacts

volunteers as they fell sadness and loss when experiencing the transitioning between volunteering and normal life.

The process of managing volunteers must take into account the existence of episodic volunteers. Since they can behave differently from continuous volunteers, who effectively engage in long-term volunteering (Kim, 2017), organizing committees' should strive to give special attention to this group. With regards to mega events, volunteers are often from the home country and are not previously involved in volunteering ((Tokyo, 2016; Moreno, Moragas & Paniagua, 1999).

2.3 Emotions and service delivery

Emotions can have significant effects on service quality evaluations (Mattila, & Enz, 2002), especially when service employees (e.g. volunteers) go beyond their expected role (Zhao, Yan, & Keh, 2018). These emotions can be divided between those that represent negative affect (Anger, Sadness, Fear, Shame) and positive affect (Contentment and Happiness) (Laros, & Steenkamp, 2005). When employees display positive emotions, this evokes positive emotions in customers, increasing their participation in the service encounter (Zhao, Yan, & Keh, 2018).

3. Method

3.1 Data collection and Sample

This study used mixed methods (Study 1 - quantitative and Study 2 - qualitative) to analyze user-generated content of the Facebook group Rio 2016 Official Volunteer Program. In the group, participants expressed their experiences as Olympic and Paralympic Games volunteers with statements ranging from demonstrations of admiration and joy to information searching in order to perform volunteer functions.

For study 1 a sample of all the posts from the Facebook group was collected and the data transposed do a database. In total 201 posts for the Summer Olympics and 226 for the Paralympic Games were analyzed using Iramuteq, which is a licensed software that provides users with statistical analysis on text corpus and tables composed by individuals/words. It is based on R software and on python language. Each post was coded using the following motivations: expression of values (concern for others, the success of the event, and society), patriotism (pride in and love of the country, and allegiance to the country), interpersonal contacts (meeting and interacting with people and forming friendships), career orientation (gaining experience and career contacts), personal growth (gaining new perspectives, feeling important and needed), extrinsic rewards (getting free uniforms, food, and admission) and love of sport (event related to sport, sport is something I love or being involved in sport activities) (Bang, Alexandris & Ross, 2009). And for emotions: the emotions anger (angry, frustrated, irritated, unfulfilled, discontented, envious and jealous), fear (scared, afraid, panicky, nervous, worried and tense), sadness (depressed, sad, miserable, helpless, nostalgia and guilty), shame (embarrassed, ashamed and humiliated), contentment (contented, fulfilled and peaceful), happiness (optimistic, encouraged, hopeful, happy, pleased, joyful, relieved, thrilled and enthusiastic), love (sexy, romantic, passionate, loving, sentimental and warm-hearted) and pride (Laros and Steenkamp (2005). For study 2, we content analyzed the main problems faced by volunteers during the games, aiming at discovering managerial suggestions for future Olympic organizers. We scanned all the posts from the beginning to the end of the Olympic Games and categorized them in problems occurring before, during and after the event.

4. Data analysis

4.1 Study 1 (Lexical analysis by context of a set of text segments and Similarity analysis)

The content of the analyzed posts (201 posts for the Summer Olympics and 226 for the Paralympic Games) was categorized into 2 clusters. Each cluster is characterized by specific motivations and emotions presenting chi-square > 3.80 and p<0.05:

- Cluster 1 – 72.8% of the text segments composed by 3 motivations: personal growth (Chi2 14.14, p. 0.00016), expression of values (Chi2 14.05, p. 0.00017), and patriotism (Chi2 4.5, p. 0.03381) and 1 emotion, namely contentment (Chi2 6.07, p. 0.00016
- Cluster 2 – 27.2% of the text segments composed by 1 motivation: interpersonal contacts (Chi2 58.83, p. <0.0001) and 1 emotion: pride (Chi2 15.55, p. <0.0001).

Cluster 1, due to the motivations and emotions it encompasses, can represent how a person might gain new perspectives by being concerned for others, for the success of the event, and for the society. Cluster 2, on its turn, might mean how much proud a person might feel by meeting and interacting with people and forming friendships.
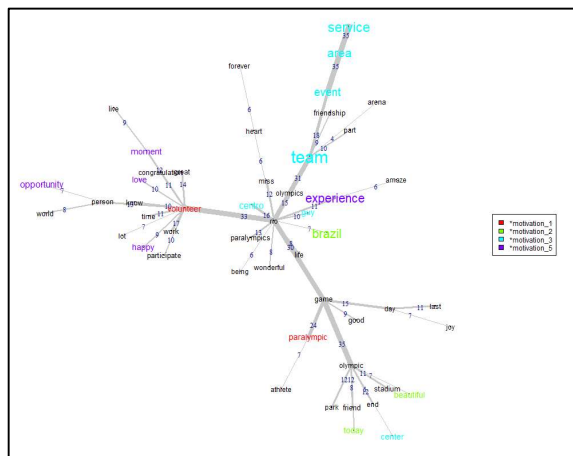

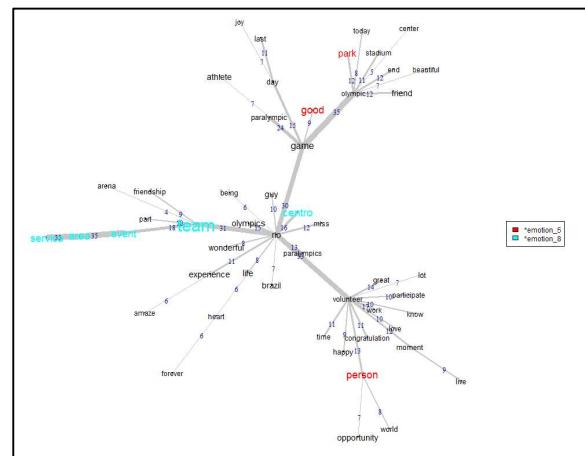Figure 1. Similarity analysis - words co-occurrences and motivations

Figure 2. Similarity analysis - words co-occurrences and emotions

Similarity analysis allows identifying the words co-occurrences, which provides information on the words connectivity. Additionally it helps to pinpoint the structure of a text content. Moreover, it allows identifying the shared parts and specificities taking into consideration the descriptive variables that are identified in the analysis (Marchand and Ratinaud, 2012). Figure 1 presents the connection of words that represent motivations, such as expression of values, patriotism, interpersonal contacts and personal growth. For example, as regards the motivation "expression of value", the words "volunteer" and "Paralympic" indicate more co-ocorrunces, indicating the context that the expression of value is more evident, that is, concern for others, the success of the event, and society are more relevant. Figure 2 highlights word co-occurrences and emotions. Emotions 5 and 8 are respectively contentment and pride. As an instance of contentment, words "park", "good" and "person" present situations which volunteers manifest such an emotion.

4.2 Study 2 (Problems face by Volunteers)

The following table shows examples of occurrences of problems involving volunteers before, during and after the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, divided by categories.

- <u>Before Rio 2016 Games</u>: Insufficient training (I was cast as operations support team member, but I have no idea what you do in practice. Can anyone help me?); Delivery of work equipment (... I could only get my uniform at the facility, but they only gave me a t-shirt. I didn't even get the blouse.); System failure (I received an invitation letter, but on the portal my situation remains under review. The committee said that this letter is not worth it and that I should wait for another. I'm sad.); Lack of empathy (... and they still look at people with indifference in training.).
- <u>During Rio 2016 Games</u>: Difficulty of locomotion / transport (Stayed an hour to get out of Deodoro); Volunteers' food (sour and spoiled food in the cafeteria of Marina da Glória. I couldn't work today. Feeling sick.); Volunteer support (I have my two pants torn and they didn't forward me to make the exchange. I'll keep them torn to the end.).
- <u>After Rio 2016 Games</u>: Lack of certificate delivery or incorrect delivery (my certificate went wrong and I don't know where else to complain. I feel like a ping pong ball.); Sense of emptiness (what now? What am I going to do tomorrow without the Games?); The organization of the event did not fulfill the agreement with the volunteers (promises and more promises... where the fraternization of the volunteers that was promised?); Communication fails (it was already difficult to talk to the committee during the Games. Now that they're done, it's impossible. I didn't get the certificate).

5. Conclusions

The main goal of this research was to analyze the motivations and emotions that volunteers experienced during Rio 2016. In order to do so we collected the user-generated data from the official Facebook group of Rio 2016 Volunteers. The collected data proved to be very rich in emotions and motivations from the volunteer group. Brazilians are one of the most active in social media and they shared vividly before, during, and after the games. Our main findings point out to a group of volunteers composed mostly by Brazilians that were travelling from different cities, that is, they were non-host region volunteers (Chen, Zheng, Dickson, 2018). This poses additional barriers to the process of volunteering, such as accommodations and transport within Rio de Janeiro city because of not knowing the city.

Study 1 shows that volunteers experienced 4 main motivations, in line with what was previously reported in other Olympic games study (Bang, Alexandris & Ross, 2009). These motivations can be used in order to help future organizers attract volunteers. Study 2 presented the main problems faced by volunteers during their experience. By going deeper into the negative emotions that volunteers faced we can highlight several managerial suggestions that could boost morale within the volunteer group. For instance, there should be an active hotline for volunteers to call upon to solve their main issues, especially regarding schedule and transportation. Additionally, there could be a system in place to solve issues volunteers have with their work equipment, such as clothing and permits. Finally, working with volunteers during the process of their exiting role (Gellweiler, Fletcher, & Wise, 2019) would allow for more positive emotions to arise and improve chances of volunteering in the future.

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