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# **VOLUNTEER SATISFACTION AND INTENT TO REMAIN: AN ANALYSIS OF CONTRIBUTING FACTORS AMONG PROFESSIONAL GOLF EVENT VOLUNTEERS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Sport events are increasingly reliant on episodic volunteers for the successful delivery of an event. As there continues to exist a surge in the organization of sporting events coupled with the demand for volunteers, event organizers must concern themselves with utilizing the appropriate recruitment and retention strategies. In an effort to do this, one must understand the points of satisfaction for volunteers as well as factors influencing their future intentions to volunteer. While there exists a plethora of research to understand the motivation of volunteers, exploring the antecedents of volunteer satisfaction as well as intent to remain has been limited. This study investigates the factors influencing volunteer satisfaction as well as intentions to remain as a volunteer for future sporting events from an elite men's golf event on the Professional Golf Association (PGA) circuit. Results indicated that overall volunteers were satisfied with their experience and willing to return yet were concerned with the level of communication between the organization and volunteers. The present study also found that longevity of service influenced volunteer satisfaction. A MANOVA revealed significant differences between first time and returning volunteers in their intent to continue volunteering for both sport events and community causes. The findings have implications to not only expand the theoretical understanding of sport volunteerism, but acknowledge the factors that sport event organizers need to concern themselves with relative to recruitment, management, and retention of volunteers for successful operations of events.

## **KEY WORDS**

Volunteer satisfaction, Sport events, Intent to remain

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Volunteers are a valuable form of capital for many organizations as they help reduce the cost of provision and ease the budget on full time staff (Cemalcilar, 2009, Clary et al., 1998; Wong, Chui, & Kwok, 2010). According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, about 63.4 million Americans, or 26.8 percent of the adult population, gave 8.1 billion hours of volunteer service worth \$169 billion in 2009. Within this realm, volunteers serve a critical role in the successful management of many sporting major sporting events (Cuskelly, Hoye, & Auld, 2006; Williams, Dossa, & Tompkins, 1995). The sport sector relies heavily upon volunteers because a large number of individuals are needed for creating and delivering sport services (Bang & Ross,

2009). Volunteers enable event managers to add and to expand the “quantity and diversity of services without exhausting the budget” (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991, p. 270).

Sport events continue to emerge in various forms and sizes. More specifically, this increase, which is likely to continue, is due to national, regional, and local governments trying to bolster economic development (Misener & Mason, 2006, 2008). With this boost comes limited financial resources and the need for more volunteers. Volunteers should be considered a valuable commodity, as research has suggested that the available pool of volunteers may be declining throughout the world due to the increasing demands of everyday life, longer working hours, and increased age of retirement (Chacon, Vecina, & Davilla, 2007; Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2001; Hidalgo & Moreno, 2009; Taniguchi, 2006; Themudo, 2009). In today’s society, there are more dual income households, and women, especially mothers returning to the workforce, leaving limited availability for volunteering (Freedman, 1999; Freeman, 1997; Smith, 2004; Tiehen, 2000). Also, the normative expectation or productivity per worker has increased where fierce competition in the workplace has implied that people cannot afford to be out of the office for long periods of time (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003; Luffman, 2003). Beyond the extra demands being placed on people, there are also increasing causes and organizations, outside of sporting events, actively seeking out volunteers, stretching the volunteer pool even thinner.

While research has been conducted regarding volunteers in a realm of disciplines, sport events are different as they are often one shot or annual occurrences of relatively short duration making their organization and management quite different from those of permanent attractions and facilities, leading to an emphasis on strategies for resource acquisition as well as development and retention of community support (Getz, 1991, p. 41-42). Both the 2000 Sydney and 2004 Athens Olympic Games relied on over 40,000 volunteers (Cuskelly et al., 2006), while the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games had 100,000 volunteers involved with the transportation, Olympic village, and competition venues (Yan & Chen, 2008). Events that are smaller in scale (i.e., city marathon, local triathlon, regional Special Olympics competition) may rely on as few as 50 and as many as 1000 volunteers to ensure their success (Doherty, 2009). Beyond just the economic impact and numbers it is important to consider the social impact of volunteers on not only the event but also, to the larger community. Through volunteerism, a sporting event can create a carryover effect of ongoing community support (Lynch, 2001). It may be indicated by increased volunteer support for other special events in the community and enhanced volunteerism in the community in general, in terms of positive attitudes towards volunteering, an increased rate of volunteering, and increased level of involvement (Doherty, 2009).

As reflected in the growth rate in the number of volunteers, number of sporting events, and also the high turnover rates throughout the world, volunteer management faces the major challenge of retention. The failure to retain volunteers not only has an adverse impact on the event, but also requires organizations to spend extra effort to recruit and train new volunteers (Cheung, Tang, & Yan, 2006; Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2001). Therefore, it is important to utilize research to identify the various factors influencing their satisfaction with the experience. Job satisfaction is defined as “the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the perception of one’s job as fulfilling or allowing the fulfillment of one’s important job values, providing the values are compatible with one’s needs (Locke, 1976, p. 1304). As volunteers constitute a significant labor source for a sport organization, researchers and practitioners have recognized job satisfaction of volunteers

as an outcome of volunteer experiences (Cuskelly, Hoyer, & Auld, 2006). The better event organizers understand these sources of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with event operations, the more effective the management of volunteers as well as the overall efficiency of the event operations can be (Farrell, Johnston, & Twynam, 1998). Furthermore, successful management of volunteers for an event has positive implications for the maintenance of a strong volunteer base for a given event or in the community for future events (Williams et al., 1995). Satisfaction has also been found to be positively associated with time spent volunteering, longevity of service, and intention to continue volunteering outside of sports (Chacon et al., 2007; Cheung et al., 2006; Finklestein, 2007; Omoto & Snyder, 1995). In understanding such factors through continual assessment event organizers will be better able to formulate strategies to motivate further volunteering, and potentially reduce drop-out rates.

This paper examines satisfaction of volunteers at an elite professional men's golf event on the Professional Golf Association (PGA) tour. The primary purpose of this research is to investigate the antecedents of volunteer satisfaction for both first time and experienced volunteers and the effect of such factors on intent to remain as a volunteer at a sport event.

#### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE/CONCEPTUAL BASIS**

Various disciplines have applied theoretical constructs and models to volunteer management (e.g., systems theory, conflict theory, empowerment theory, functionalist theory, social learning theory, life span theory, and social exchange theory). Of particular interest to volunteer satisfaction is the social exchange theory which lies on the basic premise that people make choices to maximize rewards and minimize costs. Rewards can be tangible (money) or intangible (attention, satisfaction, affection) so as long as they are seen having value or bringing satisfaction to an individual. Costs occur as either physical and emotional disadvantages or missed opportunities to gain rewards. Social relations are established and maintained based on the expectation that such relations will be mutually advantageous to the individual and organization (Blau, 1994). The social exchange theory states that behavior is governed by the reciprocal relations for which if it is imbalanced and the individual experiences fewer rewards than costs, the relationship would not be sustained (Zafirovski, 2005). Particular to sporting events, social exchange theory facilitates understanding the impact of both positive and negative experiences on behavior in the future (e.g., Doherty, 2009; Guillet et al., 2002; Howard & Crompton, 2004). Volunteering aligns with this theory as it provides people with opportunities to express or demonstrate their beliefs; learn new things; and enhance their self-confidence and efficacy through an exchange relationship (Scherr, 2008).

Previous research has examined the satisfaction of volunteers in a variety of contexts including social services (Clary et al., 1992; Finkelstein & McIntyre, 2005; Finkelstein, 2007; Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2001), parks and recreation (Silverberg et al., 2001), and events (Costa et al., 2006; Doherty, 2009; Farrell et al., 1998). From these studies, there is evidence that satisfaction is multi-faceted and can be tied to: commitment, motivation, intrinsic and external benefits, as well as organizational management elements. In the study of hospice volunteers, Finkelstein (2007) noted satisfaction depended on the volunteer experience fulfilling the goals of the volunteers at the onset of the experience. Similarly, Silverberg et al. (2001) found in their study of parks and recreation volunteers that satisfaction is a function of both job setting and psychological functions met by volunteering. Costa, Chalip, Green, and Simes (2006) studied volunteers with

the Sunbelt Indy Carnival, an Indy Car race held annually on the Gold Coast, Australia, to identify antecedents of volunteer satisfaction with that event. Through path analysis, they found that beyond just the actual event, training was important for satisfaction as it provided the opportunity for volunteers to share their opinions and experiences. In doing so, this contributed to their sense of community at the event itself, which positively impacted their level of satisfaction.

In an effort to develop a consistent and reliable instrument that recognized volunteer satisfaction as multifaceted, Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley (2001) designed the *Volunteer Satisfaction Index (VSI)* utilizing previous constructs from various studies. The instrument consisted of 40 items and measured five dimensions of volunteer satisfaction: communication quality, organizational support, participation efficacy, work assignment, and group integration. Consistent with previous literature, the volunteers reported higher than average levels of satisfaction. The findings also produced positive results in regards to supporting the reliability and validity of the VSI. A number of studies have integrated the multi-dimensional model of the *Volunteer Satisfaction Index* into different settings and cultures (Boezeman & Ellemers 2007; Chacon et al. 2007; Netting et al., 2004; Preston and Brown 2004; Wong et al., 2010;). The findings have suggested that beyond the practicality of the instrument, satisfaction can impact other aspects such as commitment and intent to remain. For example, Boezeman and Ellemers (2007) found that pride in the organization and respect from the organization predicts organizational commitment among volunteers. Furthermore, the instrument has been tested with different cultures. In an effort to test the applicability of the instrument to the Chinese population, Wong et al. (2010) found that the VSI was a psychometrically sound measure of volunteer satisfaction, however, revealed a factor structure unique to the Chinese population such that the factors uncovered by Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley (2001) focused more on the personal benefits gained from volunteering, such as feelings of empowerment and the organizational support obtained. In contrast, Wong et al., noted that volunteers placed a greater emphasis on interpersonal relationships (relationship with the organization and with peers). This provides evidence that satisfaction can be derived from different sources throughout the world and may be based on cultural variation. While the instrument has been applied in different contexts and cultures, it has not been utilized within sporting events. However, it is applicable based on the underlying premise of the instrument that sport events and satisfaction are both multi-faceted. The constructs of the instrument from previous work (work assignment, communication quality, group integration, organizational support, and participation efficacy) have been examined separately in different studies within the sport event sector; however, have not been integrated into one single instrument. In doing so, it goes beyond the general concept of satisfaction but rather helps to identify different sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in specific domains so that improvement strategies can be more targeted and therefore more effective..

As volunteers remain a critical component of sport event delivery, the importance of them to an event has been highlighted by many scholars within the sport realm (e.g., Bang & Chelladurai, 2009; Chelladurai & Madella, 2006; Cuskelly & Boag, 2001; Cuskelly, Hoye, & Auld, 2006; Farrell, Johnston, & Twynam, 1998; Green & Chalip, 1998; Shaw, 2009). Research has studied a plethora of areas regarding sport event volunteers including: management, market segmentation, motivation, commitment, and the role of training (e.g., Allen & Shaw, 2009; Bang & Chelladurai, 2009; Doherty, 2009; Farrell, Johnston, & Twynam, 1998; Williams et al., 1995). Volunteerism for

sport events constitutes a unique sector as the opportunity is a relatively short (15-20 hours) but intense experience for volunteers (Green & Chalip, 1998; Pauline & Pauline, 2009). Volunteers are often attracted to the culture of the event as opposed to the actual position they are assigned (Costa et al., 2006). Therefore, the job significance comes from the commitment to the event and opportunity to feel part of the subculture, not necessarily from the task. Through volunteering, there is also a sense of camaraderie and community that develops from the interactions among the volunteers and event staff (Fairley, Kellett, & Green, 2007). Green and Chalip (1998) noted that sport volunteers will value their experience that augment or deepen their sense of involvement and interaction with others who share an interest in the sport's subculture. Research, aligning with the social exchange theory has indicated that this sense of community for volunteers is a predictor of volunteer retention and satisfaction (Costa, et al., 2006; Lammers, 1991).

Specific to satisfaction, research has provided evidence of overall satisfaction among volunteers with the experience at sport events. Farrell, Johnston, and Twynam (1998) found that the majority of their volunteers with the 1996 Canadian Women's Curling Championships were very satisfied with their experience overall but more specifically, communication with other volunteers and recognition were significant factors in their overall satisfaction. Elstad (1996) found that a sample of student volunteers involved with the 1994 Lillehammer Winter Olympics reported high levels of satisfaction among the volunteers, with the most positive aspect being the opportunity to develop one's personal network through meeting new people and making friends; they were also particularly satisfied with the 'celebratory atmosphere, also supporting the social exchange theory. In a study of volunteers with the 2001 Francophone Games, Larocque, Gravelle, and Karlis (2002) reported a high level of overall satisfaction with their event experience. However, the volunteers were more satisfied with such aspects as quality of their volunteer team and recognition from the organizers, and relatively less satisfied with the quality and level of responsibilities they were assigned. Similar to previous findings, in a study of Special Olympics volunteers, Du (2009) noted that the volunteers were satisfied with their experience but those who had knowledge about persons with disabilities prior to the Special Olympics Summer Games tended to feel more satisfied with their volunteer service. Interestingly, volunteers were satisfied with the factors relevant to contribution and beneficiary to others while also concerned about the communication between the volunteers and the management.

Understanding not only volunteer satisfaction, but also future intention to volunteer is critical because of the volitional nature of volunteerism. This includes both volunteers with prior experience and first time volunteers. If volunteers do not have a satisfying experience, it is plausible to make the assumption that they would leave one organization to perhaps volunteer at another. As indicated earlier, this is critical because of the heavy reliance of volunteers for sport events. The behavioural intentions of volunteers are important as retention is critical from year to year, since this reduces the time involved in recruitment and training volunteers who are new to the event (Love et al., 2011). Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991) suggest people will continue to volunteer as long as they find the experience satisfying.

Research has provided evidence of strong behavioural intentions to volunteer for future sport events. MacLeod and Hogarth (1999) suggested that intentions to remain a volunteer were related to satisfaction with specific job duties. As part of their study, Twynam, Farrell, and

Johnston (2002) found that half indicated that the tournament experience would increase their likelihood of volunteering again and a little less than half said their likelihood of volunteering would not change. Downward & Ralston (2006) also examined post event volunteering intentions in their study about one year after the event and found that 85% and 68% of those individuals were willing to be involved with another major sports event and another major event in general, while 43% increased their interest in voluntary work in general. Specific to golf event volunteers, MacLean and Hamm (2007) identified eight reasons for individuals intending to remain golf volunteers which were (a) being linked to a professional golf event, (b) promoting women's golf, (c) social influences, (d) retirement, (e) community promotion, (f) improving club level golf, (g) availability, and (h) a love of the game of golf among volunteers at a Canadian Women's Golf event. Doherty (2009) noted volunteers will be more likely to engage in future volunteering behaviour to the extent that they have experienced positive outcomes as a result of that behaviour in the past; similarly they will be less likely to volunteer again if they have experience negative outcomes.

Cuskelly and Boag (2001) mention that little research effort has been directed to clarifying what factors influence retention or turnover behaviour in the context of sport volunteers, particularly for episodic events. One such factor that may be influential is prior sport event volunteer experience (Downward & Ralston, 2006). Research has had mixed findings in that some have found it to be an important determinant of future volunteering (e.g., Hall, Lasby, Gumulka, & Tryon, 2006) while more recently, Doherty (2009) found among sport volunteers at the 2001 Canadian Summer Games it did not have an effect. Further research is needed to clarify the implications of such factors on future volunteering intentions.

Overall, given the importance of volunteers to the success of sporting events, particularly in golf and large scale events on the PGA circuit, a central tenet of this study was to better understand volunteerism in a context in which the service of volunteers is critical. Furthermore, while previous literature has looked at overall satisfaction, this study took it further by investigating the relationship between satisfaction, previous volunteer experience, and behavioral intentions to remain for future events and community volunteering. Thus, the more specific purposes of the current study involve not only exploring the antecedents of volunteer satisfaction for both first time and experienced volunteers but also, its effect on the intent to remain as a volunteer at a sport event associated with the Professional Golf Association event circuit as well as other volunteer involvement. The event was the 2009 Turning Stone Resort Championship, a men's event, held in upstate New York. This event was part of the PGA tour, which employed six full time staff members, two full time interns and 1,000 volunteers. The researcher set forth the following research questions:

- RQ1. What aspects of volunteering for a professional golf event are the most satisfying and least satisfying to volunteers?
- RQ2. What factors influence volunteer satisfaction?
- RQ3. Does time spent volunteering for a particular event influence volunteer satisfaction?
- RQ4. Do previous sport event volunteers and non-previous sport event volunteer differ on volunteer satisfaction?
- RQ5. Does previous sport event volunteer experience influence intent to remain?

## METHOD

### Setting

Turning Stone Resort Championship is an annual event on the PGA circuit that takes place in Verona, New York. A number of support events are held over the three days leading up to the Championship (e.g., practice, pro-am, charity events). Like any major sporting event, the success of this event was tied to the involvement of volunteers, particularly, the Turning Stone Resort Championship required approximately 1000 volunteers. These volunteers were divided into two groups: specialized and non-specialized volunteers. Specialized volunteers complete the technical tasks associated with the event (e.g. rules officials, course operations). They often travel from event to event on the PGA circuit. Although event organizers would not provide the specific statistics, the retention rate is high for specialized volunteers from year to year. Non-specialized volunteers fill non-technical roles (e.g. transportation, will call, concessions, course ecology, information ambassadors, marshals, merchandise, sponsor services, and tournament office). These positions account for the majority of volunteers for a professional golf event. For this event, volunteers in both capacities paid a fee of \$55. The PGA has a fee structure in place for all events on the tour. In exchange for their services at the Turning Stone Resort Championship, volunteers received a golf shirt, meals during their volunteer shift, credentials for the entire tournament, parking pass, and two all day passes for guests to watch the event for the day of their choice. Event organizers also developed a rewards program to compensate those volunteers who went above the minimum shift requirement. For example, if four shifts were completed, volunteers received a free round of golf at one of Turning Stone's two premier courses. If 8 shifts were completed, a meal voucher to one of the restaurants at Turning Stone Resort and Casino was provided in addition to the round of golf. If volunteers went above and beyond, completing 14 shifts, they received an additional round of golf on the premier event course (Atunyonte). Eighty one percent volunteered extra shifts to receive the rewards, in which 37% volunteered four extra shifts and 44% eight shifts.

Orientation was held for all volunteers prior to the start of the event. It was designed to familiarize the volunteers with the event's organization and expectations regarding their performance. This includes the structure of the event, event policies, requirement of the various volunteer roles, communication methods, and appropriate means to handle any issues that arose during the tournament. While most of the volunteers were involved during the week of the event, a small number were involved in the pre-event organization tasks such as data entry, packing gift bags for the athletes, credentials, will call, and supporting the needs of the full time tournament staff. This study focuses on non-specialized volunteers.

Non-specialized volunteers were selected as the target population for this study as opposed to the entire group based on the following rationale. First, recruitment and retention of the specialist volunteers was not an issue as these volunteers were highly invested in the success of the event. In comparison, the retention rate of non-specialized volunteers was lower in previous events and their satisfaction with the experience was not evaluated. Volunteers were expected to volunteer for a minimum of 15 hours for the event; however the mean number of hours reported by volunteers was 27.8.



### Sample

The sample consisted of 205 non-specialized volunteers from the 2009 Turning Stone Resort Championship, PGA TOUR event, held in Verona, New York. The Turning Stone Resort Championship has been a stop on the PGA TOUR since 1997.

### Instrument

The instrument used to measure volunteer satisfaction was the *Volunteer Satisfaction Index* designed by Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley (2001). The scale consisted of 40 items, and measured five dimensions of volunteer satisfaction: communication quality (8 items), organizational support (8 items), participation efficacy (8 items), work assignment (8 items), and group integration (8 items). *Communication quality* was defined as the basic nature of communication that a volunteer received from the organization they are volunteering for. The second element, *organizational support* involved two components: educational (the resources, such as training provided to improve the quality of experience) and emotional (the relational environment that exists between organizational members and volunteers). *Participation efficacy* was the notion that through their participation, volunteers will benefit someone other than themselves. *Work assignment*, the fourth element, was defined as a task which gives the volunteer an opportunity to develop abilities and skills to suit their own needs. *Group integration* referred to the social aspect of the relationship that volunteers develop with other volunteers and paid staff. Examples for each satisfaction subscale included: "The availability of help when I need it" (*organizational support*); "The level of challenge this volunteer task provides me" (*participation efficacy*); "The freedom I have in deciding how to carry out my volunteer assignment" (*work assignment*); "The flow of communication coming to me from paid staff and board members" (*communication quality*); and "The degree to which I feel that I belong in the organization." (*group integration*).

The responses to each item were measured using a 7 point, Likert type scale ranging from 1 (*very dissatisfied*) to 7 (*very satisfied*). For communication regarding changes in the organization, the range was 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). For this present study, Cronbach's alpha reliability tests were conducted which yielded strong reliability for the instrument ( $\alpha = .946$ ) and acceptable values for all five dimensions: communication quality (eight items,  $\alpha = 0.82$ ), organizational support (eight items,  $\alpha = 0.79$ ), participation efficacy (eight items,  $\alpha = 0.86$ ), work assignment (eight items,  $\alpha = 0.91$ ), and group integration (eight items,  $\alpha = 0.85$ ).

In addition to items assessing satisfaction, the questionnaire also included three items designed to measure behavioral intent to remain with a Likert scale, from 1 (*certainly not*) to 7 (*certainly*). Finally, the instrument included items designed to gather demographic information such as: age, gender, educational level, marital status, income, employment status, golf experience, and previous volunteer experience.

The questionnaire was reviewed and piloted on 30 students and 4 faculty members with sport event volunteer experience for layout and readability before the actual data collection.

### Data Collection Procedure

Volunteers were asked to participate in the study within the designated rest area at the event. An intercept sampling method was used in this study, as survey packets were distributed to

volunteers at the completion of their shifts in the break room. Each packet contained a cover letter, survey, and return envelope. Volunteers were asked to complete the survey after finishing their shifts on the course or during their break on the second, third, and last day of the four-day event. The survey was not administered during the first day of the event in order to not include volunteers who had not yet fulfilled at least one shift as a volunteer. When the survey packet was given, they were instructed to complete the survey, seal it in the envelope provided, and return it to the drop box provided in the break room. The researcher was present at all times during the data collection. Three hundred and fifty surveys were distributed. Two hundred and five valid surveys were returned for a response rate of 58%.

### Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaire was analyzed using the SPSS 17.0 computer program. Descriptive statistics were first used to establish a demographic profile of volunteers at the event. Second, descriptive statistics were utilized to examine the importance of each of the 40 volunteer satisfaction items by gender and overall. Means and standard deviations were then calculated for the five factors (communication quality, group integration, organizational support, participation efficacy, and work assignment). Pearson's correlation was utilized to determine the extent to which time spent volunteering for a particular event influences volunteer satisfaction. Next, an analysis of variance was conducted to determine the influence of previous sport event volunteer experience on volunteer satisfaction (each of the five factors). Finally, MANOVA's were conducted to examine the variation in future volunteering intention by previous sport event volunteer experience.

## RESULTS

### Volunteer Demographic Profile

The respondents ranged in age from 18-82 years old ( $M= 57.3$ ,  $SD= 13.9$ ). Seventy-one percent of the respondents were male and twenty nine percent were female. Fifty six percent completed a university degree or higher (master's, doctoral). More than half of the volunteers (56.5%) were volunteering at the Turning Stone Resort Championship for the first time, 15% were in their second year, and 23.5% had volunteered for the event at least three years. Half of the volunteers (50.3%) reported playing golf on a regular basis (more than once a week). Forty six percent of the respondents volunteered with other sport organizations, and 68.8% also volunteered with non-sport organizations more than 20 hours a month. *Table 1* presents the demographic profile of the respondents.

### Volunteer Satisfaction

Descriptive statistics revealed the importance of each of the 40 items in influencing the satisfaction of volunteers. The results indicated that overall satisfaction was between "satisfied" and "very satisfied" ( $M = 5.78$ ,  $SD = .68$ ), indicating the volunteers were nearly very satisfied with the service at the 2009 Turning Stone Championship. More specifically, as all 40 items were examined, respondents cited their relationship with other volunteers as important. Volunteers were least satisfied with the communication quality. The lowest five satisfaction items all fell within this area. Volunteers were also concerned with the limited recognition they received for their efforts. This is indicative of the participants ranking "How often the organization acknowledges the work I do" as the least satisfying item. *Table 2* lists all 40 items from the *Volunteer Satisfaction Index* both overall and segregated by gender.

**Table 1**  
Selected Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	N	%
Gender		
Male	145	71
Female	59	29
Age		
≤35 years old	30	30.8
35-50 years old	45	32.2
51-64 years old	68	26.5
≥ 65 years	62	12.9
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	250	86.2
African American	20	6.9
Native American	2	.7
Hispanic	13	4.5
Asian American	4	1.4%
Marital Status		
Married/Partner	153	74.6
Single	28	13.7
Divorced	11	5.4
Widowed	13	6.4
Household Income		
Less than \$50,000	63	30.7
\$50,000-75,000	62	30.2
\$75,000-100,000	44	21.5
≥\$100,000	36	17.6
Employment Status		
Full-Time	91	44.4
Part-Time	16	7.8
Unemployed	2	1.0
Retired	93	45.4
Prior Sport Volunteer Experience		
Yes	95	46.3
No	110	53.7
Golf Participation		
Does not play	23	11.2
Couple of times a year	19	9.3
Once a month	14	6.8
Once a week	46	22.4
2x3 a week	103	50.3

**Table 2**  
*Means and Ranks of Volunteer Satisfaction Items*

Volunteer Satisfaction Item	Overall	Men		Women	
	Mean	Mean	(Rank)	Mean	(Rank)
My relationship with other volunteers at the event	6.14	6.12	4	6.19	2
The friends I have made while volunteering	6.13	6.16	1	6.07	9
The way in which other members of the organization relate to me	6.12	6.14	2	6.08	8
My ability to effectively help	6.10	6.13	3	6.03	14
The chance to receive additional skill training for this volunteer opportunity	6.09	6.07	5	6.12	5
The amount of educational resources made available to me	6.06	6.04	6	6.12	5
How appreciative the clientele are of our help	6.03	6.03	7	6.03	13
The amount of interaction I have with other volunteers	6.02	5.97	8	6.17	3
Relationship with the event paid staff	5.96	5.86	14	6.23	1
The influence my participation is having in the lives of clients	5.95	5.88	13	6.16	4
My ability to do this job as well as anyone else	5.94	5.90	10	6.05	11
How worthwhile my contribution is	5.90	5.88	12	5.95	16
The progress that I have seen in the event success	5.89	5.90	9	5.86	20
The level of challenge this volunteer job provides me	5.88	5.79	17	6.09	7
The realism of the picture I was given of what my volunteer experience would be like	5.87	5.88	11	5.84	22
The support network that is in place when I have volunteer related problems	5.87	5.80	19	6.07	9
The difference that my volunteer work is making	5.86	5.79	18	6.05	12
The availability of getting help when I need it	5.83	5.76	22	6.02	15
The accuracy of the information I have been given concerning my volunteer job	5.82	5.78	21	5.93	18
The fit of the volunteer work to my skills	5.81	5.81	15	5.81	24
The convenience of this job to my schedule	5.79	5.80	20	5.84	27
The amount of effort I put in equalling the amount of change I influence	5.77	5.75	23	5.80	25
The support I receive from people in the organization	5.76	5.70	27	5.93	17
The flexibility I am given to fit my volunteer work into my life	5.75	5.73	24	5.84	21
The freedom I have in deciding how to carry out my volunteer duties	5.75	5.80	16	5.65	35
The chance I have to utilize my knowledge and skills	5.74	5.72	25	5.77	29
The degree to which I feel I belong in the organization	5.69	5.69	28	5.70	32

The amount of time I spent with other volunteers	5.68	5.64	30	5.79	28
The training I have received	5.66	5.65	29	5.68	34
How interesting my volunteer work is	5.65	5.71	26	5.51	38
The resources I have been given to do my job	5.60	5.56	32	5.70	31
The amount of permission I need to do things	5.58	5.57	31	5.63	36
The opportunities I have to learn new things	5.54	5.53	33	5.58	37
The flow of communication coming to me from paid staff and board members	5.52	5.38	37	5.89	19
The access to information I have concerning the event	5.50	5.51	34	5.49	39
The amount of information I receive about what the organization is doing	5.50	5.39	36	5.81	23
The way in which the organization provides me with performance feedback	5.45	5.35	38	5.71	30
The degree in which the organization communicates its goals and objectives to the volunteers	5.43	5.33	39	5.69	32
How often the organization acknowledges the work I do	5.08	5.08	40	5.10	40

For the men, the highest ranking reason was “The friends I have made while volunteering,” while for the women volunteers, the top item was the “The relationship with the event staff.” In regards to the five dimensions of the VSI, the volunteers in the present study indicated satisfaction across all five dimensions with participation efficacy and group integration being more satisfying areas than work assignment, organizational commitment, and communication quality. The means and standard deviations for the five factors are presented in *Table 3*.

**Table 3**  
*Means and Standard Deviations for Volunteer Satisfaction Factors*

Factors	M	SD
Participation Efficacy	5.932	.712
Organizational Support	5.804	.736
Group Integration	5.916	.769
Work Assignment	5.488	.768
Communication	5.592	.989

**Sport Volunteer Experience**

In regards to the next research question examining the effect of previous sport volunteer experience on satisfaction, an ANOVA revealed a significant difference for the work assignment factor [ $F(1,203) = 4.97, p < .05$ ]. Volunteers with previous sport event experience ( $M=5.88, SD=.67$ ) scored significantly higher on the work assignment satisfaction factor than non-previous sport event volunteers ( $M=5.64, SD=.83$ ). The ANOVA did not find any significant differences ( $p > .05$ ) between the volunteers on the four remaining factors (organizational commitment, participation efficacy, communication quality, and group integration).

### Time Spent Volunteering

The present study also examined the impact of time spent volunteering at the golf event on volunteer satisfaction. Pearson's correlation test demonstrated that time spent volunteering was significantly associated with satisfaction overall ( $r = .23$ ,  $p < .05$ ) as well as each of the five factors: organizational commitment ( $r = .35$ ), participation efficacy ( $r = .26$ ), communication quality ( $r = .33$ ), work assignment ( $r = .65$ ), and group integration ( $r = .49$ ). Volunteers who spent more hours (greater than 20 hours) volunteering tended to be more satisfied with their experience at the Turning Stone Championship than those who spent less time (15 hours - 20 hours).

### Volunteer Experience and Intent to Remain

The final research question examined whether a relationship existed between prior sport volunteer experience and intent to volunteer for future events. Results revealed a significant variation in future volunteering intentions among volunteers with and without previous sport event volunteering experience [ $F(1, 203) = 3.37$ ,  $p < .05$ ]. Volunteers with no previous experience ( $M = 5.78$ ,  $SD = .53$ ) were significantly more likely to volunteer for the event in the future than those with previous sport event experience ( $M = 5.79$ ,  $SD = .72$ ). Exploring this further, they differed significantly in the extent to which they wanted to be involved in comparison to their contribution to the golf event, [ $F(1, 203) = 29.75$ ,  $p < .001$ ]. New volunteers were interested in being involved to a slightly greater extent ( $M = 5.35$ ,  $SD = 1.30$ ) and were also more likely to increase their level of volunteering in the community than previous volunteers ( $M = 4.61$ ,  $SD = .67$  vs.  $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD = .83$ , respectively), [ $F(1, 108) = 12.09$ ,  $p < .001$ ].

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study presents a number of areas for discussion, as it confirmed some of the previous research on volunteer satisfaction at sporting events but also discovered some unique aspects as well. In addition, it sheds light on the satisfaction of non-specialized experienced and new volunteers at the Turning Stone Golf Championship and the influences of this experience on their intent to volunteer in the future.

Social exchange theory provided a useful framework for considering both positive and negative experiences involved in the volunteering relationship. In focusing on the social exchanges that occur through interpersonal and group cohesion factors, the current study identifies aspects of the volunteer experience that enhance satisfaction and ongoing commitment. Consistent with previous research, the present study showed evidence that they were satisfied and felt their work was beneficiary (Luthy & Schrader, 2007; Reeser et al., 2005). Notably, the volunteers commented that they were most satisfied by having the opportunity to benefit others through their commitment to the event, supporting the construct Galindo & Kuhn (2001) termed participation efficacy and previous findings (Chevrier, Steuer, & MacKenzie, 1994; Costa, Chalip, & Green, 2006; Coyne & Coyne, 2001; Doherty, 2009). While the volunteers were mostly satisfied with the experience, one particular aspect to recognize is lack of information and inefficient communication between the volunteers and the management. Volunteers in the present study were most concerned about the communication quality, which is critical to not only volunteer satisfaction but also, event management (Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2002; Cyr & Dowrick, 1991; Field & Johnson, 1993; Knoke, 1981; Paradis & Usui, 1989; Stevens, 1991; Wharton, 1991). Knoke (1981) noted, the more extensive the amount of communication, both direct and indirect, within

a voluntary association, the greater the level of commitment by the volunteer, and the lower the detachment from the organization. More specifically, face to face communication was of great importance to volunteers in their satisfaction (Byren, 2006; Cyr & Dorick, 1991). Furthermore, the level of communication, clarity of information they are given concerning the organization and its constituents relative to their volunteer experience all influence volunteer satisfaction (Cyr & Dowrick, 1991). Also important to consider, supporting the social exchange theory is the need for some form of recognition based on the present study and previous research (Farrell et al, 1998; Pauline et al., 2008; Reeser, et al., 2005). As this theory is based on the reciprocal exchange, it supports that people expect some form of tangible rewards and through the rewards, they respond by doing good things for others (Homans, 1974). Such efforts are important as according to the social exchange theory, the decision to continue volunteering is typically re-evaluated throughout the volunteer's tenure, where assessments are made about the relative rewards and costs of their involvements (Phillips, 1982). This was particularly the case in the present study.

Relative to satisfaction, the findings of the present study also demonstrated the more time spent volunteering at the event, the greater the level of satisfaction. This could have been influenced by the rewards program that the event staff created for which volunteers received tangible incentives (e.g., rounds of golf, restaurant gift certificates, tickets for the event) for putting in more time, supporting the social exchange theory as well as previous research (Culp, 2009). The rewards program may also have positively influenced their perception of the extent for the received rewards again supporting the importance of feeling engaged and appreciated in their role. Also, through committing to more hours, the volunteers felt greater intangible rewards by having the opportunity to be part of the environment and benefit the community and event more than those who volunteered for the minimum number of hours required (Rice & Fallon, 2011). Further research needs to explore the specific influence of the rewards provided in influencing satisfaction.

Previous volunteer experience was also found to be an important factor relative to satisfaction. In particular, as almost half had volunteered with a sporting event in the past, those with previous experience scored significantly higher on the work assignment factor than first time sport event volunteers. This can be interpreted as from their prior experiences, volunteers knew what they were seeking and through their volunteer role, able to manage the experience, and develop the abilities and skills to suit their own needs for which they benefited, supporting the exchange theory. Furthermore, it points to the need for managers to not only address specific aspects of organizing volunteers but also, assessing the volunteers expectations prior to the event in an effort to ensure the rewards outweigh the costs. Beyond just satisfaction, in the volunteers having clear goals, this will continue to increase retention by fostering a volunteer role identity (Grube & Piliavin, 2000). As a result of the outcome of formulating a volunteer identity it is also important to consider how first time volunteers cultivate an identity. New volunteers need to assess their own experience, interest, and what they are seeking to obtain from this experience in an effort to emphasize the exchange process for both the event organizer and volunteer.

The examination of intent to remain also yielded interesting findings for discussion. Overall, the findings suggest that the experience of volunteers with a given event can have a significant impact on future volunteer behavior in other events and in the community in general. The

majority indicated they would volunteer for another professional golf event. This is a positive testament to the volunteer legacy of this event and is consistent with previous research that has demonstrated a strong willingness of volunteers to remain involved with sport events (Downward & Ralston, 2006; MacLean & Hamm; Doherty, 2009) despite any points of dissatisfaction. The findings revealed that positive interactions with volunteers, event staff, and developing one's skills while doing their work were all important factors in assessing intent to remain. This is consistent with the findings of Doherty (2009) for which it was found that volunteers must have a positive working environment in which comradeship and cooperation occurs. In an order to ensure the legacy, the more comprehensive consideration of positive and negative experiences expands the understanding of factors likely to impact future volunteering.

The finding of a correlation between those with no previous sport event volunteer experience and intent to remain yielded support to the positive experience a sport event brings. In terms of first time volunteers, taking part in the event may have opened their eyes to the opportunity to take part in the subculture of sporting events as well as other possibilities for serving others, such as through community volunteering. This experience seemingly provided a new opportunity and turned them onto volunteering both within the community and for other sport events. More specifically elements of satisfaction that influenced their likelihood of volunteering in the future included interactions with others (e.g., volunteers, athletes, and spectators) as well as making a contribution to the event. Such findings support the work of Doherty (2009) yet contrast those of Downward and Ralston (2006) who found no variation in future intentions among those with previous volunteer experience and no prior experience. Overall, the research findings suggest that the experience of volunteers with a given event can have a significant impact on future volunteer behavior in other events and the community in general. It also supports the application of the social exchange theory to volunteerism.

#### **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

For sport event managers, this study presents a sense of the level of satisfaction for the volunteers at this event, the influence of time and experience, and identify the points that need to be explored more closely to improve the overall experience. Such findings have several implications to ensure a positive experience for both first time and returning volunteers. For sport event managers, such knowledge can be of use in designing strategies for not only recruiting event volunteers but also managing them. Silverberg et al. (2001) pointed to a need to understand volunteer satisfaction in an effort to help managers avoid costly recruitment, retention, and volunteer management processes. This is the case for not only the event but also, the volunteers and the community both now and in the future. The current study builds on this knowledge by further distinguishing the respective satisfaction factors and future intentions of volunteers from a professional golf event. Event managers should seek volunteers that have a desire to give back to the community and want to immerse themselves into the sport environment. Because these individuals tend to have a higher level of satisfaction and greater intent to return as volunteers in the future, this can reduce the time required of event managers in recruiting, training, and managing volunteers. Such an effective volunteer strategy would be more time-efficient which is critical as event organizers are involved in very time intensive positions due to the wide range of responsibilities and limited paid staff in event management.



Beyond the time commitment for volunteer management, retention of volunteers is crucial to the success of sport events thus volunteer managers must work to do everything possible to ensure that volunteer satisfaction remains strong (Du, 2009). From a practical human resource management perspective, these findings are important because they help managers (especially event organizers) better diagnose and solve personnel issues (Matzler et al., 2004). As previous research has pointed out, understanding such issues will allow event organizers to focus on the job elements that most contribute to positive employee outcomes (Martensen & Gronholdt, 2001). Examples include recognizing the efforts of the volunteers as well as providing them the opportunity to feel they are part of the event staff through responsibilities. Beyond recruitment efforts, event organizers also need to make a conscience effort to create a positive experience during the event for the volunteers. This should begin prior to the event in an effort to create a team atmosphere between event staff and volunteers. Team building exercises as well as social activities can be organized throughout the event. Such activities can have a very strong positive effect on the overall experience of the volunteer, allowing them to feel a sense of camaraderie, which will in turn aid in satisfaction as well as retention efforts. In doing so, this further supports the feeling that the rewards outweigh the costs.

The results of the current study also add generally to the body of knowledge on sport volunteerism by providing insights about the demographic characteristics, satisfaction, intent to remain, and prior volunteer experience in a context in which the service of volunteers is particularly important. More specifically, it provides theoretical insight about sport volunteerism in applying the exchange theory to explore the relationship between volunteer satisfaction and the variables of intent to remain and previous sport volunteer experience.

#### **LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

There are several limitations to the study that should be acknowledged as well as recommendations for future research. First the results of this study pertain to the volunteers of the 2009 Turning Stone Championship event, and thus generalizing from the findings is limited to that population or similar populations of sport event volunteers. Second, it is possible that the results reflect a response bias to the extent that individuals who had a more positive experience may have been more likely to respond. From a sociological perspective, Gidron (1984) indicated that a bias exists to view volunteer work as a satisfying endeavour which can cause volunteers to be hesitant to discuss their actual feelings, such that higher levels of satisfaction get reported. As a result, future research may wish to include samples of volunteers who have exited their voluntary role with a particular sport event. Another limitation of the present study is asking about future behavioural intentions tied with reference to a specific event (2009 Turning Stone Resort Championship). Future research may attempt to measure more broad future volunteer intentions (e.g., other sport events, social services, community) as well as specific ones (specific events, festivals).

Another area to consider for future research is although asking participants about their intent to remain is suitable for the present study, research should also examine the actual percentage of volunteers who went on to volunteer for the event the following year, the extent of their involvement in comparison to previous years, and their level of volunteering for other sport events. The use of longitudinal research, which is non-existent in the sport event literature, to track volunteer motivation, satisfaction, intentions, and actual behavior at different points is

recommended to understand the link between sport event volunteer experience and future volunteering. This would prove to be particularly useful for following first time volunteers. Such information will give insight into not only their experiences and future intentions but also draw more comparisons to experienced volunteers. Beyond the quantitative research, qualitative research methods such as focus groups, interviews, and field observation may be useful in addressing this gap in the literature to volunteer satisfaction.

In summary, given the importance of maintaining volunteer workers and the significant role they play in the management of sport events, such research is critical to episodic events that rely on their contributions. With high operation costs associated with events as well as the increasing demands of everyday life, volunteer managers need to be effective in recruitment and retention efforts. By understanding and targeting volunteer satisfaction as well as the different constituencies, effective event management can be influenced significantly.

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