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INTRODUCTION

Event organisers are becoming increasingly reliant on volunteers to perform core event functions from planning to operations (2000p. 228; McDonnell, Allen, & O'Toole, 2002). In the context of mega events, such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games, volunteers have been recognised as crucial in the production of the event itself, and to ensure beneficial social and economic outcomes for the host community (Green & Chalip, 2004). Chalip (2000) suggests that the Sydney 2000 would not have been viable if it weren't for the contribution of over 40,000 accredited volunteers throughout the Olympic and Paralympic Games. He estimates, albeit conservatively, that for every dollar that the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) spent on volunteer recruitment and management, over AUS $21 was created in comparative worth, totalling an estimated overall contribution of the volunteer effort for the Games of AUS109 million.

The use of volunteers to assist in the production of Olympic Games events began in the early 1980s with the Lask Placid Winter Games employing nearly 7000 volunteers (Moragas, de Moreno, & Paniagua, 2000). Since then, volunteer participation has increased dramatically. For example, the 1994 Olympic Winter Games in Lillehammer enlisted 9,100 volunteers (Kemp, 2002), and the Athens 2004 Organising Committee fielded over 120,000 expressions of interest to volunteer for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, of which almost one third were from outside of Greece (Fairley & Kellett, in review). As the Olympic and Paralympic Games events grow larger each year, volunteer participation becomes increasingly necessary for event success. As Juan Antonio Samaranch noted "if we had to pay all the Olympic Movement's volunteers according to the workload and their responsibilities and taking into account the personal expenses they have to bear, we would reach a staggering figure which a government, or an organising committee, would be unable to come to terms with" (Smith, 2001 p. 7). Volunteer recruitment, retention, and management strategies are therefore a core area of focus for host Organising Committees.

The Olympic Games provides the largest volunteer movement in the world. It is surprising that the experience and motives of volunteers in the context of the Olympic Movement (as opposed to other event contexts) has only recently become an area of research in the field of sport management. There is a growing body of research that examines Olympic volunteerism and identifies key differences between the Olympic context and other contexts. For the most part, this literature examines Olympic and Paralympic volunteerism as one and the same. There is no literature that examines the experiences and motives of volunteers in the Paralympic context. It has been assumed that the experience of volunteering in the Olympic and Paralympic Games is congruent, and no consideration has been given to the uniqueness of the Paralympic context from a volunteer management perspective.

The aim of this chapter is to map current literature that examines volunteering in the event context, and in the Olympic context. The chapter will then draw from that body of research.
in order to develop pathways to provide future direction for managers, event organisers, and scholars to better understand volunteering in the Paralympic context.

**Volunteering at the Olympic Games**

There is a small but growing body of empirically based research that examines volunteering specifically in the context of the Olympic Games (Chalip, 2000; Elstad, 1996; Fairley & Kellett, in review; Green & Chalip, 2004; Kemp, 2002). As noted previously, much of that literature has considered Olympic and Paralympic volunteering to be one and the same. Literature that examines volunteering in the Olympic event context has drawn from previous studies that examine volunteering at events, and mega events.

It has been shown that in general, event volunteer motives are somewhat different to motives for volunteering in continuing or permanent volunteer positions (Farrell, Johnston, & Twynan, 1998; Getz, 1991). Research that examines event volunteering has led to a greater understanding of event volunteer management strategies (Chalip, 2000; Green & Chalip, 2004; Kemp, 2002; Strigas & Newton Jackson Jr., 2003). For volunteers across different event contexts, common factors in volunteer motivation include excitement offered by an event, (Green & Chalip, 1998), prestige (Coyne & Coyne, 2001), social benefits including meeting new friends and experiencing a sense of community (Elstad, 1996; Williams, Dossa, & Tompkins, 1995), the opportunity to help the community or the event (Coyne & Coyne, 2001; Farrell et al., 1998), and learning new skills (Elstad, 1996; Kemp, 2002). Event volunteer recruitment, retention, and management strategies must take the unique event context into account and provide those benefits that volunteers are seeking for successful retention and reacquisition of volunteers for repeat events.

In the sense of being able to offer excitement, prestige, and social benefits to volunteers, Olympic Games events might be considered to be at the pinnacle. In a study of volunteers at the Lillehammer Winter Olympics, Elstad (1996) found that volunteer’s experiences of learning about the event, and about other people were key sources of excitement and satisfaction that volunteers attained. Similarly, Kemp (2002) found that the capacity to learn and develop both job specific skills, and social skills was important for volunteers at Sydney 2000. Green and Chalip (2004) further articulated the link between learning and excitement in their survey of over 1700 volunteers across seventeen different work sites at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. They found that learning new skills was an important factor in volunteer satisfaction, but that for at least some volunteers, learning about the event itself, and how the event runs was also a source of excitement, and therefore satisfaction.

The importance of learning about the event itself, particularly in reference to the Olympic Games, and the Olympic Movement is demonstrated most clearly thus far by the work of Fairley and Kellett (in review). They have tracked a group of individuals who volunteered at both the Sydney 2000, and Athens 2004 Olympic Games, and have examined their motives for volunteering nationally (in Australia) and four years later, travelling internationally (to Athens) for the Olympic volunteer experience. They found four key motives for volunteering at the Olympic Games – nostalgia; camaraderie, friendship and a sense of community; a connection to the Olympics; and gaining and sharing knowledge.
Interestingly, Fairley and Kellett (in review) found that volunteering at the Olympic Games, for this group, allowed them to feel a connection to the event itself and to learn about what happens 'behind the scenes' which is consistent with previous research in the event context (Elstad, 1996) and the Olympic context (Green & Chalip, 2004). Fairley and Kellett (in review) found that learning for the group of volunteers in their study was more than mere event operations, but also related to the Olympic Movement itself. Volunteers in this study demonstrated a connection with the symbols of the Olympic Movement, as well as the history and culture of the organisation itself. This group sought opportunities to learn about the philosophies of the Olympic Movement, and many of the volunteers in the study reported that travelling to Greece for the 2004 Olympic Games was an opportunity to learn about the history of the Olympics.

Fairley and Kellett (in review) also found that nostalgia was an important motive for repeat volunteering at Athens 2004. Volunteers reported that they wanted to re-live the 'once-in-a-lifetime' Sydney 2000 experience. That experience was linked with the friendships and camaraderie they had made in Sydney at the event, and the continuing friendships they had fostered through their volunteer group. This group met on a regular basis throughout the four years between the Sydney and Athens Olympic Games in order to re-live their previous Olympic volunteer experience, and plan for their Athens travel and volunteer experiences. This group had an appreciation for the sense of community that they had built together, and valued the friendships that they had formed which is consistent with previous research that examines the volunteer experience at Olympic Games events (Elstad, 1996; Green & Chalip, 2004; Kemp, 2002).

What is clear from the discussion thus far, and is consistent with literature derived from event volunteering in general, is that the volunteer experience at the event is crucial for their satisfaction, and continued commitment. This provides us with a useful starting point to consider how the volunteer experience might be different in the Paralympic context. The next section builds upon the knowledge gained thus far in understanding Olympic volunteering and suggests implications for volunteering in the Paralympic context.

Volunteering at the Paralympic Games

Although there is no empirical research that has investigated volunteering in the Paralympic context, there is a large body of anecdotal evidence that suggests that the experience of volunteering at the Paralympic Games is different to the Olympic Games. Many of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games volunteers also volunteered at the Paralympic Games. Some were not intending to extend their volunteer services at the Paralympic Games, however their positive Olympic volunteering experience encouraged them to continue volunteering into the Paralympic events. Indeed, the experience of volunteering at the Olympics and Paralympics was so powerful, that many volunteers have recorded their stories in popular books.

Although there are limited anecdotal accounts of the experience of Paralympic Games volunteers, it seems probable that volunteering at the Paralympic Games engenders different outcomes and experiences for those individuals. For example, one volunteer said "the Olympics may have been thrilling, but the Paralympics were inspiring and humbling"
Volunteerism and the Paralympic Games

(Smith, 2001, p. 235). When volunteers, particularly those who had never worked with disability groups, the Paralympic volunteer experience was one of great learning. Other volunteers were so touched by their Paralympic volunteer experience that it became their dictum for life. For example, one volunteer thought that the motto of the Paralympics that said it all for him "mind, body, spirit" (Walker & Gleeson, 2001, p. 228).

It has been noted previously that learning has been identified as a factor in volunteer satisfaction and commitment at events, and the Olympic Games events (Elstad, 1996; Fairley & Kellett, in review; Green & Chalip, 2004). Certainly, volunteers at the Paralympic Games had to learn new sets of skills that the Olympic Games experience did not prepare them for. Paralympic volunteers must to learn to deal with logistical matters associated with everyday activities for those with disabilities, as well as specific sport and equipment requirements for elite athletes with disabilities. Olympic Games volunteer participation did not equip them with such specialised skills. In that way, first time Paralympic volunteers must learn a new set of operational skills.

However, anecdotal evidence would suggest that Paralympic volunteers learned more than merely operational requirements for people with disabilities. It is not uncommon to still hear Paralympic volunteers talk about Paralympic athletes as awe inspiring. While conversing with volunteers through the course of the research work that the author of this chapter has been involved in previously, there is unanimous respect for the athletes for a number of reasons. First, is that many of the volunteers had not previously appreciated the elite standards of the Paralympic athletes. Second, the experience of working with many of the athletes and gaining an understanding the difficulties they face in everyday life made many of the volunteers re-evaluate their own personal outlook to hardships they may face themselves. Third, many of the volunteers found Paralympic athletes to be gracious in accepting (or rejecting) their voluntary assistance, and compared this to some negative experiences that they had with Olympic athletes and officials.

It would be easy at this point to draw conclusions about the shortcomings of high profile athletes and their entourages in the Olympic setting. However, this would be erroneous and short sighted. It is possible that the Paralympic Games provide a different experience for volunteers because volunteers might be required to be more centrally involved 'in the action' with athletes in this context. If this is the case, volunteers might feel as though they are assisting to a greater capacity, and that they are indeed a large part of the event. This would be consistent with previous research that identifies those factors as important in volunteer motives (Farrell et al., 1998; Green & Chalip, 2004; Kemp, 2002). In essence, volunteers who report feelings of greater satisfaction with the volunteer experience in the Paralympic setting might be reporting that their motives for volunteering in the first place are being met to a greater level in the Paralympic context.

It is also possible that Paralympic athletes are more familiar and comfortable with a culture of volunteering. Many Paralympic athletes live in environments that require assistance and working with other people, sometimes to achieve menial tasks that able bodied individuals take for granted. In an able-bodied society that values individualism, it is not often that the skills required to politely accept and reject assistance from others are learned, or utilised.
Fairley and Kellett (in review) have found that repeat Olympic volunteers have a thirst for knowledge about the larger context in which their volunteering occurred – the Olympic Movement itself. It is possible that a thirst for learning about the Paralympic Movement, and the associated disability sector might be important to reacquire volunteers for future Paralympic Events.

It has been noted previously that the volunteer experience is crucial to satisfaction, and ongoing commitment. Certainly, Fairley and Kellett’s (in review) work suggests that if the experience is a positive one, volunteers are willing to travel in order to repeat the experience. Further, the destination (in their case Athens) was also an important part of the volunteer decision. In essence, volunteering abroad is part of a tourism experience.

The Olympic and Paralympic contexts offer very different experiences of the host city as a destination. For example, the Athens 2004 Summer Olympic Games hosted 11,099 athletes from 202 countries (Athens 2004, 2004a). The Athens 2004 Paralympic Games hosted 3,969 athletes from 136 countries (Athens 2004, 2004b). The Paralympic Games, although facing some logistical challenges of its own, is a smaller event that attracts fewer athletes, events, and therefore officials. It also attracts fewer spectators than the Olympic Games. This provides an important point of comparison for event organisers, in particular reference to the volunteer experience.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Paralympic event being smaller is not necessarily negative from a volunteer’s perspective. For example, one volunteer rates the most magical moment of his 23 shifts in Spectator Services as an evening working at the Paralympics. He states “the evenings were very quiet at the Paralympics. The school children had left and only the odd spectator wandered the park in between events. This allowed the hosts the opportunity to watch a number of sports during the night” (Walker & Gleeson, 2001 p. 204). In the Paralympic context, it is possible that volunteers are able to be part of the event in terms of watching the event themselves as their workload might be lessened, and viewing from different work sites might be less difficult.

Event organisers might be encouraged to further consider volunteer tourism in the context of the Paralympic Games. Fairley and Kellett (in review) noted that volunteer tourism is an important consideration for Olympic event organisers in recruitment of volunteers. It may be even more crucial in the Paralympic context. In informal conversations with volunteers throughout the research in which the author of this chapter has been involved, it seems that there is a growing trend for some volunteers to choose only to become involved at the Paralympic Games, and not the Olympic Games. When asked why this is the case, one particular volunteer noted that volunteer workloads and pressure was not as high as at the Olympic Games. More interestingly however, the volunteer noted that the host city as a destination was more attractive. He noted that air flights were cheaper, it was easier to get around the city, accommodation was more readily available in different price ranges, and tourist destinations within the host city were more accessible and less crowded.

As the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games become more entwined by sharing resources and operational processes, it might be important, at least from the perspective
Volunteerism and the Paralympic Games

of strategic volunteer management to respect the uniqueness of each event in terms of the kinds of experiences that they each offer to volunteers. Both events are exciting, and opportunities for social interaction, and unity. However, each context provides volunteer satisfaction in very different and specific ways. Event organisers need to be cognisant of the unique factors that Olympic volunteering can provide, and also be aware of the unique factors that Paralympic volunteering can provide. Olympic and Paralympic volunteering can be marketed very differently in order to ensure a future of volunteering for both events.

Implications for further research

It seems probable that the experience of volunteering in the Paralympic Games is distinctly different from the experience of volunteering at the Olympic Games. It is increasingly difficult to recruit and retain volunteers in almost every sector of the community; therefore it is imperative that event managers are provided with well developed and effective recommendations regarding volunteer recruitment and retention. In the case of the Paralympic Games, it is crucial that empirical research be focused on understanding if Paralympic volunteering is different to Olympic volunteering, and how.

A qualitative methodology, that allows the stories and experiences of Paralympic volunteers to be elucidated would seem most appropriate for future research in the area of Paralympic volunteering. Methodologies such as the one used by Green and Chalip (2004) that captures the experiences of volunteers throughout the duration of a particular event would be a good starting point. Also, the work of Fairley and Kellett (in review) who have tracked repeat Olympic event volunteers longitudinally might also be appropriate.

In order for events to provide economic and social impacts, events managers are increasingly required to provide a legacy from the event for the host community. Indeed, the International Olympic Committee demands that as part of the Olympic Charter (IOC, 2005). It would be of interest to examine how Paralympic volunteering changes perceptions of disability groups, and engenders interest in volunteering in the disability sector of local communities.

In order to understand leverage of Paralympic volunteering, it would be useful to first understand volunteer perceptions of, and connections with, the Paralympic Games as a social movement. As previous research that understands Olympic volunteering has found that the culture of the Olympics and the Olympic Movement is important for volunteers to identify with, it is possible that similar connections might exist for Paralympic volunteers. If this is the case, it would offer exciting strategic marketing plans for the recruitment and retention of volunteers not only for the Games themselves, but linking to the broader community needs.

If the experience of volunteering is different in the Paralympic Games compared with the Olympic Games, the source of that difference must be examined. It might be interesting to understand the culture of volunteering from the athlete’s perspective, particularly in the Paralympic context. It is possible that Paralympic athletes have a different understanding of volunteerism to Olympic athletes. These understandings may influence the way that they interact with volunteers at events, therefore affecting the volunteer’s event experience.
CONCLUSION

The Paralympic Games are recognised as an event that runs in parallel to the Olympic Games. Both events require volunteers for their success, and as a result, the core operation of the volunteer management program is centralised and coordinated between the two events. This chapter has highlighted that from a volunteer’s perspective, the experience of volunteering at the Paralympic Games is different than the experience gained at Olympic Games. Whilst there is no empirically based research that understands Paralympic volunteering, it seems that the future of volunteering in this context is positive for volunteers and event managers alike. Paralympic Games event managers must begin to understand Paralympic volunteer motives as subtly different from Olympic volunteer motives, and leverage that knowledge. Empirically based research that explores volunteering in the Paralympic Games is necessary. The Paralympic Movement needs to consider its profile as an organisation and a social movement as a tool to provide a hook for future volunteer management strategies— not only for volunteer recruitment and reacquisition for events, but also as a guide for the development of pathways to move volunteers from high profile events to community level volunteering.

REFERENCES


