Sports Development Impact of the Commonwealth Games: Study of Volunteers (Pre-Games)

Executive Summary
March 2003
An evaluation of the motivations and expectations of Volunteers prior to the xvii Commonwealth Games, Manchester 2002

produced in partnership by UK Sport and ICRC (MMU)

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The International Centre for Research & Consultancy for the Tourism and Hospitality Industries’s mission is to provide and expand its research, training and consultancy services for its UK and International clients in the Tourism and Hospitality sectors.
Executive Summary

The XVII Commonwealth Games held in Manchester between 25 July and 4 August 2002 was the largest multi-sport event ever held in the UK and has been heralded as a major success in the world of international sporting events. One major element of the Games was the recruitment, training and management by Manchester 2002 Ltd (M2002) of the biggest volunteer force ever assembled in the UK in peacetime.

Experience from previous sporting events in the 1990s and the Olympic Games in Sydney 2000 illustrated that volunteers are an essential ingredient in the delivery of this type of international event. When, on 17 May 2001, M2002 launched the volunteer recruitment campaign, “Count Yourself In”, over 22,000 members of the general public applied to be a volunteer. Some 10,500 individuals were eventually approved and assigned as Games volunteers: they supplemented over 6,000 full-time equivalent jobs that the Games is also estimated to have created.

The aim of this study is to compile a profile of the Games volunteers and to investigate their pre-Games motivations and expectations. This report sets out the findings derived from a postal, self-completion survey of 698 volunteers. A separate volume provides a supplementary qualitative analysis focusing on the views of a sub-sample of these volunteers who agreed to take part in a series of focus groups prior to the Games and maintain a diary during the Games. It begins to explore the actual experiences of these individuals during the Games themselves.

The research was a collaborative venture between the International Centre for Research and Consultancy in the Tourism and Hospitality Industries, Manchester Metropolitan University, and UK Sport. Part of a wider study being undertaken by UK Sport into the sports development impact of the Commonwealth Games, it was undertaken with the co-operation of the Manchester 2002 Volunteer Programme, which was sponsored by Adecco, a major recruitment company.

Background to the research

There is a wider literature on the profile of volunteers and the benefits of volunteering, including *The 1997 National Survey of Volunteering* (Davis Smith, 1998) and on various aspects, such as employability, in a recent report commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (Hirst, 2000). Within the tourism literature, most studies relate either to volunteers and recreational facilities or to major hallmark events. However, many of the latter have not addressed volunteer recruitment, composition and expectations in relation to the management of the event. Therefore, this study sought to research volunteer motivation and expectations in relation to a major international sporting event.

Methodology

The quantitative survey was undertaken in May 2002 and involved a sample frame of 1,300 volunteers drawn from a population of 9,000 who had at that time been assigned as Games volunteers. The survey elicited 698 usable questionnaires - a 54% response rate. There is no demographic information available about the total number of people (c23,000) who actually volunteered for the Games, so it is possible neither to make any comparisons between the two populations – i.e. actual and assigned volunteers – nor to draw any conclusions about the effect of the selection procedures employed by the M2002 Volunteer Programme.

The main findings are as follows:

The Volunteers

Nearly a quarter (24%) of volunteers had no previous volunteering experience; the Games had encouraged them to volunteer for the first time.

- The demographic characteristics of the volunteers for the Games were similar, in many respects, to those identified in earlier studies such as The 1997 National Volunteer Survey.
- There was an even gender balance and volunteers were spread across all age ranges. Over a half of volunteers (52%) were under the age of 45.
- Most volunteers (81%) came from the North West of England and were predominantly white British (91%). The volunteers came from a wide range of employment and social backgrounds. Over half (52%) were in full or part-time employment.
- A small percentage (6%) has some form of long-term illness, a health problem or disability that limits their daily activity at work.
- The skills most commonly possessed by the volunteers were driving, managing people, customer service, and clerical and administrative skills.
- The majority (63%) of volunteers in, or previously in, employment had been involved in a supervisory capacity in their jobs, and 83% indicated that they had come into contact with the public at work.
- The majority of volunteers indicated that they had an interest in sport, whether as active participants, as spectators or as regular viewers of sport on television. Only 4% of volunteers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they had no interest in sport at all. Overall, 92% of volunteers indicated that they had taken part in at least one sport or physical activity in the previous 12 months, with 87% having taken part in an activity on a regular basis during the year (ie. at least once in an average four-week period).

Volunteers’ place of Residence

- 20.6% City of Manchester
- 32.7% Greater Manchester (excl City)
- 0.1% Overseas
- 14.0% Other UK
- 1.9% Derbyshire
- 2.7% Yorkshire
- 7.1% Merseyside
- 9.9% Lancashire
- 11.0% Cheshire
Over three-quarters (76%) of Games volunteers had some previous experience of volunteering, with 58% of these individuals describing themselves as “regular” volunteers and 75% suggesting that they spend six hours per week on volunteering. The average length of volunteering was 13.6 years. Many of the older members of the focus groups indicated that volunteering had become a way of life. Those individuals who had stopped volunteering most commonly listed lack of time and the demands of their job as the key factors behind their decision.

The most common area for volunteering was in sport (54% of those with previous volunteering experience had been a sports volunteer) followed by voluntary work in the community (46%) and in education (32%).

In terms of the tasks undertaken in previous volunteering, around a half of those with volunteering experience had had experience as either an organiser or committee member or both. Nearly 54% of sports volunteers had carried out voluntary work at club level and around one quarter (26%) in connection with a national governing body of sport.

Nearly a quarter (24%) of volunteers had no previous volunteering experience; the Games had encouraged them to volunteer for the first time.

Previous Voluntary Work
Expectations prior to the Games

The most common reasons for applying related to the idea that being a Games volunteer would be an exciting experience (96% of volunteers agreed or strongly agreed that this was a reason for volunteering)

(The data in this section draws on both the questionnaire responses and focus group discussions)

- Over three-quarters of volunteers (79%) applied as individuals rather than with friends or family, or through the workplace or other organizations. The majority of those in full or part-time employment (59%) indicated that they would be taking annual leave to undertake volunteer duties at the Games, and 17% said that they would be taking unpaid leave. This was one of the major indicators of serious commitment to the Games.

- A quarter (26%) of volunteers had been associated with one or more associated volunteer programmes prior to the Games, such as the Pre-Volunteer Programme (PVP) (8% of volunteers) or the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme (11%).

- The motivation for volunteering lay in a cluster of factors – being part of a team; supporting Manchester and the nation; taking advantage of a unique opportunity. The most common reasons for applying related to the idea that being a Games volunteer would be an exciting experience (96% of volunteers agreed or strongly agreed that this was a reason for volunteering); to the opportunity being “a chance of a lifetime” (94%); and to the satisfaction of helping others (91%). It is also clear that, as well as fulfilling a desire to serve the community, volunteers were looking to enhance their skills and personal development through voluntary work.

Principal Motivations for Volunteering at the xvii Commonwealth Games

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<th>Percentage</th>
<th>It will be an exciting experience</th>
<th>It was a chance of a lifetime</th>
<th>It gives me satisfaction to help others</th>
<th>I will meet interesting people</th>
<th>I will be supporting sport</th>
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In terms of their assigned jobs, volunteers tended to have realistic expectations regarding the role they might play: 75% of those volunteers who knew about their assignment at the time of the survey indicated that they were happy with their assigned task and 15% had no specific view either way. However, there was a strong expectation among the volunteers that they would have the opportunity to use their skills in their assigned role.

The volunteers expected comprehensive training prior to the Games and clear supervisory guidance while at the Games. Seven out of 10 volunteers (69%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they would be fully trained by the time the Games started, with a similar proportion indicating that they expected to get clear instructions on what they were supposed to be doing during the Games. The focus groups highlighted some apprehensions regarding the lateness of training events or the cancellations of others. This was a cause of concern. However, most volunteers indicated that the content and delivery of training sessions were of high quality.

Most volunteers who attended the focus groups anticipated that there would be some problems while volunteering at the Games but the sense was that these were only to be expected in the context of an event of such size and scope.

There were a number of gender and age-related differences among the volunteers in terms of their background, experience and motivations. There were more women than men at the younger end of the workforce, but more men than women at the older end. Women volunteers were more likely to be in full-time education and part-time employment, whereas men were more likely to be in full-time employment, unemployed or retired. Older people were typically seeking to make a contribution to society by volunteering for the Games, while the younger age groups were more likely to be seeking a degree of personal development and the opportunity to learn new skills.
Experiences during the Games

The overwhelming feeling was one of comradeship, teamwork and embarking on a special experience with like-minded people.

(This section draws primarily on the material provided by a small sub-sample of volunteers who kept a diary record of their experiences during the period of the Games themselves. The second stage of the research, to be carried out in the summer 2003, will examine whether the perceptions of this small group were shared by the wider population of volunteers – and will also assess the impact that the experience of being a Games volunteer has had on individuals’ lives over the intervening year)

- Prior to the Games, the focus groups highlighted concerns about erratic communication between management and volunteers – and about transport to and from venues. During the event, these matters were not a problem and the volunteers considered that the transport system was a major success.

- At the beginning of the Games, many volunteers found they were concerned about what was being expected of them. This was dispelled for most as the Games progressed. The overwhelming feeling was one of comradeship, teamwork and embarking on a special experience with like-minded people. Many of the younger diarists recorded a feeling of increasing confidence and skill development.
Several of the more experienced volunteers reported on the positive nature of contact with other volunteers, special guests and the general public. They experienced a warm welcome from the general public – a level of appreciation and praise they had not expected.

A number of negative factors were reported, such as poor supervision and lack of communication between managers and volunteers. There was also some tension between the paid security staff and volunteers. However, these were problems for a minority of volunteers only and, in most cases, did not spoil their overall experience.

The major negative factor – especially for older volunteers – was that shifts were generally perceived as being too long and many volunteers considered that the food and drink provided for them was inadequate in terms of both quantity and quality.

Overall, the indications are that the Games proved to be a unique experience for volunteers; their expectations being far exceeded. Despite their concerns prior to the Games about issues such as uniforms, transport and communication, most (though not all) diarists were very positive in recording their experiences at the Games. All diarists considered that the Games themselves were a substantial success – something of which they had been proud to be a part. They also thought that Manchester and the UK stood to gain as a result. Many of the diarists indicated that they would volunteer for other major international events and would support Manchester again in such a pursuit.
Obtaining the report

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The report will be of value to sports developers and events managers; those involved in the management of volunteer workforces; and lecturers, researchers and students.

Further information about this research and copies of Report 1 (quantitative analysis) and/or Report 2 (qualitative analysis) on CD-ROM can be obtained from the International Centre for Research and Consultancy at Manchester Metropolitan University (0161 247 2720 or j.theodore@mmu.ac.uk) or UK Sport (020 7211 5119 or jerry.bingham@uksport.gov.uk), at a cost of £15.00 for both reports, cheques made payable to Manchester Metropolitan University or UK Sport.
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