

## **Motivation and benefits of voluntary activities. Case study: EYOF 2013 Braşov**

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**Abstract:** *Voluntary activities have become natural concerns among an increasing number of European citizens. Romania, as a member state of the EU, has a low number of participations in voluntary activities, situation partly justified by the lack of presence of our country on the map of large scale events organization which is based to a high extent, on volunteers' involvement. The present paper presents the results of a quantitative marketing research organized among volunteers who participated at EYOF 2013 Braşov and highlights the participation's motivations and benefits felt by volunteers at the end of the event. The authors of the article highlight the differences reported between volunteers' expectations and their opinions after the event, the results obtained being considered useful for planning the voluntary activities in organizing future events hosted in our country.*

**Key-words:** *voluntary activities, events, EYOF 2013 Braşov*

### **1. Introduction**

Voluntary activities play an important role in Europe, but the situation differs from country to country. These activities represent, for young population, a first step towards building the career and acquiring professional experience. Whilst certain EU Member States have longstanding traditions in volunteering and well developed voluntary sectors, in others the voluntary sector is still emerging or poorly developed. Romania is included into the group with a relatively low level of volunteering, as 10%-19% of adults carry out voluntary activities (Volunteering in the European Union, 2010). In 2011, the European Commission launched the European Year of Volunteering to celebrate the efforts of the estimated 100 million Europeans who take part in voluntary activities. A survey from 2015 found that around a quarter (25%) of young adults in the EU had been involved in an organised voluntary activity in the last 12 months ([http://europa.eu/youth/node/67\\_en](http://europa.eu/youth/node/67_en)). For Braşov county, the organization of the European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF) in 2013 has validated the organizational

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capabilities of local authorities. The event has represented a success, due to the high and enthusiastic number of volunteers involved.

## 2. Literature review

According to the European Youth Forum an activity can only be defined as volunteering if it is: (a) undertaken of a person's own free will and involves the commitment of time and energy to actions that benefit others and society as a whole; (b) unpaid (although it can involve reimbursement of expenses directly related to the activity); (c) for a non-profit cause, primarily undertaken within a nongovernmental organisation, and thus clearly isn't motivated by material or financial gain; and (d) not used to substitute or replace paid employment ([http://europa.eu/youth/node/67\\_en](http://europa.eu/youth/node/67_en)). Recent conceptualisations have emphasised that volunteering is a "give" and "take" experience (Holmes et al., 2010).

Volunteering has important insights for tourism, especially in the context of special events (Gallarza, Arteaga and Gil-Saura, 2013). Hosting events provide several advantages for tourism destinations (Lorde, Greenidge, and Devonish, 2011; Monga, 2006; Ritchie, 1994), which include improved infrastructure, greater amenities, enhanced civic pride, improved international (diplomatic) relations and increased international awareness of the destination. Volunteers actively participate in the event and thus can be considered as actors enjoying a leisure, social and cultural experience (Elstad, 2003). Volunteers at events have also been called "the hidden workforce" (Kemp, 2002), as their contribution is very important, while the financial cost for the organisation is low. As Goeldner, Ritchie, and McIntosh (2000, p. 235) state, "It takes the hard work and support from community volunteers to ensure that a festival or event runs smoothly". Volunteers are one of the key factors in the success of most events. The increasing reliance on volunteers by sport events has led to interest in this aspect of volunteering (Shaw, 2009).

As Cuskelly et al. (2004) discussed, one of the major problems for event organisers is volunteer dependability. Volunteers cannot be viewed only as a source of unpaid labour. "Managers of events or any other structure needing volunteers must develop an understanding of the combination of factors that may influence volunteers to perform their tasks successfully" (Gallarza, Arteaga and Gil-Saura, 2013). Involving volunteers in networks both during and after an event is important to successfully follow-up and retain them. As volunteers, by definition, choose whether or not they offer their services (Kemp, 2002), the event organisers should consider in their management actions that volunteering is a satisfying pursuit. In this respect, the training of volunteers becomes mandatory and nurtures the volunteer experience in a way that enhances their relationship to the event organization, and also the volunteer skills and learning (Shaw, 2009).

### 3. The research method

In order to identify motivations that led to the registration of volunteers in the organization of EYOF 2013 Brasov, and the benefits felt by them at the end of the event, a quantitative marketing research was conducted among 400 participating volunteers.

The questionnaire used in the research included a number of 19 questions, of which 3 were identification questions. In this article are developed the answers which show the determinant factors that led to the decision of the interviewed volunteers to participate at this event and which were the advantages identified after participating at the analyzed voluntary activity. The questionnaire was distributed online through Facebook network, being recorded a number of 215 valid questionnaires completed.

### 4. Results

The first question analyzed shows the degree in which respondents have participated at voluntary activities in the past. The results obtained show the fact that for 31% of the total number of volunteer interviewed the participation at EYOF 2013 Brasov represented a first step in their voluntary activities, while 69% of the respondents have mentioned the fact that they have also participated at other voluntary activities.

Another question analyzed highlights the main reasons which made the respondents to register on volunteer lists for the event's organization. The question was of semi-closed type, with five predetermined options and one free answer alternative, the respondents having the possibility of a multiple answer (Figure 1).

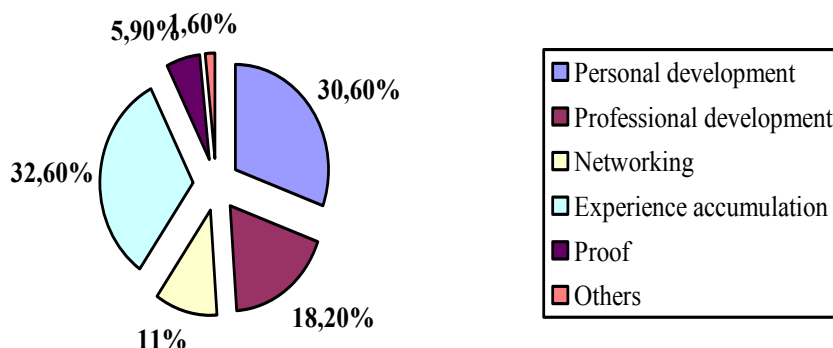


Figure 1. Reasons of enrollment on volunteer lists for EYOF 2013 Braşov

A total number of 555 answers were recorded, and the response option with most choices, namely 181 (32,6%), was that of experience accumulation. A number of 170 respondents (30,6%) have mentioned as a reason the need for personal development, 101 respondents (11%) have chosen the networking alternative, while for 33 of the respondents (5,9%) was also important the proof of voluntary activities received. A number of 9 free answers were recorded (1,6%) which showed, among others, the need for leisure activities, curiosity and desire to make new things.

There were also highlighted the opinions of respondents, as volunteers, regarding the organization of the event at which they participated (Figure 2).

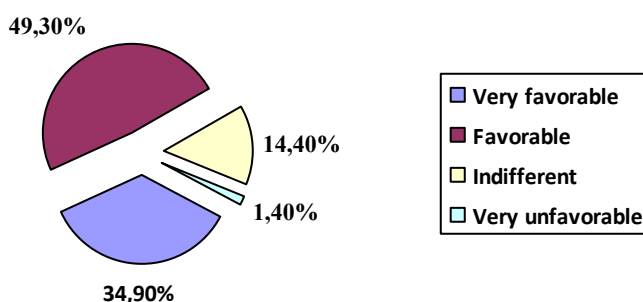


Figure 2. Volunteers' opinion regarding the organization of EYOF 2013 Braşov

The results obtained show the favorable comments because 49,3% of the respondents had a favorable attitude, while 34,9% of them had a very favorable opinion regarding the way of organizing the event. 14,4% of the answers have shown an indifferent attitude, while 3 answers, namely 1,4% of the opinions highlighted that the event was very poorly organized.

One last question analyzes the advantages felt by respondents after the voluntary activities conducted within EYOF 2013 Braşov. Being a multiple choice question, the total number of recorded answers was 823. The analysis of alternatives expressed shows a balanced distribution of responses (Figure 3). 22,7% of the answers showed the advantage of new friendships creation, 20,3% of the respondents felt the benefits of teamwork, 18,8% of the answers have appreciated the possibility to spend free time in a very pleasant manner, 18,7% of the respondents showed the experience acquired, 18,3% of the answers expressed the advantage of exercising communication skills in a foreign language, and 1,1% mentioned other advantages.

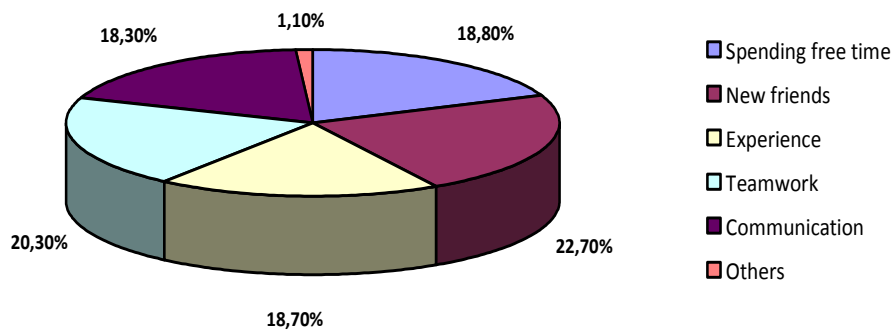


Figure 3. Benefits felt after participation as volunteers at EYOF 2013 Braşov

## 5. Conclusions

The involvement of volunteers in events' organization creates several advantages. On one hand, the organizers benefit from cheap labor, most of the times young and enthusiastic, while for volunteers the involvement in development of the event is a life experience, a pride and a card for future career. On the other hand, the motivations and expectations can be extremely diverse and may not have common points. The organizers desire responsible volunteers, as well coordinated as possible, while volunteers, as is shown from research presented want to build new friendships, to communicate in a foreign language and to spend free time in a pleasant manner, elements that might not be found on organizers' agenda. Identifying and understanding common goals, beneficial for both sides represent the proof of organizers' management skills, and the quality of the management is the performance pillar (Neacşu, 2015). The selection of labor, namely of volunteers, is an important step of the managerial approach (Madar and Neacşu, 2014), then the knowledge of their expectations, finding ways for satisfying and adapting the program and an efficient training of volunteers are steps that cannot be skippable. As the organizational effort involves making activities from different fields (as volunteer selection, training, etc.), the outsourcing of operations with not a direct link with the basic activity is also an important decision (Bărbulescu, 2015) for conducting a successful event.

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