

## MARKETING STRATEGIES IN RECRUITING AND TRAINING VOLUNTEERS FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF SPORTS COMPETITIONS

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### ABSTRACT

The study paper's focus is on establishing the connection between marketing initiatives and the strategy used by numerous volunteers to plan sporting events. The manager of the volunteer sector is responsible for assembling a project team and overseeing the recruiting, selection, training, deployment, supervision, and coordination of volunteers while they work as volunteers at major sporting events. The greatest candidates for this position are coordinators for the volunteer sector who have experience as volunteers, as they can inspire others to perform selfless volunteer work. Research has shown that in order to effectively

oversee 800 unpaid employees, someone must first build a direct relationship with them—something that can only be done in the event that there are a significant number of trained coordinators. Additionally, it is essential to heavily publicize the volunteer contest and emphasize the advantages that volunteers obtain by taking part in order to attract a big number of participants. In addition to the aforementioned, well-planned, organized, intricate, and gradual preparation that begins several months prior to the competition is required to prepare a big number of volunteers for high-quality and committed involvement at a sporting event. After receiving top-notch training, volunteers can serve in any area of the competition. Additionally, volunteers who have previously taken part in a well-run sporting event typically return to sports volunteering multiple times. Ultimately, the paper's set hypothesis—which related to the contention that there is a positive connection between marketing initiatives, sports event organization, and the approach of volunteers.

**Keywords:** sports competitions, sports volunteerism, volunteers, marketing.

### INTRODUCTION

History has revealed how important sporting events are, talking about the role they played in the development of society and many communities on our planet. Sporting events are different from non-sporting events and competitions. There is a difference in the sense that some form of competition involving physical strength is involved. Moreover, the emotional component makes sports events unique, and indeed, this characteristic becomes essential for the commercial and marketing purposes of the events themselves, which has significant economic implications and other impacts. The growing popularity of sporting

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events is a global phenomenon, resulting in larger and larger events being established around the world to capitalize on the associated economic potential. Sports events are characterized by their complexity and time constraints: sports events involve many stakeholders and cannot be easily changed, especially due to the athletes' competition calendar. However, in recent times, in the face of the crisis caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19), mega events such as the 2020 Tokyo Olympics have been postponed, adding a new challenge to the event industry in general and event managers in particular.

The research subject of the paper includes determining the connection between the organization of sports competitions, the approach of volunteers, and the application of marketing activities.

The research aims to determine, based on the available relevant literature, the contribution of marketing activities in the approach of volunteers to sports competitions.

## **SPORTS EVENTS PLANNING PROCESS**

The importance of sporting events in terms of their impact and benefits, especially large international events, is well documented and also well covered in the media, such as television, billboards, newspapers, etc (Allen, O'toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2012). In general, most attention is paid to economic benefits, mainly because they are easier to quantify. However, other less quantifiable benefits, including regeneration, physical heritage, cultural, social, environmental, tourism, and sports development, may have more significant value in the long term.

Evaluation of the theories of Bowdin, McDonnell, Allen, & O'Toole (2001) and Getz (1997) show that they propose that event planning is a phased process. Others such as Catherwood and Van Kirk (1992), Goldblatt (1997) suggest a less formal approach to event planning. These theories and models generally accept that event organizations need to plan strategically for the long term, including responsibility for the ongoing and long-term management of the financial and physical legacy of major events. Getz (1997) believes that long-term gains and losses should be assessed in the feasibility phase of the planning process. Allen, et al. (2012) and Bowdin, et al. (2001) follow a similar approach. Several

theories also consider closure or shutdown (Allen, et al., 2012; Shone, & Parry, 2001).

The latter (Allen, et al., 2012) acknowledge that some thought should be given to the intended legacies in the formation of goals at the beginning of the planning process. However, the theory offered seems to be more suited to the short-term benefits that events can bring rather than the long-term value that major international events can be strategically planned for. What the models don't cover is where developing strategies for successful long-term legacies should be in the event planning process. There is a need to include specific long-term strategies when planning major international sporting events and strategies that will extend beyond the event itself. Second, it is accepted that the existing theory and models of event planning adequately enable the realization of events, but not particularly for large sporting events. What is needed, therefore, is a more comprehensive process that can encompass the planning needs of sporting events, a process that can accommodate sporting events of all sizes and intentions and thereby enable the event to deliver benefits in the long and short term.

## **A new approach to the process of event planning**

Any potential long-term benefits attributed to an event must be comprehensively covered by strategies that ensure long-term success. First, incorporating cost-benefit forecasting in the feasibility phase of the event planning process would allow organizers to not only forecast the extent of their event's benefits and budget accordingly but through that forecasting, get support for the event at an early stage and appropriate stage.

Second, implementation strategies for the use of new facilities and/or regeneration projects must be embedded to ensure their long-term future. Third, assessing the impact of such an event requires not only an assessment of the short- and medium-term economic and cultural benefits. It also requires a long-term assessment, perhaps as long as 10 years or more, of sustainability and permanence, in other words, the success, regeneration, and legacy created as a result of setting up the event. Fourth, for the goals to be met, there is a reason to include mechanisms in the process that will enable continuous alignment with

short-term, medium-term, and long-term plans. What follows is a new process of event planning that includes both the short-term requirements for implementing the event and the long-term goals that become the legacy of the event (Masterman, 2003a; Masterman, 2003b). The model presented here aims to address the planning process necessary for all scales of events and whilst this text deals with the management of sporting events, it is suggested that this process is universally applicable throughout the event industry.

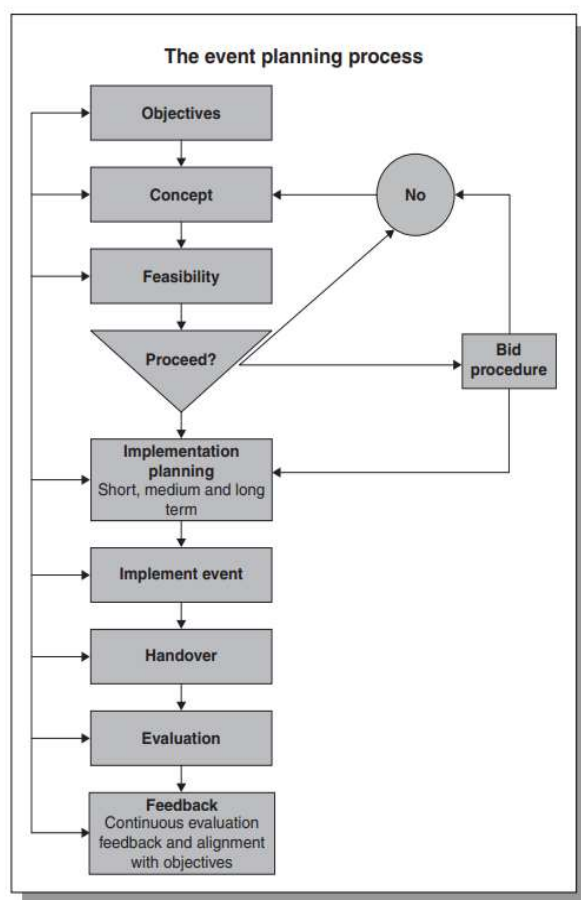


Figure 1. Planning of events and happenings (Masterman, 2003a; Masterman, 2003b)

### A step-by-step process

The model of the event planning process consists of up to 10 different stages. There is justification for a phased process where progression through the planning process is done step by step. Manchester, for example, decided on urban regeneration goals before deciding to bid for both the 2000 Olympics and the 2002 Commonwealth Games (Bernstein, 2002). Next, the feasibility of the latter being able to successfully meet the objectives in the long term was considered. After deciding to

proceed, the city then went to bid for the event. Then there was the development of strategies before the event, to make the event long-term: for example, building the facilities and ensuring their subsequent use before construction. The policy of building permanent facilities only when the subsequent use and users were certain shows that the city not only planned for the long term in the pre-event phase but also was not ready to advance to the next phase in its planning until these conditions were met (Bernstein, 2002). The handover phase followed the implementation of each event, followed by evaluation and feedback in a similar fashion as the final phase. A review of the literature related to the event planning process also supports the phase model (Allen, et al., 2012) with the remainder of the literature showing no arguments against it. The main advantage of the staged process is that it is an effective way to avoid moving forward too quickly and to find that efforts and budgets have been spent unnecessarily. There is also justification for completing each phase before moving on to the next to maintain efficiency in terms of both time and finances. This is also advocated by Allen, et al. (2012), Bowdin, et al. (2001), Getz (1997). A description of each stage of the process follows with the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games, and Sheffield 1991 World Student Games serving as examples of key points.

### Goals

It is important to identify why the event is going to be organized before deciding what the event will be or what it will look like, so objectives are the first stage in the process. Objectives determine the nature and scope of the event. In the case of major international sporting events, host cities may have regeneration objectives such as the redevelopment of derelict land for new facilities, and residential and business opportunities. The event becomes a catalyst for achieving such goals. Therefore, for this scale of events, it is important to consider how the goals of the event can fit into the wider urban plans. For all scales of events, whether international or local, the objectives refer to what the event itself is intended to achieve. It could be for monetary gain, to develop participation in sports, to determine winners

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through competitions, and to engage communities. Whatever the objectives are, they are what the event will be measured against to determine whether or not it was successful.

The use of objectives is not necessarily widespread in the industry. Emery (Emery, 2010), for example, surveyed 400 major sporting event organizers and found that although 64% of respondents claimed to have used goals and objectives, they were generally one general goal and/or lacked detail. There can be several reasons for this. One could be management complacency, but it could also be due to the perception that setting goals is too difficult a task due to the diverse nature of the various actors involved. Setting goals for a long planning process can also be considered too inflexible an approach when so much can change in the interim. Also, since targets are used as a possible benchmark for an event, there may be a reluctance to use them politically. After all, not many people want to be seen to fail. The argument in favor of using event objectives is that they provide direction for planning and execution. Event management texts agree that the use of objectives is essential to the production of a successful event (Allen, et al., 2012; Bowdin, et al., 2001). However, not everyone agrees that they should be ahead of the development of the event concept in the planning process. Some describe a process that begins with a concept and includes an intention to bid for an event where appropriate (Allen, et al, 2012), or an idea and a proposal.

Getz (1997) suggest that scanning the internal and external environment is necessary before setting the vision and goals for the event. Shone, & Parry (2001) at least wrap all of these elements into one initial phase that includes goal setting, and Allen, et al. (2012) and Bowdin, et al. (2001) agree that goals are needed before any situational analysis. Process and Event Management recognizes the need for objectives to be the first stage in the planning process. A concept is a vehicle designed to achieve goals and can only be designed once the goals are set. A lot of it is about having smart goals, that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely. To make them achievable and realistic for sporting events, the next stage in the process, feasibility, is key. That they are specific, that they are achieved in a certain time frame, and that they have performance indicators that can be measured

helps the penultimate stage of the process, evaluation. To determine the objectives, it is necessary to identify all interested parties and consider their requirements in this first phase so that they can be included in the event planning. This includes considering potential partners and related strategies. Key questions that should be asked at this stage include: why is the event being held, what is to be achieved, who benefits, and how? Although it is not necessary to categorize the goals of sporting events to determine them, in the analysis they can be political, social, cultural, environmental, or economic. Such categorization can help determine who are the people and/or organizations that influence the execution of the event; in other words, its stakeholders.

### **Stakeholders**

- *Buyers:* seat and corporate ticket buyers, athletes or competition participants, advertisers, buyers of corporate packages such as those for franchise space, sponsors, and merchandise buyers.
- *Suppliers:* Organizations used to supply equipment, services, or goods in connection with the event, for example, tournament equipment, legal advice, food and drink, transport, and emergency services.
- *Partners:* Many sporting events are not possible without the sanction of the relevant regional, national, and international governing bodies, and these bodies also run their sports. Other partners may be local, regional, or national governments or their agencies. Separate event management organizations may well combine forces to execute an event. Sponsors are often referred to as partners both in terms of ownership rights and because of the longevity and/or closeness of the relationship, as are those media organizations that purchase event rights.
- *Investors:* Some of the above partners may also be investors as they have a vested interest as a result of providing financial resources either in cash or through services/goods in kind. This interest may result in a monetary return on investment, but not always. Municipal or agency investments may require non-financial returns such as sports, cultural, or social development.

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- *Staff*: Permanent staff, short-term staff, sub-contractors, and volunteers may fall into this category.
- *External influences*: This includes event publicity that is important to the success of the event and therefore influences any decision-making even if it is not directly related to the event in any of the above conditions. For example, the local community where the event takes place, pressure groups, local and national governments from legislative, economic, health and safety, cultural and social aspects, certain politicians, and the media. At this stage, it is also important to review any reports that have been received for the event.

For example, the competition to win the right to organize an event is increasingly used by event owners. In the corporate world, propaganda is growing against others to run a sporting event on behalf of the event owner. The sports management agency will have to discuss, negotiate, and fulfill the set conditions and objectives of the latter. Even if there is no competition, there will likely be such a brief. In the same light, event owners are increasingly using bidding where host cities compete for the right to host large events. Again, each offer will need to meet different conditions or criteria to be successful (Ilic, & Ostojic, 2023). The planning process must have built-in alignment mechanisms that ensure that objectives are assessed at all stages of the planning process (Ilic, Stojanovic, & Ostojic, 2024). Alignment can be achieved through the identification of performance indicators and targets. For example, in setting goals that include the long-term success of the facilities and the resulting economic gain from organizing the event, the planning process is automatically given performance measures. For all extensive sports events, by setting deadlines for achieving a certain level of income, prescribed levels of media coverage, or signing appropriate contracts, the process gets its integrated indicators. Incorporating mechanisms and operational systems through the planning phase of implementation and thereby allowing further reflection on how the project can be improved will also ensure that in the end, the event achieves what it should achieve.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The methods used in the paper are descriptive statistics, analysis, and synthesis methods.

### **The sample**

The research included 124 people who were surveyed through a questionnaire, while e-mail addresses were collected by the football club FC "ŽAK" Kikinda. 54% of male respondents and 46% of female respondents participated in the total research sample. The largest percentage of respondents is between 35-40 years old - 42%, while the smallest number of respondents is 55 years old and older - 4%. Most respondents from Kikinda and the surrounding rural communities participated in the research.

### **Materials**

The research instrument is a survey questionnaire that consists of two parts. The first part of the questionnaire aims to determine the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample of respondents, to gain insight into the basic data concerning the gender and age structure. The second part of the questionnaire is made up of closed questions. The answers were mostly formulated according to the Likert scale. The questionnaire was originally compiled by the author of this paper.

### **The research flow**

The research was carried out in November and December 2023, and it included a survey of employees and members of FC ŽAK Kikinda, as well as their mailmen. Questionnaires were sent to individuals in the online form, and on that occasion, all respondents were informed that the research was anonymous and that they could withdraw from participating at any time. Also, the respondents were informed that the obtained data will not be used for any other purposes, except for research for this paper. Once the data were collected, they were analyzed.

The paper started with the hypothesis: „There is a positive connection between marketing activities and the respondents' decision to apply for volunteering“.

## **THE RESULTS**

In this part of the paper, the obtained research results are presented graphically.

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Primarily, the structure of the sample of respondents was analyzed using descriptive statistics. On that occasion, it was concluded

that 51% of men and 49% of women participated in the research (Chart 1).

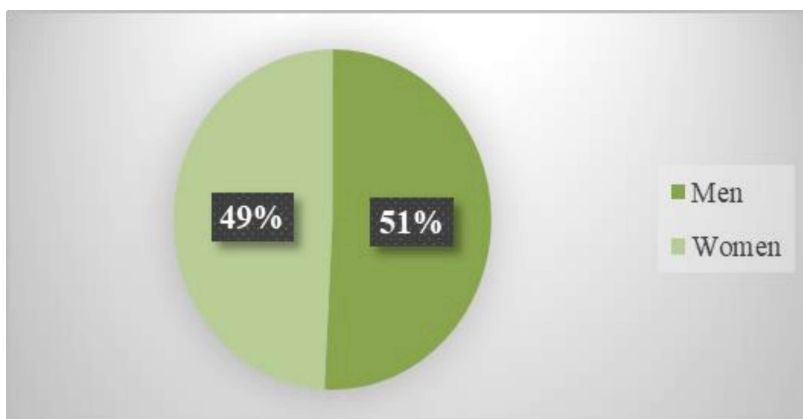


Chart 1. Gender structure

With the next question, an answer was obtained about the employee engagement of the respondents (Chart 2). From Chart 2, it can be

seen that 69 respondents (55.64%) are employed, while 55 respondents (44.35%) are unemployed.

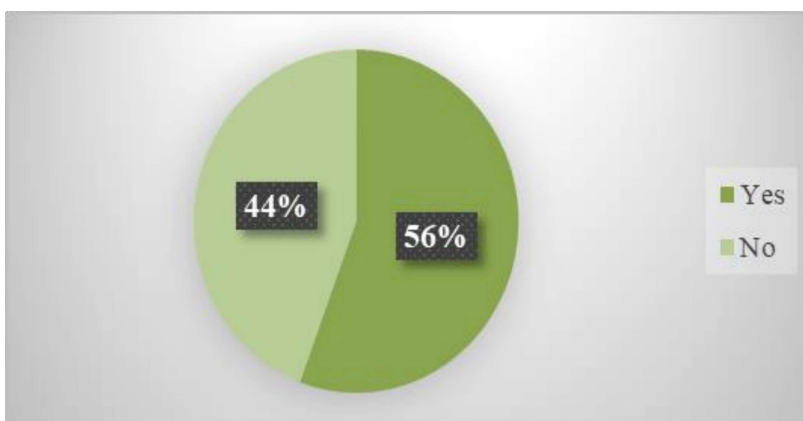


Chart 2. Are you employed?

The next question provides an overview of the respondent's experience in volunteering (Chart 3). According to the research results, it can be concluded that 58 respondents gave a

positive answer to the question, that is 47% of the respondents, while 66 of them gave a negative answer to the question, that is 53%.

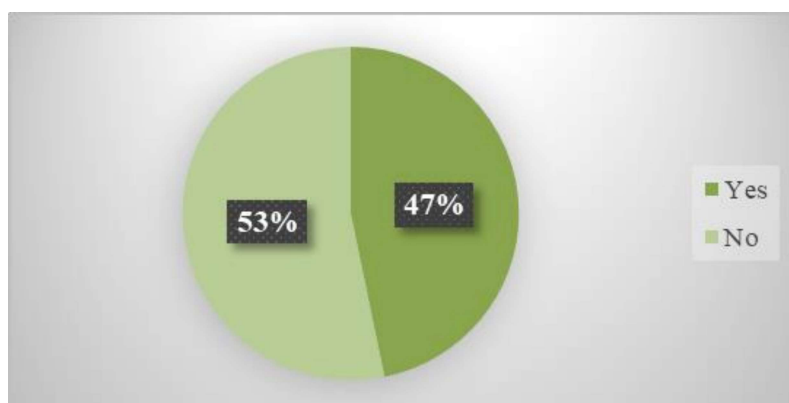


Chart 3. Have you already had experience in volunteering?

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The next question answered how often the respondents follow competitions. According to the answers, the majority of respondents agree or completely agree that they often watch sports competitions, namely 74 (59.66%) respondents,

neither agree nor disagree with 15 (12.09%) respondents, while they do not agree, i.e. 35 (28.21%) respondents completely disagree with the stated statement (Chart 4).

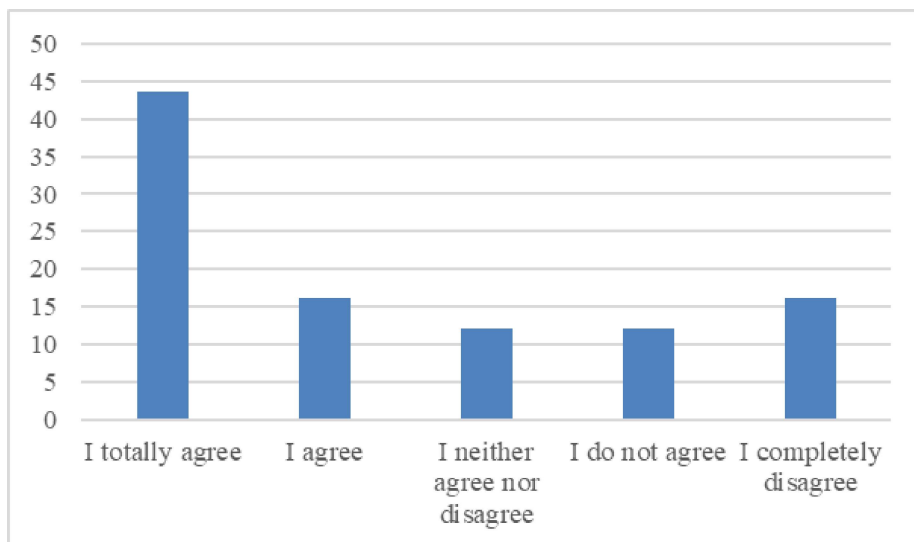


Chart 4. To what extent do you agree with the statement that you follow sports competitions often?

The largest number of respondents agree or completely agree with the statement that the organization's marketing materials influenced their decision to apply for volunteering, i.e. 75

of them (60.47%), neither agree nor disagree, 20 (16.12%) respondents, until they disagree or completely disagree 29 (23.38%) (Chart 5).

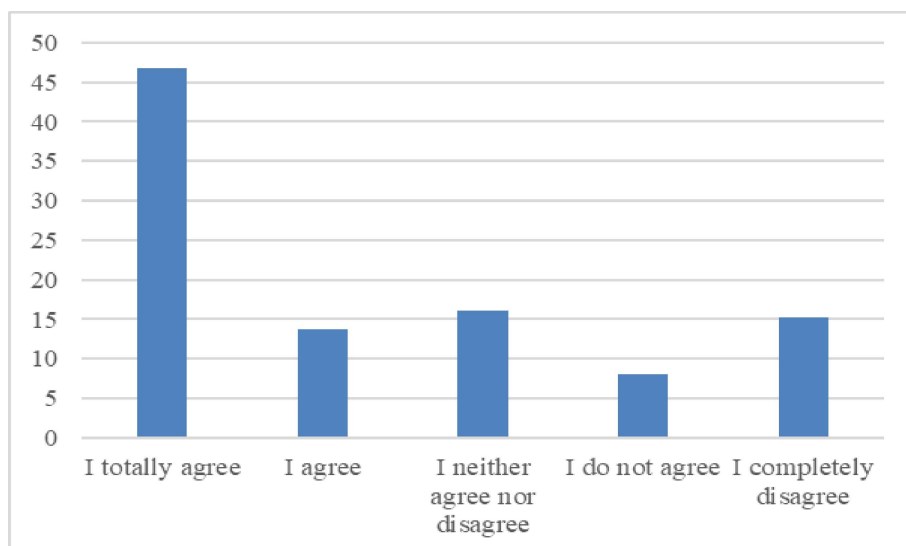


Chart 5. To what extent do you agree that the organization's marketing materials influenced your decision to volunteer?

Based on the answers received from the respondents, it can be seen that the majority agree with the statement that the organization's marketing strategies have influenced recruitment for volunteering in the organization

of sports competitions, namely 73 (58.86%), neither agree nor disagree, 22 (17.74 %) respondents, do not agree, that is, 29 (23.38%) respondents completely disagree (Chart 6).

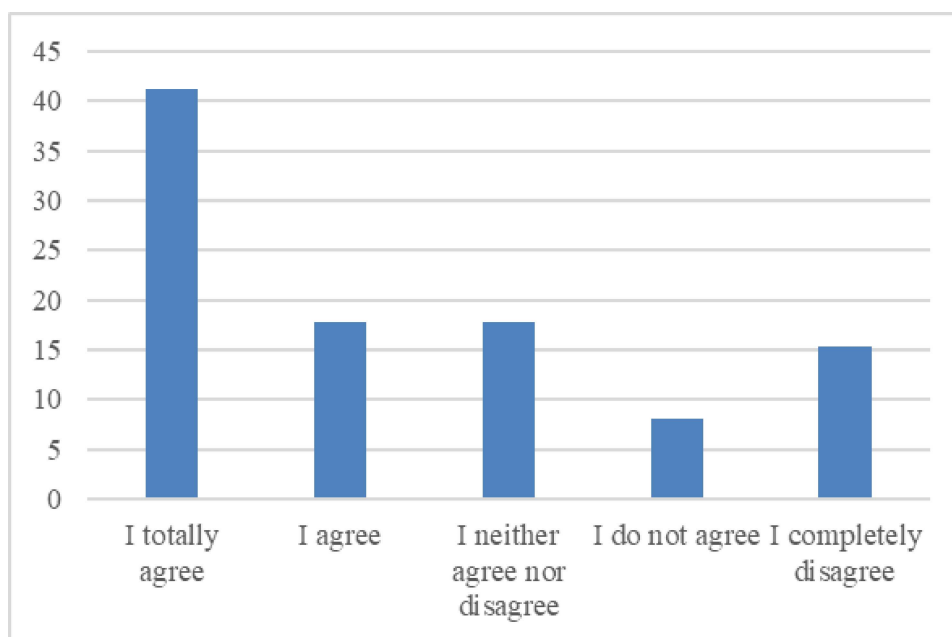


Chart 6. To what extent do you agree with the statement that the marketing strategy of the organization influenced your recruitment for volunteering in the organization of sports events?

Based on the respondents' answers, it can be seen that the majority of respondents agree with the statement that the training of volunteers before sports events is sufficient, i.e. 73 (58.86%) of the respondents, neither agree

nor disagree with 26 (20.96%) of the respondents, while do not agree, that is, 25 (20.15) respondents completely disagree with the above statement (Chart 7).

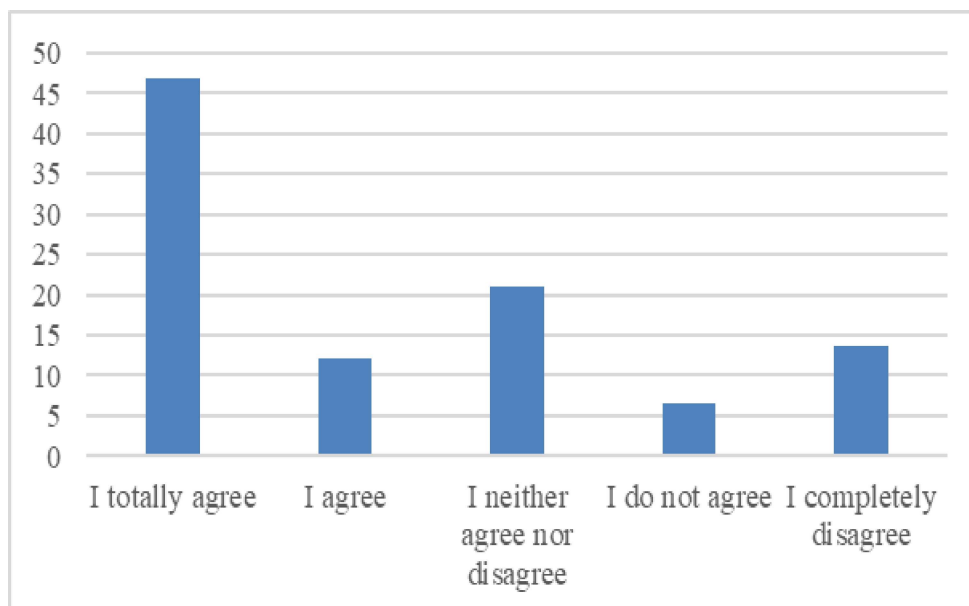


Chart 7. To what extent do you agree with the statement that volunteer training before sporting events is sufficient?

Based on the research results, the majority of respondents agree or completely agree with the statement that improved communication could increase the satisfaction of volunteers who perform volunteer work in the organization

of sports competitions, that is, 68 (54.83%) respondents neither agree nor disagree 26 (20.96%) respondents, while 29 (24.19%) respondents do not agree or completely disagree (Chart 8).



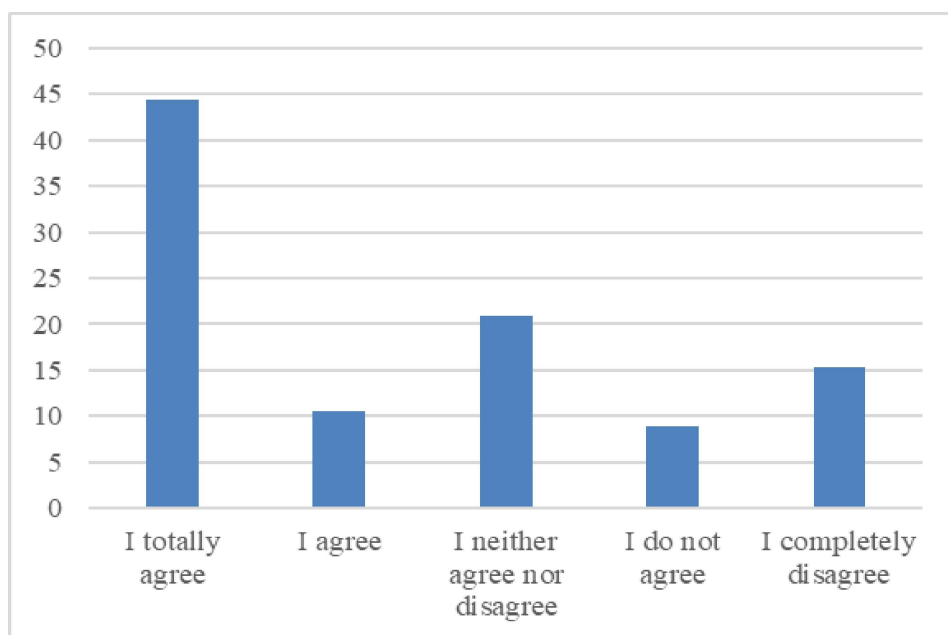


Chart 8. To what extent do you agree with the statement that improved communication could increase the satisfaction of volunteers who do volunteer work in the organization of sports competitions?

Out of the total number of respondents, 45 (36.28%) agree with the statement or completely agree with the statement that additional benefits or rewards can improve the experience of volunteers at sports competitions,

while 26 (20.96%) respondents neither agree nor disagree while disagreeing or completely disagreeing respondents are 53 (42,73%) (Chart 9).

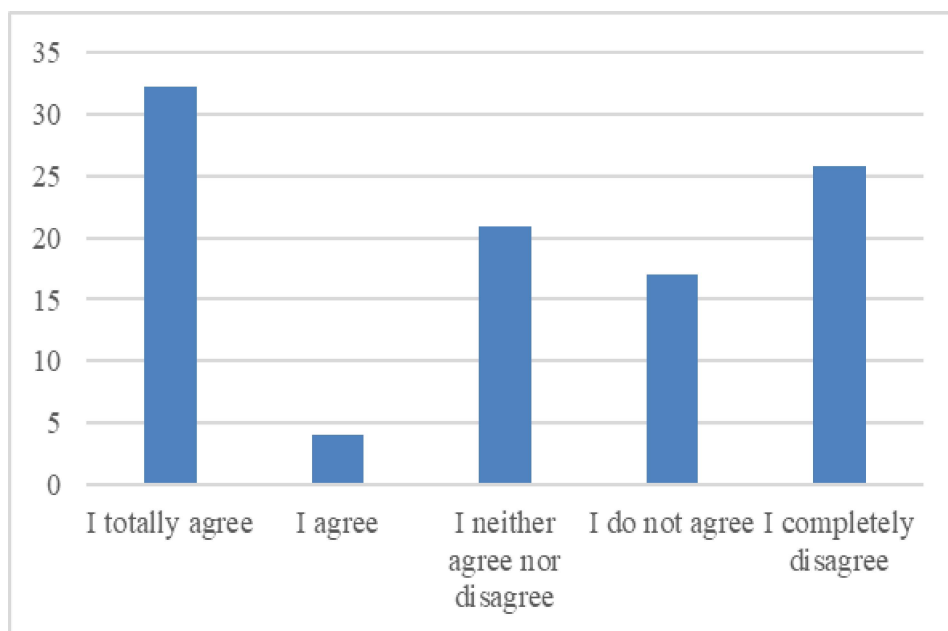


Chart 9. To what extent do you agree with the statement that additional benefits or rewards can improve the experience of volunteers at sports competitions?

## CONCLUSIONS

The biggest pleasures of volunteering are improving the environment, lending assistance to those in need, starting changes

solely out of moral obligation, and collaborating with others toward a common objective. Apart from fun, volunteering is a great opportunity for young people to learn

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something new, meet new people, value their free time, learn to do a different job, and all sorts of other things. This can be very helpful when you are faced with challenges. everyday life brings. For society, volunteering is a value that should be encouraged and nurtured, because only active individuals, united for a common goal, have the power to initiate changes that everyone can do. Every community has to face it. A society without volunteers is a static, backward society because individual enthusiasm is often the main driver of progressive change.

Indeed, many examples confirm this. Serbia, like many similar countries in the Western Balkan, need volunteering, because they must change by modern trends, catch up with what has been missed, and truly become what the citizens expect of them. The Ministry of Youth and Sports has helped a large number of projects that encourage volunteering because it is necessary to consciously accept the fact that effective changes cannot happen if those who want them are not helped.

As can be seen, the hypothesis: "There is a positive association between marketing activities and respondents' decision to apply for volunteering", was confirmed. The majority of the respondents expressed their positive attitude regarding the application of marketing strategy in training and recruiting individuals in the organization of sports competitions. The results of this survey provide a deeper insight into the attitudes and experiences of volunteers about the recruitment, training, and marketing strategies of sports competition organizations. Understanding the respondents' perceptions enables the identification of key areas that require improvement to improve the effectiveness of volunteering and achieve higher levels of volunteer satisfaction. These findings can serve as a basis for the further development of marketing strategies and training programs, contributing to the sustainable engagement of volunteers in sports communities.

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