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Who Donates Time to the Benefit of the Environment and Animal Rights? Profiling Volunteers from an International Perspective

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Keywords

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Melanie Randle and Sara Dolnicar, University of Wollongong

Abstract

Despite increased competitive pressures in the volunteering industry, there remains a lack of studies which segment the volunteering market with the aim of gaining deeper insight into the characteristics of different groups of volunteers. This study addresses this issue by using data from the 1999-2002 World Values Survey, specifically investigating those individuals who volunteer for Environmental and Animal Rights (EAR) causes. Differences are found between (i) EAR volunteers and individuals who do not volunteer for any cause, and (ii) EAR volunteers and individuals who volunteer for causes other than the environment and animal rights. This information is useful for managers of EAR organisations because it enables them to design customised marketing messages which specifically target that group most likely to donate their time to that type of organisation.

Introduction

Recent decades have witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of nonprofit organisations providing social services in many countries worldwide. This has been due to a number of factors including the devolution of services previously provided by government (Kingfisher, 2002), reductions in government funding (Wymer, 1997), and the growth of social problems such as AIDS, teenage pregnancy and drug abuse (Cnaan, Kasternakis and Wineburg, 1993). Accompanying the increase in the number of nonprofit organisations has been a reduction in the number of people willing to volunteer (Putnam, 2000; Yavas and Riecken, 1997), which has been attributed to people not being as involved in their communities as they used to be (Wymer, 1997) and the growth of 'enlightened selfishness' (Watts and Edwards, 1983). Combined, these factors have led to increased and intense competition for limited resources (Bendapudi, Singh and Bendapudi, 1996) and enormous pressure on nonprofit managers to adopt what have traditionally been considered 'commercial' business techniques in order to operate effectively and efficiently (Schweitzer, 1998). The fundamental challenge facing many volunteering organisations is how to make their offering of a volunteering experience more attractive than competitor organisations so as to not only attract the maximum number of volunteers but also retain them for as long as possible (Brudney and Kellough, 2000). Many nonprofit organisations are realising that they must take a more focused approach to their marketing efforts to obtain maximum value for money, and are thus targeting specific segments within society rather than simply using generic marketing messages aimed at entire communities (Dolnicar and Randle, 2004b). This study considers this marketing problem specifically from the perspective of Environmental and Animal Rights (EAR) organisations. The number of organisations for EAR causes has grown significantly in recent decades and they rely heavily on volunteers to provide services and programs which governments currently fail to provide. They are however extremely important in the long term health of the planet and the preservation of flora and fauna, and as such deserve increased research attention to provide the information needed for them to compete with the other

larger and more established causes. This study contributes to this endeavor by investigating the segment of the market which volunteers specifically for EAR organisations. This segment is profiled and then contrasted with other segments to understand whether significant differences are present.

Prior Research

There have been many studies which have tried to capture the profile of volunteers by describing them in terms of an assumed type of characteristic such as socio-demographics (Reed and Selbee, 2000), attitudes (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2004), values (Raval and Subramanian, 2004) and social behaviour (Musick, Wilson and Bynum, 2000). Amidst recent calls for greater and more sophisticated use of marketing techniques within the nonprofit sector (Andreasen and Kotler, 2003), including investigations utilising segmentation techniques (Dolnicar and Randle, 2004a), a number of studies have used an *a posteriori* (Mazanec, 2000) or data-driven (Dolnicar, 2002) approach to provide some insight into this issue. For example Ewing et al. (2002) took a macro-economic view of volunteering in the US and segmented volunteers based on their motivations and needs, while Dolnicar and Randle (2004b) used the volunteering motivations to determine groups of volunteers who represent useful targets for customised marketing.

There are few studies which specifically investigate environmental volunteering, however there have been a number of studies which attempt to provide some insight into who is more likely to be involved in environmental behaviours generally. Some characteristics have been consistently linked to environmental behaviour such as education (Johnson, Bowker and Cordell, 2004), income (Arcury and Christianson, 1990) and liberal attitudes (Johnson, Bowker and Cordell, 2004; Nooney, *et al.*, 2003). In relation to other characteristics, however, results are somewhat conflicting. For example Olli, Grendstad and Wollebaek (2001) found those likely to be involved in environmental behaviours to be younger, while Arcury and Christianson (1990) found them to be older; and Johnson, Bowker and Cordell (2004) found males more likely to participate, contradicting Scott and Willits (1994) who found females more likely to participate.

The information about this segment of the volunteering market is somewhat fragmented, vague and confusing. What is lacking in this area are specific segmentation studies which group volunteers according to the type of organisations they actually volunteer for, and then profile these groups to understand whether there are different and distinct homogenous groups within what is otherwise a very heterogeneous volunteering market (Bussell and Forbes, 2002). This study provides insight into this issue by (i) identifying and profiling the segment of the volunteering market who currently volunteers for EAR organisations ; (ii) comparing this with those who do not currently volunteer for any organisation to identify any significant differences between the groups; and (iii) identifying whether these differences are specific to EAR volunteers or generic to all volunteers by comparing this segment those who volunteer for other causes.

Data and Methodology

Data from the World Values Survey (Inglehart, *et al.*, 2004) was used for the analysis in this study. The World Values Survey is designed to provide insight into worldwide sociocultural and political change and includes information on personal values and attitudes. The data was collected in 1999-2002 by numerous leading universities internationally. Multistage random

sampling techniques were used to obtain nationally representative samples of the adult population in each country. A sub-sample of 85,893 respondents was used for this investigation because this number of respondents explicitly responded to a set of questions about volunteering, either by indicating that they donate time to one of the types of organisations listed or by stating that they do not. In order to profile the Environmental and Animal Rights (EAR) volunteers, the 2,751 respondents who indicated that they are actively engaged in giving unpaid help to these types of organisations were contrasted against (i) the 30,401 respondents who do not volunteer, and (ii) the 52,741 volunteers who give unpaid help to groups other than EAR organisations. Analysis of variance was used to test the significance of metric variables and Chi-squared tests were used to test the significance of nominal and ordinal variables. All statistics reported have significance levels of 95% or higher.

Results

Contrasting Environmental and Animal Rights Volunteers Against Non-Volunteers

There were a number of socio-demographic differences between these two groups worth noting. EAR volunteers were younger (average age 39 compared to non-volunteers average age 45) and more likely to be male (58% versus 46% of non-volunteers). If they have a partner they are less likely to be legally married and they are also less likely than non-volunteers to have children. Consistent with prior findings, EAR volunteers are more highly educated than non-volunteers with almost two thirds of this group having either successfully completed secondary school or gained a tertiary qualification. EAR volunteers are more likely than non-volunteers to work full-time or be self-employed, whereas non-volunteers are more likely to be retired or performing home duties. In terms of socio-economic status the majority of both groups classify themselves as being middle class, however while over half of non-volunteers reported saving some money last year, less than one third of the EAR volunteers reported having saved any. While the majority of both groups displayed 'mixed' values (i.e. a combination of 'materialist' and 'postmaterialist' values), of the remaining individuals the non-volunteers group has a higher proportion of individuals displaying 'materialist' values (that is, emphasising economic and physical security), while the EAR volunteers group has a higher proportion of individuals displaying 'postmaterialist' values (that is, emphasising individual expression and quality life concerns) (Inglehart, *et al.*, 2004).

Perhaps not surprisingly EAR volunteers are more likely to agree that they would (i) give part of their income if they were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution (33% compared to only 13% of non-volunteers); and (ii) agree to an increase in taxes if the extra money were used to prevent environmental pollution (22% compared to 9% of non-volunteers). Interestingly however, a greater proportion of non-volunteers agreed that government should reduce environmental pollution (37% compared to only 30% of EAR volunteers). This could be explained by the fact that volunteers are more likely to display pro-social attitudes (Wymer, 1997), take personal responsibility for social issues such as environmental pollution and feel they should support the social good rather than entrust that responsibility to public organisations such as governments (Reed and Selbee, 2000). In a similar vein, EAR volunteers were more likely than non-volunteers to have been involved in political activities such as signing a petition, joining in boycotts, attending lawful demonstrations, and joining unofficial strikes.

This is again supported by previous studies which found that volunteers are more likely to show high levels of political efficacy (Smith, 1994).

In terms of the factors they consider important in their job, a higher proportion of the EAR group nominated every one of the factors listed, possibly indicating more definite views about what they are looking for in their paid employment. EAR volunteers were more likely than non-volunteers to nominate having an opportunity to use their initiative and achieve something, and having responsibility and a respected job as being important. Non-volunteers, however, were most likely to nominate what might be described as the 'niceties' of a job as being important such as having pleasant people to work with.

The two groups investigated were equally concerned about their immediate families and people in their neighbourhood. However when asked whether they were concerned about their fellow countrymen and humankind the proportion of EAR volunteers who indicated that they do feel concerned was almost twice that of the non-volunteers group. EAR volunteers were more likely to attend church on a regular basis (that is, once a week or more), and were more conservative in their views on most of the social behaviours measured including cheating on taxes, paying bribes, homosexuality, prostitution, claiming government benefits and avoiding fares on public transport. However on a few social behaviours it was the non-volunteers who were less likely to consider them justifiable, for example taking soft drugs, lying, and having casual or under-aged sex.

Contrasting Environmental and Animal Rights Volunteers Against Other Volunteers

Similar to EAR volunteers, the majority of 'other' volunteers are also male, however not as large a majority (52% compared with 58% of EAR volunteers). They are slightly older than EAR volunteers but not as old as non-volunteers, and are more likely than EAR volunteers to have children and be legally married to their partner. In terms of education and employment, EAR volunteers and 'other' volunteers are very similar with only a few percentage points separating the proportions of each group falling into the different answer categories. In terms of socioeconomic status the 'other' volunteers again fall into the mid-ground when compared to EAR volunteers and 'other' volunteers. This group primarily describe themselves as 'middle class', while 20% of the group classify themselves as being middle upper to upper class and 13% describe themselves as unskilled or manual workers.

Similar to the previous comparison with non-volunteers, EAR volunteers are again more likely to display pro-environmental attitudes than other volunteers by agreeing that they would give part of their income if they were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution (33% compared to 19% of other volunteers), and accept an increase in taxes if the extra money were used to prevent environmental pollution (22% compared to 14% of other volunteers). Here again we see that the 'other' volunteers represent a mid-ground between EAR volunteers and non-volunteers in terms of their environmental attitudes. There is no difference between 'other' volunteers and EAR volunteers in the proportion of the group stating that they feel the government should reduce environmental pollution.

A number of other areas demonstrate few differences between EAR volunteers and 'other' volunteers. These include the proportion of the group involved in political activities (such as signing petitions, joining boycotts and attending demonstrations), and the extent to which they have confidence in social institutions such as churches, the social security system and the health care system. Some differences were noted with regard to religion, with 'other volunteers' more likely than EAR volunteers to belong to a religious organisation and attend church regularly. 'Other' volunteers also displayed slightly more liberal views on the same social behaviours as

non-volunteers (for example avoiding fares on public transport, homosexuality, cheating on taxes and prostitution). The two behaviours they were more likely to consider never justifiable than EAR volunteers were taking soft drugs and underage sex.

Conclusions & Limitations

EAR volunteers do display a number of differences to non-volunteers in their demographic and socioeconomic characteristics as well as their social values and attitudes. Similar differences are also found between 'other' volunteers and non-volunteers although not to the same degree. In almost every instance where differences were found between EAR volunteers and non-volunteers, the characteristics of 'other' volunteers were situated somewhere between these two groups. This is important for marketers of EAR organisations to understand because it suggests that generic marketing strategies aimed at the wider community may not be as effective in attracting volunteers for EAR organisations as they could be. Not only do the characteristics of this segment of the market differ from non-volunteers but they are more different from non-volunteers than are volunteers for other causes. Therefore there is greater opportunity to design marketing and recruitment messages which appeal specifically and exclusively to this group which enables more efficient spend of marketing dollars.

For example, knowing the characteristics of this group enables us to understand where we are most likely to find them. Given that EAR volunteers are significantly more likely to have been involved in political activities, targeting politically oriented magazines and organisations (for example Labour Unions) may be an effective way to reach them. They are also more likely to attend church regularly so recruitment strategies involving partnerships with local religious organisations would be likely to reach people of this ilk. Similarly, knowing that they are most likely to be in their 30s and male means that targeting sporting clubs with organised competitions for men of this age group may also be effective.

Findings can also be used to develop messages with maximum impact. For example, we know that EAR volunteers are twice as likely to be concerned about their fellow countrymen and humankind as non-volunteers. This indicates that messages linking the benefits of an improved natural environment to the quality of life for future generations may be meaningful for this group. They are also more likely to display postmaterialist values so promoting volunteering as an enjoyable and social activity and a way to create a balance in one's life may be motivating for them. The fact that EAR volunteers are more highly educated than non-volunteers also means greater flexibility for marketers in designing messages as they have the option of using slightly more sophisticated messages to target this group.

A limitation of this study is that it uses data from the World Values Survey, which gives a very high level overview of volunteer profiles internationally but does not include respondents from Australia. In the absence of any detailed or specific information on this subject, there is certainly some value for Australian EAR organisations in gaining an initial understanding of who the people in this segment might be. However the extent to which these findings can be applied to the Australian market is unclear, particularly in light of recent studies which suggest that the characteristics of the volunteering market in Australia could differ from other widely researched countries (see for example Wilson, Spoehr and McLean, 2005). Clearly if Australian non-profit organisations require customised insights into the profiles of specific groups a local data set should be used. Another limitation for EAR organisations is the fact that this category has generically grouped together environmental organisations and animal rights organisations for the

purposes of this study. To understand whether there are any differences between the types of people who volunteer for specific organisations, for example Bushcare, the RSPCA, WIRES or Greenpeace, a more localised and specific dataset would again be required.

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APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

	EAR VOLUNTEERS (%)	VOLUNTEERS FOR OTHER CAUSES (%)	NON-VOLUNTEERS (%)
Age (average)	39	41	45
Sex			
Male	58	52	46
Female	42	48	54
Legally married (if have a partner)			
Yes	78	84	85
Children			
Yes	69	72	74
No	31	28	26
Education			
Incomplete secondary level	36	42	55
Completed secondary level (incl. vocational/technical training)	35	34	30
University level or higher	29	24	15
Employment			
Full time	41	39	39
Part time	9	8	6
Self employed	12	5	9
Unemployed	8	9	8
Other	30	39	38
Socioeconomic status			
Upper class	26	20	11
Middle class	63	67	69
Lower class	9	13	20
Values			
Materialist	25	27	31
Postmaterialist	13	14	12
Mixed	62	59	57