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Final Thesis

# Human Resource Management in sport mega events

A study on volunteer's recruitment in China  
on the path to Beijing 2022

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*To Qianhui,  
the person who stands behind all of my success,  
the reason for my happiness.*

*To my grandmother,  
my number one supporter.*

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# 前言

这篇论文的目的是讨论人力资源管理在成功举办大型体育活动中的重要性，特别是其中志愿者的作用。

我之所以选择这个课题正是为了了解在大型体育赛事中人力资源管理系统复杂的原因。我的重点研究目标是其中的志愿者，我刻意排除有偿劳动者的原因是因为我认为志愿者才是大型赛事的真正建立者，正是由于有了他们，这些赛事才能成功的组织起来，因为他们永远战斗在第一线，优秀的志愿者管理决定了一个赛事活动的成败。另一个让我关注这方面人力资源管理的原因是我在这个领域有直接经验，我曾作为志愿者参加过两次体育赛事，其中人力资源管理和赛事本身有很大不同，尤其是在最开始的志愿者培训阶段。

在论文的第一部分，我将向读者介绍关于人力资源的世界，这样即使是那些对这个主题没有深入了解的人也可以更容易地理解后面的章节。同样在这种情况下，从我的个人经历出发，我试图给出我的设想。事实上在我上一次的志愿者经历中，我就开始思考一些关于如何组织一个大型活动的问题，尤其是人力资源管理是如何组织的。从我的好奇心出发，我试图拓宽对这一主题的知识，但在我的研究的过程中我注意到目前并没有多少重大体育赛事中志愿服务的文献，特别是关于志愿者对赛事成功的重要性的研究。因此，在我看来，在一个成功的大型体育赛事中人力资源管理必须优化并且利用这三个关键点：

1. 良好的团体组织管理
2. 建立有效的沟通机制
3. 保持团队的积极性

人力资源管理的困难就在于这三个方面，因为在我看来，组织、沟通和激励是大型体育赛事人力资源管理的三大支柱。众所周知，人是万物之本，也是各种组织能够维持运转的重要支点，无论对于一个商业机构还是一个体育赛事，因此有必要确保志愿者在活动的整个生命周期中得到正确的关注和重视。

在我看来，以上三点的结合，才是一场成功赛事的基础。

在本篇论文中我还决定将目光聚焦在即将到来的中国北京冬奥会上，对志愿者招募活动进行分析，并且结合中国特定的文化背景，提供一种理想的志愿者形象。

我想通过这篇论文让更多的读者谈论和讲述一个在人力资源文献中还鲜有涉及的话题，因此论文的结构旨在陪伴读者踏上一段进入大型赛事人力资源管理世界的旅程，引导他们一点一点认清这里领域已经消除一下普遍存在的偏见。比如，人们经常会认为无偿志愿者是被剥削

的对象，然而人们并不清楚一个人进行这类活动的真正动机；又比如，很多非专业人士并不知道一项大型活动成功的背后有多少工作，他们往往关注的是此类活动在经济方面，而不是人力方面（比如奥运会，你从来没有听说过其人力资源的预算支出，大多报道只指出其活动本身建造的支出）。

在介绍了人力资源管理和大型体育活动的世界之后，这篇论文将从一个特别的视角，将注意力完全集中在参与这些活动的志愿者的身上。

这是因为，在亲身体验了在重大活动中成为志愿者意味着什么之后，我决定借此机会发表我的观点和反思，并就志愿者的人力资源管理领域提出我的意见，而这恰恰是被大型体育赛事组织者本身低估的方面。

这篇论文的主要目的是强调志愿者在成功举办大型活动中的重要性。在此过程中，我借鉴以往的经验，提供了一些真实的志愿者管理的好坏案例，以突出哪些方面与志愿者管理相关。特别是，为了对大型体育活动有一个全面的了解，并不陷入仅凭自己经验的错误，我对此类活动的组织者和参与者进行了一系列的采访。这些直接的证词让我有机会进一步思考贯穿整篇论文的另一个方面，即接受反馈的重要性。我想强调的是，如果志愿者得不到反馈，他们就会缺乏动力，感觉不到自己是活动的一部分，从而不想参与其中。这对组委会会有严重的影响，组委会可能会发现自己缺少人手。然而，组织者低估了一个非常重要的方面，那就是在活动结束后向志愿者询问他们对活动的管理和组织的满意度。我的目的是通过我的论文，为那些对所参加的活动表示不满的志愿者们发出自己的声音。通过这种方式，我想再次强调志愿者不仅在活动期间，而且最重要的是在活动结束后都是一种宝贵的资源，因为根据他们的反馈，可以为以后的活动组织者留下一笔遗产。本论文的另一个目标是为北京 2022 年冬奥会这样的大型体育活动勾勒出理想志愿者的形象。我的研究重点是北京 2022 年冬奥会发起的全球招募计划，评估冬奥会志愿者和人力资源方面可能产生的影响。其中最有趣的一个方面是如何处理外国志愿者（也许也是第一次），以及招募过程在这些年里发生了怎样的变化（考虑到过去的此类活动是 2008 年北京奥运会）。因此我决定以这次活动为研究对象，为这个即将到来的大型国际体育活动找出理想志愿者的画像。此外，与 2008 年中国已经举办过的同类型活动进行比较也能找出很多给人启发的方面，因此可以看到志愿者的形象是如何随着时间的推移而改变的。特别是，考虑到中国的历史政治背景，值得注意的是，国际志愿者的数量是否会增加，以及与中国本地志愿者相比，他们会有哪些特点。如果说 2008 年奥运会对中国来说是一次重生和救赎的机会，展现了中国作为一个发展中国家的动力，那么现在 2022 年奥运会则是一次让中国在全球范围内确定其从发展中国家到发达国家的转变，也是一次向世界展示中国有能力在新的领域（如冬季运动产业）进行拓展的机会。然而，在论文中，我们将看到 2022 年奥运会的志愿者招募活动

仍然利用了 2008 年的两个概念：微笑和梦想。微笑的概念指的是志愿者，他们愿意通过自己的微笑迎接全世界；而梦想的概念指的是中国梦，不仅是能够举办奥运会，更重要的是向世界展示中国的能力。

多年之后，可以看看 2022 冬奥会将会给中国留下些什么遗产。2008 年的奥运会是中国崛起的根本，谁知道 2022 年的冬奥会是不是也能成为中国发展过程中的一座里程碑。

本论文在呈现具有局限性，旨在为读者呈现一个新颖且鲜为人知的主题，希望能够为这一领域的研究传播做出贡献。2022 冬奥会尚未发生是一个限制因素，因此许多观点都给予假设，然而我相信，数据的缺乏使我能够带着更多的好奇心来起草这篇论文。

# CHAPTER ONE

*AN INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS:  
REASONS AND PURPOSES OF THIS  
WORK*



## **1.1 Introduction to the chapter**

This first chapter has been designed to provide an explanation of the reasons that led me to choose the main topic of the present work, a topic that is rather unusual.

First of all, in illustrating the reasons that are behind the choice of the thesis' topic, I would also like to provide some real examples that directly come from my personal experience. These experiences were the fundamental in defining my research interests.

Later on, I will describe the organizations of the chapters, explaining the train of thoughts behind my decisions. I will briefly introduce every chapter to anticipate the key points and main concepts that will be covered along the pages in order to give the reader an overview of the whole work.

Finally, I will clarify what is the main purpose of this paper and what are the goals and objectives that I want to achieve by investigating the field of Human Resource Management in the context of sports' mega events. More specifically, I will try to explain why sports' volunteers are precious and invaluable resources who contribute to the success of world-class mega events, such as the Olympic Games or World Championships.

The last section of this chapter will focus on the research methodology and the literary review: in order to better understand the main topic of this thesis I looked for sources in different languages (mainly in English, Chinese and Italian) so that I could obtain more precise and original information. In this final section, as a part of my research methodology, I will spend few words about the surveys carried out among volunteers and the interviews conducted with relevant figures that have already had previous experiences in the HR field in sports' mega events.

## **1.2 Why HRM in the context of sports' mega events?**

I have chosen the main topic of this final thesis while I was thinking of my previous volunteering experiences, so while I was recalling such unforgettable experiences and precious memories (such as meeting people from all over the world, keeping a close contact with the athletes...) I also started thinking about the drawbacks, the negative sides that are related to this kind of events.

Each event, whether on a small scale or on a big scale, has one main purpose: every participant, every spectator should remember the event for the positive aspects, for its festive atmosphere and not for its negative aspects, like organizational problems, conflicts or bad communication strategies. Clearly, the larger the event and its scope, the more difficult and complicated it becomes to manage it in an effective way. In fact, the event organization requires a very meticulous planning that starts years earlier and ends right before the start of the event (from three to five years to stage competitions such as the FIFA World Cup up to fifteen years to stage the Olympic Games). However, no matter how

attentive and punctilious the planning is, there will always be a series of errors and problems in terms of event management.

If the organizers want to improve the event management (especially in term of quality) it is fundamental to admit their management errors and to start immediately a process of understanding what happened during the event. In fact, every event should include a debriefing session dedicated to an ex-post analysis right after the event's end, but most of the times the results may be not very clear and truthful with respect to the development of the event.

For example, in the case of the Olympic Games, this phase is fundamental because it constitutes the basis on which the know-how legacy is created and transferred to the next edition's Organizing Committee. Therefore, making mistakes in the event organization and management is something that happens on a daily basis and it is quite ordinary that even a very well-planned event may have some setbacks (this happens because planning the event is one thing, but putting into practice all the strategies once the event has started is another). However, we must state that what is not acceptable for an event organization is the failure to admit the problems, especially if related to the human resources management (volunteers' management above all).

In particular, the experience as a volunteer in a sports' mega event has had a great impact on me and made me reflect on how crucial it is to effectively plan the human resources employed during the event. The event I am referring to is the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final held in Turin in 2019 (December 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>): it is one of the most important and awaited events for figure skating fans and athletes as only the top six ranked athletes for each category can participate. Given the importance of the event, my expectations were quite high since I expected a high-level organization since the organizers were the same as for the World Championships held in Milan in 2018.

However, starting from the very first day, problems started to appear, especially between the volunteers and their coordinator. Those problems led to a series of inefficiencies that affected the overall image of the event.

The reason why I chose to deal with this topic is because I want to understand the reasons why Human Resources Management in sports' mega events is particularly complex. More specifically, I have decided to focus my attention on volunteers and to deliberately leave out paid staff because I firmly believe that volunteers are the real "game makers". It is only thanks to their continuous commitment and efforts that it is possible to run events smoothly. Moreover, they are always exposed to criticism and they always put themselves out there for the event. Another reason why I decided to concentrate my research on volunteers is the possibility to use my direct experience as a case-study: I took part in the two sports' mega events above-mentioned and although the dimension and scope of the events was pretty much the same, however the HR management and event management were completely

different, starting from the staffing process to the volunteers' training. Moreover, I chose to focus my attention on the forthcoming Winter Olympics in Beijing, China, in order to analyze the volunteers' recruitment campaign and provide a sort of "identikit" of the ideal volunteer (also bearing in mind the cultural differences between China and Western countries).

In addition, the opportunity to write about this topic that has a very special meaning to me, gives me the chance to further deepen some aspects of HR that I did not know before approaching this kind of study. While writing this thesis, I have tried to put myself in the shoes of the reader who maybe is not an expert of the topic and would like to learn and know more about it.

### **1.3 What is Human Resources Management?**

I have often mentioned the term "human resource management", but I have not yet explained its meaning and what it refers to.

Although I will dedicate a chapter (Chapter 2) to its comprehensive explanation, I would like to give here my personal interpretation of what human resources management is, especially when applied to the context of mega events.

Personally, I have had the opportunity to be involved as a "human resource" three times and it was during these three events that I developed a certain curiosity towards human resources management. Gradually, I began to ask myself: "How is it possible to manage such a large number of people in international mega events?", and as I gained some experience, I also tried to put myself in the shoes of a volunteers' leader to understand and think about what I could have done in the same situation, if I would have opted for the same choices or if I would have radically changed my approach to the solution. However, I have always focused my attention on a more practical side of HRM, without actually thinking about its meaning. For this reason, I have decided to attempt an approach to human resources that is as personal as possible, by giving my point of view on HRM in the sports' context. While carrying out this research I have noticed that there is a tendency to focus almost exclusively on a corporate, business level, ignoring the field of HRM in major sporting events, perhaps due to a lack of interest or data.

It is undoubtedly easier to pay attention to the analysis of HRM within a company or an organization, but it is much more complex to conduct this type of analysis in the context of mega events. For this reason, when referring to HRM it would be appropriate to choose first the context where one wants to concentrate his human resources' research and practice in a specific context.

For example, it would be easy to give a definition of HRM without contextualizing it, but it is risky because it would make the main topic almost abstract, without any adherence to reality.

Coming to the definition of HRM, from my point of view, it is important to emphasize the need to have the right resources employed for the right job in order to gain a competitive advantage that can lead to successful performances and excellent results; however, I am convinced that there is more than just this. Based on my experiences, before setting goals and adopting a goal-oriented approach, I think that it is necessary to develop and enhance all the resources available and create a strong connection between them so that they will work even better within the team.

Therefore, from my point of view, an optimal HRM in the context of sports' mega events should rely on these three key points:

1. Good organization of the team
2. Establishing effective and practical communication
3. Keeping the group motivated

In my opinion, these three key points are the most difficult to meet with when dealing with human resources because organization, communication and motivation are the three pillars that help to create a successful event. In fact, everybody acknowledges that human resources, or human capital, are the pivot around which the whole organization rotates (whether it is a company or an event), so it is necessary to ensure a certain amount of attention to the employees and that they feel important throughout the life cycle of the event. According to my point of view, the combination of these three key points constitutes the basis for a successful event.

Organization and communication are perhaps the most taken for granted, but, as we will analyze it better in Chapter 3, they should not be taken for granted because volunteers have always complaints about these two aspects: this happens because no matter how well HRM is designed, however there will always be some unforeseen events or problems that can pose a serious challenge for the HRM system in use. For example, volunteers' management may be designed on a vertical basis where the volunteer manager is in charge of choosing each function's coordinator and the coordinator manages the volunteers. In this case, the volunteer manager delegates the volunteers' organization and management to a small group of people (who are the head of each function) so that he can focus on other tasks. However, if functions' coordinators are not prepared for their role or are unable to effectively perform their job, the hierarchical organization may break down because the volunteers no longer follow the given directives, but almost place themselves at the same level as the functions' coordinators and they try to "save" the event and the organization.

In addition, communication plays a fundamental role because everyone involved in the event, whether a volunteer or a manager, must know what to do and where to go during the shifts.

In fact, one of the main tasks of human capital management is to establish an effective communication and make sure that everyone knows how to communicate with his peers or superiors. Without communication each person may feel entitled to make their own decisions and possibly leave their position. Organizers and volunteers' coordinators should pay extremely attention when volunteers take their own initiative, especially when it comes to unexperienced volunteers. The most appropriate solution that every coordinator should take is to listen to his team's opinions and then make decisions accordingly. Listening to volunteers' opinions actively helps to make them feel part of the group and it also contributes to boost their motivation. In fact, keeping volunteers' motivated is another important goal that coordinators should keep in mind. Volunteers decide to participate to the events on a spontaneous basis, but since they are not paid, they can voluntarily decide to withdraw from the volunteers' program. This often happens when they do not feel part of the team, or when the coordinator does not appraise their efforts and treat them like the paid staff. Volunteers' motivation can go through a series of ups and downs, especially during the event because if at the beginning their motivation is usually at its highest level (mostly due to the euphoria connected to the beginning of the event), then, once the event has started and the first problems have occurred, the motivation starts to decrease. In fact, one of the tasks of functions' coordinators is to always try to get the volunteers involved in activities and make them feel that they are unique and valuable resources. It is clear that there are some techniques that could help coordinators to keep volunteers motivated; the most know is perhaps the reward system: incentives in the form of tickets, souvenirs, bonuses are given to the volunteers who are constantly committed to their role. This kind of rewards not only is a form of gratitude to volunteers, but it is also a way to prevent them from leaving their role during the event. the more the volunteers feel rewarded, the higher their level of commitment will be.

## **1.4 Chapters' organization**

In the following section, I will introduce the chapters' organization, emphasizing the logical order of the topics presented.

Chapter 2 provides an introductory overview of sports' mega events environment, starting with an analysis of how a mega event can be defined as "mega". In addition, a brief overview of HRM is given in order to help the reader understand the two key topics of the thesis: HRM applied to the sports' context. As a result of this, a paragraph will cover this topic before concluding the chapter with an analysis of HRM in China.

Chapter 3, on the other hand, shows a careful and detailed analysis of a particular area of human resources, that is volunteers in major sporting events. First, I will give the reader an overview of volunteering in general terms, including historical background, its values and forms of volunteering. Then, I will provide a definition of volunteers by giving a general introduction of their role in the society and in major sports' events. A massive part of the chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the process that leads people to become volunteers in sports' events: recruitment, selection and training processes will all be covered. A crucial part of the chapter deals with volunteers' motivation and expectations. Finally, I will introduce and explain two examples of volunteers' mismanagement occurred in the two sports' mega events mentioned earlier in the chapter. The chapter is then completed by adding interviews and parts of a survey so as to provide an empirical feedback of volunteers.

The last chapter, Chapter 4, focuses on the analysis of human resource management of the Beijing 2022 Games. The chapter starts with an overview of the history and growth of volunteering in China from the time of Lei Feng to Beijing 2008. The 2008 Olympics boosted the development of sport volunteering in China and consequently formed the basis on which the 2022 Olympics will be organized. In fact, before analyzing the case study of Beijing 2022 Olympics, I will introduce the volunteering model that was put into practice at Beijing 2008 Olympics. That model relied on the creation of citizens that could act as role model for the whole society. It will be interesting to see how close or how far comes the model proposed by the Beijing 2022 Organizing Committee.

The second part of the chapter aims to analyze the global recruitment campaign of volunteers. again, taking into account the previous experience of Beijing 2008, I will make an attempt in defining the characteristics of the ideal Beijing 2022 volunteer, both for Chinese and international prospective volunteers. Clearly, as the application process is still ongoing and there is no volunteers' handbook provided yet, this thesis will only propose hypothetical solutions regarding Beijing 2022 volunteers' management. The last part of the chapter is dedicated to a very relevant issue, namely, how to manage volunteers and other human resources during the COVID-19 and post COVID-19 events. I will provide examples of events held during the pandemic in Italy, China and Sweden to see what solutions have been adopted and what consequences there have been for HRM.

Finally, the last part of this work aims to sum up what has been discussed along the pages, explaining what results have been obtained and what kind of limits are still in place.

## **1.5 Purpose of this work**

I have thought about this work as a sort of opportunity to talk to a wider audience about a topic that is still relatively new in the literature of the HR field. For this reason, the structure of the thesis wants to take the reader on a journey into the world of human resources applied to major sporting events, guiding him little by little to the discovery of a world towards which people often have preconceptions. For example, the image of unpaid volunteers who are exploited often comes to the mind of everybody, but people do not think about the real motivations that lead a person to carry out this type of activity; or again, many non-experts do not know how much work there is behind the success of a major event and often focus on the economic side of the event, rather than on the human side (if we think of it, we never hear news about the budget spent for human resources, but we mostly hear news about the budget of the event itself, such as the Olympic Games).

After an introductory part (in Chapter 2) on human resources and the event's environment, I decided to give it a special focus and concentrate my attention only on the figure of the volunteers who work in these mega events.

This is because, having experienced myself what it means to be a volunteer at a major event, I decided to take the opportunity to give vent to my thoughts and share my thoughts on the world of volunteers, which is often overlooked by the organizers themselves.

The main objective of the paper is to highlight the importance of volunteers in making a big event a successful one. In doing so, I have drawn on my own past experience to provide true examples of good and bad volunteer management, so as to highlight which aspects are relevant to volunteer management. In particular, in order to get an overview of the event and not to fall into the error of basing myself only on my own experience, I conducted a series of interviews with the organizers and participants of such events. These direct testimonies gave me the opportunity to further reflect on another aspect that is the importance of receiving feedback. What I want to emphasize is that if volunteers do not receive feedbacks, they feel unmotivated, do not feel part of the event and consequently do not want to get involved anymore. This has serious consequences for the organizing committee, which may find itself short of staff. However, a very underestimated aspect by organizers is the post-event feedback to be asked from volunteers, mainly about their satisfaction with the management and the organization of the event. This is of vital importance especially in cases where the organizing committee will have to organize other events of the same nature in the future. A clear example of this is the city of Milan, which in 2018 hosted the ISU World Figure Skating Championships and in 2026 will host the Olympic Games at the same venue. The goal I have set myself is to be able to give, through my thesis, a voice to volunteers who have never been able to express their degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the event they took part in. In this way, I

want to emphasize once again how volunteers can be a valuable resource not only during the event, but also and above all once the event is over, because on the basis of their feedback it is possible to build a legacy that will be transferred to the organizers of subsequent events. Another objective of this thesis is to identify the ideal volunteer for a major event such as the Beijing 2022 Olympics. I decided to use this event as an example because as it is a future event and therefore still evolving, it is easier to provide a personal interpretation of what the perfect volunteer for Beijing 2022 might look like. Moreover, it is interesting to make a comparison with the same type of event that China already organized in 2008, thus seeing how the image of the volunteer can change over the years. In particular, while taking also into account the historical and political context of China, it is interesting to note whether there could be an increase in international volunteers and which characteristics they could have more (and which less) than the Chinese candidates.

## **1.6 Methodology and literary review**

In order to conduct this research, I have used different sources in three languages (English, Chinese and Italian) with the intention of analyzing the proposed issues from several perspectives. In conceiving Chapter 2, I have read several HRM manuals so as to better understand the HRM concepts. In addition to that, I consulted several papers and websites specialized in HRM to deepen what I had already found in the reference books. Another important contribution was given by articles in Chinese found through the CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) portal in order to contribute to the final part of the chapter on HRM in China.

As for Chapter 3, the main reference source was the book "Human Resource Management for Events" by Van der Wegen thanks to which I was able to discover how HRM is applied to the context of sports' events and in particular with regard to volunteers. In addition, I used personal sources from my previous experiences as a volunteer such as the Volunteer Handbook delivered at the World Championships and at the Grand Prix Final. Moreover, the direct testimonies of volunteers and staff members were essential to give an even more personal view and contribution to this thesis. Through their stories, I was able to draw interesting insights into the role of volunteers in major sporting events. Chapter 4, on the other hand, required an intensive use of Chinese sources in order to find the news directly in the original language, without any possibility of being misrepresented. In particular, I have found numerous articles once again through the CNKI portal, as well as consulting doctoral theses of Chinese students in order to find information especially on the 2008 Beijing Olympics, useful for making a comparison with Beijing 2022 from the point of view of human resources. In fact, two other precious sources to be able to better elaborate the thesis were the Beijing 2022 Official website, the



portal for the application for volunteers and the Beijing 2008 volunteers' manual. It should be noted that in order to give an even more direct insight into the state of the art of the Beijing 2022 organization, I was planning a field trip to Beijing to visit the Beijing 2022 headquarters and interview those people who are working on the volunteer program. However, this has not been possible due to unforeseeable events and I acknowledge some limitations in the paper due to the lack of personal and direct field research.

In order to make this work as original and personal as possible, I have conducted two interviews with two people who have had direct experience of volunteering at major sporting events. The first interview aims to understand the role of the volunteer manager and how important it is for the management of the event. In fact, the volunteer manager is the person who is in charge of coordinating the volunteers not only from a working point of view, but also with regard to other activities such as the management of volunteers' benefits, reward programs, etc... This interview is about the role of the volunteer coordinator in major events such as the Olympics, World Championships and Grand Prix Finals and from this it can be deduced that the dynamics are the same. The second interview, on the other hand, shows the dual point of view of a volunteer-athlete. This contribution was made in order to see how the point of view changes with the change of role; in fact, this paper focuses mainly on the point of view of volunteers in large sporting events, but the point of view of the athletes and other participants in the event who should benefit from the work done by volunteers is often forgotten. The aim of both interviews is to allow the reader to get a closer view of the world of volunteering in major sporting events and to hear real stories from those involved.

In addition to the interviews mentioned above, a survey was also conducted to understand the motivations and expectations not only of people who have already had volunteering experience, but also of those who have not yet had experience but who might be interested in participating in the future. This survey was designed to make the volunteer management study more engaging and is also a way to give a voice to the volunteers who contributed to the events. In fact, as mentioned before, one of the problems encountered in volunteer management in general is that once the event is over, volunteers are not given a questionnaire to evaluate their activity and the work carried out by the organization. According to my point of view, it is essential to give volunteers a voice in order to understand what areas of improvement can be made in the organization of future events. I have developed the survey bearing this in mind.

As well as looking at the reasons why people would participate in volunteer programmes at major sporting events, the second part of the survey was designed to explore some of the issues mentioned

in Chapter 4. The aim was to ask respondents what they thought were the key characteristics to identify the profile of the ideal volunteer, especially in view of the Beijing 2022 Olympic Games. With the 2022 event in mind, participants were asked whether they would be interested in volunteering and what the main obstacles might be for potential international volunteers such as themselves. This survey allowed us to ask directly to the Italian and foreign participants to find out not only what their positions were, but also the degree of knowledge about the Beijing 2022 volunteer program.

The survey included both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The quantitative method was used to collect data about the nationality, occupation, gender and age of the participants as well as to ask questions with a limited choice of options; while the qualitative method was used to ask questions directly to the participants who could freely answer. However, there is a preponderance in the use of the qualitative method precisely to allow participants to express whatever they wanted and not limit them to choices they did not fit into. Moreover, when asking questions about previous events in which volunteers had participated, they were implicitly asked to go back in time and try to remember as many experiences as possible. In fact, one of the objectives is also to find out whether there was any sort of legacy in the volunteers because as Neufeind et al. says "very little is known about what happens to sport event volunteers when the event is over". Chong also argues that there is a need for a post-event study on the effects of volunteer experiences on volunteers. This survey was simply an attempt to give volunteers a chance to express their views after the event had taken place.

As Laviolette and Thorpe point out, the concept of memory is not widely used in the study of major sporting events and volunteers, and for this reason, the survey sought to leverage the autobiographical memory of the volunteers so that they could contribute their personal stories from the event. Clearly in going back over events that took place some time ago there may be either surprising revelations of detail or moments when one has a blurred view of what happened.

The fact of not limiting the choice to the participants allowed for wide and complete answers, allowing the author to connect with the participant. In addition, an interesting finding was the similarity between the responses, implying that although the events the participants served at were different there were still the same problems in terms of volunteer management.

The survey involved a pool of representatives from 14 different countries with Italy being the country with the highest number of respondents to the survey. Almost 80% (78,9%) of the respondents were between 18 and 35 years old and almost 50% were students. This denotes a greater interest and perhaps a greater predisposition to volunteer at major sporting events on the part of young people, who, not being engaged in work, have more time to devote to these activities.

# **CHAPTER TWO**

*HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT:  
A COMPREHENSIVE DEFINITION AND  
ITS APPLICATION IN THE CONTEXT  
OF SPORTS' MEGA EVENT*

## 2.1 Introduction to the chapter

One of the main issues in dealing with human resources management is the context in which it is applied. In particular, when it comes to international mega events, delivering a successful event while managing a huge number of personnel is a crucial challenge.

What happens when the event is a sporting mega event such as the Olympics or a World Championship?

First of all, it is essential to understand what the event environment is and then it is possible to introduce the human resource planning.

In the first part of the chapter the reader will be introduced to the concept of mega event from a general, broader sense to a more specific sport-oriented definition. In the second part, a comprehensive explanation of human resources management will be given, focusing on the strategic approach of Human Resources planning.

The third part will emphasize the human resources planning applied to sporting mega events. The fourth and last part of the chapter has the purpose of depicting the HR practices in the Chinese context.

## 2.2 The event environment

As mentioned before, events represent an extremely demanding challenge not only considering their management in terms of dimension, scope, planning, or target, but also considering the human resources management as one of the key elements for a successful event.

Defining a mega event is not an easy task because it requires a detailed analysis of its characteristics. People usually tend to consider an event a series of circumstances that for a limited time can attract a huge number of people and whose effects and impacts concerning the economic, social, cultural and environmental field are perceivable in the middle-long term.

Many experts of the field try to simplify this concept pointing out that intangibility, perishability and untestability are the main differences between the management of events and the management of ongoing commercial businesses.

However, mega events' definition can cover a broad range of interpretation due to the different variables used to outline its explanation.

For example, Guala<sup>1</sup> states that dimension, target, legacy and scope of the event are essential characteristics that help to define the classification of the event.

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<sup>1</sup> GUALA, C. (2002). "Per una tipologia di mega eventi". *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana*, serie XII, volume VII, 4, 2002

According to Muller<sup>2</sup>'s theory, the dimension of an event is the key element that distinguishes a mega event from a low-scale event.

One of the most common events' classifications is generally "by type". There could be cultural events (such as entertainment, local and religious celebrations), business events (meetings, exhibitions are two ordinary examples) and sporting events (it is argued whether sporting events should come under the cultural events or not).

Another interesting definition is given by Getz<sup>3</sup> who states that it is not possible to give a unique definition of mega events because we should consider two different points of view, the one of the organizers and spectators. In fact, according to the point of view of the organizers a mega event is an event that occurs occasionally compared to the regular activities. While to the guests a mega event represents a good chance to have a cultural, leisure experience that cannot be experienced on a daily basis.

Moreover, it is possible to classify mega events according to their size and the literature recognizes hallmark events, special events, minor events and parades. However, most of the literary review does not consider the size of spectators as a useful variable to define what is a mega event and what is not. However, since the main purpose of this work is human resource management in sports' mega events, we will briefly explain only this kind of event later on the chapter. To sum up, a mega event is a concept that can be examined taking different criteria.

For example, a mega event could be staged for a specific objective or purpose (such as promoting tourism); mega events can differ from one another when thinking about their consumption (if it is directly or indirectly consumed by the audience); another criteria is the impact that a mega event can have on the place where it is staged (as for the Olympic Games); moreover, also the periodicity of the event can act as a criteria that distinguish events (for example EXPO staged every five years or IAAF Athletic World Championships every two years).

No matter what kind of event, however, they have all at least one feature in common that may vary from time to time.

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<sup>2</sup> MULLER, M. (2015). "What makes an event a mega-event?: Definitions and sizes", *Leisure Studies*, 2015, Vol. 34, No. 6, 627-642

<sup>3</sup> GETZ, D. (2008). "Event tourism: Definition, evolution, and research". *Tourism Management*, 29(3), 403-428. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.TOURMAN.2007.07.017>

## 2.3 Sport mega events' context

Sporting events' environment is quite unique and complex because it encompasses competitions and cultural or commercial events such as exhibitions, parades and festivals, which are all related to the event.

In order to better understand the next chapters of this study, it is necessary to give a quick overview of what a sporting mega event is.

*“Mega sporting events are defined as those one-time sporting events of an international scale organized by a special ‘authority’ and yielding extremely high levels of media coverage and impacts (economic, tourism, infrastructure, etc.) for the host community because of the event's significance and/or size. The mega event is often accompanied by parallel activities such as festivals and/or cultural events.”<sup>4</sup>*

The definition above-mentioned provides interesting insights of what a sports' mega event is.

First of all, it underlines the perishability of this kind of events: in fact, sports events are temporary, they have a precise beginning and end. Moreover, this kind of events targets a global audience thanks to the media coverage, conveying the mission and core values of the event. Another important feature is the impact that affects the host community: this is a much-discussed debate as the majority of mega sport events have left a negative impact to the local community, especially in terms of environmental sustainability.

As sports mega events are becoming more and more important on an international scale, in order to leave a good memory of the event and consequently a positive impact, it is crucial to have the right people doing the right job.

Moreover, if we think of sport mega events such as the Olympics, it is evident that these events are focused not only on sports, but also on a series of services spectators-oriented. This is because these events are characterized by activities whose goal is also the entertainment of spectators, mainly through marketing activities. In fact, sport events are often considered as “marketing products” whose organization is based on marketing strategies; sometimes the real scope of the events, that is sport competition, takes a back seat.

As we have already mentioned, events are not all the same because there are certain criteria that help to make a distinction. In the case of sport events, for example, there are certain key characteristics strictly linked to the event, such as:

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<sup>4</sup> BYERS, T., SLACK, T., & PARENT, M. M. (2012). “Mega events. In *Key concepts in sport management*” (pp. 103-106). SAGE Publications Ltd, <https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781473914599.n23>

1. the impact on the economic and tourist sector of the host country or city: every major sports event brings with it a series of possible advantages that may arise if the event has a significant scale and importance. For example, in the case of sport events that see the participation of famous athletes, there can be an impact on tourism because fans decide to go and watch the live event thanks to tourist packages specifically organized for the occasion. A particular example of how a sport event can generate great tourist interest is when the two-times Olympic champion Yuzuru Hanyu attended the Grand Prix Final in Turin in 2019. On this occasion, most of the audience came from Japan and the hotels near the venue and around the athletes' official hotel were almost sold out.
2. Show a competitive environment: when major sporting events are awarded to a host city or host country, there is always a kind of tacit competition to show the world that the host city is worthy of being the host city and can demonstrate its greatness on a global level. The most famous example is China, which hosted the 2008 Olympics in Beijing: an opportunity that helped China to change the urban planning and to create high-tech buildings.
3. Benefit the host community: major sport events are opportunities not only to showcase one's global power, but also to benefit the host community by constructing buildings that will continue to be used as recreational or sport centres once the event is over. However, the combination between local communities and mega events does not work well, as and there can be problems if organizers do define well the positive impacts and outcomes that may derive from urban reorganization. A well-known case was the Beijing Games when the Chinese government decided to tear down a hutong district to build the Olympic facilities and athletes' village.
4. Political support: Most major sport events such as the World Cup and the Olympics are organized with governmental approval (in many cases, the host country's government is directly involved, but for some events, local government approval is required before bidding). In addition, it should be pointed out that these events can exert political influence at a global level: the Olympic Games, for example, have always been regarded as the major opportunity for a country to show its soft power capabilities (China is a good example of this).
5. Stakeholder management: major sport events attract a large number of stakeholders who want to take advantage of the situation and gain exposure. Event sponsors are the best-known type of stakeholders and can be of a different nature. The more an event has a global impact, the more competition there will be between organizations to become stakeholders in the event.

6. Volunteers' management: an essential feature of major sport events is volunteers' management, because volunteers represent the largest and most difficult group of staff to manage. Human resources managers are always challenged because before defining the volunteers' program, they must establish the criteria for recruiting volunteers that must be aligned with the type of event.

The role of HR managers at a major sport event is quite complex because they need to pay attention to many different functions to ensure that everything runs smoothly and that there are no major organizational problems. To do so, it is necessary to have a high level of expertise and professionalism, starting with the HR managers, because when it comes to setting up events such as the Olympics, nothing can be improvised and a lack of professionalism also has repercussions on the recruitment and selection of staff, such as volunteers and other paid staff.

In fact, Goldblatt<sup>5</sup> states that "*You are being paid for creating memorable positive experiences, and you and your staff are the critical resource that makes the guest's experience memorable*", this means that if an event wants to be successful and unforgettable, the Organizing Committee must pay attention to the human resources' organization and planning.

## **2.4. Human Resources Management: a comprehensive explanation**

This section of the chapter should be intended as an introduction to human resources management (HRM) under different points of view, trying to provide the reader with a detailed definition.

### **2.4.1 Human Resources Management and its strategic role**

*"You can get capital and erect buildings, but it takes people to build a business"*

*Thomas J. Watson<sup>6</sup>*

In everyday life we often hear about human resources and HRM in various contexts, in particular when referring to employees' selection and recruitment. However, HRM is a much more complex activity. In fact, HRM is not just about business, but it also includes psychology, sociology and law. Precisely, because of its complexity, today HRM is one of the most discussed and debated topics: there are numerous scholars and experts who have dedicated their attention to the study of this discipline in order to provide a clearer vision. Giving a univocal definition of HRM is quite difficult,

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<sup>5</sup> GOLDBLATT, J. J. (2005). *Special Events: Event Leadership for a New World*, 4th edn. Wiley

<sup>6</sup> WATSON, T.J., Jr. (1963) *A Business and Its Beliefs: The Ideas That Helped Build IBM*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963



indeed different approaches can be used, so defining HRM as personnel management or people management is not a comprehensive definition.

Firstly, it is possible to say that HRM refers to all activities that are carried out by an organization in order to use its human resources efficiently. Thus, HRM is an encompassing set of decisions and practices at managerial level concerning the acquisition of workforce for a given job. In fact, one of the most important assets of an organization is its employees and for this reason of the main objectives is to manage human resources effectively in order to perform well. This is the traditional definition of what HRM is.

However, another interesting definition of HRM is given by Decenzo and Robbins<sup>7</sup> according to whom "*HRM is concerned with the people dimension*" in management.

Indeed, in dealing with human resources, the emphasis is on the importance of the people employed by the organization and how they are valued precisely because they are a source of competitive advantage.

In fact, in recent years, HRM has taken on a strategic role because people are a source of competitive advantage since their skills are perceived as unique. In fact, they have the power to lead the organization to success or failure and that is why it is essential that organizations invest in human resources, training and retention.

People are a source of competitive advantage because through their skills they create value and the more they have skills that are difficult to find on the market, the more they are requested or copied, but it is impossible to imitate them because you do not have direct knowledge.

However, in order to let people, bring out their full potential, the organization must recognize their value, preserve and enhance them, through training programs and direct confrontation with staff.

The importance of training as a method of retaining top talents has also been emphasized by some scholars who argue how important investment in training and education is to help human resources improve in order to perform even better and maximize results.

Human capital or intellectual capital is often used to refer to the strategic value placed on staff. The term *human capital* was used by Sumantra Ghoshal<sup>8</sup> to describe the concept of human resources. Human capital consists of intellectual capital, social capital and emotional capital.

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<sup>7</sup> DECENZO, A., ROBBINS S.P. (2010). *Human Resource Management*, 10th edition, Wiley

<sup>8</sup> GRATTON, L., GHOSHAL, S., (2003). "Managing Personal Human Capital:: New Ethos for the 'Volunteer' Employee," *European Management Journal*, Elsevier, vol. 21(1), pages 1-10

It is evident that it is essential for an organization to have a good human resource management structure, otherwise the biggest risk is to lose the competitive advantage gained and generate a series of behavioural outcomes from employees.

Precisely, since human resources are a source of competitive advantage, they have an even higher value than capital (capital resource), however the organization should find ways to retain human resources.

In fact, one of the major goals of HRM is to build and maintain a pool of capable and deserving people who help not only to achieve competitive advantage but also to maintain it.

This is exactly what Maund<sup>9</sup> emphasizes in her definition of strategic human resource management:

*“...strategic human resource management is concerned with assisting the organization in achieving its objectives and gaining (or maintaining) its competitive edge through its objectives. These are informed by the mission of the organization - its purpose, what it wants to achieve for the stakeholders - as well as by the internal and external business environment”.*

To conclude, we can say that HRM concerns all activities, practices and policies implemented to ensure the best use of human resources in order to meet the organization's objectives, but also human capital objectives. This concept is also emphasized by Pigors and Myers who state that HRM *"is basically a method of developing potentialities of employees so that they feel maximum satisfaction of their work and give their best efforts to the organization"*.

## **2.4.2 What is the scope of HRM?**

Since HRM is not only about managing people in terms of planning, recruiting, training, giving rewards, etc., it is about everything that has to do with developing a harmonious working environment and creating a balance between what the organization wants and what the individual wants.

This is why it is not easy to define a single purpose of HRM because it is also constantly evolving and expanding. It can be said that all the main activities that affect an employee, from the moment he/she is hired until he/she leaves, fall within the view of HRM. Usually, the scope can be classified under these three categories:

1. Personnel Aspect: this covers planning, recruitment, selection, staff training, transfer, compensation and promotion. The objective is to enable resources to grow and improve in order to indirectly contribute to the organization.

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<sup>9</sup> MAUND, L. (2001). *Introduction to Human Resource Management: Theory and Practice*, Palgrave, 2001.

2. Welfare Aspect: it has to do with the working environment and conditions. Under this aspect we can find a large number of services for the staff such as security, health service, family benefits, medical care, education, recreational areas...
3. Industrial relations aspect: it concerns the interactions between the organization and the labour union and the main objective is to safeguard the interests of the workers and that there is no negative impact on the organization.

### **2.4.3 Objectives of HRM**

As already mentioned, the main objective of HRM is to make available to the organization a certain type of workforce that is competent and motivated.

In addition to this, further objectives can be identified and that can be classified into four specific objectives. These include ensuring a safe and harmonious working environment, maintaining positive relationships between employees and employers, ensuring that laws that are supporting employees' rights are enforced, taking care of employees' motivation and training program, helping to maintain effective communication.

The four specific objectives, starting with the broadest, are as follows:

1. Societal objectives: the aim is to make the organization socially responsible towards the needs of society without giving up the organization's own objectives. The goal is to use resources that can benefit the society without having a negative impact on the organization.
2. Organizational Objectives: HRM is identified as a means of ensuring that the organization is efficient. This includes providing training, trying to keep employees motivated so as to keep them within the organization.
3. Functional Objectives: The goal is to ensure that the activities conducted at the function level are appropriate and in line with the organizational needs. This means that human resources must be commensurate with the organization's needs.
4. Personnel Objectives: the aim is to invest resources to help employees achieve their personal objectives and at the same time to contribute to the organization. This means that it is necessary to offer employees a chance to grow and learn in order to keep them motivated and satisfied.

Each of these four macro-objectives corresponds to a series of functions, some of which may also be recurrent in several objectives. For example, regarding both organizational and functional objectives, the corresponding functions in common are training, placement and assessment, while for example HR planning and selection are only connected to organizational objectives. However, e.g., training,

assessment and appraisal are also linked to personal objectives because these are ones focused on the individual and his development.

#### **2.4.4 HRM Functions**

As we have seen in the previous section, all HRM functions are linked to the main HRM objectives. Here, we will see which are the seven main HRM functions (to which a number of external factors that contribute to influence the management and design of these functions should be added).

1. SHRM (Strategic Human Resources Management): The strategic role of HRM can be seen in the planning: through the HRP function, HR professionals analyze and determine what the staffing needs are and how to recruit the resources that can actually fit into the organization's requirements.
2. EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity): this function is very important and influences all other HR activities because it sets the basic rules for respect between employees and employers. Basically, it states that no one should be discriminated because of race, religion, gender, ethnicity...
3. Staffing: the staffing function comprises three main activities: job analysis, recruitment and selection. In practice, the objective of this function is to supply qualified employees to perform a range of jobs within the organization.
4. Development and Management of Human Resources: this function is concerned with providing training to employees so that they can perform their jobs to the best of their ability. The first type of training is the initial orientation for new employees. Training and development programs are created to enable experienced employees to improve their skills so they can provide even better services, or for employees who need to change something in their job. In addition to development, this function monitors the performance of employees to check their level. Supervisors can give feedbacks, known as performance appraisal.
5. Rewards: this function deals with giving rewards to staff in order to motivate them to achieve the goals set by the organization. Compensation management is used to decide who can get a benefit from these rewards based on their work. Basically, those who perform a great job are offered an even higher pay for doing the same job, alternatively there are also other benefits.
6. Risk Management: HR department must ensure that the working environment is safe and that there are no safety hazards to workers.
7. Employee and Labor Relations: it concerns the relations between employees and employers but mainly from a legal point of view. It is important to create HR policies so that both parties are aware of their rights and duties. For example, employers must follow EEO laws so that

employees are treated fairly, while employees must communicate whenever problems arise or they are treated unfairly.

The above-mentioned functions can also be classified into two macro groups: managerial functions (planning, staffing, controlling just to name a few) and operational functions, i.e. functions that are relevant to specific departments (development, compensation and benefits...).

## **2.4.5 Challenges of HRM**

The ongoing growth of HRM, particularly from a strategic perspective, means that HRM is playing an increasingly important role in the organization. However, knowing how to manage human resources, how to recruit them, how to train them, how to motivate them to improve and work at their best is a challenge for the majority of HR managers.

Some of the most common challenges that HR managers face are:

- **Conflict management:** it is important that HR managers are well prepared to deal with possible conflicts that may arise not only between employers and employees but also between employees themselves. In this case they need to have certain soft skills such as active listening and empathy to be able to communicate with the parties and try to resolve conflicts.
- **Retaining personnel:** this is perhaps the most complex challenge for the HR department of any organization because employees may decide to leave and work elsewhere for any reason. Among the most frequent reasons are a bad working environment, lack of recognition, problems with one's superiors. In order to avoid losing valuable talent and resources to the organization, HR managers should try to implement a number of strategies to convince employees to stay with them, such as higher pay, career advancement opportunities, benefits, better working conditions .... It is about finding a continuous balance between what employees would like and what the organization can offer.
- **Managing workforce diversity:** The more the organization has a multicultural environment, the more it is necessary to try to manage all human resources coming from different cultural backgrounds. Clearly this is a challenge for managers because again they have to treat everyone equally and try to respect different styles and points of view. It is important to implement strategies in which adaptability and communication are the pillars on which to build a positive relationship between managers and employees.
- **Change in management:** there may be a change in management inside the organization, including a change in strategies or structures. It also happens that some employees cannot

adapt to the change and a decrease in performance and motivation ensues. HR managers should try to convince employees of the positive aspects of the change.

## **2.5 Human Resources Planning**

When talking about human resources management we cannot only consider recruitment and selection activities, but also refers to a wide range of activities that mainly concern the development of a long-term strategy of human resources management.

One of the most complex activities to deal with when choosing the staff of an organization is finding the right kind and number of people at the right time. In order to be able to define what the needs of an organization are in terms of human resources and staff, it is necessary to define an HR planning.

Human Resources planning has to be done in a way that reflects previously established organizational plans. It is important to emphasize that this is a strategic planning activity because it is a tool for gaining the competitive advantage mentioned above.

In the words of Armstrong<sup>10</sup> "*the fundamental aim of strategic HRM is to generate strategic capability by ensuring that the organization has the skilled, committed and well-motivated employees it needs to achieve sustained competitive advantage*". The reference to strategic capability is nothing more than the strategic approach to HR planning because HR planning is a strategy developed by the organization to have adequate and balanced human resources.

HR planning comprises three phases that have to be applied in a consequential way in order to elaborate an effective strategy. The phases are planning, programming and evaluating.

The first phase (planning) foresees that the HR managers must clearly know the plans of the organization and it is essential to have well in mind the vision, the objectives and the starting point of the organization, otherwise it will be impossible to proceed to a correct definition and application of HR planning. The second phase (programming), on the other hand, concerns the planning of human resources activities: in particular, recruitment, selection, training and performance evaluation. It is in this phase that the organization's programs are implemented. The third phase (evaluating) concerns the evaluation of the activities to understand if the results that employees are producing are positive or if something needs to be changed.

In the following we will focus on the first two phases.

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<sup>10</sup> ARMSTRONG, M., BARON, A. (2002) Strategic HRM: The Key to Improved Business Performance, Gardners Books, 2002

## 2.5.1 Planning Phase

The main activities carried out in the planning phase are listed below:

- Analysis of labour supply: i.e. identifying what human resources the organization currently has. In practice, an analysis is made of the type of human resources already operating within the organization, what are their skills and qualifications, what are their performance levels, etc.
- Demand forecast: that is understanding how the human capital of the organization will evolve in the future both in terms of number and quality. This involves estimating not only the number and type of employees already working within the organization, but also the external supply of possible employees in relation to external changes that have an impact on labour demand.
- Balancing labour demand with supply: it is about forecasting the employment demand and understanding how to reconcile supply and demand. In some cases, the organization may be in a labour deficit phase and it is necessary to hire more staff than it already has. In other cases, the organization is in labour surplus and therefore needs to reduce its staff.
- Developing and implementing a plan: in this final phase the practical procedures to implement the plan are activated.

To summarize, the first thing to do is to understand the labour market, in order to have the best matching between employees and labour, avoiding surplus or shortage of workers.

Some people may wonder why human resource planning is important and why it is important to understand how to implement it. Basically, human resource planning allows organizations to plan and forecast their human capital in time, according to their needs so as to always have a good turnover/supply of workers. For this reason, another way to call HR planning is the workforce planning.

A very important feature that HR planning must have is flexibility and adaptability to sudden changes that may occur within the environment in which it is applied.

Investing in HR planning is essential for an organization that aims to be efficient in the long run, because the success of a business, company or organization largely depends (if not entirely) on its human capital.

It should be noted that HR planning is always in continuous evolution and definition because strategies and objectives within an organization may change and so human resource planning may undergo modifications and changes too.

## 2.5.2 Programming Phase

Once the HR planning is completed, we move on to the next phase in which the actions regarding human resources and their recruitment are defined and put into practice.

In particular, this phase includes some activities such as: recruitment, selection, outplacement and training. In this section are presented the activities that are mainly applied in a business context and although they are the same in the case of events, however there are some differences in each of them.

1. Recruitment: this is the first step in the recruitment process. The recruitment method can be internal or external to the organization, but both have advantages and disadvantages. Recruiting from within the organization, for example, has the advantage that employees already know the working environment, ethics and way of doing things of the organization and the fact that they can have internal growth motivates employees to work even harder and stay within the organization. However, recruiting from within has the risk of not having human resources with the necessary skills for the type of work that should be done. Recruiting from outside the organization, on the other hand, allows an organization to have new talents available, people with new ideas and different backgrounds. Organizations often make use of this type of recruitment when they want to promote innovations and changes.
2. Selection: this is the process that starts with the selection of the best candidates from among those who have applied and ends with a job offer. It is a process that is often overlooked in the details, but it is very important to assess candidates as well as possible so as not to select candidates who later turn out not to be suitable for the position. To underline this, David and Robbins' state that the selection process is a decision-making process that helps to predict which candidates will be successful if hired. Selection can take place in different ways and there are usually several steps before a final decision is reached. Generally, a first screening of applications is done through the CVs sent by the candidates; then, interviews are organized with shortlisted candidates and are usually structured (all candidates are asked the same questions) or unstructured (different questions are asked depending on the candidate). Other methods used to carry out the selection include: reference and background checks, personality tests (to understand if candidates have the characteristics sought by the organization), performance tests (the candidate is tested by simulating a series of tasks to understand if he/she can perform them once hired).
3. Outplacement: as mentioned above, it may happen that the organization decides to terminate the contract for various reasons, but often an outplacement process is offered so that employees who have lost their job can get it back somewhere else.



4. Training: another essential activity for strategic human resources management is training. Again, it is important that the organization invests time and money to have a continuous improvement of its resources, both in hard and soft skills. In fact, today's world is constantly changing, and competition is increasingly fierce, so it is necessary to develop a system that leads resources to improve their performance and acquire new skills. It is good to distinguish between training and development because most of the time training refers to activities designed for entry-level employees who need to learn how to do the job. Development, on the other hand, refers to activities designed for employees who are already active in the organization. The training process consists of four phases: firstly, the target group is identified, the training program is designed, and the third phase is the definition of the training methods (on-the-job training, role-play, seminars and conferences, online and blended programs). The last step is the evaluation of the training program by the employee and often the employee's impressions and satisfaction are asked. There are different types of training, and it is up to the organization to choose the most suitable one for its circumstances. For example, if the organization wants to emphasize teamwork and make sure that all employees perform well in a team, then team training should be organized. If, on the other hand, the aim is to let new employees familiarize with the working environment and their colleagues, orientation training is the most suitable type.

Another extremely important activity in the context of human resources and which is part of the planning phase is the performance appraisal, i.e., the evaluation of the work performed by the employees. Why is performance appraisal important also in terms of human resources planning? It is important because through an analysis, it is possible to understand if there is room for improvement; for example, if further training sessions are needed, if further experiences are needed to help employees improve. Performance appraisal evaluates the employee's performance on the basis of three categories: the first one concerns subjective evaluations (traits appraisal) such as leadership, initiative and attitude to work; however, these evaluations are not very reliable because they are subjective. The second category (behavioral appraisal), although subjective, assesses the more objective and easily observable aspects of performance. Employees are assessed using a somewhat more definitive scale of values that also allows employees to get a feedback. The third is more objective because it is based on the employee's results (results appraisal) such as earnings or sales volume. In the latter case, performance appraisals define in advance targets to be achieved over a certain period of time. Managers and supervisors usually conduct performance appraisals because their experience and role enable them to make a more comprehensive assessment, but other people

are often used to help provide a more comprehensive evaluation. For example, an employee's direct subordinates are a valuable source for the performance appraisal, but also colleagues, superiors and the employees themselves. A very useful tool that helps getting feedbacks is the 360-degree appraisal where the strengths and weaknesses of the employee are outlined. We have said that it is important to give feedbacks for the improvement of not only the employee, but also of the organization itself. Also, the way in which feedbacks are given is equally important. There is no set way to give feedbacks, but it is necessary that the manager in charge of giving feedback is able to clearly express what he or she has observed and to make it clear to the employee what needs to be improved and what is already good. The clear presentation of the feedback serves to make it as constructive as possible so that it can be a useful tool for the employee who receives it.

Later in this paper we will look at how performance appraisal can be applied in the context of major sport events. Failure to give feedback to volunteers at the end of their service is one of the main mistakes in the HRM in sport mega events, alongside failure to give feedback to the organizers because it does not allow for growth on both sides. In the next chapter a case will be illustrated where the lack of feedback created resentment among the participating volunteers.

### **2.5.3 Evaluating Phase**

The third and final phase of human resource planning is the evaluating phase in which it is determined whether the human resource activities are bearing its fruit for the development of the organizational plans.

## **2.6 Human Resources in the context of sporting mega events**

Having given an overview of the concept of mega events and the concept of human resource management, it is now necessary to take a step further by combining these two concepts and see what human resource management entails in large-scale sporting events.

As Bladen et al.<sup>11</sup> argue that because of the brevity and temporary nature of events, they can be classified as projects with unique characteristics and particular challenges. Indeed, each event is unique and this represents a challenge for HRM as it is not possible to establish fixed rules about the requirements and the number of resources to be employed in each event. In fact, any assessment of HRM must be made taking into account the environment of the sports organization.

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<sup>11</sup> BLADEN, C., KENNEL, J., ABSON, E., WILDE, N. (2017) *Events Management: An Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Routledge, 2017

It is very interesting the term used by Toffler<sup>12</sup> "*pulsating organization*" to define organizations that expand and contract. This term is perfect when applied to sport mega events because, as Crawford<sup>13</sup> later stated, these are "*organizations with temporary work units that evolve and dissolve according to environmental change...*". These characteristics are evident in mega sports events precisely because the deployment of human resources varies enormously in the various phases of planning the event. For example, if we take the Olympic Games as an example, the number of people working in the initial phase is quite small, a few dozen individuals, while as the event approaches, two/three years before the beginning, all the main functions are defined and the people responsible for each area are selected; about a year before the event begins, volunteers are recruited and begin their training. Once the event is over, we go back from thousands of human resources to a few employees, usually those at the top of the organization, who deal with the debriefing phase.

If we make a comparison with "generic" organizations, what immediately jumps to the eye in pulsating organizations is the lack of permanent staff and consequently the lack of stable relationships between most of the workers. In fact, in this case, the only workers who have a close link are the organizing committee managers who have had the opportunity to build a working and personal link over time; if we take volunteers, for example, although they are the basis on which the success of the event is founded, having been recreate a relationship of mutual knowledge and esteem and this can have a negative outcome when they are put into the field.

Focusing on sports organizations, in order to manage human resources it is necessary to elaborate a strategy that ensures that the activities performed by HR will bring results. First, a SWOT analysis of human resources is carried out in order to understand what the weaknesses are so that objectives can be defined on the basis of these. After that an action plan has to be defined which has to include a series of activities such as a volunteer recruitment campaign, training programs for core management, etc. After developing the strategy and defining the action plan, the next step is to recruit human resources including volunteers, technical and administrative staff, volunteer managers. Recruitment should always be done on the basis of the real needs of the organization to avoid recruiting the wrong resources or resources that are not strictly necessary. Then, the most important phase for human resources in sport organizations is training, useful to acquire skills and knowledge to perform their work. As it is also very important for the achievement of the organization's objectives, it would be advisable to devote the necessary attention to the development of a program that would allow all

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<sup>12</sup> HANLON, C., CUSKELLY, G. (2002). Pulsating Major Sport Event Organizations: A Framework For Inducting Managerial Personnel. *Event Management*, 7, 231-243.

<sup>13</sup> CRAWFORD, R.D. (1991). In the era of human capital: The emergence of talent, intelligence, and knowledge as the worldwide economic force and what it means to managers and investors.

resources to be fully trained. In addition, before actually putting an employee to work, an evaluation of what he/she has learned during the training should be conducted. Training is not only for the employees, but it is also useful for the organizers, because if they want to manage human resources, they must acquire a series of management competencies. One of the most important is decision-making because organizers are often in situations where difficult decisions have to be made, and it is therefore necessary to know how to make them in a conscious way. In fact, it may happen that volunteers or staff members have not done their job properly, but if the responsible managers have been trained properly to deal with these kinds of problems, then the solution can be found. This leads to two other indispensable skills: problem analysis and communication skills. These skills, together with time management and conflict management, are the basis for the effective management of an Olympic sports organization.

As mentioned earlier, in the context of HRM, the challenges are manifold because not only is it necessary to recruit the right people with the right skills for the job, but it is also necessary to "retain" these resources, since that from the recruitment phase to the action phase (when the event and the staff activity starts) there are several months of difference and the initial motivation may change.

## **2.7 HRM Cycle**

In order to have a better understanding of what will be said later, especially regarding volunteering in sport mega events, here an overview of the HRM development cycle in the context of large sports events is given. It consists of 10 steps to be completed one after the other and this cycle can be applied to any type of event and adapted to the type of organization.

- *Volunteering culture*

Considering that every sporting event, large or small, involves the use of volunteers, it is necessary to try to understand if there is already some kind of volunteering culture in place, in order to better organize the volunteers' management. In fact, it is easier to adopt a series of behaviours in organizations that already have a basic organizational structure that includes volunteering. One of the first questions that organizers must ask themselves is "why are we relying on volunteers?" and then they must understand who will be in charge of managing volunteers, whether it will be a person from management or whether an external person is called in to do this.

- *Needs evaluation*

Two perspectives should be kept in mind: the needs and goals not only of the organization but also of the volunteers.

In the case of sports organizations, this needs analysis allows organizers to understand what the gaps are and how to improve the human resources available. Moreover, it is not only necessary to think

about the needs of the present situation, but also to have a look at the future, thinking about how the sport environment might change over the years. This analysis also concerns the field of human resources because as they are employed in the organizational context, it is expected that they can grow with the organizers.

In any case, the key word is always careful planning of human resources so that needs and objectives are aligned as much as possible to avoid extra work and frustration.

- *Recruitment*

Recruitment involves the search for and selection of people suitable for the position. In fact, it is not always the case that the people identified are actually able to do the job, but simply have the basic requirements to do so.

To actually recruit, a series of activities have to be carried out which can be summarized as follows: the organization has to create a volunteer recruitment campaign and advertise it in order to inform people; then the recruitment and selection process starts, often through the analysis of qualifications and following an interview; the organizers then contact the selected volunteers who are asked to declare their interest and commitment.

- *Orientation*

This phase is important for HR development so that the organization can benefit from their actions. In particular, in this phase human resources come into contact with the organization and it is necessary that orientation is well planned in order to make new volunteers feel welcome and at ease, so that they can already feel emotionally attached to the organization. The orientation also provides a better understanding of the role volunteers have to play and puts them in a position to perform at their best.

- *Training*

Training activities are very important in the context of sports events because they allow volunteers to be trained to perform sport-related tasks.

Good training ensures that volunteers are prepared to do their job and work to the standards set by the organizers.

- *Retaining*

Retaining volunteers is not an easy task as there are many factors that can cause a volunteer to leave their role. Organizers must try to avoid volunteer turnover and so it is necessary to adopt volunteer-friendly strategies.

- *Rewarding*

Acknowledging the contribution of volunteers through a series of rewards is a way to make volunteers feel appreciated and part of the team. There are different ways to recognize the commitment of volunteers: for example, thanking them and listening to their opinions is a good way to make them

feel important in the team, or giving material rewards, creating events for them or giving certificates and merits. In the case of sporting events, these are prize tickets, certificates for volunteering...

For volunteers, it is not important to have a monetary reward because as Kegel<sup>14</sup> points out "*recognition is the salary of volunteers*". However, an important step to be taken by the organization is to understand which rewards are most suitable for volunteers.

- *Evaluation*

Evaluation and self-assessment are useful tools to assess the degree of satisfaction with the role and tasks to perform and also to understand how to improve one's skills in the future. It allows organizers to check the work of volunteers and make sure that they always perform tasks according to the set standards. However, it should be emphasized that this feedback should also be given by the volunteers so that the organizers also have a view from outside the management to see where improvements can be made.

- *Learning*

Sports volunteers are often asked to participate in training activities in order to develop their skills prior the event. In particular, organizers develop programs to enable volunteers to learn skills that will be useful not only for the event but also for their individual development. These trainings aim to improve the quality of the volunteers and foster their development so that they can contribute to the event. In addition, through the trainings, volunteers gain motivation and a sense of belonging because they see their place of "work" as a place that encourages and promotes continuous learning.

- *Re-assignment*

Re-assignment is a way of keeping volunteers within the organization but assigning them different roles so that they can experience other functions. This helps to mitigate drop out requests from volunteers as they feel that the organizers want to contribute to their growth.

## **2.8. Human Resources Management in the Chinese context**

In order to better understand Chapter 4 of this thesis it is necessary to take a moment to understand how human resources management takes place in China. The explanation that will be given, even if it focuses more on the corporate context, offers, however, interesting insights that concern human resources management in a broader way, thus including sports events.

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<sup>14</sup> STEINBACH, D., GUETT, M., FREYTAG, G. (2011-2012). "Training4Volunteers: Mapping strategies and good practices of human resource development for volunteers in sports organizations in Europe", *Leadership Academy of the German Olympic Sports Confederation*, 2011-2012

In fact, there are certain characteristics, such as the high turnover rate, the lack of professionalism and the search for talent (人才 *réncai*) that are common to all contexts in which human resource management is applied.

In order to understand the context of human resources in China, it is useful to have an overview of the chronological evolution of human resource management in the country to understand how the concept of 人力资源 (*rénlì zīyuán*) arrived at. In addition, it is also crucial to understand and appreciate the cultural context in which this activity takes place.

It should be pointed out that HR management is still evolving and developing in China: in fact, if at first it was limited to the administrative function, now over the past decades new concepts related to HRM are being developed.

We have already mentioned that HRM is a very complicated process, and it is obvious that there are challenges and difficulties in China as well.

Historically, since the 1950s, China's historical and political upheavals have inevitably also influenced the HRM system.

However, the concept of people management was already present in ancient times, influenced by Chinese philosophy, in particular by Confucius. In fact, it is referred to as 'Confucian management' as it was based on the most important values that guided and underpinned society (harmony, benevolence, loyalty, *guānxi* and *miànzi*). These values influenced personnels' recruitment, selection, as well as the relationship between subordinates and superiors. For example, when thinking about personnel selection, in ancient China, the imperial examination system (科举 *kējǔ*) was the means by which those who would hold public office were chosen. The selection was made by meritocracy on the basis of the candidates' actual abilities. The system was abolished in 1905 after 1300 years of history.

1911 marked the beginning of the Republic of China, but it was not until 1949 (with the founding of the PRC) that a series of Soviet-style personnel management measures were introduced.

In this period scholars of personnel management began to appear and the first reference texts entitled 人事管理 (*rénshì guǎnlǐ*) were published, but there are still few sources that testify to the evolution of human resources in the period between 1911 and 1949. One of the most important personalities of the period is He Qingru, who is considered to be among the first to talk about people management.

The period described above refers to a proto phase of human resources in China.

In fact, it is from the twentieth century that HRM is defined in its true sense of the term as *rénlì zīyuán guǎnlǐ* and no longer as *rénshì guǎnlǐ*.

In fact, even in Mao's era the term Human Resource Management had a different meaning and was translated as 人际关系 *rénjì guānxi*, or interpersonal relations. It was not until the time of Deng Xiaoping that the term *rénlì zīyuán guǎnlǐ* became widespread; in fact, the first texts using this term date back to the early 1980s.

In the Maoist era, the first forms of personnel management reflected the political system of the period: in fact, the concept of 'communism' was also applied to the workforce management. This implies the abolition of hierarchies (which is quite unusual as up to then the observance and respect for hierarchies had always been one of the main features of the Chinese system) and the equality of workers as part of the same people. The idea was that there should have been some kind of equality between managers and subordinates, but in fact it was never fully applied.

During the communist regime, the cadre system was also introduced, which came to be the determining factor for the social status of workers (as it specified wages and benefits). This is an example of strategic HRM in China.

The turning point came with the rise of Deng Xiaoping, who proposed a series of reforms that overturned the Chinese economy of the time and laid the foundations for China's rise on a global scale.

Starting in 1978, Deng Xiaoping's reforms led China to open up to the world (to the West) and the shift from a planned economy to a capitalist economy with Chinese characteristics (具有中国特色的资本主义 *jùyǒu Zhōngguó tèsè de zīběn zhǔyì*) also influenced Chinese management models. In this opening phase, there was an increase in economic relations between China and the West, particularly through the creation of joint ventures, which also led to a change in human resource management.

First of all, the *tiěfànwǎn* (铁饭碗) in use during the Maoist era was abolished, i.e., the guarantee of a fixed job for each worker. Why was it abandoned? Simply because they already had the guarantee of a job, a fixed salary and a convenient welfare package, so workers were not motivated to improve their skills and strive to achieve their goals. In addition, a situation was created where there was a surplus of workforce which resulted in a waste of economic resources. The system of remuneration also changed: whereas in the past times it was fixed and pre-determined, now a shift to remuneration based on skills and the actual work done by each individual occurred (各尽所能、



按劳分配 *gè jìn suǒ néng , àn láo fēn pèi*). However, this generated dissatisfaction among workers because they felt that double standards were being applied in awarding fair pay. This led, in the second half of the 1980s and early 1990s, to a change to make pay more proportionate to performance. Another change concerns the recruitment of managers: having to look across boundaries also conditioned the choice of human resources because now managers and employees had to be more result-oriented, capable and deserving. From the 1990s onwards, there was a shift towards a more Western-style HRM model. In this transitional phase, the direction needed to be clear, and Deng Xiaoping aspired to reform management by including workers in decision-making processes in the company context and by emphasizing the importance of training for managers, who had to acquire a whole series of skills that they had not been able to acquire in the Maoist era. In fact, it was during this period that managers who held important roles were sent to the West (especially to the United States) to acquire management models.

What happens in the end? From the Soviet-style planned system in which *tiěfànwǎn* (铁饭碗) was the personnel management system, we move to a different system in which there is no longer the security and stability provided by a fixed job, but workers must through their skills and commitment adapt to change and improve more and more in order to become competitive.

What happened after the Deng Xiaoping era? And how has HRM evolved?

China has continued its unstoppable rise to the top of the world economy. The role of HRM is crucial in creating value and achieving goals. China understands that to take that decisive step to global prominence, it must invest in human capital. Human capital, also referred to as intellectual capital, leverages the skills and knowledge of employees, which is why it is necessary to invest in education and talent search.

The aim is to invest more and more resources in training and to ensure that it is put into practice in a way that benefits both employees and the organization by limiting the recruitment of low-skilled staff in the interests of labour-saving.

# **CHAPTER THREE:**

*VOLUNTEERISM  
IN THE CONTEXT OF  
SPORTS' MEGA EVENTS*

*“At the heart of volunteerism are the ideals of services and solidarity and the belief that together we can make the world better. (..)”*  
Kofi Annan<sup>15</sup>

### **3.1 Introduction to the chapter**

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the role of the volunteer and a description of voluntary activities in major sporting events, in particular the Olympic Games. In the chapter we will examine all the steps that may lead a candidate to become a full-fledged volunteer. The recruitment process is quite long and can be source of stress not only for the recruiters, but also for the volunteers who may lose the motivation to participate and contribute to the event.

According to the literature, the process formally starts when the Organizing Committee kicks off the application process, but according to my personal point of view, the volunteers’ journey actually begins when the volunteer becomes aware that he/she wants to participate in the event and give his/her contribution.

This aspect should not be underestimated because the process is time-consuming and requires a great deal of effort on the part of both recruiters and candidates, whose level of motivation may fluctuate during the process. It is up to the human resource manager and to the Organizing Committee to keep the interest alive.

The chapter also deals with the rights and duties of volunteers, presenting some examples taken from the experiences of volunteers and a volunteers’ leader who have participated in international sporting events, highlighting the point of view of both parties. A section of the chapter will be dedicated to the explanation of the figure of the Volunteer Leader: he acts as the reference person for all the volunteers and functions’ coordinators and, since volunteers represent the largest part of the workforce employed in an event and it is difficult to coordinate them, the role of the Volunteer Leader is crucial for the good or bad management of the event.

Finally, at the end of the chapter, there will be an in-depth research on the motivations and expectations of sport volunteers and their impressions after the event.

This chapter may be intended as an introduction to Chapter 4 where the Beijing 2022 Volunteer Program will be taken as a case study.

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<sup>15</sup> MANUAL FOR BEIJING OLYMPIC VOLUNTEERS: BEIJING 2008, Summer Olympic Games. Organizing Committee. 29, 2008, Beijing | Beijing Olympic Games Volunteer Work Coordination Group, Edited by China Renmin University Press. Beijing, 2007

## **3.2 Volunteering as a social and human resource**

The topic of volunteerism has been widely discussed in numerous studies related to the voluntary activities, but it is still a rather vague concept that needs some clarification. For this reason, before proceeding with the discussion of volunteerism in major sporting events, it is necessary to examine in broader terms what the previous studies have said in order to clarify the meaning and significance of volunteerism, volunteers and what is their role within the society.

One of the first things to do is to distinguish between volunteers and paid staff. Paid staff are workforce recruited by the organizers, with whom there is a real working relationship enshrined in a contract. Employees can be temporary, i.e., employed throughout the event life cycle and working on a specific task (volunteer coordinators are a good example of this kind of employees); casual workers, that are those who are employed to carry out tasks that usually last only a few hours (in fact they are paid on an hourly basis); temporary employees, i.e., staff recruited not by the event organizers, but by employment agencies contracted by the organizers.

### **3.2.1 An historical overview of volunteering activities**

First of all, the term we use for volunteering has Latin origins and more precisely it derives from the words "*valo*", "*velle*" or "*voluntas*", words that encompass the ideas of will, determination and hope. In fact, from a historical point of view, the first evidence of voluntary activities dates back to the Roman Empire, mostly intended as philanthropic activities and religious charity. However, until 1600 the use of this term was almost limited to the military context, defining those people who voluntarily decided to enlist in the army.

Today, however, volunteering constitutes a very important part of the development of societies because it can be found in different sectors, such as healthcare, sport and social work.

Moreover, even between East and West there is a different view of what volunteering is: for example, in Western countries participation in voluntary activities is seen as a means for the development of society, while in Eastern countries it is perceived as a kind of moral duty whereby a person acts on the basis of a deep sense of conscience and responsibility. This statement is particularly true in the case of China, a country that has experienced a rapid increase in the number of participants in voluntary activities thanks to the 2008 Olympics.

### **3.2.2 Defining volunteering activities**

Even defining volunteering activities is not easy because there are various schools of thought about the nature of volunteering, often contradicting each other.

Since the main objective of this work is not to provide an in-depth analysis of the nature and meaning of volunteering, we will limit ourselves to simplifying what the reference literature has pointed out, recognizing that at the basis of volunteering activities there are some very precise characteristics, recognized by all:

1. Altruism is at the baseline of these activities: in fact, people who volunteer decide of their own free will to help others, without imposition from others.
2. Volunteering is an unpaid activity: by giving their time and skills, volunteers do not expect to receive anything material in return, however, they are often rewarded with experience, new connections and knowledge.
3. It is a service that is carried out by people who want to give society a better future.

We can summarize by saying that voluntary service is about activities that do not involve monetary compensation and are carried out by people who wish to give their time and contribution to the development of the society or their community.

Penner<sup>16</sup> considers volunteering as a series of long-term pro-social behaviours planned to benefit society. This definition is also shared by Juan Zhuang<sup>17</sup> who in her study indicates volunteering not only as pro-social behaviour, but also recognizes the importance of volunteers' motivations and the fact that it is a non-profit activity.

### **3.2.3 Sources and values of volunteering activities**

As we have already mentioned, and as Kennett<sup>18</sup> points out, altruism is one of the main sources of volunteering, but in addition to this there are other sources that combined together can give us a 360-degree view of volunteerism.

For example, Kennett states that volunteering is an opportunity for self-improvement (individual development). This means that also individualism is at the basis of volunteering understood in a twofold way: this term does not only indicate individual participation (and thus based on the

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<sup>16</sup> PENNER, L.A. (2004), Volunteerism and Social Problems: Making Things Better or Worse? *Journal of Social Issues*, 60: 645-666. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-4537.2004.00377.x>

<sup>17</sup> ZHUANG, J. (2011), *Volunteering for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games: Visions, Policies and Capitals*, University of Bedfordshire, 2011

<sup>18</sup> KENNETT, C. (2005). Volunteers: helping hands, in *Olympic Review*, April - June 2005, pp. 34-37

participant's will) in voluntary service, but it also indicates that one can gain personal benefits by promoting one's individual development.

Moreover, as Juan Zhang points out, patriotism is also seen as one of the main driving forces of volunteering activities. This is particularly visible in the case of mega events such as the Olympic Games where volunteers feel that they are the representatives of the whole nation and their participation and commitment to the event makes them proud to be part of a major event that brings prestige to their country. Besides the patriotic value, the direct intervention of the government in promoting voluntary activities (through specific policies and programs) plays its part. This is a widespread practice in all countries, but this is especially true for countries with a more authoritarian regime where government intervention is more pronounced and evident. China can be taken as an example because the promotion of volunteering activities is closely linked to the development of individuals who can set a good example of active citizenship.

According to the *Beijing 2008 - Manual for Beijing Olympic Volunteers*<sup>19</sup> there are four values at the basis of volunteering:

- 1) dedication, i.e., acting for the sake of doing good actions. This value is seen as the essence of volunteering.
- 2) fraternity, i.e., respect for others and openness towards others without distinction of ethnicity, nationality, culture...
- 3) mutual aid, i.e., mutual help among people is of utmost importance to encourage the participation in volunteering activities.
- 4) progress, that is the most significant part of volunteering because any activity requires an improvement, be it on an individual, community or social level.

### **3.2.4 Dimensions and forms of volunteering**

Another way of classifying volunteering is through the analysis of its key dimensions.

There are four such dimensions:

1. Goals and purpose of volunteering activities
2. Types of activities
3. Categories in which the volunteer activity fits in
4. The amount of time devoted by volunteers

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<sup>19</sup> MANUAL FOR BEIJING OLYMPIC VOLUNTEERS: BEIJING 2008, Summer Olympic Games. Organizing Committee. 29, 2008, Beijing | Beijing Olympic Games Volunteer Work Coordination Group, Edited by China Renmin University Press. Beijing, 2007

It should be noted that all four dimensions are interconnected because, for example, in order to define the purpose of the activity, it is necessary to know the context in which it is going to operate, and which activities will be carried out.

For example, sport volunteering and environmental volunteering will certainly have different objectives: while for volunteering in major sporting events, such as the Olympics, the aim is the success of the event and the dissemination of the principles of Olympism, for environmental volunteering the main objective is to benefit the surrounding environment. However, even though these are two different types of volunteering, they both share a sort of "mission", which is to involve as many people as possible with the proposed issues.

Focusing on the second dimension, four types of activities have been identified: 1) mutual aid activities, 2) philanthropic activities, usually managed by an organization which through its volunteers operate in different sectors, 3) activities based on active participation in decision-making within the community, 4) activities concerning social campaigns (e.g., campaigns for the environment, for better health services...).

To these four categories, according to the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR), a further category should be added, a fifth category that comes from the expression of interest by volunteers to carry out their activity in a context they prefer (such as sport or art).

The latter category prevails especially in the case of sporting events and will be analyzed later in the chapter while discussing about the motivations of volunteers.

Specifying and clarifying the context in which volunteering takes place can help to understand the level of intensity that characterizes volunteers' participation.

For example, in the case of activities promoted by formally constituted organizations or associations, it is very likely that the level of active participation is a long-term one. In this case, volunteers become attached to a specific association and regularly serve to achieve the objectives set according to the type of activity.

Another example is given by groups of volunteers who join together to achieve a goal (which may be for their own benefit or for the benefit of society as a whole), they have no clearly defined organization and therefore tend to separate once the activity has been completed. This is defined as occasional or short-term volunteering, but despite its brevity it still plays an important role in volunteering.

Finally, the last category concerns volunteering that is done on an individual level and not as part of groups or organizations. While Penner<sup>20</sup> spoke of volunteering as a series of pro-social behaviours, other scholars separate individual volunteering from pro-social behaviours. For example, the act of offering to give someone a lift and offering to accompany a person to a place are two different behaviours: the former is a pro-social behaviour because by agreeing to the request one does a good deed, while the latter is an example of volunteering because it is determined by the will of the person who is offering his help.

To conclude, it is worth remembering that volunteering includes various forms, but the main ones, as Wilson and Musick<sup>21</sup> point out, are two: formal and informal volunteering.

Formal volunteering refers to events such as the Olympics, Expo, UN programs where volunteering is formally organized and volunteers are those who act within an association or organization. Informal volunteering refers to mutual aid activities between neighbours, relatives, friends, in short activities that do not involve an underlying organization. In particular, informal volunteers are people who act not because they have to respond to a social cause, but simply for the pleasure of helping others.

Another distinction made by scholars regarding the formality or otherwise of volunteering is based on the type of activities performed. For example, Onyx and Leonard<sup>22</sup> argue that there is a relationship between formal and informal volunteering and the creation of social capital: they identify four areas of action within social capital that correspond to the areas in which formal and informal volunteering occurs.

However, it must be acknowledged that in recent years scholars have focused more on the analysis of formal volunteering rather than informal volunteering because they have more reliable data available, and it is also easier to measure the impact it has on society.

### **3.2.5 Defining volunteers**

Having outlined the characteristics of volunteering, now it is necessary to specify the characteristics of those who decide to participate in volunteering activities, known as volunteers.

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<sup>20</sup> PENNER, L. (2002). Dispositional and organizational influences on sustained volunteerism: an interactionist perspective, in *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 58, No. 3, pp. 447-467

<sup>21</sup> MUSICK, M. and WILSON, J. (2008). *Volunteers: a social profile*. Indiana University Press

<sup>22</sup> ONYX, J. and LEONARD, R. (2003). The relationship between formal and informal volunteering: a social capital framework, in *ISJR Fifth International Conference*



Volunteers are people with such priceless values and precious for socio-economic development to the extent that the impact they have on society was also recognized by the UN General Assembly in 2001, the International Year of Volunteers.

As with volunteering activities, it is difficult to give an absolute definition of volunteers.

In fact, as McCurley and Vesuvio<sup>23</sup> argue, “*the only thing that can be said with certainty about volunteers is that they cannot be described as monolithic*”. However, we cannot state that all the people who act on a voluntary basis can be defined as volunteers because willingness is not the only characterizing element. The majority of researchers who have tried to give a definition have always stressed the fact that it is an unpaid service, but they have never given a clear and precise definition, on the contrary, they have always been either too broad or too narrow in giving explanations of the term.

Looking at some of the definitions, for example, if we accept Du Boulay's<sup>24</sup> definition "a volunteer is a person who, on a regular basis, contributes his or her time and energy" would risk giving an overly simplistic view of the strength and size of volunteers. Adams also defines volunteers as those who carry out work to help others without monetary compensation, but this definition is too general to be taken as a reference.

Cnaan, Handy and Wadsworth<sup>25</sup> noted that although a difference between volunteers and paid workers is recognized, the distinction is complex because only a few out of 300 articles have given a definition for volunteers. However, the same scholars found four key dimensions recurring in all of these definitions, despite there being broader and purer currents:

1. Voluntary nature of acts: in some cases, it is sufficient that a person acts on the basis of his or her own will to be defined as voluntary, while there are other scholars who argue that this characteristic is not sufficient.
2. Type/Nature of the reward: according to the purist approach volunteers should not receive any compensation and even in some cases a fee is required from volunteers to participate in activities. On the contrary, the other way of thinking admits that volunteers can receive compensation (e.g., reimbursement of expenses, transport).

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<sup>23</sup> CNAAN, R.A, HANDY F, WADSWORTH M. Defining Who is a Volunteer: Conceptual and Empirical Considerations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. 1996;25(3):364-383. doi:[10.1177/0899764096253006](https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764096253006)

<sup>24</sup> BAUM, T.G. and LOCKSTONE, L. (2007) *VOLUNTEERS AND MEGA SPORTING EVENTS DEVELOPING A RESEARCH FRAMEWORK*. *International Journal of Event Management Research*, 3 (1). pp. 29-41

<sup>25</sup> CNAAN, R.A, HANDY F, WADSWORTH M. Defining Who is a Volunteer: Conceptual and Empirical Considerations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. 1996;25(3):364-383. doi:[10.1177/0899764096253006](https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764096253006)

3. Context of the activity: as explained before, there are formal and informal forms of volunteering. For some scholars, a "true" volunteer is someone who only serves within recognized associations. For others, informal volunteering is equally acceptable.
4. Beneficiaries of the volunteering activities: in some definitions of the term volunteer, it is often mentioned that the recipients should be people unrelated to the volunteer, such as strangers; while for others, a volunteer can also help people he or she knows or that comes from a similar background.

On the basis of what has been said earlier in this chapter, I would like to propose my own version of what a volunteer is, although with limitations and shortcomings.

A volunteer is a person who dedicates his or her time and skills for the benefit of others. The beneficiaries can be of a different nature depending on the context in which the volunteering activity takes place: for example, if a person deals with social issues, the beneficiaries will be people belonging to the community; while if a person acts in larger contexts such as major international events, the beneficiaries will be more diversified (for example, at the Olympics those who act as city volunteers will be responsible for helping the users of the event, while those who work inside the venues or competition fields will directly serve the athletes and their entourage). Volunteers, as already mentioned, can work on an individual basis (especially in the case of large international events) or within structured associations and they act without being paid. However, we should point out that volunteers do get some rewards: in most cases, they gain new personal skills, they may improve their interpersonal skills or in other cases they may receive event gadgets, vouchers or prize tickets, uniforms...

Many scholars claim that the basis of volunteering is altruism, but I argue that we can also talk about reciprocal altruism because after all, volunteers also have an intangible benefit.

Moreover, volunteers are people who have a great power to mobilize society due to their social, cultural but also political role. Since the development and progress of society is the ultimate goal of voluntary actions, volunteers carry out their activities also by trying to raise the awareness of the population on certain issues. In addition, for example in the context of international events, volunteers are also spokespeople for the culture and values of the host country. Their political role, on the other hand, is pretty clear and evident if the role of volunteers is taken as an example of active citizenship. Finally, an essential aspect of volunteers, but at the same time complex to analyze, is their motivation, what drives them to volunteer. Today, our society is characterized by a strong individualism, so that people often tend to consider people who engage in volunteering activities as "fools", judging simply by taking into account the non-remunerability of the service.

However, there is a tendency not to dwell on the real motivations that push volunteers to apply because the main motivation is not always to give back to others, but it could be to do any good to oneself while doing it for others. As a matter of fact, motivations can be of different nature and clearly can also affect the activity of volunteers. For this reason, it is also important to assess and evaluate each candidate's motivations before choosing the group of volunteers to be employed in the activities. The relevant literature sees the duration, the length of volunteering as a discriminating factor when identifying who can be called a volunteer or not. This thesis, however, considers that this dimension should not be a discriminating factor, but can be analyzed in a different light. If a volunteer works for one week rather than for one year it does not mean that he or she is less worthy of being called a volunteer than another just because the length of the activity. In fact, it is often commensurate with the duration of the event or project in which they participate. The problem that might arise later is the drop out or the non-adherence to other volunteering projects, which is possible when volunteers feel unappreciated.

In conclusion, volunteers are valuable resources and should be treated as such. A big mistake that organizers and HR managers must avoid is to take the work of volunteers for granted: lack of recognition of their work and commitment, or the lack of reward can cause resentment and dissatisfaction among volunteers. If paid workers may be hesitant when it comes to leave their position, volunteers, on the contrary, have no problem to drop out overnight. This behaviour shows the two faces of volunteering, almost like a two-faced Janus.

### **3.3 Volunteerism in sports' mega events**

Having attempted to provide an overview of volunteering activities and the nature of volunteers at a general level, it is now necessary to go into more detail and focus on volunteering in the context of sports' mega events.

The following paragraphs introduce the main features of what happens at major sporting events from the point of view of volunteers and professionals.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, mega events (both sporting and non-sporting) involve the use of a large pool of human resources.

Indeed, when introducing volunteer management or human resource development in a sport context, it is necessary to first identify who are sport volunteers and how they differ from paid staff. Remuneration, length of the activity (in the case of paid staff it can last for years) and motivation that leads people to carry out their work are the main differences between volunteers and paid staff.

Motivation is perhaps the most interesting and contradictory aspect because in many cases it leads workers or volunteers to perform differently.

However, volunteers make up the majority of the workforce employed in mega events, to such extent that Goldblatt<sup>26</sup> identifies them as the "*lifeblood of many events without these events could not be delivered*".

As we pointed out earlier, volunteers sacrifice a large part of their time to make it available to the organizers, and since time is such a valuable resource, knowing how to manage volunteers is essential to ensuring their participation and the success of the event.

Basically, in order to have a good volunteer management, organizers should start with the development of the volunteer program for the event.

Someone may think that the volunteer program simply relates to the recruitment and training of volunteers, but actually it is much more complex than this because it also covers some functions that are almost taken for granted such as transport, uniforms, meals, accreditation, workplace safety, accommodation, and also motivation and reward programs.

How do organizers and HR managers design a volunteer program?

According to Brudney<sup>27</sup>, in order to design a good volunteer program, a number of factors need to be taken into account, such as:

1. Creating a detailed job description also for volunteer positions so that there is no doubt about the tasks to be performed.
2. The program must meet the requirements of the event and therefore the volunteers must also align with the atmosphere and spirit of the event. In order to do this the program should summon volunteers up to apply on the basis of their motivations and the needs of the organization.
3. A good volunteers' program requires a change in approach to the organizational structure: it should not be hierarchical (vertical), but should be based on teamwork, as if everyone is on the same level to achieve a great common goal.

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<sup>26</sup> GOLDBLATT, J. (2011) *Special Events: A New Generation and the Next Frontier*. 6<sup>th</sup> edn. Hoboken (New Jersey): John Wiley & Sons.

<sup>27</sup> BRUDNEY, J.L. (1994). *Volunteers in the Delivery of Public Services: Magnitude, Scope, and Management*. In *Handbook of Public Personnel Administration*, eds. Jack Rabin, Thomas Vocino, W. Bartley Hildreth, and Gerald J. Miller, 661–686. New York: Marcel Decker.

4. It is also important to specify the mission and vision of the event as well as making the concept of the volunteers' program clear.
5. The program should also guarantee certain benefits and rewards.

Clearly, the volunteer program will vary according to the type of event: the bigger the event, the more detailed the program should be.

It is also interesting to understand the level of interest that people have in participating or not in volunteering activities at sports' mega events.

In order to get a better understanding of people's attitudes, I carried out a survey to find out how many people have already participated in sports' mega events and how many were interested in participating. Before receiving the results of the survey, my beliefs were that sport volunteering was not very widespread and that people were not so interested in taking part in it no matter how big or prestigious the event is. However, respondents refuted these beliefs. In fact, 72.4% of the respondents had already participated in such activities in the past, while of the remaining 27.6%, 21% wanted to try to be involved in any sport volunteering.

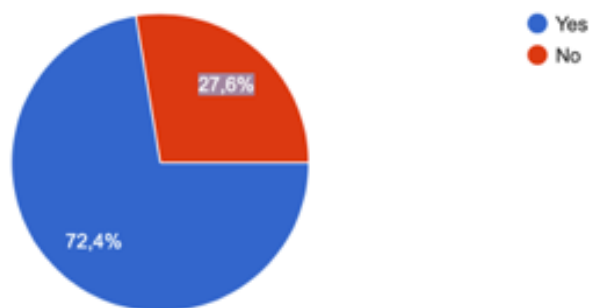


Table 3.1 Survey results

Another interesting fact is that although most of the respondents belong to the student category (47.4%), 45.4% are workers (employed or self-employed) and therefore it is possible to dispel the myth that sport volunteers are almost all university students and retired people.



Table 3.2 Survey results

### 3.4 Volunteers' recruitment, selection and training

One of the biggest challenges for the Human Resources team is the recruitment and selection of volunteers and paid staff. One of the most critical issues that often arises is the lack of suitable candidates for the role or, in the case of bigger events, there are too many candidates for the same position, which causes extra work for recruiters.

For example, if we take the Olympics as an example, the most sought-after positions are those in contact with the athletes or during the opening and closing ceremonies. In other events, however, candidates are not even given the opportunity to express a preference as to where they would like to serve, such as at the Expo 2015 in Milan.

Another challenging element is the temporary nature of the event which results in fixed-term recruitment, not only for paid staff, but also for volunteers who can only work for a certain period of time. Indeed, in the context of mega events, especially sport events, most volunteers are employed for a period of one or two weeks depending on the overall length of the event. Very few volunteers can have the opportunity to serve for almost the entire preparatory phase of the event and they are usually called "ambassadors", people who represent the event and promote it among the society.

The motivation of the candidates and the difficulty in outlining the human resource needs for the event can also contribute to make the recruitment process more complicated.

Once that the main difficulties are determined, it is necessary to go into details by defining each of the phases that lead to the definition of the volunteers' group and their training program.

#### 3.4.1 Recruitment

People often tend to use the terms recruitment and selection interchangeably, thinking that their meaning is the same, but this is not exactly the case.

Recruitment is basically the process of identifying, attracting and selecting the most suitable people for the organization's needs.

Chelladurai<sup>28</sup> defines it as a process in which a large number of potential candidates are identified and are encouraged to apply.

However, care must be taken in how the recruitment campaign is created as there is always a risk of attracting too many candidates who may not have the requirements to perform the role. This means that recruiters have to do an extra work and also for this reason there must be transparency about the requirements of the organization at the basis of the recruitment campaign.

Therefore, before even proceeding with the design of the volunteer recruitment campaign, the first step is to identify the basic criteria that volunteers should meet before applying.

For example, in the case of the Olympic Games or other major international sporting events, the basic requirements are necessary to make a first screening and these requirements usually concern the origin of the volunteers, age (e.g. underage people are excluded from the selection), willingness to follow the rules of the country where the event takes place and of the Organizing Committee, availability for at least one week (this requirement is important to avoid an excessive turnover of volunteers), good knowledge of foreign languages (for some positions, this prerequisite is essential to be selected).

The main purpose of recruiting is not only to have enough volunteers at the event, but also to create a sort of database of all the volunteers and human resources that can be used for future events as a "legacy".

In fact, senior volunteers (volunteers who have previous experiences) are contacted before selecting new volunteers. An example is given by the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games where out of 110,000 volunteers 100,000 had already participated in the Asian Games.

Over the years, mega sport events, such the Olympics and FIFA World Cup, have seen an exponential increase in the number of volunteers' applications and this has posed a fundamental question for organizers to answer: What is the best way to recruit volunteers?

Although this is a difficult question to answer, there are some guiding principles that can help organizers with recruitment. These include: 1) Conduct the recruitment bearing in mind the characteristics and needs of the event, identifying groups of volunteers divided according to activities; 2) Use recruitment methods that are accessible to all, or ideally to most candidates; 3) Assess

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<sup>28</sup> CHELLADURAI, P (2006). *Human Resource Management in Sport and Recreation* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Champaign: Human Kinetics

candidates on the basis not only of their skills but also of their potential; 4) Implement policies that ensure transparency during the selection process.

The first step in recruiting volunteers is to find suitable candidates and this can be done using internal or external resources.

Examples of external resources are advertisements in newspapers or on the radio and those are among the most common methods because they may reach a large number of people. However, as they can potentially reach everyone, a study by Jago and Deery<sup>29</sup> found out that many candidates who applied through this kind of advertisements turned out to be unsuitable to become volunteers. Another common example is recruiting through voluntary associations or groups. In the case of sports events, organizers often recruit volunteers from local sports associations because they have expertise and knowledge in a particular sport. For example, at the 2019 Grand Prix Final in Turin, many volunteers were recruited from skating groups as they were already familiar with the tasks to be performed, or from the Vol.To volunteer group (volunteering association set up for the 2006 Olympics) and served at the venue to support less experienced volunteers.

Recently, one of the most effective ways of recruiting candidates among young people is through universities or colleges: this is a good chance for students to put into practice what they have learnt and to get more credits. An example is the recent campaign to recruit volunteers for the Italian Pavilion at Expo Dubai 2020, which has already received around 8000 applications from students from all over Italy.

However, the most known volunteers' recruitment resource is the recruitment platform set up by the organizers. Through this platform, linked to the event's main page, applicants can fill in the form to register for the volunteer program and other useful information about the event and the activities of the volunteer program. For example, before applying for a specific position, the candidate should read all the job descriptions so that he/she can choose according to his/her skills and preferences. Moreover, the volunteers' program is also sponsored through the event's social media (such as Facebook and Instagram) to increase the chance to attract more potential volunteers.

An example of an internal resource is the word of mouth, i.e., through recommendations from staff who is already working for the event. This is the cheapest method and often proves to be a good one. Before publishing the official volunteers' recruitment announcement, the organizers must think about how to publicize the volunteer program. The aim is to attract the best resources and to ensure that those who do not meet the requirements do not apply.

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<sup>29</sup> DEERY, M., JAGO, L., & Mair, J. (2011). *Volunteering for museums: The variation in motives across volunteer age groups*. *Curator: the Museum journal*, 54(3), 313 - 325. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2151-6952.2011.00094.x>



It is therefore necessary that the advertising post clearly defines the selection criteria and describes the type of role and the context in which it will be performed. As the Internet is now playing such an important part in people's lives, it is clear that the majority of people will want to apply via the web than via paper submission, so knowing in advance how to effectively recruit on the Internet is increasingly important. Foster<sup>30</sup> emphasized the need for a dedicated volunteer recruitment platform developed in such a way as to be able to store candidate data for use in case of need. In addition, to divert people's interest to the webpage, it needs to appear in search engines such as Google and have a simple but interactive design because, as Foster emphasized, the more people click, the longer they stay on the page.

When the number of candidates is restricted to those who actually meet the basic requirements, it means that the recruiting phase is over, and the selection phase can start.

### **3.4.2 Selection**

Selection is the process of choosing the best candidates, those who are suitable to work as volunteers in a given event.

Selection is always a very difficult process because recruiters can never be sure that they have chosen the right candidates until the moment they are performing their role. Furthermore, this selection process must ensure that all candidates are treated equally and that no one is excluded from the selection process on the basis of factors not directly related to their skills. The selection should be made on a merit base.

Once candidates send in their applications, the HR department set up by the Organizing Committee must carry out an initial screening. Once that a smaller number of candidates have been identified, an interview is usually organized. However, there are also cases where the selection is carried out only on the basis of what the applicant states on the form, but this is usually more frequent in smaller events.

For example, I have participated as a volunteer in three major events, Expo Milano 2015 and two figure skating competitions: in the first case, following a positive screening, an interview was organized at the local office of the organization in charge of recruiting volunteers (CSV Milano); in

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<sup>30</sup> FOSTER, M. (2003). *Recruiting on the Web*. McGraw-Hill in VAN DER WAGEN L. (2007) *Human Resource Management for Events: Managing the Event Workforce*, Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007

the second case, on the other hand, since both events had a minor impact at international level, no interview was organized and the selection was carried out directly by the volunteer managers, mainly taking into account the real motivation of the candidates.

The objective of the interview is mainly to understand the candidate on a behavioral level. The HR manager in charge of conducting the interview in most cases does not aim to test the technical skills already indicated in the candidate's CV, but the HR manager wants to know the candidate's personality, interests and motivations. The interview is a delicate moment as the interviewer has to be careful not to ask sensitive questions to candidates in order not to discriminate. For example, in recruiting volunteers for the Rio de Janeiro Olympics, all shortlisted candidates had to participate in a group assessment in which they were evaluated on their interaction and problem-solving skills, rather than on the final result of the case-study they had to analyze. In addition to interviews, an evaluation of several tests, such as aptitude tests, language tests, can help in the selection of candidates. In the context of sport events, these tests are often outsourced to the event's official partners: in the case of language tests, the organizing committee of the Olympics relies on EF as the official supplier of language training.

Finally, before deciding the final list of volunteers, a check of criminal record is carried out and, if necessary, references are checked too. The selection process is concluded by communicating the outcome to the candidates in both positive and negative cases.

Finally, it is important to remember that the recruitment campaign and the selection process can take more than a year to be completed, depending on the scale of the event. In the case of the Olympic Games, organizers start two years before the event takes place and hopefully about six months before the beginning volunteers' roles are defined and assigned. In the case of smaller events, such as the Stockholm 2021 World Figure Skating Championships, the recruitment took less than a year, with applications opening in February 2020 and volunteers being selected at the end of September 2020.

### **3.4.3 Training**

Volunteers' training, as well as paid staff's training, is one of the programs to which organizers must pay most attention when deciding on its characteristics, its methods and its target audience.

The training phase essentially enables the entire workforce to acquire the basic skills needed to perform the job.

In fact, it is possible to distinguish between two groups that may need a training program: event's core management and event workforce. In the case of the core management, training starts months or even years before the event and covers several areas. To illustrate this, the Milano-Cortina 2026

Organizing Committee has already defined a large part of its core management, and at five years before the event's kick off, these individuals are already undergoing training so that they can perform their tasks to the best of their ability. In the case of the event workforce, the training is much more diversified because this big group includes paid staff, volunteers and also contract workers, so each of them will have different tasks requiring specific training. If the training of core management has a long duration, the training of the workforce and, in particular, of volunteers, can even last just one day, that usually is the day before the beginning of the event.

The training process, together with the induction program, is part of the HR process and consists of several phases.

The first part is orientation, a phase in which basic information about the event, the organization, security measures, volunteer policy etc. is given. In the case of smaller events all this information is contained in a handbook (known as the Volunteer Manual) and it is up to the volunteer to read it and get informed.

The actual training is divided into two parts: general training and specific training. The main difference is that general training concerns the acquisition of skills that can be transferred from one event to another (e.g., information about the history of the event, safety concepts...), while specific training concerns the provision of skills that are specific to a certain role and only applicable in that context (in the case of sporting events, an example would be the training that volunteers have to do in relation to the sport and venue at which they have to serve).

However, before implementing the training program, the first thing to do is to carry out a study of the type of training suited not only to the event in general, but also taking into account the type of volunteers, managers and workforce.

In order to design the training program, a training needs analysis must be carried out, i.e., an understanding of the type of training the organization needs in order to run the event smoothly. This analysis answers a number of questions that are important for the plan to be effective. It looks at the context of the training (i.e., the type of event), the nature and number of people who will be trained (events with a large number of volunteers need to think about training programs that can be used by everyone and in a simple way), the timing of the training, the cost of the training and how to deliver it. The choice of those responsible for the training program must be well thought out because, especially in smaller sporting events, it may happen that those responsible for training are also responsible for other functions and therefore do not have the necessary skills to give a complete training to volunteers. This is what happened at the 2019 ISU Grand Prix Final of Figure Skating, where the volunteers were trained by the Competition Manager and not by the Head of Sport Function.

The training needs analysis can be done in different ways, for example it can be formal if the needs are analyzed taking into account the whole organization; or informal if each function and area is responsible for developing its own training.

If a formal approach is chosen, it will be necessary to carry out research and studies of past events in order to understand how the training was managed and, if necessary, to correct mistakes. In addition to that, regular meetings and focus groups can be useful before the initial development of the project.

As we have already seen, training is not only for the workforce, but is also mandatory for the event management team. In particular, this type of training must be organized in a meticulous way, so that the team can make the most of it and transfer the knowledge learned to the event organization. One of the aims of management training is to ensure that all people in a managerial position have the same view of the event and that everyone is aware of the cornerstones on which the event is based. For this reason, a training session on the history and purpose of the event is needed (for example, in the case of the Olympics, the International Olympic Committee wants to ensure that the entire Organizing Committee is aware of the Olympic principles and values). Another type of training concerns project management techniques, planning, notions of cultural awareness, recruitment and selection of personnel, leadership. All these topics cover all the areas that event organizers need to know about. In particular, leadership training is an essential part of the training and very often managers do not realize the importance of this type of training until they have obvious problems in managing staff, especially volunteers.

As far as the training of the workforce is concerned, in most mega events, such as the Olympics, the Asian Games and the Universiade, it consists of three parts: orientation training, venue training and job-specific training.

As mentioned above, orientation training is a general training to get an overview of the event. Through orientation training, volunteers and other staff members receive training in the history, purpose, planning and organization of the event. For example, in the case of sports events, an overview is given of all the sports present at the event and the venues where the competitions will take place. In addition to this information, socio-cultural issues such as disability (how to deal with disabled athletes or guests, knowledge of accessible areas and all the services dedicated to them) and interaction with guests, especially of different nationalities, are also mentioned.

The primary goal of this first training phase is to inform the volunteers and to give them a boost in motivation. However, despite the fact that this is the first phase of the training and that all volunteers should be highly motivated, sometimes it happens that either due to the type of approach used or the

amount of knowledge provided, volunteers become discouraged and lose their initial enthusiasm and motivation. To solve this problem, the Organizing Committee often turns to national and international celebrities such as athletes, actors or singers and politicians to promote messages of encouragement to the volunteers, highlighting once more their unique role and the fact that they are the pivot on which the whole event revolves.

The second step is venue training and this is held in competition areas such as stadiums, gymnasiums, gyms. This is the first training that allows the volunteers to get acquainted not only with the environment they will have to work in, but also with the whole team. During this phase, the volunteers are put in contact with the Venue Manager, who will take care of the venue and, in case of large and dispersed venues, of only some sections of it and will be the volunteers' direct superiors. During the venue training, all information about the venue is given, such as the field of play, game area and the surrounding area, which functional areas are present (e.g. accreditation function, medical service function, media, protocol...) and another very important thing to know is who has the rights to access to certain areas of the venue and those who cannot.

The latter part of the venue training is intended to ensure that competitions are conducted safely, so that no one can impede the smooth running of the event.

Another important part of the venue training concerns safety and emergency procedure. This part can only be done at the venue because each venue has different rules.

Finally, the aim of this phase mainly to connect each functions' coordinators with his group of volunteers so that they can try to get on well with each other and work together to achieve the event's goals.

The third and last part of the workforce training is the job-specific training.

This phase enables the volunteers to acquire the specific skills of the job they will have to do. This training often lasts a few hours, but in some cases it can take up to a few days.

Job specific training is necessary for all events regardless of size and duration because everyone involved needs to know exactly what to do.

The first thing to do to develop the job specific training is to understand which role the organizers need to create the plan for, so they need to read through the job description and understand what skills are needed in order to establish the objectives of the training. Based on this, it is necessary to understand what specific skills the volunteers lack and to prepare a training program which suits not only the needs of the organizers but also the needs of the workforce who will be performing the tasks. After having understood how to prepare the training, it is also necessary to decide how to deliver it and how to evaluate it afterwards. Basically, job-specific training follows the same planning steps as

the general training. In this case, since it is a more "practical" training, it is good to include many demonstrations and role plays so that volunteers can experience what they will actually have to do once the event starts. The most classic and well-known example where volunteers learn while training is their participation in the test events of the Olympic Games, a series of sport events held in the Olympic venues. These test events mainly serve as a general trial to test not only the facilities, but also the organization and the management of the staff. In any case, in order to be useful for volunteers, trainers should give precise and detailed instructions to the volunteers in order to make them more competent and to increase their confidence in carrying out the activity.

In the case of smaller sporting events, all three phases can be concentrated in a single training day, often the day before the event starts. Although this is less time-consuming and less expensive for the organizers, it does have drawbacks: for example, after an intensive day of training the volunteers are likely to be more confused about their role and therefore not know what to do when they are put into action. In addition, regardless of the nature of the event, all volunteers should be able to put what they have learnt into practice, at least once before the event: in fact, once the event has started, volunteers are not allowed to make mistakes, but as we will see later in the chapter there is a link between training, poor performance and general dissatisfaction.

From the organizers' point of view, the planning and management of training should require special attention, as failure to adequately train volunteers directly results in poor performance, but the long history of mega events has shown that organizers do not invest in training enough. Most of the time, they focus more on training delivery than on the quality of contents. Online training has also become a much-discussed topic: the organizers wonder whether it is possible to deliver online training that is as effective as face-to-face training. Clearly, there are both pros and cons: for example, online training is cheaper and can be accessed at any time through pre-recorded courses. However, connection problems and especially the lack of interactivity are some of the main problems. In fact, the lack of direct interaction with the trainers leads to an increase in the level of distance between the volunteers and their managers: without feedbacks, people cannot have a deeper knowledge of their team members and, as far as the organizers are concerned, this lack of direct feedback on training does not allow them to understand whether it is useful or not and whether it needs to be modified.

For many experts, online training should only be informative and therefore more suitable for the general training phase where volunteers learn information passively. In the case of annual events, however, investing in an online training platform can be beneficial in terms of budget and can also reduce the time needed to prepare the training program (since the event is always the same, it is possible to prepare video lectures that can be used in subsequent years).

Many researchers emphasize the importance of training because if it is well organized it can lead to efficient and effective organization and also to volunteers' satisfaction, and as a result they gain more awareness and confidence in their abilities. It has been shown that volunteers really care about training because it is an opportunity to improve their skills. As we have already mentioned, volunteers are the lifeblood of events and the outcome of their performance is also influenced by their level of satisfaction with the organization and this also applies to the training programme. Therefore, if the training is well run then the volunteers are motivated to give their best, however, on the contrary, if it is badly organized, the volunteers feel entitled to leave their role, causing a lack of volunteers. This loss of volunteers, often even before the event starts, is a big problem especially in sports events.

In conclusion, the planning and management of the training program also depends on the nature of the event: for example, for events comprising just one sport (such as marathons) the training may be assigned to one person; whereas for multi-sport events (such as the Olympics, World Athletics Championships) it will be necessary to assign the training to more than one person, which is the reason why it is necessary that the HR department and the event management team work together to plan and coordinate the training.

### **3.5 Volunteers' motivations and expectations**

When recruiting the team of volunteers to work at the event it is necessary to know their motivations. It is not surprising that there are different levels of motivation for volunteers to participate in the event. It can be said that volunteering revolves around motivation, which is not necessarily altruistic, but rather, especially in the case of mega sporting events such as the Olympics, is more selfish or instrumental.

What is motivation? It is the drive that leads an individual to achieve certain goals or results on the basis of previously defined needs or requirements. So, it is a process that involves three components: need, action and achievement. A first distinction can be made about the sources of motivation: intrinsic (when an individual acts in order to gain a personal advantage from the actions he or she performs, in this case motivation comes from the inside) and extrinsic (the individual acts on the basis of external factors).

There have been numerous studies on the motivation of volunteers, most of which have focused on the fact that motivation varies according to the nature and magnitude of the event. Other studies, however, have focused on the motivations that lead volunteers to leave their role by investigating the

reasons that guided to this decision. In addition to motivation and the reasons why volunteers drop out, studies have also focused on the issue of volunteers' retention.

When analyzing motivation, the study by Monga<sup>31</sup> is interesting as it outlines the five key dimensions of volunteer motivation:

1. Affiliatory motivation: volunteers feel part of the event and want to actively participate in order to contribute to its success.
2. Altruistic motivation: people volunteer just to help others and create a better society.
3. Instrumentalist motivation: volunteering activities contribute to acquiring a number of useful skills for personal growth.
4. Egoistic motivation: Volunteers participate in voluntary activities to feel important and useful. This is a typical motivation for those who want to increase their self-esteem.
5. Solidary motivation: In this case, voluntary activities serve to create opportunities for social interaction and unite people in a community.

However, it is difficult to determine which dimension is more frequent, also because it happens that several motivations can occur together or that one can lead to another.

Hallmann and Harns<sup>32</sup> further investigated motivations applied to the context of large sporting events and deduced that volunteers acted primarily on the basis of altruistic and selfish motivations, while a factor based on personal benefits was not found. On the contrary, in the study by Barron and Rihova<sup>33</sup> it was noted that the instrumental dimension was the most widespread among the volunteers as they expected to gain skills to be employed in the future and to create a professional network.

From these discordant studies, it is clear that what event organizers, particularly those involved in sport events, need to understand is the real motivation of volunteers, so that to ensure that everyone espouses the mission of the event and contributes to its success. In the case of sport events, the volunteers' motivation can also vary according to the importance of the event. For example, in events such as Wimbledon or athletics meetings, volunteers are more likely to participate on the basis of affiliatory or altruistic motivations as they are passionate about the sport and decide to be involved in

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<sup>31</sup> MONGA, M. (2006) *Measuring Motivation to Volunteer for Special Events*, Event Management, 10, pp. 47-61 in PILLWATSCH M. *Human Resource Management in the events context*, Northumbria University

<sup>32</sup> HALLMANN K., HARMS G. (2012) "Determinants of volunteer motivation and their impact on future voluntary engagement: A comparison of volunteer's motivation at sport events in equestrian and handball", *International Journal of Events and Festival Management*, 3:3, pp. 272-291

<sup>33</sup> BARRON P., RIHOVA I. (2011) "Motivation to volunteer: A case study of the Edinburgh International Magic Festival", *International Journal of Events and Festival Management*, 2:3, pp. 203-217



the event. In cases such as the Olympics, World or European championships or Asian Games (which are major events that can involve many people around the world) motivations can also be instrumental because people can gain personal benefits from such experiences.

Other studies on motivation reveal that volunteers choose to participate in events because they are motivated by cultural factors related to the event so that they can engage in a cultural exchange with other people. Another motivation is the possibility to use the volunteering experience as an opportunity to expand one's network and to learn new skills, especially if the activities carried out are quite different from what one is used to do.

Motivation is also closely linked to the volunteers' expectations regarding the event, and this also determines their degree of involvement.

In fact, there is an expectancy theory of motivation developed by Vroom<sup>34</sup>, who focuses his study on the motivations that lead people to work with regard to the goals they want to pursue and the efforts they are willing to make to get there. In essence, Vroom argues that motivation is the result of expectation and valence, i.e., motivation arises from the belief that an individual has that an effort will lead to a result and the value that the individual assigns to the expected result. This theory was further amplified by introducing the concept of instrumentality, i.e., that a good performance also corresponds to a good result and consequently a reward.

**Motivational Force (MF) = Expectancy x Instrumentality x Valence**

Basically, in Vroom's theory, motivation is the process that guides people's choices because individuals first check that there is a connection between effort and reward and then they try to understand if there is actually a possibility that the performance will lead to a reward. If, for example, an individual understands that he will never achieve a certain result because it is objectively unattainable, then he will not even try.

This theory applies well to the field of volunteers in major sport events and events of other nature because, as we will see when analyzing the statements of certain volunteers, in many cases the motivation is often linked to the fact of obtaining a reward after the performance.

When dealing with the volunteers' motivation, in order to better understand the intentions of volunteers, a survey was carried out to which 76 participants responded.

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<sup>34</sup> VROOM, V. (1973). *Work and Motivation*. John Wiley and Sons

Of these, 48.7% already had experience of volunteering at major sport events, while 30.3% said they would like to try to volunteer at such events in the future; what is surprising is that only 2.6% said they would not like to engage in such volunteering activities at sport events.

The survey in question asked respondents to indicate the main reasons that usually lead people to apply for volunteering programs at sport mega events. The answers given by the volunteers were very interesting as their motivations ranged from the passion for sport to the possibility to enter in contact with athletes and the chance to meet new people.

For many volunteers, the main motivation was to be able to participate in the event as an "insider" and thus to experience the atmosphere of the event and to be part of it personally. The idea of being able to be an essential part of a big event created such an emotion that it was the main motivation for these volunteers. For example, the volunteer A.G. stated that her main motivation was to *"get the chance of being part of the event, get a closer look at how things work, be part of something that makes me feel good"*. Also, for the volunteer C.P. passion and the possibility to contribute to the success of the event are the main motivations as she said *"to be honest my main reason is the possibility of getting close to sports I love the most. I also find fully satisfying and overwhelming the feeling of being an essential part of a big event, which really needs the kind of help I can offer for working efficiently"*.

For others, however, being able to convey the values of sport through their work is a good motivation to get involved in major sporting events. A.L. is convinced of this and even though he has no experience of volunteering in sport events he says that *"promote sport values and focus on societal issues"* are the motivations that will lead him to participate in this type of event. Some volunteers identify the experience itself as a source of personal "profit" that can open up future opportunities. Being able to acquire new skills through the experience and include them in the CV is a frequent motivation among those who do not have a great passion for sport but who see in the volunteering experience a return in terms of personal growth and network amplification. This is underlined by the statements of some volunteers such as C.V. who says that volunteering is useful *"to have many different experiences on the CV"*.

Another recurrent motivation among volunteers is the possibility to get in touch with people from all over the world, thus favouring a cultural and linguistic exchange. This is what volunteer G.R. expresses when she says that *"Possibility to practice the language, to meet new foreign people, to experience something different"* is important to her. Also volunteer G.M. in motivating why she participated as a volunteer in some sport events included *"...practice a language, meet new people, have fun, the excitement of doing something new and facing a different challenge every day, dynamic*

*multicultural environment*". For V.B. "to be part of a big event is an occasion to meet people from all over the world that have a common passion" is a chance of personal enrichment.

However, I would say that the most frequent motivation, recurring when it comes to sport events, is the chance to see the event from a different perspective and above all to be in contact with the athletes and the atmosphere of the competition. In fact, volunteers who participate in sport events are driven by a strong passion for the sport and being able to be in contact with the athletes they normally see through the TV screen or as spectators is a unique opportunity and a privilege.

To underline this, R.P. says that "*Seeing athletes preparing for major events and being able to see the event all day and especially "live" the event itself instead of being a spectator only*" is one of the main reasons she would volunteer for major sporting events. S.P. also says that "*being able to experience the competition from the inside, to see behind the scenes your favourite people and last but not least to be able to watch the competitions from a privileged position*" are the motivations that have kept her coming back as a skating event volunteer since 2005.

With regard to expectations, it is very interesting to analyze the "psychological contract" developed by Guest and Conway<sup>35</sup> and how it fits into the context of volunteers. Basically, in the field of HR, the psychological contract concerns the relationship between employee and employer on the basis of mutual expectations. In fact, the management of expectations on the part of the organizers of an event is also related to the management of volunteers. As Ralston et al.<sup>36</sup> say, when volunteers participate in an event, they seek a psychological contract from the very beginning and not only during the event. While initially based on trust, as a link is established with HR managers and organizers, this contract evolves and volunteers begin to have expectations (such as having training, shift and event planning, a certain level of communication...), but they also know that these expectations may not be realized. However, as Ralston points out, if expectations are not met in full or even in part, volunteers begin to lose interest in the activities and the event itself. This is because if at the beginning their motivation was fuelled by the fact of participating in a unique and globally recognized event, this motivation is not strong enough to influence their behaviour and for this reason they often drop out. On the other hand, from the point of view of the organizers, i.e., the employers, being able to meet the expectations of the volunteers (and of the workforce in general) is important in order to increase the level of interest

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<sup>35</sup> GUEST, D. and CONWAY, N. (2002). "Communicating the psychological contract: an employer perspective" *Human Resource Management Journal*, **12(2)**, 22–39

<sup>36</sup> RALSTON, R., DOWNWARD, P. and LUMSDON, L. (2004). "The expectations of volunteers prior to the XVII Commonwealth Games 2002". *Event Management*, **9**, 13–26

and acceptance of the event by the population, because volunteers can influence the perceptions of the public by interacting with people.

Guest and Conway, as well as Ralston, considering the employee side, divide the psychological contract into three parts that will be briefly discussed here after.

The first phase, the initial phase, sees the involvement of volunteers fuelled mainly by altruism and the fact that they can actively participate in a unique event. In this phase, the volunteers already feel strongly part of the event also thanks to the communication work that is carried out so as not to lose but the contact with them that are the essential part of mega sport events. Indeed, for this reason, effective communication must be established right from the beginning. In addition, the organizers must carefully communicate the right messages, otherwise bad publicity given by external forces can influence the volunteers, so it is important to give a positive view of the activities and the event in general to encourage workforce retention.

The second phase concerns the period in which the event takes place. During this period, the motivation and retention of volunteers and paid workforce are extremely important in order to be able to carry out all the planned activities (daily event operations) that require a large number of human resources (but mainly volunteers). At this stage, strategies, namely reward programs, are implemented to maintain a high spirit of staff participation. However, although necessary, these programs need to be thought through carefully because they have a cost and are often replanned during the course of the project due to a lack of budget. Examples of these rewards are competitions' tickets, certificates of participation, interaction and networking events between volunteers, products from event's sponsors, official event photos, etc.

The third phase is related to the post-event: volunteers, having participated in mega events, expect to have some kind of recognition in the future, maybe use their experience as an incentive for their professional career. However, if the event has received bad publicity and has been exposed to criticism by the media, then volunteers also think they might be affected. An example of this was the 2015 Expo held in Milan, an event that has received negative comments and where volunteers were often attacked because of their role.

As we have seen, in order to ensure that motivation does not decrease and that volunteers have always the same level of commitment, it is essential that organizers provide volunteers with a good working environment basing on continuous feedback, appreciation, rewards and a sense of teamwork. This makes the volunteers even more involved, loyal and motivated and also creates a strong team spirit. Of course, as we have seen, this is not so easy to put into practice, otherwise the problem of dropping out would not occur.

What happens when motivation decreases or when voluntary work produces a sense of anxiety and inadequacy in volunteers?

One of the most common problems is volunteers' drop out and it can be very dangerous for the organization if many dropouts occur.

Scholars have asked what causes volunteers to drop out of their role and some of the main causes are a general dissatisfaction with the event organization, few activities to do, tensions between staff and volunteers, lack of help from coordinators.

As Yanay and Yanay<sup>37</sup> point out, the reasons for dropout are linked to expectations and how far these expectations are from the actual experience. In their study they tried to analyze three typical cases of dropout. I will now present one of the most common cases that could be easily found in sport mega events.

The two researchers studied the case of volunteers who, after having carried out the training, decide to drop out even before the beginning of the event: this is a very common situation in sport events, both on a small and large scale, because volunteers develop a sense of over-involvement and for this reason they struggle to even start the activity.

The study showed that although the volunteers were initially motivated and their convictions were very strong, but due to the intense training the volunteers started to develop worry and anxiety. In jargon, this phenomenon is called "motivational saturation" and occurs when volunteers feel psychologically overwhelmed by the pre-volunteering experience. In addition, some volunteers may feel inadequate for the role and thus experience a sense of inadequacy resulting in an inability to act. This is a frequent problem, for example, in the case of volunteers who decide to participate in order to test their character and who, after having undergone training, no longer feel confident to do so. For example, if a volunteer with a shy nature is assigned to a role with a lot of interaction with guests and the public, it is easy for them to feel stressed and unable to perform at their best. In this case, the organizers and even more so the Volunteer Manager must try to listen to the volunteers' concerns and reassure them so that they feel confident and responsible.

Speaking of problems related to the motivation and commitment of sports volunteers, scholars such as Pearce<sup>38</sup> recognize the level of dependability of volunteers as one of the major problems. This is because many volunteers fail to maintain a certain standard or leave their workplace or do not turn up for shifts causing operational problems not only for the organizers but also for other volunteers.

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<sup>37</sup> YANAY, G.V. and YANAY, N. (2008), "The decline of motivation?: From commitment to dropping out of volunteering." *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 19: 65-78. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.205>

<sup>38</sup> PEARCE, J.L. (1993). *Volunteers: The organizational behavior of unpaid workers*. London: Routledge

Cuskelly et al.<sup>39</sup> pointed out that studies have not focused enough on the social and cognitive reasons that guide and influence volunteers: in fact, according to them it is important to try to predict volunteers' behaviour in mega sport events. In particular, in order to give a theoretical framework to explain volunteers' retention, Cuskelly et al. talk about the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) applied to volunteering in mega sport events and point out that this theory has never been applied to this field in an extensive way. Before seeing how it can be applied in this context, it is necessary to understand what TPB is. The theory of planned behaviour was introduced by Ajzen<sup>40</sup> and basically helps to understand how an individual can change behaviour. In simple terms, this theory is based on the fact that the implementation of a behaviour is determined by the individual's intentions to act and behave in this way, and these intentions are in turn influenced by three components: attitude towards the behaviour (i.e. what the individual believes will be the result of the implemented attitude, positive or negative), subjective norm (i.e. the individual's perception of a behaviour but which is influenced by the judgement of others) and perceived behavioral control (i.e. the degree of difficulty a person perceives in assuming a particular behaviour).

How can this theory be applied to volunteering at sporting events? Cuskelly et al. explain that, for example, the fact of wanting to volunteer may already lead to a positive outcome that outweighs possible negative outcomes. In addition, volunteers may be subject to the opinions of people around them, which may have influenced their decision to participate. Finally, they will certainly have weighed up the degree of feasibility of the assignment.

Cuskelly et al. ask: assuming that the decision to volunteer at sporting events is a rational one and that volunteers have considered all the beliefs mentioned above before deciding, how can we go beyond motivations and examine their behaviour, in particular predict their degree of dependability? The question posed by Cuskelly et al. is interesting because the level of behavioral dependability is influenced by volunteers' perceptions of possible rewards but also by organizers' expectations. Basically, organizers expect a certain level of behavioral dependability because volunteers should always show up and complete their shifts based on their willingness to volunteer, but this is not always the case. The higher or lower level of dependability may depend on the rewards because a volunteer is more likely to continue their activity and be dependable if they receive rewards for their efforts. In fact, Pearce's argument about trustworthiness and rewards is different from others because he argues

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<sup>39</sup> CUSKELLY, G., AULD, C., HARRINGTON, M. and COLEMAN, D. (2004). "Predicting the behavioural dependability of sport event volunteers" *Event Management*, 9, 73–89

<sup>40</sup> AJZEN, I. (1985) "From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behavior"  
J Kuhl, J Beckmann (Eds.), *Action-control: From cognition to behavior*, Springer, Heidelberg (1985), pp. 11-39

that the greatest reward is participation in volunteering itself because the interactions with other volunteers, staff, and the satisfaction of contributing to something greater, being able to go backstage and meet athletes, is already a great reward. This theory corresponds to what we saw earlier when talking about the motivations of the volunteers who participated in the survey.

Being able to understand the behaviour and the reasons of volunteers behind their actions is also important to ask another question: what are the motivations that make volunteers stay? There are several factors that have an impact on volunteers' retention. For example, having suitable shifts clearly influences volunteer commitment. If volunteers have well-balanced shifts, they are more likely to be committed while working. The degree of job satisfaction is also essential for a volunteer to stay: however, it should be emphasized that volunteers have a more positive attitude and are more willing to justify certain organizational mistakes.

### **3.6 The role of Volunteers' Leader in sport mega events and volunteers' management**

*“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.” – Henry Ford<sup>41</sup>*

The sentence abovementioned sums up pretty well what is the role of the Volunteers' Leader (also known as Volunteers' Manager): uniting the volunteers and keeping them together throughout the whole event, motivating them to do their best for the success of the event.

The Volunteer Manager's job is quite complicated because he/she and his/her team have to take care of all the tasks related to volunteers' management.

The main tasks of a Volunteer Manager include:

- Planning the volunteers' program according to the needs of the event
- Recruiting volunteers
- Organizing volunteers' training
- Ensuring that the communication between volunteers and function managers is effective
- Checking that volunteers are enthusiastic and motivated
- Giving constructive feedbacks at the end of activities

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<sup>41</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/erikaandersen/2013/05/31/21-quotes-from-henry-ford-on-business-leadership-and-life/?sh=5977e8a293c5>

- Ensuring that the rights of volunteers are respected

In order to be able to carry out tasks of great responsibility, it is necessary to recruit volunteer leaders who not only have had previous experience in this role, but also have had volunteering experience. This is because no one knows volunteers' needs better than those who have already had the same experience.

In addition to this, it is important that the volunteer manager is competent in HRM practices, he/she should have good interpersonal communication skills and should be able to manage the budget given by the organizers in order to carry out his/her volunteer management activities.

We have already talked about the recruitment and selection of volunteers: the volunteer manager is in charge of making this important choice and he/she is the one who communicates by email with the candidates about the progress of their application.

Before the beginning of the event, the volunteer manager must make sure that volunteers have received their volunteer kit (uniform, accreditation and volunteer handbook and some gadgets or memorabilia) and that they have done proper training together with their function coordinators.

It is important to note that the volunteer manager is only responsible for volunteers' recruitment and not for the recruitment of each function's coordinators, who are chosen by the Organizing Committee. One of the biggest problems for a volunteer manager, apart from volunteers' drop out during the event, is the management of any shortcomings of the function's coordinators (who are not always competent in this area). For this reason, organizers should provide adequate training also to them in order to prevent the volunteer manager from doing extra work.

An important task of the volunteer manager is to keep the volunteers motivated every day in order to make the volunteering activities as fun and enjoyable as possible. For example, one of the best ways to make volunteers stay and feel part of the team is to allow them to watch competitions or other competition-related events in their free time or after their completed shifts. Moreover, to make all volunteers feel included and part of the team, it is important that staff members should greet volunteers every day, just to make sure everyone knows where to go and who to contact in case of need. Finally, volunteer leaders must allow volunteers a certain degree of freedom: it is clear that volunteers cannot work for eight hours straight, but they do need to take breaks. So, organizers should implement a system that allows each volunteer to have at least one lunch break during their shift.

Also, during the event, especially at the end of the day, volunteer managers should try to have a direct discussion with volunteers to understand if the organization is working properly or if they perceive any shortcomings. This is a good way to make the volunteers more involved and to check if they are happy, if they need more flexible shifts or if they want more tasks.



Once the event is over, the volunteer manager participates in a debriefing organized by the Organizing Committee in which his/her performance is evaluated. However, this evaluation is done only by the organizers and not by the volunteers. This is a very common mistake because volunteers should always be able to give a feedback not only on their experience, but also on how they perceived the organization of the event. In this work I have tried to partially overcome this problem, by exploring the memories of sport mega events' volunteers. Furthermore, once the event is over, the volunteer manager should try to keep in touch with the volunteers, usually through social media platforms, so that they can share their experiences, photos and highlights of the event, but also to be able to contact them again if they are needed for future events.

The volunteer manager must also be able to deal with some common problems when managing volunteers.

The most common and occurring problem is the loss of volunteers before the event starts: volunteers who have signed up for the volunteers' program may drop out at the last moment. To avoid this, or to try to mitigate this risk, the volunteer manager should ask the volunteers to confirm their attendance a few days before so that there is still some time to change the schedule; the volunteer manager could also send a series of friendly reminders in order to create a sort of sense of belonging and unity between the volunteers and the coordinators.

Another problem is conflict management that may occur not only between volunteers, but also between volunteers and coordinators or, in the worst of the cases, with participants or spectators. In this case, the volunteer manager must demonstrate that he/she is empathetic and try to solve the problem by moving the volunteers to other tasks so that they do not lose their participation and do not risk to incur in more arguments.

The last most common problem is the management of volunteers' shifts to ensure that everyone works more or less the same number of hours and that everyone can have breaks during their shifts so that they are not too tired.

In addition to these common problems, there are also issues concerning the legal aspect of volunteer management.

For example, the volunteer manager has to make sure that all volunteers are covered by insurance for the activities in which they are expected to participate. Also, another very important point that the volunteer manager should clarify is the difference between volunteers and paid staff and making sure that volunteers do not perform any work that should be done by paid staff in order to avoid the risk of exploitation. The final legal issue concerns the criminal record check of all volunteers before

selecting them. In fact, the organizers would not want to have any problems caused by volunteers who have a pending criminal record. For this reason, the criminal record is checked before choosing people on the basis of their skills and motivation. Usually, organizers automatically check the criminal records for those volunteers who come from the hosting country, international volunteers should ask this document to the competent bodies and send it to the organizers

In order to better understand the figure of the volunteer manager, I have conducted an interview with Fulvio Raggio, volunteer manager in various sporting events, from the Turin 2006 Olympics to Sochi 2014 Olympics.

*Q. How did you become a Volunteer Manager?*

*A. I am an example of how an ex-volunteer can become a volunteer manager: the first event in where I participated as a volunteer manager was the 2006 Turin Olympic Games. I applied on the Internet without great expectations and then I was called for an initial interview until the final choice was made.*

*Q. What do you usually do as a volunteer manager? How do you choose volunteers?*

*A. In every mega event, the organization starts many years before, about three years beforehand. Once the core management is defined, we move on with the recruitment campaign, mainly through media which will be the main tool for recruiting volunteers. Volunteers are first recruited at local level and then the search is extended throughout the country and abroad. The preference expressed by candidates regarding roles and areas of work is a very important thing to keep in mind when recruiting volunteers. Taking the 2006 Turin Olympic Games as an example, at that time there were around 30,000 applications and, after record criminal checks done by the police, the list of potential candidates has dwindled to 22,000. The list of all volunteers participating in the "Noi 2006" volunteers' program was geared towards the sport events to which volunteers applied. For example, in the case of figure skating, suitable candidates were invited to participate in test events and if their performance was good enough, they would have been confirmed as "Olympic volunteers". This is also a great way to train and retain volunteers. Almost one year before the event's beginning, volunteer managers define each volunteer's role and functions. However, this phase can be quite long, starting about 6 months and lasting up to two weeks from the beginning of the event. Once volunteers have been assigned to a specific function, they are then put in contact with their function's coordinator.*

*Q. How is the training of volunteers carried out?*

*A. The level of training depends on the size of the event. In the case of mega events such as the Olympics, training is carried out during the year preceding the event through a series of meetings with volunteers, aimed to conduct general and safety training. Afterwards, the different functions can proceed to more specific trainings. One of the most effective ways of training volunteers is to have them attend test events and other sport-specific events so that they gain confidence and will be ready when the mega event starts.*

*Q. What important aspects should the Organizing Committee consider when managing the event and volunteers?*

*A. First of all, the wrong choice of volunteer managers may have a strong impact because if inexperienced people are chosen, there is a risk of not being able to control the volunteers. Taking the Grand Prix Final as an example, the volunteers' coordinators had already been chosen months before the event, but a change in management by the organizers caused some other changes in the coordinators' team. These changes took place in the last two weeks before the event and the people identified and chosen for these roles did not have the necessary skills to do the job. However, as the event was just around the corner, it was not possible to change the coordinators any further. Clearly this constant change of managers had an impact on the volunteers, especially in the Sport function (the most important in a sport event) where volunteers no longer knew who to contact and where some of them were even left at home. However, we must not forget that the event organization must never be left to chance, whatever the type of event. Another very important aspect is the rewarding of volunteers: organizers must always remember that volunteers are people who come and work for free and the effort they make must be recognized. In this case, the Organizing Committee must provide a certain type of benefits, such as free tickets, special events reserved for them... The volunteers' management is clearly the most important aspect and it must always be well planned, volunteers must have a precise and defined role: for example, at the 2014 Sochi Olympic Games there were many university volunteers, however they were not really motivated to participate, while at the 2015 Milan Expo the volunteers had a mere representative role; this cannot happen in sports events because volunteers are the engine that makes the whole event work. In addition to this, the Organizing Committee must be careful with volunteers who decide to drop out the event because, in addition to an organizational problem, there is also economic damage because every volunteer has a cost that the organizers have to bear, so the budget cannot be wasted because it is always very limited.*

*Q. How important is it to give feedback to volunteers and to have feedback from them?*

*A. Giving feedback to volunteers is important because it is a way to let them know that their work is appreciated and recognized. It is also useful for the organizers to understand how the work of the volunteers is going and whether the guidelines they give are being respected. However, it is also important that volunteers give feedback to their coordinators so that the event organizers can improve the organization for future events. However, satisfaction questionnaires are hardly ever sent out and there is a tendency to disregard the volunteers' thoughts. In fact, at the Grand Prix Final in the debriefing session after the event, the organization highlighted that there were no relevant problems during the event, even though it is clear that there were many. There was no real intention to understand how to improve the event because in case of negative feedback the international skating federation might not assign any more events to Italy.*

*Q. What are the areas that need to be improved in volunteers' management?*

*A. Definitely the training of volunteers: we need to organize online training programs, just like it happened for the 2015 Expo and Turin 2006 Olympics and provide specific training on a practical level before the event, as if it were a simulation of what could happen during the event. In addition, volunteers should be appreciated more (the organizers should be aware that volunteers are useful for the event success) and real benefits should be provided on the basis of the budget available.*

To conclude, the table below summarizes the good practices that a volunteer manager should follow for good volunteer management.

DO	DON'T
Choose volunteers' based on their skills	Treat volunteers' for granted
Ensuring specific and general training	Isolate volunteers
Respect volunteers' role	Treat them in a different way
Include volunteers as part of the team	Ignore their interests and preferences of role
Give positive and constructive feedbacks	Give too many tasks
Listen to volunteers' opinions	Put them in a difficult situation
Try to acknowledge their efforts and achievement	Ignore their feedbacks

Table 3.3 Good practices for volunteers' managers

### **3.7 Examples of bad volunteers' management in sports' mega events: 2019 ISU Grand Prix Final and 2018 World Figure Skating Championships**

Volunteers are the engine of the event and their activity can lead to the success or failure of the event. They are the direct expression of the event, the representatives of a set of values that the organizers

want to promote beyond competitions. Volunteers' management needs to be carefully planned because when volunteers do not feel rewarded for their hardwork they tend to change their view of the event and of the Organizing Committee, going from an initial state of euphoria and a sense of belonging to a state of discouragement and non-appreciation.

What happens when there are problems with volunteers' management at the event? What could be the consequences of a lack of leadership and management?

I have decided to focus on two examples taken from my personal experiences, examples that are at the heart of this work. These two cases concern two international sport events, both concerning the same discipline and both organized in Italy twenty months apart. Another element that characterizes the two events is the involvement of the same group of volunteers for most of the operational functions, however we must underline that the core management has changed due to a different Organizing Committee's decision.

Here I would like to highlight how the construction of a well prepared and competent team should be the basis on which the organization sets up all the functions. In addition, through the direct testimonies of the volunteers and organizers, it is possible to have an overview of the event that encompasses different points of view.

The first event mentioned is the 2018 ISU World Figure Skating Championships, a competition organized at the Mediolanum Forum in Assago (Milan) from March 19<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> 2018 and this event saw the participation of almost 600 volunteers. The second event is the 2019 ISU Grand Prix final of Figure Skating, held at the Palavela in Turin from December 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> 2019 and the volunteers who participated were around 300.

The two events had similar issues, although declined in different ways.

### **3.7.1 Language barriers**

Both events were attended by athletes and spectators from all over the world, particularly from Russia and Japan. One of the first problems encountered was the lack of sufficient paid and unpaid staff who knew the most requested languages, such as Russian, Japanese and Chinese, as to act as mediators between the organizers and the guests (athletes, coaches, spectators).

While this lack may be partly justifiable given that it is hard to find a good number of volunteers in Italy who can speak these languages fluently, the organizers underestimated another obvious problem: the knowledge of English at an acceptable level. This problem emerged especially among the volunteers of the spectators' service function, i.e., those volunteers who worked in close contact with

the audience at the venue. The main reason was that most of the volunteers were over 65 years of age and therefore it can be assumed that they had no opportunity to learn English in a proper way. The lack of English knowledge, which should be taken for granted in this kind of events, led to situations where several volunteers had to leave their workplace to help other volunteers in difficulty or to the use of electronic translators to establish communication with the spectators.

A very significant and funny episode on language misunderstanding concerns the experience of some volunteers at the 2019 event. One of the most eagerly awaited moments by true sports fans is the delivery of banners depicting their favourite athletes to volunteers: the day of men's short program, where the reigning Olympic champion Yuzuru Hanyu had to participate, a Japanese fan went to the banner collection point but could communicate with the volunteers only in Japanese. This problem required the intervention of four volunteers who tried to interact through the automatic translator, but the latter led to a series of misunderstandings due to the misinterpretation of some Japanese terms. Although the situation eventually resolved, it took four volunteers to overcome the difficult situation and they had to temporarily suspend their previous activities. One may wonder why volunteers who couldn't communicate with foreign guests were placed on the venue's stands. The choice is actually justified by the fact that they were very familiar with all the sectors of the arena due to their previous volunteering experiences in the same venue. However, the event organizers made a mistake: they should have provided all the volunteers with a basic English course at least few weeks before the event in order to give them the basic knowledge of the most used English terms in order to welcome international guests. While in mega events language tests and pre-event courses are planned, in smaller events the language skills of the volunteers are not given the right importance, as they are only indicated in the application form but never checked (probably due to the limited funds available to allow everyone to take the test and course). Another mistake was that of not placing younger volunteers alongside the "senior" ones who could help them interact with non-Italian-speaking users: in fact, an average of two volunteers worked in each sector of the venue. The third mistake concerns the lack of mistakes' awareness: there had already been language problems in the 2018 event and these difficulties recurred in 2019 in an even more obviously considering that there were fewer volunteers participating. This means that there was no knowledge or mistakes transfer from one event to another.

### **3.7.2 Frequent changes in schedule**

Another problem encountered by the volunteers and which caused moments of tension between them and their supervisor was the constant changing of shifts. In both events there were problems of this

kind due to two reasons in particular: directives given at the last minute by the organizers and volunteers drop out.

At the World Championships in Milan, shifts were designed to have at least two extra volunteers (to be used as "jolly" when the volunteers on duty needed a break), however the organization had to face severe episodes of volunteers dropping out because of disagreements with their function coordinator. In this case, the lack of volunteers during the event was managed thanks to the goodwill of other volunteers who were willing to work double shifts just not to cause further problems to the organization. Given this basic problem, other problems with volunteer management rapidly followed, such as never having shifts with fixed hours. In fact, many volunteers complained that the shifts changed every day and nobody knew what they were supposed to do because it was decided at the last minute, mainly according to the number of volunteers available. For example, there were two significant episodes of how problematic management was: in the first case, there were volunteers who had finished their shifts at 11.30 p.m. and would start again the following day at 6 a.m.; in the second case, it often happened that some volunteers who had arrived in the volunteer area earlier than their shifts were put immediately on duty, thus giving up the possibility of attending competitions or resting before starting their shift. This led to a disequilibrium in the distribution of shifts with the result that there were many volunteers who did more than expected, while others worked less. Needless to say, this behaviour on the part of the volunteer coordinators had an impact on the mood and happiness of the volunteers who, in some cases, felt exploited, or rather their goodwill was exploited.

In the case of the Turin event, the problem of constant changes of schedules and positions recurred and had an even greater impact on the volunteers as they were fewer in number compared to the other event. Taking the Sport function as an example, the fact that there were fewer volunteers than the minimum number required resulted in a work overload for all the volunteers participating. This was the consequence of a wrong estimation of the number of volunteers to be deployed in the areas controlled by the Sport function: in fact, a few days before the beginning of the event there were some volunteers (coming from foreign countries too) who were asked to go back home as they were "no longer needed". In fact, the absence of volunteers led to endless shifts without breaks because no one could take the place of other volunteers. As for the volunteers' time schedule, last-minute changes were an everyday occurrence. This is my personal experience: on the day of the training, which took place the day before the event, the timetable for the following day had not yet been provided, causing organizational and logistical problems for volunteers coming from outside Turin, since the first shift would have started at 5.30 am.

For the purpose of this thesis, I carried out a survey asking volunteers what the main problems were and if they felt that their work was recognized or not. The answers were very interesting.

According to the 60.5% of the respondents, volunteers' work is not properly recognized either by the volunteer coordinators or by the event organizers, while, on the contrary, the efforts of the volunteers do not go unnoticed in the eyes of the athletes and their entourage. This negative fact is also highlighted by some testimonies of volunteers, reported below, who pointed out the poor organization of schedules as one of the main problems.

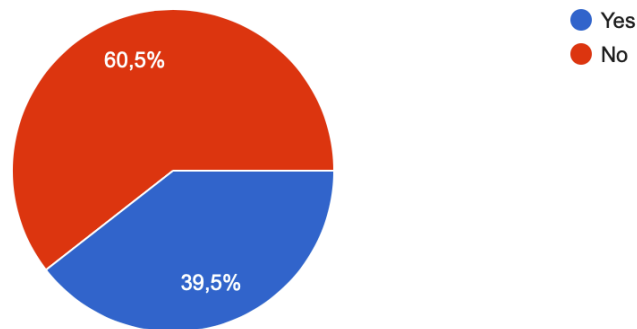


Table 3.4 Survey results

Volunteer G.M. said *"once a Japanese team manager gifted me a small pin to express her gratitude for what volunteers do"*, but also pointed out that *"sometimes I didn't feel valued by the organizers"*.

Volunteer M.C. said that *"Each volunteer should have a perfectly detailed schedule of where and when they should be present during the event"*.

Volunteer M.M.A. stated that *"more precise management of shifts and more privileges (rewards like discounts for brands which are sponsors of the event)"* were needed; while volunteer F.F. underlined that *"Sometimes volunteers are given for granted and their needs are put in second place. Sometimes they aren't given any time to have a meal or they have unbearable shifts in a very cold environment"*.

Volunteers E.C., A.G. and V.V. stressed the need to create precise and well-organized schedules system exposed on a notice board so that everyone can have an overview of where the other volunteers are, and in addition to this, they felt it was necessary to reduce or at least minimize the mistakes.

From the direct testimonies of the volunteers participating at the event, it is evident that there was a lack of attention on the part of the volunteer coordinators, who paid the price for their lack in managing human resources in mega international events.

### 3.7.3 Communication problems

When interviewing volunteers, it emerged that poor communication between coordinators and volunteers was the cause of misunderstandings and many problems, especially when the event had



already started. However, if in the pre-event phase there was a timely communication with volunteers about the tasks, the rules of the event, and even a preliminary division into shifts, etc... this was not equally efficient when the event started. In particular, the lack of adequate communication was somewhat a leitmotif of the volunteering experience at the event in Turin.

To illustrate the importance attached to effective communication, Goldblatt<sup>42</sup> argues that the success or failure of event management depends on communication. Specifically, in the case of both events, a lack of communication led to situations in which volunteers did not know what to do and did not know how to contact their coordinators in case of difficulty. It is common knowledge that at the basis of any big event there must be teamwork and the collaboration between all team members whose aim is the success of the event. Communication also plays an important role in facilitating the work of the whole team, both management and volunteers.

In the case of poor or a total lack of communication, there are two important and closely related consequences: volunteers feel ignored and abandoned and this leads them to act autonomously, according to their own initiative.

The fact that volunteers act autonomously is very risky not only because it can create a problem within the function, but also because it can have consequences on the whole event. For example, in the case of the Grand Prix Final, communication between volunteers and coordinators was almost absent in the Sport Function, one of the most important as it is in close contact with the athletes and the competition environment. Let's briefly look at the reasons that led to volunteer coordinators' failure and how the problems were solved. First of all, one of the main reasons was the lack of "knowledge management" on the part of the coordinators, i.e., they did not know how the 2018 event had been run simply because there was no time to get the information. In fact, as Fulvio Raggio, the volunteer manager of the event, recalls, "*the managers were defined in the two weeks before the event and got their position by acquaintances, not by merit*". This is something to bear in mind, because the lack of experience inside the Sport Function led to a series of problems, where communication was in the background. One of the mistakes was assuming that all volunteers in the function always knew how to behave and what to do in all circumstances. However, every event is unique and one can never know what unforeseen events may occur and the timeliness of communication must always be on a high level. For example, one volunteer had an unforeseen situation: an athlete was locked in a toilet and needed some outside help. The volunteer in question immediately tried to call the volunteer manager and only after several attempts was able to get a response. In the meantime, the athlete was

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<sup>42</sup> GOLDBLATT, J. J. (2005). *Special Events: Event Leadership for a New World*, 4th edn. Wiley

getting anxious because he was supposed to start his competition right after. Solving the problem took longer than necessary because the coordinators were never available at the phone and it could have been easier if the contact details of the emergency personnel had been provided.

As volunteer N.T. points out *"more general information should have been given to the volunteers quickly to avoid bigger problems"*.

Another example where communication problems caused discomfort in volunteers was the lack of instructions in English: since most of the volunteers were Italian and the coordinators did not know English well, volunteers from abroad were given few instructions, mostly through the volunteer manual. This behaviour only increased the distance between coordinators and foreign volunteers and did not foster the spirit of multiculturalism that characterizes large events. In this way, the foreign volunteers did not feel fully part of the group but had to rely on the other volunteers to act as translators.

Volunteer A.C. summarized her previous comments as follows: *"I had several volunteering experiences: I can say that it's important that the OC creates trust and teamwork atmosphere to get the best of volunteers."* When the volunteer feels "isolated " they won't get involved in the organization and mistakes will happen. For the same reason clear communication is crucial.

Timeliness and quality of communication should be the basis on which a relationship of trust and cooperation should be built, so it is desirable to define an effective plan, especially in view of the next big event to be held in Italy, Milan Cortina 2026.

### **3.7.4 Lack in volunteers' control**

Another problem encountered in both events was the inability of effectively control volunteers' work. This problem is linked to a lack of leadership on the part of the coordinators, or rather to the wrong use of the leadership style employed to control the volunteers. A leader is first and foremost a person who seeks to inspire and motivate the "followers" to work according to the guidelines, so as to achieve the common goal (in the case of the events in question the primary goal is the success of the competition), but also to make them grow as better individuals. If the wrong leadership style is adopted, i.e., one that is not suited to the context in which one operates and the people with whom one works, there may be an impact on the performance of the group as the style influences the organizational climate.

In the case of the two sports events taken as examples, the two volunteer coordinators of Sport function adopted two different leadership styles, but which led to the same result, that is a poor volunteer management.

In the first event, the coordinator of Sport function adopted an authoritarian leadership style through which he exercised a rather oppressive control over the volunteers by imposing his own decisions without being open to a dialogue with them. For example, in some cases, rather than common sense prevailing, decisions were made solely on the basis of the needs of the event without also taking into account the needs and requests of volunteers.

In the second event, the coordinator used a pacesetting style whereby important tasks were given to the volunteers at a high pace and no one was expected to make mistakes. However, it can be said that the coordinator demanded a lot of commitment from the volunteers but without giving clear guidelines and without providing the right training to make the volunteers' work as autonomous as possible. The fact of pretending the maximum level from volunteers in terms of commitment and availability without involving them directly in the planning of the shifts led the volunteers to no longer follow the coordinator's directives but acting autonomously on the basis of their previous experience in that type of event. The cooperation between the volunteers of Sports function was essential for the success of the event: their common sense and ability to act on their own initiative made it possible to run smoothly. The Turin event was a fairly unique case in which the volunteers were better prepared than the coordinators to deal with and manage unforeseen events. In the end, there was no clear definition of roles as coordinators also delegated to volunteers.

In general, the volunteers emphasized that it was necessary to better define the organization of the coordinators by putting more experienced people in charge of it. They also stated that a better organization would have led to more interaction, sense of belonging and emotional involvement from the team.

However, it is not so easy to replace coordinators in a short-term sport event such as the two taken as an example because, as Fulvio Raggio points out, *"for smaller event organizers usually start the organizational process a little more than a year before the beginning, but they tend to take decisions about staff and core management at the very last minute; whereas in mega events such as the Olympics it is easier to replace people who are unsuitable for the role because the team is made up of 1,500 people who closely work together for at least four years, so there is time to replace them"*. Mr. Raggio also stresses that *"the event organization should never be improvised, and it is important to choose competent and experienced people for positions of responsibility."* In fact, volunteer coordinators should participate in special leadership training so that they are aware of the most appropriate styles for the type of event.

### **3.8 Rights and duties of volunteers**

One of the most important issues to which event organizers must pay close attention is the one concerning rights and duties of the workforce. In particular, organizers must pay attention to working conditions and ensure maximum safety levels for all the people who are on site (both workers and spectators).

In order to avoid problems and disputes, HR managers and event organizers need to be aware of the legal framework of employment that applies to volunteers even though they are not paid workers or subject to a contract. In fact, even though they are not subject to a contract and therefore cannot enjoy the same rights as workers, volunteers still have rights recognized in an agreement explaining what is allowed and what is not.

However, the legal status of volunteers is an interesting and complex area because they do not have an official contract and this makes them vulnerable.

#### **3.8.1 Volunteers' rights**

Taking the two events mentioned before as an example, the volunteer handbook sets out the rights of volunteers, such as:

- to be properly trained before starting the activity
- right to have an official uniform and personal accreditation
- right to have a meal for each completed work shift
- insurance coverage
- safe working environment
- possible reimbursement of expenses and other benefits (at the discretion of the organizers and according to the volunteer program).

Volunteers are entitled to receive training before starting their work and in some cases are obliged to attend training sessions for which they receive a certificate upon completion. The uniform and accreditation are mainly used to be recognizable as event staff and must be provided to all volunteers before they start their activity. Volunteers are not only entitled to receive the uniform and the accreditation card, but they also must wear them all times during their shifts, not only because they represent the event at that moment, but also because the accreditation serves as an identification document and work permit.

The right to have a meal is one of the basic benefits guaranteed to each volunteer by the organizers, who may decide to set up a volunteers' lounge where all the volunteers can have a meal and rest. However, they often cannot use the lounge due to the limited opening hours.

As far as insurance coverage is concerned, it is taken out by the Organizing Committee and it is granted to all volunteers and workers who work at the event. As they are not workers, there is no workers' compensation insurance, but an insurance specifically designed for volunteers is often taken out. It is important that all information given to volunteers about the insurance is accurate and constantly updated so that it is clear which items the insurance covers and under which circumstances. For example, in the case of the two events mentioned above, the insurance coverage was limited to volunteers' effective working days, as regards to accidents, third party liability, any damage caused by third parties, and damage to sports equipment at the venue.

The Organizing Committee is also responsible for ensuring a safe working environment and must take all necessary measures to protect workers and volunteers. In fact, organizers also have a duty of care towards volunteers. The duty of care is the obligation to take the utmost care not to cause danger or harm to others and falls within the common law concept of negligence. Putting the duty of care into practice is important both for the volunteers (who feel protected) and for the organizers (they are liable in case of injury to volunteers). The aim of this is to minimize the risk of potential accidents at work.

For example, in the volunteers' manual a large part is dedicated to illustrating useful safety procedures for volunteers so that they work aware of the potential risks of their actions. In fact, if we take the manual used at the 2018 World Ice Skating Championships as a reference, volunteers should contribute to protect the safety of others and can also count on the presence of medical staff and law enforcement officers if necessary.

In dealing with the last example of volunteers' rights, it is necessary to underline that granting additional benefits is something that may be granted by the organizers at their discretion. Fulvio Raggio explained that in most cases volunteer managers have to "fight" against the limited budget in order to allow volunteers to have more benefits. For example, he recalled how, in the 2018 event, long negotiations took place before all volunteers could be granted public transport tickets and possibly a taxi service when public transports were not working. It seems like a small benefit, but in reality, there has been a long negotiation between organizers and service providers. One of the benefits that volunteers always hope to receive is accommodation, but from the point of view of the organizers, as they have a limited budget, they cannot guarantee an accommodation to all the volunteers; however, they can look for hostels or bed & breakfasts with which they can set up an agreement to ensure that volunteers have discounts or special promotions. If we think about big events,

even the Olympic Games do not provide free accommodation, and this is also one of the reasons why potential volunteers decide not to participate after having taken into account the costs of staying in another country. Events such as the Milan Expo, on the other hand, could guarantee an accommodation for all volunteers in the city's main hostels so that everyone could be in a position to enjoy the experience. In addition, in the specific case of sport events, volunteers expect to be able to attend competitions once their shift is over. Unfortunately, this is not always the case, as events may be sold out or the organizers may not have provided enough places for volunteers. Usually, a specific sector inside the venue is dedicated to volunteers so that those who want to can watch the competitions before or after their shifts. These are usually unsold sectors, often with poor visibility, but the volunteers are interested in being able to watch the competitions in some way and cheer on their favourite athletes. We should note that in the case of specific events such as the figure skating events mentioned above, most volunteers are both fans and event's volunteers. In the case of the Olympics, volunteers are often allowed to watch the rehearsals of the opening ceremonies and also have discounts if they wish to buy tickets for certain competitions.

Some events may also include reimbursement of expenses, for example reimbursement of return tickets to the event venue or of public transport.

However, we should specify that the rights of volunteers sometimes are transformed into duties which they must fulfil in order to ensure the smooth running of the event.

### **3.8.2 Volunteers' duties**

As well as rights, volunteers have duties too, or rather more than duties, they have responsibilities.

In particular, volunteers have to behave responsibly and have to respect certain safety rules.

Responsible behaviour may seem like having common sense, but especially at sport events, it may happen that many volunteers use their position to get close to their idols and favourite athletes. One of the most important unwritten rules that the coordinators always repeat to volunteers is the prohibition to talk to athletes or ask for photos or autographs from the athletes participating in the competition. In the two skating events above mentioned, there were episodes where the organizers and volunteers' managers had to suspend and remove some volunteers due to volunteers behaving more like fans than event staff. Remember that volunteers also have to ensure the safety of the athletes and the entourage, so they cannot behave like fans otherwise there is a risk of compromising the athletes' concentration. The bad behaviour of volunteers leads to the coordinators having to take away their accreditation cards, leading to a reorganization of the whole team of volunteers to cover the empty shifts.

Regarding safety, it was mentioned earlier that volunteers have the right to work in a safe environment, but they also have the obligation to do their utmost to avoid all possible dangers to themselves and others. For example, volunteers working as a Spectator's service have the responsibility to support the security staff in controlling the correct flow of spectators both at the entrance and especially at the exit and help them in directing people to avoid overcrowding.

In addition to this, volunteers have to follow very precise rules of behaviour concerning verbal and non-verbal communication and especially concerning cross-cultural communication, since such events have a large participation of spectators and participants from all over the world. In fact, volunteers, as representatives of the event, must always maintain a professional appearance, interact cordially while paying attention to the interlocutors, and try to remain calm even in difficult situations. Talking about cross-cultural communication rules, volunteers should be careful to avoid physical contact and to keep a certain distance from the interlocutor to avoid unpleasant episodes in which volunteers are labelled as "disrespectful". An example of this is the direct experience of volunteer M.C., who stated that when interacting with a guest from North America, he got too close during the conversation and the interlocutor immediately changed his attitude and pointed out that he had to keep his distance.

On the visual level, however, volunteers should look neat and tidy and avoid showing off piercings and tattoos. In particular, during the events in Milan and Turin, the volunteers working at the rink boards had to wear make-up and have their hair done because they could have been filmed by cameras. Finally, volunteers are also obliged to always communicate their movements within the venue and give timely notice to the coordinator if they want to drop out. In fact, it often happens that volunteers do not show up from one day to the next without notifying anyone. This clearly constitutes a problem at organizational level and it is not even possible to force them to stay because they have the right to withdraw from volunteering activities anytime they want. Finally, once they fill in the application forms, prospective volunteers give their consent to a police check on their criminal record because in some events people with criminal records are not accepted to prevent them from causing problems during the event.

### **3.8.3 Workforce policies and procedures**

In this paragraph we will consider some policies implemented by the HR department of the event in order to guarantee workers and volunteers. For example, one of the most important policies is the policy on the protection of personal data and privacy: a policy is usually always included in programs for staff safety. In addition to the privacy policy, the Organizing Committee must ensure that there is

an equity policy in place so that the whole workforce is treated equally, especially in the case of people with disabilities.

On the other hand, from the workers' point of view, they often have to follow guidelines in dealing with the public in a positive and proactive way as representatives of the event and must be careful not to be seen as spokespeople for the event. Finally, the workforce must also accept that all information about the event is confidential and cannot be freely divulged except through the official media. This last case was the reason why in the Turin 2019 event a volunteer was suspended for having published on his social profiles a photo of the venue the day before the beginning of the competition, thus denying the surprise effect that the organizers wanted to give to the public.

### **3.9 What does it feel to be both an elite athlete and a volunteer?**

So far, volunteers have been the main focus of the chapter, but for example how are the volunteers perceived by the athletes participating at the event?

Below is an interview with Michael Chrastecky, Italian ice dance junior champion and former volunteer at Milan 2018. Thanks to his words it is possible to understand first his experience as a volunteer and then as an athlete.

*Q. As a volunteer, what was your role?*

*A. I was in charge of the athlete security and stood at the borders of the rink during the competitions wearing my skates on, just in case someone would come inside the rink to bother skaters. However, when there were no competitions, I would help cover the other shifts in the skaters' lounge and in the warm-up area.*

*Q. What were the main issues you encountered?*

*A. In my experience one of the biggest problems was the workforce lounge which had very limited hours that didn't match with my breaks and having to stay in a cold place for so many hours I felt the need to take a few breaks to drink and eat. Another problem was the communication: there was a Whatsapp group, but it was badly managed because too many messages were sent and the really important ones got mixed up with others.*

*Q. What could be possible solutions to these problems?*

*A. It was necessary to create extra shifts to ensure volunteers who wanted to take breaks to go without leaving their place uncovered; also, I think it was necessary to create some stands with snacks and*



*drinks for volunteers near the ice rink so that they could have at least hot water and drinks without having to go too far from their workplace.*

*Q. How would you define your experience as a volunteer? Would you like to do it again?*

*A. It was a special experience, and it gave me even more energy to pursue my career as an athlete. It is an experience I would do again especially because of the energy and the atmosphere: having the best athletes around me has given me even more motivation to stay in the sport's world.*

*Q. What have you learnt from this experience?*

*A. Above all, I have learnt how to work in a team and to try to solve problems even without the coordinators around, and of course to be more autonomous. I have also learnt to relate better to people from other cultures and to change my attitude according to their customs.*

*Q. Thinking instead about your experience as an athlete, what do you think of the volunteers you have met in the events you have participated in?*

*A. When I participated in the World Championships in Tallinn in 2020, I noticed that the volunteers were all very young and did not seem very motivated or enthusiastic about their role. However, the opposite situation occurred in Courchevel during an event of the Grand Prix circuit: the volunteers were mainly people over 65 years old who worked very hard to satisfy the requests of all the participants even though they could not speak English.*

*Q. Have you ever witnessed to problems between volunteers and athletes?*

*A. Yes, I saw a volunteer who didn't want to let an athlete entering into the rink because he did not have his accreditation pass with him, but the athlete in question had to enter the rink to take part in the competition and, of course, this unpleasant episode contributed to raise his level of anxiety.*

*Q. Do you think there are differences in the management of volunteers across the events?*

*A. Yes, there are some differences, but it also depends on the country in which the event takes place. For example, in Japan, the volunteers are carefully selected and also receive a monetary compensation. In fact, they are all very meticulous while doing their job during the event. On the other hand, for example in countries where there is no great tradition for sports such as skating, when these events are organized, it is difficult to find people willing to be volunteers, so the organizers think they can solve the problem by putting up signs everywhere at the venue. In Italy, on the other*

*hand, the situation is a bit different because the recruitment of volunteers and the professionalism of the volunteers themselves always depend on the budget that is available.*

*Q. How were the competitions managed during Covid-19? Was there an impact on the recruitment of volunteers?*

*A. With regard to the events held in Italy, the organization was very careful not only with regard to the athletes, but also with regard to all the staff employed in the events. For example, all the staff who had access to the venue had to be swabbed and every effort was made to prevent unauthorized people from staying outside, as it was a closed event. The staff employed was kept to a minimum, around 20 people including photographers and media, and in addition to them there were 4 or 5 volunteers to work at the rink. The volunteers were the only ones, among the human resources employed, who changed according to the cities hosting the competitions because they were chosen by the organizers.*

*Q. How would you define the “ideal” volunteer for sport mega events?*

*A. The ideal volunteer should be very disciplined and ready to react quickly in any situation so as not to create problems for the organization of the event. In addition, he/she should be very aware of the risks if he/she leaves his/her position. In addition, he or she must be humble, do the job with passion and always be ready for the unexpected. Another important characteristic that an ideal volunteer should have is languages' knowledge, especially English so that he/she can interact with international guests and spectators. Finally, the volunteer should always be well informed about the venue and the services on site, even if these are not areas of his competence.*

In conclusion, the main aim of this chapter was to introduce the figure of the volunteer in sport mega events. In the next chapter we will look at the specific case of China and how the volunteer program is managed in view of the Beijing 2022 Olympics.

# **CHAPTER FOUR**

## *BEIJING 2022 OLYMPICS: VOLUNTEERS' RECRUITMENT PROCESS*

## 4.1 Introduction to the chapter

After providing an overview of the concept of volunteering in mega events in Chapter 3, this chapter aims to focus exclusively on volunteering activities in China. The first part of the chapter wants to provide the reader with a brief historical overview of the origins and evolution of volunteering in China in order to better understand what will be explained later in the chapter. In parallel to the historical background, the comparison between the recruitment of volunteers in Beijing 2008 and the current recruitment for the 2022 Games will illustrate how volunteer's concept has changed and evolved over the years, also as a result of the progressive geopolitical influence assumed by China (visible in the field of sport too). Furthermore, an analysis of the volunteers' global recruitment campaign combined with the results of the survey will help to outline the essential characteristics of the ideal volunteer for the 2022 Beijing Olympics, thus providing a sort of "identikit" of both Chinese and international volunteers. Finally, drawing on recent sporting events, the chapter concludes with a hypothesis on how post COVID-19 sport mega events might take place and how the role of volunteers might change.

## 4.2 Volunteering activities in China: from Lei Feng to 2008 Beijing Olympics

Although volunteer service in its broadest sense has a history dating back to the imperial, however, the concept of volunteering and the figure of the volunteer is still seen as something new in China, not yet fully covered by the relevant literature. As this is a thesis that looks towards the future, a contemporary historical perspective is given here, focusing on the development of volunteering in China starting from the Maoist era with Lei Feng.

Lei Feng was a soldier enlisted in the Chinese army during the 1950s and dedicated his life to helping others and society. His actions were so influential that he was recognized by the leaders of the time, including Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin. Even Mao Zedong praised his work and urged the Chinese population to follow his example. Lei Feng, as the personification of altruism (and consequently of Communist values), became a cultural symbol, still discussed today by scholars. His figure inspired the term 活雷锋<sup>43</sup> (*Huó Léi Fēng*) an expression for those who devote their time to community development.

However, with the rise of Deng Xiaoping and the transition from a collective to a more individualistic society, the concept of volunteering embodied by Lei Feng could no longer coexist and a new concept of volunteering more in line with the economic and political development of the country emerged in

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<sup>43</sup> ZHUANG, J., *Volunteering for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games: Visions, Policies and Capitals*, PhD Thesis, University of Bedfordshire, 2011

this period. It is worth remembering that we can only officially talk about volunteering from 1989, the year in which the first voluntary association was founded in Shenzhen, and later expanded throughout the country. It is interesting to point out that even though these associations are non-governmental organizations, they still receive funding from the Chinese government: although this may seem counterintuitive, it is actually a strategic move by the Chinese state to promote volunteering as a new "soft power" to create a society of model citizens<sup>44</sup>.

According to the relevant literature, volunteering in China can be interpreted through the analysis of four words used in the Manual for Beijing Olympic Volunteers to illustrate the four pillars on which volunteering in China is based: dedication (奉献 *fèngxiàn*), fraternity (友爱 *yǒuài*), mutuality (互助 *hùzhù*) and progress (进步 *jìnbù*)<sup>45</sup>. Specifically, the term dedication emphasizes the commitment of volunteers to enable the development of society without receiving compensation, fame or prestige; they act guided by a selfless love of neighbour. The second word, fraternity, emphasizes the kindness, selfless love and respect for others shown by volunteers towards everyone, just as if they were brothers. The third word, mutuality, emphasizes one of the key points of the concept of volunteering, i.e., mutual help between individuals to improve themselves. The last word, progress, emphasizes the need for volunteers to share their skills and abilities in order to promote first the growth of their community and then the development of humanity.

This concept of volunteering, however, presents a point of continuity with the philanthropic ideologies of traditional China, while introducing different elements dictated by the evolution of China itself.

In fact, in contemporary China, as Juan Zhuang points out in her study on volunteering in China, there are different forms of volunteering that have some elements of continuity with the past because the sense of brotherhood and mutual aid derived from Lei Feng persist and other social practices persist as a legacy of philanthropic practices of the philosophical schools of thought of the past. These forms of volunteering have been developed within society on three different levels: social, organizational and individual. It should be noted that the role of the Chinese central government is fundamental not only in promoting voluntary activities among the people, but also in providing continuous support in the form of funding for voluntary organizations, in particular by exercising control through the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Central Committee of Chinese Communist Youth League.

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<sup>44</sup> CHONG, G., *Volunteers as the "New" model citizens: governing citizens through soft power*, in *China Information*, 25, 2011

<sup>45</sup> BEIJING ORGANIZING COMMITTEE FOR THE GAMES OF THE XXIX OLYMPIAD (Eds.), *Manual for Beijing Olympic Volunteers*, Renmin University Press, Beijing, 2006

Why is the Chinese central government so concerned about spreading voluntary activities among the population?

As already expressed above, one of the main reasons is the attempt to create a society of model citizens based on the principles of the "*harmonious society*"(和谐社会)<sup>46</sup>; the second reason, instead, concerns the dissemination and implementation of volunteering programs in order to promote consequently the major development plans not only on a national, but also on a global scale. The most evident example of this, and the one most dealt with in the relevant literature, is the case of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Volunteer Program, which will be discussed in the next section.

Clearly, despite the efforts of the government, there are some critical elements in the development of volunteering activities. Firstly, the increasing number of associations scattered throughout the country highlights the problem of the lack of formal and unified management at both administrative and organizational levels.

Another problem is that over the years project-based volunteering activities have been promoted (such as the Olympic Games, the 2010 Shanghai Expo or targeted projects in some critical areas of China) and the nature of these activities has influenced the target of potential volunteers by reducing it to three categories of people: university students, retired people and wealthy people who can afford to devote their time to volunteering activities.

Although recruitment campaigns were open to all, it was seen over the years that these three categories were the most represented. This may lead people to stop applying for jobs for fear of being rejected out of hand. In fact, in the last two decades, most volunteers in China are university students because universities carry out volunteer (or active citizenship) projects in close collaboration with the central government. The purpose of this is a mutual win-win: on the one hand, students can put what they have learned into practice in the service of the community, and on the other hand, the government can take students as a model to promote civic education.

To sum up, if in the Maoist era Lei Feng was considered the example to follow for his dedication and attention to others, today the concept of volunteering is taking a slightly different direction: clearly the emphasis remains on willingness, gratuitousness and a sense of reciprocity, but in addition to this there is also an emerging "individualistic" tendency, in the sense that volunteers agree to put themselves at the service of others also to receive in exchange something intangible and not material, such as the experience itself and the acquisition of soft skills.

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<sup>46</sup> CHONG, G., *Volunteers as the "New" model citizens: governing citizens through soft power*, in *China Information*, 25, 2011

What is certainly of great interest is how not only volunteering activities, but also the figure of the volunteer may evolve over time in China. A key date for conducting such a study is 2022, the year in which the Winter Olympics will be held in Beijing. Once the event is over, it will be interesting to compare the volunteer management between the two Olympic events (both summer and winter editions) to see if China has made any progress in this area on a span of 15 years. This chapter will offer an attempt to analyze two models of volunteers by comparing the Beijing 2008 volunteers with the proposed ideal volunteer for Beijing 2022.

A further proof of how the figure of the volunteer may change may emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic: although the emergency is still ongoing, what is of interest is whether there would be a change in the approach to volunteering by the Chinese population, whether it is 活雷锋 or people in search of recognition and fame. Again, this has to be analyzed retrospectively as the event is too recent.

### **4.3 Forms of volunteering in China**

The 2008 Olympic event helped to boost the spread of volunteering activities in China, to the extent that volunteer associations and groups have been set up all over the country.

One example are nationwide associations such as the Beijing Volunteers' Association, or the volunteer groups that have sprung up within Universities (e.g., volunteers from Peking University and Tsinghua University have already planned to actively participate in Beijing 2022 Olympics). The main forms of volunteering in China include:

1. Community voluntary services: Volunteers join voluntary programs to improve the conditions of the community and residents through the promotion of cultural activities and community welfare. This is the most common form of volunteering in China because it allows everyone to contribute to the development of society.
2. Educational programs: Many university students are sent to rural areas of the country to promote the development of education and training in schools where there is a lack of resources or qualified teachers.
3. Environmental protection programs: A new form of volunteering is the environmental protection. This type of volunteering is very popular among young people who care about the environmental sustainability of their country and wish to contribute to reducing its impact.
4. Volunteering for large-scale events: An example is volunteering for the Olympic Games, Universiade, Asian Games or Expo.

#### 4.4 2008 Beijing Olympic Volunteers: building a new model

Before proceeding with the analysis of human resources for the Beijing 2022 Olympic Games, it is interesting to see how the 2008 Olympics influenced the development of volunteering and a new model of society.

Before 2008, the concept of volunteering was still relatively new in China, and the volunteer program for the 2008 Beijing Games represented something new that caught the attention of the population. However, the significance attached to the practice of volunteering was not similar to that found in Western countries: in fact, the interesting aspect of the spread of volunteering in China is precisely the role that the government has taken in promoting volunteering as a way to foster the creation of a harmonious society. The Chinese government has been very smart at using soft power to convince the population to join the Beijing 2008 Volunteer Program *en masse*, not by coercion but by the sense of patriotism in the Chinese population. In essence, the government took the opportunity to organize a mega-event to promote a new image of the Chinese population in the eyes of the outside world on the one hand, and to strengthen the sense of belonging to the state and the community on the other hand.

If we think that the 2008 Olympic Games were China's social redemption, it is clear that the government wanted to promote a positive image of China, starting with its population. It was necessary for the world to recognize China's efforts to emerge and not “lose the *miànzi*” (face). It is interesting what Callahan says about this *"the national humiliation shows how China's insecurities are not just material, a matter of catching up to the West militarily and economically, but symbolic. Indeed, one of the goals of Chinese foreign policy has been to "cleanse national humiliation"*<sup>47</sup>. So why start with the Beijing 2008 Volunteer Program? Because, as we said before, volunteers are the image of the event and since volunteers are mostly Chinese people, it was necessary to promote social change.

All the strategies implemented by the government have slowly shaped the lives of Beijingers and Chinese people, trying to change their behaviour and discipline in order to be ready to welcome millions of foreigners and to make a good impression in the eyes of the world.

The 2008 Beijing Volunteers Manual also sets out the main objectives for all Beijingers: *"...to smile to express their compassions, to spread civilization, to build a society of harmony and to promote the concepts of "People's Olympics" and "socialist harmonious society"*<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> CALLAHAN, W. (2004). National Insecurities: Humiliation, Salvation, and Chinese Nationalism. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 29(2), 199-218. Retrieved April 10, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40645112>

<sup>48</sup> BEIJING ORGANIZING COMMITTEE FOR THE GAMES OF THE XXIX OLYMPIAD (Eds.), *Manual for Beijing Olympic Volunteers*, Renmin University Press, Beijing, 2006



From here, it is clear what the government's line was: the volunteers, through their positive actions, were to influence the behaviour of other people in order to achieve the much sought-after harmonious society. The promotion of positive images, such as smiles or a sense of participation and unity, were disseminated throughout the city through advertisements, banners and slogans that were easily visible to all. By doing so, these values and positive images proposed by the government slowly entered the minds of people who felt unconsciously urged to act according to the principles dictated by the government. Indeed, as Foucault points out, visibility is crucial in disciplining people<sup>49</sup> in fact, the government wanted citizens to embrace the games, making the ideals promoted by the organizing committee their own. In addition to this, another factor promoted by the government was the importance of joining the volunteer program because being able to be a volunteer at the Olympics was supposed to be something to be proud of and would give prestige to a person's image in the eyes of society.

In essence, they wanted to get the message across that "being a volunteer in Beijing 2008 also means being a model citizen". This is because the volunteers were educated on good etiquette, intercultural communication, Chinese traditions and heritage, etc. by participating in training sessions.

One of the most interesting concepts in this context is precisely the promotion of China's positive image in the eyes of the Western world. The concept of the *miànzi* (面子) is one of the pillars of Chinese society and contains the idea of reputation. For the government, in fact, the Olympics and *miànzi* are closely related: the ability to organize a successful event increases the likelihood of gaining a greater reputation internationally.

Chong's study is extremely interesting because she proposes that the quest for *miànzi* is divided into three parts:

1. *Yào miànzi* (要面子): that is the desire for a respectable reputation. The Olympics is the opportunity people have to show off, to prove they have a certain status quo and to show the best.
2. *Gù miànzi* (顾面子): it means showing the best of what you have, that is, showing the best of Chinese society. Taking the volunteer recruitment campaign as an example, potentially all Chinese people could apply, but only the best, those with outstanding skills were recruited precisely to show the best side of society.

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<sup>49</sup> CHONG, G., *Volunteers as the "New" model citizens: governing citizens through soft power*, in *China Information*, 25, 2011

3. *Gěi miànzi* (给面子): that is, to show that they are the best, the model citizens, the best image of China. As we have seen, one of the drawbacks of the drawbacks is that it is the first time that the volunteers have been recruited.

As we have seen, one of the drawbacks is the *dīu miànzi* (丢面子), or “loss of face”. The possible loss of face would have had repercussions not only on Chinese society as a whole, but especially on the volunteers as bearers and disseminators of ideals and values. The loss of face would have caused a sense of shame, humiliation and embarrassment for the whole of Chinese society. Fortunately, history has turned out differently and the Chinese population has benefited from the 2008 Olympics, especially in terms of worldwide recognition, but also nationally because from then on volunteer activities have definitely increased throughout the country.

Returning to the issue of recruiting the best resources to be employed as volunteers, it is interesting to note the study carried out by Juan Zhuang who examined the Beijing 2008 Volunteer Program from the point of view of University candidates. In fact, a glance at what is written in the action plan of the Beijing Olympic Volunteer Program shows that emphasis is placed on the need to provide a high-level, people-oriented service that respects cultural differences. It is clear that University students, precisely because they have a high level of education, are better suited to this role and it is not surprising that 90% of the Beijing 2008 volunteers were recruited among the University students. Also, thinking about the Chinese government's use of soft power, the use of volunteers from Beijing's top Universities would lead to the creation of a long-lasting legacy because it was expected that University volunteers would influence the people around them, their relatives and friends, encouraging them to participate in volunteer activities. Because the practice of volunteering in China was still in its earliest phases at that time, the employment of University students would have certainly encouraged the involvement of a good number of people.

From the volunteers' point of view, it was an important opportunity to improve their skills such as communication, teamwork, foreign language practice, etc.

These expectations are in line with those already examined earlier in Chapter 3. This means that the motivations of the volunteers are more or less the same even years later and taking into account people from different cultural backgrounds.

This brief excursus on the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the importance of volunteers (especially at University level) allows us to understand the situation of volunteering in the 2008 Beijing Olympics in China in order to see if there has been an evolution over the years or if the recruitment techniques are more or less the same.

## **4.5 Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics: a case study on human resources management**

As we have seen in the previous section, the Olympic Games have always been an opportunity for the growth of both the host city and the country in many different ways. If the 2008 Olympics marked China's rise on the world stage, the Beijing 2022 Winter Games will confirm that China has achieved the status of a major world power. Indeed, the 2008 Games were a bit of a dream for China and its people to show off to the world and open up even more to intercultural exchange. Now, the 2022 Winter Games will not only show China at the top of the world but will also represent an opportunity to promote the development of a sector that is still underdeveloped: the winter sports industry. In fact, the practice of winter sports is mainly concentrated in the north-eastern part of the country (commonly known as Manchuria), while in the southern part of China there are very few facilities dedicated to the winter sports. However, from 2015 onwards, with the assignment of the 2022 Winter Games to Beijing, there has been an increase in the promotion and dissemination of winter sports throughout the country thanks to investments in skating rinks, indoor ski slopes, etc.

However, there remains the problem of somehow convincing the Chinese population to take up winter sports, and in this the development of volunteer programs has boosted awareness not only of the Beijing Winter Games, but also of the winter sports industry throughout the country. In fact, it is thought that Beijing 2022 volunteers can contribute positively to the development of society in a number of ways, such as: instilling a sense of national pride among the population, promoting the image of China as a strong country in winter sports, contributing to the development of a system that encourages the practice of sport *en masse*, etc.

Volunteers are always the pivot on which the organization of the Olympics revolves, and just as in the case of the 2008 Summer Games, they are the bearers of the Olympic values, messengers of cultural exchange and promoters of a harmonious society. However, although China has a great deal of experience in managing human resources in the context of major sporting events, it has some shortcomings when it comes to winter sports, precisely because there is no efficient volunteer system at its base. In fact, this lack has led the Organizing Committee to invest a lot of resources in the creation of social capital already during the bidding process.

The main objective is not only to create a pool of trained and ready volunteers to be employed during the Olympics, but also to take the opportunity to build up a volunteering system for winter sports that goes beyond the Olympic event in order to continue to serve society on an ongoing basis and to be ready in case of new sports events.

The fact that winter sports volunteering is more complex than traditional sports has posed a new challenge for China: it is no longer a matter of training volunteers, but of training professionals.

Training in this case plays an even more important role because it has a major impact on the quality of the volunteer service. As mentioned above, in order to design an effective training program, it is necessary to understand the characteristics and motivations of the volunteers.

However, despite the good intentions of the organizers to create a united group of volunteers also after the games, the mentality of the volunteers has to be taken into account. In fact, many Olympic volunteers have a wrong idea of what volunteer service is in big events of this kind and this leads to difficulties in providing quality service and also damages the image of volunteers in general. Therefore, organizers must always be very careful in conducting recruitment in order to select the best resources. This is because the Winter Olympics are perceived as a win-win event for both sides: on the one hand the volunteers gain spiritual satisfaction, learn from others, improve their skills and expand their knowledge, on the other hand the organizers benefit from the volunteers' service, visible in the satisfaction of the people or the success of the event.

Finally, the Beijing Winter Olympics represent an opportunity for the country to accelerate the process of autonomy and professionalization of the winter sports volunteer service, as well as to establish and improve the structure of the volunteer service in order to create a solid base on which to organize the winter sports volunteer service also after the Olympics.

#### **4.5.1 Volunteers' recruitment announcement**

On 5 December 2019, the Beijing 2022 Organizing Committee launched the global campaign to recruit volunteers for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. This campaign has a very significant name due to China's connection with the Olympics: in fact, the name "*Building a Dream Together*"<sup>50</sup> contains the word "dream" which refers to the 2008 Olympic dream. The combination of China and the Olympics represents an opportunity for the country to grow and continue to evolve, but if in 2008 China was still not very influential at a global level and still little known from a cultural point of view, now China is playing a leading role and inviting the whole world to collaborate in the realization of the greatest Olympic Games ever. Indeed, Beijing is the first city in the world to host both the summer and winter Games.

Another noteworthy aspect emerging from the volunteer recruitment campaign is the recurring reference to smiles: in fact, the president of the International Olympic Committee, Thomas Bach, in a dedicated video message from the launch of the volunteer program stressed that "*volunteers will be remembered by the whole world for their smiles*"<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> <https://www.olympic.org/news/beijing-2022-launches-global-recruitment-programme-for-games-volunteers>

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

This reference to smiles echoes one of the pillars on which the volunteer recruitment campaign for Beijing 2008 was based, underlining once again how a sense of hospitality and openness to the world underpins the volunteer program of the Olympics in China. Indeed, the mission of Beijing 2022 is to create Games that are "*...green, inclusive, open and clean*"<sup>52</sup>.

As we know, the organization of the Games requires a significant deployment of human resources in order to run smoothly the event. While it is necessary to have more competent and experienced human resources in certain roles or activities, the Organizing Committee must also provide for the recruitment of even more human resources to be employed in activities that do not require such a high degree of competence or responsibility.

This is what the recruitment of volunteers for events of this scale is all about.

Looking at the announcement of the Global Recruitment of Games Volunteers of the Beijing 2022, what immediately catches the eye is the division into several points that explain everything you need to know about volunteer recruitment. The most important and relevant ones are analyzed below.

### **1. Numbers of volunteers**

The Beijing 2022 Organizing Committee will recruit 27,000 volunteers for the Olympics and 12,000 for the Paralympics. This is an important number considering that there were just over 20,000 volunteers at the previous Games in Pyeongchang 2018 between the Olympics and the Paralympics.

### **2. Categories and areas of volunteers**

Recruited volunteers are divided into two categories: General and Specialist Volunteers.

General Volunteers are volunteers who do not have specific skills in areas that may be of interest to the organizers and who can carry out simpler tasks, such as helping spectators to find seats, providing information, checking areas around the competition area, etc.

Specialist volunteers, on the other hand, are those volunteers who apply for specific positions because they know they have the necessary skills and expertise to serve. For example, volunteers who are part of the medical team or who provide interpreting and translation services at press conferences. In addition to the possibility of expressing their preferences, applicants are asked during the application process if they have any special requirements, such as a driving license, first aid certificate, etc.

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<sup>52</sup> [https://www.beijing2022.cn/en/about\\_us/vision.htm](https://www.beijing2022.cn/en/about_us/vision.htm)

Among the specialist volunteers it is also possible to find candidates from the media and press fields (e.g., to be employed in the mixed zones), or experts in the field of IT or guest relations.

However, scholars of volunteering at major events include a third category, which concerns volunteers in the Sports Function. Although not present in the global announcement, in my opinion this third category deserves to be taken into account because when applicants fill in the form, they can indicate any previous volunteering experience and in the case of applicants with previous experience in winter sports events, it is very likely that they will be employed with reference to the sport they have already served (an example is the experience of some volunteers mentioned in Chapter 3). In fact, volunteers in the sports function should be volunteers who are familiar with the rules and common practices of the sport at which they volunteer. Employing volunteers with prior knowledge of the task to be performed would allow the organizers to significantly reduce the time and method of training.

Turning to the areas in which volunteers are required, these can be divided into macro-areas: venue operations, international relations, human resources, culture programs, logistics, competition operations, press operations and broadcasting, marketing, transport, etc. Each area of work comprises a number of different areas. Each work area includes a number of roles to be filled by volunteers. As an example, volunteers from the sports function employed at skating competitions have to cover a number of roles such as: main rink monitor, practice rink monitor, access control to the rink and main venue, skaters lounge and warm up area control, dressing room control, gate openers, etc.

Depending on the needs and the location of the event, volunteers can be deployed at the opening and closing ceremonies, at the venues, at the participants' facilities (e.g., the Olympic village, accreditation area, official hotels for judges, IOC members, etc.) or at the Olympic-related events in Beijing, Yanqing and Zhangjiakou.

### **3. Who is in charge of the recruitment?**

Recruitment is conducted by the Beijing 2022 Organizing Committee, but it can also be outsourced to other organizations that can help organizers to find more volunteers. For example, recruitment may also be outsourced to third-party HR recruitment companies around the world, or through volunteer groups and organizations, which may propose a range of candidates for employment in the Games, especially when it comes to specialist volunteers.

### **4. Who is eligible?**

Even though the volunteer program is open to all, the organizers still need to pre-select candidates before proceeding with applications because otherwise they will end up with too many candidates to screen.

Minimum requirements were also introduced for the 2008 Beijing Games and for Beijing 2022 Olympics these requirements are essentially the same. Applicants must be at least 18 years old before 1 January 2022; must abide by the Chinese laws and regulations for the duration of their service as a volunteer; in addition, they must be in good health; possess skills necessary for the desired volunteer position; be able to communicate in Chinese and English; and guarantee their presence during test events.

In addition, organizers prefer volunteers who state their availability for both the Olympics and Paralympics and volunteers who declare their intention to participate in events promoting the games on the road to Beijing 2022.

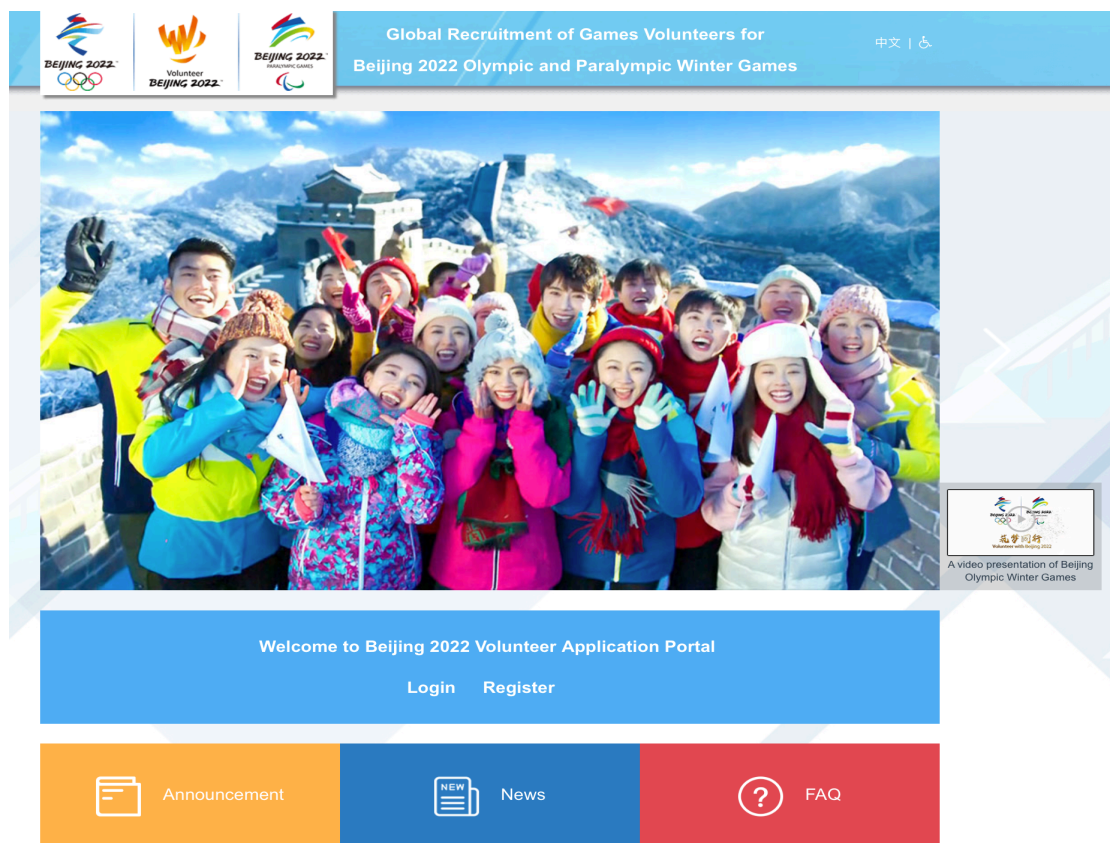
## **5. Application process**

As stated in the announcement of the volunteer program, applications can be submitted on the Beijing 2022 Volunteer Application Portal on an individual or group basis from December 5<sup>th</sup> 2019 until June 30<sup>th</sup> 2021.

In Chapter 3, we discussed the ways in which organizers can recruit volunteers, including the creation of an ad hoc website, designed exclusively to collect all applications from candidates. The Beijing 2022 Organizing Committee opted for this choice, following the example of previous editions of the Olympic Games, including Beijing 2008.

As far as individual candidates are concerned, they must enter their personal information on the portal and it must correspond to reality, otherwise they will be excluded from selection.

Candidates applying as a group can only do so through groups recognized by the Beijing 2022 Organizing Committee (i.e., those groups and associations to which the committee delegates the selection of volunteers). In fact, if candidates apply through these groups, they must enter the identification code of the group in the application on the online portal.



Picture 4.1. *Beijing 2022 Volunteer Application Portal*<sup>53</sup>

After registering with the portal, candidates must complete the application, which is divided into four sections plus a confirmation section before submitting.

### 1. *Personal Profile*

In this section candidates must enter their personal data (name, surname, date of birth, nationality, physical condition), insert their identity document and give indications about the size of their uniforms.

### 2. *Contact Information*

Candidates should enter their address, telephone number and who to contact in case of emergency.

### 3. *Experience and Skills*

In this part of the application, volunteers are given a space to describe any volunteering experience, languages spoken and employment at the time of application.

<sup>53</sup>BEIJING 2022 VOLUNTEER APPLICATION PORTAL <https://vol.beijing2022.cn/indexEn.html>



#### *4. Availability and preferences*

Candidates are asked to indicate their availability (whether they are only available for the Olympics or also for the Paralympics, whether they can participate in pre-event training and test events) and are asked to express preferences about the role they would like to play. It is possible to select up to two venues, but only one job area may be chosen. It is clearly stated on the portal that the Organizing Committee is not always able to accommodate all candidate preferences.

#### *5. Confirmation*

in this last section candidates must declare that all the information provided is true and that they are aware of the consequences in case of false declarations.

Once the applications are closed, i.e., on June 30<sup>th</sup> 2021, the second part of the selection process will begin.

Having myself tried to apply as a potential volunteer for the Beijing 2022 Games, I feel that this application is too simple and does not enhance the value of the candidates. The fact that one's CV cannot be attached is not a point in favour because the organizers have very little knowledge of the candidate, based only on the little information declared in the application. It is clear that the intention is to select candidates who meet certain requirements and that those who do not possess the requirements are not taken into consideration: for example, in the case of international volunteers, it is likely that only those who have an advanced knowledge of Chinese will pass to the next stage. Moreover, the fact that only the employment status and the type of education are asked does not help candidates who cannot specify the type of employment or degree and may not be considered if, for example, they have never had any volunteer experience. In fact, in my opinion, what will make the difference in recruiting volunteers will be their language skills and previous volunteering experience, since these are the only fields in which applicants can enter more options or talk about their experiences without space limits.

#### **6. Selection Process**

The selection process of the volunteers for Beijing 2022 Winter Games is essentially the same as the one used for the previous Winter Olympics.

After an initial screening of the applications, the successful candidates will enter the second part of the selection process, namely the English language test and the basic knowledge test. The English test verifies the candidate's real skills, while the second test tests the candidate's knowledge of the

Olympics and general culture, as well as questions simulating a typical situation that the candidate has to solve.

Candidates who pass this part of the selection process are divided into general volunteers, specific volunteers and sports volunteers. At this point, a further, more specific selection is made according to the role the candidates wish to fill.

For example, sports candidates have to pass an additional English test asking for specific knowledge of English terms related to their assigned sport, and they also have to pass a general knowledge test on the rules of the sport and venue they will be working in.

In the case of specific volunteers, their skills are tested through a special test. General volunteers only have to pass an English test at a basic level.

Those who pass the pre-assignment phase receive an official invitation to join the team of volunteers for the Beijing 2022 Games. In fact, the Beijing 2022 organizing committee sends a letter of offer to all selected volunteers by 30 September 2021. Once received, volunteers wishing to accept the offer must sign a Letter of Commitment and are then ready to start training.

As with all recruitment and selection processes for large sporting events, there can be some problems. For example, there may not be enough suitable candidates for certain positions or, on the contrary, there may be too many candidates to choose from. The selection process is a process of eliminating candidates at each stage, so if too many candidates are eliminated there is a risk of not having enough to choose from.

In order to make the selection process as smooth as possible, it is advisable to follow these tips:

- all candidates should be treated equally, they should be respected, and their preferences should be taken into consideration.
- organizers should try to recruit the best candidates regardless of their background, occupation, gender, religion and ethnicity. In fact, the strength of volunteers often comes from the confrontation of different cultures and consequently different opinions and solutions.
- it is necessary to make sure that all candidates are able to apply and eventually to offer help when there are difficulties in submitting the application online.
- tests must be divided according to difficulty and according to the role that candidates have to perform. Language and culture tests must be done by experts so that the quality of the tests can be guaranteed.

## 7. Training

Volunteers' training is a step-by-step process and serves to help volunteers familiarize with the tasks to be performed and to acquire the necessary skills to perform at their best.

Training is conducted at both general and specific levels and the training process is based on the gradual achievement of skills. Volunteers need to have basic training in order to have a general understanding of their roles and of the event.

### *General training*

General training is compulsory for all volunteers and aims to nurture the Olympic spirit of the volunteers and give them a basic understanding of the event. In most cases, it is a distance learning course, delivered electronically through specially created platforms. This allows volunteers to use the content at anytime and anywhere in the world.

The training is carried out by a number of experts such as university professors or former volunteers as well as by language training institutes.

What are the contents of the general training?

- Basic concepts about volunteering, the meaning and value of volunteering at the Winter Olympics
- Rights and obligations of volunteers
- Overview of the history of the Winter Olympics and Beijing 2022
- History of China and of the city of Beijing
- Organizational structure of Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics
- Etiquette, risk prevention, first aid knowledge and what to do in case of emergency
- English language at basic level

An example of a platform dedicated to the general training of volunteers is the Beijing 2022 Information and Knowledge Management Platform<sup>54</sup>. Although this platform is accessible to all, it allows us to understand what information is being shared in order to prepare not only volunteers but the entire Chinese population for the Winter Olympics.

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<sup>54</sup>BEIJING 2022 INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PLATFORM  
<https://education.beijing2022.cn>



Picture 4.2 Beijing 2022 Information and Knowledge Management Platform

### *Specific training*

Once the general training has been completed, the second step is specific training according to the role.

This type of training mainly concerns specific and sports volunteers because they need a more in-depth level of training.

In this phase, experts and scholars from the relevant sector are invited and practical simulations are organized to allow volunteers to get involved in active learning. An example is the language service volunteers employed in competition zones. For example, in the case of figure skating competitions, specific volunteers need to know the specific language of the discipline, how it is performed, the scoring system and the rules set by ISU. To be able to carry out their service in the skating venues, volunteers must master the language and culture of the sport: if they are to be employed for translation services in a post-competition press conference, they must be able to faithfully report the athletes' speeches, which requires knowledge of the specific terminology.

In this case, the training takes place at the event so that simulations can be carried out in the field.

Even in the case of volunteer training there may be problems in managing the training program.

One of the possible problems is to make the content of the training sessions interesting in order to keep the volunteers motivated and to capture their interest throughout the training phase. In order to

do this, it is necessary to understand what the volunteers need and expect from the training in terms of content and delivery and to adapt accordingly. For example, volunteers are more likely to keep their attention if the content is delivered in the form of interactive videos. Another problem can be the management of the training for volunteers in other parts of the world: if the training activities are carried out remotely but through a live stream, then there will certainly be volunteers who will have to attend the training at night or early in the morning and this might affect their motivation to continue with the volunteer program. In order to ensure that all volunteers are in the best possible condition for the training, flexible methods should be adopted.

Furthermore, the training must be evaluated by the organizers (the coordinators of function of each group of volunteers) in order to be effective. The evaluation is important not only to see if the training program is useful and effective, but also to see if the volunteers are able to carry out the assigned tasks and if they feel comfortable.

Evaluation can be done in the form of tests (usually online) and the skills acquired by volunteers are checked every time they complete a phase of the training.

Finally, in order to ensure that volunteers maintain their enthusiasm and motivation despite the fact that they do not receive remuneration, organizers must provide a series of incentives and rewards for volunteers who participate in the Olympic Games. As we discussed in Chapter 3, the nature of these incentives can be of different types. In this case, organizers can provide accommodation for volunteers who come from outside the city, meals and transport for all, opportunities to visit Beijing through cultural activities organized especially for volunteers, give away prize tickets to attend competitions, and issue a certificate of participation.

#### **4.5.2 Analysis of prospective volunteers**

Since volunteers' applications are still open, it is only possible to make an analysis of the characteristics that volunteers should have in order to participate to Beijing 2022 Olympics. I decided to make a distinction between Chinese volunteers and international volunteers based also on the cultural background and the different interpretations given to the concept of volunteering. In the following paragraphs, I will try to give my vision of what the two groups of volunteers might be like by analyzing their limitations and qualities and also taking into account the results of a survey.

Finally, I will try to propose a model of the ideal volunteer to be employed in Beijing 2022: this is clearly a simplistic model, but that aims to draw some conclusions on the characteristics of volunteers from what emerged in the previous chapters of this thesis.

### 4.5.3 Chinese volunteers

In the eyes of foreigners, Chinese volunteers represent the quality of Chinese people. On the basis of this statement, China has been trying to promote volunteer programs in order to not only encourage the practice of public good activities but also the development of Chinese society as a model to be followed and imitated.

Since 2008, however, Chinese volunteers have undergone a major change, which is a source of China's economic, cultural and social progress.

In particular, from the point of view of intercultural communication, the Beijing 2008 experience has helped Chinese volunteers to interact with people from all over the world, thus creating a cultural exchange from which they have certainly learnt certain behaviours.

Indeed, the increasingly close contacts with the Western world influenced the lifestyle of the Chinese and this is also reflected in their behaviour.

As we have seen, Chinese volunteers represent China's model citizens and symbolize the desire to open up to the world thanks to the power of their smiles.

In China, volunteering is seen almost as a social mission, whereas in the West, the recreational aspect inherent in volunteer activities prevails.

It must be acknowledged that government intervention has encouraged the spread of volunteering activities nationwide by helping to train volunteers through ad hoc projects and training. If we think that in the 2008 Beijing Volunteers manual there were specific indications on how to behave in the presence of foreign guests (among which, indications on how to shake hands, how to keep your distance, how to behave appropriately with foreigners). Now the focus is on the communication skills that Beijing 2022 volunteers must have.

In fact, volunteers must have certain intercultural communication skills that go beyond the Olympic Games and can contribute to making China increasingly international. One of the main requirements and still the weak point of Chinese volunteers is the knowledge of English. In fact, not knowing the language also compromises the understanding of the culture. Chinese volunteers, such as university students, are able to read and write in English, but when it comes to initiating a conversation there are difficulties because they lack the right training. For the Beijing 2022 Games to be successful, volunteers need to be able to serve in all kinds of situations, from day-to-day communications to guest relations, and they need to be trained to do this. That's why all volunteers must participate in English courses designed to foster intercultural communication.

In addition, the Beijing 2022 Organizing Committee has also developed a platform in Chinese to enable volunteers to learn all the basic information about winter sports and the history of the Winter Olympics so that they can acquire a certain level of knowledge before the Games begin. This online

platform is very useful for everyone because it allows people who have no knowledge of winter sports to approach this topic in a fun and interactive way.

#### **4.5.4 International volunteers**

Although the volunteer recruitment campaign is open to applicants from all over the world, there are a number of challenges that foreign volunteers must face when deciding to serve for Beijing 2022. Through a survey, I asked respondents to express what might be the biggest challenges that an international volunteer may face once selected for the Beijing 2022 Games.

Unsurprisingly, 65.8% of survey respondents identified the language barrier as the biggest challenge for an international volunteer in China. Not knowing the Chinese language and not being able to communicate with the local population also creates an obstacle to applying because candidates feel demoralized. This initial difficulty is compounded by the cultural barrier, i.e., a lack of knowledge of China, especially from a cultural and historical point of view. Language and culture are closely related because they enable a connection, an intercultural communication between international volunteers and the Chinese people. This problem is often underestimated by the organizers who, although providing general training on Chinese history and culture, often tend to forget the point of view of the foreign volunteers. In fact, it would be necessary to create a cultural program, especially for international volunteers who come to China for the first time and want to get to know its cultural peculiarities in a deeper way and to be able to compare it with their own cultural background. In addition, the organizers should allow the foreign volunteers to learn some basic Chinese so that they can get even closer to the culture and gain a certain sense of security when interacting with Chinese people. Anyone who has been to China knows the sense of disorientation that one feels when arriving there, especially in cities as big as Beijing, and having some basic Chinese knowledge can help foreign volunteers feel more welcomed. Another interesting proposal to encourage intercultural exchange is to create a buddy system among volunteers: in practice, each international volunteer can have a Chinese volunteer to help him/her get acclimatized before the start of the event; in the same way, the international volunteer helps the Chinese volunteer in practicing English.

Another element that is a major obstacle to the participation of foreign volunteers in the Olympics is the lack of accommodation. To tell the truth, the lack of a place to sleep offered by the organizers is also a problem for Chinese volunteers. However, for international volunteers it is more complicated to find accommodation, especially in China where there are still hotels or houses for rent that only accept Chinese citizens.

Usually, the organizers try to provide accommodation, but they do not always manage to satisfy all requests. For this reason, a solution could be to create partnerships with hostels or hotels close to the venues in order to allow volunteers to have a place to stay at low prices.

The management of international volunteers is not easy because in the case of China, for example, everyone needs a visa to enter the country and often it is not issued in time for the start of the activity or there are bureaucratic problems that prevent it from being issued.

#### **4.5.5 Prospective International volunteers' motivation**

In order to understand what the real motivations for potential international volunteers might be to apply for the Beijing 2022 Volunteer Program, I asked potential applicants to indicate their level of interest.

First, I tried to find out how many were aware of the Beijing 2022 volunteer recruitment campaign and surprisingly, 60.5% of respondents said they had never heard of the Beijing 2022 Volunteer Program.

However, 42.1% said they were interested in volunteering for the Beijing 2022 Games, while 27.6% said they would not participate.

The motivation for volunteers to apply is mainly linked to the uniqueness of the event, as the Winter Olympics are organized every four years.

Another interesting motivation is the possibility to practice languages and to meet people from all over the world with whom to share the volunteering experience. For example, A.R. said "*I think that will be an amazing opportunity to improve foreign languages and help someone who needs in that moment*". For many respondents to the survey, it is also an opportunity to practice the Chinese language, e.g., M.Z. stated that "*I studied Chinese and I would love to be involved in this event to put in practice and improve my knowledge*".

Finally, another interesting reason is tourism: by participating in the Olympic Games, volunteers want to take the chance to visit China and discover a new culture. The respondent G.M. said "*I love China and I would like to have the opportunity to be in Beijing, and volunteer with other foreigners and Chinese people*".

When it comes to the reasons that deter volunteers from applying, the most common is distance and lack of time. For others, the main problem is the financial expense of their participation. For example, A.C. says "*I would like to but it's far from my home and expensive in terms of travels and hotels/rental houses. I also have to see how it fits with my studying and working schedule*". Here, it emerges also the problem of being able to fit the volunteering experience into the commitments of personal life and it is not always possible because of work, University commitments, personal reasons, etc.



Other respondents to the survey, on the other hand, express perplexity mainly because of the COVID-19 emergency: in fact, since they do not know how the situation will evolve in 2022, they prefer not to apply in order to avoid having to change their plans at the last minute.

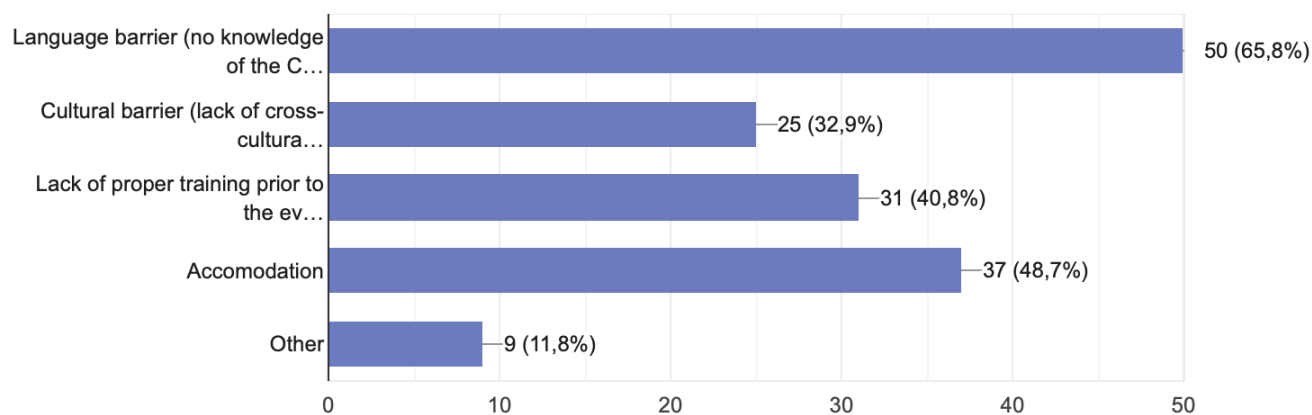


Table 4.1 Survey results

#### 4.5.6 Identikit of the ideal Beijing 2022 Volunteer

As the recruitment of volunteers for Beijing 2022 is not yet finished, in order to make this paper more personal and interesting, I would like to provide below my own view on the characteristics that the ideal volunteer for the Beijing 2022 Games should have.

In order to have a broader point of view, I created a survey to ask what three adjectives would best describe an Olympic volunteer.

In the following I will outline the main characteristics and create a sort of Volunteer's profile with the help of the answers to the survey.

- *Passionate and enthusiastic*

The ideal volunteer should first and foremost have a strong passion to get involved and collaborate in the event. Without passion and enthusiasm, the level of commitment is also reduced. Respondents to the survey identified these two adjectives as key characteristics for being a good volunteer and said that passion and enthusiasm always lead to positive results.

- *Proactive and flexible*

One of the most important characteristics is proactivity: in events such as the Olympics there can be last minute problems and disruptions that test the volunteers' decision-making skills. Therefore, they need to be proactive and act according to common sense. Moreover, because of the sudden changes, volunteers are required to be flexible, not only in terms of shifts and working hours, but also from a mental point of view: as the Olympic Games are a huge event

that mobilize people from all over the world, volunteers need to be open-minded, welcoming cultural differences and breaking down prejudices.

- *Serious and hard-working*

Another key characteristic is the seriousness with which volunteers carry out their work. The volunteers selected for the Beijing 2022 Olympics must demonstrate that they are hard-working and have the well-being of the event at heart.

- *Reliable*

Olympic volunteers need to be reliable because they play such an important role in the success of the event. It is important that volunteers understand from the outset that their role is essential and requires a high level of commitment.

- *Empathic*

One of the characteristics that is almost taken for granted is empathy. Volunteers need to demonstrate that they are empathetic people, able to put themselves in the shoes of others and understand what their needs are. Empathy is crucial in such events because volunteers are dealing with people from all over the world and volunteers need to transcend cultural barriers to provide an excellent service.

In addition, there are other very important characteristics that determine the profile of the ideal volunteer. For example, a good volunteer must be able to work in a team, listen to the opinions of others without imposing their own, be kind, smiling and altruistic.

#### **4.6 Impact of COVID-19 on sport mega events and Beijing 2022 Olympics**

To conclude this chapter, it is interesting to say a few words about the evolution of mega events during and after COVID-19 because there will certainly be implications from a human resources perspective as well.

The coronavirus epidemic, from when it started to the present day, has had a major impact on the major events sector, both sporting and non-sporting, to the extent that the Tokyo 2020 Olympics have been postponed. This has also affected the preparations for the Beijing Games, not only in terms of organization, but also in terms of the 'image of the country'. Moreover, the fact that the coronavirus epidemic had its first cases in China did not help China's public image, as it had been seen as an unsafe country. The perception has, however, slightly changed thanks to the control that China has been able to exert on the number of infections, but there is still some apprehension about the organization of the Beijing 2022 Winter Games.

It should also be noted that no studies have yet been carried out on the possible impact of the epidemic on major events of this kind. In fact, scholars usually focus on the impact of natural disasters or social problems, such as the earthquake in Sichuan a few months before the Beijing 2008 Summer Games. So far, only one scholar, Huang Haiyan, has tried to analyze the impacts of Covid on sporting events. Major sporting events such as the Olympics are known to bring a large flow of tourists to the host city and country, so it is clear that one of the sectors that will suffer the heaviest impact is tourism. This is because it can take several months before a tourist flow similar to pre-pandemic levels returns. Focusing on the Beijing 2022 Winter Games, the pandemic has slowed down for a few months the work on the facilities that should have been all ready in anticipation of the test events. However, these events, commonly named as test events, which are a kind of event rehearsals, have not yet taken place. In addition, the pandemic has led to a change in the way staff are recruited: they are no longer recruited through examinations and face-to-face interviews, but through online interviews.

The most interesting aspect, however, is that China may also gain a positive advantage by being the first country able to organize large international post-pandemic events. This is China's hope, but the Beijing 2022 Winter Games may not necessarily be the first post-pandemic event. However, in the latter part of 2020, China has already held international sporting events (even if they have in fact only seen the participation of Chinese athletes) and has been able to test the first strategies to organize events safely and in compliance with anti-pandemic regulations.

The first event in question was the Grand Prix of figure skating held in Chongqing in early November 2020. To ensure that all participants, from athletes to volunteers, never came into contact with members of a different level the organizers created a zone system (red, yellow and green). For example, the athletes and their entourage had access to the green area, the media and judges to the yellow area and the rest of the staff to the red area. To ensure safety, people with different passes eat and live in areas that do not intersect with each other, to get back and forth from the hotel to the competition venue they take different routes and different buses.

Another example of event management in COVID time is the recent World Figure Skating Championships, held in Stockholm. In this case, however, a sort of bubble was created from which none of the participants in the competition could leave: this was a way to ensure the safety of the participants in the competition and of limiting contact with the outside world as much as possible. Clearly, no public was allowed in either case, and the organization of the volunteers was also affected by the constant changes: in fact, the Organizing Committee had to take the drastic decision to employ only local volunteers, renouncing a large number of well-qualified foreign volunteers. Looking ahead to Beijing 2022, we may wonder whether the same thing might happen, with the volunteer schedule having to be changed, or whether there will be an impact on foreign candidates joining the volunteer

program. Recently, some foreign diplomats residing in Beijing participated to a hockey match as spectators and this may be a good sign for the future events. Another positive sign comes from the Chengdu 2021 Universiade, which, despite being postponed, is still proceeding with the selection of volunteers and function-specific training.

Recently, at the first test events held at the facilities in Beijing in early April 2021, some procedures have already been put in place to ensure the safety of athletes and staff. For example, to reduce the presence of operational staff and service volunteers, artificial intelligence robots have been used to avoid unnecessary contact as much as possible. These robots were used to transport materials and documents, carry athletes' luggage and equipment from one venue to another. In addition, app-linked thermometer chips were created that can be worn with a sticker so that body temperature can be monitored at all times. All of these chips make it possible to immediately detect any abnormalities among the staff or the audience and intervene immediately. With just under a year to go before the event, it is still too early to say what the real and effective repercussions of the pandemic may be on an event of this magnitude, but what is certain is that China will try to make the most of the Olympics to establish its supremacy at world level.

## CONCLUSION

The reasons behind the writing of this paper were many, but surely the main one was the fact of being able to propose to the readers the HRM in the context of large-scale sporting events, an original topic and one that is little treated in the reference literature. The decision to focus on volunteering in sport mega events was almost natural, given that volunteers are the basic element of large-scale sporting events.

Along the pages of this work, it was stressed several times that without volunteers it is not possible to organize such mega events as the Olympics.

Managing volunteers at major sporting events is not an easy task because people often tend to underestimate the importance not only of volunteers, but also of the role that the volunteer coordinator must play. In fact, when analyzing two major sporting events, it emerged that it is the wrong choice of volunteer coordinator that leads to the first problems in volunteer management. For example, the lack of effective communication or the lack of definition of roles leads to situations where volunteers feel lost, do not know what to do and feel poorly integrated into the team.

As we have seen, also thanks to the testimonies of sports volunteers, volunteers are well aware of their role, but they need someone to guide them and keep them together so that they can perform their tasks even better. Without effective volunteer's management performed by competent people there is a risk that volunteers may lose their initial interest and enthusiasm and eventually drop out.

Another aspect that was highlighted in the thesis is the importance of volunteers' training. Creating a comprehensive training program that meets the expectations of both volunteers and organizers is important in order for volunteers to become familiar with their role and to acquire specific skills to perform at their best.

The design of the training program is a process that should not be underestimated: organizers must invest all the necessary resources to enable volunteers to learn and improve their skills. If the training is not designed properly, the work of the volunteers will be negatively affected. The timing and methods of the training must also be appropriate for the type of volunteer and the type of event.

Chapter 3 also dealt with another issue that concerns the world of volunteers, namely the motivations that lead people to apply as volunteers for sport mega events. Thanks to the direct testimony of some volunteers, it emerged that the possibility of being in contact with people from all over the world and seeing the events from behind the scenes are among the most frequent motivations. In addition to these, the possibility of practicing the knowledge of foreign languages or being able to use the volunteering experience as an opportunity for personal growth are among the top motivations for prospective volunteers, especially younger ones, to participate in major events as volunteers.

In the last part of the thesis, we paid attention to volunteering in China and to the volunteers' recruitment campaign for the Beijing 2022 Olympics.

Although the practice of volunteering in China is still developing, it must be acknowledged that the 2008 Olympics contributed to an increase in the number of volunteer associations throughout the country. In fact, as has been pointed out above, the 2008 Games were also taken as an example for the creation of the volunteer recruitment campaign for the 2022 games. The main difference is that these are Winter Games, which require a high number of volunteers who are competent and experienced in winter sports.

The main objective of the volunteer recruitment campaign is to create a long-term volunteer system for winter sports, so that a legacy is also created for future events.

Finally, an interesting element that deserves to be explored in greater depth over time is the management of events during COVID-19 pandemic, analyzing what solutions can be put in place to ensure that major events such as the Olympics are carried out safely.

From this point of view, China has already put the first measures in place, deploying the latest technology at some of the preparatory events for the Olympics.

However, it is still too early to say that the 2022 Beijing Winter Games will be the first post pandemic event, but what is certain is that China will do its best to ensure the success of the event.

In conclusion, this paper has been designed to allow the reader to learn about a topic about which little is known, and although there are limitations to this research (due in part to the lack of field research), the aim has been to make the work interesting through interviews and surveys to allow for a different point of view to that of the traditional papers and books. It will be interesting to see how the study of human resources in sport mega events will evolve in the coming years and if there will be innovations from the point of view of volunteer management.

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千里之行，始於足下

*“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”*