

TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

THE IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTARISM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF EVENT TOURISM

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Abstract: *Many new occupations that complement the quality of tourist stay are emerging together with the development of tourism. Besides, tourism affects the creation of awareness about its importance among the local population. Consequently, there is an interest of a large number of mostly young people to be engaged in tourism. This usually happens through volunteer work. Volunteers are agile and hardworking people; whose free and voluntary work lasts for a certain time aimed at achieving the well-being of other people. The paper explains the concepts of volunteers and volunteering, it defines the ways of their motivation, recruitment, education, monitoring, and evaluation. Special attention is paid to the education of volunteers through educational training. All this is presented in a greatly positive example of cultural event called "Ivanjica's Nušićijada", where the education of volunteers is carried out in workshops with smaller groups, which enables more intensive work and gives better results.*

Keywords: *tourism, voluntarism, volunteers, motivation, recruitment, education, monitoring, evaluation, Nušićijada.*

VOLUNTEERS AND VOLUNTARISM

A volunteer is a word of Latin origin; according to the modern understanding, it means a person who, by his own will (voluntarily), individually or in an organized manner, provides his / her services to those who need them without any material compensation that exceeds (outcomes?) the costs of providing services, of course (Radosavljević and Stojanović, 2012). Volunteering is broadly defined as a non-profit and unpaid activity by which individuals contribute to the well-being of their community or society in general. People who voluntarily donate their work to the well-being of the community and the society in which they exist are the basis of many non-governmental organizations and professional

associations (Marilyn, 2008). Under the term *volunteering* the European Union means all forms of voluntary activities, regardless of whether they are formal or informal (M. Matić, 2014). A person carries out activities based on his / her free will, his / her own choice, and motivation and without the intention to gain financial profit.

Voluntarism occurs in many forms and various areas, from traditional customs of mutual aid (a bee) to organized community action in times of crisis (natural disasters, social unrest, etc.), and even in global movements such as poverty reduction. "Voluntarism (or voluntary work) (Adirondack, 2002) is one of the cornerstones of civil society because it revives the noblest aspirations of mankind: the commitment to peace, freedom, choice possibility, security and justice for all people," as it is said in the *Universal Declaration on Voluntarism*. Volunteers can be specially trained for the field in which they are engaged (medicine, first aid, legal advice, etc), while other activities can be performed without special education (natural disasters, promotions, campaigns) (Lainie, 2005).

Volunteers are people willing to dedicate their time, knowledge, and energy to achieving the objective they believe in, to the things that make others as well as themselves happy. Volunteers represent changes and bring changes (Cromer and Teodorović, 2004). The common denominators of volunteer work are:

- free work,
- voluntary work,
- work that lasts a certain time (a certain number of engagement hours),
- work aimed at achieving the well-being of other people (help aimed at people with whom the volunteer is not related),
- organized work (Marilyn, 2008).

However, hiring volunteers does not mean that they are free labor that you should and can use endlessly. Therefore, working with volunteers must be cherished. In working with volunteers, we must act systematically and methodically, because otherwise that precious resource can easily be wasted. For young people, volunteering can be: a form of socialization, well-spent free time, acquiring new skills, work experience, and for organizations: a form of support, replenished resources, strengthened capacity, transparency, and many other advantages (Adirondack, 2002).



Photo 1. Ivanjica volunteers at Nušićijada (a cultural event dedicated to the great Serbian writer Branislav Nušić), Photo: Authors

A volunteer can be anyone regardless of gender, education, status, religion, or socio-economic situation. There is no age limit for volunteering, except that persons under the age of 15 (according to the law of the Republic of Serbia) must have the written consent of their parents. In our country, especially in small communities, young people represent the greatest volunteer resource, but unfortunately, they are underutilized not because it is a rule, but because the culture of volunteering has been neglected for a long time.

Volunteering, as a form of civic activism, emphasizes the best in a person, changes people's consciousness, improves the quality of life, develops tolerance, breaks down prejudices and negative stereotypes (Adirondack, 2002).

Not only the ultimate beneficiaries end users but also the participants themselves, i.e., volunteers, benefit from their volunteer work, because they gain new experiences and, most importantly, feel useful (Marilyn, 2008), spend their free time well, learn new skills, enrich their own experience through work, etc.

Volunteerism is at different stages of development in European countries. Some EU member states have a tradition of volunteering and a developed volunteer sector (M. Matić 2014) such as Ireland, the Netherlands, Great Britain; in some other countries this sector is poorly developed.

The main elements of the concept of volunteering in the laws and regulations of EU member states are described as activities (M. Matić, 2014):

- that an individual performs based on free will;
- that are created within non-profit and non-governmental organizations;
- that have no professional character;
- that are unpaid;
- that are conducted for the benefit of the community or a third party.

Three types of volunteering have been identified in Serbia:

- Long-term volunteering (lasts longer than 10 hours per week, at least three months continuously).
- Short-term volunteering (lasts longer than 10 hours per week, less than three months in a calendar year) (Štetić, Pavlović, 2014).
- *Ad hoc* volunteering (maximum 10 hours per week and maximum 30 days during the calendar year).

Example of *Nušićijada* in Ivanjica

The work on the organization of *Nušićijada* (*cultural event dedicated to the great Serbian writer Branislav Nušić*) is based on volunteerism as a basic value from the very beginning, that is, from the citizens' initiative, until the present day. Over the years, the volunteer program has changed but it has remained a key segment in organizing the festival as a major activity.

This event has been held for more than 50 years and has won many domestic and world awards. The volunteer program of *Nušićijada* was formed after the evaluation of the first festival when the dual need for volunteers was stated: first, the organization's need for additional human resources; second, the volunteers' need to participate in this type of event.

To respond to these needs, the project "Theory and Practice to the Youth" was designed, through which young people, together with representatives of all three sectors, had the opportunity to acquire certain knowledge and skills that they practically applied in the festival work. The positive results achieved by the project were already shown at the next festival when the number of volunteers tripled. The evaluation of the festival and the volunteer program showed that it is necessary to continue

working with volunteers, but with a focus on strengthening institutions, so that the project "Proactive Community" was designed next year. Through this project, volunteers learned about the organization of work within the institutions and defined work plans for the preparation and realization of the event, risks in event tourism and responses for that (Štetić, 2016), which they later implemented.

After three years, the volunteer program finally defined its scope, organizational scheme, and work model. Volunteering at *Nušićijada* has been organized according to the principle of teams. For the festival needs external volunteers have been engaged, from whom active volunteers or those who have the desire to continue volunteering in other activities are selected after the festival evaluation. The jobs during the year are mostly related to the organization and it can be said that these volunteers are engaged in internal positions. After one year of volunteering in the organization, internal volunteers join the first team of volunteers, or if they show capacity, they get the positions of coordinators of certain segments of the festival.

MOTIVATION OF VOLUNTEERS

When it comes to volunteer work, one of the unavoidable issues is motivation. It is safe to say that there are as many people as motives for volunteering. This is one of the first and very important steps in understanding volunteerism and the volunteers we work with (Ignjatović, 2005). In practice, it often happens that the organizers of volunteer programs, even the volunteers themselves, neglect or underestimate this issue, which often calls into question the quality and implementation of the program itself.

Needs are the basic motives of human action towards an objective, and if we accept that, then it is clear that it is important to identify which needs to lead an individual to socially useful work. If it is assumed or known why a volunteer is in the organization (his motivation), then he can be motivated to stay there, because by satisfying his need, the motive for volunteering grows. Thereby, it is very important that the organization has the capacity to satisfy the motivation of its volunteers, and it is best to examine them at the very beginning of the engagement. In tourism, it is extremely important to know the segment in which volunteers work (H. A, Stanton, 2016).

The most common motives for volunteering are:

- the desire to help others;
- the need to participate in some change;
- to gain work experience that is often marginalized in formal education;
- to acquire specific work experience;
- the possibility to travel;
- to meet new people, places, customs;
- to exchange experiences;
- to acquire practice;
- retraining;
- well-spent free time and many others.

There are two forms of volunteer work systematization and they refer to the positions where work with volunteers is directed.



Photo 2. Volunteers of Nušićijada at the tourism fair in Novi Sad.

Photo: Authors

Internal volunteers are focused on working within the organization. In this form of volunteering, a volunteer usually comes as an individual, whose motivation is mainly professional development, and gaining work experience. In this form of engagement, the work is mostly done within the business premises.

Another form of engagement is external. When it comes to the external form of engagement, to a greater extent the problem the volunteers deal with is the local community. Depending on the form and scope of the work performed, in this form of volunteering, volunteers can be engaged as individuals, but there may also be a larger group of engaged volunteers within which they work together. In this form of engagement, work takes place outside the business premises, i.e., "in the field" (Norton, 2011).

The arrival of volunteers in the organization inevitably leads to a change. A large number of internal/external volunteers come into contact with employees, share space and materials for work with them. That is why it is very important to include all employees in the process of preparing the organization to work with volunteers, where they will define and design the jobs that volunteers should perform, ways of their engagement, volunteer competencies, working hours during which volunteers will be engaged.

One of the good results in the organization's preparation is the *Rulebook on Working with Volunteers*, a written document that defines all the necessary areas in working with volunteers (Trišić, Štetić, 2019), and which is defined with employees during the organization orientation to work with volunteers.

Another prerequisite in the preparation of a volunteer program is the selection of a volunteer coordinator (volunteer program manager). Although all employees create and are introduced into a volunteer program, thus taking on the obligation to accept volunteers, it is very important that only one person deals with them. The task of a volunteer coordinator is to instruct volunteers in the work of the organization, to keep records of volunteers, to monitor their work, to help in case of problems, to represent the rights of volunteers in the organization, and to take care of relations with employees, to provide additional training, to motivate volunteers, etc.

The coordinator should be a person who is prepared and trained to work with volunteers, oriented towards working with people. In practice, it has been shown that it is best for a person engaged in the position of volunteer coordinator to perform exclusively tasks related to working with volunteers (Pavlović, Križanić and Šovljanski, 2010).

The key element in working with volunteers is a clearly defined work plan. Planned work with volunteers is a whole that includes certain steps, which, if followed and implemented in a quality manner, contribute to the successful and professional implementation of the volunteer program. This system is applicable to both categories of volunteering and has a circular flow, so it is also called the cycle of organized work with volunteers.

A volunteer program should define: the objective, place, and time of activities; user group; required number of volunteers and their profiles (education, age, skills, experience); required number of other staff (trainers, coordinators, facilitators, and others); description of volunteer positions; description of support activities (training courses, training, supervision plan; evaluation of work and programs, etc); budget needed for program implementation.

One of the key things, based on which volunteers choose the programs they will participate in, is a *description of volunteer positions*, which should contain as concise a description of all activities as possible (volunteer's position, description, time, place of activities' implementation, user/target group, well-defined schedule of engagement, defined rights and duties, etc.).

In addition to the fact that volunteers are a significant resource who possess a variety of skills and knowledge, *the admission of volunteers also carries numerous risks* - for the clients we work with, donors, employees, and also for the reputation of our organization. All volunteer positions carry some risk; the objective is to reduce the risk to a minimum or to completely neutralize it, and that is why it is important to define the level of risk for each individual position. It is important to think about how the organization will *respond to the risk* to avoid consequences for the users, the project, and even for the volunteers themselves.

Example of Nušićijada in Ivanjica

For the Organizing Committee of *Nušićijada* in Ivanjica, it is clear from the very beginning that the volunteer resource is one of the most important segments of their organization. During the situation analysis and risk assessment, all the members became aware that the introduction of volunteers is a necessity to which everyone must adapt and in which everyone must participate. One of the starting advantages was that there was a coordinator in the team who had experience in working with volunteers, so the process of orienting the organization, designing programs and models went without significant difficulties.

The most important factor in the formation of the volunteer program was the orientation of beneficiaries, partners, and associates towards volunteers. After the first festival, everyone had words of praise and pride for the volunteers, but only a few understood the importance and value of volunteering for both, the individual and the community (Project Management Guidelines, 2004). During the year, through the implemented projects, the tendency was to promote the values and principles of volunteer

work, including volunteers in all activities with collaborating and partner institutions, showing the benefits of volunteer work through the practical example.

In addition to the system of rewards and motivation mentioned in the previous chapter, in which volunteers are constantly advancing in their positions (second team - first team - coordinator), at the end of each festival or larger activity (such as the action "Halfway"), the evenings are organized where volunteers are given thank-you notes and occasional small gifts. Ivanjica volunteers have the opportunity to meet numerous actors, performers, and participants in the *Nušićijada* by hosting them at the festival, thus gaining valuable acquaintances and friendships. The attitude of the association that organizes *Nušićijada* to volunteers is clearly defined by the Rulebook on Volunteering and all associates are familiar with the affirmative attitude towards them.

RECRUITMENT OF VOLUNTEERS

The potential places where people can be found to help with recruitment (in addition to resources within the organization) can be schools, colleges, and other organizations. Depending on the work which volunteers are engaged for, they can also be hospitals, banks, museums and galleries, municipal institutions, etc.

In addition to recruitment in the area, we can distinguish two other types of recruitment:

- Recruitment with a target group (conducted when volunteers with specific knowledge and skills are needed. When recruiting these volunteers, we should pay attention to define the job description clearly and in detail so that there are no problems with realization, motives, qualifications, etc.).
- Recruitment without a target group (carried out when as many volunteers as possible are needed. The jobs that we engage these volunteers for are generally simple, where volunteers can perform the given task based on some elementary information).

Once it is determined what type of recruitment is needed, it is necessary to define *a message* that is well to be sent to volunteers (internet and press releases, media, group presentations, targeted presentations, printed material, personal contact).

The next step in recruiting a volunteer is *an interview*. The interview is a scheduled conversation between organizers and volunteers, which serves to get to know each other better. The person in charge of working with volunteers in the organization who should prepare for this type of communication should conduct the interview.

Example of *Nuščijada* in Ivanjica

During the project "Theory and Practice to the Youth", one of the first activities during the project "Theory and Practice to the Youth" was the reintegration of volunteers. It was a two-day seminar with the aim to review the real possibilities, strengths, and capacities of the old volunteer team, prepare plans for future actions, and recruit a new team of volunteers.

The first team of volunteers, together with their coordinator, design the recruitment for the second team and define work plans that they implement together with the second team during the festival. After each festival, they evaluate the volunteer program, after which they make a plan for the next year. Every volunteer who volunteers within the second team for two years automatically moves to the first team in the third year.

The idea of volunteers recruiting new volunteers proved to be a good model nurtured during the recruitment in the following years. Not only that volunteers have the opportunity to hear experiences "from the first hand", but they are also the ones who pass on the same experiences next year.



Photo 3. *Recruitment of volunteers and one of the workshops in Ivanjica High School,*
Photo: Authors

EDUCATION OF VOLUNTEERS

Education is one of the most complex processes in working with volunteers. It is a moment in which there is no place for improvisation and insufficiently clear information. Training is often one of the strongest motives why people choose to become volunteers (Brundey and Meijs, 2014).

Before volunteers start realizing their work tasks, it is necessary to include them in an organization's work. This process is called **VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION**. We must not neglect this process because it represents the foundation of future work and leads to a more successful realization and adequate social inclusion of volunteers in the organization. The orientation process begins with the first arrival of volunteers on the organization's premises.



Photo 4. Education of volunteers in Ivanjica, Photo: Authors

The next step is to make volunteers familiar with the organization's mission, vision, and objectives, as well as the current projects and the project on which they will be engaged (Štetić, 2011). If there are volunteers who already work, you should introduce them to the volunteer program and give them the *job description*. Also, it is necessary to discuss rights and obligations that they have towards the organization but which the organization has towards them (if any, it is good to give them a list of obligations and responsibilities in print). That is a great time to sign a volunteer contract and to welcome them!

Example of *Nuščijada* in Ivanjica

The orientation process of collaborative institutions, partners, and users was the most challenging in working with volunteers. With this in mind, after the recruitment of new volunteers, we started educating these new volunteers and the representatives of institutions, partners, and other beneficiaries we cooperated.

For example: in the workshop on multi-sectoral cooperation, teams of volunteers worked in small groups with representatives of institutions, learning about their role in those institutions and working with them responded to the set tasks related to the festival. The example given by the institutions' representatives to the young volunteers respected their opinion, it was as useful for the young as it was for the representatives of other sectors (Stojanović, 2018). Volunteers could see how much their engagement was appreciated, and representatives of the sectors – how important volunteer engagement is for a project of this type. After working together, both were grateful for the mutual respect and commitment to the project.

Through a series of workshops organized within the project "Theory and Practice to the Youth" volunteers and other partners had the opportunity to work together and learn one from another about institutions and volunteerism (Matorčević and Gligorović, 2017). When it comes to such projects (repeated from year to year), a good practice is that this orientation and education can be conducted only once. If they are completed well, the effects are permanent, no need to repeat the process, but only to mutually upgrade it (Brundey and Meijs, 2014).

MONITORING

Monitoring is a verification process that is performed during the implementation of the activities performed by a volunteer. The aim of monitoring is to check how successful the activity is, i.e., whether the planned results have been achieved. Volunteers must understand that monitoring is a natural process in their work and that they do not feel threatened by the evaluators (Petrović et al., 2011).

It is also important to allow volunteers to communicate with each other, giving each other suggestions and advice and learning in such a way. If we notice that a volunteer does not do his/her job adequately due to personal problems, we should talk to him/her individually (Adirondack, 2002).

Monitoring and evaluation can show that volunteers are not doing well in their work tasks and that they need additional training (Brundey and Meijs, 2014). Also, volunteers may realize that they do not want to be engaged or even that they are not suitable for the given job. Then it is necessary to re-recruit or engage other volunteers (Project Management Toolkit, 2000). Volunteers may be dissatisfied with the coordinator's attitude of the coordinator towards them; then, it is necessary to assess what exactly is the source of their dissatisfaction - whether it is the coordinator, the employee, or simply the entire relationship of the organization to the volunteer program. No matter what kind of situation is concerned, it is necessary to constantly monitor and upgrade the volunteer program. Meetings are the right tool that will point the way to change (Krogerus and Tschappeler, 2011).

The word that is often associated with volunteers is "we use": "we use volunteers ...". Volunteers are not things to be used; we should try expressions such as include, count on, delegate, work together, etc. It will show our respect to those who give their knowledge and time to others.

Example of Nušićijada in Ivanjica

In this case, monitoring and supervision on the example of a three-day festival need to be conducted periodically. During the festival itself, monitoring is done every day in order to react to the problems as soon as possible if it is necessary, while during the preparations, supervision is required periodically (every seven days).



Photos 5. *Volunteers with visitors of the event, Photo: Authors*

EVALUATION

Evaluation, as well as all segments of the volunteer program, are planned and designed earlier. No matter which model of the evaluation plan we use, it is important to involve all stakeholders into the volunteer program, namely: the volunteers, organizations and beneficiaries (Radosavljević and Stojanović, 2012). Methods that can be helpful during the evaluation are: questionnaires, minutes of meetings, reports, etc.

Evaluation is the moment when we consider whether the engagement of volunteers has resulted in savings (Stojanović, Prelević, 2018). The savings on engaging volunteers in the event organization is generally around 20-30% (Matorčević and Gligorović, 2017).

Working with volunteers is not easy: this process takes a lot of time and energy (which generally is not involved in the account above), but working with volunteers in addition to material savings brings spiritual benefits (Marilyn, 2008). Volunteers are mostly cheerful people eager to help and change the world around them. They usually create an optimistic mood and good atmosphere, and because of that, organizations decide to work with volunteers despite small statistics (Volunteer Handbook - Local Community and Volunteers, 2007). Perhaps the most considerable influence which volunteers have, is the positive voice they spread about the organization. We must not forget that volunteers represent the voice of the community and that their involvement shows openness and transparency while working.

Example of *Nušićijada* in Ivanjica

The project "Theory and Practice to the Youth" included the recruitment of re-integrated volunteers from the festival, trained to recruit new volunteers who they worked with on the first training (Štetić, 2013). This was followed by two seminars on the topic: multi-sectoral cooperation and community awareness, as well as tourism and media promotion. Also, within the project, two local actions were made; as a result, an intensive media and tourist campaign was conducted and implemented with designed thematic performances and several promotional advertisements. The number of volunteers has tripled after this project.

Evaluation is an unavoidable process in the organization of *Nušićijada* in Ivanjica. The quality of the completed work has been assessed, and the plan for the next challenges has been created based on this evaluation. (How to volunteer in Serbia, 2011). In this particular case, the

evaluation was a key factor in the development of the volunteer program as implemented today.

After the first Nušićijada, the evaluation of the festival showed the need to increase human resources in the form of volunteers, after which the work plan for the next year was designed, organized through the project "Theory and Practice to the Youth".

The evaluation of the project and the festival received the highest grades but it was concluded that next year it would not be necessary to do education of that intensity and number, but to focus on basic training needed for good teamwork, and to dedicate the rest to work with institutions.

And thus, the *proactive community* project was created, through which volunteers were educated about volunteering, teamwork, duties, and responsibilities with a special focus on working with institutions. In partnership with representatives of institutions, they analyzed roles and defined work plans, which they jointly implemented at the festival.

CONCLUSION

Instead of a conclusion, we will quote the words of one of the eminent scientists in world history, Albert Einstein: "How valuable a person is for his community depends, first of all, on how much his feelings, thoughts, and actions aim at improving other people's lives."

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