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Volunteers' knowledge activities at UK music festivals: a hermeneutic-phenomenological exploration of individuals' experiences

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Abstract

Purpose – *This paper aims to explore how and why volunteers share knowledge and engage in other related knowledge activities. The paper offers an interpretation of participants' multiple realities to enable a better understanding of managing volunteer knowledge, which ultimately underpins organisational performance and effectiveness.*

Design/methodology/approach – *A qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenological study of volunteers (n = 28) at UK music festivals was conducted through in-depth interviews (n = 9), diaries (n = 11) or both (n = 8). This interpretivist approach adopted purposive sampling to recruit participants through (social) media.*

Findings – *The findings illustrate how and why volunteers share knowledge that is attributed to a successful process of volunteering, which enables effective knowledge management and knowledge reproduction. Where volunteers' motivations are satisfied, this leads to repeat volunteering. Knowledge enablers and the removal of barriers create conditions that are conducive for knowledge sharing, which have similar characteristics to conditions for continuance commitment. Where volunteers do not return, the organisation leaks knowledge.*

Research limitations/implications – *Although high-quality research standards were maintained, participant self-selection may result in overly positive experiences. Future research might explore the impact on knowledge sharing of negative volunteering experiences.*

Practical/implications – *Practical recommendations include factors that contribute to effective volunteer co-ordination and volunteering experiences, which are enablers for knowledge sharing. These fall within two categories, namely, areas for continuance (i.e. those aspects that should be maintained because they contribute to effective volunteer co-ordination and experiences) and areas for improvement (i.e. those aspects of volunteer co-ordination that are either currently lacking or require development or enhancement).*

Originality/value – *This paper's original contribution is demonstrated through the use of hermeneutic phenomenological methods in the exploration of individuals' perspectives of knowledge sharing in the context of temporary organisations. This paper provides value to academics studying knowledge management and volunteer management, and practitioners managing volunteers.*

Keywords *Communities of practice, Knowledge management, Knowledge sharing, Volunteering, Hermeneutic phenomenology*

Paper type *Research paper*

1. Introduction

Managing knowledge within organisations has been linked to improved skills and competencies, and thus opportunities for enhanced innovation, increased business performance and ultimately towards achieving competitive advantage (Argote and Ingram, 2000; Brown and Duguid, 1991; Gorelick and Tantawy-Monsou, 2005; Kogut and Zander, 1992; Song *et al.*, 2003). The management of organisational tacit and explicit knowledge is an important activity that has the ability to impact organisational performance and "the

bottom line" through strategically aligned and effective knowledge management policies, plans and practices (Dalkir, 2011; Jashapara, 2011; Newell *et al.*, 2009). Similarly, commercial or not-for-profit organisations that are reliant on free labour through the act of volunteering have the opportunity to encourage and leverage knowledge activities (including sharing and retention) among volunteers to reduce the "wasteful cycles of relearning" and the possibility of organisational failure (Ragsdell *et al.*, 2014). In such volunteer-reliant organisations, the possibility of high turnover of (free) resources and the transient nature of volunteers results in a fragmentation and lack of cross-fertilisation of knowledge (Lettieri *et al.*, 2004).

This paper focuses on individuals' experiences at UK music festivals, specifically stewards. The data are snapshots of volunteers at a variety of UK music festivals, rather than at an organisational level or through the lens of the event stakeholder, and explore single event lifecycles and is not longitudinal in scope. Volunteers in this context are of interest, as they are typically equipped with a variety of experiences and knowledge (Barron and Rihova, 2011), and the steward role they undertake has the potential to impact the quality of the customer experience. This is significant as in the long term, the customer experience can contribute to organisational competitive advantage (Holmes and Smith, 2009). Having the ability to stand apart from competitors is important in competitive sectors and this includes music festivals, which are becoming more homogeneous or "isomorphic" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Frumkin and Gelaskiewicz, 2004). Therefore, knowledge activities and volunteers are critical to enable organisational competitiveness and differentiation from rivals. The research findings presented here are as a result of a doctoral research project, funded by the ESRC and awarded by the South West Doctoral Training Centre. The research study aimed to explore how and why volunteers shared knowledge within temporary, "pulsating" (Crawford, 1991; Toffler, 1990) events organisations. Invariably, individuals' knowledge sharing perspectives have influences on and implications for knowledge activities from the organisational viewpoint. Organisational knowledge management concerns the overall coordination of "knowledge activities" that create flows to, and from, a firm's stock of knowledge (Nielsen, 2006). Typically, these include eight steps, i.e. creation, acquisition, capture, assembly, sharing, integration, leverage and exploitation of (new) knowledge (Alavi and Leidner, 2001; Nielsen, 2006; O'Dell and Grayson, 1998; Teece, 1998). Symptomatically, festival organisations consist of distinct groups of individual paid and unpaid resources on a mixture of contracts and no contracts, from permanent to temporary, and these combine to create a new, temporary organisation (Hanlon and Jago, 2009), expanding and contracting with the annual event lifecycle. The use of volunteers is integral to the delivery of an event (Elstad, 2003; Love *et al.*, 2012; Slaughter, 2002), without whom operating costs would exponentially increase (Holmes and Smith, 2009) and potentially forcing organisational failure (Love *et al.*, 2012).

This paper aims to present an interpretation of volunteers' lived experiences of knowledge sharing, and through these insights assist the management of knowledge and other knowledge activities, which are attributed to improved business performance and competitive advantage. While the participants worked for a mix of not-for-profit and commercial organisations, the use of volunteers in this context generates relevant insights for any organisation reliant on large volumes of volunteers to deliver the core business. The researcher's findings concluded that the motivation to volunteer needs to be understood and satisfied by the organisation and for volunteers to have an "optimal" volunteering experience. The research established that an "optimal" experience provides the environment conducive for active knowledge sharing, and contributes to factors that enable repeat volunteering, thus enhance organisational knowledge retention opportunities.

This paper commences with a literature review, where Knowledge Management Studies are dominated by positivist and quantitative studies. Until recently, Knowledge Studies have focused on the "harder" side of knowledge activities, particularly technology-related

interventions (Dalkir, 2011; Hutchinson and Quintas, 2008); however, research investigating the "softer" side is emerging (Cooper, 2006; Ragsdell and Jepson, 2014), which supports the investigation of social actors and their knowledge in this research. Subsequently, this paper moves on to explore the research methodology. In adopting a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, the researcher aimed to understand human behaviour rather than explain or measure it (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Saunders et al., 2009). Through the interpretation of meanings of the complex world from the perspective of social actors, this study generated data from participants' in-depth interviews and diaries. The researcher's interpretations, embedded in the context of the literature, are outlined in the findings using verbatim quotes to construct the narrative. A discussion section follows that summarises the conclusion that a good or "optimal" volunteering experience is a conduit for the conditions for knowledge activities, including knowledge sharing. These conditions are also conducive for repeat volunteering. As a result, through the effective management of volunteers, this population is likely to demonstrate more productive performance resulting in increased organisational performance and ultimately increases competitive advantage.

2. Literature review

Knowledge Management Studies, or the study of human knowledge, has a long and rich history, beginning with classical philosophers (Dalkir, 2011; Hislop, 2009; Jashapara, 2011; Newell et al., 2009). In contrast, the study of organisational knowledge management is a relatively newer and evolving field of study commencing in the 1960s (Dalkir, 2011) that has progressed in three distinct phases (Cooper, 2006):

1. Information, communications and technologies influences (Dalkir, 2011) and "knowledge work" and "knowledge workers" (Drucker, 1988).

2. The concept of the "learning organisation" (Senge, 2006) that leverages the power of knowledge for competitive advantage (Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995).

3. Knowledge and human capital as a vehicle for knowledge (Cooper, 2006).

This research study is positioned in this third phase, and aims to explore the relational impact between knowledge (sharing) and volunteers within music festival organisations. Tacit knowledge is deeply embedded within a person, and reflects the skills and know-how of a person's experiences (Newell et al., 2009). Knowledge itself is deeply social in nature (Dalkir, 2011), and core to the study of knowledge is an understanding that the social world and social relationships are central to facilitate knowledge-related activities such as knowledge creation, knowledge retention and knowledge transfer or sharing (Argote et al., 2003). Despite greater accessibility, speed, capacity of information, data and knowledge storage (Blackler et al., 1998; Dalkir, 2011; McElroy, 2003; Newell et al., 2009), the process of knowledge management endures reliability and validity issues due to human fallibility, thus demonstrating knowledge management is not exclusive from human activity and intervention.

A substantial portion of the Knowledge Management literature concentrates on large organisations in the knowledge economy, known as "knowledge intensive firms" (KIFs) (Nicolini et al., 2003, p. 5). That said, knowledge is beyond the narrow scope of KIFs and is central to most diverse organisations (Nicolini et al., 2003, p. 5); thus, all organisations must embrace and manage their knowledge stocks effectively. A key condition of knowledge is the environment within which social actors operate, and this includes the organisational community. Communities of practice (CofP) have been cited as a conduit for knowledge and learning, with the ability to fundamentally influence an organisation's aptitude for innovation (Coakes and Smith, 2007), as well as creativity, competitive advantage, performance and engagement (Hughes et al., 2007). According to Wenger et al. (2002, p. 4), CofP are:

> [. . .] groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an on-going basis.

CofP (Lave and Wenger, 1991) challenge the didactic approach of formal teacher–student education and offer a dynamic and situated method of student-led learning. Noted for its prominent place in Knowledge Management literature (Bolisani and Scarso, 2014), CofP studies recognise the social nature of learning activities, identities and artefacts by and through actors in a social world (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Memberships to communities occurs simultaneously, without the need for cards or elections (Wenger, 1998). Access is instead "granted" through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991), referring to the relationship and interaction between members, specifically the old timers or masters, with newcomers or apprentices, whose legitimacy is established through the individuals' active engagement in the socio-cultural community and their desire for learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

The unformulated nature of knowledge sharing means that a range of life experiences influence the knowledge acquired, retained and (re-)shared. In turn, the environment and social networks within and outside working lives can be instrumental to knowledge activities and flows. Organisational environments comprise stimuli and catalysts that enhance knowledge activities; conversely, barriers can prohibit such activities, particularly at an individual level. Geisler and Wickramasinghe (2009, p. 113) outline four categories into which barriers broadly fall. They are:

1. organisational and unit culture barriers restricting knowledge exchanges;

2. disciplinary and professional differences that obstruct knowledge exchanges;

3. the type of knowledge in a group can repress exchanges; and

4. breakdowns in communication networks within the group demonstrate a weakness in the knowledge platform.

Having established the social nature of knowledge and its influence on the environment, it is likewise important to comprehend the desire to attend festivals and the act of volunteering itself. Music festivals are products to be purchased or consumed by participants and visitors (Picard and Robinson, 2006), and dissimilarly steward volunteers both simultaneously work for, and are consumers of, festivals. Motivations to attend the same festival fluctuate due to assorted intrinsic needs and wants (Gelder and Robinson, 2009; Yolal et al., 2012, p. 71). The study by Ralston and Crompton (1988) is cited as conducting the first significant festival attendees' motivation research, as further contributions have been typically based on psychological (needs and wants) factors (Gelder and Robinson, 2009; Yolal et al., 2012). Research specific to music festivals visitors' motivation is sparse (Gelder and Robinson, 2009; Oakes, 2003). Uysal et al. (1993) established that where consumer's motivation to attend an event was perceived to be satisfied, this influenced individuals' (repeat) purchasing behaviour. Thus, a cycle of motivation, satisfaction and repeat behaviour occurs (Lundin and Söderholm, 1995). Yolal et al. (2012) concluded across different festival products that "event novelty" had prominence. Formica and Uysal (1996) arrived at a similar conclusion as did Pine and Gilmore (2011), suggesting Festivalgoers would most naturally situate the escapist (immerse/active) "realm". Escapists combined "active guest participation" and "immersive environmental relationship", that is, people who are completely immersed in the event experience and who actively participate (Pine and Gilmore, 2011, p. 46).

Similarly, in the two socio-psychological motivational forces of "seek" and "escape" (Iso-Ahola, 1980; Mannell and Iso-Ahola, 1987), individuals who have a low level of stimulation in work seek novelty and stimulation in leisure. Conversely, those individuals with high levels of stimulation in work seek to escape. This concept suggests leisure and tourist behaviour is made on experiential bases, rather than purely tangible or practical motives (Shaw and Williams, 2002). In exploring the experiential factors of leisure, selected

researchers (Fodness, 1994; Gnoth and Matteucci, 2014; Mannell and Iso-Ahola, 1987) have adopted the work of Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1993) and his exploration of what it means when people find things enjoyable and achieve happiness; this is described as "flow". In leisure, this "optimal experience" describes where (work) areas of people's lives are lacking, they seek excitement through leisure (Roberts, 1999; Rojek, 1995). In addition to an appreciation of the motivation to attend leisure events, the recognition of the meaning and purpose of (music) events provides an understanding of volunteers' desires to join festival communities. It also provides a sense of the environment within which volunteers operate and thus where knowledge activities take place.

Volunteering is a prosocial behaviour (Clary et al., 1998), that is, active behaviour freely enacted by individuals engaged in helping, giving or participating (Reed and Selbee, 2000) for the benefit of the community and the volunteer (Holmes and Smith, 2009). Volunteers are vital to event resourcing (Elstad, 2003; Slaughter, 2002) and volunteer relationships with an organisation may be categorised as one-off, long-term or episodic, although the latter is most prevalent in events (Bryen and Madden, 2006). Episodic volunteering (MacDuff, 1991) describes a flexible relationship with an organisation, in the capacity of "host" (e.g. providing a service) rather than guest (e.g. volunteer tourism) (Holmes and Smith, 2009). "Occasional episodic" volunteers return to duties repeatedly, or "bounce-back" (Bryen and Madden, 2006), and have a long-term continuance commitment (Elstad, 2003; Holmes and Smith, 2009). This means volunteers will return to the same organisation on a repeat, temporary basis, and it is precisely this repeat relationship a festival organisation should engender to enable knowledge retention.

To understand the decision-making process for volunteering, it is prudent to appreciate the motivations prior to volunteering; these replicate motivations exhibited in the cycle of motivation, satisfaction and repeat behaviour (Lundin and Söderholm, 1995). Clary et al. (1992) argue that while volunteering may suggest a common act, the underlying motivations for volunteering are distinctly different. In a later study, Clary et al. (1998, pp. 1517-1518) suggest there are six motivational functions served by volunteering. These are:

1. *Values*: This is an ability to express values related to altruistic and humanitarian concerns for others.

2. *Understanding*: This offers new learning experiences and the chance to exercise knowledge, skills and abilities, which might otherwise go unpractised.

3. *Social*: This creates opportunities to socialise with existing friends or create new (personal) social networks.

4. *Career*: This provides the utilitarian function of preparing for a new career or maintaining career-related skills.

5. *Protective*: This guards the self by removing negative feelings of guilt of having more than others have; this function protects the ego and addresses personal concerns.

6. *Enhancement*: This promotes the self by reinforcing growth and development and increases self-development.

Later, research established that "values" and "understanding" were the strongest motivations (Caldarella et al., 2010; Clary and Snyder, 1999), and "enhancement" was a more important dimension of volunteering for younger people than older (Clary and Snyder, 1999). Motivations for volunteering in the leisure sector are somewhat complicated by the trade-off between simultaneously satisfying customers' and volunteer's leisure needs (Lockstone-Binney et al., 2010). Other determinants of motivation and subsequent behaviour are the "person-situation fit" (Clary et al., 1998) and the provision of pride and respect as both a motivator and a reward (Boezeman and Ellemers, 2007). Satisfaction is a post hoc measure of experience and is gained through fulfilling the original motivation to volunteer, and it subsequently encourages repeat volunteering (Caldarella et al., 2010;

Clary *et al.*, 1992, 1998). Taken together, understanding individuals' motivations to volunteer and the subsequent satisfactions of volunteering motives can inform leaders of volunteers for future recruitment activities, to engender organisational commitment and repeat volunteering (Boezeman and Ellemers, 2007; Broadbridge and Horne, 1994; Clary *et al.*, 1992; Goldblatt and Matheson, 2009). Encouraging repeat volunteers (Bryen and Madden, 2006; MacDuff, 1991) is a critical tool in the reduction of time and money invested in recruitment and training (Bang *et al.*, 2009; Ragsdell and Jepson, 2014). It further reduces costs associated with recruitment, selection, training and induction, and other extrinsic non-financial rewards (Slaughter, 2002). This is particularly pertinent to events organisations, which often fulfil all, or a substantial majority of, roles with volunteers (Rolfe, 1992). As a result of repeat volunteers, (tacit) knowledge is retained and routinised into practice, without which knowledge "walks out of the door at the end of the day" (Dalkir, 2011, p. 2). The ability to convert "first-timers" into repeat volunteers requires organisations to understand continuance commitment (Elstad, 2003; Love *et al.*, 2012), that is, a manifestation of increased satisfaction (Slaughter, 2002), which supports a higher likelihood of repeat volunteering.

3. Research methodology

The researcher adopted an interpretivist approach, influenced by hermeneutic phenomenology, to gain understandings of behaviour (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Saunders *et al.*, 2009) and interpret meanings. Interpretivism is suitable to the study of individuals in a social world, and it is complex and unique (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). In-depth interviews and written diaries methods were chosen because of the potential for exploring deeper into the complexity of multiple realities and "explaining phenomenon that is integrative and complex" (Grant *et al.*, 2001, p. 68). Both methods enable the necessary depth of insight and allow the researcher to interpret meanings, experiences and understandings (Smith *et al.*, 2009). In combination, interviews and diaries facilitate the exploration of "deep, personal and experiential aspects" of volunteering (McIntosh and Zahra, 2007, p. 545).

The total period of data-related activities ranged from July 2012 to September 2013. Commencing with scoping activities, the research design was iterative and identified emergent themes in the participants' responses and provided alternative lenses through which to conduct the subsequent analysis (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Purposive sampling was applied and participants were recruited for their greater likelihood to reflect the context, phenomenon, or both, being studied, rather than trying to reflect the population at large (Creswell, 2003). To recruit participants, printed and online social media were used to attract participants. The final study comprised 28 participants, 11 of whom recorded their festival experience in a diary during a 2013 festival, nine who were interviewed about previous (2010-2012) festival volunteering experiences and eight who participated in both.

In analysing the data generated, the raw material was categorised, interpreted and creatively applied using van Manen's (1990) thematic analysis. Such endeavour could be termed "co-construction" (Steier, 1991) or, as Denzin and Lincoln (2011) assert, "bricolage" or "quilt-making". These terms imply expert craftwork and tools being applied to raw material parts to create the "whole". During analysis, Heidegger's "hermeneutic circle" urges researchers that to understand the "part", one must also understand the "whole" and vice versa; thus, researchers must move backwards and forwards through the data to consider the part *and* the whole (Moran, 2000; Schmidt, 2006). During analysis, data were categorised and sorted (Bryman and Burgess, 1994) to create themes, patterns, events and actions (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p. 32). In this paper, representative verbatim quotes are used to ground the interpretation in the social actor's worldviews. Where an individual's words have been selected as evocative and a representative embodiment of a theme, the quote is attributed to them using their assigned pseudonym (e.g. "Ralph"), together with the number of the related script (e.g. "P84") and the number of the line-quote (e.g. "54"). Put together, this would be referenced as such: "Ralph [84:54]". The document

numbers and the quotation numbers were automatically assigned during the thematic "coding" stage in ATLAS.*ti*.

4. Research findings

The research exposed the importance of knowing the conditions that enable or prevent knowledge activities, which are similar to conditions that create an environment conducive to an optimum volunteering experience. From an organisational perspective through the improvement of the volunteering experience, it is suggested that knowledge activities will be enabled and enhanced. Through the research process, four distinguishing themes emerged from the data, i.e. the distinctiveness of (festival) volunteers, motivation to volunteer, the knowledge environment created through communities of practice and the type of knowledge shared in the organisational context of volunteering at festival events. The themes emerged as representations of the phenomenon, and were presented by two linked and overlapping categories, namely, the experience of being a volunteer and the experience of learning to be a volunteer.

4.1 Distinctiveness of (festival) volunteers

> There is nothing quite like a festival for having trench foot *and* sunburn! [Laughs] [Ginny, 74:113].

With respect to being a volunteer, a strong sense of distinctive characteristics emerged that was different from the notion of a "typical" volunteer. Carol [80:32] supported this premise:

> I really don't think there is a typical volunteer, no. The only thing that everybody that I met who volunteered came with [was] enthusiasm and, you know, bright, lovely people. You know, positive, optimistic, because you know, it rains. It gets muddy. Nobody's spirits are dampened but then that's festival mentality anyway. It's not just a volunteer thing. So, yeah [. . .]. Happy to be there, and just bright and lovely people!

Further, the sense of the volunteer's identity emerged through their experiences and a sense of "being more me" and inverting their own perceived normality (Hall and Page, 2012; Picard and Robinson, 2006), which pertains to transformative and ritualistic forms of festivity, such as (alternate) dressing, speaking or acting in defined ways (Picard and Robinson, 2006). Ginny [74:39] felt free and unrestrained in her volunteering role, in contrast to her normal work environment. Ginny said:

> I often hear "management speak"; this idea of "thinking outside the box". I hear that a lot in meetings. Very dull. I think in all the different voluntary things I've done there hasn't been a box to think outside of. There hasn't been a box, because everyone's coming with so much, and so many different backgrounds and experiences, that you're starting from scratch almost and doing things in a completely different way.

A selection of the participants expressed that they actively tended to seek out roles that were dissimilar to their working lives, akin to the "seek-escape" concept (Iso-Ahola, 1980; Mannell and Iso-Ahola, 1987) and thus aimed for "optimal experience" in their leisure (Roberts, 1999; Rojek, 1995). In a similar manner, Arthur demarcated his work and leisure. While volunteering, he liked the "clearly defined set of things" he did and not the "hassle and stress" of work life. Arthur [90:29] said:

> I'm volunteering my time and my labour; I'm not volunteering to have more stress and difficult decisions, and dealing with staff and stuff like that.

4.2 Motivation to volunteer

The other theme categorised under "being" was the participants' motivation(s) to volunteer and their experience of being a volunteer:

> It poured with rain, it was so muddy but right in the middle of it I said to him [the volunteer coordinator], "right, can I come back next year"? [Carol, 80:11].

Understanding the motivation to engage with an organisation and its purpose helped the researcher understand the motivations to engage freely (literally and figuratively) with the volunteer work, to repeat volunteer and how it relates to knowledge activities. The motivation to volunteer included altruistic, entertainment, financial and social aspects and are somewhat similar to those found by Yolal et al. (2012). A number of participants conceptualised the festival experience as a holiday, as examples: "[needing] something else to do as well" [Tamsin, 82:4] or "structured holiday" [Ed, 76:44]. This is akin to suspending normal life during periods of leisure (Iso-Ahola, 1983; Mannell and Iso-Ahola, 1987) and seeking optimal experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The sense that being a volunteer was for the benefit of the individual, more than the organisation, recurred and supports the motivational functions served by volunteering (Clary et al., 1998) most notably: value, understanding and enhancement. This echoes findings by Caldarella et al. (2010) and Clary and Snyder (1999).

In a similar vein, a few of the volunteers said they felt "smug", which resonated with the self-interest versus altruism debate of volunteering (Wearing and McGehee, 2013). Val [66:456, 66:523] felt "smug" in relation to her privileged access backstage, which provided satisfaction; such satisfaction might reasonably be converted into motivations and a continuance commitment to repeat volunteering (Bang et al., 2009). This point is supported by Kelly [70:69]:

> I love the smugness of, you know, feeling that I'm doing this work and, you know, I'm giving something back because while it's certainly not the reason I started out doing volunteering, it's one of the reasons that I go back to it really.

A number of the participants were clear in their altruistic motivation to support charities that coordinate festival stewards, a common reason for volunteering (Caldarella et al., 2010; Clary and Snyder, 1999; Clary et al., 1998). In working through, and with a charity, to provide themselves as free resources, it was a volunteer's act of charitable "donation". Victor felt donating his time for a charity was a more worthwhile way of going to a festival [Victor, 72:13], in fact, it was the prime reason to attend a festival [Victor, 72:18]. Likewise, Ed felt it was an advantage to contribute to a good cause through stewarding [Ed, 76:21], Laura said festival volunteering allowed her to feel "a bit less guilty" about being unable to donate money to charity [Laura, 94:8], and Ginny could not afford to donate money to charity. Ginny [74:26] said, "working for them in this way is another way of giving to them". Wendy [86:69] was of the same motivation, she said:

> [The charity] are effectively getting my wages, but I just think it is for a good cause and therefore it is my little donation, without having to spend any money on doing it, if you see what I mean?

Further examples suggest participants were satisfied with their volunteering experience, as they benefitted from personal growth and skills development, which may enhance their career or lives in general (Clary et al., 1998; Wearing, 2001; Wearing and McGehee, 2013).

4.3 The knowledge environment

Typically, a substantial element of the festival volunteer role was satisfying and enhancing consumers' experiences, upon which organisational success is dependent (Pine and Gilmore, 2011). That said, professional qualifications are not required or assessed; although volunteers are required to conduct themselves efficiently and effectively and attend mandatory training. Training sessions were a standard means through which to build efficacy, which assures organisational commitment. It is noteworthy that efficacy is important to personal motivation and actual performance (Green and Chalip, 2004).

During the act of volunteering, simple privileges, rituals and artefacts grant legitimacy to community members and assign a sense of belonging (Lave and Wenger, 1991). At music festivals, this manifests itself through the possession of a mug, tabard, or lanyard, or being included in "crew camping" areas. Arthur suggested creating a fun working atmosphere for a shift team is achieved in small yet significant ways, such as the "tea man" making his

rounds or sharing bacon rolls [Arthur, 90:41]. Steward tabards, hi-vis jackets or t-shirts created a uniform, which unify and create a sense of belonging. These rites, rituals and artefacts distinguished the volunteer community from the rest of the (festival) crowd. As Jacqui [96:28] illustrated:

> It's about feeling part of something which is really important, you know. So, it wasn't quite uniform but it was so, yeah, "I'm special", "I'm a volunteer, look at me".

In a link to the role of "old-timers" (Lave and Wenger, 1991) within a community of practice, Carol [80:54] acknowledged the (tacit) knowledge that more experienced volunteers brought to the festival and shared with their new ("apprentice") volunteers.

> [. . .]because I know the layout and I know what to expect a little bit more this time because of doing it last year. So you've got more experienced stewards as well that you can rely on.

Here, Carol displayed her understanding of knowledge sharing within an "alive" community and gave a commitment for repeat volunteering (Bryen and Madden, 2006; Holmes and Smith, 2009). "Aliveness" is characterised as the "internal direction, character, and energy" of the community (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 51). Such aliveness creates an environment within which knowledge flows and volunteers perform more effectively and thus develop to be more open to sharing knowledge (Ragsdell and Jepson, 2014), which then becomes codified into everyday work (Stadler et al., 2014). "Aliveness" and energy were evident despite shifts often being very dull, as Hannah [107:4] described how her shift rallied together to alleviate the boredom and a couple of volunteers collected everyone's ice cream orders, while the others played a "standing on one leg for the longest tournament". This "silliness" represents group cohesion and trust associated with communities of practice, and were powerful tools that enabled knowledge to be created, shared and managed more effectively (Brown and Duguid, 2002; Foss, 2005).

Participants principally offered positive views of the community, although they also remarked on how not all volunteers conducted themselves in such an "alive" manner. Many respondents energetically describing fellow volunteers' abuse of the festival and volunteering opportunities and did not turn up for their shift, or did not perform as expected. This lack of performance and attendance demonstrated a lack of commitment, factors that are important for festival leaders to consider for future recruitment (Green and Chalip, 2004). A strong culture of performance and motivation are also important factors in knowledge activities (Ragsdell and Jepson, 2014).

4.4 The type(s) of knowledge

As with other participants, Susan had a desire to be useful to the organisation, echoing the studies conducted by Love et al. (2012) and Wilks (2013) who found events volunteers wanted to be "needed and useful" and for their efforts to "make a difference". However, at the start of a volunteering experience, many participants felt unprepared and unconfident, displaying anxiety similar to being out of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Under the right conditions, matching an individual's skill level with the appropriate degree of challenge for an activity should engender optimum flow. Therefore, where an individual is "out of flow", in theory this should indicate individuals must increase their skill level or reduce the challenge to achieve flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). However, this often reflected perception versus reality and the process of moving from unknowing to knowing is relatively swift, which typically took place through "on-the-job" training. Such "learning-while-doing" is common amongst CofP (Lave and Wenger, 1991), and emphasises the need to experience learning first-hand and for regular communications (Wilks, 2013). Individuals learn through repeat volunteering, as well as through peer-to-peer, situational learning. This cycle of prior knowledge reproduction, and creating new knowledge, is critical to future absorption capacity (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990) for volunteers and collective learning. Val [66:427] described the learning environment and support available:

> I think they [inexperienced volunteers] learn from that, from seeing those experiences and hearing our feedback on what the festival was like for us and what it was like for a volunteer - it sort of gives them some sort of porthole if you like, into "how it is".

The "porthole" Val illustrates evokes a gateway through which the learning of experienced volunteers is enacted and learnt from. Kelly [70:161] refers to the benefit of repeat volunteering as a positive reinforcement of her existing learning. It is worth noting that the commitment to "work" is dramatically different in volunteer work versus paid work, where one is a psychological contract (Argyris, 1960; Kotter, 1973; Levinson, 1962) and the other is formal employment contract with measurable performance targets (Love *et al.*, 2012). Carol [80:81] agrees and said simply "you wouldn't not" share knowledge while volunteering, as it is helpful to your colleagues. She says:

> It's a working mentality isn't it? That you're all in the same job and just trying to be helpful and efficient, so, I don't know if that's a "condition", but it would seem sensible. I suppose in a way, unlike an office environment, it's not like one-upmanship [. . .] but there's no one-upmanship about, you know, hanging on to knowledge and not sharing it and trying to be better than your colleagues. You don't have that.
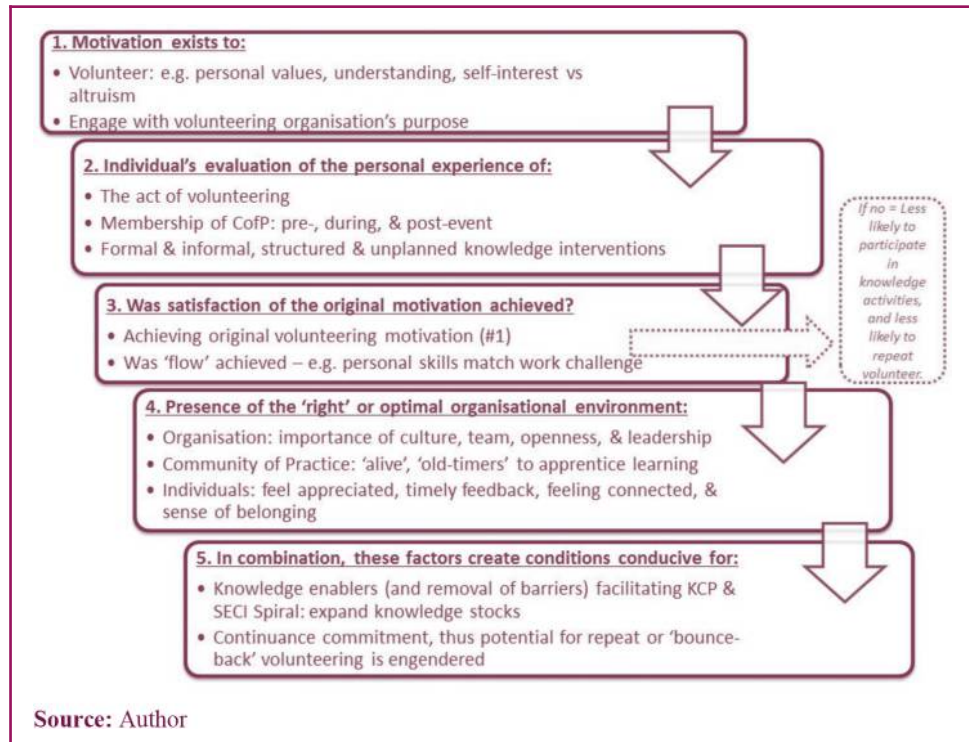
To create conditions conducive to knowledge activities, enablers to knowledge sharing must be enhanced or barriers removed (Geisler and Wickramasinghe, 2009). Where participants felt engaged, this had a direct link with knowledge sharing, which was typically sustained by practical knowledge management actions (Ichijo *et al.*, 1998) such as the presence of good leadership, managerial and supervisory support, and supporting manuals and training aides. The opposite, namely, the absence of these items, made people feel unprepared and unconfident, in addition to the fear of unknown and new situations, and poor, bad or miscommunications (Geisler and Wickramasinghe, 2009). Further, a culture of collaboration and a sense of community is required (Ragsdell and Jepson, 2014; Stadler *et al.*, 2014), and is achieved through a combination of improved "recruitment" of volunteers and recognising the motivations to volunteer.

5. Discussion

The research discovered that the "why" and "how" of knowledge sharing are intrinsically linked to the "why" and "how" of volunteering. That is, knowledge sharing is enabled (and knowledge barriers diminished or removed) in the optimum circumstances when an individual's motivation to volunteer ("why") is satisfied, and the resultant volunteering experience is agreeable. The subsequent impact on knowledge activities necessitates volunteer management to encourage and promote the knowledge-enabling context through the connected volunteering experience. Figure 1 below demonstrates the indicative optimal experience of volunteering and knowledge. This author-generated diagram was derived from the findings, and the model conceptualises the optimal circumstances that represent a "good" experience of a (festival) volunteer, which this paper suggests is central to knowledge activities. The model diagrammatical shows the connected nature of experiences and conditions of volunteering and engagement with the organisational purpose together with knowledge sharing and related knowledge activities.

This diagram reflects the optimal situation and assumes a good experience. The author acknowledges that not every volunteer experience is a good one, and accordingly, there are potential exit routes from the process for a variety of personal or role-related reasons. Further, while a "good" experience does not guarantee knowledge sharing nor repeat volunteering, a combination of factors that contribute to a good volunteering experience is characteristically an enabling factor that may engender such behaviours. It should be noted that the impact of enabling factors conducive for continuance commitment and thus engendering repeat volunteering is not evidenced from these findings, although has been indicated as a potential outcome through existing studies (Bryen and Madden, 2006; Elstad, 2003; Holmes, 2008; Holmes and Smith, 2009; Love *et al.*, 2012; MacDuff, 1991, 2005; Slaughter, 2002).

Figure 1 Indicative optimal experience of volunteering and knowledge

1. Motivation exists to:
- Volunteer: e.g. personal values, understanding, self-interest vs altruism
- Engage with volunteering organisation's purpose

2. Individual's evaluation of the personal experience of:
- The act of volunteering
- Membership of CofP: pre-, during, & post-event
- Formal & informal, structured & unplanned knowledge interventions

3. Was satisfaction of the original motivation achieved?
- Achieving original volunteering motivation (#1)
- Was 'flow' achieved – e.g. personal skills match work challenge

4. Presence of the 'right' or optimal organisational environment:
- Organisation: importance of culture, team, openness, & leadership
- Community of Practice: 'alive', 'old-timers' to apprentice learning
- Individuals: feel appreciated, timely feedback, feeling connected, & sense of belonging

5. In combination, these factors create conditions conducive for:
- Knowledge enablers (and removal of barriers) facilitating KCP & SECI Spiral: expand knowledge stocks
- Continuance commitment, thus potential for repeat or 'bounce-back' volunteering is engendered

If no = Less likely to participate in knowledge activities, and less likely to repeat volunteer.

Source: Author

The optimal experience commences with the requirement for managers of volunteers to understand the factors that lead to the satisfaction of individuals' motivations to volunteer. These factors include the connected motivations to engage with a particular music festival and stimuli for volunteering their personal time and energy (e.g. ability to express personal values such as altruism, and opportunity for new learning and exercising new skills). The optimal process continues through the very act of volunteering, in the course of which volunteers experience membership to a community (or communities: organisation and volunteer). The findings suggest knowledge interactions are reliant on exchanges between old timers and newcomers. These are formal or informal, structured or unplanned, and may be enacted in a controlled manner by organisation, or spontaneously by community members. The opportunities for situated learning and the successful application of knowledge in the organisational context, both have the potential to influence repeat volunteering and thus influence the processes of knowledge creation, conversion, sharing and retention. What is important to the optimal experience is that the individual's original motivation(s) to volunteer is satisfied, which is also associated with being "in flow", although this might only be achieved at the end of the act of volunteering.

Where the "right" organisational context is present, the conditions conducive for effective knowledge practices and enabling organisational learning are created. These conditions include the right organisational environment (e.g. culture, team, openness and effective leadership), individuals feeling engaged and appreciated, and the "aliveness" of the community that create the conditions for "bounce-back" volunteering (Bryen and Madden, 2006; MacDuff, 1991). Ultimately, the optimal process of a good volunteering experience can result in repeat volunteering and a continuance commitment (Holmes and Smith, 2009), thus enabling future knowledge activities. While the outcomes of continuance commitment and repeat volunteering have not been investigated nor proven in this research, they are suggested by literature. The benefits to the organisation of repeat volunteers manifests itself in reduced training needs and expense, the benefit of (future)

"old-timers" returning with stocks of organisational tacit knowledge and ultimately improved opportunity for business performance and competitive advantage.

Further, consideration of this conceptual model and the connection with the socialization, externalization, combination and internalization, or SECI, spiral model (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) illustrates how the knowledge conversion process (KCP) is enabled by the process of volunteering, where the potential for repeat volunteering outcomes reinforces the consolidation of tacit to explicit to tacit knowledge with each volunteering event. To explain further, SECI represents how knowledge passes through processes to convert from tacit through to explicit, and in so doing, expands the quality and quantity of knowledge stocks for an organisation (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). This concept is enhanced through the recognition of enablers to the knowledge creation process, including the "right" context such as physical, virtual and emotional spaces, or "*ba*" (Nonaka and Konno, 1998). In essence, what is crucial to this entire process is the "how" and "why" of knowledge activities, both of which are incumbent on human actors who are conduits for knowledge and knowledge activities. It is also important to note in the motivation-satisfaction-repeat cycle, where motivations to volunteer are not satisfied, and a poor experience ensues conditions conducive for knowledge activities and/or for continuance commitment are not created, and thus volunteers are less likely to repeat volunteer. Therefore, the knowledge reproduction cycle will not persist.

6. Summary and conclusion

This paper aimed to reveal an interpretation of volunteers' lived experiences of knowledge sharing during the festival lifecycle, and through these insights assist the management of volunteers' knowledge and effective performance, which are attributed to improved business performance and competitive advantage. While not generalisable, the lessons garnered from this research make a contribution in the following areas: first, it fills a gap in the area of the organisational knowledge management of festival volunteers in Festival and Event Studies. Second, this research recognises the impact of pulsating and temporary organisations on knowledge activities, in so much as the volunteer resources expand and contract in line with the event, and thus with each refresh of the organisation, a new cycle of situated (re)learning occurs. In addition, combining "old-timers" and newcomers within the community gives rise to knowledge sharing activities, where conditions are conducive. Finally, this research uses festival volunteers' experiences to explore motivations and barriers to tacit knowledge sharing. Motivations to knowledge sharing are typically to conform to the community's routinisation of knowledge practices reinforced by a common purpose and a sense of belonging, whereas there were few evident barriers. Seemingly, where barriers exist, it is due to individuals not conforming to the community's routinised behaviours. This behaviour is typically a manifestation of dissatisfaction with the act of volunteering, that is, the intent to volunteer was not volunteering itself but rather to gain access to the festival. As a result, these (small number of) individuals did not gain membership to the community through legitimate peripheral participation.

6.1 Practical recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, a further contribution is a number of practical recommendations for volunteer coordinating organisations and event stakeholders. These fall within two categories:

1. areas for continuance (i.e. those aspects that should be maintained because they contribute to effective volunteer co-ordination and experiences); and

2. areas for improvement (i.e. those aspects of volunteer co-ordination that are either currently lacking or require development or enhancement) (Table I).

Areas for continuance include maintaining high levels of trust towards volunteers, empowering freedom to act and thus perform their role to the best of their ability. In

Table I	Practical recommendations for volunteer coordinators and event stakeholders	
Areas for continuance	*Areas for improvement*
High levels of trust of individuals	Use training to reinforce the importance of volunteers: As front line staff for customer services and health, safety and welfare purposes Reinforce the importance of the "uniform" as part of community Face-to-face induction meetings, including festival leaders
Encourage individuality and freedom to act in how to perform role Open management/supervision style Formal, structured training Provide opportunities for social networking (physical and virtual) Embed and routinise knowledge management processes and policies	Leverage the virtual communities and transition to physical communities Codification of (tacit–explicit) knowledge Encourage post-event feedback Focused utilisation of experienced, repeat volunteers or "old timers" Good basic planning and communications More frequent contact and communications during the year Understand individual motivations to volunteer Good person–role match
Source: Author	

adopting an open leadership style, the organisation engenders flexibility and freedom. Areas for continuance also include formal, structured training, the provision of opportunities for social networking (physical and virtual), and embedding and routinisation of knowledge management processes and policies. The establishment of a community of practice and creating a sense of "aliveness" and purpose are recommended, thus enabling situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation. During volunteering, introduce more formal and structured activities to codify (personal) knowledge, thus making explicit that which is tacit rather than having it "leak" out of the organisation. This will also enhance the "corporate memory" (Beckett, 2000). Enhanced codification of knowledge can be derived, in part, through improving or initiating post-event detailed feedback from volunteers. In a similar vein where festivals are successful in engendering a continuance commitment, individuals are likely to return for repeat volunteering (Holmes and Smith, 2009). Thus, it is recommended that improvements are made to using "old timers" within the community and getting the "basics" right, which has significant impact on volunteers' experiences. Finally, understanding and satisfying individual's motivations to volunteer (Clary, 2004; Clary *et al.*, 1998) and achieving a "person-role" match (Bang *et al.*, 2009; Wilks, 2013) are outcomes which should be aimed for. However, it is recognised that these might be idealised situations considering the generalised nature of festival recruitment processes and the lack of HR professionals managing it, as such these two recommendations may prove difficult to accomplish. Where festivals are able to implement either of these elements, it may contribute to satisfying the original motivation and in achieving "flow" more readily during the volunteering experience.

6.2 Research limitations

A considerable planning and pre-work was conducted in advance of the data collection phase. The resulting data are fit for the purposes of the study, although is not without limitation, which is explored now. The participants commonly expressed positive experiences, which may be a true reflection of volunteers' experiences, it might also be attributed to the virtuous circle of one section of the volunteering population having a good experience and that section actively self-selected themselves for research. Therefore, it is possible that having a more positive experience equates to being more likely to spend time and effort to participate in a study. While this is acknowledged, the interpretations and conclusions have been made based on themes that reflect a consensus of experiences.

6.3 Future research

A number of future research areas have arisen from this research. The findings of this research reflect participants' positive volunteering experiences, who are often prompted to repeat their stewarding activities; to balance this, it would be noteworthy to establish whether a range of experiences exist across a volunteer population. If they do, to compare negative and positive experiences, particularly where individuals disengage and cease to volunteer at festivals. In so doing, it would be useful to establish whether there is any link to the quantity or quality of training and preparation, or indeed the presence or absence of knowledge enablers and barriers in their experiences. A further area for future research connects experience and knowledge. These findings established that prior (tacit) knowledge and experiences augmented the formal and informal (explicit) knowledge flowing through the organisation, as well as being valued by fellow volunteers. Therefore, a consensus formed that volunteers with prior experience of volunteering, of employment, or life in general, were considered "better" volunteers or perhaps more reliable to perform their duties. This was not linked with age *per se*, rather it was reflective of the quantity and quality of life experiences providing a basic level of tacit knowledge and behaviours that were transferable to an event situation. Future research could explore the relationship between prior (transferrable) knowledge with the impact on volunteer experiences at different stages, for instance pre-event, during and post hoc.

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