

WHO VOLUNTEERS IN RUSSIA: DATA-DRIVEN SEGMENTATION

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of market segmentation has been widely used in developing consumer-oriented marketing strategies enabling companies to distinguish homogeneous subgroups of individuals based on similarities with regard to certain variables and adapt products to their needs accordingly (McDonald and Dubar, 1998; Armstrong and Kotler, 2005; Kotler and Keller, 2009).

Dolnicar and Randle (2007) differentiate between *apriori* (in other words commonsense, descriptive or demographic) segmentation based on one of so-to-say self-evident grounds for differentiation, such as age, gender or income and *aposteriori* or data-driven segmentation where an empirical data set rather than single variables is used to identify homogeneous customer groups, typically of socio-demographic or geographic nature (Mazanec, 2000). Psychographic characteristics, including motivations, interests, opinions, beliefs, values and attitudes often make the basis of data driven segmentation

Increased competition for shrinking resources and search for effectiveness and sustainability led nonprofits to explore marketing tools and approaches including market segmentation. In terms of supply and demand, segmentation for NPOs involves segmentation of their potential beneficiaries (demand side) and segmentation of their resource providers, both financial and human (supply side).

In Russia, the scope of volunteerism significantly lags behind many developed countries where volunteers have become a valuable human resource in various sectors of society. On the 2014 World Giving Index, Russia comes 126 among 135 countries surveyed. These findings resonate with the data of a representative Monitoring of Russian Civil Society conducted by the Russian National Research University Higher School of Economics on the basis of a representative sampling covering 2,259 population centers in 83 components of the Russian Federation. According to the survey, only 25% of Russians were engaged in volunteer activities “over the past 12 months” (the survey was carried in 2011). Out of this number, only 6% of

respondents were engaged in volunteerism many times, 16% - several times and 3% - only once. Overall, some 72% of respondents did not do any work as volunteers over the reported period (Mersianova, Korneeva, 2013). It needs to be underscored that the above survey is one of the few representative empirical studies exploring the scope and nature of volunteerism in Russia.

Addressing a critical gap in data-based research of Russian volunteers, this study looks at the supply side of the volunteer market aiming to gain insight into personality traits and lifestyles of Russian citizens which are conducive to participation in voluntary activities.

METHODOLOGY

The source of data was an All-Russia Volunteer Motivation Survey (2014-2015) designed by Professor D. H. Smith in collaboration with the Russian National Research University Higher School of Economics. The innovative sociological research on Motivations for Volunteering among adult populations of the Russian Federation (from 18 years old and more) was based on a unique comprehensive model of human behavior, including social behavior and voluntary action, developed by Professor D. H. Smith (Smith, 2014; Smith, 2015). The Interview Schedule designed by Professor D. H. Smith provided for semi-formalized interviews and contained indicators measuring body variables (such as demographics like sex, age, general health, illnesses, disabilities); environment variables (such as type of residential location and building where respondent resides, local socio-cultural system and ethnic culture/region/republic, local climate; assessment of local formal volunteer opportunities and settings, respondent control over resources, respondent power/control over other people; questions and items measuring motivations (involving personality traits, values, attitudes), affect/emotions; goals such as intentions to do informal volunteering, to do formal volunteering, to do other kinds of social, religious, or recreational participation; intelligences such as verbal-linguistic intelligence, social intelligence, emotional intelligence; cognitions such as beliefs about informal volunteering, formal volunteering, NGOs, citizen initiatives, associations, the nonprofit sector, and others. The total sample of 2,000 respondents had two subsamples, including volunteers (800) and random adults (1,200).

The data resulting from this massive survey will yet have to be analyzed to establish the impact of the above variables on participation in voluntary activities. However, at this early stage of data analysis it was possible to construct a number of psychographic segments for the total sample in order to pinpoint personality traits and patterns of behavior are associated with being predisposed to voluntary action.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

At the initial stage of the analysis, four segments were constructed for the total sample of 2,000 respondents using the hierarchic cluster analysis (Ward's method) based on questions about psycho-emotional and health self-evaluation, values and attitudes. In particular, the following sets of questions formed the basis for segmentation:¹

1. questions referring to psychological and emotional state aiming to find out whether the respondent often felt apathy, loneliness and sadness or was active and full of energy over the past 12 months; whether s/he looked to the future with optimism or apprehension and uncertainty.
2. questions referring to moral values such as altruism, kindness, care and concern about others.
3. questions referring to communication skills and trust in other people.
4. questions referring to creativity and openness to new impressions
5. questions referring to the attitude toward work
6. questions referring to demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, occupation, education, income
7. questions referring to health condition.

The four resulting segments were designated as “Determined and Optimistic”, “Indecisive and Detached”, “Passive and Pessimistic” and “Altruistic and Active.”

Across the entire sample, the distribution of segments had the following pattern: the “Determined and Optimistic” segment included almost half of all respondents (44%). “Indecisive and Detached” came next on the list (26 %), with the rest of respondents divided almost equally between the two remaining segments “Altruistic and Active” (16%) and “Passive and Pessimistic” (14%).

The “Determined and Optimistic” segment indicated relatively high emotional stability and self-confidence. Respondents in this segment have rarely felt apathy, anxiety or depression. They are largely optimistic, feel self-confident and capable of taking control over circumstances. For the most part, this segment includes working population. The “Determined and Optimistic” are prone to work effectively. Although respondents belonging to this segment are willing to be kind and responsive, they do not show any particular preference to engagement in volunteer activities, either formal or informal. They are more inclined to help their family members.

¹ The questions were designed by Prof. D. H. Smith

The “Indecisive and Detached” segment demonstrated lower than average self-evaluation of physical health and emotional condition. Respondents belonging to this segment feel less optimistic than other Russians, they are more prone to feel vulnerable, have difficulty in controlling their emotions. The number of respondents inclined to trust people and help strangers is the lowest in this segment as compared to other segments. The number of people willing to be kind and responsive is also very low in this segment. Typically, respondents in this segment belong to Russian middle class.

The “Altruistic and Active” segment largely includes the youngest cohort of respondents. For the most part they are either university students or employed and have higher education. Urban dwellers predominate in this segment. This segment includes the lowest number of pensioners. Accordingly, the “Altruistic and Active” respondents have higher income and enjoy good physical and emotional health. They are energetic, responsive, positively view their future and more often feel an urge to care about the needy. Moreover, they have a sense of belonging to their place of residence. They think that most people can be trusted, feel friendly toward other people and have no difficulty in communicating with strangers. In terms of work attitude, they seek maximum effectiveness: 93% of them want to be effective in doing their work . This segment includes the largest number of active volunteers (both formal and informal) as well as those planning to start volunteering or expand the scope of their current volunteer activities. Respondents belonging to this segment are also more actively engaged in charity and the size of their charitable giving is fairly large as compared to other segments.

The “Passive and Pessimistic” segment includes a larger number of pensioners and disabled than any other of the segments profiled. Therefore, it is mostly limited to the oldest age cohort that has relatively low education level and income lower than average. Members of this segment have most often faced depression, anxiety, tension and serious illnesses. They are less self-confident and less apt to care for others. Among them, the number of those willing to do their work thoroughly and effectively is minimal. This segment exhibits the lowest communication skills. Members of this segment rarely engage in volunteerism and in helping their relatives, friends and neighbors. Hardly any of this cohort plan on starting volunteer activity.

The second stage of the analysis examined typical personality and socio-demographic traits of Russian volunteers as against the random sample of population. Our research identified psychographic segments that were predominant in the volunteer subsample. We hypothesized that psychographic traits making up the “Altruistic and Active” segment (such as optimistic world outlook, a

high degree of empathy, trust in people and attachment to the local community) would predominate in the volunteer subsample.

In conformity with our hypothesis, “Altruistic and Active” were found to represent 56% of volunteers. On the contrary, this segment had a fairly low representation among random adults (16 %). The “Altruistic and Active” is a fairly homogeneous cohort. As mentioned, they are fairly young, often under 30, half of them being university graduates; most are employed, with income level higher than average.

As different from other international studies pointing to essential heterogeneity among volunteers (Dolnicar, Randle, 2007), our psychographic segmentation research highlighted a noticeable degree of homogeneity among Russians engaged in volunteering.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As different from other international studies pointing to essential heterogeneity among volunteers (Dolnicar, Randle, 2007; Schlegelmilch, Tynan, 1989), our psychographic segmentation research highlighted a noticeable degree of homogeneity among Russians engaged in volunteering pinpointing links between volunteering and certain personality traits and socio-demographic characteristics among Russian citizens. More in-depth studies are needed to explore the phenomenon of this homogeneity, its nature and reasons. As a preliminary consideration, it could be linked to the development trajectory of Russia’s nonprofit sector which only started to take shape in the 1990s and thus, citizens of older age cohorts could have no exposure to values, culture and practices of volunteerism and charity.

However, since the current paper is the first attempt to apply the psychographic segmentation method to identify specific characteristics of Russian volunteers, its findings can be seen as a useful starting point to explore more nuanced differences and typical features of Russian citizens engaged in voluntary activities.

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