

Voluntary workers' differing perceptions of community money:  
What kinds of voluntary workers become more motivated by community money?

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**Abstract**

In Japan, it has been noted that some voluntary workers have been motivated by community money, while others have not. Some voluntary workers maintain that voluntary work is not undertaken in order to receive community money, while others welcome the money as an added reward. This paper investigates what kinds of voluntary workers are motivated by community money. In particular, we focus on people's perception for reward. By a perception for reward, we refer to the way they think of reward as a means of raising voluntary workers' enthusiasm.

A questionnaire survey was carried out to determine what types of reward are seen as motivating by voluntary workers doing clearing up work and those assisting old ladies. Attitudes to reward differ according to the type of activity undertaken, so two activities were looked at, to see whether the use of community money enhance motivation.

Analysis of the results confirmed that differences in perception for reward do effect whether or not the community money spurs enthusiasm. There was a clear trend showing that people who are oriented towards activities offering no reward are not further motivated by receiving community money, while those who are oriented towards reward are motivated more highly by receiving community money.

To sum up, giving community money to those who are not oriented towards any reward is counter-effective, while giving it to those who are oriented towards reward might well succeed in raising their motivation.

**Keywords:** community money, voluntary work, a perception for reward, motivation

## Introduction

This paper investigates what kinds of voluntary workers are motivated by community money. It confirms that motivation can be increased in voluntary workers who are oriented towards reward.

In Japan, all local communities are striving to increase the number of participants in voluntary activities, in an effort to revitalize local life. However, although certain voluntary workers participate frequently in activities, those local residents who have not been participating in voluntary activities seldom start doing so. As a result, the work load falls disproportionately on to particular individuals<sup>1</sup>. In order to maintain the enthusiasm of active voluntary workers and to entice more new voluntary workers into taking part, a new mechanism is needed to increase motivation. Accordingly, community money has been introduced as reward, in an attempt to provide such a mechanism. Voluntary workers receive community money as a reward for participation in activities.<sup>2</sup> Clearing up the neighborhood, helping out at festivals and mutual assistance all count as voluntary activities.

The voluntary workers can use community money for either commercial or non-commercial transactions. Commercial transactions include using the money in local shopping districts, at local festivals and for paying for administrative services. Non-commercial transactions include use as recompense for voluntary activity or recompense for mutual assistance<sup>3</sup>. In this way, community money can be used for a variety of transactions of goods and services. Therefore it was expected that voluntary workers would be eager to receive community money. Governing bodies are issuing community money in rapid succession in anticipation of an increase in the number of voluntary workers.

However, it has been noted that some voluntary workers have been motivated by community money, while others have not. Some voluntary workers maintain that voluntary work is not undertaken in order to receive community money, while others welcome the money as an added reward.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, we can see that different voluntary workers perceive community money in

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<sup>1</sup> For example, in Musashino City in Tokyo, where community money has been introduced, the concentration of voluntary work load on certain individuals has been noted as a problem.

<sup>2</sup> In Japan, it is common for businesses, government bodies or shopping districts to fund the issue of community money.

<sup>3</sup> See Kurita et al. (2012) for more details.

<sup>4</sup> For example, a survey in Musashino City in Tokyo showed that some voluntary workers have a positive image of community money, whereas other voluntary workers have a negative image.

different ways. What factors influence these differences in perception? We need to explain where these differences in voluntary workers' motivation come from, if we are to use community money as a means of increasing the number of participants in voluntary work.

### **Previous research**

There have been various types of studies tagged with 'perception of community money', 'reward' and 'incentive' as their key words. For example, Kaplan and Thiel both analyze perceptions of community money. Kaplan investigates differences in perceptions between merchants and consumers (Kaplan [2011]). He reveals how perception differs according to standpoint, and how that influences behavior. The merchants see community money as a means of increasing sales, and are trying to encourage more users through word of mouth and advertising. Consumers on the other hand see community money as a means of revitalizing the local economy, and so make their purchases in local shopping streets rather than at major stores. Thiel believes that people regard community money as having both a functional aspect and also a symbolic aspect (Thiel [2012]). The functional aspect refers to the range of uses that community money can be put to. The symbolic aspect refers to the ethics of using community money. People see community money not only as a means of exchange for purchasing goods and services, but also as a kind of ethical money which revitalizes the locality. Thiel claims that people's perceptions for community money affect its circulation.

On the other hand, Frey and Goette or Ariely has researched into the relationship between a reward and motivation for doing voluntary work. Frey and Goette have established that in some cases money can undermine voluntary workers' enthusiasm (Frey and Goette [1997]). He has shown how having money as a form of reward can damage the self-respect and sense of self-determination of voluntary workers, and thereby undermine their enthusiasm for the work. Likewise Ariely points out how money can end up tainting the relationships between friends and acquaintances (Ariely [2010]). For instance, he notes that by handing over money as a token of thanks to a relative who has provided a meal, or to a friend who has lent a hand in some matter, one runs the risk of sullyng one's relationships with them.

Kaplan and Thiel have thought deeply about people's perceptions for community money, but they have not paid attention to the function of community money as a means of reward. Frey and Goette or Ariely, on the other hand, has thought deeply about money and people's motivation, but they have not researched about community money and people's motivation.

Research hitherto has not dealt sufficiently with the question of whether community money which has recently been introduced as a form of reward does in fact increase people's enthusiasm for the work. Consequently, virtually no attention has been given to the phenomenon of the co-existence of cases where community money does serve to enhance voluntary workers' enthusiasm alongside cases where they do not.

### **The approach of this research**

This paper highlights just what kind of voluntary workers are motivated by community money. In particular, we look at people's perception for reward. By a perception for reward, we refer to the way they think of reward as a means of raising voluntary workers' enthusiasm. For example, people who see any kind of reward as unnecessary in voluntary work are not oriented towards any reward. They have a strong resistance to receiving money, vouchers or token gifts as recompense for their activities. When they are given something, it dampens their enthusiasm. In contrast, people who believe that some kind of recompense is needed for voluntary work are oriented towards reward. They show little resistance to receiving cash or vouchers or token gifts as recompense for their activities. Their enthusiasm rises when they receive some sort of recompense. Of course, it is not just a bipolar contrast of being oriented toward no reward versus oriented toward reward. Rather, there could well be cases where a person's perception for reward changes depending on the nature of the voluntary activity. In other words, people vary widely in what they see as appropriate rewards for activities.

A perception for reward has a strong influence on the motivation of voluntary workers. If those voluntary workers who are not oriented towards activities offering any reward are given a reward, there is a high risk that their enthusiasm will be dented. On the other hand, if those voluntary workers who are oriented towards activities offering a reward are given a reward, there is a high chance that their enthusiasm will be enhanced.

Since community money is one form of reward, it is possible that how they are regarded will differ greatly according to the worker's perceptions for reward.

### **Research method**

A questionnaire survey was carried out to determine what types of reward are seen as motivating by voluntary workers doing clearing up work and those assisting old ladies<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> See appendix . The questionnaire asks not only about types of reward, but enquires into a variety of attitudes.

Attitudes to reward differ according to the type of activity undertaken, so two activities were looked at, to see whether the use of community money enhance motivation. In the questionnaire, the types of reward that could be chosen were increased as the questions progressed, and so it could identify what kinds of rewards were chosen by those who chose community money. For example, in the first question, the choices of reward for voluntary clearing up work are between a verbal thank you from the organizer of the event and a certificate which includes a message of appreciation from the mayor. The second question has the same two choices plus a third one of a cake worth around a hundred yen. The third question adds a further option, that of receiving community money. The final question adds the further option of receiving 100 yen in cash. By adding reward options one at a time in this way, we can identify the perceptions for reward of those who choose the third option, community money.

This research targeted the community money known as the Toda Oar, used in Toda City in Saitama Prefecture. The Toda Oar is typical Japanese community money, one that can be used for both commercial and non-commercial transactions. The commercial transactions include its use in shops, at festivals, and in exchange for bus tickets. The non-commercial transactions include its use as reward for voluntary activities or for mutual assistance, or for participation in educational programs. It is used by primary and junior high school children as well as by adults. Furthermore, there is a variety of voluntary activities set up which allow people to acquire the Toda Oar. Many citizens know about the Toda Oar, and so the community money can be thought of as being established in the local community. If less established community money had been used for this survey, it would have been more difficult for respondents to understand meaning of the questions. For that reason, this research chose to target the Toda Oar, widely circulated in Toda City. The survey was carried out among the general public who attended festivals September and October 2012. Primary school children were also included in the survey, as the festivals provided many opportunities for them to use the Toda Oar. The survey was carried out face to face, and the questionnaires were collected in on the spot<sup>6</sup>.

94 people took part in the survey. Ten people who either did not know about the community money or whose questionnaires had too many blanks were weeded out, leaving 84 for analysis. The respondents were 38.1% male and 61.9% female. 46.4% were primary school children, and 53.6% were older. (Table 1).

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<sup>6</sup> We gave out the questionnaires to shop owners in advance, and collected them in at the end of the festival.

Table 1 . Survey respondents by sex and age

	Percent(%)
<b>Sex</b>	
Male	38.1
Female	61.9
<b>Age range</b>	
Primary school	46.4
Older than primary school	53.6
n	84

## Results

Analysis of the results confirmed that differences in perception for reward do effect whether or not the community money spurs enthusiasm. There was a clear trend showing that people who are oriented towards activities offering no reward are not further motivated by receiving community money, while those who are oriented towards reward are motivated more highly by receiving community money.

Firstly, the overall trends: Figures 1 and 2 are trees showing reward choices. Figure 1 shows the tree of reward choices for voluntary clearing up work, while figure 2 is for assisting old ladies. From figures 1 and 2, we can see that there are groups who consistently chose to get words of thanks, and many groups whose choices changed from getting a certificate or a cake to getting community money. In the case of the voluntary clearing up work, the figure consistently choosing to get words of thanks was about 20% overall. Those who chose to get reward, first as certificates or cakes and then later as community money were around 43% of the total. In the case of assisting old ladies, 35% consistently chose to get words of thanks, while those choosing to get reward, and then community money when the choice became available, was also 35% of the total. Thus we can see that between them, the groups who chose consistently to go unremunerated, and the groups whose choices changed from lesser rewards to community money accounted for a large proportion of the total.

Next, we can check whether the perception for reward affects the choice of community money by using a cross tabulation. For the analysis, we can consider those who prefer to get words of thanks in both the first and second questions to be oriented towards no reward. We label these people “the no reward group”. Likewise, we can consider those who chose to get a certificate or a cake in either of the first two questions to be oriented

towards reward. We label this group “the reward group”<sup>7</sup>.

In the case of the voluntary clearing up work, 37% of the no reward group chose to get community money. In contrast, 63% of the reward group chose to get community money. In the case of assisting old ladies, 25% of the no reward group chose to get community money, while around 66% of the reward group chose community money. Among people who are not oriented towards any reward we could see little tendency to choose the community money, while among those who are oriented towards reward we could see a tendency to choose community money. Those with an unremunerated orientation persisted in choosing to receive no reward, and those with a remunerated orientation chose to get the community money. In other words, those with the remunerated orientation changed their preferences once the community money was added as an option.

These results show that an individual’s perceptions for reward does affect whether or not they choose to get community money. The use of community money does not raise enthusiasm in the no reward group, but there is a tendency for it to do with the reward group. Furthermore, we are not able to see large differences in the structure of the trees depending on whether the work involved was voluntary clearing up or assisting old ladies.

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<sup>7</sup> The distinguishing feature is that the uncompensated chose to get only words of thanks, while the compensated chose to get a tangible object as well.

Figure 1. Tree showing reward choices for voluntary clearing up work

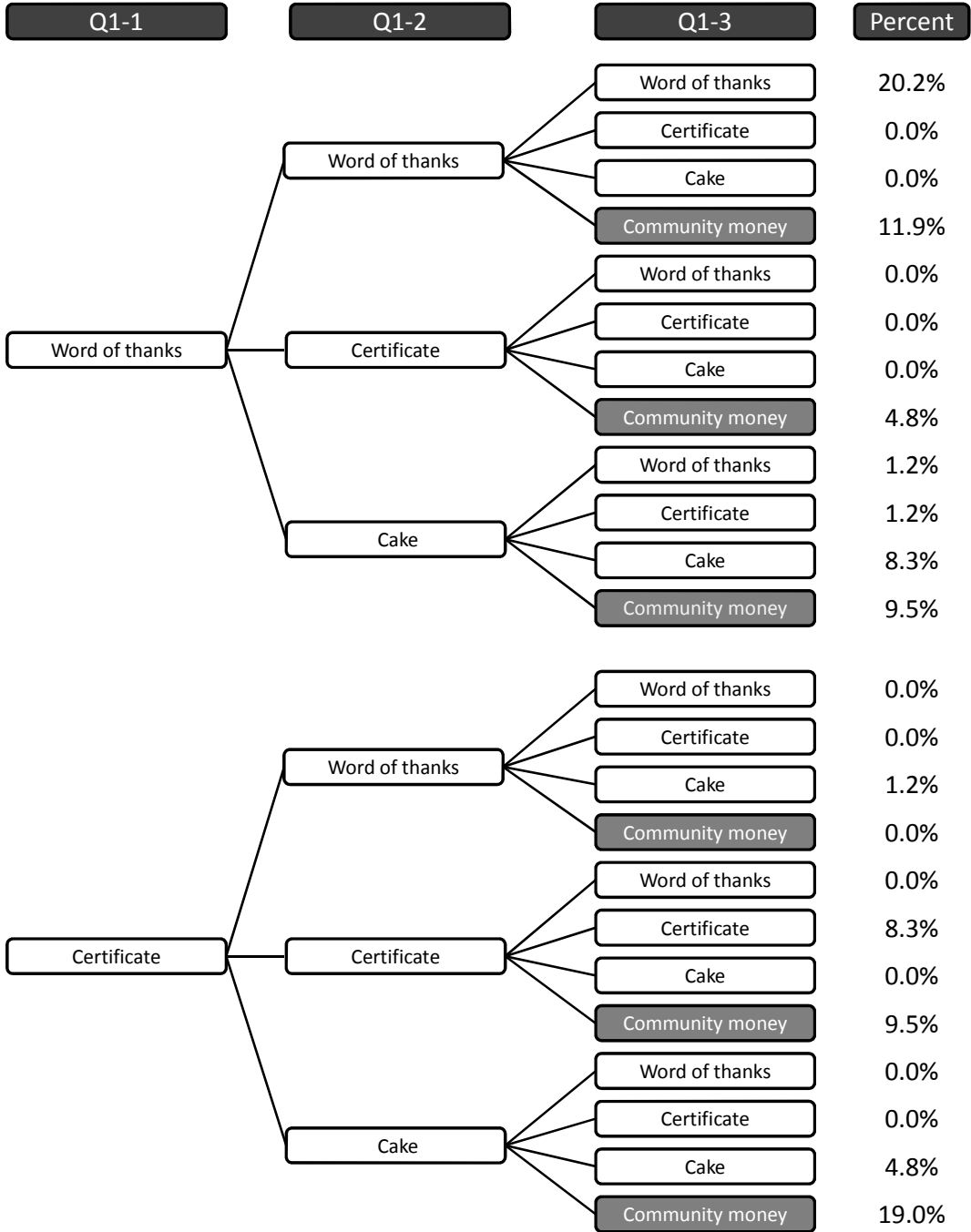




Figure 2. Tree showing reward choices for assisting old ladies

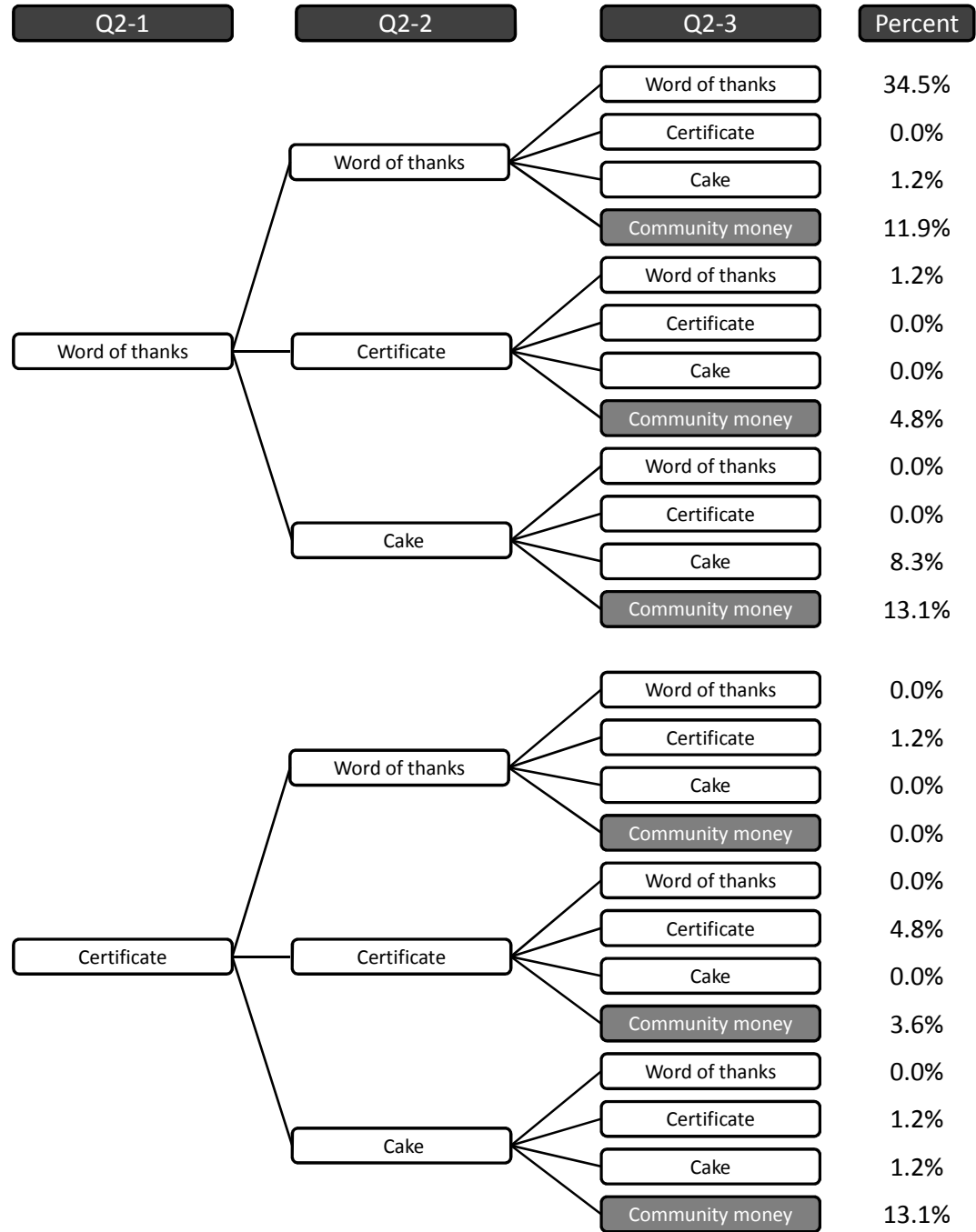


Table 2. Differences in choice of community money according to a perception for reward – voluntary clearing up work

	chose	did not choose	<i>p</i> value
No reward group (n=27)	37.0%	63.0%	.025
Reward group (n=57)	63.2%	36.8%	

Table 3. Differences in choice of community money according to a perception for reward – assisting old ladies

	chose	did not choose	<i>p</i> value
No reward group (n=40)	25.0%	75.0%	.000
Reward group (n=44)	65.9%	34.1%	

### Comparison with earlier research

Earlier research has shown how giving money can destroy people’s motivation. In the case of community money, the effect on motivation differs according to the individual’s perceptions for reward. Frey and Goette give evidence that voluntary workers who accept money as a reward will provide a lesser volume of voluntary activity, compared with those who do not accept money. It is possible that in some cases the money serves to undermine the voluntary workers’ intrinsic motivation. Ariely, on the other hand, points out how the human relations between friends and acquaintances can end up being undermined when an instrument of market forces such as money is introduced into those social relationships. He claims that when we are asked by a friend or acquaintance to do something for them, we would rather receive a non-monetary present than money. Thus, we can see that earlier research has dealt in depth with the relationship between money and motivation.

However, attention has not been paid to whether community money can raise motivation or not. Just like money, community money can be used for commercial transactions. This new form of currency can also be used in exchange for assistance and

voluntary work. Previous studies have not touched upon the question of how human psychology reacts to this new type of money when it is introduced as a reward. This paper demonstrates that this new type of money known as community money does not necessarily undermine the motivation of voluntary workers. Rather, the effect of community money on motivation differs according to people's perceptions for reward. Giving community money to those who are not oriented towards any reward is counter-effective, while giving it to those who are oriented towards reward might well succeed in raising their motivation.

### **Conclusions and discussion**

This paper has investigated what kinds of voluntary workers are motivated by community money. The results of the analysis show that it is motivating for those who are oriented towards reward. These results have great implications in practice for the governing bodies of community money. If they issue their community money, then voluntary workers will often be glad to receive them and devote themselves with all the greater enthusiasm to the voluntary activity. Of course they see community money as the good money for such voluntary workers. However, community money does not necessarily lead to increased motivation for those who are not oriented towards any reward. In fact, community money might even undermine the motivation of such workers. On the other hand, community money does succeed in raising the motivation of those who are oriented towards reward. Whereas money might undermine the enthusiasm of those voluntary workers, community money raises the motivation of those who are oriented towards reward. In this way, how people regard community money depends on their individual perception for reward. Community money issuers need to take into account these differences in perceptions for reward among voluntary workers. They also need to make further efforts to change the preferences of those who are not oriented towards any reward. They need to explain how accepting community money as a reward relates to the revitalization of the local community.

It has been posited that one of the reasons why community money have not been circulated more widely in Japan up to now is the few goods and service which they can be used for. Consequently, policies have been directed towards getting more shops to accept community money, and getting local administrations to support them more. We can expect people to be happier to accept community money as they become more widely usable. However even if the range of goods and services for which community money can be used is increased, those people who are not oriented towards any reward will not necessarily participate more in their use. Such people have a different sense of values

from those who prefer to receive reward.

It may be necessary to devise a circulation scheme which fits in with their sense of values. To do this, further research is needed into the factors contributing to the formation of their perception for reward. That perception is presumably formed through the influence of factors such as education, experience of voluntary activity, and regional characteristics. People's experiences form their perceptions for reward, and so affect how they regard community money. Further research is also needed into whether it is possible to change an individual's perception for reward once it has been formed.

### **Acknowledgment**

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Appendix Questionnaire

Question1. If you do 30 minutes of clearing up work at a festival, what kind of reward to you want to receive?

Q1-1. If you can choose between these 2 rewards, which one would motivate you more? Mark only one option.

1. A word of thanks from the organizer
2. A certificate bearing words of appreciation from the mayor

Q1-2. If you can choose between these 3 rewards, which one would motivate you more? Mark only one option.

1. A word of thanks from the organizer
2. A certificate bearing words of appreciation from the mayor
3. A cake worth about 100 yen

Q1-3. If you can choose between these 4 rewards, which one would motivate you more? Mark only one option.

1. A word of thanks from the organizer
2. A certificate bearing words of appreciation from the mayor
3. A cake worth about 100 yen
4. 100 Oar in Toda Oar community money

Q1-4. If you can choose between these 5 rewards, which one would motivate you more? Mark only one option.

1. A word of thanks from the organizer
2. A certificate bearing words of appreciation from the mayor
3. A cake worth about 100 yen
4. 100 Oar in Toda Oar community money
5. 100yen in cash

Question2. If you 30 minutes of garden weeding for a local old lady, what kind of reward to you want to receive?

Q2-1. If you can choose between these 2 rewards, which one would motivate you more? Mark only one option.

1. A word of thanks from the old lady
2. A certificate bearing words of appreciation from the mayor

Q2-2. If you can choose between these 3 rewards, which one would motivate you more? Mark only one option.

1. A word of thanks from the old lady
2. A certificate bearing words of appreciation from the mayor
3. A cake worth about 100 yen

Q2-3. If you can choose between these 4 rewards, which one would motivate you more? Mark only one option.

1. A word of thanks from the old lady
2. A certificate bearing words of appreciation from the mayor
3. A cake worth about 100 yen
4. 100 Oar in Toda Oar community money

Q2-4. If you can choose between these 5 rewards, which one would motivate you more? Mark only one option.

1. A word of thanks from the old lady
2. A certificate bearing words of appreciation from the mayor
3. A cake worth about 100 yen
4. 100 Oar in Toda Oar community money
5. 100 yen in cash

Question 3. Do you know the community money Toda Oar? Answer Yes or No.

Question 4. Have you ever received or spent the community money Toda Oar. Answer Yes or No.

Question 5. What do you think are the best ways to spend the Toda Oar? Choose 2 answers.

1. to give and get it as a token of thanks for helping someone
2. to give and get it in return for local voluntary work
3. to give and get it as a gift
4. use for buying things in shops and at local festivals
5. exchange it for yen cash

Question 6. When you take part in voluntary work, do you like to be praised for doing so?

Answer Yes or No.

Question 7. When you take part in voluntary work, do you like to receive some kind of reward?

Answer Yes or No.

Question 8. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_ years.

Question 9. Are you at primary school? Answer Yes or No.

Question 10. Sex (M • F)