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Collaboration Report with ActionAid Denmark to Increase Volunteers

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This project started with the coordination of ActionAid Denmark. ActionAid Denmark is part of the global ActionAid Federation, working to empower people living in poverty and fight inequality through advocacy, education, and community-driven solutions. However, their problem is the lack of young (students) involvement in volunteering work, as a dwindling number of volunteers puts a financial strain on the organization. This issue leads ActionAid to find an alternative and reliable solution to increase the number of young volunteers in the future.

This report focused on attracting young people (18-25) through social media platforms. Secondary data was collected through academic articles, websites, books, and social media polls (insights from Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok). This information helped us understand the habits and interests of young people, especially their use of social media to connect with others and share experiences. About this report, theories like social media engagement, storytelling, and motivation were used to enhance the understanding of how to engage and motivate young people to volunteer act and analyze behavior patterns. The implementation of the report was focused on leveraging (content creation) social media, awareness campaigns, and incentives (certificates, letters of recommendation, and ECTS). We identified that young people are more likely to engage with relatable, fun, and informative content, so we focused on creating content that speaks to their values and interests.

Finally, we completed the project design and developed presentation materials that helped to capture our comprehensive strategy to increase volunteer engagement for ActionAid. We explained how we use storytelling and work with influences to reach more people. We also suggested offering ECTS to the students to make the volunteer work more attractive to the university students. By offering ECTS points, we added an academic incentive that would attract and retain more university students who might otherwise not consider volunteering. This would help students earn credits while making a difference in the world. 'Impact Hub' (our product) clearly outlined how ActionAid and the university or the educational institute could implement our ideas in their content creation and attract more volunteers. Overall, our product presentation materials provided a step-by-step guide for everyone involved to understand. Our approach ensures that the strategy is easy to follow, helping both ActionAid and universities implement it

effectively, ultimately increasing volunteer participation and strengthening the organization's impact.

2. THEORETICAL PART

2.1 SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

The central model of this theory is based on the concept of user engagement, where engagement of the user is presented as ideologically as including dialogic, multi-way, or voluntary forms of communication (Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016), and in the larger context of social media, engagement is an important analytical category (Hwang & Thorn, 1999). According to Di Gangi & Wasko (2016), involvement is thought to involve several potential actions, such as observation, user views, affective assessments like liking or disliking specific content, and reaching a wider audience. Therefore, it is believed that commenting and sharing, for example, on Instagram, Facebook, or any kind of media, is the type of interaction that demands the greatest dedication from users (Hwang & Thorn, 1999).

Social media means to allow conversations (Ashkanasy, 2004). In general, social media are built websites that allow social interaction and Information sharing in various formats through photos, messages, icons, and more (Rahaman, 2021). Rehman (2021) further added that people or users actively participate in and interact with content on social media platforms. This includes the forms of engagement that allow media users to express their judgments, reactions, and opinions about the content they encounter.

One of the important aspects of media engagement theory is the idea that media consumers have a feeling of social media existence or the relationship to the content and other users on the platform (Hwang & Thorn, 1999). This leads to a sense of belonging and engagement among users, which creates a sense of trust and credibility in the information being shared (Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016). Researchers like Ashkanasy (2004) have also demonstrated that individuals or people are more likely to interact with content that is popular or has been shared by someone they trust. Several different factors influence the level of an individual's engagement with social media (Chetty & Bhagwan, 2021). These can include the platform itself, for instance, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok,

Twitter, and the kinds of content being shared (e.g., words, images, videos) and the media user's characteristics and motivations (e.g., age, gender, interests) (Chetty & Bhagwan, 2021).

2.2 STORYTELLING: POPULAR WAYS TO FOSTER ENGAGEMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Storytelling is an appropriate way to increase social media interaction by engaging in psychological and emotional processes. User-generated content (UGC) builds community and authenticity by encouraging followers to offer their testimonies, experiences, and stories (Greene et al., 2018). The Narrative Transportation Theory (Green & Brock, 2000) states that people are "transported" into a tale, which increases their emotional engagement and involvement. Including community tales or reposting user-generated content (UGC) increases engagement by confirming followers' experiences and encouraging loyalty through mutual storytelling. This strategy fosters closeness and trust by allowing fans to enter the "inner world" of the company, increasing emotional connection and encouraging openness, all of which can boost brand loyalty.

Emotional storytelling employs the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty, 1986), which proposes that emotional appeals engage audiences through peripheral processing, with emotions such as empathy, humor, or motivation, developing connections that encourage engagement via likes, comments, and shares. Furthermore, emotional tales improve narrative conveyance (Green & Brock, 2000), drawing the audience into the story and improving attention and engagement. Similarly, live streaming and interactive storytelling formats, such as Facebook Live and Instagram Stories, draw on interactive narrative theory (Jenkins, 2006), where viewers actively contribute by altering the narrative through feedback, polls, and comments. On the other hand, real-time interaction's immediacy promotes a sense of intimacy and deeper engagement, which is consistent with Social Presence Theory (Short et al., 1976).

Woodside (2010) asserts that storytelling has psychological and marketing implications and is a successful tactic used by brands to build emotional connections with consumers. Motivated by self-expression, social affiliation, and identity formation, consumers actively engage in the storytelling process. Modern marketing techniques require an understanding of the mental and emotional processes involved in storytelling (Woodside, 2010).

2.3 SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY (SDT)

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) was developed in the 1980s by psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan. It is a comprehensive framework in psychology that explains the understanding of human motivation, personality development, and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Self-determination theory (SDT) is a basic idea of what inspires people and makes their lives happier and more successful. It indicates people are more likely to feel triggered and experience fulfillment when they feel in control of their actions and when their needs for connection, learning, and skill are being met. Within the framework of SDT, people's fundamental psychological needs—such as those for relatedness, competence, and autonomy—are crucial to their best functioning (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Autonomy, competence, and relatedness are the main components of self-determination theory. Autonomy refers to the idea of volition and freedom of choice based on people's specific interests and values. When people feel autonomous, they are more interested in engaging in the activities because they find it intrinsically motivating them rather than feeling pressured (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Similarly, competence is about the feeling of being effective and capable of doing things in one's surroundings. Meeting these needs encourages confidence and motivates persistence in challenges. It is fostered by skill development, constructive feedback, and the accomplishment of attainable goals (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Whereas relatedness is the need for care and support, the need to feel a connection to others, and a sense of belonging. It focuses on deep mutual respect and meaningful social connections. Meeting related requirements is important for internalizing values and objectives, which enhances well-being and motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

2.3.1 INTRINSIC

The natural interest, happiness, or satisfaction that comes from doing something is the source of intrinsic motivation. It is frequently linked with improved psychological health, creative thinking, and dedication. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), favorable conditions enhance the human capacity for self-fulfillment, and they stress the significance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness to encourage intrinsic motivation.

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), intrinsic motivation is essential for reaching a "flow state," in which individuals get completely and significantly involved in projects that test their skills without putting them under excessive pressure. Peak performance and intrinsic joy are associated with flow and are considered ideal motivational states (Beck, 1992).

According to Harter (1978), perceived competence is crucial to fostering intrinsic motivation. Successful mastering of duties and the resulting experience of competence, she stated, automatically motivate people to pursue novel responsibilities (Harter, 2009).

2.3.2 EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION

In Self-Determination Theory (SDT), extrinsic motivation happens when an activity is driven by something beyond one's interests or pleasures. These external forces can be anything from tangible benefits like cash to engrained principles that give the action value. SDT emphasizes a range of extrinsic motivations, beginning with external regulation, in which rewards or penalties regulate behavior. On a more independent level, recognized regulation takes place when people carry out tasks because they believe they are important, like studying to advance in their careers. Environments that foster autonomy, competence, and relatedness facilitate this internalization process, boosting the sustainability and benefits associated with extrinsic motivators (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Even in assignments that are not intrinsically appealing, extrinsic motivation can result in enjoyment and fulfillment when it is in line with personal values (Vansteenkiste, Lens, and Deci 2006)

While SDT theory is widely praised, there are some criticisms. One key criticism is that it can be potentially culturally biased. The emphasis on autonomy may not be as universally applicable in communities with collectivism, where community and interdependence may be of greater importance than individual freedom, which was first established in Western settings (Chirkov et al., 2003). The exaggerated focus on autonomy is another criticism. Although autonomy is an essential component of motivation in SDT, some scholars argue that it may not always be as significant as suggested, especially in circumstances when there are external influences or rewards (Gagné & Deci 2005).

3. BACKGROUND

3.1. PROCESS OF CREATING THE PROJECT

Our project was created in response to the problem that is outlined by the non-government organization ActionAid, where the organization has been facing a significant decline in the number of volunteers. This shortage is resulting in financial strain, as action aid heavily depends on the efforts of volunteers to run their organization and carry out its various global programs. In developing the strategy, we conducted a thorough analysis of the current volunteer trends, especially focusing on the younger generation, who are critical for future sustainability.

Understanding that young people engage predominantly on social media, we proposed a multipronged approach targeting social media engagement, educational incentives, and career development. The project was designed with a focus on working on social media platforms like Facebook, Tiktok, and Instagram which are highly popular among younger audiences. It also highlighted non-financial incentives such as university credit or ECTS to attract young students who are looking for further enhancement and develop their academic careers and profiles.

Furthermore, the project considered the underlying motivational factors that drive volunteerism, proposing strategies rooted in theories like self-determination theory (SDT) and storytelling. These theories influenced and helped to shape our recommendations by considering intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, which focus on ensuring that the volunteers feel linked to one another, capable, and independent in their duties and responsibilities. Moreover, to better understand the barriers of participation and identify the best possible ways to find and retain younger volunteers, we suggest integrating a feedback system from the previous volunteers. This data-driven method would further strengthen the proposed strategies.

3.2. ABOUT ACTIONAID

ActionAid is a global movement dedicated to creating a more just and sustainable world. Founded in 1944, the organization works in over 45 countries, reaching more than 25 million of the world's poorest people. The primary mission of ActionAid is to fight against discrimination, climate crises, and poverty while also advocating for democracy and human rights (ActionAid, 2024).

The organization supports vulnerable and marginalized groups of people, especially young people, to raise their voices and influence decision-makers to create positive social change. Their work encompasses cooperation and development, as well as humanitarian aid in crisis situations. ActionAid's grassroots approach focuses on empowering local peoples and communities to help secure their rights and focuses on systemic changes that lead to a more equal and just society for everybody.

Additionally, ActionAid Denmark plays a pivotal role in the global network, focusing internationally on striving to build democratic, sustainable societies by enabling young people to be at the forefront of the change-making process. By offering a platform for youth activism, ActionAid helps nurture leaders who challenge injustices and demand accountability from those in power. As part of its innovation, To reach a wider audience and involve more individuals in its mission, ActionAid has also incorporated digital tools and online engagement into its initiatives, allowing it to involve those who are particularly unable to participate in a traditional volunteer environment (Action Aid, 2024).

3.3. THE PROBLEM RELATING TO THE LACK OF VOLUNTEERS

The decline in volunteers has become a significant concern for ActionAid. Young people are essential for maintaining the momentum of the organization's work, especially as they bring fresh perspectives, new energy, and innovative approaches. However, despite the need for their involvement, fewer young people are signing up for volunteer roles, leaving the organization in a difficult situation.

This issue can be attributed to a variety of factors:

- Lack of Incentives: While many young people are motivated by causes they care about, they often need additional incentives to engage in volunteer work, especially if they are balancing studies or early career development. Without tangible rewards, such as academic

credit, career development opportunities, or specific skill-building, young people may not feel compelled to volunteer.

- Social Media Engagement: ActionAid has not fully tapped into the power of social media to reach and engage young people. As a result, many potential volunteers may be unaware of the organization's existence, mission, or opportunities.

- Career Concerns: Some young people may struggle to see how volunteering with ActionAid aligns with their career goals or adds value to their professional aspirations. Without clear career development opportunities or the ability to tie volunteer experiences to future job prospects, the appeal may not be strong enough for them to invest their time.

Addressing these issues is crucial for ActionAid to build a sustainable volunteer base, ensuring that young people see their contributions as meaningful and impactful while also understanding the personal benefits and rewards they can gain from their involvement. Furthermore, there is a need for more targeted outreach to address misconceptions or lack of awareness about how volunteering with ActionAid can provide long-term value, including networking opportunities, professional development, and personal growth.

3.4 UNIVERSITY STUDENT INCENTIVE

As discussed above, it is our understanding that incentivizing young people through credits at university may be a good way to increase volunteers. The age group that is desirable for Action Aid is also the same as the age of many students at Danish universities. Here, students are often required to, or at least recommended to, complete internships during their university career. Internships are a great way to get to know one's field of work and the tasks and jobs one wishes to pursue after finishing a degree. Despite this, some students are not able to secure such a sought-after spot. The demand for internship positions is high, and there is only a limited amount available. This is where our idea comes in to benefit students who are more interested in hands-on work or have not been able to get an internship locally.

To follow up on our initial idea to use ECTS points or other forms of academic credit, we had an interview with an International Coordinator from AAU to discuss the subject. He stated that the

idea looks good on paper, yet he also had concerns that needed to be addressed. Mainly the educational element, or lack thereof, in the volunteer work appeared to be a problem.

This problem should not stand in the way of collaboration if all parties work together to create the ability for a more educational approach. We thought that, for example, this could be addressed by having some form of project organization element and report writing during the volunteer stay.

He also stated that internships at the university are only in the autumn semester, but if someone wanted to do the volunteer work in connection with their master's Thesis, this could happen in either spring or summer. Lastly, he stated that there would need to be a supervisor who agrees to supervise the student in this endeavor. All in all, we found the meeting to be productive and a great first step towards collaboration. In addition, further discussions with academic institutions and departments could refine the criteria and structure of such a collaboration, ensuring it aligns with both academic standards and ActionAid's mission.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

Most of the data that has been used in the creation of this project idea, as well as the project writing, has been secondary. This data mainly consists of research papers and articles that are related to the subject matter. Some statistical data points were also used as a form of quantitative data to aid in understanding the scope of users on social media. The research articles mainly focused on the theory section, thematically concerned with motivation and self-determination. Social media and storytelling were also researched through secondary sources. The Information regarding Action Aid was collected from the information sheets that the organization provided for us, as well as their website and social media platforms.

The only data that was collected firsthand was the Information about university credit in connection to volunteering. To do this we interviewed with a coordinator at Aalborg University. The interview was not structured as it served as an initial means of understanding the requirements of the university. Additionally, we reviewed previous reports and surveys on volunteer participation trends to gain further insights into the challenges faced by organizations like ActionAid in attracting young volunteers.

3.6 SOCIAL MEDIA BACKGROUND

Since our project idea is largely hinged on improving social media presence, we began by taking a look at the current platforms on which ActionAid is active. We have chosen to look at Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok as a focus to get an assessment of what ActionAid is posting and how much engagement there already is to work with, as well as how the content on the pages differs. We also examined the frequency of posts and the type of interactions each platform receives to better understand how the audience engages with the content.

Facebook

The official Facebook page of ActionAid Denmark (Mellemfolekeligt Samvirke) stands at 80 thousand subscribers and posts regularly, around once a day on average. The posts on this page are mainly political, focused on current issues and developments, and contain pictures and events that the organization draws attention to. Going back until the beginning of 2024, we could only find one single post on the page calling for volunteers, and in this, it was related to local volunteering efforts, not international. While the page has a good number of followers, it could benefit from more frequent and targeted volunteer calls to increase engagement among younger audiences.

Instagram

The Instagram page (mellemfolkeligtsamvirke) has around 30 thousand followers and almost 2 thousand posts. The content on this page is largely the same as on Facebook, containing the same pictures and Information. Here, the organization also posts short-form video content, which has been one of the most engaging and fastest-growing things on social media over the last few years. Employing this type of content is common practice for organizations and corporations to gain publicity and user engagement. The content on the Instagram page has changed over the years, with the video content becoming more colorful and attention-grabbing, containing quiz games and short interviews, while it previously was more reliant on video footage from the organization's events, etc.

TikTok

TikTok appears to be a newer endeavor of the organization, with the first video on the page (@mellemfoleligtsamvirke) dating back to late 2022. With only 46 videos posted and 1,500 followers, there is definite room for growth on this platform, more than on the Facebook and Instagram pages we have seen. In Denmark, in 2024, 1.45 million people are using TikTok (Statista, 2024). According to Statista.com, this is substantial growth even from 2023. Especially in the age groups of 15–19-year-olds and 20–25-year-olds (Statista, 2023), the platform spikes in popularity. Since this is well within the age group targeted for international volunteering, it seems reasonable to focus more resources on building up this web presence. Moreover, by analyzing the engagement rates on TikTok, we can identify specific types of content that resonate best with the younger audience, guiding our strategy for future posts.

3.7 BRINGING IN THEORY

At this point, the theoretical assumptions by using social media, storytelling, and motivational approach gave a better understanding and solutions to the problem that were much more appropriate to attract a volunteer.

Creating Successful Content

According to the current trends, social media is frequently used as a platform to exchange ideas, share, and build relationships. Young people, like college or university students, feel positive about being part of a social network and derive a great deal of enjoyment from the use of social networking. Thus, we used social media to attract young volunteers, as most youngsters use social media frequently to exchange all our ideas, share information, and build relationships.

Telling a compelling story is important, yet other aspects of content creation should be considered alongside this. We have compiled a few examples that should help the process of increasing views and engagement for the organization. A Forbes article on the subject sheds some light on this; whilst they here, too, recommend storytelling and sharing experiences with an appropriate amount of humor, they also focus on inspiration and relatability. As an NGO that focuses on aiding others, evoking emotions in viewers should be a task that can be accomplished. Another angle to social media content is to understand who views the media; to do this effectively, analytics should be

employed, which track engagement and views of posts. This helps to see which content does well in the desired demographics.

Lastly, it is always important to have good quality, which in turn means high production quality and possibly the use of more resources in the process. Videos that are unfocused or have unclear audio will deter viewers from consuming the footage. (Forbes, 2024)

3.7.1 SOCIAL MEDIA

Using the internet-based platforms where young people spend most of their time, social media engagement theory can offer Action Aid a useful framework for attracting young people to be volunteers. Young people's desire for involvement is matched by social media's participatory aspect, as the influence of human engagement or participation is thought to be stronger than saying things (Srivastava, 2017). For instance, the generation of today's individuals search for Information about services based on evaluations like reviews by others on social media or websites. Most young people now place a high value on sharing knowledge, Information, and ideas on social media, which implies that interactions with other people create the intention to engage (Ashkanasy, 2004).

Through social media, young people may quickly interact with the organization as well as find out the sources of the Information of possibilities volunteerism and think about donating their time skills, and interests (Abdallah, 2021). For instance, Action Aid has its own Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook channels, where they can create content about the course and volunteering in general. In addition, leveraging emotionally resonant messages, visually engaging content, and interactive features in media is an effective way of communicating to impact the young generations about what volunteers can make contributions and the benefits they will receive after doing work as volunteers. When promoting the opportunities of being volunteers on social media, it's strictly essential to use the techniques of storytelling to paint a clear picture of how volunteers contribute to your Nongovernmental organization's mission. However, the researchers Hwang & Thorn, (1999) demonstrated that although social media is a powerful tool to engage young volunteers, things such as likes, shares, and comments that emphasize social media often reflect surface-level engagement rather than meaningful action, that is why it is important for Action aid to prioritize effective strategies that can convert digital interest into attracting volunteerism.

Social networking platforms like Instagram and Facebook enable two-way communication that allows messages and posts to be delivered and instantly pushed up to the intended user and all of their connections. In this way, individuals can be reached right away on a social network, and viewers can comment in return. Moreover, they can also see which friends are volunteering, and this leads to a self-reinforcing effect. Di Gangi & Wasko (2016) further added that social media gives organizations like NGOs the chance to reach a large audience of people who share similar interests, Information, backgrounds, and passions. However, because being effective on social media is time intensive, organizations like Action Aid should consider creating a volunteer position to support marketing initiatives.

3.7.2 STORYTELLING

According to Greene et al. (2018), storytelling effectively engages young people and motivates them to participate emotionally. Sharing true stories about people and communities allows people to see the practical results of their contributions, which is critical to expanding the number of volunteers in the long run. Stories of young people volunteering to combat issues such as climate change and poverty, as well as to promote gender equality, highlight the transformative potential of collective action.

These narratives can present volunteers as change agents in the global struggle for justice by employing relatable frameworks such as the hero's journey (Campbell, 1949; Vogler, 2007). Calls to action at the end of each story encourage young viewers to join the cause (Brooks et al. 2018), and digital platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook magnify these stories, making them accessible and shareable (Wexler et al. 2013). Additionally, digital storytelling has been shown to boost young people's emotional attachment to social issues and can be a powerful tool for inspiring them to take joint action (Greenfield 2019). Furthermore, narrative-driven activism can inspire young people by demonstrating the personal and social power of action, thereby promoting active citizenship (Kahne & Westheimer, 2003).

By concentrating on actual individuals and communities, ActionAid could tell the tales of young volunteers who have contributed meaningfully. Using a realistic framework, the organization tells the story of a volunteer who decides to join ActionAid, overcomes obstacles, learns new skills, and ultimately has a positive impact. Youth ideals like equity and global justice are supported by

emotionally engaging stories, which evoke empathy. Digital and multimedia storytelling can also be utilized to establish personal connections through social media campaigns and interactive material.

Apart from that, it is also known as a dynamic strategy as it resonates with company values, emotions, and desire for meaningful engagement. Young people are often drawn to causes that connect with their personal beliefs and offer kinds of opportunities to create tangible impact, making authentic and relatable stories particularly compelling. By sharing narratives that highlight the transformative power of volunteering—both for the company itself and the volunteers themselves, NGOs can inspire a sense of purpose and agency in young audiences (Wexler et al. 2013). Stories with relevant characters—such as individuals who have grown personally, acquired new skills or developed enduring friendships through volunteer work—generate a powerful bond and make the experience seem achievable (Vogler, 2007). Furthermore, using different platforms such as online videos, social medias and interactive material guarantees that these tales are seen by young people where they spend the majority of their time, which boosts engagement. NGOs may effectively convey their objective, generate a feeling of community, and inspire young people to promote social change through storytelling actively.

3.7.3 MOTIVATION

Self-determination theory (STD) is a broad theory of human motivation. It emphasizes both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence the behavior of people and the importance of key components of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in encouraging motivation. STD can be very useful when analyzing the motivation of young people as these factors are highly connected to their skill development and meaningful personal experiences (Deci and Ryan, 1985).

Young volunteers crave independence and want to express themselves because they go through different phases in life where they seek freedom and choice. It is more inspiring for young people to support a cause. ActionAid can promote autonomy by providing flexible volunteer roles and responsibilities and allowing them to choose jobs that reflect their interests. Allowing volunteers

to select specific areas, such as education and healthcare, can enhance their sense of ownership and motivate them.

Young volunteers are still in school and are often eager to gain deeper knowledge and develop skills or gain experience that could be beneficial to them in the future to build up their careers. Action Aid can provide volunteers with instruction and training, feedback, and mentorship that develop practical abilities like advocacy or project management, which builds up their confidence. Acknowledging their work and providing them with medals or certificates in public to recognize their contributions will increase their self-esteem and highlight their accomplishments. ActionAid can set up workshops or online resources that help young volunteers learn practical skills.

As young people explore new social networks and meaningful connections with a peer who shares beliefs. Action Aid can establish strong peer networks and social gatherings to foster strong feelings of community. Promote teamwork and cultural exchange to make them feel belonging in the large and supportive group. This could be done through an online platform where volunteers can share experiences and support one another. Regular meetings, creating volunteer groups, or social media engagement can help to bring a sense of relatedness among volunteers.

According to the SDT, intrinsic motivation (doing something inherently enjoyable) is a more sustainable and powerful form of motivation. ActionAid can appeal to intrinsic motivation volunteers by showcasing the sense of satisfaction that comes from supporting communities that are marginalized. Sharing stories showing how their work results in long-lasting transformation. previous volunteers' narratives might provide a glimpse into the fulfilling experiences and developmental opportunities that come with volunteering.

Though inner drives are important, external recognition is also crucial (Vansteenkiste, Lens, and Deci 2006). ActionAid can use a recognition system to share their individual experiences at events with new volunteers, and providing certifications or public acknowledgment through ActionAid's channels can provide a greater sense of accomplishment in their achievements, which are further strengthened by these tangible recognitions. While STD is a powerful tool, it is important to consider its limitations. Complementing it with other strategies and motivational factors, ActionAid can attract and retain more volunteers.

3.8 TOWARDS SOLUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Social media is a powerful way to engage, inform, and recruit volunteers because every person who likes, shares, or follows the post of your company has the potential to be your next valuable volunteer. Thus, we have presented our solutions as pointed out below.

3.8.1 START BY ENGAGING THE AUDIENCE WITH COMPELLING CONTENT

Engaging the target audience means sharing different kinds of content on social media that encourages people to act. Companies like ActionAid can see how successful that content is when people like, comment, share, retweet, and reply to the posts that they share on social media. So, in this situation, the questions come to mind: what kind of content is engaging or can attract an audience?

Multimedia – Use multiple photos and videos to engage the young audience. For example, when you are providing things like donating clothes to children in need, the photos of smiling kids and their families are a powerful way to tell their story to the audience. We thought about creating content as we couldn't find any of your hundreds of photos on Action Aid's website, Facebook, or any other media.

Inspirational – Get the audience thinking about what they can do to help by using inspirational quotes and photos.

Asking a question – By asking a question like, what's the most gratifying part of volunteering for you? And another, what's one piece of advice you would give someone who is looking to volunteer here? These kinds of questions work in two ways: first, it will inspire the people who already have experience, and another it will influence them to be a volunteer by reading their comments.

Humor- sharing funny and interesting content is always a good idea. For example, following current trends is important, yet it is important to remember a balance of humor and content to not lose respectability.

3.8.2 KEEPING THE AUDIENCE INFORMED

Social media allows organizations like nonprofits to interact with their audience daily. Thus, to take advantage of the interaction between the audience by notifying them about the organization's mission is crucial.

Share News – Sharing news about daily activities is basic, but it's important. Regular posting of daily work, accomplishments, announcements, and events helps to remind the audience of the vital role that your organization is serving in your community. Posting engaging and attracting stories on Instagram and Facebook, like likes and dislikes , voting poll content, yes/no questions, and rating their posts. In addition, sharing stories of previous volunteers about their volunteer jobs and providing information about the changes they have made in society may help to attract the younger generation to volunteer. These kinds of stories help the volunteers see the value of their efforts and tap into the youth's desire to make a difference on a global level. Stories can be shared through social media, video diaries, or newsletters to attract potential volunteers. Framing volunteering as part of a larger movement for social justice can motivate the younger generation to the idea of systematic change. Focusing on the mission of ActionAid, how their work fits into global goals like sustainable development goals (SDG), and how their effort helps to create an equitable world can be motivating for the young generation.

Education – The knowledge that the company has in various areas about doing volunteer work is valuable—it can be used to educate the social media audience. Young people are drawn to the fact that they can develop diverse skills that can be recognized globally. ActionAid can market the program to gain cross-cultural communication skills, adaptability, and leadership abilities that will be valued by universities and employers worldwide. Highlighting how volunteering in a global context opens the door for networking with other NGOs, government organizations, and international development professionals can appeal to young people seeking future opportunities.

Events – Invite followers or the audience to events via social media, but it is also important to make sure you're posting after the event, too. Event photos and videos allow followers to show off your hard work. In addition, making sure to tag participants—people, sponsors, and other nonprofits—in uploaded photos is important to get more. As company fans interact with your content, their networks will see it, allowing you to spread your message even further. For instance,

organizing live webinars and or Q&A sessions with past volunteers and the ActionAid staff about their experience, addressing concerns, and sharing tips on what to expect in a certain place will help young people build excitement and demystify the experience of volunteering in a challenging environment.

3.8.3 PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE PRE-DEPARTURE TRAINING AND OFFERING STRONG SUPPORT DURING THE VOLUNTEER PERIOD

Working in a new place can be challenging, especially for young people, offering training on cultural adaptation, ethical volunteering, and emotional resilience to help volunteers navigate challenges while working in other countries. It is essential to ensure volunteers understand their roles, goals, and the impact they will have. Pairing volunteers with mentors who can guide them through the experiences they have and connect with ActionAid staff to address the challenges, offer advice, and improve their well-being.

3.8.4 COUNSELLING AFTER VOLUNTEERING

Post-volunteering counseling is a vital part of the volunteer journey to ensure that the volunteers reflect on their experience and feel valued and motivated to stay connected with social causes. This process not only improves the personal and professional growth of the volunteer but also helps to strengthen the relationship with ActionAid for the long term, which can also increase the chance of long-term collaboration.

Personalized one-on-one counselling

Volunteers will receive personalized support through one-on-one counseling sessions, career guidance, workshops, and emotional support. Group sessions will be helpful for the community, while a feedback system can help improve future programs. Volunteers will participate in the individualized session to reflect on their experience, discuss the challenges they faced, and the achievements they gained tailored guidance. This session will allow them to connect to their contributions to the broader mission of social impacts while gaining the skills that strengthen their career portfolio.

Career and Academic support

The guidance provided by the company helps volunteers integrate their experience into professional and academic platforms such as resumes, LinkedIn, or other academic documents. Resources will be shared by volunteers to explore career paths or educational opportunities in social work and social development.

Recognition of contribution

Volunteers' efforts will be formally acknowledged through certificates, letters of recommendation, and awards. Exceptional contributions will be highlighted through social platforms to reinforce their sense of accomplishment and encourage further engagement.

Structured feedback system

Volunteers will be encouraged to provide detailed feedback through surveys, interviews or focus groups. this feedback will help gain insight to the impact of the program and identify the area for improvement which also ensures the better experience for future participants.

3.8.5 COLLABORATION WITH UNIVERSITY

As we have already discussed the angle of social media, we will now delve a bit further into the implementation of the collaborative approach. As mentioned above, the coordinator we spoke to about the idea of offering ECTS/credit for volunteering during the internship semester found the idea generally interesting and possible. Of course, the details of such a collaboration between Action Aid and Aalborg University need to be discussed in further detail by the two parties.

We believe that a collaboration between the two could well be possible if there is enough room for students who are volunteering to find a more academic aspect to their volunteering work, for example, writing a paper or working on a project related to their volunteer work. This would be a great success for both organizations, which would presumably gain master's students in the 3rd semester as volunteers. Additionally, incorporating academic requirements into the volunteering program could also attract students from various disciplines, offering them an opportunity to utilize their academic knowledge in a real-world setting, making the volunteer work even more valuable. If the collaboration with AAU were to be implemented and produce successful results for both

parties, this same approach could be suggested to other Danish universities, where even more potential volunteers could be reached.

4. PROJECT DESIGN: STRATEGY TO INCREASE VOLUNTEERS FOR ACTIONAID

First Step: Project Experience and Information Gathering

The first phase of our project focused on understanding the challenges ActionAid faced and gathering important Information to improve volunteer recruitment. Our main goal was to find ways to attract more volunteers to ActionAid and ensure the sustainability of their programs. We began by brainstorming different ways to attract university students to volunteer with ActionAid. We realized that social media played a big role in shaping the views of this group, so we decided to use storytelling as a tool to reach out to them. By telling compelling and personal stories about the impact of ActionAid's work, we could create an emotional connection with potential volunteers. This would help humanize the cause and make it more relatable to young people, especially those who may not be familiar with the organization.

Influencers and volunteers with strong social media presence could help spread the word and create more interest in volunteering. These volunteers could post content such as short videos, photos, and written stories about the difference they've made through their volunteer work with ActionAid. The idea was to make volunteering feel more tangible and inspiring for young people, helping them see the value of their potential contributions. To back up our approach, we explored some theories around storytelling and self-determination. By aligning ActionAid's volunteer opportunities with these elements, we believed we could appeal to students who are not just looking to help others but also to grow personally and professionally.

Second Step: Communication and Coordination

In the second phase, we worked on refining our ideas and ensuring they could be put into action by communicating with key people at both ActionAid and the university.

We first reached out to our supervisor to present the initial ideas and get feedback. This feedback was crucial in shaping our strategy. The supervisor helped us refine our approach and ensured that

it aligned with ActionAid's mission. We also discussed the challenges, such as the need for academic recognition of volunteer work, and how we could integrate this into our plan. The supervisor's insights helped us clarify the next steps. Through this conversation, we gained valuable insights into the structure and support systems of ActionAid's volunteer programs. This helped us understand how we could integrate the concept of academic credit for volunteering in a way that would benefit both ActionAid and the volunteers. We then reached out to a contact at Aalborg University (AAU) to explore the possibility of offering ECTS points (university credits) for volunteer work. This was an important part of our strategy to make volunteering more appealing to students. The coordinator at AAU expressed support for the idea but mentioned that some academic requirements would need to be met before the credit can be granted. They suggested incorporating an educational element, such as project management tasks or reports, to make the volunteer work more academically valuable. This feedback was essential for refining our plan and ensuring it could be implemented smoothly.

Third Step: Development and Execution

The final steps of the project focused on refining our ideas and preparing them for implementation. With feedback from ActionAid and the university, we have funded our strategy. The final idea was to create a series of short videos for social media where real-life volunteers shared their stories. These videos would highlight the social impact of the work and how volunteering can contribute to personal and professional development. We also planned to offer ECTS points for university students who completed a set number of volunteer hours. This would make volunteering more attractive by linking it to academic goals. The videos and posts would be shared across Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, with influencers amplifying the reach. Our final product, named 'Impact Hub,' is designed to serve as a central platform for these videos and social media campaigns, encouraging greater participation and interaction of volunteers.

We then wrote a report outlining our entire strategy. The report included the key ideas, research, and implementation steps. It also addressed potential challenges, such as how to coordinate with universities and ensure that volunteer experience met academic standards. The report was designed to be clear and actionable, providing a step-by-step guide on how ActionAid could implement the plan. We also included projected outcomes, such as increased volunteer numbers and greater

engagement from university students. The goal was to provide a comprehensive yet easy-to-understand presentation that could be shared with both ActionAid and the university to gain support for the initiative.

STEP I **STEP II** **STEP III**

(Product: Impact Hub)
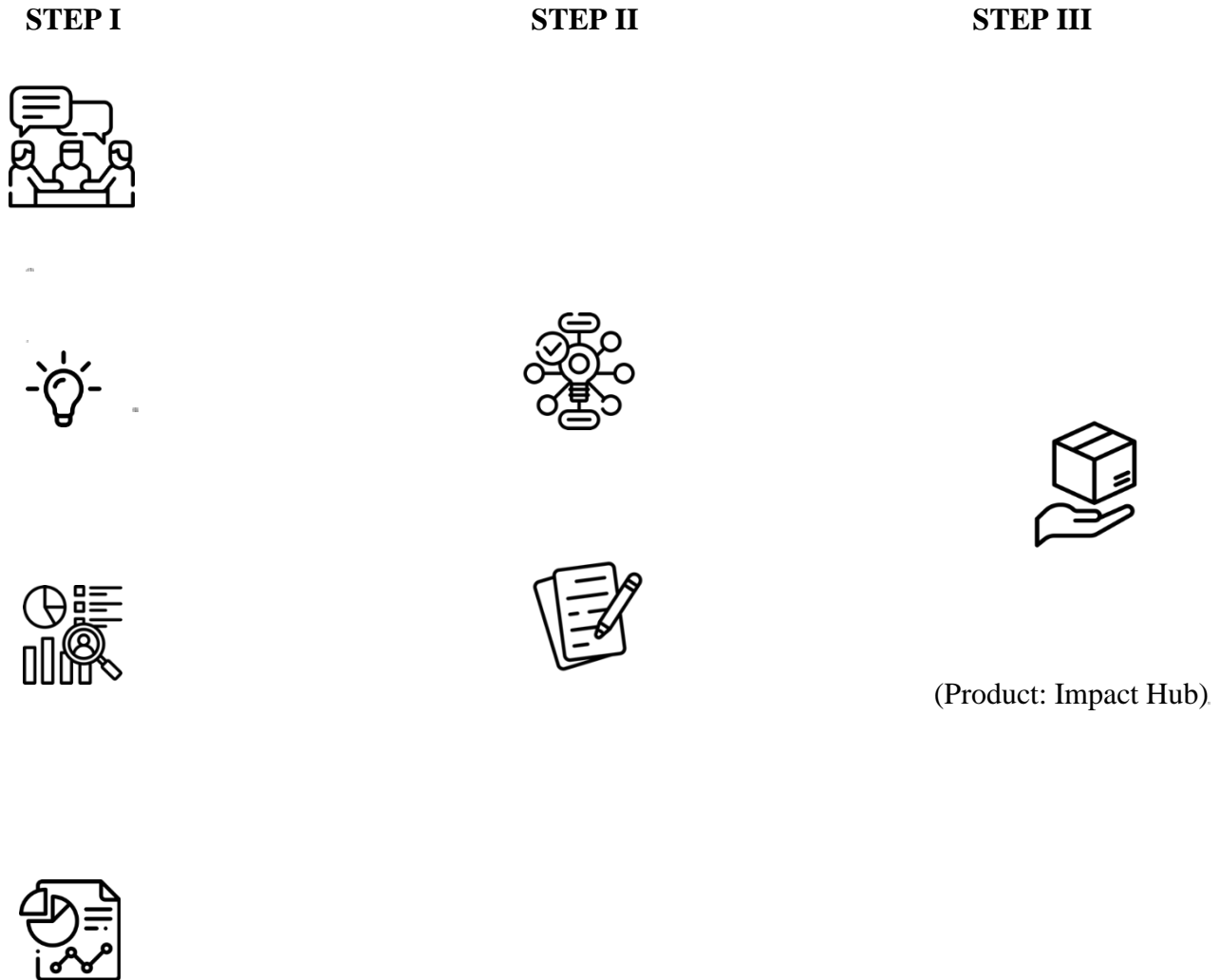
Figure 1: Three different steps by step illustration of the project design

5. MATERIAL FOR PRESENTATION

Week	Activities
Week 1 (Oct 9-13)	Project briefing and initial meetings with Majken from ActionAid.
Week 2 (Oct 14-20)	Reviewed the research and sent pitch ideas to Majken for approval.
Week 3 (Oct 21-27)	Received approval for the strategy from Action Aid and followed up for more volunteer insights.
Week 4-7 (Oct 28-Nov 24)	Brainstormed ideas, organized research, and decided on theoretical frameworks.
Week 8 (Nov 25-Dec 1)	Organized data, began writing project design, and met with Vibeke online for feedback.
Week 9 (Dec 2-8)	Completed the analysis and methodology sections, and everyone suggested implementation steps.
Week 10 (Dec 9-15)	Online meeting with Jesper, added graphics, proofread, and finalized the report.
Week 11 (Dec 17)	Final formatting and submission of the project.

Figure 2: Weekly timeline of the activities from starting to end of the project.

This table outlines the key activities that were completed each week during the project, which focused mainly on increasing volunteers for ActionAid. Here, we will showcase a breakdown of our process:

- **Week 1 (Oct 9th-13th)**: The project started with an initial meeting with Majken from ActionAid to understand the organization's challenges. During this meeting, we discussed declining volunteer numbers and gathered Information about ActionAid.

- **Week 2 (Oct 14th-20th)**: After gathering basic Information, we conducted research on ActionAid's volunteer strategies and sent a pitch to Majken for approval. This pitch included our idea for attracting more volunteers.

- **Week 3 (Oct 21st-27th)**: Once our pitch was accepted, we followed up with Majken to get more insights on experienced volunteers, which helped us refine our approach.

- **Week 4-7 (Oct 28th-Nov 24th)**: The project's core involved brainstorming and organizing our ideas. We decided to use storytelling, social media strategies, and academic incentives like ECTS points to attract university students. We also gathered secondary data from research, interviews, and online sources.

- **Week 8 (Nov 25th-Dec 1st)**: We continued refining our project by organizing the data, writing the project design, and meeting with Vibeke for feedback and suggestions on improvements.

- **Week 9 (Dec 2nd-8th)**: The focus shifted to writing the detailed analysis and methodology of the project. We also created suggestions for implementing the strategy, including how to use social media and academic incentives.

- **Week 10 (Dec 9th-15th)**: We had a final meeting in Teams with Jesper, the International Coordinator, to discuss the project and ensure that it met the necessary academic standards. We also added visuals and proofread the report.

- **Week 11 (Dec 17th)**: The final week involved formatting and submitting the completed project.

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