Hong Kong Jockey Club Community Project Grant (JCCPG)

Glocal Leader Academy

Research Study Report

1. Introduction: VolTra's Role as a Motivation Engineer

Founded in 2009, VolTra is a Hong Kong-based non-governmental organization that aims to encourage everyone to take part in global and local action. By curating journeys that enrich glocal vision and cultivate impactful actions, VolTra believes that perspectives continuously shape worldviews, which in turn direct actions. The organization is dedicated to cultivating a voluntary culture fueled with passion and promoting friendship, diversified teams, and communities through its programs. VolTra wishes to foster co-creating and co-owning in a fun way.

To achieve this, VolTra employs an innovative strategy with an approach of **"Make meaningful things fun and fun things meaningful" (令有意義的事變好玩，令好玩的事有意義)** which incorporates elements of gamification to create dynamic, engaging experiences that embody the spirit and approach of the organization. It is a process of transforming traditional community service initiatives into captivating experiences that emphasize the core components of VolTra's approach, including the 3F strategy (fun, freedom, and friendship). In this context, gamification refers to the application of game design elements and mechanics in non-gaming contexts, such as events, to engage attendees and enhance their experience. By leveraging gamification strategies, VolTra aims to increase youth engagement and provide valuable support for potential partners and clients in organizing successful youth engagement programs.

The importance of VolTra's approach lies in its ability to foster success in organizing youth-related programs, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hong Kong youth have been significantly affected by the pandemic, with disruptions in education, social life, and mental well-being. By designing experiences

that are enjoyable, meaningful, and impactful, VolTra addresses these challenges and provides enriching opportunities for young people, cultivating personal growth, friendship, and teamwork among participants. Moreover, these experiences not only benefit local and global communities but also demonstrate VolTra's unique perspective on volunteerism.

In the following sections, the specific strategies that constitute VolTra's approach will be explored, delving into the theoretical foundations underpinning these approaches and discussing their implementation in various programs and campaigns.

2. Gamification Strategies Adopted/Initiated by VolTra

In the coming few sections, gamification strategies employed by VolTra will be examined. This section will explore how the organization integrates the 3F strategy (fun, freedom, and friendship) to create engaging and dynamic experiences for young people. The theoretical foundations of gamification and its relevance in the context of volunteerism will be discussed, emphasizing the role of intrinsic motivation and psychological needs as crucial factors for successful youth engagement. Additionally, specific examples of gamification strategies implemented by VolTra in various programs and campaigns will be provided, illustrating their practical applications and effectiveness in fostering positive experiences for participants.

2.1 Approach and Objective

In this section, the 3F approach (Fun, Freedom, Friendship) will be discussed in relation to the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which posits that motivation is driven by three basic psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. By implementing the 3F approach in VolTra's programs, the organization aims to fulfill these needs while striving to achieve the 3"E"s and 2"A"s, fostering intrinsic motivation, well-being, and optimal functioning among the participating youth.

The 3"E"s and 2"A"s (Fig. 1) are:

- Exploration (好奇心): The eagerness to explore the world is always the starting point of any journey. Once you identify a point of interest, be it traditional culture, unique history, nature, religion, politics, or rituals, just step out of your comfort zone and start.

- Empathy (同理心): Empathy is the core of the international voluntary service movement. When you dive into the overseas community, you listen, you feel, you see the world from others' perspectives; only when you are empathetic, can you support the local community.

- Empowerment of change (求變心): After a journey filled with passion and inspiration, the world you see will never be the same. When you wish to initiate a change, VolTra will connect you with like-minded individuals, to bring passion into action, and to empower the change!

The 2"A"s consist of:

- Local awareness (本地意識): Developing a deeper understanding of social issues and community needs within one's own local context.

- Global awareness (全球意識): Expanding one's understanding of social issues and community needs on a global scale.

These two elements can be combined into the concept of "Glocal Awareness." Glocal awareness is an important concept for Hong Kong youths, as it emphasizes the interconnectedness of local and global communities. By developing a glocal perspective, young people in Hong Kong can better understand the unique challenges and opportunities that arise from their city's position as a global hub, and appreciate the impact of their actions on both a local and global scale.
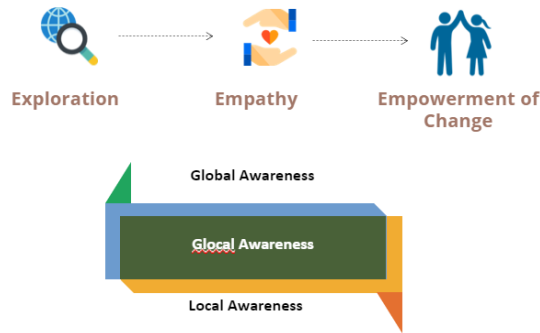
Fig. 1 Model of 3"E"s and 2"A"s

In this context, the 3F approach (Fig. 2) can be linked to the three needs as follows:

- Fun (Competence): By incorporating engaging and enjoyable activities, participants can develop their skills, gain a sense of competence in their abilities, and experience enjoyment.

- Freedom (Autonomy): Allowing youth to explore and develop their real and digital selves provides them with the autonomy they need to make choices and take control of their own learning experiences, which fosters empowerment.

- Friendship (Relatedness): Encouraging collaboration and teamwork in VolTra's programs helps to build connections among participants, satisfying their need for relatedness and belonging while promoting local and global awareness and action.
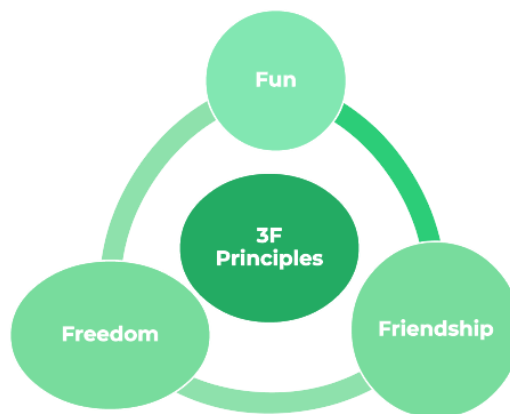

Fig 2. 3F Approach/Principle

In the upcoming sections, the connection between the 3F approach and the three needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness, as well as the 3"E"s and 2"A"s, will be further explored. Examples and data will demonstrate the effectiveness of the 3F approach in increasing youth engagement in community service.

2.2 Fun: Gamification Model and the Hero's Journey

Gamification plays a crucial role in VolTra's 3F approach, as it enhances the **"Fun"** factor in the organization's programs. Gamification is an effective tool for increasing participant engagement, motivation, and satisfaction, leading to higher event success rates and more positive feedback from attendees. By incorporating gamification elements, VolTra aims to make community service initiatives more engaging and enjoyable for young participants, fostering intrinsic motivation and enhancing their overall experience.

A key aspect of VolTra's gamification strategy is the integration of the Hero's Journey concept (Fig. 3), which is often used in narrative storytelling to describe the transformation of a protagonist as they embark on a challenging adventure. The Hero's Journey consists of several stages, including the call to adventure, trials and challenges, personal transformation, and the return with newfound wisdom or abilities. By applying this concept to their programs, VolTra allows youth participants to complete their own Hero's Journey, providing them with a sense of accomplishment and personal growth.

Incorporating the Hero's Journey into VolTra's programs effectively addresses the needs of young participants who are often seeking challenges and achievements. By offering them the opportunity to embark on their own journey of self-discovery and personal growth, VolTra's programs not only make community service more appealing and enjoyable but also provide meaningful experiences that contribute to the overall well-being and development of the participants.

Throughout the Hero's Journey, participants are encouraged to take on various challenges, engage in problem-solving, collaborate with others, and ultimately reflect on their experiences. This process not only

aligns with the principles of gamification but also fulfills the psychological needs outlined in the Self-Determination Theory, such as competence, autonomy, and relatedness.
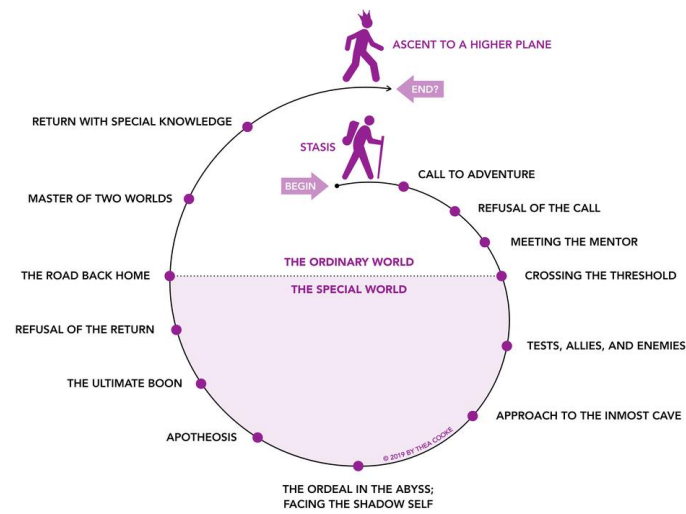

Fig. 3 The Hero's Journey

In conclusion, the integration of gamification and the Hero's Journey in VolTra's programs successfully enhances youth engagement and motivation while providing meaningful, transformative experiences. By designing programs that cater to the needs and desires of young participants, VolTra ensures the effectiveness and impact of their community service initiatives.

2.3 Freedom: Fostering Personal Growth through Autonomy and Creative Exploration

Freedom plays a pivotal role in the personal development of youths, as it allows them to exercise their autonomy and engage in creative exploration. VolTra believes that providing individuals with the opportunity to make choices and control their own experiences fosters intrinsic motivation and enhances their overall well-being. In the context of youth development programs, allowing participants to exercise their freedom contributes to a sense of ownership, increased engagement, and a deeper understanding of the learning content.

One key component of VolTra's program design is the inclusion of an incubation phase, which allows youth

participants to create their own works, fostering creativity and self-expression. This element enables participants to exercise their freedom and make choices that shape their learning experiences, ultimately promoting personal growth and a sense of ownership over their projects.

In addition to the incubation component, VolTra recognizes the importance of developing both the real self and digital self of youth participants, as a balanced development of these two aspects is crucial for overall well-being and success in various aspects of life, such as education, social relationships, and professional careers. To cater to this need, VolTra incorporates strategies that allow for the growth of both real and digital selves in their programs.

One of these strategies is Goodmates, a Learning Management System (LMS) developed by VolTra, which currently has over 5,000 users from different countries. Goodmates transforms organizational activities into interactive games and operates similarly to social media platforms, allowing participants to post and interact with other users. Users can also complete tasks to earn points, which can be redeemed for rewards, encouraging their active involvement. The platform provides a comprehensive record of each participant's completed tasks, content, and learned skills, with support for downloading records to Excel for more detailed analysis.

Goodmates offers participants the freedom to develop their real and digital selves simultaneously, making it an ideal platform for personal growth. The platform fosters a sense of autonomy by allowing users to choose their tasks and engage with other participants on their own terms. It also helps develop digital skills, which are essential in today's interconnected world.

By offering multiple channels for personal growth, including the incubation component and the Goodmates platform, VolTra encourages youth participants to exercise their freedom, explore their potential, and contribute to their communities in meaningful ways.

2.4 Friendship: Cultivating Connection and Collaboration Among Youth Participants

Fostering friendships among young people is a critical aspect of VolTra's programs, as it contributes to the development of social connections and a sense of belonging. The Self-Determination Theory stated that the need for relatedness is a fundamental psychological requirement, and satisfying this need has a profound impact on an individual's motivation and well-being. By emphasizing collaboration and conversation, VolTra aims to create a supportive environment where participants can form strong relationships, further fostering engagement in community service.

One of the ways VolTra encourages friendship among youth participants is through collaborative tasks that require them to form teams and work together. These tasks not only help develop teamwork and communication skills but also provide opportunities for participants to forge connections and understand diverse perspectives. Research has shown that collaborative learning environments contribute to improved academic achievement, increased motivation, and a greater sense of belonging among students.

VolTra's digital platform, Goodmates, also plays a crucial role in fostering friendships among participants. By offering a social media-like environment, Goodmates enables participants to connect, collaborate, and engage with one another on both a personal and professional level. This virtual space further enhances the opportunities for relationship-building by transcending geographical boundaries, bringing together participants from various cultural backgrounds.

The importance of cultivating online platforms and friendship-making opportunities is underscored by the increased reliance on digital interactions, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. VolTra believes that, with face-to-face interactions restricted, the need for alternative ways to connect and collaborate has grown exponentially. By providing online programs that connect people from different cultural backgrounds, VolTra not only supports the formation of friendships but also facilitates cross-cultural understanding and

appreciation.

In summary, by providing opportunities for collaboration, both in-person and online, and fostering an environment that encourages conversation and connection, VolTra effectively cultivates friendships among youth participants. These strong relationships serve to enhance participants' motivation and engagement in community service, ultimately contributing to their personal growth and the betterment of their communities.

3. Case Study: The Jockey Club Glocal Hero Action 2022

The Jockey Club Glocal Hero Action 2022 was a perfect embodiment of the 3F approach (Fun, Freedom, and Friendship) that underpins all of VolTra's activities. This program was designed meticulously, ensuring every phase would both engage participants and fulfill their intrinsic psychological needs.

The "Fun" aspect of the program was effectively integrated by employing gamification elements throughout. Through a series of engaging activities and missions, participants could delve into global and local issues in an enjoyable and non-intimidating manner. Furthermore, the concept of the Hero's Journey was used as a framework, allowing the participants to feel as if they were protagonists in their own story. This story-like structure encouraged participants to overcome challenges, fostering a sense of accomplishment and fun throughout the program.

The principle of "Freedom" was clearly reflected in the autonomy given to the participants. Participants were encouraged to explore and make choices based on their interests and perspectives, thereby promoting creativity and self-expression. For instance, the incubation phase of the program allowed participants to create their own social impact projects, fostering a sense of ownership and personal growth. The digital platform Goodmates further provided participants the liberty to connect, learn, and share their achievements in a digital environment, facilitating their development as digital citizens.

"Friendship" was fostered through the program's emphasis on collaboration and connection. Participants worked in teams to solve challenges and create projects, thereby developing bonds and enhancing their teamwork skills. In addition, the Goodmates platform provided a social space for participants to connect, share experiences, and build relationships that transcended the geographical boundaries.

With respect to the program's impact, The Jockey Club Glocal Hero Action 2022 had a significant and tangible effect. Despite the shift to digital format, the enthusiasm among Glocal Heroes remained high. Over 2,500 tasks and missions were completed by 172 active participants, with 16,259 interactions were made between them. This demonstrates how the program, even in a digital format, continues to have a significant impact on both the participants and the communities they serve.

The programme successfully engaged a large number of participants, creating a wide network of young people committed to making a difference in their local and global communities. The quantifiable outcomes of the program included the number of participants, the number of social impact projects developed, and the number of connections made on the Goodmates platform, demonstrating the program's significant reach and influence.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, VolTra's unique approach of incorporating "Fun, Freedom, and Friendship" has proven successful in engaging youth in community service and fostering a culture of volunteerism. By implementing strategies based on gamification, autonomy, and collaboration, VolTra ensures that their programs are not only enjoyable but also meaningful and impactful.

The case of The Jockey Club Glocal Hero Action 2022 exemplifies the effectiveness of VolTra's approach. The program's design, rooted in the principles of the 3F approach, resulted in an engaging and transformative experience for participants, providing them with the opportunity to grow personally and contribute positively

to their communities.

In numerical terms, VolTra's impact has been substantial, with thousands of youth participating in its programs and initiatives. The organization's efforts have also led to an increasing number of social impact projects and global connections, testifying to the organization's wide-reaching influence.

As we move forward, VolTra will continue to refine and evolve its approach, staying true to its mission of making meaningful things fun and fun things meaningful. The organization remains committed to its role as a motivation engineer, nurturing a culture of voluntary action that empowers youth to make positive changes in their communities and the wider world.

With its pioneering strategies and dedicated team, VolTra is well-positioned to continue shaping the future of youth engagement in community service. The organization's commitment to the principles of fun, freedom, and friendship, combined with its emphasis on meaningful and impactful experiences, offers a promising and exciting way forward in the world of volunteerism.