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MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS IN SMALL THEATRES IN FINLAND

Case Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia

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ABSTRACT

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The topic of this thesis was provided by the case company, Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia. The case company wanted to develop their marketing communications and needed a tool for managing their marketing communication activities. This tool should help the person responsible for marketing communication to structure their workload and schedule their tasks more easily. Hence, the aim of this thesis was to provide the case company with information about marketing communications in small theaters in Finland and an annual wheel tool in Microsoft Excel format. The tool can be adapted and tailored to changes in the future.

Two research questions emerged that would aim to provide answers for the commissioner's needs. Firstly, this thesis aims to provide answers for the commissioner on how they could develop their marketing communication. To answer this question, the author utilized literary reviews and desk research to form the theory base. Secondly, this thesis aims to provide the commissioner with information on what kind of marketing communication do other small theatres in Finland do. To answer this question, interviews were conducted with selected representatives of small theatres in Finland. The results provide information and examples of marketing communication done by similar theatres to the commissioner.

In this thesis basic information about marketing communications and planning marketing communications is provided. The thesis introduces the annual wheel tool developed for the commissioner. Finally, this thesis provides information on what kind of marketing communication do small theatres in Finland do. There also some suggestions for the case company on how they could develop their marketing communication activities further.

Keywords: annual wheel, marketing communication, planning marketing communication, theatre

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1 INTRODUCTION

Smaller enterprises rarely have resources and opportunities to develop their marketing communications from the theoretical starting point. Therefore, planning marketing communications is often on the backseat compared to other aspects of running the business, especially those which generate income and are seen as more urgent and profitable to developing marketing communications. This has been the case for Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia, who as a small company has not had excess resources to appoint towards the development of their marketing communications further.

The aim of this thesis is to develop marketing communications of the case company. The commissioner has asked me to investigate how they could develop their marketing communications and what things to take into consideration when developing a marketing communications plan. The current marketing communications plan was roughly put together several years ago and was developed for a theatre just starting out. The commissioner is looking to receive suggestion on how to develop their marketing communications, and to receive an annual wheel tool, will be provided to them as a separate Microsoft Excel -format.

This thesis aims to provide answers to two research questions: What kind of marketing communication do small theatres in Finland do and how can Vera Audentia develop its marketing communication? To answer these questions, the theory section will focus on defining what marketing communications is and how marketing communication is planned. I will then move on to present the results of interviews. I interviewed selected small theatres in Finland on how they conduct their marketing communications activities. Finally, I will focus on the case company and their marketing communications. In addition, I will provide the commissioner with a Microsoft Excel based annual wheel tool to assist them in conducting their marketing communication activities.

Case Company

My commissioner for this thesis is an Oulu based contemporary theatre Vera Audentia. Since 2018 Vera Audentia has produced three contemporary theatre premieres and five art exhibitions. In addition to the performing activities, they also organize dance courses for professionals in the Oulu area. Vera Audentia is headed by Hanna-Kaija Takalo, who is the artistic director, producer, and chairperson of the board. The board consists of Takalo and three other members and together they

share the responsibilities of day-to-day activities during the production season. All together there are around 10 active artists who work for Vera Audentia depending on which projects are currently underway (Vera Audentia 2021, 2).

In the Northern Ostrobothnia region, Vera Audentia has profiled itself as a proactive and fearless actor on the field of performing arts. The theatre has approached challenging topics such as drugs abuse and violence from the perspective of an individual. One the strong points of the theatre is the interdisciplinary approach to theatre, which has had a strong impact on the viewers and has resulted in positive feedback. Vera Audentia differs from the other theatres in the area by focusing on producing interdisciplinary performances and employing local professionals. The goal of Vera Audentia is to produce high quality art and performances, which address impactful and societal topics. (Vera Audentia 2021, 3-4).

2 MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

Kotler and Keller define marketing communications as “the means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade, and remind consumers – directly or indirectly, about the products and brands they sell” (Kotler & Keller 2016, 580). Marketing communications aims to affect how people view an organization, what it sounds like and how people think about the services and products it offers. Marketing communications can be informative and aimed to educate the public on how to use the products offered, or it can try to convey feelings and, in this way, link their brand to a specific situation, usage, or user group. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 580).

The main goal of marketing communications activities is to maintain communication with the market. Communication that aims to create, maintain, and strengthen a customer relationship that affects directly or indirectly the sales of a product, or a service is marketing communications. For pursuing effective marketing communications, it is essential to tie it with the organization’s activities and means of competition they utilize. The different means of competition form the basis of content pool used in marketing communications. (Isohookana 2007, 62–64.)

Marketing communication can be organized in various means, which should be chosen based on who the target audience is and what are the best ways to reach them. When utilizing multiple communication channels and medias, it is important to co-ordinate the messages sent out to the public. This calls for an integrated marketing communication. The integrated marketing communication plan focuses on the whole picture, including which elements of the promotion mix are used and when they are scheduled to be launched. (Bergström & Leppänen 2021, chapter 5.1).

For development of effective marketing communications, it is important to understand the general communication process. As seen on figure 1, between the sender (an organization) and receiver (customer) there are a lot of possibilities for a message to be misinterpreted. Therefore, to have the highest possibility for a receiver to understand the message as intended, it is best to rely on familiarity. Encoding, decoding, response, and feedback are functions of communication where the message has a chance to be understood or misinterpreted. Message and media are the tools of communication, a medium through which messages are sent. Finally, noise is the element that can vary in practice and cause the message to be lost with its unplanned appearance. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 452-453).

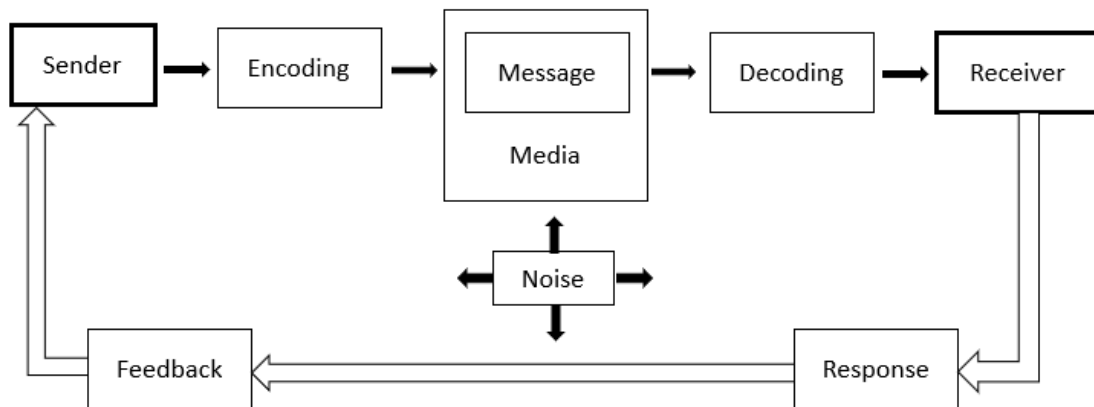


FIGURE 1. Communication process (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 453).

For a functional communication to happen, the sender must first identify the target audience. The target audience can be a group of people, certain individuals, or a general public. The target audience influences what, how, when, where, and who says the communicated message. Next, the objectives for the communication must be defined and a message constructed. When the message has been designed, the sender can choose which media to utilize. Finally, feedback should be collected. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 454).

Fill and McKee (2011, 242) state that understanding the target audience's environment and context is crucial for a successful marketing communication operation. While an organization is the planner of marketing communication, it should be willing to quickly adjust its marketing communication based on the response of the target audience. Therefore, marketing communications should be seen as an audience-centered activity. This way marketing communications tries to foster engagement between participants, the organization and target audience, and spark conversations. (Fill & McKee 2011, 242).

When conducting a business, marketing communications can be used to a competitive advantage, especially when it is planned well. In markets where there are several similar products, marketing communication can be used as a differentiator. Reinforcing experiences and beliefs can also be done via marketing communications and it is important for development and maintaining long-term customer relationships. In addition, raising awareness of the product and informing customers of the product is an important aim of marketing communications. All this together can be used to build a brand image. (Fill & McKee 2011, 246).

2.1 Integrated Marketing Communications

Today's consumers are changing as they are better informed and can use different mediums for communications. In the past consumers had to rely on marketer supplied information, but nowadays they can search for the information themselves and connect with other consumers to discuss specifics of a certain product or a service. This, along with the fragmentation of mass markets and advancement in digital technology, have caused a shift in the marketing communication environment. Marketing communicators increasingly view themselves as content marketing managers and work with a variety of earned, paid, owned, and shared communication channels. The change in communication channels has been rapid and, more often than not, consumers come into contact with brand content from a variety of sources during their day. This calls for a careful approach in managing marketing communications, so that all communication is consistent and convey the same message. This is called integrated marketing communications and it considers the whole image and scale of communications that is conveyed to the consumer. The promotion mix is an important tool for managing integrated marketing communications, as all of the five major promotion tools connect and blend with each other during marketing communications as seen on figure 2. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 447-449)

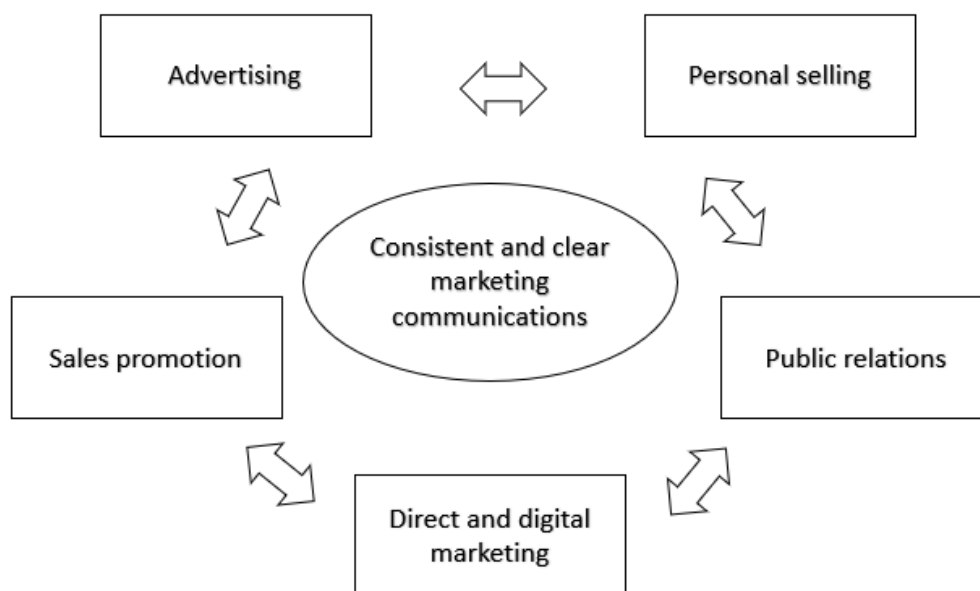


FIGURE 2. Integrated marketing communications model (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 451).

When implementing integrated marketing communications, an organization should consider all communication channels they utilize and if those channels deliver a consistent and similar message. Timing is also crucial, and care should be taken to schedule the promotional activities so that they support each other. The aim of integrated marketing communications is to prevent mixed messages being sent out to consumers. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 452.)

2.2 Promotion Mix

Marketing mix consists of 4Ps: price, product, place, and promotion. Of these 4 Ps, the promotion or promotion mix, focuses entirely on the communications and engagement of customers. Promotion mix is a mix of different marketing tools that an organization can utilize to communicate customer value, connect with customers, and create and strengthen customer relationships. The promotion mix has five major promotion tools: advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and direct and digital marketing. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 447.)

Advertising

Advertisements are an important promotion tool, through which an organization can engage and inform the customers of their products and services. In short, any form of nonpersonal presentation and promotion of products or services that is paid for is advertising. In addition, a selected and known sponsor can provide advertising service. Advertisements can have different objectives such as being informative, persuasive, or reminding. Informative advertising is used when introducing a new product or a service. Persuasive advertising is used when the product or service is known to the public, and is useful especially as competition increases. Reminder advertising is used when a product or service has been around for a long time, and it is designed to keep the product in the forefront of consumers minds and sustain the customer relationships. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 474-476.)

The major media types for advertising are television, digital and social media, direct mail, magazines, newspapers, radio, and outdoor. When selecting which media to use for advertising, one must first determine the reach and frequency. The percentage of people in the target market an advertisement reaches and how many times they see the advertisement, frequency, are important factors when deciding which media to use. One must also consider the impact an advertisement has, and the quality value of the message sent. For example, an advertisement will be perceived

differently when published in a respected academic journal compared to a tabloid newspaper. Engaging customers is another factor when choosing the media since social media channels and advertisements online make it possible for a customer to just click on the advertisement or affiliate link to be taken to the homepage of the advertiser. It is also important to consider whether a nationwide campaign compared to a local campaign has a better result in reaching the target group. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 482-483.)

Timing can elevate a well-planned advertisement campaign to new heights. Scheduling an advertisement campaign for a known children's clothing brand just before school semester starts will probably have a good impact on the sales. Advertisements can be run seasonally or continuously or around an event or a product launch. Reacting to events in social media can have a huge reach if timed well, for example via twitter. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 485-486.)

Public Relations

Public relations (PR) cover a wide range of mass-promotion tools, such as activities designed to engage and form good relationships with the various publics an organization interacts with. For example, press relations, public affairs, product publicity, lobbying, investor relations, and work with nonprofit organizations are all PR activities. One of the major benefits of PR is the cost-efficiency as it can have a huge impact on public awareness, but compared to advertising, a considerably lower cost. Major public relation tools include news, special events, written and audiovisual materials, corporate identity materials, and contributions to public service activities. These tools can be used in a variety of ways and on different channels, for example the social media, blogs, and websites are important PR channels. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 490-493.)

Sales promotion

Sales promotion is a short-term promotion mix tool. Incentives, such as sales or coupons, encourage the consumer to make a purchase. Sales promotion provides arguments for buying the product right now, whereas informing consumers on reasons why they should buy a product is done via advertisements. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 518-519.)

Events are one example of sales promotion activities. Press events, seminars, audience discussions, and internal events are all part sales promotion and can be classified further as either internal communication, organizational communication, or marketing communication. An event can be a marketing activity when it fulfills these requirements: it is pre-planned, the goal and target group

have been identified, and the event provides interaction with an experience. For example, strengthening current customer relationships and the brand image can be the sales promotion goals of an event. (Isohookana 2007, 170-171).

Personal selling

Personal selling relies on the salesperson to communicate with the customer. To a customer the salesperson represents the whole company and the image they present affects how a customer views the organization and its services and products. A salesperson does utilize their own personal influence during the face-to-face sales while providing customer service. When selling services, it is up to the salesperson to concretize to the customer, what exactly they are buying and how it can benefit them. When the production and consuming of services happen at the same time, there are no tangible physical products left to take home. Since services are intangible, and rather than being able to carry a service home it is to be experienced, it is important that a salesperson selling services listens to the customer in detail. (Isohookana 2007, 133-135.)

The sales force can perform activities such as prospecting potential customers, communication, selling and servicing, and information gathering. These activities can be effective in completing marketing objectives and in such way be considered an element of promotion mix. When the sales force makes a contact with a customer, they also answer their questions and help with possible problems, thereby providing customer service and increasing customer satisfaction and engagement. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 525.)

Direct and Digital Marketing

The marketing communication channels have, in short, radically changed in recent times and more and more of the budget is spent on digital advertising and marketing. Digitalization has affected where and when potential customers encounter advertisements and sales promotion materials. One of the benefits of this digital interaction is the possibility to target certain advertisements towards a specific group of consumers. It is increasingly important to know which consumer groups are reachable via which medium. (Ilmarinen & Koskela 2015, 44).

Direct and digital marketing means direct engagement with a carefully targeted individual consumer or customer community. One of its benefits is the ability to obtain rapid responses from the consumers. Another benefit is the possibility of creating and maintaining customer relationships. Direct and digital marketing can be at the core of a business operation and as such be a business model,

or it can be an additional marketing communication channel. Direct marketing in the past consisted of mail catalogs, telemarketers, and direct mailers, and while these are still used in some places, most of these activities have been digitalized e.g., into online shops and mobile shopping applications. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 534-535.)

One of the fastest growing forms of direct marketing is digital and social media marketing. It consists of social media marketing, mobile marketing and online marketing. Online marketing covers marketing conducted on websites, emails, online videos, blogs, and online advertisements. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 538-539). According to Kantar and IAB (2022), 50,0% of all media advertisements in Finland were done in digital form in 2021. This includes social media channels, search word advertising, outstream and instream videos, displays, and classified advertisements (Kantar & IAB 2022).

When discussing digital marketing, it is important to realize that in addition to paid advertising, which includes banners, mobile advertisements, and affiliate marketing, there are other forms of marketing that are widespread. An organization can produce their own digital marketing material and distribute it through emails, social media channels, mobile and internet pages, videos, and blogs. While it does require financial input, compared to a paid advertisement, it is often cheaper. Also, earned media can be utilized in marketing communications, though it cannot be bought. When people post reviews or discuss the services or products of an organization, it does draw attention to the organization regardless of whether it is negative or positive. While earned media is free, it cannot be directed, and this poses a challenge to organizations looking to manage their public image. (Ilmarinen & Koskela 2015, 46-47.)

Unconventional methods

Unconventional methods are not a new discovery but rather old ways that have been found again. These methods are often tied to a specific location, time, and situation. Ambient design, ambient media and guerilla marketing are all categorized as unconventional methods. Ambient design can be used to affect the different human senses and it covers a wide range of scent, lighting, sound, touch, and taste effects used in sales promotion for example when designing a packaging, a store, or an event. Ambient media on the other hand is sales promotion done outside, for example in hot balloons, types of employees dressed in an advertising clothing or a costume, or employees operating cars or carriages clad in advertisements or promotional wear. Guerilla marketing aims to gain attention in extraordinary ways while costing as little as possible. It is present in unusual places

and situations, and even if very successful, can seldom be utilized again since it will lose its novelty. One of the aims of guerilla marketing is to get people to talk about it to their friends, colleagues and so on. (Isohookana 2007, 172-175).

3 PLANNING MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

Planning marketing communications is a process just like all others. The process covers an analysis of current situation, strategic planning stage, implementation, and finally follow-ups. By monitoring the results and aftermath of implementation, one can already gain information for the next situation analysis that awaits in the future. For the process to turn into an ever-repeating cycle of analysis and development as seen on figure 3, consistent and constant work is a requirement. (Isohookana 2007, 91).

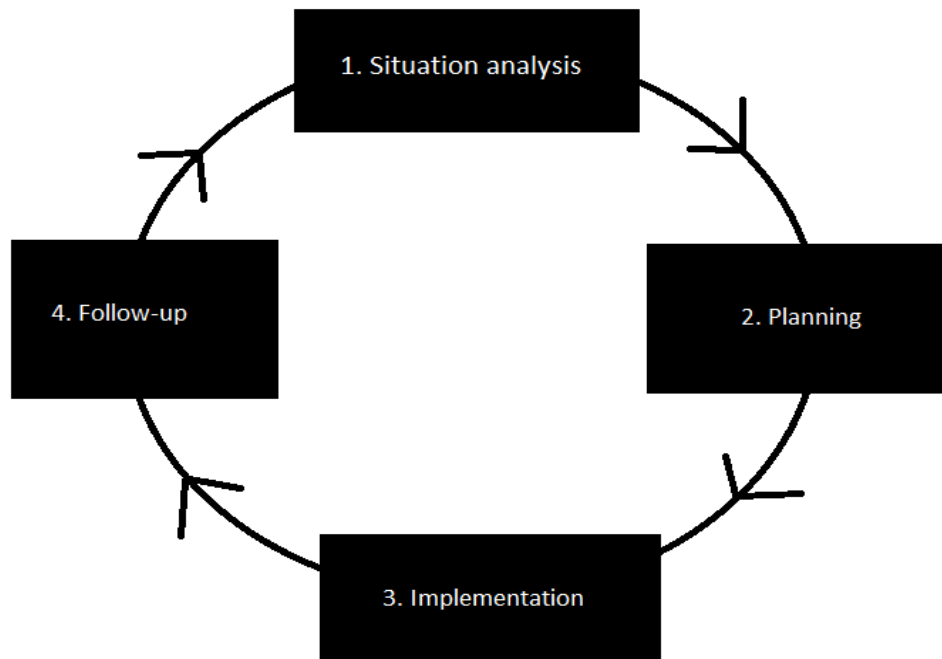


FIGURE 3. Cycle of Planning (Isohookana 2007, 94).

The basic process model for marketing consists of analysis, planning, implementation, and follow-up. The analysis step considers the current state of the organization, field of operation, customers, competition, technology, and environment. (Lahtinen et al. 2022, 30). For example, the SWOT and PESTEL analysis can be utilized in this step (Vuorinen 2013, 91).

The planning step covers the market segmentation analysis, target group selection, and development of a proposal on what added value is going to be created for the customer. Creation of added

value for a customer is always a result of knowing your target market's needs and desires well. Market segmentation will provide information on the different target groups and makes it possible to create different proposals for each market segment. An organization can also focus on one target group and direct their marketing communications efforts towards them. (Lahtinen et al. 2022, 30-32).

After choosing the target market and completing the segmentation step, an organization must decide what kind of marketing mix it will utilize (Lahtinen et al 2022, 32). Marketing mix is a combination of different differentiating factors that an organization can use when deciding first, what to offer, and secondly, how to offer it (Isohookana 2007, 48). Product and price determine what is to be offered, place and promotion determine how it is offered (Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan 2017, 50).

For the next step, an organization needs to make a decision on how to manage their customer relations (CRM) and corporate social responsibilities (CSR). This step might include strategies for forming partnerships or co-operative ventures with non-profit organizations or volunteer groups. Finally, the added value that has been produced for the customer during the previous steps of marketing process model, will be utilized as business development for the organization. (Lahtinen et al. 2022, 32-33).

3.1 Situation analyses

SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis comes from the following words: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Strengths are the factors that the organizations possess that are advantages compared to its rivals. Weaknesses are possible shortcomings that a competitor might take advantage of. Opportunities are factors that might provide great benefits or growth opportunities and in this way be competitive advantages. Threats on the other hand are factors that when realized might have an adverse effect on the organization. (Jurevicious 2021).

When conducting a SWOT analysis, it is important to consider all factors from multiple angles. A brand image could be considered both a strength, when it is well-recognized, and a weakness, when it is poorly managed. External factors such as exchange rates and policy changes can be

both opportunities and threats, as they affect different aspects of the organizations operations. (Jurevicious 2021).

PESTEL Analysis

The PESTEL analysis is a tool that is used in marketing to examine external macro environment factors that might have an impact on the organization and its day-to-day operations. These external factors can become opportunities or threats to the organization. The aim of the PESTEL analysis is to gain knowledge of the current external situation, to recognize which factors might develop and alter into others, and on how to make the most of the situation when considering all the opportune and risky factors. The results of a PESTEL analysis are further used in a SWOT analysis. (Jurevicious 2022).

All organizations are affected by political factors, which also means that all organizations need to be able to respond to possible changes in the current legislation and predicted future legislation. These factors include tax policy, labor laws, environmental and other laws, trade restrictions and foreign trade policy, political stability or instability, and government policies. (Professional Academy 2022a).

Economic factors include economic growth, interest and exchange rates, inflation, economic growth, and disposable income of consumers. These factors influence how an organization conducts its business and what kind of profitability they can achieve. Additionally, these factors can be divided into micro-economical and macro-economical factors. Macro-economical factors, such as taxation policy, interest rate control imposed by the government, and government expenditure, influence the management of demand in an economy. Micro-economical factors, such as the way individuals and businesses use their incomes, influence organizations, especially those serving or selling products directly to consumers. (Professional Academy 2022a).

When analyzing socio-cultural factors, one can gain information on the beliefs that are widespread in the population and affect the thinking behind consumers' decision making. Population growth and age distribution for example give the marketer an idea of how large a potential target market is for a product, or a service aimed at a certain age group. Cultural factors, such as career attitudes and health consciousness, and so on, have an impact on what drives the customers and hence are of vital importance and interest to marketers. (Professional Academy 2022a).

Technological factors consider the changes and development in the technological field. For example, new ways of communicating with the target markets can have a large impact on what medium is used to promote the organization's services and products. New ways of service and product distribution impact the distribution channels and may provide new opportunities for reaching previously unreachable target groups. Finally, new ways of producing goods and services may revolutionize the market, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Professional Academy 2022a).

Environmental factors have been raised to particular interest in recent decades and more organizations have focused on reducing their carbon footprint as part of their sustainability programs. The demands for increasing development of sustainability do not come only from governmental bodies, but also increasingly from consumers. Ethically acquired materials from sustainable sources have become a competitive advantage. Pollution targets, scarcity of raw materials, and ethical guidelines direct how an organization can manage their production of goods and services as well as their human resources. (Professional Academy 2022a).

For an organization to run successfully, it must be aware of what is legal and what is not. Things such as health and safety, advertising standards, consumer rights, product labeling and safety, and employment are governed by law. An organization must follow the local laws and regulations as well as adhere to trade unions' rules during employment. (Professional Academy 2022a).

Ethical factors provide the PESTEL with an extra 'E' – the PESTELE. Ethical factors consist of all things ethical, including ethical principles, moral problems, and equal treatment. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) aims to tackle these issues and has become a more important developmental area for organizations. An organization can collaborate with e.g., a local children's sports club or a support organization for single mothers or stretch their CSR activities to a country where they source their materials. (Professional Academy 2022a).

3.2 Planning

Segmentation and Choosing Target Audience

Segmentation is a process of identifying common characteristics within a mass market and in this way be able to divide a mass market into smaller groups with similar wants and needs. Markets can be segmented in several ways, for example geographically, behaviorally, sociographically, and

demographically. By completing a throughout market segmentation, an organization can aim the product or service towards the most likely consumer group. After the segmentation is complete, the marketing communication message can be tuned in to the target group (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 223).

For the most part, organizations can use three distinct criteria to divide the market into segments. Groups with similar needs possess homogeneity. Groups that clearly differ from other groups are distinctive. Finally, groups that have a similar reaction to e.g. an advertisement. With these three criteria organizations can identify segments and market their products and services appropriately. (Tarver 2021).

After segmentation, the organization can make a further decision on which segment they will focus on. This will be their target market and the organization will tune its product offering to attract this specific set of consumers, who share a common characteristic or a need that the organization can fulfill. Market targeting can be very focused (micromarketing), all-around (undifferentiated marketing), or between these two extremes (differentiated marketing). Undifferentiated marketing or mass marketing focuses on a common need that consumers share and ignores the possible variables in their needs. Differentiated marketing, or segmented marketing, focuses on a several target market segments and offers a separate message to each segment. Concentrated marketing or niche marketing focuses on a specific target market segment or a niche of this segment and aims to fine-tune their message to this specific group of consumers. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 233-234).

Setting Objectives

When planning marketing communications, an organization should look back on their mission statement. A mission statement states the organization's purpose and acts a general guiding hand in all business decisions. The mission statement guides the defining process of the organization's objectives and goals. These objectives influence the marketing strategy decisions and the marketing communications objectives. This way, the marketing communication plan reflects the mission statement of an organization and fits in to their current operations. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 65, 68).

The objectives of a marketing communication plan can be for example raising awareness, promoting an upcoming event or a product launch, or re-engaging current customers. The objectives should serve the current needs as well as long-term goals. A marketing communication plan should provide an answer to the following questions: what are the target markets, what are the short and

long-term goals of marketing communications, what is the main message and which channels are used to deliver it? These in turn become the answers for the objectives of marketing communications plan. (Viita 2020, 51-53).

Timetable

When planning the timeline of marketing communication actions, an annual wheel or a communications calendar is an useful tool. The seasons, holidays, different celebrations, and events influence the expectations of consumers and thus affect the marketing communication. In addition, the events of a specific business field should be marked. Of course, the organization can utilize the annual wheel for scheduling other actions as well, for example in the case of Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia grant application deadlines could be added. Regularity should be one the goals of marketing communication and releasing information every month is better than having a long period of media silence and for this, an annual wheel is an excellent tool. (Kilpeläinen 2020, 107).

Recognizing when it is useful to communicate is as important as knowing when not to. For example, during a sports competition or a city festival it is not worth it to release a press statement or promotion material as one would be competing for visibility with a high-interest event. But linking one's message with a suitable theme day or event can increase the chances of reaching a larger audience. For example, magazines might plan their publications around themes which can be found on magazine rate cards and thus might provide opportunities for advertising or interviews. Similarly, it is important to be aware of the publication schedule of newsrooms and newspaper editors. Sometimes the last date of accepting stories for a publication is months ahead of the release date and sometimes it is best to inform a newsroom during the same day and even during a specific time slot. (Kilpeläinen 2020, 108-109).

Selecting Channels

There is a wide variety of channels that can be utilized for marketing communications. A marketing communication channel is a medium through which one can send a message to one's customers. Traditional media channels, such as radio, television, newspapers, and magazines are still available. Locally, billboards and banners are still effective when aiming to reach the local people passing by. Direct mail and catalogues have been mostly moved to digital form and are published online. Nowadays, digital marketing communication channels are abundant and have grown their share compared to traditional media channels. Digital marketing channels include websites, email, video,

blogs, webinars, podcasts, and social media. Choosing the right marketing communication channel is important, so that the message reaches the target audience. (Murphy 2021).

Budget

The breadth of marketing communications is determined largely by budget. Budget functions as a coordinator and divider of resources. Marketing communications budget is usually decided for one year at a time. Budget should be divided between planning costs, execution costs, and measurement costs. Planning costs consist of services bought from advertisement and media agencies, as well as resources used by the organization's own employees. Costs related to the execution of the marketing communications plan come from a variety of sources such as PR events, website creation, advertisement costs, and so on. Measurement costs cover the follow-up of the project, measurement of results, and reporting as well as possible research during the planning stage. (Isohookana 2007, 110-111).

3.3 Evaluation and Measurement

Measuring and then analyzing the results of marketing communications campaign will provide the organization with information for future references. These results will become the beginning point for the next round of situation analysis. By measuring and evaluating if the predetermined targets have been reached, the organization will receive information how the production went. By monitoring the budget spending, time and employee resources spent, the organization gains information on the total contribution delegated to the marketing communications plan. Monitoring should be continuous so that possible exceptions and problems can be spotted as soon as possible. (Isohookana 2007, 116-117).

The organization can conduct the monitoring themselves, utilize databases, or buy research services from specialized companies. Customer satisfaction questionnaires, consumer surveys, and total available market research are examples of research that provide information for marketing communications. For example, customer service satisfaction, profile of website visitors, and publicity gained in different medias. (Isohookana 2007, 118).

4 ANALYSIS OF CURRENT STATUS

The current status of Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia's marketing communications is haphazard and has rested on the shoulders of one person. The resources for marketing communications are limited and much of the focus has been on the non-paid communication channels. Most often a time resource is the only resource available and there have not been any paid advertisement campaigns outside of performance promotions when a few advertisements have been placed on the local newspaper media. In addition, posters and flyers have been distributed around Oulu area and through the associations in partnership with the Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia. (Takalo 2022).

Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia has not had a specific structured timetable for their publications. Marketing communication activities have revolved around the performances and exhibitions. Press releases and interviews with the local radio and newspaper media representatives have revolved around the premiere of a performance or opening of an exhibition. Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia does have a website, which offers information on upcoming projects and contains information of past projects. In addition, Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia maintains social media accounts on Instagram and Facebook, where they are active on a weekly basis. On the social media channels Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia has been active in-between events, especially on their Instagram account, which is updated regularly with new photos and videoclips (InstaStories). Their social media accounts have been updated whenever there has been time, though holidays and special days such as international dance day, have been noted in their marketing communications. Sometimes there is a string of posts and updates on a progression of a performance rehearsal, and sometimes there is a longer period with fewer posts. (Takalo 2022).

Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia's current target group has been young adults 18-25 years old and adults 26-55 years old. Though the 18–25-year-old group is one of their target groups, they have not succeeded in attracting them to their performances as well as they would have liked. The topic of each performance also dictates which group is the target group, as the themes of performances are all different. So far, Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia has not had any other goals for their marketing communications activities other than to increase ticket sales. There have not been any focused follow-ups on how well the marketing communication activities have succeeded

for each performance. Nor has there been any tracking of visitors on their website or documentation on how many followers they have had on their social media channels. (Takalo 2022).

Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia has been active on the partnership front and has maintained long term partnerships with selected associations in the Oulu area. They have able to distribute their posters and fliers via their partners' assistance and have been featured on their partners' social media channels. Their partner's logos are visible on their website. The grant givers are featured on their program alongside with the partners' logos. This is often a specification and a condition for receiving the grant money. Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia has not sold any advertising spaces on their program. In addition, Vera Audentia has received small support from the City of Oulu and has been able to distribute their posters via the city's libraries. (Takalo 2022).

Though Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia has a membership structure, it is currently aimed at the artists who perform with the theatre. As such, the members have been given a discount on the courses the theatre organizes but not on the tickets for performances. So far, there has not been any members-only content, newsletters, or events. There is a supporting member option, but again, there has not been any special content or discounts for the supporting members. (Takalo 2022).

SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis was conducted together with Hanna-Kaija Takalo. The results of the SWOT analysis can be found in figure 4 below.

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devoted artistic director and active board • Strong artistic vision and quality • Fearless and brave in their approach to picking performance and exhibition topics • Impactful performances • High motivation • Multidisciplinary art performances 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small and relatively unknown • Small human resources • Funding dependent on grants • Project dependent funding and rehiring of artists for each project
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining artistic quality • Networking • Touring • New partner opportunities 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing competition • Grant cuts • Over exhaustion of staff

FIGURE 4. SWOT -analysis for Vera Audentia.

Strengths of Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia are many, and most of them are related to the Artistic Director Hanna-Kaija Takalo. Takalo has a strong artistic vision, which has led to Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia having a high artistic quality in their performances. These performances have been impactful and customer satisfaction has been high. The unique artistic vision is also a differentiating factor and a competitive advantage, especially as Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia has tackled many previously untouched topics and themes. In addition, their productions are multidisciplinary art performances, which their audience has grown to enjoy. (Takalo 2022).

Weaknesses consist of dependency on grant money for funding, which has led to artists being hired again and again for each project. The small permanent human resources that Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia has are often overworked. In addition, Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia is still a small theatre and relatively unknown. Currently, the lack of human resources is preventing their faster growth as the theatre does not have the funding to hire additional staff. (Takalo 2022).

Opportunities for Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia are many, especially on the touring aspect as the world has reopened after the COVID-19 pandemic. Networking could produce opportunities for visitations in other theatres and festivals. New partnership opportunities could also be explored, as current partners have been very happy with Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia. (Takalo 2022).

Threats include an ever-increasing competition not only in the Oulu area but also in general, as people less money to spend on free time activities due to the rising living costs in Finland. A long-term threat is the grant cuts and not receiving any funding for new projects. In addition, the over exhaustion of staff is a threat that could affect the potential growth and maintenance of current artistic quality. (Takalo 2022).

PESTEL Analysis for Vera Audentia

At the moment, the current political situation in Finland has made it possible for Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia to give performances and open exhibitions. During the COVID-19 pandemic the situation was difficult, as most of the activities Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia is involved in were forbidden due to restrictions on gatherings and indoor events. Economically the concern right now is with the increasing living expenses and whether the public will have the leeway to spend money on theatre tickets. Vera Audentia has maintained quite consumer friendly prices to attract a wide range of customers, not just the wealthy. Generally, the aging population does pose

a concern especially if the younger people do find the theatre and the elder visitors slowly age. However, Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia has managed to attract younger visitors and their core consumer group consists of 25–55-year-old women, and they are actively trying to reach even younger audience. (Takalo 2022).

Despite the growing online platforms and opportunities to showcase theatre pieces via video sharing platforms, Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia has not taken advantage of the new technology. The artistic director Takalo had decided not to explore the online platforms further, as one of their key advantages is the strong presence on the stage which would transmit well over digital services. In their performances they have utilized multi-media projectiles, as well as online ticket selling services. Sustainability is one Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia's core values, and the theatre has taken actions to reduce waste and recycle materials needed in the performances. In addition, the performances are kept in the show roster so that they can be re-performed and, in this way, recycled. (Takalo 2022).

Legally, Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia operates under the Finnish labor laws, but as an association it does not follow any unions specific requirements for hiring labor. However, the theatre has taken care to pay all of their artists and staff members appropriately and has continuously worked on improving the working environment and well-being of staff. Ethically, Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia has aimed to be transparent and open in their actions not only with the performing artists but within their partnerships as well. (Takalo 2022).

Of the five major promotion mix tools, Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia has been most active on the field of public relations. They have been active on social media platforms and through them have communicated to a wide audience about their activities and future performances. Advertising has been limited to a few advertisements on the local newspaper. Similarly, sales promotion has been limited to posters and their distribution throughout the city. Personal selling has been utilized somewhat when offering the youth focused performance to junior high schools in 2018. Direct and digital marketing has been, likewise, limited and mostly underutilized.

5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this thesis I will utilize qualitative research method in addition to secondary data and theoretical data collection methods. In this chapter, I will describe the qualitative research method, what data has been collected, and the interview process.

Collected data can be divided into primary and secondary data. Primary data is collected by the researcher for one specific study. Secondary data is data that has already been collected and presented by someone else. One of the benefits of using secondary data is its easy availability compared to primary data. (Johnston 2014, 619.) For the theory portion of this thesis, theoretical data has been collected from books, articles, and electronic sources such as e-books and internet articles. The books chosen are books written by business professionals, so that the secondary data utilized for this work is credible and professionally recognized. This will form the knowledge base for the annual wheel developed for Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia.

Rather than quantity, qualitative research focuses on quality and gleaning as much information as possible from the target of the research. The target of research is chosen carefully and can affect the results greatly compared to quantitative research. In qualitative research, the data is often in text form. Common ways of collecting data for qualitative research are interviews, thematic conversations, or group discussions. In addition, diaries, biographies, and letters can form a primary data source for qualitative research. (Heikkilä 2014, 15-16).

For the case study portion of this thesis, I will utilize empirical data collected from the interviews with selected representatives of the theatre field and from the interview with Contemporary Theatre representative Hanna-Kajja Takalo. The empirical data in this thesis was collected by descriptive research during the interviews. Descriptive research, as defined by Heikkilä (2014, 13), answers to the questions of what, who, what kind of, where and when. Thus, it can be said that describing a phenomenon or an action is a way to conduct descriptive research (Heikkilä 2014, 13).

Interviews

Interview is a great way to collect data for research as the identity of the respondent is known and the method is based on the interaction between the interviewer and the person being interviewed. This interaction allows for the possibility of further observation during the interview and therefore

additional knowledge may be gained. One of the benefits in conducting interviews is its flexibility, as the interviewer can clarify the questions and clear any possible misunderstandings immediately. The voluntarily aspect of the interview must always be made clear. A good way to reach out to an organization is to send a letter or an email beforehand to inquire their interest in participating in said interview. The interview should be prepared well ahead of the interview so that the presentation of questions is clear, and the interviewer knows what the aim of the questions is. (Heikkilä 2014, 64-65.)

The themed interview method is based on the focused interview method presented by Merton, Fiske, and Kendall (1956, 3-4) in their book *The Focused Interview*. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2015, 47) have further developed the themed interview method and define it as a half-structured interview that goes through a set list of themes during the interview. These themes are topics that are being researched by the interviewer and, while no direct questions are presented, answers to the research topic questions are gained via the themed discussion. The themed interview takes into account the fact that the meanings and impressions by different people given to the subjects under discussion are valuable and may present previously unseen insights into the research topic. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2015, 47- 48.)

For a themed interview the topics for the interview have been predetermined, but they may be discussed in whatever order the interviewee feels comfortable or naturally navigates to. The interviewer should take care to go through all the themes and listen to the interviewee as sometimes different themes take different times depending on e.g., the position of the interviewee in the organization. A manager might talk more about a certain topic compared to an assistant. (Eskola, Lätti & Vastamäki 2018, Mikä on teemahaastattelu?).

For this thesis, interviews were conducted as half-structured themed interviews. The interviews were conducted in May 2022. The interviews were conducted via phone with selected representatives in the field of theatre to collect information on marketing communications practises they utilize. For the interviews, I contacted smaller theatres that operate locally, and which produce 1-2 performances per year. Of the initially contacted 10 theatres, 8 accepted to be interviewed. The results from these interviews can be found in chapter 6.

6 RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS: MARKETING COMMUNICATION PRACTISES IN SMALLER THEATRES IN FINLAND

Finland has many theatres, small and large. Quite a few of the smaller theaters operate locally and with limited resources, both on budget and human resources. On the other end of the spectrum there are the larger theatres that employ several people from artists to lightning technicians and maintain their own performing spaces. Another way to categorize theatres is whether they receive funding from the government or not. Theatres accepted into the government funding program receive financial assistance and can therefore more easily run their operations. (Kanerva & Ruusuvirta 2006, 45). As of 2022, there are 100 theatres that have been accepted to the government funding program (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2022).

Cupore, the foundation for Cultural Policy Research, commissioned a study in 2006 to comprehensively collect data on theatres in Finland, focusing on the then current situation, operating environment, and conditions. For the theatres not receiving government funding, the press and internet were the most important marketing communication channels. The average marketing budget reported was a little under 8% of total expenses. Some theatres and companies reported that they do not have any funds for marketing communications. On average, the marketing communication budget for theatres and companies not receiving any government funding was 690€. Most of these theatres and companies exchanged advertisements with partners and sponsors, as well as with other theatres. (Kanerva & Ruusuvirta 2006, 74-75).

To find out more about the current state of marketing communications in smaller, non-government funded theatres in Finland I conducted interviews with selected representatives of small theatres. These eight theatres are all small, local, and produce 1-2 performances every year. All the interviewees reported that their core audience was local, roughly 100 to 150 kilometers away from the theatre, though one theatre reported on trying to reach customers on a 250 kilometer radius. (Interviews 2022).

All interviewed theatres still print and distribute posters as part of their marketing communication activities. In addition to posters, all theatres cited their websites and Facebook as important mar-

keting communication channels. All but one respondent also used Instagram. 75% of the respondents still place advertisements in the local newspapers, though one respondent mentioned that they are currently in the middle of giving up print media advertisements. Outdoor advertisements were still utilized by 62% of the respondents. Local television and radio advertisements, brochures, and leaflets were used by 25% of the respondents. (Interviews 2022).

The most important marketing communication channel varied from one respondent to another. Three respondents named two channels instead of one as the most important. For 62% social media was the most important channel, especially when they had a performance aimed at children in their program. Advertisements in the local newspaper was the most important way to reach customers for 38% of the respondents. These theatres were producing performances aimed mostly at adults and seniors. In addition, radio commercials (13%) and direct sales to groups (25%) were mentioned as the most important ways to reach their customers. (Interviews 2022).

All respondents were active on their websites and Facebook. The activity level varied from lesser activity (2-8 posts per year) to high activity, where the respondent mentioned being active on social media every day during performance season and, at minimum, posting once per week during off-season. Instagram was used by all but one respondent. Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok were all used by only one respondent. (Interviews 2022).

The final question I posed during the interviews concerned partnerships and cooperation with other theatres and local businesses. 50% of the respondents mentioned utilizing their partnerships for direct marketing and sales. This way the respondents could distribute their leaflets and posters via the partner's distribution channels and sell directly to special target groups, such as kindergartens and schools. For 25% of the respondents their local city's tourist information center was an important way to promote their performances and, in this way, access the city's information channels. Exchanging advertisements in their paper programme was practiced by 38% of the respondents. 75% of the respondents also promoted their partners by showing their logos on their website and the paper programme. One of the most popular ways to partner with a business was to offer a dining and ticket package or a hotel night and ticket package. All respondents offered one or both of these packages, with the dining and ticket package being more popular. (Interviews 2022).

Thus, the choice of marketing communication channel is dependent on the target group. When trying to reach adults and families, social media channels are the best. When trying to reach senior

customers radio and advertisements in the local newspaper are the most important. Marketing communication budget is often small or non-existent. Therefore, partnerships and exchanges of advertisements are an important way to gain visibility. Selling advertisement space on the paper programme is a way to finance the marketing communication budget. (Interviews 2022).

7 DEVELOPMENT TASK FOR CONTEMPORARY THEATRE VERA AUDENTIA

In this chapter I will present the marketing communication development suggestions to my commissioner. The suggestions are based on the theory presented in chapters 2 and 3, as well as on the results of interviews conducted with selected representatives of small, locally operated theatres in Finland. The interview results were presented in chapter 6.

One of the most important goals for this development task was to create an annual wheel for the commissioner. The annual wheel would help with organizing and timing the marketing communication activities throughout the year. This would also allow the person responsible for marketing communication to better manage their time and ease their workload. As seen on figures 5 and 6, I ended up creating three columns for the annual wheel: management and production, marketing communications, and social media. This way the tasks are separated into categories based on what area of operation they belong to and for ease of use. In addition, information about grant application deadlines was added as this is a critical and time-specific knowledge for the commissioner. The annual wheel was created in Microsoft Excel format and delivered in Finnish to the commissioner. The format makes the annual wheel adaptable to their future needs and makes it possible to add new tasks, deleted old ones, and assign tasks to different employees.

As seen on figures 5 and 6 in the Social Media column, the number of weekly updates rises as the performance period gets closer. This in anticipation of the performance season and as the ticket sales open, the number of weekly updates rises to spark the interest of the public. The content published on all social media channels and on the website should be consistent with each other. This way the same information is distributed on time across all channels and the customer can follow a post on e.g., Instagram to the website, which shows the same updated information, to a ticket sales link. Similarly, the other tasks presented in the annual wheel have been forethought to make sure they are done on time e.g., production of posters begins in January and is concluded in the beginning of April, one month before the premiere of the spring performance. Usually, the marketing communication activities start roughly 4-5 months before the premiere in theatres with the production starting much earlier than is visible to the general public.

	Production	Marketing communications	Social Media
January	the office opens, confirm partnership(s) for spring meeting of the board spring production's scheduling booking the rehearsal space spring courses start Grant applications: Pohjoismainen kulttuuripiste Suomen Kulttuurirahasto (maakuntarahastot)	event calendars online events calendars on newspapers emails to members promotional photos for spring production commissioning a poster from graphic artist	Instagram: 1 photo/week + 1-2 instastories /week Facebook: 1 update/week Instagram: 1 photo/week + 1-2 instastories /week Update website with latest info
February	rehearsals start for the spring production ticket sales start promotion material to the partners	press release teaser photos in social media update for website receive suggestions for poster from graphic artist	Instagram: 2-4 instastories/week + 1 photo/week Facebook: 1 update/week Update website with latest info
March	rehearsals continue last year's annual report deadline Grant applications: Suomen Kulttuurirahasto (liikkuvuusapuraha) Oulun Valistustalorahasto (kulttuuriavustukset)	planning the paper programme for the performance being active on social media select the poster picture and send them for printing	Instagram: 3-5 instastories/week + 1 photos/week Facebook: 2 updates/week Update website with latest info <i>World Theatre Day 27.3.</i>
April	dress rehearsals planning next year's course outlines Grant applications: Jane ja Aatos Erkon säätiö	press photos, distribute posters tickets for the VIPs paper programme to print active on social media updated press release	Instagram: 3-6 instastories/week + 2 photos/week Facebook: 3-4 updates/week Update website with latest info <i>International Dance Day 29.4.</i>
May	Spring production's performances ticket sales close planning autumn's performance starts planning autumn's course outline office closes for summer Grant applications: Taiteen edistämiskeskus (Taike) Jenny ja Antti Wihurin rahasto	critiques onto website and social media	Instagram: instastory every day + 2-4 photos/week Facebook: 3-7 updates/week Update website with latest info
June - July, theatre is closed for summer holidays			

FIGURE 5. Annual Wheel for Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia.

	Production	Marketing communications	Social Media
August	the office opens, confirm partnership(s) for fall registrations for autumn courses autumn production's scheduling booking the rehearsal space Grant applications: Alfred Kordelinin säätiö (työskentelyapuraha) Kansan sivistysrahasto Suomen Kulttuurirahasto (residenssi- ja liikkuvuusapuraha)	event calendars online events calendars on newspapers emails to members promotional photos for spring production commissioning a poster from graphic artist	Instagram: 2-4 instastories + 1 kuvapäivitys/vko Facebook: 1 update/week Facebook: 1 update/week Instagram: 2-4 instastories/week + 1 photo/week Facebook: 1 update/week Update website with latest info
September	rehearsals start for the autumn production ticket sales start, promotion material to the partners autumn courses start Grant applications: Koneen säätiö Alli Paasikiven säätiö	press release teaser photos in social media update for website receive suggestions for poster from graphic artist	Instagram: 3-5 instastories/week + 1 photos/week Facebook: 2 updates/week Update website with latest info
October	rehearsals continue Grant applications: Suomen Kulttuurirahasto (työskentely- ja kuluapurahat)	planning the paper programme for the performance being active on social media select the poster picture and send them for printing	Instagram: 3-6 instastories/week + 2 photos/week Facebook: 3-4 updates/week Update website with latest info <i>The World's Mental Health Day 10.10.</i>
November	Autumn production's performances (end of November) Grant applications: Frame (projektiaapuraha, näyttelyt)	press photos, distribute posters (early November) tickets for the VIPs paper programme to print active on social media updated press release	Instagram: instastory every day + 2-4 photos/week Facebook: 3-7 updates/week Update website with latest info <i>National Mental Health Awareness Week (week 47)</i>
December	office closes for Christmas holidays ticket sales close planning spring's performance starts Grant applications: Samuel Huberin Taidesäätiö Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö	critiques onto website and social media	Instagram: 1 photo/week + 1-2 instastories /week Facebook: 1 update/week Update website with latest info
Christmas holidays to January 6th, theatre is closed			

FIGURE 6. Annual Wheel for Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia.

In the annual wheel I have suggested to confirm the ongoing partnerships twice a year in preparation for the performances in November and May. This way there is time to plan the joint actions well ahead of the performances and plan on how the performance is shown on the partner's social media channels as well as other ways of visibility (posters, flyers, website). The annual wheel also notes the deadlines for reception of announcements on event calendars online, of which some are also printed and distributed on the city's tourist information center. Press releases have also been scheduled in the annual wheel. In addition, the press release should be released in the early morning (6 a.m. to 9 a.m.) to increase the chances of it being picked up by the news agencies and radio channels for their topic of the day.

The annual wheel also notes some important international days, such as the World Theatre Day in March and the National Mental Health Awareness Week. These days could be utilized for marketing communication events in a creative manner. For example, on the National Mental Health Awareness Week the commissioner could organize an event where one could interact with an artist that could connect with them and provide face-to-face communication and a chance to relax and de-stress. This kind of small budget and time specific event could become a viral sensation and provide a good "buzz" on the grapevine for a long time.

As Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia's marketing communication budget is small, paid advertisements are mostly out of question. However, social media presence does not require financial resources – just human resources. As this is within the scope of the commissioner, I would recommend them to focus on their social media presence. Maintaining an active presence in social media does require content creation consistently during offseason as well as during performance period. As Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia aims to reach younger audiences (18–35-year-olds), it is crucial to be present in whichever social media channel this age group uses. This also means that it is important to adopt new social media channels as necessary. For example, according to a study conducted by the company DNA in Finland, 16–24-year-olds were most active in Snapchat, TikTok, and Instagram, with TikTok achieving the highest growth in users in 2021 (DNA 2021, 11). Because of this, I would recommend adding TikTok to the selection of social media channels.

In addition to being active on social media, it would also be prudent to measure how many followers Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia has on their different channels and whether the number of followers is increasing or decreasing. Other measurable factors are the number of likes, clicks,

views, and shares. This way successful posts could be identified and analyzed to provide information on what works and captures the interest of the public. The type chosen for a post could also be tracked for further information on what interests the public, e.g., a photo of an artist, a peek into a rehearsal, an anecdote, customer feedback, one of the artists discussing their work, or a “my day” vlog.

Thirdly, Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia should maintain its close relationships with their long-term partners. The access to their partners information distribution networks alone is a great reason to continue their partnership, but whether the partners also fit into Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia’s mission statement is also an important consideration. When their mission statements align, it creates a powerful message to the public and theatre visitors. Some partnership opportunities could be used for direct sales including selling a whole performance for example to a school or a kindergarten group. This of course depends on the type of performance produced and what is the age group targeted. Another type of partnership opportunity would be participation in an event in exchange for visibility and access to direct marketing to possible customers, for e.g., participating in a culture day organized by the city.

Fourthly, I would recommend Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia to re-examine their membership structure and benefits. Currently, members receive a discount on the courses offered, but nothing else. This is partially explained by the fact that most of the members are artists who have performed in Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia’s productions (Takalo 2022). A newsletter informing members of upcoming events and courses would be a way to distribute information to knowingly interested parties. If possible, perhaps it could be possible to create a new membership level aimed at people who come to watch Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia’s performances. For these people, a newsletter containing a sneak peek into the next performance and information about the creative process behind the performance could be a way to engage and create long-term customer relationships. Additionally, these members could receive a small discount on tickets and a chance to pre-order them, as well an access to special content only for members (e.g., interviews, rehearsal footage).

Lastly, based on the results of interviews introduced in chapter 6, I would recommend Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia to explore possibilities for further partnerships and perhaps developing service packages with them. Exchanging advertisement space in their programme leaflet could be an easily implemented form of visibility. Partnerships could also provide opportunities for direct

sales, especially for larger groups, and content marketing, where the partner's product or service would be mentioned during the performance. Another way to utilize partnerships could be via discounts on the products or services that the partner sells when the theatre ticket is presented. I would recommend Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia to continue their activities on their social media channels and perhaps consider the addition of new social media channels such as TikTok, so as to reach the younger target groups. In addition, while Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia's marketing communication budget is small, considering some paid advertisements could potentially increase their visibility locally (radio) and in social media (advertisements in e.g., Instagram).

8 DISCUSSION

The thesis process started in January and was completed as planned during spring 2022 semester. In the beginning of my thesis process I felt quite unsure on where to start, and I ended up researching and writing about topics that were eventually cut from the thesis. As I delved further into the theory, the structure of the thesis became clearer. After the directions seminar, I had a better understanding of the necessary components required for the completion of the thesis. Towards the end of the thesis process, I became more confident in my writing skills and noticed how much I had already learned about marketing communications during my thesis process.

The topic for this thesis came from the commissioner, who wanted to develop their marketing communications. As we discussed the topic further, it was decided that creating an annual wheel for marketing communication activities would be the main goal. An annual wheel would provide structure and clarity, which in turn would help with the workload, as it would be easier and faster to take care of the different marketing communication tasks. For the commissioner it was very important that the annual wheel would be easily adaptable and updatable, and they were quite happy with the Microsoft Excel format.

On the theoretical side, this thesis focused on answering two research questions: How can Vera Audentia develop its marketing communication and what kind of marketing communication do other theatres in Finland do? To answer these questions, I focused on books and other written materials to learn more about marketing communications and how to plan it. The theory portion utilized knowledge bases from the last 20 years, with the oldest sources focusing on theory that is still valid to this day. As quite a few changes have taken place in the digital development in the last 10 years, the newer sources reflect this and were chosen especially when discussing digital marketing communication, social media channels, and changes in direct marketing.

Based on the theory and analysis of their current situation, I gave my recommendations for developing the commissioner's marketing communications in chapter 7. Tied into this was the interview process, where I interviewed small, local theatres to find out what kind of marketing communication activities they practiced. While I interviewed only 8 representatives of theatres, I was careful to select theatres with similar qualities as Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia has. This way the interview results and any new insights gained from them, would have a higher chance of being use

to and applicable to Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia. As the sample size is very small, the results are not generalizable and represent the opinions of only a fraction of the theatre field in Finland.

As expected, social media was used by all respondents to some degree. Depending on their target age group and the age of the person in charge of marketing communications, the usage varied. For a small theatre targeting mostly seniors and pensioners, it makes sense to utilize the channels familiar to the target group. However, this might hinder younger audience from finding information about the performance and thus being less likely to come see it. Another respondent stated that they had focused on social media and its different channels for a couple of years now and were in the process of giving up paid advertisements in the local newspaper. Their clientele was mostly younger adults and adults with children, but they did cater to their senior audience via outdoor advertisements and posters in the local area.

During the thesis process I interviewed Hanna-Kaija Takalo about the current status of Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia. While I received answers to my interview questions, it would be interesting to further analyze their core audience, why they came to their performance and how they found out about it. For example, a customer survey could be conducted by a student and the marketing communication could be developed further. Another interesting development aspect would be a detailed plan for social media marketing and content production. For this thesis, it was necessary to focus on the requested development task (an annual wheel) and the theory base that would support finding answers to both research questions. This meant that a detailed social media plan could not be fitted into the scope of this thesis.

During the thesis writing process I gained a lot of new information about marketing communications and its planning. It was interesting to work with the commissioner and to be able to benefit them in creating the annual wheel. In the beginning of the thesis process I found myself wanting to dive into the practical side of the thesis first and towards the end of the process I found myself going back, again and again, to read and discover more about the theory base. Now at the end of the thesis process, I would like to go back and do it again, but with my current knowledge to refine and rediscover more about marketing communication and myself along the journey.

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maisista\(\(20\)verkkokaupoista/piste:ta](https://bisneskirjasto-almatalent-fi.ezp.oamk.fi:2047/teos/IAC-BGXCTEB#/kohta:3((20)Digitalisaatio((20)Suomessa(:3.4((20)Suomalaiset((20)ostavat((20)ulko-
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Questions in executed language (Finnish):

- Mitä markkinointiviestinnän kanavia käytätte?
- Mitkä markkinointiviestinnän kanavat ovat teille tärkeimpiä kohdeyleisönne tavoittamisessa?
- Onko teillä somekanavia käytössä? Jos on, kuinka usein päivitätte niitä?
- Hyödynnättekö yhteistyökumppaneita näkyvyyden lisäämisessä?

Questions in English:

- What marketing communication channels do you use?
- Which marketing communication channels are the most important to you when trying to reach your target audience?
- Do you use social media channels? If yes, how active are you on them?
- Do you utilize partnerships or co-operation with other organizations to gain more visibility?

Questions in English:

- What do you expect from the thesis and what do you want to be the focus point?
- What would you like to be included in the annual wheel tool?
- Could you please tell me about the history of Contemporary Theatre Vera Audentia and about the organization in general?
- For SWOT analysis: what are the strong points? What are the weaknesses? What are the opportunities? What are the threats?
- What is the membership structure like?
- Do you provide special members-only content or benefits?
- Do you have partnerships with any other businesses or organizations?
- If yes, what type of partnership it is, and do you produce any projects/goods together? Do you promote each other (if yes, on which ways)?
- Could you tell me about the current state of marketing communications in your organization?
- Could you tell me what is the target audience you are trying to reach?
- What is your budget for marketing communications?

Questions in executed language (Finnish):

- Mitä odotatte opinnäytetyöltä ja mihin toivotte sen keskittyvän?
- Mitä haluaisitte sisällyttää vuosikelloon?
- Voisitko kertoa minulle nykyteatteri Vera Audentian historiasta ja sen toiminnasta yleisesti?
- SWOT-analyysia varten: Mitä vahvuuksia, heikkouksia, mahdollisuuksia ja uhkia nykyteatteri Vera Audentialla on?
- Minkälainen on jäsenyyks -rakenne?
- Tuotatte "vain jäsenille" -sisältöä tai annatko jäsenalennuksia?
- Onko teillä yhteistyökumppaneita?
- Jos teillä on yhteistyökumppaneita, niin minkälaista yhteistyötä teette? Promoattekko esimerkiksi toisianne? (esim. logo nettisivuilla tms.)
- Voisitko kertoa tämänhetkisestä tilanteesta markkinointiviestinnän suhteen?
- Voisitko kertoa mikä on kohdeyleisönne?
- Minkälainen budjetti teillä on markkinointiviestinnälle?

	Hallinto / Tuotanto	Markkinointiviestintä	Some
tammikuu	toimisto aukeaa, yhteistyökumppanien kontaktointi uuden hallituksen järjestäytymiskokous kevään tuotannon harjoitusten aikataulutus harjoitussalien varaus	menopalstat tapahtumakalenteri sähköposti jäsenille kevään tuotannon promokuvat tilataan graafikolta juliste-ehdotus	Instagram: 1 kuvapäivitys/vko + 1-2 instastooria Facebook: 1 päivitys/vko nettisivuille viimeisin info
	Apurahahaku: Pohjoismainen kulttuuripiste Suomen Kulttuurirahasto (maakuntarahastot)		
helmikuu	kevään tuotannon harjoitukset alkavat lipunmyynti aukeaa promomateriaalit yhteistyökumppaneille (tiedote+kuva)	tiedote medialle "teaser" -kuvat someen nettisivujen päivitys kevään tuotannon juliste-ehdotukset graafikolta	Instagram: 2-4 instastooria + 1 kuvapäivitys/vko Facebook: 1 päivitys/vko nettisivuille viimeisin info
maaliskuu	kevään tuotannon harjoitukset jatkuvat edellisen vuoden vuosikertomus Apurahahaku: Suomen Kulttuurirahasto (liikkuvuusapuraha) Oulun Valistustalorahasto (kulttuuriavustukset)	käsiohjelman suunnittelu aktiivisesti somessa julisteiden kuvan valinta, julisteet painoon	Instagram: 3-5 instastooria + 1 kuvapäivitys/vko Facebook: 2 päivitystä/vko nettisivuille viimeisin info <i>Kansainvälinen teatterin päivä 27.3.</i>
huhtikuu	kevään tuotannon kenraaliharjoitukset seuraavan lukuvuoden kurssitarjonnan suunnittelu Apurahahaku: Jane ja Aatos Erkon säätiö	pressikuvat, julisteiden jako kutsuvieraiden liput ensi-iltaan käsiohjelma painokuntoon aktiivisesti somessa päivitetty tiedote medialle	Instagram: 3-6 instastooria + 2 kuvapäivitystä/vko Facebook: 3-4 päivitystä/vko nettisivuille viimeisin info <i>Kansainvälinen tanssin päivä 27.3.</i>
toukokuu	kevään tuotannon esitykset (toukokuun alku) lipunmyynti kiinni toimisto kiinni syksyn tuotannon suunnittelu alkaa syksyn kurssitarjonta julki	kritiikit nettisivuille ja someen	Instagram: joka päivä instastoori + 2-4 kuvapäivitystä/vko Facebook: 3-7 päivitystä/vko nettisivuille viimeisin info
	Apurahahaku: Taiteen edistämiskeskus (Taike) Jenny ja Antti Wihurin rahasto		
kesä-heinäkuun teatteri kiinni, kesälomat			

	Hallinto / Tuotanto	Markkinointiviestintä	Some
elokuu	toimisto aukeaa, yhteistyökumppanien kontaktointi ilmoittautuminen lukuvuoden kurseille syksyn tuotannon harjoitusten aikataulutus harjoitussalien varaus	menopalstat tapahtumakalenteri sähköposti jäsenille syksyn tuotannon promokuvat tilataan graafikolta juliste-ehdotus	Instagram: 1 kuvapäivitys/vko + 1-2 instastooria Facebook: 1 päivitys/vko nettisivuille viimeisin info
	Apurahahaku: Alfred Kordelinin säätiö (työskentelyapuraha) Kansan sivistysrahasto Suomen Kulttuurirahasto (residenssi- ja liikkuvuusapuraha)		
syyskuu	syksyn tuotannon harjoitukset alkavat lipunmyynti aukeaa, lukuvuoden kurssit aukeavat promomateriaalit yhteistyökumppaneille (kuva+tiedote) Apurahahaku: Koneen säätiö Alli Paasikiven säätiö	tiedote medialle "teaser" -kuvat someen nettisivujen päivitys kevään tuotannon juliste-ehdotukset graafikolta	Instagram: 2-4 instastooria + 1 kuvapäivitys/vko Facebook: 1 päivitys/vko nettisivuille viimeisin info
lokakuu	syksyn tuotannon harjoitukset jatkuvat	käsiohjelman suunnittelu aktiivisesti somessa julisteiden kuvan valinta, julisteet painoon	Instagram: 3-5 instastooria + 1 kuvapäivitys/vko Facebook: 2 päivitystä/vko nettisivuille viimeisin info <i>Maailman mielenterveyspäivä 10.10.</i>
	Apurahahaku: Suomen Kulttuurirahasto (työskentely- ja kuluapurahat)		
marraskuu	syksyn tuotannon esitykset	pressikuvat, julisteiden jako kutsuvieraiden liput ensi-iltaan käsiohjelma painokuntoon	Instagram: 3-6 instastooria + 2 kuvapäivitystä/vko Facebook: 3-4 päivitystä/vko nettisivuille viimeisin info <i>Valtakunnallinen mielenterveysviikko (viikko 47)</i>
	Apurahahaku: Frame (projektiaapuraha, näyttelyt)	aktiivisesti somessa päivitetty tiedote medialle	
joulukuu	toimisto kiinni lipunmyynti kiinni kevään tuotannon suunnittelu alkaa	kritiikit nettisivuille ja someen	Instagram: joka päivä instastoori + 2-4 kuvapäivitystä/vko Facebook: 3-7 päivitystä/vko nettisivuille viimeisin info
	Apurahahaku: Samuel Huberin Taidesäätiö Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö		
joulusta loppiaiseen teatteri kiinni, joululomat			