Improving the Marketing of

the Voice of the Martyrs'

Finnish Office

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International Business   Abstract

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According to different statistics the offences against the freedom of belief have grown in last years. Studies also tell that Christians are the most persecuted religious group in many countries around the world. The Voice of the Martyrs is an international and non-denominational charity organization that helps persecuted Christians around the world. The commissioning company for this thesis was The Finnish branch of The Voice of the Martyrs that is registered association called Marttyyrien Ääni ry. The purpose of the research was to find out how Marttyyrien Ääni ry can improve their marketing.

The theoretical background consists of marketing theory (compiling a marketing plan, marketing channels and movements in marketing thinking), characteristics of charities and charitable giving and customer behavior. The method of the thesis was research focused. The material was collected using multiple research methods (focus group, questionnaire, and interviews). The focus group and interview material were analyzed qualitatively and questionnaire quantitatively.

The results give understanding about how the organization sees their activities, strengths, and weaknesses, how people respond to different channels and how important are the visits to local churches. Based on the results the research gave some practical suggestions for the subsequent improvement of marketing.

Keywords	Marketing study, charities, charitable giving, freedom of belief.
Pages	33 pages and appendices 5 pages

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Eri tilastojen mukaan uskonnonvapauteen kohdistuneet loukkaukset ovat lisääntyneet viime vuosina. Tutkimukset kertovat myös, että kristityt ovat vainotuin uskonnollinen ryhmä monissa maissa ympäri maailmaa. Marttyyrien Ääni on kansainvälinen ja tunnustustenvälinen hyväntekeväisyysjärjestö, joka auttaa vainottuja kristittyjä ympäri maailmaa. Opinnäytetyön tilaajana toimi Marttyyrien Ääni ry. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää, miten Marttyyrien Ääni ry voisi parantaa markkinointiaan.

Teoreettinen tausta koostuu markkinoinnin teoriasta (markkinointisuunnitelman laatiminen, markkinointikanavat ja markkinointiajattelun muutokset), hyväntekeväisyysjärjestöjen ja hyväntekeväisyyden ominaisuuksista sekä asiakaskäyttäytymisestä. Opinnäytetyön metodi oli tutkimuspainotteinen. Aineisto kerättiin useilla tutkimusmenetelmillä (fokusryhmähaastattelu, kyselylomake ja haastattelut). Haastattelut analysoitiin laadullisesti ja kyselylomake kvantitatiivisesti.

Tulokset antavat ymmärrystä siitä, miten organisaatio näkee toimintansa, vahvuutensa ja heikkoutensa. Tutkimus kertoo, miten ihmiset reagoivat eri viestintäkanaviin ja kuinka tärkeitä vierailut paikallisissa seurakunnissa ovat. Tulosten perusteella tutkimus antoi käytännön ehdotuksia markkinoinnin parantamiseksi.

Avainsanat	Markkinointitutkimus, hyväntekeväisyys, lahjoittaminen hyväntekeväisyyteen, uskonnonvapaus.
Sivut	33 sivua ja liitteet 5 sivua

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1   Introduction

1.1   Introduction to the topic

According to UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief Ahmed Shaheed, offences against the freedom of religion or belief are growing (Shaheed, 2019, p. 2). Other reports (Mounstephen, 2019, p. 4) suggest that the religious intolerance is particularly strong against Christians to the point that "Christianity is – the most persecuted religion of modern times". However, these things rarely make headlines in Western countries and even many Christians are unaware of the situation in many countries.

This topic is interesting to the author for many reasons. There are personal motives to help those who are persecuted at the moment. The author has collaborated with the Finnish office of The Voice of the Martyrs and would like to help them in their work. There are also aspects of professional development. The author has been working for about 20 years in Pentecostal churches and one constantly weak area has been marketing. By this research project, the author strives to deepen the understanding and practical implementation of marketing, within this type of movements, and especially for The Voice of Martyrs, the Finnish office.

1.2   Commissioning company

The Voice of the Martyrs (VOM) is international, nondenominational Christian movement that consists of independent national organizations. The mission of VOM is to support persecuted Christians and to raise awareness of difficult religious situations and persecutions. (The Voice of the Martyrs, n.d.)

It was originally established in USA in 1967 by Romanian Lutheran priest Richard Wurmbrand, who prior to his escape to US was imprisoned and tortured under Romanian communist regime for 14 years. Subsequently national organizations have been established in about 20 countries. The national organizations fund their activities independently and

most of the funds are gathered by donations and by product sales. (The Voice of the Martyrs, n.d.)

Marttyyrien Ääni ry. is a Finnish registered association and part of international VOM movement. It was established in 1973. It has its base in Kerava. It employs few people but has also a network of voluntaries to do different tasks. (Director interview, 2021). In the rest of the thesis, the English name of the association (The Voice of the Martyrs) will be used.

The estimate is that currently most of the active supporters and loyal donors are more aged people. That raises the need to reach also to younger people.

Traditionally the association has communicated through bi-monthly magazine and having thematic meetings at local churches. Traditional communication is too slow-paced for today's world and the need to reach younger people demands the use of electric medias. Lately, it has also put more emphasis on website, social media, TV and radio programs, podcast etc. The challenge is that the association has limited work force. And most of the employed people have their main competence on religious or church-related work. (Director Interview, 2021)

The staff of the association is well-motivated to collaborate in marketing research. In meeting with them they told about their continuous effort of developing the marketing but at the same time struggling with time and limited workforce. They had clear idea about meeting the needs of customers through marketing. But due to the nature of the activities the customers represent many segments with different needs. Likewise with different channels they can reach different customers. So, the marketing has many good starts but it is lacking research foundation and overall plan. (Staff interview 1, 2022)

1.2.1   Current situation with the donors

Direct donations through the banks have been the most common way of donating in the past years. However, by the rise of new ways of money transfer (e.g., different mobile services) have widen the ways to donate also to The Voice of the Martyrs. Currently is possible to donate by bank accounts, support calls, mobile services (Pivo, Mobilepay, Siirto) and by cards. (Staff interview 2, 2023)

The organization monitors their performance. During the last two years the situation has remained the same. Most of the donations, over 90%, come by traditional bank transfers. (Staff interview 2, 2023)

1.2.2   Current marketing channels

The magazine has been the traditional communication channel. It is published nowadays every second month. It contains articles and news about target areas of the work and reports about the field trips of personnel. During the last two years the number of subscribers has risen about 11%. The magazine is free, although there are requests to donate for the work.

The Voice of the Martyrs has done co-operation with Radio Dei to produce radio programs and with TV7 for making TV programs.

Digitalization has brought new challenges and possibilities. The website has been a must for a long time, but social media platforms have opened new possibilities for quick and two-way communication. There is also generational aspect: younger people do not read so much magazines, but they use social media natively. Thus, The Voice of the Martyrs has expanded their communication channels. Current list of different digital channels includes web page, Facebook, Instagram, Soundcloud, Twitter, YouTube. The focus with these has been on Facebook and recently also on Instagram. The number of Facebook followers has risen about 27% during the last two years. Instagram is also rising, 80% during the last two years, but is still significantly smaller than Facebook. Weekly Vartti vainotuille live streams have proven to be popular and important. (Staff interview 2, 2023)

1.3   Research question

The research focusses on current need of The Voice of the Martyrs association. The study aims to answer to the question: How can The Voice of the Martyrs improve their marketing?

The research question has three subquestions that will be answered in the thesis.

1. What are the main targets and channels of the marketing of The Voice of the Martyrs?

2. What are the main needs of their supporters?

3. What practical actions can The Voice of the Martyrs to do to develop their marketing with emphasis on gaining new supporters?

2 Theoretical framework

The main theories for this research come from marketing. The nature of charity organization has its own specialities that will be discussed. This chapter has also an overview of previous studies. The chapter ends with conclusion which discusses about these different aspects.

2.1 Marketing

2.1.1 Marketing trends

Kotler and Armstrong (2017, p. 29) define marketing as "the process by which companies engage customers, build strong customer relationships, and create customer value in order to capture value from customers in return".

The key question is: How can an organization bring value to the customer? Traditionally this has related to certain product or service the company wants customers to buy. But already current and emerging trends in marketing are widening the scope of it.

According to Weber (2019, p. 70), we have transitioned from production era through different phases to digital engagement era. There has been total shift in the marketing from the need of seller to the need of customer. Customers are more than just targets to whom one tries to sell.

But Weber (2019, p. 73-74) anticipates the next phase to be authentic marketing. The new emphasis is on moral purpose that relates to key values and the impact on society that is important and meaningful for public. In this era communications are two-way. Companies need to figure out the values of customers and try to respond to corresponding needs.

Companies, whose marketing reflects genuine work for common good, capture the hearts and minds of consumers. One important part of this is honoring the customers' data that is collected in vast amounts. This data opens enourmous opportunities for both good and bad.

Lahti and Meretniemi (2022) agree with Weber that social impact is the megatrend of 2020s. The youth and young adults find it important that companies and organizations participate in discussions and take a stand on issues on society. They see that consumers and especially social media influencers can use considerable power on companies rewarding but also punishing companies depending on their commitment and moral authenticity in their operations and communications.

2.1.2 Compiling marketing plan

Kotler and Armstrong (2017, p. 627-637) propose a comprehensive marketing plan to have following parts:

Current marketing situation

The plan begins by examining the overall situation in the industry. Who are the main competitors? Where are they going? What kind is consumer behavior and how is it expected to change?

SWOT analysis of own organization / product

It is important to know honestly own strengths on which to build but also weaknesses that need improvement.

Objectives

What does one want to achieve? Clear goals help to make decisions, how to go forward.

Marketing strategy

Based on previous parts, company develops marketing strategy that pays attention to all sections of marketing mix.

Action programs

To implement strategy company has to draw scheduled plan with key themes and campaigns.

Budget

Calculations help make right decisions and follow progress.

Controls

The plan needs constant monitoring. How are sales going? Do people speak in social media?

2.1.3   Marketing channels

The basic marketing theory sees that the marketing is comprised of four aspects: product (the actual product or service that is offered), price (price in relations to product and potential buyers), place (different channels used to set the product for buying) and promotion (advertising in all forms). These together make marketing mix, so called 4Ps, one of the major concepts in marketing today. The various aspects of marketing mix are planned together to target specific customers. The choice of certain retailers or advertising channels depends e.g., how the desired customer segment is reached best and / or most profitable. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, pp. 77-79)

Organization can manage their marketing channels many ways. It is possible to have direct contact with consumers. This can happen e.g., through websites or telephone sales. Marketing can be done also indirectly using intermediators like retailers or wholesalers. Both approaches have their own benefits, and the choice of channels needs to be done according to specifics of certain situation. In many cases it is also possible to combine these. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p. 361)

Practical approach to different marketing channels is to divide them according to the used medium. This way channels can be divided into six categories (Marketing evolution, n.d.):

Video advertising: Television & Youtube

During the last decades TV has been one of the major channels for advertising. Today use of videos has expanded on online videos and streaming services. Videos have unique power to create multisensory experiences. However, they can also be expensive and their succesfull use requires very demanding planning and execution.

Audio channels: Radio & Podcast advertising

Radio ads have been in use over hundred year by now and traditional radio remains surprisingly popular still. Strongly growing newcomer is podcast. Radio broadcasts reach people of even different ages quite comrehensively. It is also much more cost-efficient comparing to TV-advertising. For the downside, radio is often used as background voice while working, driving, doing shoppings etc. and people may not be really listening to it.

Newspapers

Newspapers and other printed ads are one of the oldest mediums of advertising. Newspaper advertising helps to target specific areas and also spesific groups of certain interest. Using high-quality newspapers that enjoy trust can increase good reception for advertising. Unfortunately the newspaper circulation is shrinking.

Print & digital publications (magazines)

Magazine are also old way of advertising. They can reach higly targeted group of people who are also more generally interested in the adversiting of the area of interest. Many magazines have expanded to digital that has helped to grow the number of subscribers. Magazine advertising happens in slow cycle that may require long planning. Many magazines are published nationally and thus difficult to target specific geographical areas.

Out-of-home advertising

Out-of-home advertising started become popular in 1800s. The rise of cars and travelling spread billboards along the highways. This advertising is usually much cheaper comparing to TV or radio. Billboards and other similar ads offer wide coverage. On the other hand, it is difficult to to target specific audiences with this kind of advertising. Tracking the succes of out-of-home advertising is also difficult.

Social media

Social media is the newest channel for advertisers. Social media offers easy ways to target very specific audiences. The advertising is relatively cheap and the effectiveness of media campaing is easy to track. However, the social media has divided onto many platforms that have their unique best practices. Keeping up with these and new technologies require lots of work in highly competitive area.

Today's special challenge is omnichannel. The consumer may see an ad on TV and be inspired by that and explores the product at nearby store and having become convinced of the product orders it from the online store where it is sold by lower price. The consumers are fast to move from one channel to another. The rise of the internet and especially mobile phones have opened easy and fast accesses to acquire information, make comparisons and even place orders. Still the traditional physical store has its own strengths like the atmosphere of shopping, personal service, and the possibility to physically touch and try products. Wise marketers and business planners create unity while taking advantage of the strengths of different channels. (Kartajaya et al., 2016, pp. 139-140; Chaffey, 2021)

2.2 Charities and their characteristics

Charity organizations have the mission to promote some sort of benefit for the common good. They do not exist to produce economical good for their owners like business do but to "channel the value of donors' gift to their intended purposes". (O'Halloran, 2011, pp. 14-15).

This setting gives some liberties or advantages to charities. The registration as a charity gives them certain positive image. They may not face the similar competition like regular businesses, nor they affected by the changes in the stock market. Charities usually enjoy

different tax exemptions depending on local laws. Some charities have functioned over many centuries, and many of them are considered to perform such an important work that they have considerable power in society. (O'Halloran, 2011, pp. 14-15).

Charities have some limits or challenges of their own too. They are founded for certain purpose. Whereas business organization are freer to move from one area to another to produce profit, the charities are more tied to their purpose. Also, their business possibilities are limited due to tax exemptions and other economic reliefs. The income of the charities depends on the good will of donors. (O'Halloran, 2011, pp. 12-15).

The particular task of charities is to represent the needs of deprived persons to those who can help (O'Halloran, 2011, p. 15) In this, common marketing theories are very helpful. Questions like: How to get your message heard? or How to create lasting relationship with donors? are the same for charities too. The task to represent those in need rises also new questions. To present the severity of suffering can help to distinguish one's marketing but how much and what kind of suffering is ethical to present? The mere donor-recipient setting may even create unhelpful dependency. So the question arises on how to help the recipients gain more control of their lives while that may not offer so dramatic marketing possibilities. (O'Halloran, 2011, pp. 15-16; EFA, 2018, pp. 1-3)

2.3 Charitable giving

Donating to those in need is an old phenomenon of human living. There has also been long debate about the nature of altruistic behavior. It has divided scientists. Is it based on human biology or is it product of culture and upbringing? There is also debate that are humans genuinely altruistic because of empathy or is the giver anyway seeking some benefits like social approval or feeling good about himself or herself. In addition, modern times have seen the rise of professional fundraising, entities that exist to work as a middleman to raise money from donors for beneficiaries. (Atkinson et al., 2000; Chapman et al., 2022)

Still in the modern society charities and charitable giving is a important area of human life. Charities are working on the many difficult and pressing issues (eg. cure for cancer, human rights, environmental issues). Mostly they are funded by voluntary donations. They

administer lot of money. Alone in America, 471 billion dollars were donated to charitable organizations in 2020. (Chapman et al., 2022)

Due to the importance of phenomenon there has been substantial amount of research on the subject. Yet the research has partly siloed into different and not properly connected disciplines like marketing, psychology, economics etc and also due to the compelexity of the subject there has not been overarching theory. Most of the studies have solely focused on donors and much less on the beneficiaries or fundraisers not to mention even the relationship between them. (Chapman et al., 2022)
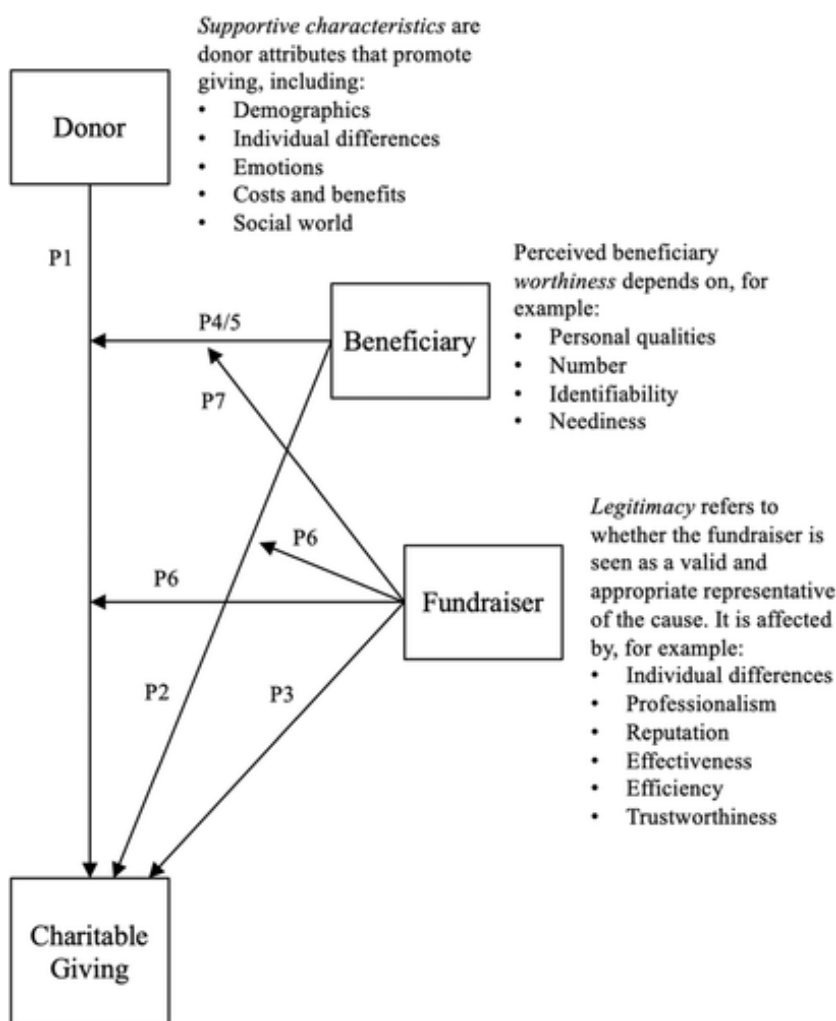

Figure 1. Charitable triad with key conceptual definitions (Chapman et al., 2022).

To fullfil this gap Chapman et al. (2022) have proposed charitable triad theory. The following figure defines the key concepts of the theory.

The three key ideas of the theory are that donating involves three parties, their each' characteristics are needed but not sufficient alone and giving is relational.

Donors are individual people or organizations that donate usually money for charitable purposes. Through many studies there is solid understanding that some people are more generous than others. Typical traits that predict likelier donator are women, older people, higher income, higher education, higher empathy and higher religiosity. However donors can be driven also by possibility of receiving emotional benefits or rewards like thank you gifts and tax deductions. Many emotions can be related to donating varying from guilt and anger to compassion and gratitude. However these factors seem to be very volatile and depending on many different factors emphasizing the importance of the whole charitable triad. That's why Chapman et al. (2022) argue "Supportive donor characteristics are necessary but not sufficient to promote charitable giving". (Chapman et al., 2022)

Beneficiaries are entities that in some form receive help from donors contribution. They can be individual people but more commonly groups of entities. According to Chapman et al. (2022) "Beneficiares perceived as worthy of care will usually elicit greater levels of charitable support than those deemed unworthy." For example charities supporting children are much more popular than those supporting offenders or prostitutes. Factors of beneficiares predicting positive attitude among donors are being younger, more attractive or perceived as "warm". Also fundraising campaings that use name and pictures are usually more succesfull. However, the needines is not directly linked to succes of fundraising.

Fundraisers are usually organizations, seldomly individual people, who exist to raise money for beneficiaries. It is rare to donate money without being asked and the beneficiares do not generally ask for themselves. Chapman et al. (2022) propose that "Fundraisers that are perceived to be more legitimate will usually raise more money." This can involve appearance, professionalism, experience, record of impact, reputation and trustworthiness.

2.4 Customer behavior

Understanding customer behavior is crucial for marketing success. This is quite easy to understand but it is more difficult to really comprehend the reasons why customers do the buying decisions they do. Sometimes the customers too might be unaware of their real motives. However, it is important for marketers to study customer behavior and especially the why-questions. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p. 159)
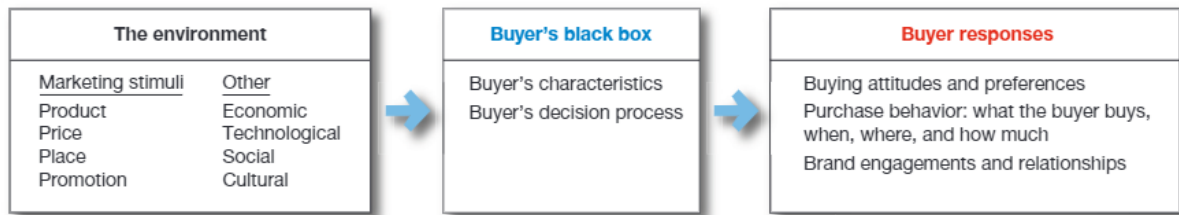

Figure 2. The model of buyer behavior (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p. 159)

Figure 2 shows different factors affecting the buyer behaviour. Large environmental factors like economic situation or technological advances and culture with its many levels are mostly out of control of single corporation. But wise marketers try to understand those so that they can use them in their marketing mix. Studies and researches help to understand different groups of people. They might be categorized according to age, place of living, ethnicity, social class, beliefs or values etc. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, pp. 159-173)

	High Involvement	Low Involvement
Decision making	Complex decision making (autos, cameras)	Limited decision making (cereals, snacks)
Habit	Brand loyalty (athletic shoes, cereals)	Inertia (canned vegetables, paper towels

Figure 3. Consumer decision making (Assael, 2004, p. 100)

Decision making depends on what kind of things the consumer is buying. Assael (2004, p. 100) has compiled a table showing how the decision making seems to consumer. The factors

are degree of involvement and degree of consideration. This table is helpful to understand the level of commitment and easiness of decision making in different purchases.

Figure 4. The model of buyer decision process (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p. 175)

Figure 4 presents buyer decision process. Process begins much earlier than just having a product in hand and thinking do one buys or not. Successful marketers try to be involved already from the beginning. The process can go through all those phases, skip some or have some phases simultaneously. Sometimes the need arises from actual situation like there is no milk in the fridge, but the need can also come through advertising. The need pushes to search information. The need for information changes much according to purchase. For the inertia buying behavior (e.g., everyday consumables), the consumer is less likely to search for information. On the contrary cases with complex decision making (e.g., buying a new car) the information search is thorough. The same applies to evaluation of alternatives. Purchases that require more decision making require also more evaluation of different options. These factors lead to actual buying decision. Usually, companies benefit mostly from long lasting customer relationships. That is why the seller should invest also to post purchase customer service. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, pp. 175-178)

2.5   Previous studies

Marketing studies seem to be very typical among bachelor or master's theses. One can easily find lots of theses about marketing in Theseus. Typically, these are made about business organizations.

There are also some theses about the marketing of charities. Piironen (2016) has done a bachelor thesis about marketing strategy for foreign startup charities in Finland. Lintala (2018) has written her graduate thesis about Effective Fundraising through Digital Marketing

Soi Dog Foundation. Enckell (2016) has made based on his case study a thesis titled as Planning strategic marketing for non-profit organizations.

There are no similar studies about the marketing of The Voice of the Martyrs.

2.6   Summary of theoretical framework

Marketing thinking has not been the most typical part of many Christian associations or congregations. Sometimes marketing has been even considered something unethical (Hagenbuch, 2008). The main competence of churhes and other associations has been in their core activities (e.g., functions of a local church, diaconal activity, social programs, development aid).

However, marketing theories can also be applied to the work of these organizations. In fact, newer marketing models that emphasize authenticity fit well the general idea of charities. One just has to keep in mind the specialties of charities. (O'Halloran, 2011, pp. 12-15).

Based on previous brief studies on charities and customer behavior the author tries to draw some conclusion. Buying is here expanded to mean supporting financially but also giving time for some voluntary work. Supporting or joining charity is intentional act. According to buyer behavior model, there can be many environmental influences, e.g., poor financial situation creates families with acute financial needs. These might simultaneously create both need and willingness to help. But the same environment might hinder giving when many people are lacking. However, like the charitable triad model states many factors influence on giving and sometimes attitudes or emotions may lead to giving even when individual's own situation is not the best possible.

In the Assael's table this type of behavior is high involvement. The author believes that it can be both decision making and habitual. Many charities have loyal donors. But when trying to gain new supporters it is strongly complex decision-making situation. For these reasons, the charities should focus on the other to appealing to person's values but also give open and extensive information about their activities.

3   Methodology

Research design will consist of different parts and methods. These parts will help to answer sub questions of the research question. Different parts require different approaches. The use of different methods has also some benefits. Together they will give fuller picture of the topic. This chapter presents the parts and methods of study and discusses also potential problems.

3.1   Research process

The study is planned to go as follows. Different parts answer corresponding subquestions.

- **Defining the basics**

    The first part of the study is to go through Kotler's and Armstrong's phases 1-3 with analysis of inteviews done amongst the staff of The Voice of the Martyrs. The findings of this part will be used to formulate the questions for the second part.

- **Customer inquiries**

    Customer inquiries have two parts. First is short questionnaire that is published on their webpage and Facebook page. The questionnaire is also distributed through churches to reach people who are not yet familiar with the organization. This is intended for individual people to fill.

    To futher the practical research a couple of thematic interviews for churches that have recently had a visit from The Voice of the Martyrs have been conducted.

    These parts will help to build phases 4 and 5 of Kotler's and Armstrong's plan.

- **Conclusion and practical guidelines**

    Based on the findings on previous parts, the study summarizes different inputs and present practical steps on improving the marketing. This finalizes Kotler's and Armstrong's phases 4 and 5 and gives guidance to phases 6 (budgeting) and 7 (controls).

3.2 Qualitative methods

Qualitative methods relate to research data that is non-numerical. It may have been derived from various research methods and be analyzed by many techniques. It answers the questions like Why? How? and by it the researcher tries to understand different meanings of phenomenon. (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 482)

Focus groups

The aim of the first part is to estimate current market situation and to do analysis of own organization's marketing efforts. The good tool for this is focus group. The group of people that have enough similarities are given a task to tell their opinion and discuss about certain issue, product, topic etc. (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 347).

Burns & Bush (2013, p. 154) list three central problems with focus groups: the difficulty of generalization, the facilitators competence and subjectivism of analysis. The results need not be generalized because the study is about the particular organization and the focus group involves most of the staff members. Facilitator's competence is a good question. However, the group will not be too big, and participants seemed to be motivated about the study. Subjectivism of analysis is potential problem but in this case the output of focus group is some ready material like SWOT analysis. Thus, the risk of wrong interpretation is low.

Interviews

The Voice of the Martyrs makes several dozens church visits yearly. Some are made by Finnish staff members. They also try to have some foreign visitors from countries where they are delivering help. Authentic and usually inspiring stories help to promote the purpose of association. Church visits offer good possibility to invite new supporting members for the association.

The other half of the second phase comes from 3 interviews. The purpose is to interview a representative of a church who has been organizing the visit to find out how local church has experienced the visit. Have they got enough material and information beforehand? Have the posters and other advertising material been helpful? Did the event reach new people?

A semi-structured interview seemed the best way to reach to these representatives of churches. It is probable that many questionnaires would remain unfilled. Semi-structured interview allows to get enough needed information while the respondent can quite freely analyze his/her experiences and the interviewer can continue with possibly upcoming things. (Saunders et al., 2019, pp. 323-324)

This little number of interviews makes generalizations problematic. However, it gives important insights how main partners see the marketing for these events.

3.3 Quantitative methods

Quantitative methods relate to research data that is numerical. It may come from all research strategies. At its simplest it can be just counts of occurrence but with elaborated tools the able researcher can do very complex analysis. Quantitative study answers to questions like How many? (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 414)

The other half of the second part is made by short questionnaire. The questions are written based on the first part of the study. The questionnaire has been published on the webpage and Facebook page of the association. It was open for anyone to answer. The purpose of the questionnaire is to get data what kind of information would be interesting or useful for respondents. Questionnaires are well suited for that purpose (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 362)

The problems of this setting are sampling and generalization. A questionnaire that is open for all to answer does not target the supporting members of the association. Thus, the results are not able to generalize. However, for the situation of the association (widening the marketing to electric medias and struggling with the work) and the purpose of the study (how to improve marketing with emphasis on new supporting members) this selection can be justified. It reaches those who are using electronic medias and gives valuable information about their needs.

4 Results

4.1 Focus Group analysis

The aim of the focus group was to answer the first sub question: What are the main targets and channels of the marketing of The Voice of the Martyrs? The answers from this phase help to formulate the questions for subsequent phases.

The interview took place at the office of The Voice of the Martyrs and the interviewed group consisted of three main employees of the organization. The discussion had three main topics: current marketing situation, SWOT analysis and defining the objectives. (Staff interview 2, 2023)

The current marketing situation is somewhat difficult. There has been slow downward progress among Finnish churches that has an affect also on The Voice of the Martyrs. In addition, the crisis like COVID pandemia and Russian attack on Ukraine has affected many people's personal finances and also on donations. Finland as small country and active Christian communities as even smaller population have many different organizations doing overlapping things. This leads to unnecessary competition.

The deep transformation during the last years has been the digitalization of the media environment. Previously the magazine and church visits reached audiences quite well. Nowadays especially the younger generation gets the most of their information from the web. Digital media has also divided into many different channels increasing the need and challenge to invest in these.

The Voice of the Martyrs was for a long time the only Christian organization that focused solely on helping persecuted Christians. Some other misson organizations did also that but it was more like side business for them. In 2015, Open Doors, an another world wide Christian organization helping persecuted Christians, began operating in Finland (Open Doors, n.d.). It can be considered the only direct competitor. Open Doors has had succes mostly among the Lutheran churches. Its strengths are vast international support, capable marketing and strong emphasis on information about the topic. While the competition for the support has

tighten a bit, the coming of Open Doors has increased the awareness of the global situation significantly and thus increased the total support from the churches and individuals.

The second topic was SWOT analysis of the organization. The following table lists findings of the discussion.

Strengths	Weaknesses
- stories from the trips to and from the people of working areas draws engagement - direct contacts to many target areas - own practical work - committed employees / supporters - "family" feeling	- scarce resources; need for prioritizing resources, difficulty of substitution in case of sickness or other obstacles - history; difficult external relationships with some authorities has somewhat sidelined the organization (The operation began during the cold war and then president of Finland Kekkonen didn't approve it due to relationships with the Soviet Union) & internal conflicts in past decades - interest of younger people
Opportunities	Threats
- strengthening own identity - digitalization - Nordic co-operation, expanding to Baltics - religious situation - increased awareness of situation through Open doors, new organization in the field	- realistic and reliable statistics and information; - deteriation of economic situation may lead to lesser financial support - aging of population / donors - tightening attitudes / legislation / international restrictions

Table 5. SWOT analysis of organization.

The third topic for the discussion was to define goals. The desire of the interviewees was to increase the visibility of organization. Especially this is important in reaching the younger generation.

For the continuation of this study the participants emphasized the need to find out what people are expecting or needing. What kind of information is relevant to them? What inspires them to act? The other important area was the quality of communication. How does people view the magazine? Do they consider social media publications to be of high quality?

For the church representative analysis the interviewees suggested questions like: Have they got enough material and information beforehand? Have the posters and other advertising material been helpful? Did the event reach new people?

During the discussion they also realized that even though they have pretty similar thoughts about situation and future challenges they are still lacking clearly defined strategy. This makes work to be more day-to-day operation rather than focusing on strategic goals.

For the author the discussion seemed very open and honest. Mostly the participants had similar thoughts but they were also able to disagree with each other. Discussion flowed nicely in relaxed atmosphere but maintaining focus and depth at the same time.

4.2   Questionnaire analysis

The questionnaire was compiled based on the results of focus group interview. The questions focused on needs and motivation factors of recipients and to quality and reachability of different communication channels. The questionnaire was open for about two weeks at the latter part of March 2023. It was promoted in the digital channels of The Voice of the Martyrs. Unfortunately, due to the schedule it was not possible to inform about it in the organization's magazine. Also couple of churches delivered the questionnaire to widen the recipients.

In total 118 people replied to the questionnaire. Here are at first general information about respondents then some basic observations from the replies, and last deeper analysis concerning above stated main focuses of the questionnaire.

Mostly the respondents were familiar with The Voice of the Martyrs. This is not surprising given that the questionnaire was mostly promoted through The Voice of the Martyrs. This

helps to understand the needs of committed supporters but on the other hand gives little knowledge about potential new supporters.

	n	Percent
Very familiar	65	55,1%
Somewhat familiar	45	38,1%
I can't say	1	0,9%
Only little	5	4,2%
Not at all	2	1,7%

Figure 6. The familiarity of the respondents with The Voice of the Martyrs.

In general, the respondents were mostly above average age. This reflects the understanding of the staff about the current situation. However, the age group between 41 and 55 years old is bigger than that of active church people.

	n	Percent
< 25	3	2,6%
26-40	12	10,3%
41-55	37	31,6%
56-70	41	35,0%
> 70	24	20,5%

Figure 7. The age distribution of questionnaire respondents.

Large majority, 81%, of respondents were women. And about half of respondents were members of Pentecostal church

	n	Percent
Lutheran church	27	22,9%
Pentecostal church	56	47,5%
Free church	9	7,6%
Other charismatic church	7	5,9%
Other, what:	19	16,1%

Figure 8. The church background of respondents.

Currently the organization is using multiple channels to communicate. The questionnaire had questions to find out what channels / mediums people have used to follow and what are their most preferred ways to follow. The numbers in preferred channels are lower because the replies were limited to three different options at maximum to point out the most important channels / mediums.

Magazine and Facebook are at the top on the same level, while Facebook is clearly the number one on most preferred channel. Otherwise, the numbers match pretty much. However, there is strong peak at the preference of Instagram compared to current usage.
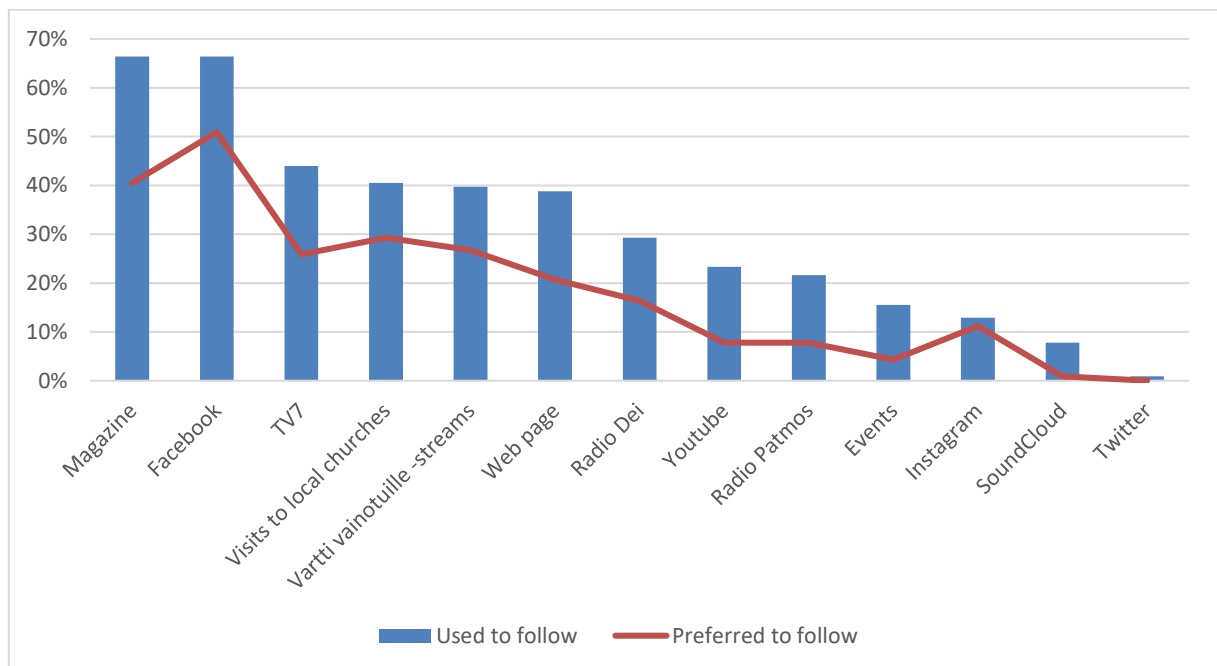

Figure 9. The channels / mediums used to follow and most preferred to follow (max. 3).

The next question asked what areas people need more information. Clear top two areas
were the lives of the people living in the target countries and facts about freedom of religion
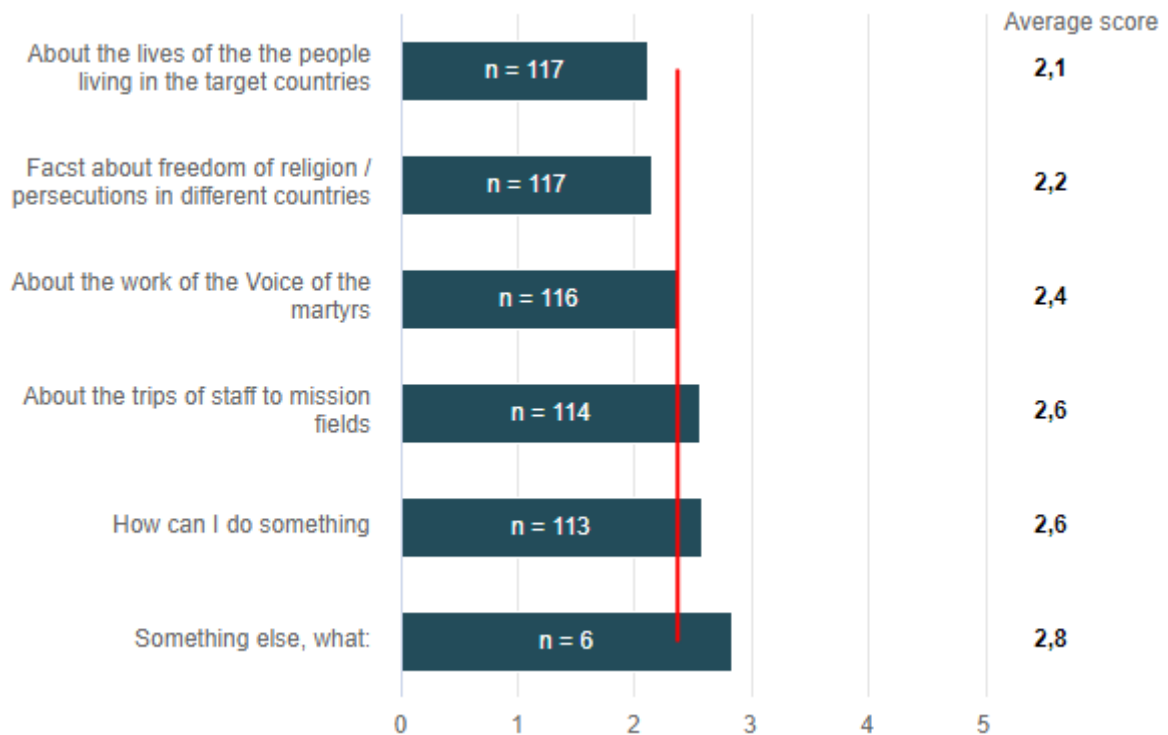/ persecution in different countries.

Figure 10. The areas about which people need more information, smaller score = more
important.

The following questions were about the quality of certain main communication channels.
The respondents were asked to rate overall perception of each channel on a scale from 0-5.
The magazine, radio and TV programs scored best, each having an average of 4,4 and most
typical answer was five.

Webpages and social media communications were also at satisfactory level although they
scored lower. The average was for both 4,1 and median was four. In open questions some
answers provided insight to development like the web pages could be more comprehensive
and clearer and have information about ways to be involved, campaigns and donations. Also,
some respondents considered the social media communications to be still at first steps.

7. What is your overall impression of the magazine

0 = very bad - 5 = very good

Number of respondents: 95

Min value	Max value	Average	Median	Sum	Standard Deviation
2,0	5,0	4,4	5,0	417,0	0,8

8. What is your overall impression of the radio programs

0 = very bad - 5 = very good

Number of respondents: 66

Min value	Max value	Average	Median	Sum	Standard Deviation
1,0	5,0	4,4	5,0	289,0	0,8

9. What is your overall impression of the TV programs

0 = very bad - 5 = very good

Number of respondents: 73

Min value	Max value	Average	Median	Sum	Standard Deviation
2,0	5,0	4,4	5,0	323,0	0,7

10. What is your overall impression of the web page (marttyyrienaani.fi)

0 = very bad - 5 = very good

Number of respondents: 85

Min value	Max value	Average	Median	Sum	Standard Deviation
2,0	5,0	4,1	4,0	351,0	0,8

11. What is your overall impression of the social media communications?

0 = very bad - 5 = very good

Number of respondents: 91

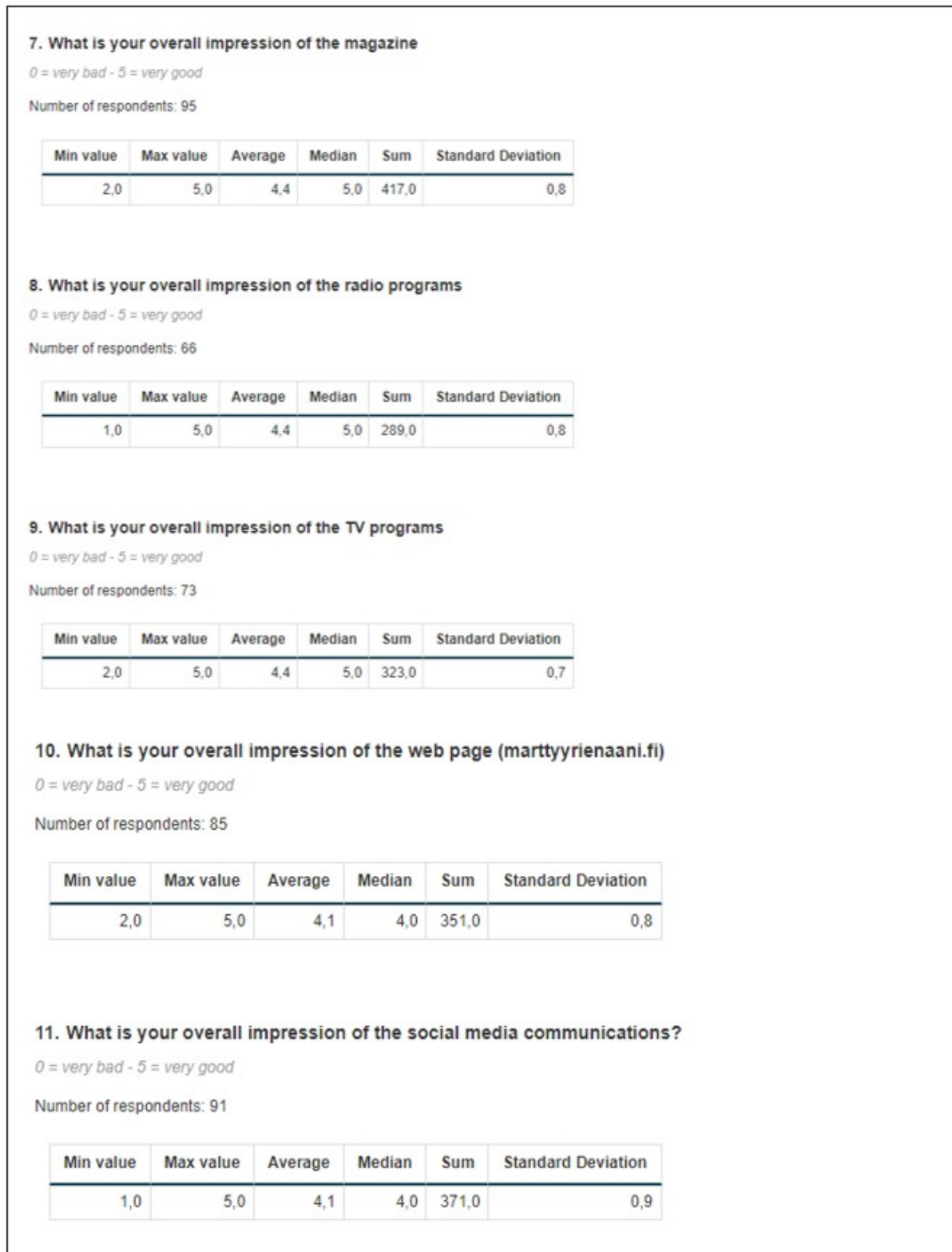| Min value	Max value	Average	Median	Sum	Standard Deviation
1,0	5,0	4,1	4,0	371,0	0,9

Figure 11. The overall impression of respondents of certain communication channels.

The last two actual question were related to participation. Question number 12 asked different ways how respondents have been involved with the organization and the following question was about motivational factors.

	Percent
Following communication	72,3%
Following programs (TV7 or Radio Dei)	56,3%
Participating to church visits	50,0%
Donating money	59,8%
Sharing information (e.g. giving the magazine to others or sharing social media posts)	38,4%
Writing letters to prisoners	23,2%
Something else, what:	19,6%

Figure 12. Different ways of participation.

The "something else" option had many additional textual answers like praying for the persecuted, sending appeals for authorities and cards for imprisoned people and organizing visits.

Two most important reasons to participate are the will to help persecuted Christians and understanding that this organizations does a good job. The third almost as important motivational factor was the missionary work among the unreached people.

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average	Median
I want to help persecuted Christians	67	17	10	10	12	116	2,0	1,0
	57,8%	14,7%	8,6%	8,6%	10,3%			
Missionary work among the unreached peoples	53	23	14	9	11	110	2,1	2,0
	48,2%	20,9%	12,7%	8,2%	10,0%			
I know the officials of the organisation personally	31	16	22	14	23	106	2,8	3,0
	29,2%	15,1%	20,8%	13,2%	21,7%			
The organisation does good job	64	12	17	8	16	117	2,1	1,0
	54,7%	10,3%	14,5%	6,8%	13,7%			
Something else, what:	3	1	2	0	0	6	1,8	1,5
	50,0%	16,7%	33,3%	0,0%	0,0%			
Total	218	69	65	41	62	455	2,3	2,0

Figure 13. Motivational factors for participation.

Because one of the foundational questions was to know how to reach to younger people, some comparisons were made between the age groups of 55 and younger comparing to the

older people. This cutting point divides the respondents roughly half, 52 younger and 65 older people. This setting is problematic because the ways to use different communications methods varies strongly in general among the age group of 55 years and younger. However, the groups under 25 and 25-40 are so small that then individual replies get too big value and results are no more reliable.

Mostly the answers were quite similar, but there were some notable differences. The familiarity of the organization is not so high among the younger respondents.

Many interesting differences appeared regarding the communication channels. The magazine and the Facebook page were the most common channels used to follow also to younger people. However, Facebook was clearly the most preferred way for younger people. Also, they favored more web page and Instagram than older people and put less value on TV7, streams or Radio Patmos than older group.

The most striking differences were preference with church visits and events. Clearly the younger people valued more personal meeting with the representatives of the organization.

In general, the younger people gave lower scores to different mediums.

Younger people also had more willingness to participate in practical ways. They were more interested to get more information about the lives of the people in target countries and about the possibilities to do something personally than their older counterparts. Likewise, they were more motivated than the older people by the desire to help persecuted Christians. On the contrary, they had not participated in practice as much as the older people.
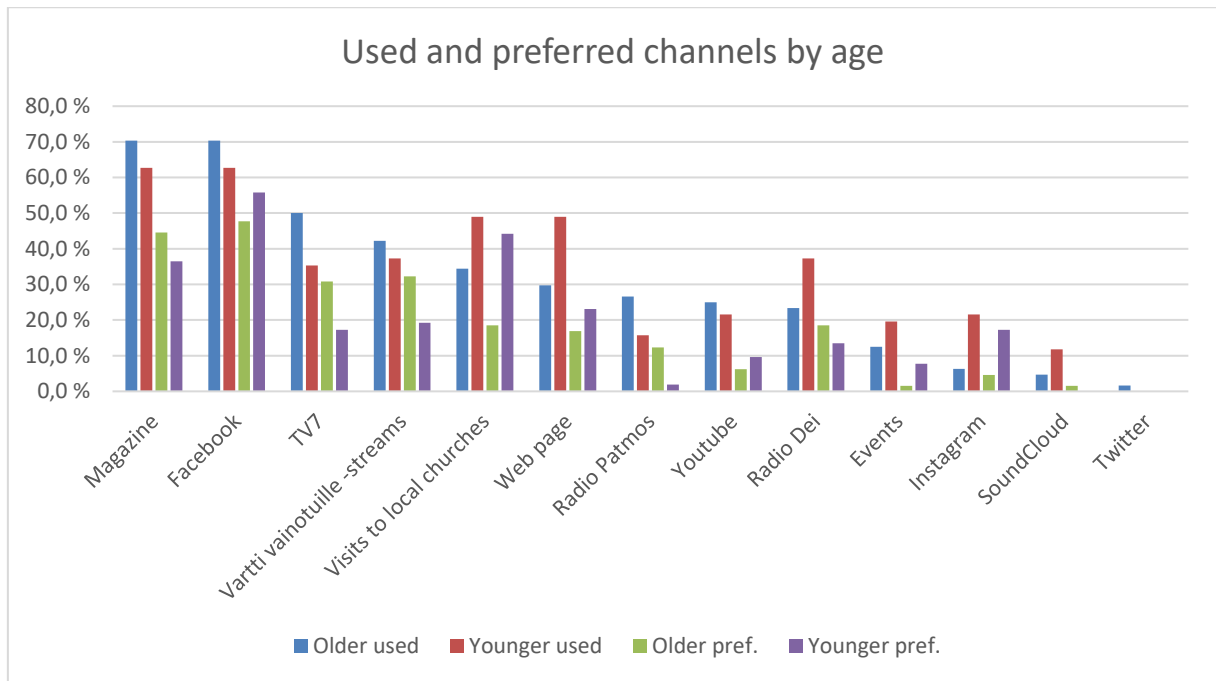
Figure 14. The used and preferred channels according to the age group.

Also, the author wanted to know what the main differences between the people who are familiar and not so familiar with the organization. The number of respondents that had identified themselves concerning the familiarity as cannot say, little or not at all was small, only 8. Thus, the generalizations of their replies are very uncertain. However, there are some notable differences comparing to people who are familiar with the organization.

For people who are not familiar with the organization, the main contact has been some event in local church. Facebook has also been important, and it is the most preferred medium. They are interested about the lives of people living in the target countries but less interested and motivated to participate. All these people were members of the Lutheran Church.

4.3   Interviews analysis

Interview questions were based on focus group results. Bases on the questionnaire replies it is evident that church visits have a potential to reach to new people. That's why it is important to know are preparations for the visits (poster & other marketing materials, information) sufficient and applicable, how the visits went and did they reach new people

and how local people responded to visit. Visits are also important to maintain strong relationships with current supporters.

The author had three interviews from the churches who have had one or more visit during the last couple of years. The interviewees were pastors from Pentecostal Church, Free Church, and Evangelical-Lutheran Church.

All the interviewees agreed that the pre-material they had received had been good. They received posters, possible personal presentations if there was some foreign visitor involved, videos, and article texts for local newspapers. Arrangements were smoothly. One wish from interviewees was to get more video material especially from foreign visitors. That could help in the advertising the visit.

The interviewees also all said that the visits had gathered at least some new people. Mostly the participants had been regular churchgoers from own church. About the new people the interviewees were quite uncertain. Some had been local people that belong to other churches and some maybe churchgoers from other towns. But especially if the event had some special features (like the movie about the life of Wurmbrandt or guest who were originally from North Korea) it had attracted interest and brought new people to meeting. Local newspapers were important in gaining the attention of not regular churchgoers. Had they published a story about the meeting or guest the more new people showed up.

One interviewee pointed out that the ignorance about the topic and the organization (combined with its "obscure" name) is major problem for gathering new people. But for those who are aware about the situation and the work the organization does it is very inspiring to have them visit locally. The Lutheran interviewee brought up the same problem that the whole issue is very much in dark in Lutheran church. The reason goes back several decades when bishops took negative attitude against The Voice of the Martyrs and the same attitude still prevails, while the reasons for it have been changed. He thought that many priests find the topic too difficult or disturbing and thus do not want to get involved.

Feedback has been mostly positive. For new people it has been very surprising to know about the situation in which many Christians live today around the world. The interviewees said that the visits have inspired people to pray more for persecuted Christians, some have

begun to write letters on the behalf of the imprisoned or cards to those in prison, and probably the organization has got some new people on their mailing list or donators. Some rare negative feedback had come from some presentations that some participants had experienced too graphic or shocking.

In general, the interviewees were pleased about the visit. They consider them to be important to keep the topic alive. The visitors who have direct contacts or have been visiting to field work in target countries bring the situation and stories touchingly and inspiringly to local churches. One interviewee also brought up that it would be good if these issues could be linked to Finland and Finnish setting more closely. Even though in Finland there is no such oppression as in many other countries but still some Christians may feel themselves uncertain or hide their beliefs. Very strong or dramatic stories from abroad may leave unattached to lives here.

5   Recommendations

The research question presented in the beginning was: How can The Voice of the Martyrs improve their marketing?

The research question had three subquestions of which the first and second were researched during the research process.

1. What are the main targets and channels of the marketing of The Voice of the Martyrs?
2. What are the main needs of their supporters?
3. What practical actions can The Voice of the Martyrs to do to develop their marketing with emphasis on gaining new supporters?

This chapter focuses on drafting practical suggestions to answer the third subquestion and discusses about the relation to theoretical background.

Practical suggestions are listed here and then discussed in detail.

1. Defining strategy

2. Building long term relationship with young people
3. Creating omnichanel plan

Defining strategy would help to direct the work in general as well as marketing activities. During the the focus group interview, it became clear that during the years the core staff has developed quite uniform thinking about the goals, strengths and weaknesses of their work, new opportunieties etc. However there were also some areas they slightly disagreed or noticed that they have not thought about. They also clearly brought up that they are lacking written strategy that would bring clarity and focus to work.

Strategy forms the basis for marketing and marketing planning. It helps to convey coherent message through different platforms and settings. Otherwise the marketing lives its own life. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, pp. 64-66).

Important part of strategy work and improving marketing is to answer to the question: What value does the organization and its activities bring to participants? Many tentative thoughts were presented during the focus group interview. Some of them (e.g., "I want to help persecuted Christians" or "Missionary work among the unreached peoples") were tested in questionnaire. Paying more attention to these might increase engagement because they seem to be important for participants. The same applies to churches that the organization wishes to work with. What benefits the co-operation brings to churches? In the church representative interviews, the interviewees saw several important things, like it helps to keep missionary work fresh, inspires to pray for fellow Christians who are suffering and encourages to live openly as a follower of Jesus. These kind of things could be promoted when contacting churches for visits. Many of these ideas are already existing in minds and talks but having them written form helps to crystilize them.

Defining strategy and strategic goals enable measuring progress. Without it evaluation of performance will be more random. Constant and regular evaluation includes also updating KPIs so that they would accurately measure desired outcomes. (Reh, 2020)

Building long term relationship with young people is essential for future. The questionnaire supports the assumption that the current supporters are more elderly people. Reaching to

younger people is vital for future and also to keep the present marketing and communications meaningful for also younger generations.

Younger people are also potential supporters because they tend to be more interested in taking action or supporting causes to increase social justice (Lahti and Meretniemi, 2022). On the other hand according to charitable triad usually older people are more likely to donate. Supporting charity requires that donors see the beneficiaries worthy of support and the charitable organisation as a legitimate representative of beneficiaries (Chapman et al., 2022). The questionnaire shows that people who are not so familiar with The Voice of the Martyrs are unlike to participate. Therefore it is important to build relationship with younger people so that they become aware of situation in other countries and see The Voice of the Martyrs as effective and reliable charitable organization.

The questionnaire highlights that two points of contact are meaningful for younger people. Digital channels are natural for them. And maybe having specific content for younger people would increase engegament. At the moment the organisations doesn't have a TikTok account, that is currently one the most important platform among young people. Also Instagram and Youtube are very popular among younger people (Markkinointimaestro, 2023). On the other hand while the number of different chanels grow, it becomes more important the material created for each chanel should fit into that platform. Maybe a bit surprisingly church visits seemed to be much more important for younger people than for respondents in general. This opens interesting possibilities for youth work co-operation with churches. Church visits aimed especially at younger people and done with youth workers could reach people who are not reading the magazine and may not participate in traditional church visits. This setting enables to adjust the content better according to the participants and create interactive atmosphere that could also encourage young church people.

Creating omnichanel plan would greatly help at maintaining multiple channels both in digital and printed form as well as physical visits. Different age groups, people at different level of customer journey and different channels have all their own characteristics. Managing appropiate and succesfull content can be huge burden without sweeping plan.

Questionnaire answers give understanding about the importance of different channels. They also reveal that certain channels have very little meaning. Thus while drafting omnichannel plan the focus should be placed on those most important channels and maybe, time and work force being limited, drop out those that have very little meaning.

Questionnaire answers and interviews confirm the results of the SWOT analysis. The staff estimated that their strenghts are direct contacts to many target areas and own practical helping work in those areas. These also produces very touching strories from trips to those areas and from local people whom the staff members meet there. From these lots of great material is created that can be flexible used in many platforms.

6   Conclusion

The journey with this project has been instructive and rewarding for the author also. It has been inspiring to learn new things and to challenge himself to think and study this area more.

As a whole the process went quite smoothly even though it took some time from the initial idea and contacts. But then it proceeded step by step. Clear plan that was based on simple but holistic model for compiling of a marketing plan helped to execute the research. Some timing issues that the author didn't think through came out (e.g., the publication of the magazine didn't fit for the timing of questionnaire).

The results from all phases gave many ideas to think about. The main results presented in this research are more general in nature. But as such they can create solid base for more practical applications.

Main challenge for the author has been limiting so that the thesis would not expand too vast. There has been so many interesting sideways and possibilities to go further that would have been interesting to explore too. Theoretical viewpoints from charitable triad, marketing as creating value for the customer and ethics of marketing link together in interesting ways (e.g., reason for donating can be feeling better about own self and thus marketing can offer value for customer by promoting needy beneficiaries, but setting could

prove to ethically unsustainable). Also, it would have been interesting to have wider questionnaire or continue the work with recommendations deeper into practical level.

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Appendix 1: Focus group discussion plan

1. Current marketing situation

   Overall situation in the industry? Who are the main competitors? Where are they going?

   What kind is consumer behavior and how is it expected to change?

   - Marketing environment; current trends, future challenges / possibilities

   - Competitive environment; see table at the end

   - Consumer behavior; trends, touchpoints, byuing decision factors; understanding the reasons of behavior

1. SWOT analysis of own marketing

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

2. Objectives

   What do we want to achieve? How to go forward?

   - Marketing goals; awareness, financial support, new members, co-operation?

   - Research goals; questions for questionnaire, questions for interviews

Competitor review

Brand name	Competitor: direct, indirect, unexpected	Key competitive advantage	Market share	Brand character / promise	Communication	Differentiation

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

1. How familiar are you with the Voice of the martyrs?

○ Very familiar
○ Somewhat familiar
○ I can't say
○ Only little
○ Not at all

2. From which medium / channel have you followed the communication of Voice of the martyrs

☐ Magazine
☐ Web page
☐ Facebook
☐ Instagram
☐ Youtube
☐ Twitter
☐ Radio Patmos
☐ SoundCloud
☐ TV7
☐ Vartti vainotuille -streams
☐ Radio Dei
☐ Visits to local churches
☐ Events

3. From which medium / channel you like (would like) the most to follow the communication of Voice of the martyrs?
Choose three at maximum

☐ Magazine
☐ Web page
☐ Facebook
☐ Instagram
☐ Youtube
☐ Twitter
☐ Radio Patmos
☐ SoundCloud
☐ TV7
☐ Vartti vainotuille -streams
☐ Radio Dei
☐ Visits to local churches
☐ Events

Please select maximum 3 options
Selected options: 0

4. I'd like to have more information about

1 = the most, 2 = the second most, etc.

	1	2	3	4	5
About the lives of the the people living in the target countries	○	○	○	○	○
Facst about freedom of religion / persecutions in different countries	○	○	○	○	○
How can I do something	○	○	○	○	○
About the work of the Voice of the martyrs	○	○	○	○	○
About the trips of staff to mission fields	○	○	○	○	○
Something else, what:	○	○	○	○	○

5. What is your overall impression of the magazine

0 = very bad - 5 = very good

0

0   5
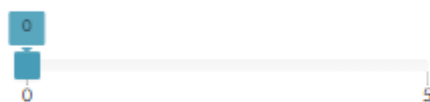
☐ I don't know

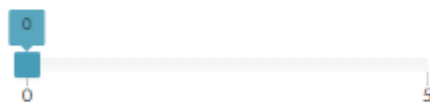## 6. What is your overall impression of the radio programs

0 = very bad - 5 = very good

0

0   5
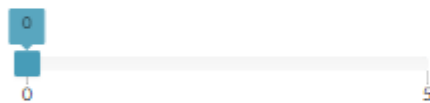
☐ I don't know

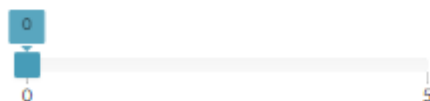## 7. What is your overall impression of the TV programs

0 = very bad - 5 = very good

0

0   5

☐ I don't know

8. What is your overall impression of the web page (marttyyrienaani.fi)
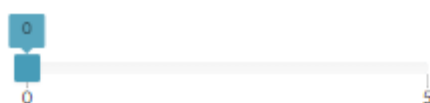
0 = very bad - 5 = very good

0

0   5

☐ I don't know

9. What is your overall impression of the social media communications?

0 = very bad - 5 = very good

0

0   5

☐ I don't know

10. I have participated by

☐ Following communication

☐ Following programs (TV7 or Radio Dei)

☐ Participating to church visits

☐ Donating money

☐ Sharing information (e.g. giving the magazine to others or sharing social media posts)

☐ Writing letters to prisoners

☐ Something else, what: [   ]

11. I am motivated to participate

1 = the most important, 2 = the second most important, etc.

	1	2	3	4	5
I want to help persecuted Christians	○	○	○	○	○
Missionary work among the unreached peoples	○	○	○	○	○
I know the officials of the organisation personally	○	○	○	○	○
The organisation does good job	○	○	○	○	○
Something else, what: [ ]	○	○	○	○	○

12. What else would you like to comment about the communication of the Voice of the martyrs?

13. Age

○ < 25

○ 26-40

○ 41-55

○ 56-70

○ > 70

14. Sex

○ Man

○ Woman

15. Church background

○ Lutheran church

○ Pentecostal church

○ Free church

○ Other charismatic church

○ Other, what: [   ]

Appendix 3: THESIS DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

1   Management and storage of research data

Research data includes focus group interview (notes & audio recording), questionnaire answers and interviews (notes & audio recording).

Focus group and interview data is stored on researcher's computer. The computer is password-protected and only the researcher has access to data. Back-up copy of data is on HAMK's OneDrive that is also password protected. Questionnaire data is saved on Webropol-service that is used to collect the responses. The service is password protected.

The researcher has agreed with the commissioning company that collected data can be used for this thesis.

2   Processing of personal data and sensitive data

Only personal data that is collected during the research is background information about questionnaire respondents (e.g., age and sex). This data is used for analysis. Questionnaire is answered anonymously and thus the information cannot be connected to any specific person. The interviewees are presented anonymously, and no personal data is collected from interviews.

3   Ownership of thesis data

The author of the thesis has the ownership of data.

4   Further use of thesis data after the work is completed

The research data will not be used further except possibly in the internal use of the commissioning company. The author of the thesis stores the data in a secure manner for a period of one year from the date of approval of the thesis, so that the results of the thesis can be verified. After that period, the data will be deleted.