

Mariia Ryndina

ATTRACTING INTERNATIONAL XAMK STUDENTS TO YOUTH SERVICES IN THE KOUVOLA REGION

Bachelor's thesis

Digital International Business

2023



South-Eastern Finland
University of Applied Sciences

Degree title	Bachelor of Business Administration
Author	Mariia Ryndina
Thesis title	Attracting international XAMK students to youth services in the Kouvola region
Commissioned by	Nuorten Kouvola
Year	2023
Pages	53 pages, 6 pages of appendices
Supervisor(s)	Ulla Puustelli

ABSTRACT

Brand awareness presents an essential aspect for both profit-driven and non-profit organisations. Marketing communications, in turn, is a highly effective way of generating greater brand awareness, and non-profit organisations utilise various marketing tools and channels to communicate with key audiences. Therefore, the objectives of this thesis were to identify potential communication channels that could be used to increase awareness of Nuorten Kouvola's youth services among international XAMK students, determine the current level of awareness, and give recommendations on how to raise awareness of youth services among international students.

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were utilised in the research process. An online survey was distributed among the XAMK students and 60 individuals responded. Two follow-up interviews were conducted with the employees of Nuorten Kouvola - one of the interviewees is responsible for the international youth work, and the other is part of the marketing group. Combining the research methods allowed for a deeper understanding of the data.

Overall, the results showed a large gap between the desired and current awareness of the Nuorten Kouvola organisation and its services among the international XAMK students. Survey participants showed their motivation and interest in participating in the Nuorten Kouvola's activities. However, since there is a lack of accessible materials for international people, the participation rate is extremely low. Students expressed their preferred communication channels through which they wish to be contacted, which correspond to the current capabilities of Nuorten Kouvola. Employees of the organisation expressed their willingness to accommodate and further develop the collaboration with the international XAMK students.

Keywords: marketing communications, brand awareness, marketing communication channels

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	4
1.1	Background	4
1.2	Research aims, objectives and questions.....	5
1.3	Research methodology	6
2	NUORTEN KOUVOLA.....	7
3	INCREASING BRAND AWARENESS THROUGH MARKETING COMMUNICATION	12
3.1	Brand awareness.....	12
3.2	Marketing communications	13
3.3	Marketing communications applicability.....	22
4	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	23
4.1	Data collection	25
4.2	Data analysis	26
5	RESULTS	28
5.1	Survey results	28
5.2	Interview results.....	37
5.3	Analysis of the results.....	40
6	CONCLUSIONS	41
6.1	Managerial implications	41
6.2	Reliability discussion and future development	46
	REFERENCES	48
	LIST OF FIGURES	53

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview questions list

Appendix 2. Survey questions

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Youth Services in Finland present an inclusive environment for youth under 29 years old to socialise, participate in cultural events, and use the support of the social workers on a voluntary basis (Höylä 2012). Over the past twenty years, there has been a substantial development in multicultural youth work in Finland, primarily due to the increasing number of young immigrants to the country (Kiilakoski 2020, 21). Services are open to youth of all backgrounds, nationalities, and social levels. However, the involvement of the immigrant-origin youth is much less than that of Finnish either because of insufficient knowledge and experience with the local Youth Services or because of the discrimination presumption (Harinen et al. 2009, 192). International youth and especially international XAMK students is a group that can greatly benefit from Youth Services through increased social involvement and opportunities to participate in regional decision-making processes. Allgurin et al. (2023) state that particularly social work has a great potential to transform unequal social relations that might, among others, arise for an immigrant-origin youth. Youth Services are provided in the city of Kouvola through its 10 houses, and are seeking to attract more international students to its operations. Nuorten Kouvola is part of the City of Kouvola, which provides Kouvolan Youth Services (later on referred to as Nuorten Kouvola) has the capabilities and resources to provide quality leisure time activities and involve youth in the services provided, which would be greatly beneficial for their target customers as well. This research suggested ways on how to increase the involvement of international XAMK students in the Nuorten Kouvola activity through enhanced brand awareness and efficient use of marketing communication channels.

Work internship of 263 hours was completed by the researcher in the Nuorten Kouvola which provided a chance to get acquainted with the organisation's operations, get insights into the goals of the Nuorten Kouvola, and learn about the experiences of other workers. The completed internship gave an outlook on

the strengths and weaknesses of Nuorten Kouvola where the awareness of Youth Services among International XAMK students is a noticeable addressable problem. Consequently, some parts of this thesis include knowledge that were acquired through the completion of the internship at Nuorten Kouvola.

During my internship, I was responsible for creating a chain of events aimed at international students and consequently, I was working on closing the described gap. This research gives recommendations for Nuorten Kouvola to address the issue and ways to attract and keep International Students involved in Youth Services. By attracting students, Nuorten Kouvola will create a win-win situation for both parties.

The findings of this study will be beneficial for Nuorten Kouvola and its efforts in attracting more international youth as the thesis will suggest, based on the mixed-method research, an approach to raising awareness of Youth Services, based on the particular case of Nuorten Kouvola. The developed recommendations may to a certain degree, be applicable to similar (youth work) organisations and to attracting another group of XAMK students – Finnish-origin youth.

1.2 Research aims, objectives, and questions

The research problem. The weak marketing communications strategy of Nuorten Kouvola has led to a lack of awareness of the Youth Services among XAMK's International Students in the Kouvola region. The current marketing strategy and channels are not effectively reaching this demographic, and there is a need to improve awareness of Youth Services among international XAMK students.

The aim of the research was to attract more International XAMK Students to use Nuorten Kouvola's youth services through increased awareness of the organisation and its activities. Thus the **research questions** were (1) What are the optimal marketing channels for Nuorten Kouvola to reach international students studying in XAMK? (2) What is the way to increase awareness of the Nuorten Kouvola services provided to international students?

The research objectives were to identify potential communication channels that could be used to increase awareness of Nuorten Kouvola's youth services among International XAMK Students; to determine the current level of awareness among international XAMK students about Nuorten Kouvola's youth services and activities. Additionally, to outline current flaws in the marketing communications and marketing channels of Nuorten Kouvola and ways to improve them. Giving recommendations on increasing awareness of Youth Services among international students was also considered.

1.3 Research methodology

The mixed-method study was chosen for the following thesis research, particularly a combination of a quantitative survey, and a qualitative interview. Exploratory research, also known as qualitative research, involves exploring and discovering ideas and views, whereas quantitative research involves producing numerical data or data that can be converted into usable statistics to measure a particular issue (Abuhamda et al. 2021, 72). Utilising the combination of two methods would give a comprehensive outlook on students' perspectives and motivation to participate in the Youth Services - through the survey and previous experience and insights on the marketing activity, level of awareness, and boundaries of Nuorten Kouvola – through the interview. Interpretivism philosophy has been chosen for this study as it is important to consider the experiences and social realities of the target audience and employees of Nuorten Kouvola.

When selecting a data collection strategy, it is crucial to ensure it is feasible given the study's circumstances and that a practically viable timeline for data gathering is established (Punch 2003, 41). The choice of the survey as a research method for this study can be justified as it would allow collecting data from a larger sample of the target audience – International XAMK Students and get into their perceptions of Nuorten Kouvola, level of awareness and preferences for the marketing communications channels.

Utilising qualitative interviews as a research method offers the advantages of obtaining more in-depth quality information and the ability to obtain supplementary details about the studied topic and environment (Kothari 1990, 98-99). In the interviews of this study, the aim would be to gain the perspectives of Nuorten Kouvola employees that specialise in the work with international youth and can give knowledgeable insights into the strategies and peculiarities of social work with this target group. For this research has been chosen the semi-structured interview approach which would follow a consistent and systematic structure with prepared questions based on identified themes, along with stimuli to encourage detailed responses; the main focus would be on using an interview guide that includes broad themes to direct the conversation towards the topics and issues of interest to the study (Qu & Dumay 2011, 246).

By utilising mixed-method research in this study, it is possible to obtain comprehensive answers to research questions that go beyond the limitations of a single method which possesses a significant advantage to the chosen approach (Spratt et al. 2004, 6). By successfully combining two perspectives, it is possible to get cross-dimensional high-quality data on the problem in the existing marketing communications and consequently develop implications for improving awareness through marketing communications channels that would reach students and be convenient and efficient for the company employees to use.

2 NUORTEN KOUVOLA

Nuorten Kouvola is a non-profit youth work organisation in Kouvola, Finland that provides various activities for individuals of 0-29 years old in the area. Nuorten Kouvola is under the regional authority of the city of Kouvola. The organisational structure of Youth Services is represented in Figure 1; Nuorten Kouvola organisation is positioned under the governance of the Education and Teaching board.

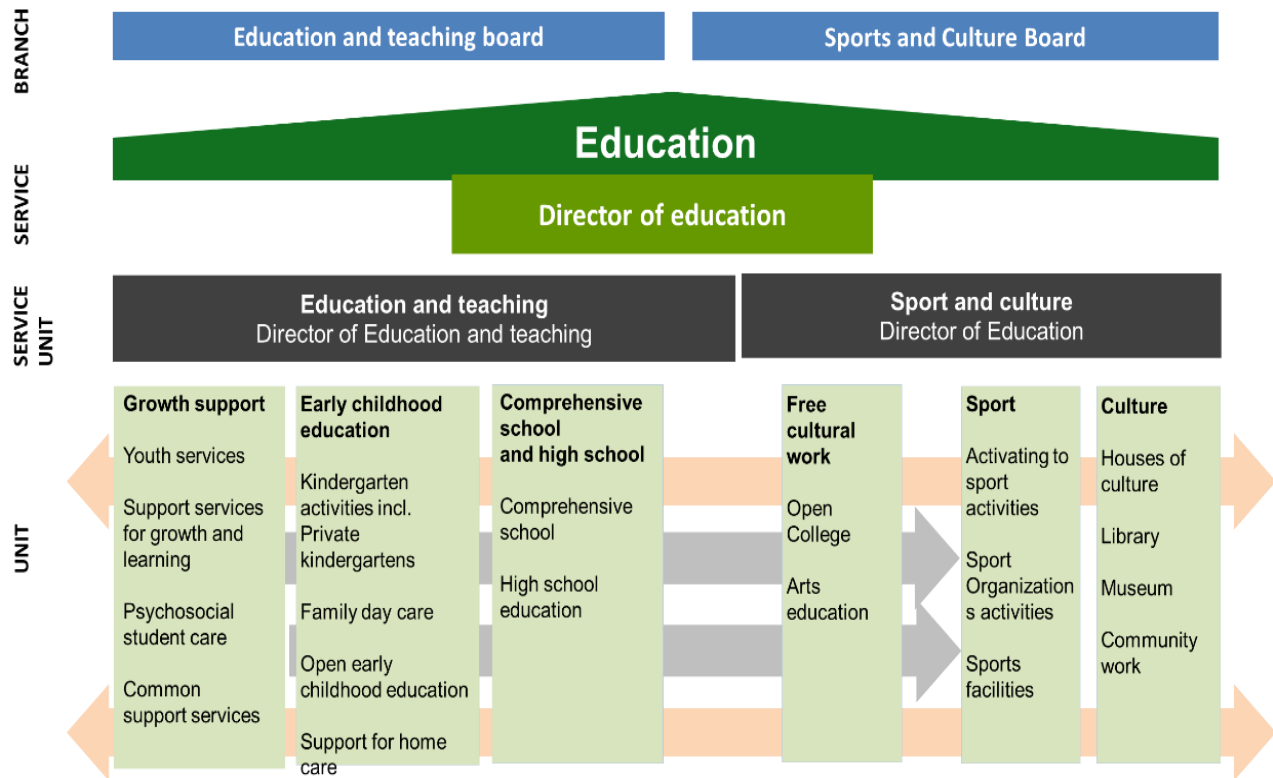


Figure 1 Organisation structure (Salonsaari 2021)

Youth Work of Nuorten Kouvola is conducted on the premises of the Youth Houses, which present a safe place for the youth to gather, participate in different events, join goal-oriented small clubs, and get support or guidance from the youth social workers. Through the Youth Services Nuorten Kouvola aims to support the growth of young people and parenthood, improve employment opportunities, promote equality and inclusion, and consult young people to enhance their influence in the regional decision-making processes (Salonsaari 2021). The Youth Work employees provide counseling, guidance, education, and communication through various forms, including individual and group activities conducted at schools, online, and during leisure time. Youth Services promise to actively listen to each individual and work collaboratively to find solutions that enhance their well-being (Salonsaari 2021). They pledge to prioritise the needs of the person, regardless of how they connect (in person, via social media, or phone), and consider their entire life situation (Salonsaari 2021). The organisation commits to providing ongoing support and guidance while empowering individuals to take responsibility for their decisions. Figure 2 shows the broader structure and variety of Youth Services in Finland.

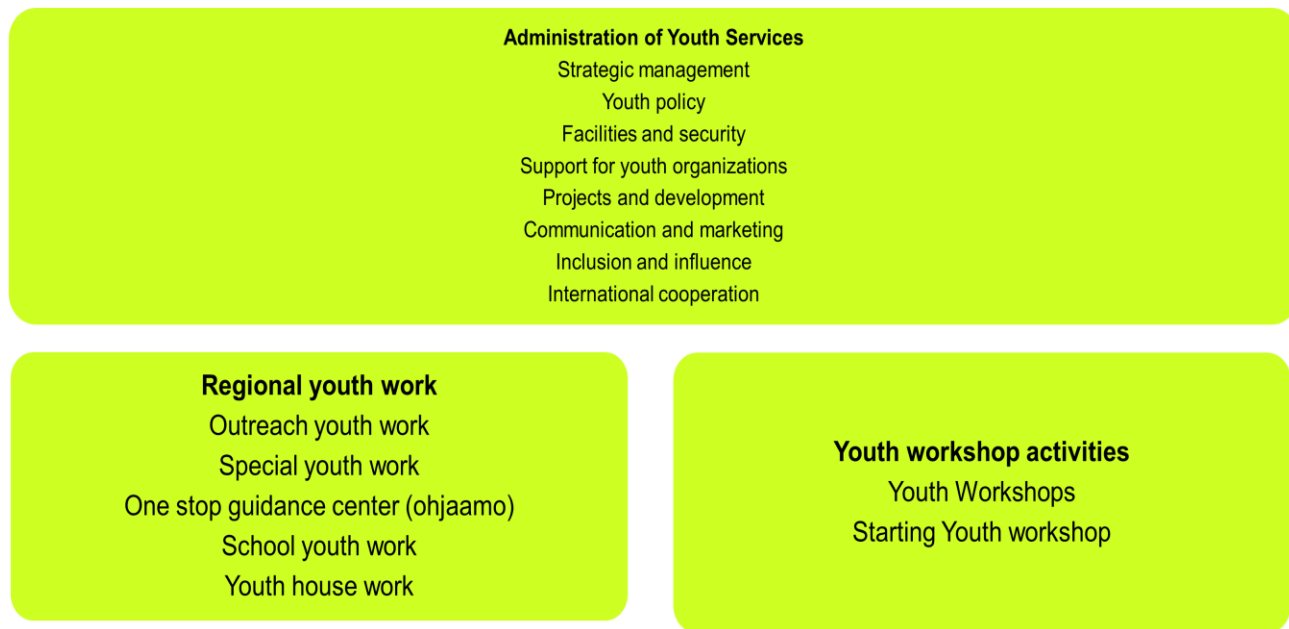


Figure 2. Organization of Youth Services (Salonsaari 2021)

Nuorten Kouvola had 22 975 visitors between the ages of 0-29 years old in 2021 (Salonsaari 2021). Overall, the 10 premises of Nuorten Kouvola include 8 Youth Houses, a specialised sport house Lehdokki, and Bermuda (Youth House of Church). Figure 3 presents the map of the Youth facilities in the Kouvola region. Nuorten Paikka (Kouvolankatu 28; later on referred to as NuPa) is a Youth House in the Kouvola region open to individuals over 18 years old and systematically organises free-entry events that are meant to bring together a young adult audience between the ages of 18-29. Some of the events are as well allowing 30 years old individuals, mainly the International Youth Evenings, that are held monthly and are aimed at the older demographic. Overall, NuPa offers a wide range of services for young people, like individual and group tutoring, various events, and meeting spaces (Salonsaari 2021). Additionally, NuPa provides one-stop guidance (Ohjaamo) and administration of youth services, as well as specialised outreach, cultural, multicultural, digital, and inclusive youth work to promote youth inclusion and influence (Salonsaari 2021).

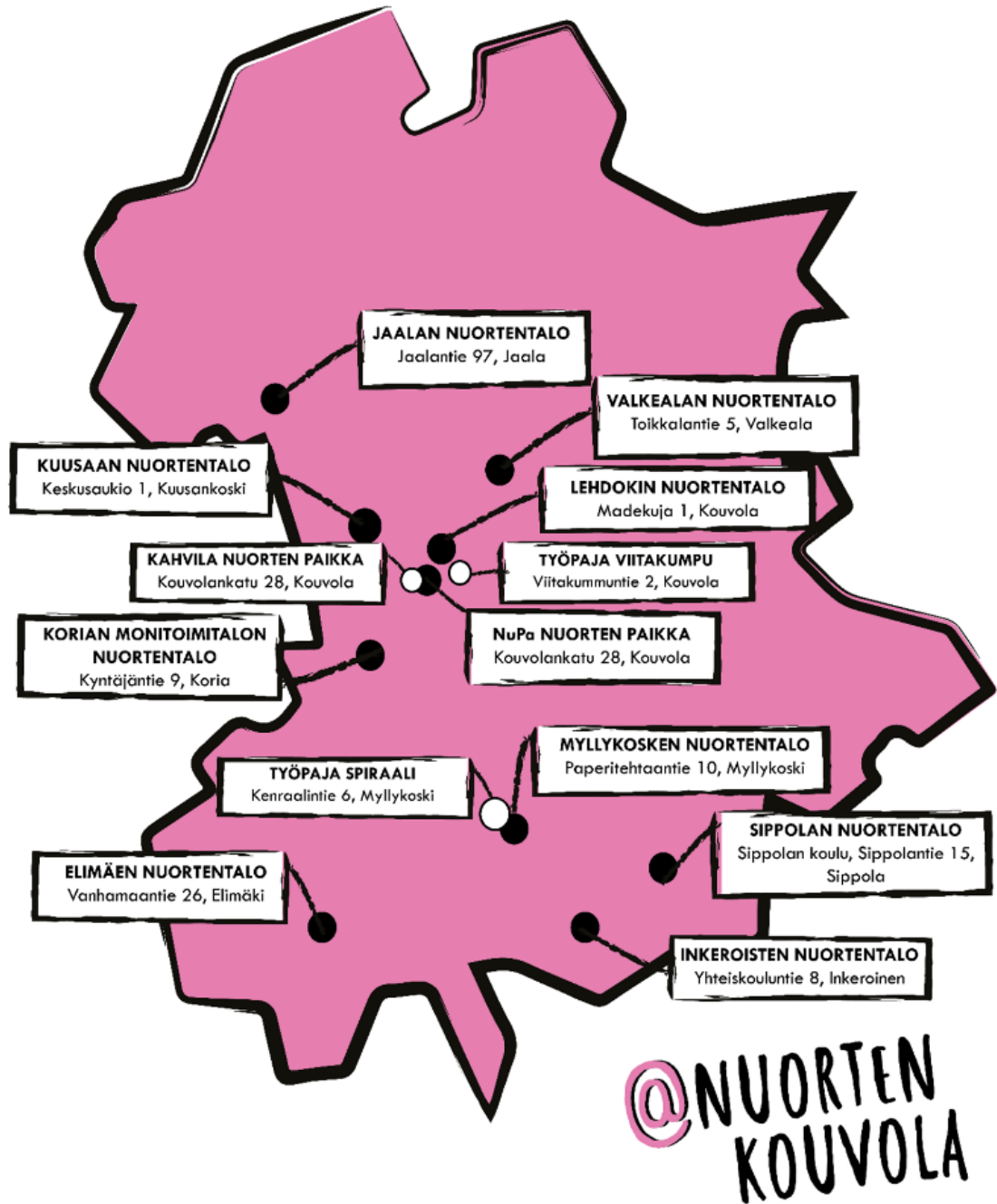


Figure 3. Map of the Youth Premises (Salonsaari 2021)

The budget for Kouvola's youth services composed €2.8 million in 2021, with 69% allocated for staff costs, 17% for premises rents, and 10% for services; and it represents 0.53% of the City of Kouvola's budget (Salonsaari 2021).

Additionally, €67 500 is allocated for supporting youth organisations, including regular youth activities and projects. Fifty permanent employees are working for the different Youth Houses (Salonsaari 2021).

Nuorten Kouvola is an accredited member of the ESC (European Solidarity Corps) volunteer program, and the organisation receives around 3 international volunteers each year that participate in the company's operations, develop events, and integrate with the audience of the Youth Houses.

Nuorten Kouvola has an official website page in the Finnish language where information on the organisation, blog sections, announcements, and upcoming events are posted. Nuorten Kouvola as well has social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Discord. On Instagram and Facebook organisation regularly updates followers on upcoming events and brings awareness to various social causes such as anti-racism campaigns, the importance of mental health, and LGBT+ awareness. On YouTube Nuorten Kouvola posted short thematic videos about the events and projects, news of the youth services, and interviews with the employees. All content on the YouTube channel is available only in the Finnish language. In their Discord channel, Nuorten Kouvola is carrying out virtual social work. It is possible to connect with social workers there, and spend time in the shared virtual environment.

Non-profit organisations. Nuorten Kouvola is a non-profit organisation. Non-profit organisations (later referred to as NPO/NPOs) are tax-exempt entities that aim to serve the public interest through various categories such as charity, education, science, literature, or religion (Carroll 2018, 2491). Non-profit organisations differ from traditional business organisations primarily in their inability to pay profits to owners, unlike business organisations (which can generate profits and allocate them to various shareholders), non-profit organisations do not have owners in the traditional sense, thus NPOs cannot distribute any income that represents revenue in excess of costs (Carroll 2018, 2491). Most non-profit organisations are characterised by having a public service mission, being organised as a not-for-profit or charitable entity, having a governance structure that prevents self-interest and private financial gain, being exempt from federal taxes, and having a special legal status that allows tax-deductible benefits, although there may be some exceptions to these criteria (Wolf 1999 cited in Carroll 2018, 2491). Anheier & Toepler (2023, 69) defined

certain rules that NPOs must adhere to when carrying out private activities for the public benefit. These guidelines include being selfless, where members of the organisation cannot receive profits or similar compensation (except for fair salaries for the work). Additionally, the organisation must exclusively pursue purposes defined as a public benefit, and any other activities may even result in the loss of non-profit tax status under some governance (Anheier & Toepler 2023, 69). The organisation must also directly serve its charitable purpose, rather than using third parties, and must spend its resources for the specified purposes within a given period with a couple of exceptions defined for inter-organisational structures, financing, and special institutions (Anheier & Toepler 2023, 70). NPOs are not chasing revenue gains and most commonly operate with private contributions from individuals, companies, and foundations as the only source of funding (Carroll 2018, 2491). In the case of non-profit organisations planning marketing communications, it is crucial to focus on the customers by identifying them, understanding their interactions with the organisation, and evaluating their level of awareness of the present offerings of services (Katsioloudes 2006, 269).

3 INCREASING BRAND AWARENESS THROUGH MARKETING COMMUNICATION

3.1 Brand awareness

According to Kotler & Keller (2016, 587), brand awareness refers to the degree to which consumers are familiar with and able to recognise or remember a brand with enough clarity to consider purchasing its offerings. Brand awareness results from the various interactions and encounters that consumers have with a particular brand over time (Ateke & Nwulu 2017, 212). Specifically from the non-profit point of view, brand awareness signifies a profound understanding of the organisation, and its various programs and mission (Grau 2021, 91). The awareness can be classified into three categories: aided (prompted) brand awareness, spontaneous (unaided) brand awareness, and top-of-the-mind awareness (Kall 2022, 5-9). Assisted brand awareness refers to the proportion of customers within a specific product category who are able to identify a brand's name, logo, or packaging when presented within a list, shelf display, or on a

computer screen (Kall 2022, 5). Unaided brand awareness identifies the percentage of buyers within a category who can recall brand elements, typically the brand name, from memory (Kall 2022, 7). Top-of-mind awareness refers to the percentage of product category buyers who mention a particular brand first when asked about brands they are aware of (Kall 2022, 9). Compared to spontaneous awareness, top-of-the-mind awareness is significantly lower for all brands, just as spontaneous awareness is considerably lower than aided awareness (Kall 2022, 9). The process of building or improving brand awareness is closely linked with the organisational processes aimed at educating customers about the brand through various programs and channels (Latif et al. 2014, 78). McDougle (2014, 196) states that brand awareness is fundamental in building brand loyalty and attracting customers for profit-driven organisations, as consumers are less likely to be influenced by brand-related information when they lack awareness. Likewise, brand awareness for non-profit companies is crucial in creating recognition and customer loyalty. Enhanced brand awareness can benefit NPOs in multiple ways, not only by generating resources, but also by advancing an organisation's social objectives and differentiating from the competition when it comes to attracting volunteers (Garg et al. 2018, 5). Latif et al. (2014, 78) suggest that methods for increasing brand awareness include both traditional means - such as print advertising or telemarketing, and modern programs like public relations and social media marketing, all combined through organisation's marketing communications. It is a justified approach for organisations to engage in marketing efforts that aim to increase awareness and support of their services among the recipients of those offerings (Pasquier & Villeneuve 2018, 31).

3.2 Marketing communications

Marketing communications can be described as an organisation's audience-centered process of promoting and delivering messages to customers and potential customers, which can be done through a variety of communication channels (Fill 2011). Marketing communications are a highly effective way of generating greater brand awareness (Ateke & Nwulu 2017, 216; Pasquier & Villeneuve 2018, 31). The use of marketing communications supports NPOs in

achieving various objectives, such as establishing public recognition of the brand, raising stakeholder awareness of the organisation, promoting an understanding of the NPO and its activity, and maintaining consistent communication to keep the organisation at the front of stakeholders' thoughts (Grau 2021, 161; Albanna et al. 2022, 6). Non-profit marketing refers to the promotion of a product or service with the goal of achieving a non-monetary outcome rather than generating profits for the marketer (Grau 2021, 7). NPOs utilise marketing tools and channels as a straightforward way to communicate with a variety of key audiences, as then the offering and the message of the organisation have a greater chance to successfully reach and motivate a potential customer to act on it (Wymer et al. 2006, 152). Randazzo (2014, 29; Lefebvre 2013, 38) states that a successful marketing approach should always prioritise customers by considering their needs and values. This can be crucial for the immigrant-origin youth as a target group of marketing communications of an organisation, as this demographic already needs integration into the new environment of the country and culture in shows a recent article by Gyan et al. (2023, 3).

To successfully promote and raise awareness of the services, organisations might need to utilise a combination of marketing and marketing communication components: personal selling, public relations, social media, alternative (buzz) marketing, database marketing, (traditional) advertising, direct response, sales promotions (Clow & Baack 2022, 25). Specifically, from the NPO's marketing communication point of view personal selling, public relations, social media marketing, alternative or buzz marketing, and advertising techniques utilised as communication tools, are suitable and would be further discovered in more detail.

Personal selling as a communication tool. According to Kotler & Keller (2016, 582), personal selling refers to face-to-face interaction with one or more potential customers to present ideas, respond to questions, and procure orders. Personal selling consists of various stages: identifying potential customers, assessing their suitability, acquiring knowledge about their needs, delivering a sales presentation, addressing concerns, finalising the sale, and following up with customers (Clow & Baack 2018, 320). In this research personal selling is

considered as a communication tool. Personal selling is a method that requires direct contact with the customers to establish an immediate relationship, it is characterised by high levels of interactivity, enabling effective communication between the organisation and the customer, which makes this method excellent for conveying information about the organisation to the customers (Sowier-Kasprzyk 2014, 121). Unlike advertising which involves communicating with target customer groups in a one-way impersonal manner, personal selling implies two-way communication between employees and specific clients, whether over the phone, in person, or in other ways. Personal selling is closely tied to bringing awareness and building immediate trust. Therefore, consistency in personal selling can be a key success factor in implementing such a technique (Clow & Baack 2022, 324). Wymer et al. (2006, 272) prove that usage of the personal selling technique is rather widely and successfully utilised by NPOs' marketing efforts aimed at attracting individuals to the different activities organised by NPOs. The key objective of implementing personal selling is to match the right product with the right consumer and develop a long-term relationship with the customer (Clow & Baack 2018, 347; Kaur 2014, 5). Personal selling implemented from a promotion perspective include numerous advantages such as the ability to keep the customer's attention and get instant feedback through two-way communication, accurate customer targeting, and the possibility to get immediate action (Kaur 2014, 6). These valuable features of personal selling make it a powerful communication tool that would enable organisations to build instant trust and long-term relationships.

Public Relations (PR) refers to various programs aimed at promoting or protecting a company's reputation or its individual products, which are implemented internally towards employees and externally towards consumers, other firms, the government, and the media (Kotler & Keller 2016, 582). Public relations belong to the nonpersonal mass communications channel (Kotler & Keller 2016, 591). PR has the administrative function that evaluates people's attitudes, defines individual or organisational policies and operations, and develops programs to assess public understanding and acceptance of the organisation overall or of the offered products or services (Ayyıldız et al. 2017,

177). Public relations primary tools include various publications and events, news, community affairs, branded media, and social responsibility (Kotler & Keller 2016, 631). Research by Papasolomou (2014) showed that PR integrated within the marketing communications plan is an important tool since it has the ability to create brand awareness and visibility, generate media attention in the promotional activities to increase the organisation's and offer's reputation, and deliver a message about the products or services in a style that doesn't necessarily come across as a promotion and stands out from the conventional advertising. PR has the ability to reach a wider audience of potential customers who may avoid traditional marketing tactics and advertisements by presenting information as news and events (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 440). Public relations are a tool that may be used to promote anything, whether it is goods, people, places, ideas, or activities (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 470). The general appeal of public relations messages lies in their freedom from prejudice, ultimately creating interest and value for the public. PR helps to raise or create customer awareness of a product and organisation through media coverage and word-of-mouth recommendations (Papasolomou 2014, 9). Public Relations can work in synergy with other marketing communications channels to enhance the overall effectiveness of the promotional campaign (Papasolomou 2014, 9). PR used in marketing enhances the credibility of messages, accompanying advertising (Papasolomou 2014, 8).

Social media marketing generally refers to the usage of online communities, social platforms, and blog promotion to advertise a product or service. The main forms of social media platforms are social networks, blogs, opinion-sharing platforms, and content-sharing platforms (Lin & Rauschnabel 2016, 2). Social media platforms can be used proactively and reactively by organisations (Lin & Rauschnabel 2016, 3). Active use of social media refers to how companies utilise social media platforms to achieve business goals such as brand awareness, customer relationship building, sales, or public relations, whereas the central theme of proactive social media marketing is empowering consumers as broadcasters of an organisation's marketing message through electronic word-of-

mouth (eWOM) (Lin & Rauschnabel 2016, 3). Mehrotra and Siraj (2021, 2) state that individuals, who utilise social media as a means of interacting with organisations generally have a stronger sense of loyalty to the company and may serve as advocates for such entities.

Social media is particularly well suited for building community and consumer engagement and for involving customers with both the brand and one another (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 523). Social media has the greatest potential to involve consumers in creating and disseminating brand content, experiences, knowledge, and ideas (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 523).

In the case of non-profit organisations, social media serves mainly as a networking tool that allows companies to reach out the interested individuals and increase the visibility of those who may not be familiar with the brand (Mehrotra & Siraj 2021, 2). Although social media has become extensively available and acknowledged as a crucial component of marketing strategy, companies are still struggling with comprehending how to use and manage the channels effectively to enhance brand performance or awareness (Haenlein 2017 cited in Chierici et al. 2019, 216). Carboni and Maxwell (2015, 26) determined that the effectiveness of implementing social media marketing relies on several factors, such as the adopted approach, the particular social media channels utilised, and the quality of interaction.

Gartner et al. (2021, 581) state that the 7 support functions of social media usage by non-profit organisations include improving customer relationships, exchange of information, reinforcement of interactions and conversations, stimuli to co-create and innovate, community-building, cooperative action, and support of the reputation of the organisation. Each social media platform has its own unique characteristics and culture, as well as a distinct set of media elements that enable different types of communication. The research by Gartner et al. (2021, 585) showed that the social platforms can be grouped into categories based on their characteristics of content delivery; for instance, WhatsApp is primarily used for text-based both-way communication, Facebook, on the other hand, is dominated

by two-way communication that includes a mix of media and content, Instagram is more aligned with one-way visual communication, and YouTube is a social platform that is being mostly focused on one-way content communication, that is being delivered through the visual. After choosing the appropriate platform or platforms, the effectiveness of social media usage depends on the quality and implementation of the practices engaged (Gartner et al. 2021, 585). NPOs engage in activities such as posting, advertising, messaging, broadcasting, public education, and advertising as a means of communication, sharing, and dissemination of information. The advantage of social media marketing is that the results of the targeted strategies implemented allow for rapid and effective measures of whether the audience has responded or seen the campaigns (Carboni & Maxwell 2015, 26). This is crucial in assessing and making timely changes if the target audience has not been reached or responded to in an anticipated way.

Namisango et al. (2019) explored the purposes for which NPOs are maintaining their social media presence - Figure 4 shows that the information exchange (77,4%) is the primary reason.

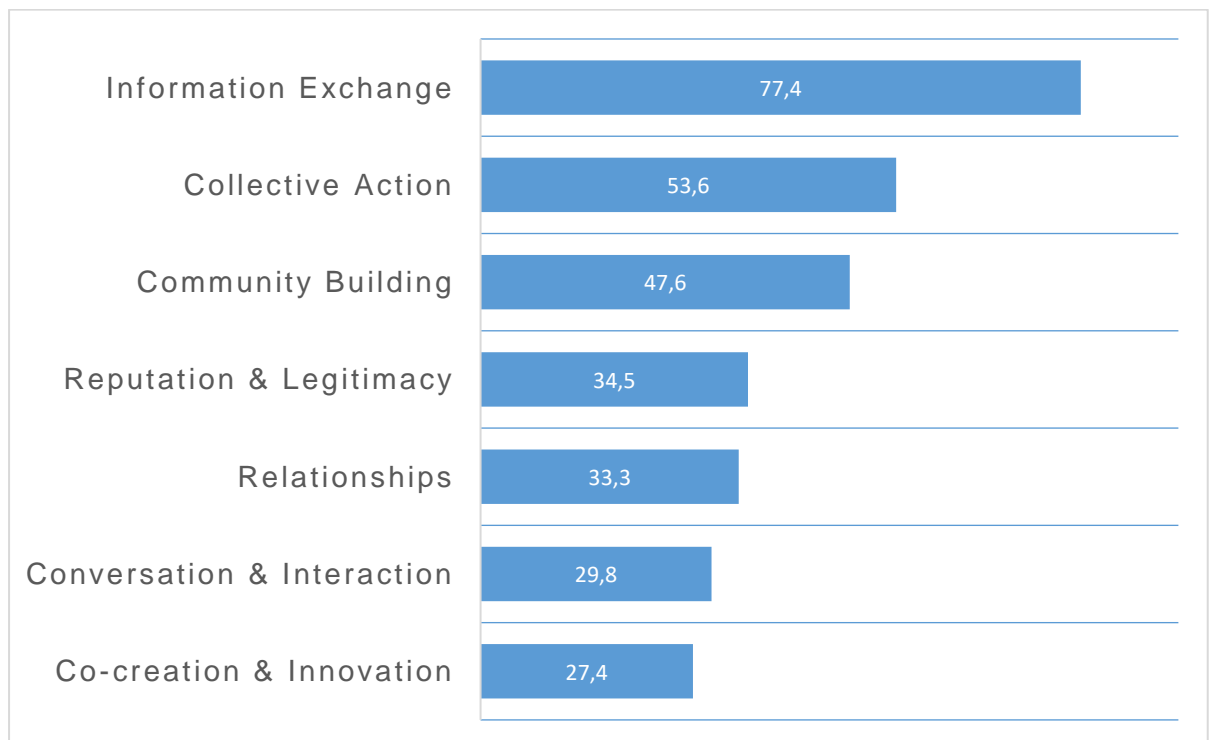


Figure 4. Social Media Functions for Non-profits (Namisango et al. 2019)

The study carried out by Albanna et al. (2022, 10) showed that social media usage has a considerable and positive impact on two effectiveness dimensions of NPO operations: awareness and community engagement.

Alternative or buzz marketing. Alternative marketing encompasses buzz or word-of-mouth marketing, lifestyle marketing, and product placement (Clow & Baack 2022, 279). Implementing alternative marketing within marketing communications requires the use of imagination and creativity, with the goal is to identify connection points between the brand and the customer's path to transmit marketing messages (Clow & Baack 2022, 283). Lifestyle marketing includes the process of dividing the market or target audience according to lifestyle aspects, presenting the product in a manner that aligns with the targeted market's activities, interests, and opinions, and executing targeted marketing campaigns that utilise lifestyle-related appeals to boost the product's market worth (Sathish & Rajamonah 2012, 152). Product placement refers to the practice of using brands as set pieces within other programming (Kotler & Keller 2016, 459). Another form of alternative marketing, buzz marketing, also known as word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing, is based on the trust and credibility that comes with interpersonal communication, specifically through personal recommendations of existing customers with individuals, who are yet unaware of the organisation and its offering (Soundararaj et al. 2015, 1). In this research, the focus of alternative marketing will be on buzz marketing which will now be explored in more detail. Word-of-mouth has attracted significant attention among customers as a considerable source of information related to services and products, and a highly effective marketing communication strategy to 'naturally' increase brand awareness (Yeh & Choi 2011 cited in Barreda et al. 2015, 603). Barreda et al. (2015, 603) even state that word-of-mouth can be considered the strongest form of brand awareness. However, buzz communication initiatives from real customers are unable to successfully generate 'buzz' on their own (Clow & Baack 2022, 282), so the organisations must create events and promote and create occasions for customers to be willing to share their experiences. Organisations can start effective word-of-mouth buzz that aims to emphasise connections between the sender and the receiver in their target group (Quesenberry 2019,

253). In another way, the organisation's communications should encourage customers to ask friends in the target audience for information or the benefits of the product or service (Quesenberry 2019, 253). In order to develop and increase positive word-of-mouth, organisations should encourage satisfied customers within their target audience to share their positive experiences for example through their personal social media channels (Quesenberry 2019, 253). Real customer-generated word-of-mouth buzz occurs once individuals become aware of the product or service, so it is important to combine buzz marketing with other tools of promotion to prepare and inform individuals that later on would be sharing this knowledge with others (Clow & Baack 2022, 282). Unlike social media marketing covered earlier, WOM provides a different approach since the 'advertising' comes from the social media channels of customers, instead of the organisation itself. Word-of-mouth marketing relies on the personal relationships organisations have with customers, and their voluntary advocacy for the brand (Quesenberry 2019, 332). Buzz marketing is mainly effective for two reasons: firstly, because people tend to trust the opinions of others more than they trust paid advertisements and secondly, it allows for consumers' desire to express their own opinions and experiences and share them with others (Clow & Baack 2022, 305).

As Grau (2021, 163) defines, **traditional advertising** refers to the form of funded messages on television broadcasting, radio, in printed media like newspapers and magazines, and in out-of-home, outdoor venues, such as billboards or transit advertising. Although businesses tend to utilise advertising the most, a broad range of non-profit organisations also uses advertising to spread awareness about their causes to different target audiences (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 452). Advertising is helpful since it gives the institution control over the marketing message frequency, size, positioning, and reach. However, advertising can be rather expensive, and many individuals believe the message might be biased because it comes straight from the company, despite the fact that such control for the organisation is ideal (Watkins 2003). Advertising as well can be considered impersonal, and expensive to create and position, and the message cannot be personalised to the individuals that will see the advertising message, alongside

with it becoming harder to capture the attention of viewers (Wymer et al. 2006, 161). As people in the modern world are exposed to numerous marketing messages every day and since the media is excessively saturated with commercial advertising aimed to sell goods, it becomes increasingly difficult for non-profit organisations to communicate with target audiences through traditional advertising (Wymer et al. 2006, 13). However, advertising has some strong advantages that make organisations choose to include this type of marketing in their marketing communications efforts. Advertising is effective in building broad awareness and knowledge of the offer as it can reach the masses and be delivered at a relatively low cost per person. As advertising is becoming more and more international, NPOs are given the opportunity to reach people around the world with their message and inform volunteers wherever they are (Wymer et al. 2006, 160).

Nuorten Kouvola is implementing traditional advertising through outdoor promotion – transit advertisement which is shown in Figure 5. Nuorten Kouvola has advertisements placed on the public transportation buses (Elimäen Liikenne) running in the Kouvola region. The advertisements include colourful visuals with the organisation's logo and name, alongside catchy slogans.



Figure 5. Nuorten Kouvola's advertising on a Kouvola's bus

3.3 Marketing communications applicability

It is important to connect with the target audience consistently and through multiple channels (Miller 2021, 121). To effectively reach consumers, organisations should employ a mix of promotion tools, including advertising, personal selling, public relations, and social media marketing (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 403). Nasir (2015, 221) states that in order to obtain target customers, a company must employ innovative techniques to attract potential customers, concentrate on generating encouraging conversations through a variety of channels, create awareness through public relations and word-of-mouth, and communicate with relevant content. Nowadays consumers are better educated and more empowered to communicate, they can utilise the internet, social media, and other technology to independently find information rather than fully depending on the information provided by organisations themselves (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 425). That is why it is important to have a cohesive marketing communications approach to reach the target audience through various channels and techniques. Creating integrated marketing communications implies careful coordination of the customer touch points with the brand to ensure the delivery of a cohesive promotional message (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 429). For example,

all the techniques of marketing communication described above are complimenting and add onto each other. Both the media coverage (through the Public Relations incentives) and consumers (through word-of-mouth) become 'partners' in the organisation's efforts to create a buzz about the brand (Papasolomou et al. 2014, 15). The traditional form of advertising or social media marketing can serve as an introduction to the brand and its offer before personal selling is carried out to enhance the effectiveness of that method (Kotler & Keller 2016, 597).

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methods refer to the various techniques utilised in conducting research; these techniques serve as the instruments of the investigation process, allowing for the systematic gathering, organisation, and examination of information to reach conclusions (Walliman 2022, 7). To differentiate between quantitative and qualitative research, a common approach is to categorise data as either numeric for the quantitative approach or non-numeric for the qualitative (Saunders et al. 2019, 175). Quantitative methods, such as surveys, experimental methods, and hypothesis testing, measure the spread of certain opinions or behaviour within a group, while qualitative methods handle data that cannot be counted and require coding and content analysis to be managed and analysed (Hammond & Wellington 2021, 127). By utilising both qualitative and quantitative methods, it is possible to gain a more comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon studied than what can be achieved with just one approach (Wallilman 2022, 199; Saunders et al. 2019, 178). Mixed-methods research is a type of multi-method research that combines the use of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and analytical techniques within a single research study (Saunders et al. 2019, 181). Mixed-methods research offers several advantages as it incorporates confirming, complementary, and contrasting data sources (Hammond & Wellington 2021, 130). The choice of this approach is connected to the concept of triangulation, where multiple perspectives are used to verify and validate the findings of the research (Walliman 2022, 199). The primary objective of conducting mixed methods

research is to expand the range and variety of data that can be gathered, thus offering a more comprehensive resource for analysis (Walliman 2022, 205). Sampling for the survey will not be random as the sampling strategy must be aligned with the overall logic of the study and the research questions (Punch 2003, 38). The approach to dealing with quantitative and qualitative data differs significantly; statistics are the most common method for analysing quantitative data as it offers a range of tests depending on the data's nature and intended use, and the analysis of qualitative data is less exact due to the imprecise nature of the data (Walliman 2022, 88).

The research takes on the qualitative interviews as it offers to obtain more in-depth information on the topic and the ability to attain supplementary comments (Kothari 1990, 98-99) and quantitative surveys, which would allow for flexible data collection of a large number of cases (Walliman 2022, 133). Interviews enable to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research topic from the participants' perspective, as they allow for interactive discussions and identification of unexpected themes, whereas surveys are better suited for capturing a broader picture of the research topic (Hammond & Wellington 2021, 109). According to Hammond & Wellington (2021, 170), survey research refers to the systematic data collection from a certain group known as the survey population. Surveys are a powerful tool for generating data independently, but they can also be implemented as a component of a mixed-methods research strategy where surveys are used to gather a wide range of data, while interviews provide in-depth insights (Hammond & Wellington 2021, 174). Interviews refer to the conversations that take place between the researcher and the individuals being researched, who may be referred to as participants, subjects, or interviewees (Hammond & Wellington 2021, 109). Interviews offer a thorough understanding by enabling researchers to perceive events or contexts from their interviewee's perspectives and providing an interactive platform for clarification of questions and identification of unexpected themes (Hammond & Wellington 2021, 109).

In this research, primary data have been gathered through two sources: an online quantitative survey and in-person qualitative interviews. The combination of the two research methods allowed to gather the perspectives of both the target audience and the employees of the Nuorten Kouvola.

4.1 Data collection

Survey data collection. The questionnaire is a flexible data collection method that offers several benefits, including a structured format, convenience for respondents, and a low cost, allowing for the administration of a large number of participants across vast geographical areas (Walliman 2022, 132-133). Additionally, since there is no personal influence from the researcher, sensitive questions can be asked, and there is a higher chance of obtaining accurate responses (Walliman 2022, 133).

The survey in this research was distributed through Outlook email to the target students from the Kouvola campus from a Digital International Business degree, Game Design degree, Diploma Program in Entrepreneurship and Startups, Master's Degree in International Business, and to the Exchange students, - this demographic is a target audience for Nuorten Kouvola. This specific setting or group of people examined - International XAMK students aged 18-29 - is a case of a larger phenomenon - international youth's interest and motivation in participating in social work services, and the findings of the study will have implications for this general demographic group. The data has been collected over a period of 12 days. There have been two emails sent to a total of 479 students from the mentioned above study programs. The language of the survey was English, and the respondents have been notified that the survey is for academic purposes and their identities are to remain anonymous. The questionnaire included a variety of question types, containing open-ended, multiple choice, and scale questions. Questions of the survey covered the experiences of the students that have visited Nuorten Kouvola previously to find out about their perception of the organisation

Interview data collection. While interviews are useful for collecting quantitative data, they are especially valuable when qualitative data is needed, as they can be conducted on general or specific topics and even on sensitive subjects that might be related to one's study (Walliman 2022, 138).

Interviews have been carried out with the employees of Nuorten Kouvola: a social worker that carries out youth work with international youth and an employee responsible for the marketing activity of Nuorten Kouvola. Interviews were in-person, held in the familiar for the employees' environment - in the offices of Nuorten Kouvola, which allowed them to avoid stress connected with the interview process and to observe the nonverbal cues such as intonation, gestures, or facial expressions for a better understanding of the conversation. The interviews were carried out in a semi-structured manner, with the list of the predetermined questions sent to the interviewees in advance, however, the fixed questions did not limit the conversation and allowed the participants to elaborate further on topics in their own words to draw attention to areas not foreseen when setting the questions. Interviews were anonymous which as well contributed to the honest opinion-sharing by the interviewees. To enhance the data analysis stage and avoid missing opportunities to improve the data, the interviews were recorded, enabling active listening during the interview process instead of continually taking notes.

4.2 Data analysis

Quantitative analysis involves data presented in numerical form and utilises mathematical operations to explore their characteristics, with the levels of measurement - nominal, ordinal, interval, or ratio - influencing the type of applicable analysis along with the number of cases involved (Walliman 2022, 87). The quantitative analysis aims to measure, compare, explore relationships, make forecasts, test hypotheses, construct concepts and theories, explore, control, and explain data (Walliman 2022, 88). In all cases of quantitative analysis, the raw data has to be displayed in a way that enables to detect patterns or trends (Walliman 2022, 157). Two main analysis methods for the quantitative data include descriptive and inferential statistics (Jones & Goldring 2022, 5).

Descriptive statistics enable us to portray, illustrate through graphs, and capture the main characteristics of a particular group (Jones & Goldring 2022, 8).

Descriptive statistics involve concentrating on sample size (N) and utilising the statistics derived from that sample to provide social insight into a particular phenomenon (Jones & Goldring 2022, 8; 73). Descriptive statistics provide graphical options to facilitate data understanding for the readers (Walliman 2022, 163). The approach to measure and analyse the data through the descriptive method is shown in Figure 6.

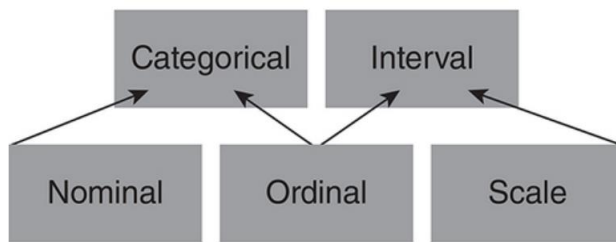


Figure 6. Levels of measurement (Jones & Goldring 2022, 73)

This data-analysing technique allows to deal with the data more effectively to reach conclusions (Jones & Goldring 2022, 73).

Qualitative data is commonly analysed through the technique of coding, which refers to the process of assigning thematic labels and organising the data systematically (Tracy 2013, 186). Coding involves the process of categorising data based on their representation or association with a specific concept, belief, theme, action, cultural practice, or relationship (Tracy 2013, 189). The coding process can vary based on the research's focus and the volume of data, with various approaches available (Hammond & Wellington 2021, 27). However, it generally commences by assigning basic descriptive labels that capture the essence of a text unit (Hammond & Wellington 2021, 27). By using coding, it is possible to easily identify patterns and draw meaningful comparisons both within and across respondents (Hammond & Wellington 2021, 27). The initial stage of coding involves open coding, where researchers examine interview transcripts for overarching themes related to their research topics, such as participants' ideas or experiences, this process facilitates the categorisation of the data (Pattern &

Newhart 2018, 168). After open coding, the data analysis involves axial coding - during this stage; the data is re-examined and restructured to identify connections between categories and themes in the coding (Pattern & Newhart 2018, 168). In the end, the data is classified according to the core categories (Pattern & Newhart 2018, 169). The coding technique allows to see the broader picture of the gathered qualitative data, which allows for cohesive analysis and results.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Survey results

Demographic of respondents. Sixty XAMK students from the Kouvola campus have completed the survey successfully. However, as the target audience of Nuorten Kouvola is individuals up to 30 years old, in this section the emphasis will be made on the survey answers of the 41 students, who match this criterion. Additionally, a group of 19 students aged 31+, who also answered the survey, was researched to find out differences or any comparability in the answers. As mentioned above, the survey has been disseminated to a group of 479 students from the programs carried out in the English language at the Kouvola campus, however, since the programs as well include students above 30 years old, and Finnish students, which do not fall into the target audience of Nuorten Kouvola or scope of this research, it is impossible to estimate the exact response rate. However, it can be assumed that the response rate is circa 10%. Since the response rate and the number of respondents is low, this research will just present basic statistics, as it is not possible to carry out advanced calculations.

Table 1 shows the ages of the respondents of the N=41 group. There is at least one student of every age from 18-30 that has completed the survey, with the biggest group of students aged 30 and 20.

Table 1. Age distribution of respondents (N=41)

18-19y.o.	20-21y.o.	22-23y.o.	24-25y.o.	26-27y.o.	28-29y.o.	30y.o.
4	9	4	5	5	6	8
9,8%	22%	9,8%	12%	12%	14,6%	19,5%

In the N=19 group, 14 individuals are aged under 40 years old (74%), and 5 are over that age (26%).

Survey answers were given by 20 men, 18 women, and 3 non-binary individuals, which is illustrated in Figure 7 (N=40).

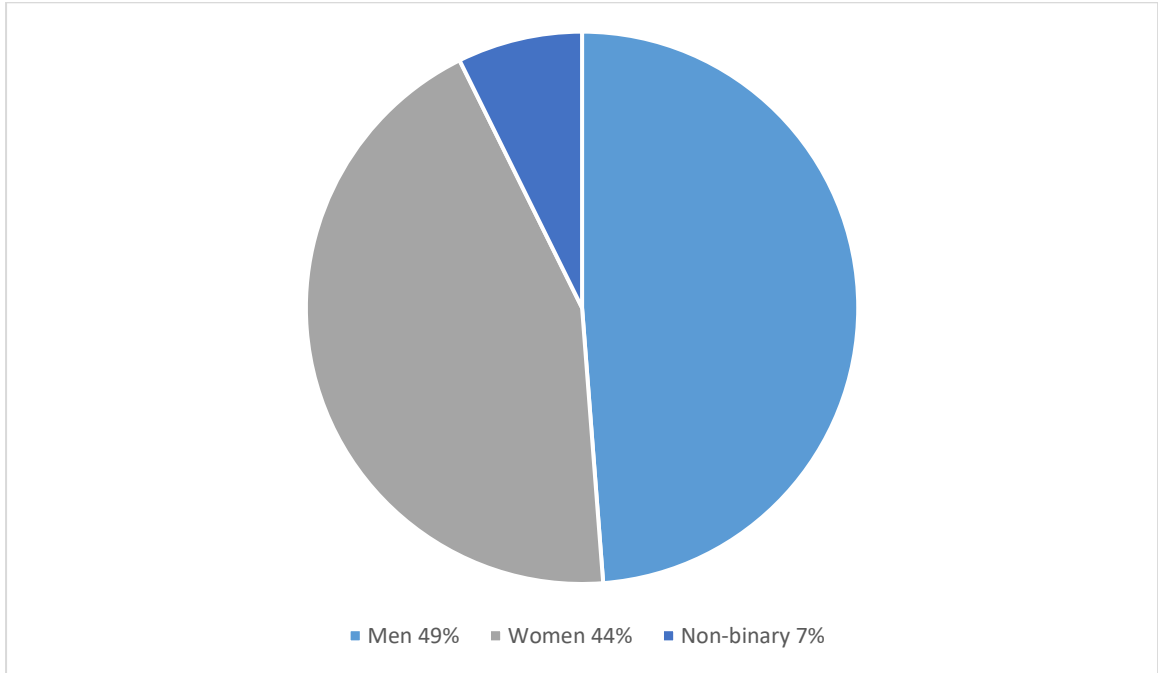


Figure 7. Gender distribution of respondents (N=41)

Group N=19 contains answers from 10 women (53%) and 9 men (47%).

In the main group N=41, there has been a total of 16 different student nationalities, with most answers from Indian and Russian students. Table 2 shows the variety and distributions of the respondents' nationalities.

Table 2. Respondent's nationalities (N=41)

Poland	1
Sri Lanka	1
Senegal	1
Vietnam	1
Turkey	1
Pakistan	1
Spain	1
Kazakhstan	1
Greece	1
Morocco	1
Austria	2
Nepal	3
Italy	3
Finland	6
Russia	7
Indi	10

In Group N=19, the majority of the respondents were Indian (8), with other students being from Vietnam (2), Germany (1), Nigeria (1), Italy (1), Finland (1), Nepal (1), Algeria (1), Senegal (1), USA (1), and Sri Lanka (1).

The respondents from Group N=41 were from all the programs on the Kouvola campus taught in the English language. The majority of the respondents, however, are from the Digital International Business degree and a Diploma in Entrepreneurship and Startups. The minority of respondents were Exchange students, as this category is usually quantitatively smaller than any other full-time degree. The distribution is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of Study programs & study years (N=41)

	Digital International Business	Game Design	MBA	Diploma in Entrepreneurship	Exchange Students
1 st Study Year	3	3	2	9	3
	7,3%	7,3%	4,9%	21,9%	
2 nd Study Year	4	3	3	N/A	7,3
	9,7%	7,3%	7,3%		
3 rd Study Year	4	3		N/A	
	9,7%	7,3%			
4 th Study Year	3	1		N/A	
	7,3%	2,4%			
Total	14	10	5	9	3
	34,1%	24,4%	12,2%	21,9%	7,3%

Respondents from group N=19 were students from the Diploma Program in Entrepreneurship and Startups (8), Digital International Business (5), Master's Degree of Business Administration (3), Game Design degree (2), and the Exchange Mobility (1).

Awareness of Nuorten Kouvola. Figure 8 reveals that only 17% (7) of respondents from Group N=41 have heard of Nuorten Kouvola – Youth Services of Kouvola before. 83% (34) of students are entirely unaware of the organisation and its services.

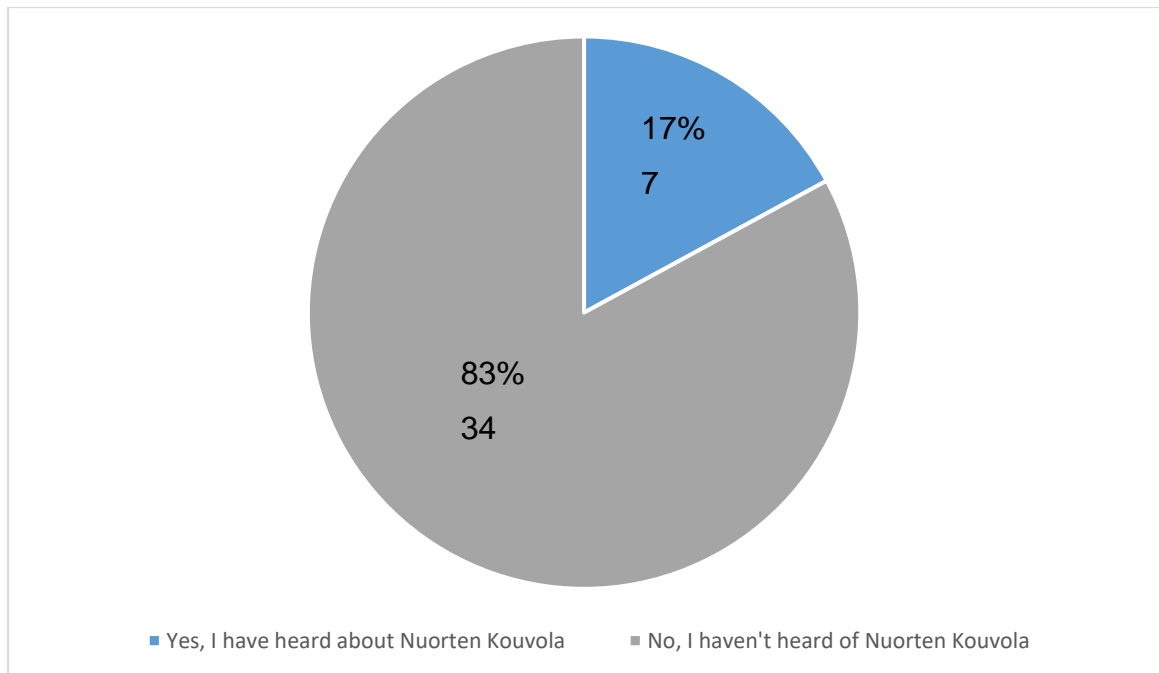


Figure 8. Knowledge of respondents about Nuorten Kouvola organisation (N=41)

In Group N=41, 15 students (79%) have not previously heard of the Nuorten Kouvola before, and 4 of the participants (21%) already being aware of the services.

Figure 9 illustrates the answers of 7 respondents from the main Group N=41 who have previously heard about Nuorten Kouvola on whether they have used services provided by Nuorten Kouvola. Only 1 respondent has heard about Nuorten Kouvola, without using the services provided by the organisation. 6 respondents have visited Nuorten Paikka and used the available services provided by Nuorten Kouvola at least once.

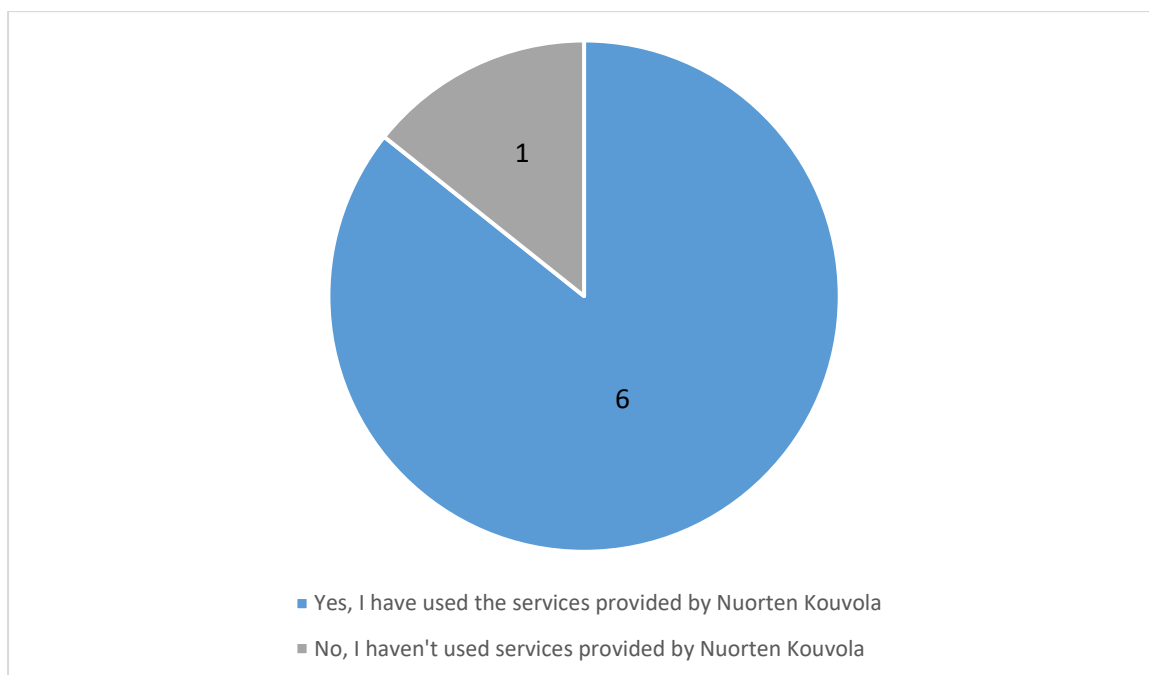


Figure 9. Usage of provided services (N=7)

In Group N=19, from the 4 respondents, who have heard of Nuorten Kouvola, 3 have used the services provided by the organisation, and 1 student has not.

Services that students from the N=41 group have used are illustrated in Figure 10. Respondents have equally participated in spending leisure time in Nuorten Paikka and/or joined cultural events. One of the respondents as well stated that they have 'visited with a friend because he wanted to', which can be as well classified as spending leisure time in NuPa. The support services provided by Nuorten Kouvola remained an unexplored category. This can be explained by the insufficient information available in the English language about this particular branch of Nuorten Kouvola since to access these services, one has to voluntarily reach the social workers responsible for the guidance activities.

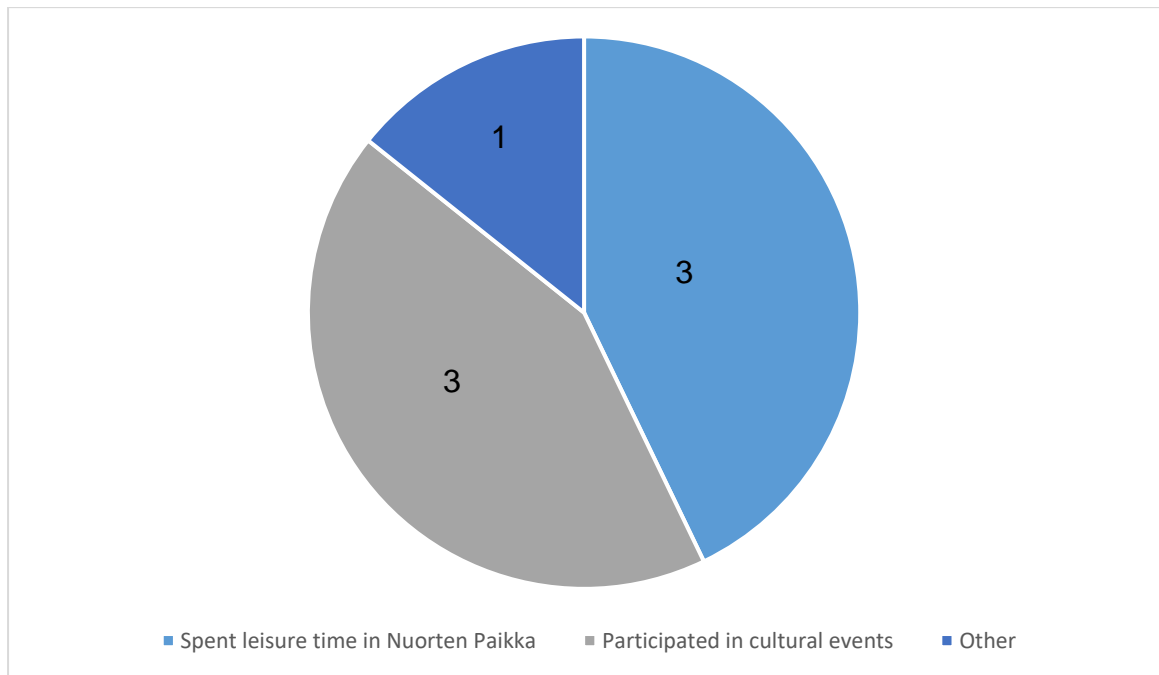


Figure 10. Services popularity (N=6)

3 students from the N=19 group all participated in the cultural events provided by the Nuorten Kouvola.

When it comes to finding out about the Nuorten Kouvola, the majority (71%) of the respondents of the N=41 Group discovered the organisation by recommendation from friends. Such means of traditional advertisement as flyers, event-related, or bus advertisements were not noticed by the respondents. Figure 11 as well shows two other categories that the students noted as the ones that informed them about the organisation – from the social media accounts of the City of Kouvola or Nuorten Kouvola and the university employee.

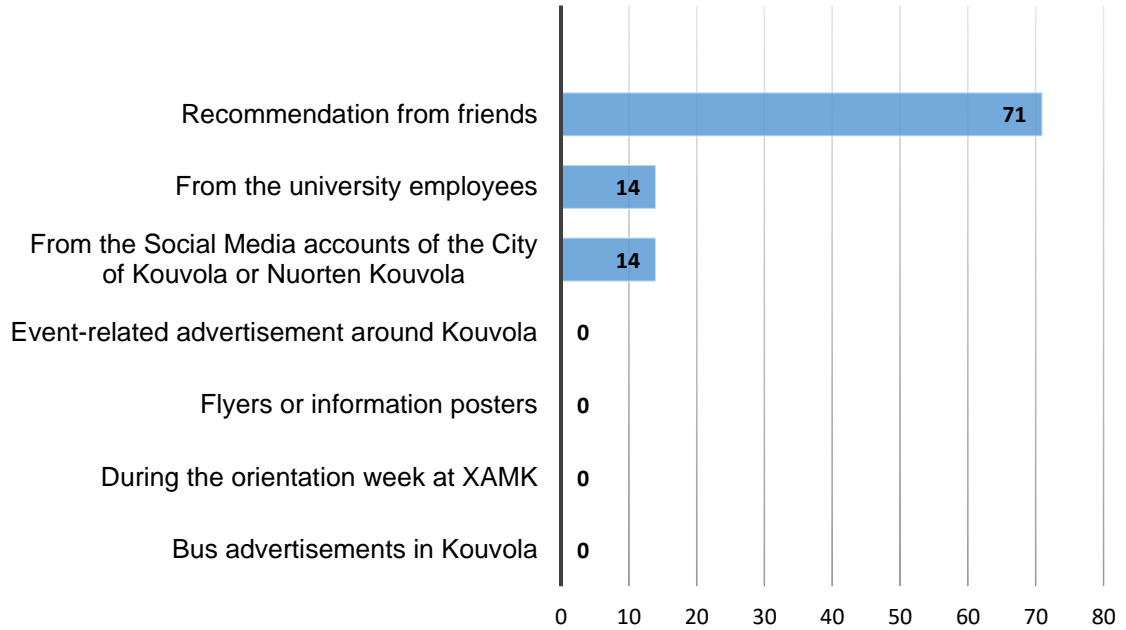


Figure 11. Marketing communications channels used (N=7)

In Group N=19, 4 students who have heard about the services of Nuorten Kouvola, selected through a multiple-option question that they found out about the organisation from the orientation week at XAMK (2), as well as from the social media accounts of the Nuorten Kouvola or the City of Kouvola (1), from the recommendation from friends (1), or from the flyers and information posters (1).

Respondents from the Group N=41, who have used the Nuorten Kouvola services were asked to estimate their overall knowledge of the organisation and its services on a scale of 1-5, where 1 = 'Not at all aware' and 5 = 'Fully aware'. The average amounted to 2.6, with the minimal value given being 2 and the maximum value of 4.

Respondents as well rated their likeliness of recommending Nuorten Kouvola's services to fellow students. The scale was 1-5, with 1 being 'Not at all likely' and 5 referring to 'Extremely likely/Already did'. This value's average came up to 3,3 with the same minimal and maximal values given as in the previous question.

In Group N=19, the overall knowledge of the organisation was rated at an average of 2.3, and the average likeliness to recommend the services to a friend to 3.3.

Efforts in attracting the students. Students from the N=41 group were asked to select what would encourage them to use Nuorten Kouvola's services. Figure 12 presents that the two main options: Better communication to inform students about the services and more events and activities organised by Nuorten Kouvola for students, were almost equally popular with 28 (68%) and 29 (71%) votes respectively. Answers given in the open field included the presence of events that are aimed not only at young people and 'information - awareness campaigns IN ENGLISH!'.

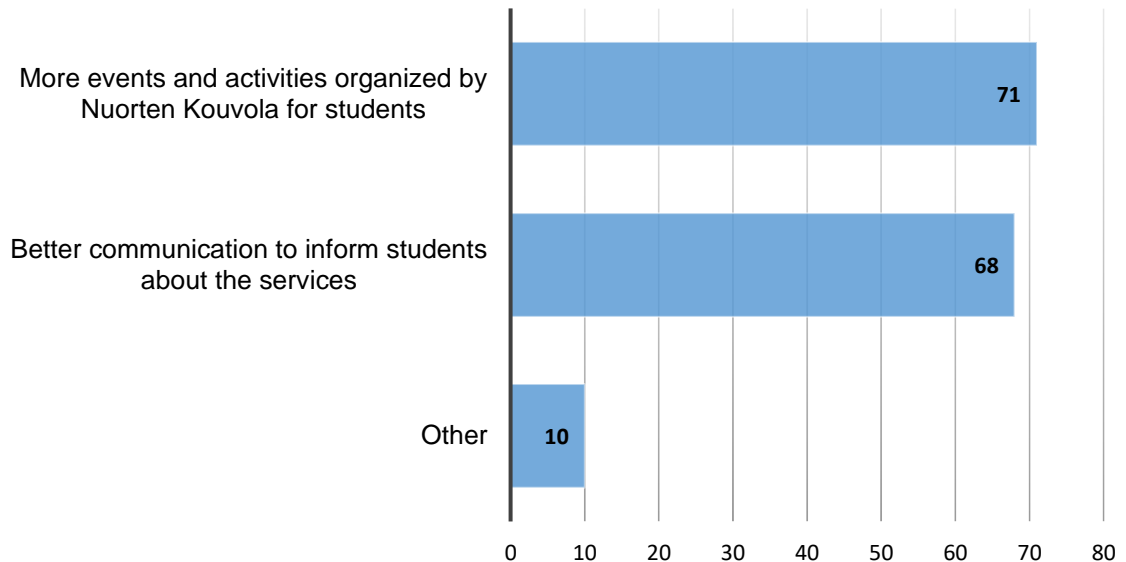


Figure 12. Motivation for visiting Nuorten Kouvola (N=41)

Group N=19 through a multiple-choice question showed that they would feel encouraged to use Nuorten Kouvola's services if there was better communication to inform students about the services (15), more events organised for students (10), and according to the answers given to the 'other' option, respondents would like to have an opportunity to 'Interact with others who came from different cultures and countries', and would feel encouraged to use Nuorten Kouvola's services if they organised 'Activities without age limit'.

The participants were asked to select option(s) that represent, in their opinion, the most effective ways and channels in informing the students about the

services of Nuorten Kouvola or upcoming events. Figure 13 shows that the most popular option among the N=41 group was posters or flyers in the XAMK's buildings (56%; 23) followed by getting to know the organisation during the orientation week (49%; 20) and through Social Media channels (46%; 19). Preferred social media channels were named as follows: Instagram (54%; 14); Facebook (23%; 6); TikTok (8%; 2); LinkedIn (8%; 2); Microsoft Teams (3%; 1); Discord (3%; 1). 'Other' option answers included communicating through student union and tutors and through 'content that young people would be interested in'.

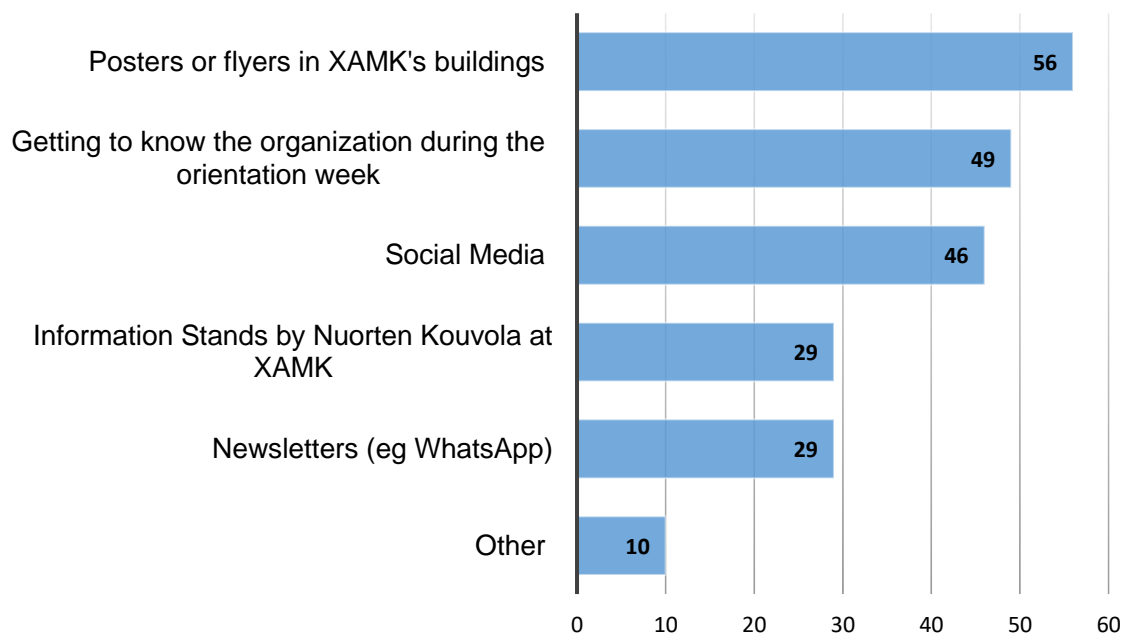


Figure 13. Preferred Marketing Communications channels (N=41)

Students from the N=19 group would prefer to be informed about the services of Nuorten Kouvola through Social Media channels (12), newsletters (9), orientation Week's program (8), informative stands in XAMK (7), and through posters or flyers (6). Preferred Social Media channels included Instagram (8), Facebook (5), LinkedIn (4), YouTube (1), and Twitter (1).

To find out the events or services by Nuorten Kouvola that the students would consider joining, participants were asked to select the option(s) or express their own opinion. In the group N=41, the majority of votes (80%; 33) composed the 'trips' option, with the second choice being cultural events (66%; 27). Figure 14

illustrates the selected options. Other answers given for the answer included the willingness to have movie nights, 'role playing (D&D)', and video games.

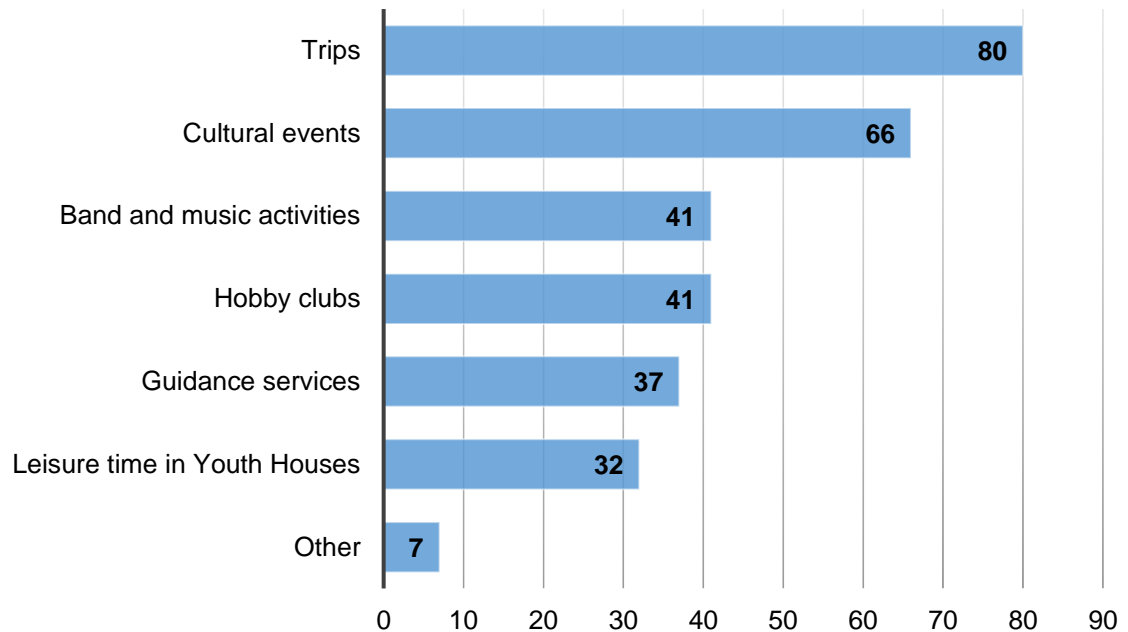


Figure 14. Desired activities provided by Nuorten Kouvola (N=41)

In Group N=19, participants would like to join cultural events (16), leisure time spending in Nuorten Kouvola (13), trips (12), hobby clubs (11), band and music activities (10), and utilise guidance services (8). Answers given to the 'other' option included 'Art sessions and photography groups', 'board games club', 'football competition', and 'job finding events'.

5.2 Interview results

After collecting the survey results, two additional interviews with employees of Nuorten Kouvola were conducted. These interviews were semi-structured, meaning a predetermined set of questions was prepared beforehand to ensure that the discussions remained relevant to the study. The interviewees shared their personal experiences and observations during the interviews, in addition to answering the planned questions. The two interviewees will be addressed as Int1 (Interviewee 1) – the youth worker responsible for the social work with international individuals and Int2 (Interviewee 2) – the youth worker within the marketing group of Nuorten Kouvola.

Marketing communications. Respondents gave a perspective on Nuorten Kouvola's existing marketing communications and how they are being handled. It was apparent, that there is no particular strategy that the organisation is pursuing when carrying out digital and social media marketing and the existing audience is being mostly reached through personal channels like WhatsApp group chats or the Instagram account of a Youth House. According to Int1, the way in which Nuorten Kouvola usually reaches XAMK students to inform about the events is through specific contact people that in their turn, distribute the information to the students; so 'sending emails to XAMK teachers and Student Union workers, that's the main ... way to reach people'. The overall marketing strategy was explained by Int2, as they shared that 'I am not sure if any of us have really good strategy for Nuorten Kouvola Instagram, for example, because there are so many people running it, I think the best way would be that there's one person who does everything to Nuorten Kouvola, but we don't have time for that or the person for that'. It was also mentioned that Nuorten Kouvola does not have a dedicated marketing department, but instead, the majority of the marketing communications are carried out by social workers. Int 2 as well shared that since the rebranding of Nuorten Kouvola, the advertisements have to follow very specific templates that comply with the brand of City of Kouvola as 'now its strict what kind of posters we can have so it doesn't give that much space when we're doing advertising because everything looks the same all over Kouvola'. Other marketing communications besides Instagram are not updated regularly, as Facebook pages are mainly aimed not at 'youngsters but parents' according to Int2, YouTube has been an active platform during the period with Covid-19 related restrictions that did not allow for in-person interactions, TikTok is being updated rarely as it requires a lot of the time and dedication from the social workers and Discord channel is aimed mostly at the youth that is interested in video games. So, personal communication channels and Instagram remain the main categories that Nuorten Kouvola utilises in its marketing efforts. Traditional advertising, such as bus advertisements or banners in the city of Kouvola, was named by Int2 to be incentivised by the City of Kouvola marketing department, so if there is a need for any changes, they are to be made directly from the City of Kouvola.

Reaching the international XAMK students. As Int1 pointed out, the difficulty in consistent communication with students is the current need for a contact person in XAMK that would help with the distribution of the information: 'You need to have contact persons, and of course, students are here about 3 years, and when they move away, we have to have new contact persons, so it would be nice to have like 2 or 3 or many students at the same time so there won't be any gap when they go away or move away'. Another barrier that was mentioned by both interviewees is the language - in order for the international students to be able to access the needed information about the organisations or the events. As Int1 said about the website of the Nuorten Kouvola, 'of course our material is, I think, only in Finnish, we haven't put any material in English yet', which was explained as the lack of the professionals that could update the information for the organisation to include other languages. Int2 also mentioned that it might be an area of improvement too as 'I think most of our employees speak English very well, but of course it's easier to do everything in Finnish, and I don't know if we have even thought about it, for example: yeah, we should also do something in English language, so yeah, I think we could do more in other languages than Finnish'. However, both respondents highlighted that the 'International' communications are being eased by the ESC volunteers that have their own social media account and a web blog, and it could be a way to address the issue with communication in the English language and help to reach students successfully. There is a close cooperation of Nuorten Kouvola with the XAMK that has been mentioned by the participants, for example, Ohjaamo, the one-step guidance services, has organised monthly stands in the XAMK's Main Building lobby to inform students about the services, provide materials, and establish an initial personal relationship with the students. There has been an event collaboration with XAMK as well, such as the Amazing Kouvola race, one of the locations for which was the Kouvola Campus.

Challenges faced when attracting international XAMK students. As it was noted by the interviewees, the existing marketing communications of Nuorten Kouvola were initially designed to reach the younger Finnish audience, so it was noted by Int1 that the biggest current challenge for International students to

access Nuorten Kouvola services is 'getting information about the events, is the main point'. Nuorten Kouvola currently tries to attract more individuals to attend Nuorten Paikka on Thursdays – designated evenings for the 18-28 old youth. However, not many XAMK students are aware of it, and as noted by both respondents, there might be a barrier for the individual to first come to NuPa, and according to Int1 'you need a lot of courage to come here (for the first time)'. Social workers are creating a welcoming and warm environment for the Youth House visitors, however, overcoming initial hesitation from the customer's side is a significant point. As the students are not aware of the currently organised events, thus not actively participating and showing interest in the provided services, Nuorten Kouvola cannot develop or extend the range of the provided activities since it would not bring desired outcomes. However, it was mentioned by Int1 that there were successfully added activities for the 'older' audience once Nuorten Kouvola saw the interest of the individuals in the 16-28 old Youth Evenings in, for example, Youth House in Myllykoski. So, once the demand is apparent for the organisation of the existing services, new suggestions can be taken forward to accommodate that group of customers.

5.3 Analysis of the results

The results of the survey and interviews showed that there is an apparent gap in Nuorten Kouvola's desired and current awareness levels among International XAMK students. Students showed significant interest in all the areas of services provided by the organisation, but the marketing communications of Nuorten Kouvola are not successfully reaching this group of potential customers. Students prefer to be reached and informed personally on the University campus or through digital communications means, such as Social Media channels, particularly through Instagram. As Nuorten Kouvola has a sustained online presence, overcoming such barrier as language could be important in becoming closer to the audience – both the students and employees underlined the importance of adding the English versions of the informatory materials or campaigns. Students who have already visited Nuorten Kouvola showed that the main channel they found out about the organisation is word-of-mouth, which is a very powerful tool if done on a bigger scale. At the same time, Nuorten Kouvola

has incentives that are aimed at the personal promotion of the services, which could be classified as personal selling on campus. Traditional advertising appeared to be the least successful category both in the perception of the employees and the students. Bus advertisements running for multiple years did not affect the awareness rates among students and are not dependent on the Nuorten Kouvola, but the City of Kouvola's design decisions. A significant number of students that participated in the survey agreed that better communication on the available services would motivate them to engage with the organisation. As the interviewed employees expressed – if there is demand for certain acceptable activities suggested by visitors, it is possible to provide them, and students would be able to take part in the preferred activities that they selected among the existing and planned services of Nuorten Kouvola. The group of students aged over 30 years old supported the finding of the main group, as the students there showed compatible results in the channels they would like to be reached through, awareness levels, and willingness to participate in the services provided by the Nuorten Kouvola, which supports the results of the main group.

This way, answering the research questions of this research, the way to bring awareness of Nuorten Kouvola among the International XAMK students is through marketing communications, which encompass multiple techniques and communications channels. Specific channels that were considered the most suitable by both students and employees are Instagram, WhatsApp, and personal communication carried out on the XAMK campus.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Managerial implications

Combining the described above marketing communications techniques would allow Nuorten Kouvola to close the awareness gap and attract International XAMK students. Below are suggested marketing communications techniques for Nuorten Kouvola to follow to inform International XAMK Students about the services.

In the Youth Work field, the connection between employees and customers is based on a highly personal relationship. For Nuorten Kouvola utilising personal selling as a communication tool would provide an opportunity to directly face the target audience and establish the initial relationship. Nuorten Kouvola could conduct personal selling at the campus of XAMK, as it would allow employees to directly meet the international students and tell about the services available to them. Establishing personal relationships between social workers and students will also ensure that students are less intimidated to begin using the services. Personal selling should be carried out not only for the guidance services but as well for the other areas of Nuorten Kouvola's operations. The days when the Nuorten Kouvola employees are present at the campus should as well be marked in student environments, to encourage students to meet the employees, since this type of coverage was not executed before. XAMK's orientation week, which is annually held for first-year degree students at the end of August would be a perfect time for Nuorten Kouvola to meet arrived students and introduce the organisation, so the students are aware and involved with Youth Services since the beginning of their studies. For international students, it would be important to see materials and presentations in the English language, so for Nuorten Kouvola would be required to prepare the materials suitable for that particular audience. A direct presentation could be an efficient technique since it would also allow for receiving immediate responses and feedback. Once the initial introduction was made, Nuorten Kouvola needs to maintain the relationship with the students, coming back to the personal selling technique throughout the study years to remind them of the services and the organisation. The continuous implementation of personal selling by Nuorten Kouvola for the XAMK students can significantly increase the awareness of the organisation and services and create loyalty and interest among students.

Public relations activities in the case of the Nuorten Kouvola can be present in the form of coverage of the services in one of the magazines or environments available to the target group of students – for example, through the Insider student magazine or the independent review of the services carried out by the Student Union Kaakko. Insider student magazine would be a way for Nuorten

Kouvola to connect with the students working for Insider and raise awareness about the organisation through the publications that are made in the magazine for the audience. Connecting with the students through such channels would allow to notify students about upcoming events, news from the organisation, and tell about students' experiences with Nuorten Kouvola. Partnership with Insider student magazine would allow for a mutually beneficial relationship for both parties, that has the potential to successfully reach International XAMK students, as well as stay relevant, close to the audience, and provide material for the writers of the Insider. Regular coverage in the Insider student magazine, which has its web presence and printed materials would be a cohesive channel to successfully reach the international students, whether online or at the campus. This collaboration opportunity was not previously considered by Nuorten Kouvola, however, its accessibility and closeness to students make it a perfect outlet for bringing awareness to the services. This way, identifying local media outlets and collaborating with them to share stories about the organisation's relevant services and events would help to naturally reach international students and raise awareness about the organisation. This can generate media coverage and increase visibility for the organisation without any additional investment or high involvement.

Nuorten Kouvola is present on various social media channels, such as Instagram, Facebook, Discord, and YouTube. The organisation consistently keeps up with covering the latest updates and announcements, bringing attention to social campaigns, and engaging with the followers. While the presence in social media is maintained, the main slacking points are the quality of the content, and appeal to the international students – the majority of the information is only available in the Finnish language. As the social media accounts are not maintained with international individuals in mind, the social media of Nuorten Kouvola does not have many international students following and engaging with the posts. This could be improved by the addition of English text under the posts, and enhancement of the content. For instance, even for the events particularly aimed at international young adults, social media posts promoting the event were fully in Finnish with not sufficient information for the international students to discover the

event. Instagram account of the volunteers of the Kouvola can be another way of improving social media communication – since all information in that channel is in the English language, targeting it to the International XAMK Students could be another strategy to build the online bridge among students and the organisation. Another opportunity to connect with the target audience could be through WhatsApp. The creation of the group chat with international students and Nuorten Kouvola employees would allow for efficient information delivery from the side of Nuorten Kouvola to promote upcoming events for international young adults. This could benefit those individuals, who are not present on other social media platforms, are more receptive to direct notifications, or just prefer this type of communication, as it appears to be a large group of students that prefer this type of social media. As Nuorten Kouvola already has an established social media presence, adjusting the existing channels could be enough to attract international students of XAMK to follow the channels and engage with the content presented.

The buzz marketing can be also successfully implemented as part of Nuorten Kouvola's marketing communications. As Nuorten Kouvola regularly organises events for international young adults, it presents an excellent opportunity to encourage word-of-mouth social media sharing from visitors. Incentivising customers to share their experiences from the events by reposting content from the organisation's account or coming up with their own posts would be a powerful utilisation of the WOM for Nuorten Kouvola. It is usual for students to have extensive networks on their social media with their fellow classmates and students from XAMK would allow reaching individuals who would not have been able to learn about Youth Services otherwise. Nuorten Kouvola could promote eWOM among customers with small favours to encourage the sharing of information on social media. As personal word-of-mouth is impossible to track and precisely measure, Nuorten Kouvola needs to sustain positive relationships with existing customers and remind them to inform their acquaintances or friend about the services and the organisation. Personal word-of-mouth is a very powerful tool, however, it is challenging to measure its outcomes or strongly influence it. Consequently, Nuorten Kouvola should mainly focus on encouraging

eWOM among existing customers. Word-of-mouth could be enhanced through other marketing communications channels, such as personal selling, as that would be the most viable opportunity for Nuorten Kouvola, to position themselves among the students.

The traditional advertisement is already present for Nuorten Kouvola, however, the advertisement design hasn't changed in multiple years and the slogan in Finnish, might be hard to understand especially for international students. Even though the vast majority of international students in XAMK tend to use public transportation, the outcomes of the advertisement are questionable. Since Nuorten Kouvola has access to such a promotion channel, it might be beneficial to change the visual appearance and contents of the advertisement through the City of Kouvola marketing department. After seeing the same advertisement for a continuous period of time, the advertisement might lose its relevance in one's eyes, and, since the buses with Nuorten Kouvola's logo are driving around Kouvola every day of the year, it has become the case as the data showed. Focusing on the links or adding the QR code for the organisation's social media channels or website could encourage people to find out more about the Nuorten Kouvola, thus creating not only visual awareness but also the willingness to get to know the organisation through its services. This type of traditional advertisement might be efficient for Nuorten Kouvola if implemented correctly since telemarketing or radio advertisements, for instance, would not provide such accurate targeting of viable customers and might not reach international students at all, as that group might not have much interest in Finnish broadcasting services. Outdoor banners could as well be implemented for the promotion of various events; however, the positioning has to be carefully chosen to ensure that the target audience has the highest chance of seeing the marketing message – for example, positioning the banners nearby the University campus or the student apartments, since those locations present the highest chance to be noticed by the desired audience of the International students.

The discussion above shows that, if executed adequately, the efficiency of the marketing communications methods that have been chosen for this study is a reliable way to attract customers and raise awareness for Nuorten Kouvola. By

combining the methods explored above, Nuorten Kouvola has a viable opportunity to bring awareness to its services and attract international XAMK students to the organisation. As Nuorten Kouvola already has the base for the marketing communication techniques, adjusting in a way that would appeal to international students will be a needed change that could make the biggest difference – such as adding English captions for the social media posts, or renewing the design of their traditional advertisements around the Kouvola.

6.2 Reliability discussion and future development

Validity and reliability. According to Hammond & Wellington (2021, 192), the reliability of a measurement indicates its level of consistency, whereas validity evaluates whether the measurement is appropriate and relevant. In qualitative research, the term validity does not have the same implications as it does in quantitative research (Creswell & Creswell 2018, 274). In qualitative research, validity refers to the researcher's efforts to ensure the accuracy of the findings through specific procedures, while in quantitative studies, reliability is connected to the consistency of the researcher's methods (Creswell & Creswell 2018, 274). The concept of qualitative validity involves assessing the accuracy of findings in relation to the perspectives of the researcher, participants, and readers; validity in qualitative literature can be referred to as validity, including trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility (Creswell & Creswell 2018, 274). To enhance the validity of a study, researchers should triangulate data from various sources and use it to create a cohesive base for identified themes by integrating data from multiple sources or perspectives, researchers can strengthen the validity of their findings (Creswell & Creswell 2018, 274). Determining validity in the quantitative methods involves evaluating whether the observed cause-and-effect relationship between the cause and outcome is casual and is based on the measurements of the variables of the study (Martin & Bridgmon 2012, 59). To ensure the validity of quantitative study findings, it is crucial to assess the quality of data used in statistical analyses through data diagnostics, which helps to identify inaccuracies, representativeness, and consistency with underlying statistical assumptions (Martin & Bridgmon 2012,128).

Efforts were made to enhance the validity and reliability of the quantitative survey research method targeting XAMK students. The validity was reinforced through a comprehensive literature review, which ensured that the research was directed toward the relevant areas. Additionally, the survey questionnaire was designed to include a clear introduction, and simple questions, allowing respondents to understand the research objectives and accurately answer the questions. The questions were carefully designed, interconnected, and arranged in a logical flow to guide respondents and maintain their focus with the various interactive question formats used in the survey. The validity and reliability of the quantitative study results could have been threatened by the low response rate, however, the extra group of students that have completed the survey, which is not directly a target group of Nuorten Kouvola reinforced the findings.

To support the validity and reliability while conducting interviews, it was ensured that the interviewees are experts in their area with numerous years of experience in their roles. The questions have been carefully considered to follow the scope and the overall logic of the study. The analysis was carried out thoroughly to avoid biases and for better theme identification.

Suggestions for future research. Based on the findings of this thesis, future research suggestions might include a study with the research question of ‘How could regular communication with the XAMK International students affect awareness of Nuorten Kouvola?’. Besides, further research can be conducted on the evidence-based effectiveness of the individual marketing communications channels of Nuorten Kouvola. Future research can as well explore the brand awareness of non-profit organisations and its correlation with attracting customers.

REFERENCES

- Abuhmada, E., Ismail, I. & Bsharat, T. 2021. Understanding quantitative and qualitative research methods: A theoretical perspective for young researchers. *International Journal of Research*, 8 (2), 71-87. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349003480> [Accessed 23 March 2023].
- Albanna, H., Alalwan, A. & Al-Emran, M. 2022. An integrated model for using social media applications in non-profit organisations. *International Journal of Information Management*, 63. E-journal. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0268401221001456> [Accessed 20 March 2023].
- Allgurin, M., Anand, J., Gubrium, E., Svenlin, A. & Thoresen, S. 2023. The 'social' in social work. *Nordic Social Work Research*, 13 (1), 1-3. E-journal. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2156857X.2023.2176015> [Accessed 17.03.2023].
- Anheier, H. & Toepler, S. 2023. *Non-profit Organizations: Theory, Management, Policy*. 3rd ed. Oxon: Routledge.
- Ateke, B. & Nwulu, C. 2017. The brand communication - brand awareness Nexus. *Business Master*, 5 (1), 210-221. E-journal. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325718289> [Accessed 2 April 2023].
- Ayyıldız, H., Akmermer, B. & Akyüz, A. 2017. Marketing Approach for Non-Profit Organizations. In Potocan, V., Ünğan, M. & Nedelko, Z (eds.) *Handbook of Research on Managerial Solutions in Non-Profit Organizations*. Hershey: IGI Global, 156-181. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316137762> [Accessed 16 April 2023].
- Barreda, A., Bilgihan, A., Nusair, K. & Okumus, F. 2015. Generating brand awareness in Online Social Networks. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 50, 600-609. E-journal. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/07475632150021> [Accessed 20 March 2023].
- Carboni, J. & Maxwell, J. 2015. Effective Social Media Engagement for Non-profits: What Matters?. *Journal of Public and Non-profit Affairs*, 1 (1), 19-28. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.20899/jpna.1.1.18-28> [Accessed 28 March 2023].
- Carroll, A. 2018. Non-profit Organisations. In Kolb, R. (ed.) *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Business Ethics and Society*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Inc, 2491-2495. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334173452> [Accessed 13 April 2023].

Chierici, R., Del Bosco, B., Mazzucchelli, A. & Chiacchierini, C. 2019. Enhancing Brand Awareness, Reputation and Loyalty: The Role of Social Media. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 14 (1), 216-228. E-journal. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5539> [Accessed 21 March 2023].

Clow, K. & Baack, D. 2022. *Integrated Advertising, Promotion, and Marketing Communications*. 9th ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Clow, K. & Baack, D. 2018. *Integrated Advertising, Promotion, and Marketing Communications*. 8th ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Creswell, J. & Creswell, J. 2018. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 5th ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Fill, C. 2011. *Essentials of marketing communications*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Garg, E., Swami, S. & Kumari, S. 2018. Branding effectiveness measurement in non-profit environment. *Journal of Advances in Management Research*, 16 (1), 4-22. E-journal. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JAMR-05-2018-0039> [Accessed 21 March 2023].

Gartner, J., Fink, M., Floh, A. & Eggers, F. 2021. Service quality in social media communication of NPOs: The moderating effect of channel choice. *Journal of Business Research*, 137, 579-587. E-journal. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.08.026> [Accessed 28 March 2023].

Grau, S. 2021. *Marketing for Non-profit Organisations: Insights and Innovations*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gyan, C., Chowdhury, F. & Yeboah, A. 2023. Adapting to a new home: resettlement and mental health service experience of immigrant and refugee youth in Montreal. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10. E-journal. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-01572-7> [Accessed 17 March 2023].

Hammond, M. & Wellington, J. 2021. *Research methods: The Key Concepts*. 2nd ed. Oxon: Routledge.

Harinen, P., Honkasalo, V., Souto, A. & Suuripää, L. 2009. *Ovet auki!*. Helsinki: Hakapaino.

Höylä, S. 2012. Youth work in Finland. *Series E. HUMAK*, 4, 80-104. E-magazine. Available at: <http://julkaisut.turkuamk.fi/isbn9789522162267.pdf> [Accessed 25 February 2023].

Jones, J. & Goldring, J. 2022. *Exploratory and Descriptive Statistics*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Kall, J. 2022. *Measuring Brand Efficacy along the Customer Journey*. Oxon: Routledge.

Katsioloudes, M. 2006. *Strategic management: Global Cultural Perspectives for Profit and Non-profit Organizations*. Burlington: Elsevier Inc. E-book. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/book/9780750679664> [Accessed 19 March 2023].

Kaur, S. 2014. *Introduction to Sales Management*. In Kaur, S. (ed.) *Sales And Promotions Management*. New Delhi: Excel Books Private Limited, 1-24. E-publication. Available at: http://ebooks.lpude.in/management/mba/term_3/DMGT507_SALES_AND_PROMOTIONS_MANAGEMENT.pdf [Accessed 16 April 2023].

Kiilakoski, T. 2020. *Country sheet on Youth Work in Finland*. Council of Europe, European Union. PDF document. Available at: <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/58820665> [Accessed 19 March 2023].

Kothari, C. 1990. *Research Methodology. Methods & Techniques*. 2nd ed. New Delhi: New Age International Limited.

Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G. 2018. *Principles of Marketing*. 17th ed. Harlow; Pearson Education Limited.

Kotler, P. & Keller, K. 2016. *Marketing Management Global edition*. 15th ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Latif, W., Islam, A, & Noor, I. 2014. *Building Brand Awareness in the Modern Marketing Environment: A Conceptual Model*. *International Journal of Business and Technopreneurship*, 4 (1), 69-82. E-journal. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272161898> [Accessed 17 March 2023].

Lefebvre, R. 2013. *Social Marketing and Social Change: Strategies and Tools for Health, Well-Being, and the Environment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lin, C. & Rauschnabel, P. 2016. *Social Media Platforms as Marketing Channels*. In Lee, I. (ed.) *Encyclopedia of E-Commerce Development, Implementation, and Management*. Hershey: IGI Global, 2144-2158. E-publication. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301325194> [Accessed 16 April 2023].

Martin, W. & Bridgmon, M. 2012. *Quantitative and Statistical Research Methods: From Hypothesis to Results*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

McDougle, L. 2014. *Understanding public awareness of non-profit organisations: exploring the awareness–confidence relationship*. *International Journal of Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 19 (3), 187-199. E-journal. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/nvsm.1496> [Accessed 21 March 2023].

Mehrotra, A. & Siraj, S. 2021. *Social Media Marketing – An Effective Solution for Non-Profit Organizations*. Conference paper. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350083863> [Accessed 20 March 2023].

- Miller, K. 2021. *The Non-profit Marketing Guide: High-Impact, Low-Cost Ways to Build Support for Your Good Cause*. 2nd ed. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons Inc. E-book. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/2430265/> [Accessed 21 March 2023].
- Namisango, F., Kang, K. & Rehman, J. 2019. What Do We Know about Social Media in Non-profits?. A Review. Available at: <http://elsevier.com/S0148-2963> [Accessed 28 March 2023].
- Nasir, S. 2015. Customer Acquisition Management Strategies. In Nasr, S. (ed.) *Customer Relationship Management Strategies in the Digital Era*. Hershey: IGI Global, 219-243. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/34415592> [Accessed 16 April 2023].
- Papasolomou, I., Thrassou, A., Vrontis, D. & Sabova, M. 2014. Marketing public relations: A consumer-focused strategic perspective. *Journal of Customer Behaviour*, 13 (1), 5-24. E-journal. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263107792> [Accessed 29 March 2023].
- Pasquier, M. & Villeneuve, J. 2018. *Marketing Management and Communications in the Public Sector*. 2nd ed. Oxon: Routledge.
- Pattern, M. & Newhart, M. 2018. *Understanding Research Methods: An Overview of the Essentials*. 10th ed. New York: Routledge.
- Punch, K. 2003. *Survey Research. The basics*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Qu, S. & Dumay, J. 2011. The qualitative research interview. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, 8, 238-263. E-journal. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227430203> [Accessed 16 April 2023].
- Quesenberry, K. 2019. *Social Media Strategy: Marketing, Advertising, And Public Relations In The Consumer Revolution*. 2nd ed. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Randazzo, G. 2014. *Developing Successful Marketing Strategies*. New York: Business Expert Press, LLC.
- Salonsaari, T. 2021. Kouvola Youth Services. Nuorten Kouvola. PowerPoint Presentation. 16 December 2021.
- Sathish, S. & Rajamonah, A. 2012. Consumer Behaviour And Lifestyle Marketing. *International Journal of Marketing, Financial Services & Management Research*, 1 (10), 152-166. E-journal. Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/16087680> [Accessed 6 April 2023].
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. 2019. *Research Methods for Business Students*. 8th ed. Harlow: Pearson education Limited.

Soundararaj, J., Baskaran, S. & Sivaprakash, S. 2015. The Power of Buzz Marketing. *Journal of Exclusive Management Science*, 4 (3), 1-13. E-journal. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340548039> [Accessed 6 April 2023].

Sowier-Kasprzyk, I. 2014. Promotion strategy for non-profit organisation on the example of the Eastern European arts therapy association. *Marketing and Management of Innovations*, 5 (1), 116-123. E-journal. Available at: https://armgpublishing.com/wp-content/uploads/mmi/volume-5-issue-1/mmi2014_1_116_123.pdf [Accessed 20 March 2023].

Spratt, C., Walker, R., & Robinson, B. 2004. Module A5: Mixed research methods. Vancouver: Commonwealth of Learning.

Tracy, S. 2013. *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Walliman, N. 2022. *Research Methods: The Basics*. 3rd ed. Oxon: Routledge.

Watkins, M. 2003. *Getting the word out: A guide to promotion and public relations for non-profit organisations*. Thesis. Available at: <https://commons.emich.edu/honors/110utmich.eduF110> [Accessed 29 March 2023].

Wymer, W., Knowles, P. & Gomes, R. 2006. *Non-profit Marketing: Marketing Management for Charitable and Nongovernmental Organizations*. California: Sage Publications Ltd.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Organisation structure (Salonsaari 2021)	8
Figure 2. Organization of Youth Services (Salonsaari 2021)	9
Figure 3. Map of the Youth Premises (Salonsaari 2021)	10
Figure 4. Social Media Functions for Non-profits (Namisango et al. 2019)	18
Figure 5. Nuorten Kouvola's advertising on a Kouvola's bus	22
Figure 6. Levels of measurement (Jones & Goldring 2022, 73)	27
Figure 7. Gender distribution of respondents (N=41)	29
Figure 8. Knowledge of respondents about Nuorten Kouvola organisation (N=41)	31
Figure 9. Usage of provided services (N=7)	32
Figure 10. Services popularity (N=6)	33
Figure 11. Marketing communications channels used (N=7)	34
Figure 12. Motivation for visiting Nuorten Kouvola (N=41)	35
Figure 13. Preferred Marketing Communications channels (N=41)	36
Figure 14. Desired activities provided by Nuorten Kouvola (N=41)	37

Interview Questions for the Nuorten Kouvola Employee responsible for International Youth Work:

- Could you describe your role in working with international XAMK students at Nuorten Kouvola?
- In your experience, what are some of the challenges faced by international XAMK students when it comes to accessing and using Youth Services of Nuorten Kouvola?
- How do you currently communicate with international XAMK students about the services and activities available at Nuorten Kouvola?
- What types of activities or services do you think are or would be most appealing to international XAMK students? What kind of services and activities do international students tend to use the most?
- What do you see as the biggest challenges facing immigrant-origin youth in accessing and utilizing youth services, and what do you think can be done to address these challenges?

Interview Questions for the Nuorten Kouvola Employee Responsible for Marketing:

- Could you describe the current marketing strategy of Nuorten Kouvola and the channels that are being used to reach, inform, and communicate with the customers?
- What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of Nuorten Kouvola's current marketing strategy?
- Have you noticed any particular challenges or barriers to reaching international XAMK students through marketing? If so, what are they?
- How effective the current marketing strategies are in reaching international XAMK students?
- Is there a budget for marketing activities, and if yes, how do you allocate it?
- What do you see as the biggest challenges facing international youth in accessing and utilizing youth services, and what do you think can be done to address these challenges?

Attracting International XAMK Students to Nuorten Kouvola

Nuorten Kouvola is a non-profit municipal organization that provides youth services for Kouvola residents below 29 years old. Nuorten Kouvola provides cultural and leisure time events, guidance and support for youth, and hobby clubs – all free of charge. This survey is part of my thesis research, and through your answers, we have the opportunity to influence how the services are being developed! Answering the questions only takes a few minutes of your time but it would be a great help to me.

Thank you for your responses!

Mandatory questions are marked with a star (*)

1. Have you heard of Nuorten Kouvola – Youth Services of Kouvola before? *

- Yes
 No

Question rules

Have you heard of Nuorten Kouvola – Youth Services of Kouvola before?

Yes

Rule: Show Question(s)

If option is selected Show Question(s) Which services have you used? (Select all that apply), On a scale of 1-5, how likely are you to recommend Nuorten Kouvola's services to a fellow student?, How did you find out about Nuorten Kouvola's services? (Select all that apply), Have you ever used the services provided by Nuorten Kouvola or visited Nuorten Paikka (Kouvolankatu 28)?, On a scale of 1-5, how well do you think you know services and the Nuorten Kouvola organization?

No

No option rules

2. Have you ever used the services provided by Nuorten Kouvola or visited Nuorten Paikka (Kouvolankatu 28)? *

- Yes
 No

Question rules

Have you ever used the services provided by Nuorten Kouvola or visited Nuorten Paikka (Kouvolankatu 28)?

Yes

No option rules

No

Rule: Hide Question(s)

If option is selected Hide Question(s) Which services have you used? (Select all that apply)

Question **Have you heard of Nuorten Kouvola – Youth Services of Kouvola before?** has *Show Question(s)* rule for this question

3. Which services have you used? (Select all that apply) *

- Socializing with other youth/Spending leisure time in Nuorten Paikka
- Participating in cultural time events
- Used support services provided by the social workers
- Other (please specify): _____

Question rules

Which services have you used? (Select all that apply)

No question rules yet

Question **Have you heard of Nuorten Kouvola – Youth Services of Kouvola before?** has *Show Question(s)* rule for this question

Question **Have you ever used the services provided by Nuorten Kouvola or visited Nuorten Paikka (Kouvolankatu 28)?** has *Hide Question(s)* rule for this question

4. How did you find out about Nuorten Kouvola's services? (Select all that apply) *

*

- From the Social Media accounts of the City of Kouvola or Nuorten Kouvola
- Recommendation from friends
- Flyers or information posters

- Event-related Advertisement around Kouvola
- Bus advertisements in Kouvola
- From the university employees
- During the orientation week at XAMK
- Other (please specify): _____

Question rules

How did you find out about Nuorten Kouvola's services? (Select all that apply)

No question rules yet

Question **Have you heard of Nuorten Kouvola – Youth Services of Kouvola before?** has *Show Question(s)* rule for this question

5. On a scale of 1-5, how well do you think you know services and the Nuorten Kouvola organization?



Question rules

On a scale of 1-5, how well do you think you know services and the Nuorten Kouvola organization?

No question rules yet

Question **Have you heard of Nuorten Kouvola – Youth Services of Kouvola before?** has *Show Question(s)* rule for this question

6. On a scale of 1-5, how likely are you to recommend Nuorten Kouvola's services to a fellow student?



Question rules

On a scale of 1-5, how likely are you to recommend Nuorten Kouvola's services to a fellow student?

No question rules yet

Question **Have you heard of Nuorten Kouvola – Youth Services of Kouvola before?** has *Show Question(s)* rule for this question

7. What would encourage you to use Nuorten Kouvola's services? (Select all that apply) *

- Better communication to inform students about the services
- More events and activities organized by Nuorten Kouvola for students
- Other (please specify):
-

8. In your opinion, which of the following would be most effective in informing students about the services of Nuorten Kouvola or upcoming events? (Select all that apply) *

- Social media (please specify which):
-
- Newsletters (eg email; WhatsApp chat)
- Posters or flyers in XAMK's buildings
- Information stands organized by Nuorten Kouvola at XAMK
- Getting to know the organization during the orientation week
- Other (please specify):
-

9. What would you like Nuorten Kouvola to organize or what kind of events organized by Nuorten Kouvola would you like to join? *

- Cultural events (eg excursions)
- Leisure 'hang-out' time in Youth Houses
- Trips (eg ski trip; day trip to the amusement park)
- Guidance services (eg help with Finnish digital environments like Vero)
- Hobby clubs (Gym, Bowling, 'Rainbow' Youth
-

meetings) please specify:

Band and music activities

Other (please specify):

10. What is your age? *

11. What is your gender? *

12. What is your nationality? *

13. At what year of studies at XAMK are you currently? *

14. What do you study? *

- Digital International Business
- Game Design
- Master's degree of Business Administration
- Diploma student - Entrepreneurship and Start
- I'm an exchange student (please specify your degree):
- Other (please specify):
