



**The Power of Togetherness: Exploring Strategies and Tools for Building and Sustaining a Sense of Community in International Accommodation Operator.**

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## Abstract

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<p>Objectives of this thesis was to create community event calendar for the commissioner Noli Studios. Noli Studios is an international accommodation operator that offers guests shorter-term and longer-term accommodations. Noli Studios wants to enhance the shared economy and make individuals feel at home when staying with them. One of the ways they conceive both objectives is by sustaining community through community events. In the past year, Noli Studios has grown from having three sites in Finland to having six sites in Finland and one in Poland. Due to the current growth of the company and the recent need for a combined way of building and sustaining community at each site, there is a development need for a clear community event calendar. The purpose of the community event calendar is to divide into event categories to make it easy to build each month's events based on the categories. This material can be used as an orientation material for new opening sites.</p> <p>This thesis used a literature review as a theoretical base for building community event calendar. The literature review is based on academic books and online articles from the topics of community building and event management.</p> <p>The study was executed with qualitative online survey which was used to gather information about the satisfaction of community events. The online survey was held to Noli Studios guests and employees. The satisfaction survey used open, multiple-choice and likert scale questions. The final product, community event calendar was based on the literature review, community event satisfaction survey, and information gathered by the author through free discussion with the host and other stakeholders.</p> <p>The results from community events satisfaction survey showed how important of community events are to build community. Community events give guest opportunity to do activities together with other guests and get to know people in the community which help guest feel less lonely. The results revealed how much guests appreciate events where hosts are present. Based on the result it is vital for listen members of the community to make the community grow.</p> <p>In conclusion thesis produced community event calendar for Noli Studios to help employees monthly community events planning process. The key outcomes gave tools and practical principles to plan and construct each moths community events. The outcomes can be further developed into more detailed handbook on how community events are planned at Noli Studios.</p>
<b>Key words</b> Event planning, Event calendar, Community events

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# 1 Introduction

This thesis topic is *The Power of Togetherness: Exploring Strategies and Tools for Building and Sustaining a Sense of Community in an International Accommodation Operator*, made for Noli Studios. This thesis will produce a community event calendar that will be used as a base for organizing community events every month and as orientational material for building community at the new Noli Studios sites. The thesis idea started when the author joined the Noli Studios team in February 2023 to work as an assistant host manager. The topic was chosen based on the needs of the commissioner and the author's interest in community event planning.

## 1.1 Aims and objectives

The thesis will produce a community events calendar that gives details of each type of event organized every month. A sense of community is now achieved at the Noli Studios sites with community events. These events are held every month, while some of the events stay the same every month, but most of them change monthly. Events are usually arranged by host managers and assistant host managers. In this thesis the term employees refer to both host managers and assistant host managers. The community event calendar will serve as the base for every month's community events. Noli Studios in Finland are operated by a small group of employees, and most community events are planned to connect all the sites' guests together. Noli Studios is a growing company, and they have six Noli Studios in Finland and one in Poland, Mokotów. (Noli Studios 2023.) When Noli Studios was still smaller and had only two to three sites in Finland, community events were easier to organize, and hosts could arrange them without a written base for the community events and the type of events every month would include.

For the current growth of Noli Studios, they have a need for a uniform community event calendar that can be used as a base for planning community events for the existing sites and new upcoming ones. The community event calendar will give a base for which types of events to build in every month, and this helps the growing company to harmonize the way to do the events more similarly among Noli Studios sites. At a new site community event calendar can be used as orientation material.

## 1.2 Methodology in Brief

This thesis uses a literature review from the topics community building and events management as the foundation for creating a community event calendar for the commissioner party. The literature review is based on academic books and online articles. The final product, community event

calendar was based on the literature review, community event satisfaction survey, and information gathered by the author through free discussion with the host and other stakeholders.

### **1.3 Commissioner**

The commissioner of this thesis is an international accommodation operator Noli Studios owned by NREP real estate investor. NREP was founded in Denmark and their focus is to bring positive change for people and for the planet via decisions made with real estate investment. (NREP 2023)

Noli Studios offers hotel accommodations for short term stays, typically less than a month, and flexible accommodations for stay durations longer than a month. During the thesis the term guests will be used for Noli studios flexible long-term guests. Noli Studios wants to enhance the economy of sharing, which is achieved with shared spaces, service stations and sharing points. Between sites shared spaces can vary slightly but in general they include a common kitchen, movie room, working spaces, sauna and spa area and gym. Service stations include household devices which are free to use among all the guests. Sharing point is for guests to bring used goods in for other people to take for free. Since Noli Studios have longer term guests staying from month to even years, Noli Studios want to enhance shared economy, it is important to build a community and make guest feel at home. (Noli Studios 2023.)

## 2 Community

This section is about what community means based on the target group. Will be discussed the importance of community to the wellbeing of individuals and how community events enhance the sense of togetherness.

The meaning of community is simply a group of people who have something in common. (Wooll 2021) According to Born (2014, 9.) The word community can have many meanings depending on the place and time it has been used. The meaning of community can be a town, a network of interest, a neighbourhood, a group of friends or a set of employees. For the group of individuals to create a community which cultivates their lives it is important for members of the community to feel a shared sense of connection, trust, and care for one another. (Wooll 2021.)

During the thesis community word is used for describing communities of long-term guests at all Noli Studios locations.

### 2.1 Building community

Community as a word can be used in many different situations, and depending on the occasion which ways the word is used can affect the ways how the community is built. Sometimes a community creates itself and does not need specific strategy to form the community and, on some occasions, building a community needs more strategic thinking behind it to make the community form itself. Whether the community creates itself or it needs to be structured, there are common aspect of building a community that can be used when structuring and developing a community and sense of belonging.

According to Spinks (2022.) for building a healthy and thriving community it is useful to determine community strategy and design social identity. To determine and design social identity for a community can be used three-stage social identity cycle seen in Figure 1. This three-stage identity cycle is divided into stages identification, participation, and validation.

- Stage 1. Identification: When individuals decide to join a community some aspect of their personal identity aligns with the collective identity of the community. Building a community is important to have a clear and strong sense of what type of identity the community has. Over time the community's identity and individual's identity start to reflect each other and create an engaged environment. (Spinks 2022.) According to Born (2014, 81) belonging in community is being with others and promoting mutual good and care which leads to individual's identity merging with the community's identity. Community is making common good

priority and placing the well-being of all of us higher than the well-being of single of us. This effect on blurring the line of where my property end and yours begin. (Born 2014, 9.)

- Stages 2. Participation: Community is nothing without participation from its members. There are different ways of participation which community needs for its development. Community needs those individuals who are more engaged with the community and are driving the community to grow. Community also needs those individuals that are participating the community by consuming the community's content whether it is participating in a community event as a guest and not as part of the organizing team. (Spinks 2022.)

Involving members in the community will empower individuals and raise their knowledge and levels of trust between the stakeholder creating healthy and sustainable communities. (Gruber 2020, 20-22) Working together in collaborative partnerships within the community to create social capital which holds the community together and makes them more vital and healthier. Social capital also known as community-based capacity encompasses stable social networks, more positive community norms and trust among the community members. The establishment of social capital can be accomplished through processes that enable the community to learn collectively and actively participate in communal projects and decisions. Involving in participatory vision, problem-solving and decision-making often encourages the development of trust and sense of local ownership among the community. (Gruber 2020, 42.)

The decision-making process within a community usually involves leaders or people in higher positions, this varying depending on the community. To fully foster participation in the community is important to involve all community members in the decision-making process. Gruber (2020, 20-22.) Supporting open communication and bringing transparency in the level of information sharing is the most effective aspect when it comes to community-based planning and implementation. (Gruber 2020, 94)

- Stage 3. Validation: Making individuals in the community feel validation is an important stage for creating an engaged and growing community. As humans when we get to participate on rewarding experiences, and they release dopamine in our brain which leads us to feel satisfaction from the good experience and makes us want more of it and participate again. Rewarding in behavioural economics can be divided into two norms: extrinsic and



intrinsic reward. Extrinsic reward is transactional exchange of market norms meaning rewarding with material goods. Intrinsic reward is remunerating with social norms for example rewarding with respect, sense of belonging and reputation. It is important to remember to use both extrinsic and intrinsic rewarding and have them in balance with each other when building community. (Spinks 2022.)

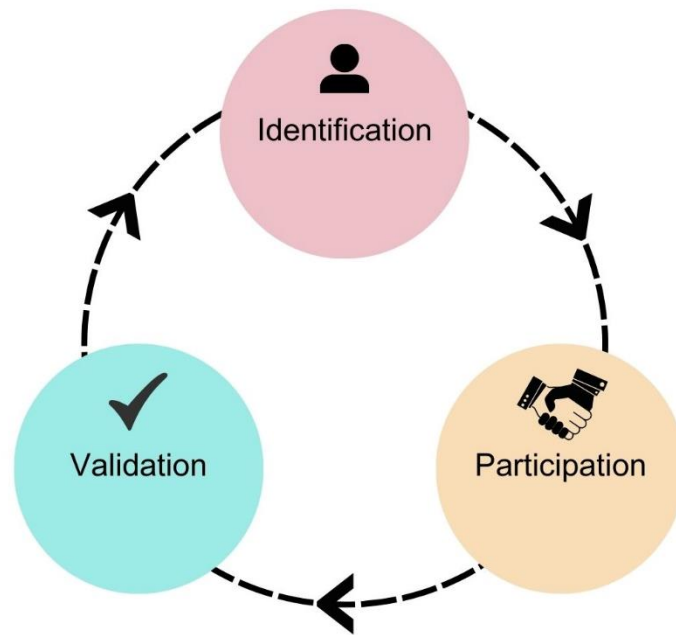


Figure 1 CMX Social Identity Cycle (Adapted from Spink 2022.)

Building a community does not have to be all serious, it is important as a community to play together and enjoy each other's company. Even though playing is usually associated with children learning and developing their brain, playing is important to adults too. According to Born (2014, 69.) adults need to play to awaken optimism and help to give creative energy, reduce stress, and feel pleasure in live. For a community emotional intelligence is essential and playing enhances individual and group emotional intelligence and it gives us opportunity to test our human behaviours and relationships with less consequence than more serious obligations. Playfulness also helps develop skill to adapt and make individuals more pliable to make sense of the changing world around us.

## 2.2 Importance of community for wellbeing

Having a strong community is crucial since community is often for an individual's source of social connection and sense of belonging.

Working together and being together gives individuals a sense of belonging in the place and time which they are at and make them feel needed and accepted as part of the group. (Born 2014, 67) Sense of community can make individuals feel they are part of something greater than themselves. (Clarabut 2020)

Being a part of community has many benefits for individuals' wellbeing. Support that community gives to its members can have a vital role for helping individuals physical and mental wellbeing. Sharing knowledge and experiences between the members can stimulates innovation and growth. Community can influence its members to feel empowered to be able make positive changes in their personal lives and in the community. (Clarabut 2020.)

For everyone's wellbeing is important to feel happiness and joy. Happiness is a temporary feeling that individuals personally feel and seeking happiness is easier to find even in the smallest objectives. When it comes to joy, it is the way of being. Joy is experienced through kindness and love, and it evokes altruism of caring and powerful source of good. Deep sense of joy is harder to find alone as an individual. For an individual to feel and grow the sense of joy in them the individual must connect to the joy others give. Community is one of the best ways of nurturing joy in us, but it's important to remember receiving and giving joy should be mutual. (Born 2014, 69.) The joy of collective accomplishments gives individuals energy and helps individuals overcome the level of powerlessness to accomplish larger scale problems. This kind of joy can be compared to when playing sport and as a team being able to accomplish bigger wins than one person could have by themselves. Similarly, a community can help individuals feel deep joy of the accomplishments the community has achieved. (Born 2014, 67.)

### **3 Event management**

These sections will look at how events are contracted and what is needed to make successful events.

#### **3.1 Definition of event and community events**

Meaning of event is originated from the Latin word “eventus” which is used to describe big happenings out of ordinary. Concept of events nowadays is broader, and it has been used to describe big social gatherings, sport shows, meetings, and performances. (Damm 2011, 1.) The earliest sighting of events in history can be traced back to communities gathering around to do religious worship and celebrations. Even if these were not considered events at the time, it started a need in the social system to build venues in city planning to give communities a place to gather and enjoy various events. (Robison, Wale & Dickson 2010, 16.) Events nowadays bring people together in the same ways as they did in the past. Throughout history can be seen how important individuals in local communities were to co-create successful events. (Clarke & Jepson 2015, 120.)

As events' base purpose is to bring people together, increase sense of place, and create experiences for its participants, community events nature has similar principals as normal events. Community events nature is to create memorable experiences and enjoyment to meet community's needs and desires. (Clarke & Jepson 2015, 16.)

#### **3.2 Event idea and concept**

Whether the event is a professional corporate event or small gathering of people it always needs an idea and team behind it to make it happen. All events start with the idea of the event concept which will be developed with the knowledge for whom the event is for and to fit the purpose and desired outcome of the event. (Robison, Wale & Dickson 2010, 20.)

Event idea is just an idea of the outline of the event but is not a clear statement which is needed to make the event. Event ideas usually make the first spark to get the design process going to make an idea into a concept. Event concept is a clear statement which gives the event the meaning and parameters to shape the event to a clear laid out design. (Robison, Wale & Dickson 2010, 20.)

Concept defines the aim of the event and what the event is supposed to achieve. (Robison, Wale & Dickson 2010, 72)

Transforming event an idea to a concept one of the useful tools is the 5 W's questions. The 5 W's help defining if the event idea is feasible and lucrative. These questions are important to consider from the beginning of the design process. (Robison, Wale & Dickson 2010, 22.)

The 5 W's:

- **Who:** Event serves as a platform for bringing people together to create shared experience to people who support the event including the internal and external stakeholders. Event stakeholders are the individuals or groups that can affect or be affected by the impact of the event. No matter the size of an event, from the beginning of the event concept design process determines functionality of interactions between stakeholders.
- **What:** Defines the object of the event and what is the product. Mission statements help the create the specific goal and how needs are established in the wider external context.
- **Why:** Statement of the reason why the event is occurring and what is the purpose of the event being produced. Why questions are usually easy to answer and defining this part can be the easiest since the event idea would not have been created without already having the reason for why the event should take place.
- **When:** Defines the timing of the event and the timescale of the planning process that is important to make the actual event happen. Planning the timing of the event includes taking considerations of the delivery process which includes venue availability, production timeline, performance, participants requirements, supplier availability and consideration for competing events.
- **Where:** Answers the question regarding the location of the event. Where the event will be held and what requirements the venue needs to fulfil to suit the event purpose. If the event is held somewhere further away how will the participants get there and would there be a starting meeting point to reach the main event venue.

### 3.3 Event Planning

Event planning process can be divided into to three phases that carry out the event from start to end. First phase of the event planning process in figure 2 is preparation. Event planning starts with defining the event's type, size, aim and purpose which is developed into a clear statement of event concept. The clearer the event concept is in the beginning, the less time organiser needs to spend on issues that are not as important for the event. (Dowson & Bassett 2015, 22-23.)

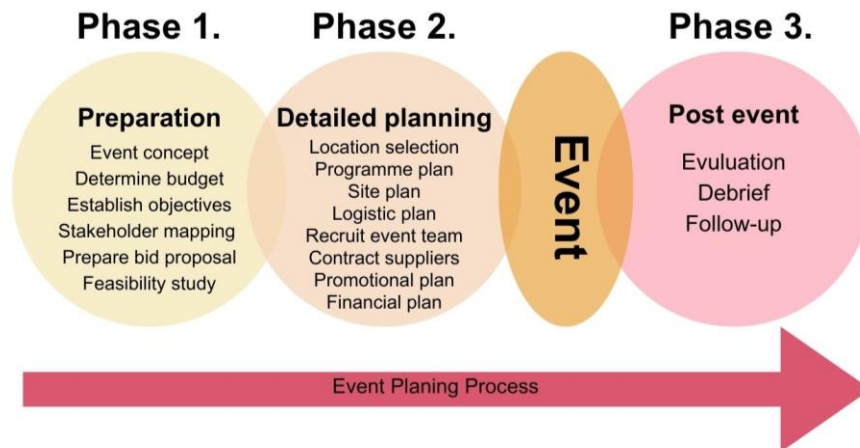


Figure 2 The event planning process (Adapted from Dowson & Bassett 2015, 22.)

After the event concept is defined, it is needed to determine the event budget. When setting a budget, it is important at first to outline all expected expenses and take in consideration all the possible unexpected expenses in the planning process. Making a list of all the expenses will help the event organiser to divide it to all sectors in the planning process. (Robison, Wale & Dickson. 2010, 62.)

Once the idea and concept have been developed it is important to inspect the feasibility of the concept and how the vision will be turned into measurable objectives. Meaning of feasibility in event planning can vary depending on the type, aim and focus of the event. It can mean minimizing the risk of failure or evaluating finances or identifying management structure, marketing strategies and main resources needed to produce the event. Developing the event plan considering feasibility will ensure achieving the original mission and vision for holding the event. (Robinson, Wale & Dickson 2010, 76.)

In phase two of the event planning process, detailed planning of the event, it is important to define the delivery of the event and understand critical paths of the concept. Defining the delivery of the event consists of deciding the event venue, supplier planning, promotional and financial planning. Part of detail planning is also determining the event program. Event program consists of the formal and informal activities or performances which event organisers think the participants would like. (Dowson & Bassett 2015, 43-44.) Event results can sometimes be a guessing game since it is harder to know what kind of obstacles can occur in the planning process. Having a clear understanding of all the actions that can be undertaken during the planning and execution of event is a crucial part of the critical path. As an example, when planning and confirming an event venue or an

activity, they might include a set of requirements which are needed to be met. These requirements can be to get a certain number of participances to meet the participant limit of the venue to get a private event or for the activity to be possible to implement. (Robison, Wale & Dickson 2010, 78.)

### **3.4 Event calendar**

The word calendar comes from the Latin word “calendarium” which means interest register or account book. All types of calendars describe time divided into periods, most typical time descriptions are days, months, or year. (Lin, Roman & Ziadeh 2023.) Calendars are most often perceived as the traditional year calendar that is used to track our everyday lives. Calendars can be used for other purposes as well for example when planning and managing events.

Event calendar can be used in two different ways. First way of using an event calendar is when managing the event schedule. Event schedule management is a timetable for an event project that coordinates the development process of the event from start to end. It gives clear structure when and what needs to be done. (Tomakh 2019.)

Organizations also use event calendars as a more informative platform to give all stakeholder information on the upcoming events and their schedules in the calendar year. This kind of event calendar will display already planned events and will only showcase the results. These event calendars have been made using event planning and event schedule management. Event calendar's most important task is to display information regarding the events. Not all events need to have displayed the same information, but it rather depending on the event which information is important to display to be helpful for events participants. Some important information to consider to display are event type and description including place, date, and time, organizations and their contact information, link to event or event venue or performer's social media page, event's sponsor, map of the events location, link on the registration page or description how to register if its needed, and promotional images. Informative event calendar used to display upcoming event can be displayed in two ways, normal calendar view which show events recording the timing or with listing view that can be either by categories of events or by the timing of events. (Peck 2021.)

## **4 Community events satisfactions survey**

As mentioned in the theoretical part 2.1 about community building it is important to listen all the members of the community and let everyone to be part of decision making in the community. This is why considered to be essential to hear what the stakeholders who are part of Noli Studios community feel and expect about the community and community events. The stakeholders who are part of Noli Studios community are the long-term flexible guests and host managers and assistant host managers employees. Since the stakeholders are two groups, will be conducted two surveys each meant to each stakeholder group.

### **4.1 Survey design**

Community event satisfaction surveys research question is “How stakeholder in Noli Studios community experience and feel the importance of community events and what needs they have from the community?”

#### **4.1.1 Structure of the survey**

A qualitative survey will be conducted to determine how Noli Studios’ longer terms guests and host managers and assistant host managers employees experience and feel about Noli Studios community and community events. The survey will give input on what are the needs and expectations Noli Studios guests have for community events and what needs and expectations Noli Studios employees have for managing community events. Qualitative, because the subject of the survey is collecting information to know how survey participant think and feel. Qualitative research is used for collecting and analysing non-number data such as in-depth perspective into a problem or new ideas for the research. (Bhandari 2023)

#### **4.1.2 Choice of survey tool**

Community event satisfaction survey for both stakeholders is contacted as online survey form. The online surveys will be designed in Google forms, because it has a simple selection of question types, and the distribution can be with a link. Satisfaction survey technique needs are quite simple and Google forms as a platform are effortless and easy to use. Furthermore, the decision felt to the online survey because online surveys can be realized quickly, and question types and answer options, such as single or multiple answers and weighted matrices, can be selected individually. In addition, the survey is easy to evaluate, as all the answers are already available in the system and no longer need to be transferred.

Satisfaction surveys are meant to get inside what each stakeholder expects and has experiences from Noli Studios community. Surveys use both multiple choice questions and open answer questions.

Community satisfaction survey for Noli Studios guests were distributed with flyers seen in Appendix 2. The flyers have a QR code that takes participants to the survey and these flyers were hung up at the elevator walls in every Noli Studios sites. For additional picture of this flyer were put on Noli Studios Facebook page with text informing reader about the survey followed up with link for the survey. Community satisfaction surveys for employees were distributed via email and they were sent to every assistant host managers and host managers.

#### **4.1.3 Community event satisfaction survey for guests**

Community event satisfaction survey for guests has seven questions in total, which four of them are open written answer questions, two multiple-choice questions and one likert scale question seen in Appendix 3. The questions of the survey have been prepared to reflect the guests' level of satisfaction on community events and what kind of wishes and needs guests may have regarding the community. In the beginning of survey participances are presented with consent form seen in Appendix 1. For the consent form if participant would answer not the survey will be send as empty. All the questions in the survey are anonymous and optional to answer. Because community events satisfactions survey is free of choice for guest to answer, the number of respondents' desired is not high. Desired number of responses would be from 20 to 30 guests to answer the survey.

#### **4.1.4 Community events satisfaction survey for employees**

The community events satisfaction survey for employees is constructed to give more inside on the feedback what employees have gathered during their work from guests who has participated to community events and what wishes guests might have for the community. Is also important to get inside on the aspect employees feel need to be taken into consideration when planning future community events and if employees wish to have some better or more tools for the planning process. Community event satisfaction survey questions for employees can be seen in Appendix 4. Community events satisfaction survey for employees is contacted in the way participants will be presented consent form seen in Appendix 1. If participants answer no on the consent form the survey is send as empty. Desired number of responses for community events satisfaction survey for employees is half of all employees being around 15 responses.



## 4.2 Survey findings

Community satisfaction survey was open for participants to answer from 4.10 to 22.10 in total two weeks. The expectations of how many people would participate taking part on the surveys were quite low from the start. Every answer I got to the survey is considered as positive since I know people are not so willing to take part on surveys. Community event satisfaction survey for guest gathered in total 22 participances, but the total of answer depends on the questions, since all questions were optional to answer. Community event satisfaction survey for employees gathered in total 8 participants which is a bit lower than I expected, but still positive since it was meant to also get assistant host managers and host managers perspective on community and community events.

### 4.2.1 Findings from survey for guests

Since community event satisfaction survey for guest had 3 types of questions: open questions, multiple-choices, and likert scale questions. I will first examine the multiple-choice and likert scale questions first and then proceed to open written answer questions.

First question of the survey is multiple-choice questions giving answers to do guests feel part of Noli Studios community. In total for the first question answered 22 participances. From the answers 40,9% feel like they are part of the community and 27,3% are not sure about do they feel part of the community and 31,8% don't feel part of the community seen in figure 3. The positive aspect regarding the answers is that most of the guests feel like they are part of the Noli studios community, although there were surprisingly many participants who answered not to feel part of the community.

#### Do you feel like you are part of Noli Studios community?

22 answers

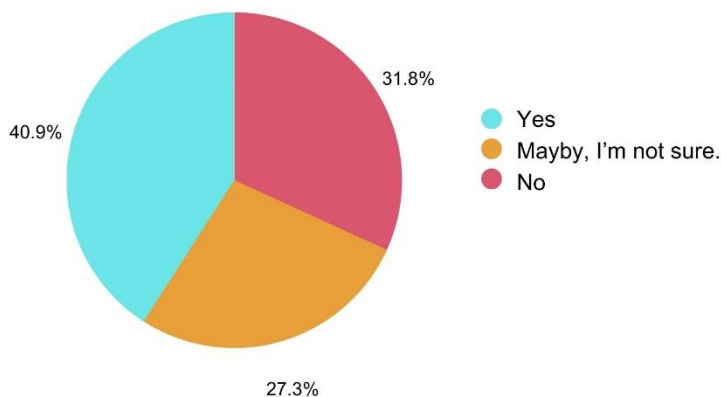


Figure 3 Answer from community event satisfaction survey for guests.

When asked from Noli Studios guests how important they feel to be part of the community in the scale of one to five, one being not so important and five being very important, can be seen how the previous answer may affect on the importance of feeling part of the community. As seen in the figure 4. most of the participants feel it is important to be part of the Noli Studios community. Together over half of the participants answered to be number four important and number five very important to feel part of the community. Only 9,5% from participants answered number one that they do not feel it to be important to be part of the community. For both number two and number three answered 14,3% meaning that they do not think it's so important to feel part of the community or the opinion is neutral. From these answers can be concluded that most of the participants who answered not to be sure do they feel to be part of the Noli Studios community still highly feel important to be part of the community.

### How important is for you to feel part of the community?

21 answers

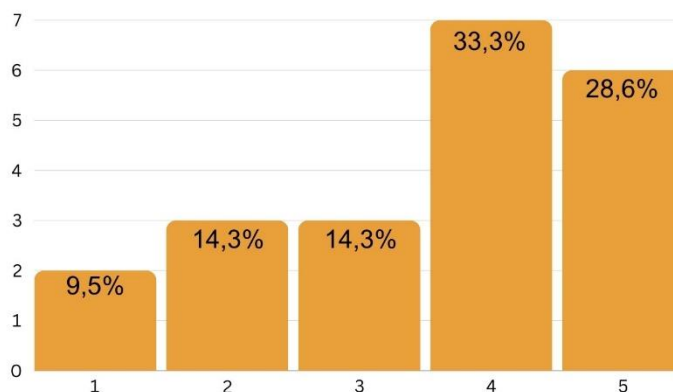


Figure 4 Answer from community event satisfaction survey for guests.

Last multiple-choice question answers how the guest think does current community events support building community and make it easier for guests to get to know people in the community. From 21 participants 38,1% were not sure of the difference that current event makes in their life to get to know people and 14,3% answered that they do not see a difference. A bit less than half of answers was more on the positive side, 19% answered yes definitely they have got new friends from the community events and 28.6% answered to got to know new people but not were so strongly agreeing with the questions seen in figure 5. From the answers can be assumed that participants who might have previously answered not to feel part of the Noli Studios community don't have so big of a need to get to know more people or community events in general are not their way of getting to

know more people. This shows how in the community is multiple personalities and for some people feeling of sense of belong in the community is not as important than it might be for others.

### Do you think that current community events building a community and makes it easier to get to know people?

21 answers

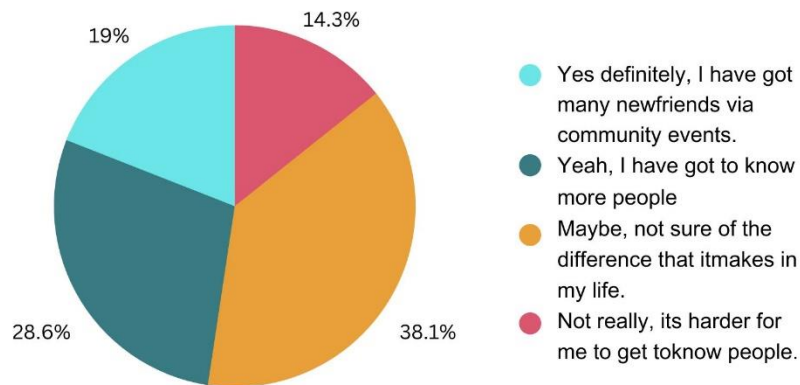


Figure 5 Answer from community event satisfaction survey for guests.

Continuing into first open question which responds to what are the things that makes guest feel welcome to the Noli Studios community. For this question answered 20 participants in total. From the answers can be seen 3 major point which make guest feel most welcoming to the community. First major point is friendly co resident and host from whom guest are able get support and company to the everyday life. Second major point is clean common areas which provide guest place to gather around and meet other guests. One participant answered how important is having common areas information is in both in English and Finnish to make them feel more welcome to the community. Third point is Noli Studios community events. Some survey participants like the events with activities and some like specially events host are organizing. One participant mentioned to be important how events bring people together from different age groups and not just young people. Answers were mostly positive and aligning with each other, but there were two slightly unhappy participants who mentioned site specific problem either due to some maintenance of the common areas or cleanliness after some gathering between guests. Furthermore, these answers are vital to consider specially in the ways of communication between host and guests.

When asking participants what is the most important thing for them in the community similarities there can be seen similarities in the answers compared to when asked what makes them feel welcome. One of the similarities is the importance of events for guests and the opportunity to network and get to know new people. Between answers are visible two aspects of importance safety and

having openness and kindness. For many participants, based on the answers, it is important to feel connected with others and get respect in the community and specially get companionship from other guests to do activities together which lower the feeling of loneliness.

The third open question gathered the most variation in the answers responding to what hopes and expectations guests have about Noli Studios community and community events. A couple of participants were happy about the community and community events as they were or did not know what to add to them. There were a couple of answers explaining being happy with the events but taking small things into consideration, for example, allergic-friendly food and the timing of the events to be more accessible for people with working schedules. Many participants mentioned how they would like to have events where there would be more possibility of getting to know their own neighbours, since in some bigger events it is harder to get to know people, because guests can already have their own friend groups and friends harder to join those groups. Those smaller and simpler events where hosts would be present would help take pressure away and make it easier for to get new people into the community. From answers, participants enjoy events with different kinds of activities and cultural experiences, but participants would wish to have those kinds of events which would have bigger participation numbers and more room in the sing-up, since most of the time participants sing up sheets fill up fast. This is one excellent aspect to take into consideration when hosts plan events to sometimes do events which are low in cost and would provide bigger participation opportunities for guests.

The final open question asked participants what type of community events they personally feel are beneficial for their well-being. Findings from these questions were quite similar to answers from the previous questions. Many participants felt it most beneficial for their well-being events with sporty activities or outdoor activities and gathering which gives opportunities for getting new people. Some participants suggested having some local site-specific group where they could practice wellness together, whether it is yoga, gym, or outdoor activities. From answers that can be seen, the participants already feel that Noli Studios' exciting event already supports guests' well-being, and many participants wish to have more similar experiences and events Noli Studios has already provided.

#### **4.2.2 Findings from survey for employees**

The community events satisfaction survey for employees had a total of six questions, four of them being open written answers and two of them multiple choice and liner scale questions. A total of

eight employees took part in the survey. I will first proceed with finding from multiple choice and liner scale questions and then forward to open written answers.

A similar way to the survey done for guests, the first question of the survey for employees is how employees think most of the guests at Noli Studios feel welcome and being part of the community. From employees' answers, that can be seen, 87,5% say that the guest does feel welcome in the community and 12,5% answered, maybe not sure, as seen in figure 6.

### **Do you think most of the guests at Noli Studios feel welcome and being part of the community?**

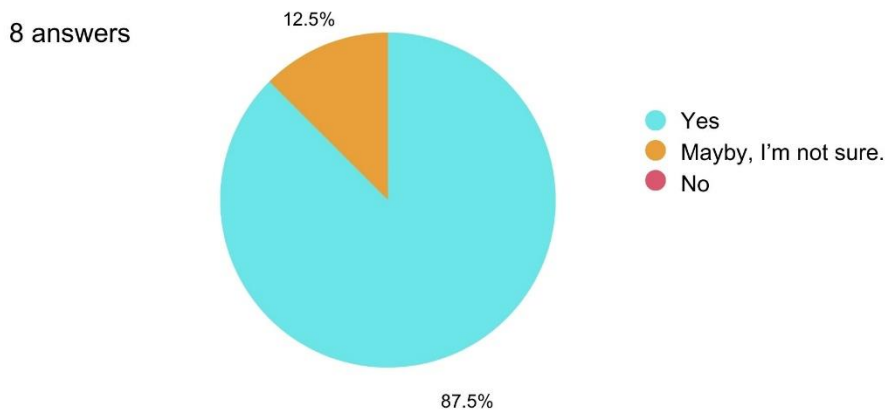


Figure 6 Answer from community event satisfaction survey for employees.

Employees were asked to put on a scale from one to five how important they think community is for Noli Studios guests, one being not important and five being very important. Similarly, to previous answers from multiple choice questions, employees think community is important to guests. From answers 37,5% thought the five very important and the rest of the answers 62,5% were four important as seen in figure 7. No one of the employees who took part in the survey thought that it would not be important for guests to be part of the community.

## How important do you think community is for Noli Studios guests?

8 answers

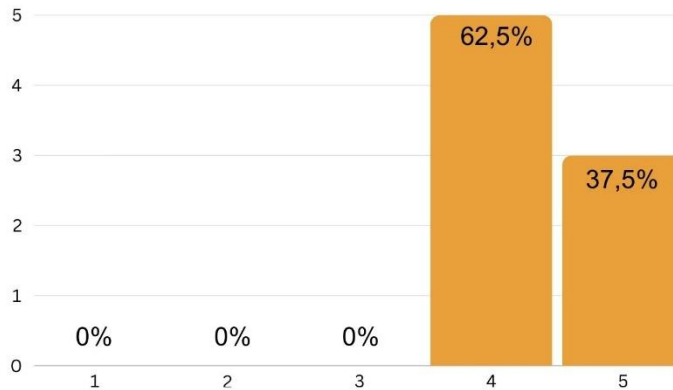


Figure 7 Answer from community satisfaction survey for employees.

Proceeding to the open questions, the first question is what kind of feedback employees have received from guests regarding community events, most of the answers aligned with each other. Many employees have received positive feedback and guests have liked the community events. Surveys brought up similar answers to guests' surveys, that the guest would wish guests would be more present at the events, having bigger and costly events, having more sports activity related events, and wishing to have more sing-up spots at the events. Moreover, the feedback which employees have received is mostly positive and shows guests being content with the community events that Noli Studios already provides.

When asked what kind of community event employees find beneficial for Noli Studios guests and their well-being, many similarities can be seen with the answers of guests. Employee's answers can be divided into 3 main points. The first point being events where participants get to know more people, whether there are low threshold events at the site, a gathering or event that is easy to participate events without knowing people and getting to know more people that way. Second point is having activities where guests get to do sports together and get guests engaged with each other through movement. The third point being cultural events where guests get to learn new things about culture. For example, a museum exhibition or walking tour in Helsinki, at the same time, guests get to learn about culture and about themselves and other participants.

Third, open question for employees is what hopes and expectations employees have for Noli Studios community and community events. Employees answered that they hoped every Noli Studios

site could get their own unique community and hope guests would get to know each other and maybe even make lifelong friends from the community. Another aspect that was brought up in a couple of answers is having more available sport for guests to participate in ordinary events, but still having events together with other Noli Studios sites.

Last, open questions are asked by employees if they wish to have some other tools or more tools when planning and executing community events. A couple of employees answered wishing to have more clear files, where to see what events have been done in the past and an easier way to display new ideas and ideas that have been exceptionally successful and could be used again. Employees mentioned how now the file to store ideas and build community events calendar is not as clear and a bit harder to follow and fill up. To have more clear tools, one suggestion was to have all cooperation partner information collected on one file, since right now it hasn't been displayed clearly and can make it harder for could new host to know what companies to utilize in the community event planning process. One employee answered that since Noli Studios is expanding in Finland, they see a need for one employee to be designated to organize community events and that is one way to help the load of other work hosts has. The last suggestion from employees was to utilize questioners for collecting feedback and letting guests to have more choice about the events the host organized for them.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

Community events satisfaction surveys for both guests and employees can reveal how important community is for the guests and that community events play a vital role in building a site's community. Community events give guests the opportunity to get to know new people and help guests feel less lonely whether they have just moved on to Noli Studios or have stayed there for a while. In particular lower cost events where guests gather around food or fun activities. For example, game nights are good low threshold events to participate in and get to know people. Survey answers show that even if some guests have answered not being sure about if community events make a difference in their lives still the open answers show many liking and wishing to have more events where there is an opportunity to do activities together with other Noli Studios guests.

From both survey answers for guests and employees, there can be observed the importance of communication between host and guests. The presence of host in the events seem to make guests feel more comfortable in the community. The presence of a host is especially important when building a new community and when new guests move to Noli Studios to make them feel welcome to the community.

## 5 Community event calendar

The following chapter will explain Noli Studios community event calendar in the following order: event categories, how to build each month's events and finally presenting present the year 2024 event calendar. The year 2024 event calendar is a draft of the possible events that can be carried out in that year and this event calendar can still change when it's into use. The purpose is to give an example of what an event calendar consists of and give tools for employees to construct every month's events and use the materials as orientation material.

A community event calendar is used to display information about the events and what timing each event is planned to happen. The community event calendar displays information on the listing view in the order of events are organized or planned to be organized. This community event calendar does not display a schedule for planning the events since each month's events are planned on the same schedule, month at the time. Criteria for the community event calendar is to display clear event categories when utilized make the event planning process easier for the employees. The main purpose for the material is to be able to use it for orientational material for the new Noli Studios sites and for new employees.

### 5.1 Event categories

To make it easier for hosts to plan community events each month, we have a clear structure on which type of event months events can consist of. The main reason for categorizing events is to make phase one of the event planning process be ready and the host could focus more on phase two detailed planning of the event planning process. To make the events planning process easier and faster events are divided into three main categories: annual events, common events, and site-specific events. Each of the three main categories includes more specific event categories.

#### 5.1.1 Annual events

Annual events are recurring events every year or month and are considered as a tradition. Annual events are:

- **Host Hour:** Events are arranged every month last Sunday. Usually, the host will put out some tea, coffee, and cookies in the common kitchen. Couple times a year Host Hours are organized as brunch. The purpose of Host Hour is for guests to get to know each other and give feedback or just share their feelings with the Host. Host hours usually do not have a specific topic that hosts and guests talk about, but there could be an opportunity for the host to ask for feedback on some specific topics. The findings from the community satisfaction survey show how important feedback and interaction with hosts are for guests to feel



more welcome in the community. Based on the feedback and interaction at the host hours, the host can collect ideas of which things guests are specifically wanting or longing for.

- Sites birthdays: It is a site-specific event and is considered as an annual event since birthdays happen every year at the same time. Site's birthdays are celebrated in a common kitchen and the host will offer birthday cakes for guests.
- Noli does Olympics: The Noli Olympics are playful Olympic competitions held once a year in the summer, where the winners receive various prizes, such as a free stay at one of Noli Studios' sites. The Noli Olympics don't require singing up beforehand and the games are played with groups of people. Group sizes depend on the number of participants.
- Noli goes Private Cruise: The private cruise is an annual event every summer. A cruise is normally held at M/S Emma Sun Lines, and it is an approximately 3–4-hour sight-seeing cruise around the Helsinki coastal line. During the cruise, guests get to socialize, enjoy drinks, and have each other's company. For the private cruise, has singing up before hand, to make sure required participant number would fill up and not go overboard.

### 5.1.2 Common events

As a category, common events are organized together with multiple Noli Studios sites. Common events usually use an external organizer to arrange the community events and, for this reason, most of the time, events require participants to sign in advance. Common events are usually costly events, and for that reason, it is important to divide the number of participants common events can host, taking into consideration how many participants the event venue or activity can be. Common events can be organized together at all Noli Studios sites or only among a few of their sites. Common events consist of:

- Sport events
- Cultural events such as museum visits, theatre, movie night in outside provider and stand-up show.
- Workshops and courses

### 5.1.3 Site-specific events

Site-specific events are events that are going to be organized at the Noli Studios site and usually require some effort from the host who is on shift that day. Site specific events can be shared with other sites and be arranged-in every site at the same time, or the event can be arranged only on one site or a couple of sites, but not on all sites. In general, site-specific events are less costly events compared to common events. Site-specific events usually have a low threshold for the guest to participate and do not require signing in advance, such as:

- Movie night at the Noli Studios (at common kitchen or movie room)

- Game night can be boardgames or pool table tournament.
- Holiday theme crafting such as easter egg painting, Christmas card decorations.
- Enjoying food and company together, for example Noli does BBQ or Pizza night
- Grandstand for popular game or TV show for example watching ice hockey finals together or Eurovision and having snacks.

When new sites open is important to at the beginning to focus on site-specific events specially to those events which are low threshold for guests to participate and which has host present such as housewarming party, having food together and socializing and in general gatherings. When starting to build a new community the key is to have hosts participating and encouraging guest to get to know each other. The main goal in the beginning of building the community is to get the guests feel comfortable and build a trust between host and guests.

## **5.2 Constructing community event calendar**

Community event calendar events are most of the time planned one month ahead of time. At the beginning of every month, hosts gather to decide next month's event together in a team meeting. During the meeting, it will be agreed who will take responsibility for asking offer requests from possible activity organizer companies. Offers for activities and events are forwarded to the host manager who makes the possible reservations for the activity. All decisions and reservations need to be made until 20th of the month when next month's events are published.

Every month should consist of events from each event category: annual events, common events, and site-specific events. The number of community events should be from 3 to 5, depending on the community event types and the budget used for one community event. Each month, community events should be balanced to include less costly and a bit more costlier events. Noli Studios has monthly budget for each site for community events. The monthly budget is reviewed on a yearly basis, so that one month's budget can be compensated compared to other months if one event takes more of the budget or vice versa.

When constructing community events, it is important to take into guest's feedback. As mentioned in the theoretical chapter 2.1 Building community, is important to listen to all stake holders and create a feeling of being heard in the community. Organizing community events which are for guests' liking and give them value creates the feeling of validation, which encourages guests to be more active in the community.

At the beginning of opening New Noli Studios site and when building new community to the site is important to put more emphasis on community events where the host is present, to make it more low thresholder for guests to participate and get to know new people in the community.

### 5.3 Community event calendar 2024

In this chapter a draft of possible community event calendar for year 2024 will be presented. The community event calendar is meant to give host idea and base on the planning process of the community events. Due to community events are planned one month ahead, the calendar can be modified based on future guests feedback and requested events that might appear during community events planning process. In the calendar previous ideas what Noli Studios have gathered from host and guests feedback are utilized. Community event calendar uses listing view of every months events.

#### January

- Clay and beer
- Noli goes Löyly or winter outside sport such as Noli goes Ice skating
- Host hour

#### February

- Noli Otaniemi opening
- 9.2 International Pizza Day, Possibility Via tribunal pizza making course or ordering pizza and having game night with guests.
- Valentines day friend speed dating at every site
- Host hour

#### March

- CoolHead Brew Brewery visit/ tour
- Quiz night
- Host hour

#### April

- 1.4 Birthday of Noli Malmi one year old.
- Easter egg hunt at the sites
- Ax throwing at HELAXEN: Over 20 people reservation need to book bigger hall with 12 ax throwing tracks.
- Host hour, Sunday brunch at common kitchen.

#### May

- 1.5 Birthday of Noli Herttoniemi one year old.
- Foxtrail urban adventure trail in Helsinki: trail is done normally with groups of 2-6 people, but they have possibility for bigger group reservations as well.
- Eurovision finals grandstand at common kitchen or movie room with some small snacks.
- terrace opening Rooftop BBQ at Noli Sörnäinen, Noli Katajanokka and Noli Katajanokka II
- Game night at Noli Malmi, Noli Myyrmäki and Noli Herttoniemi
- Host hour

## June

- Ice cream summer with 3 kaveria ice cream.
- Noli does surfing, Helsinki surf house offer private lessons for max 20 person for 540€ one hour. During the lessons participant get guidance on how to surf. Private surf lessons suitable for beginners as well as slightly experienced surfers. Due to the participant maximum limit, event would be needed to be divided into couple of groups, so every site would have enough sign up places.
- Pasila street art tour. The tour is focuses on the urban art in Pasila neighbourhood. Helsinki urban art organizes public tour every other Saturday and private tour for groups. Tours for larger groups cost 200€.
- Host hour

## July

- Noli does Olympics is fun playful competition where guest compete together as groups. Olympic winner gets different kinds of prizes for example Staycation at Noli Studios.
- Noli goes picnic, would be arranged in every site. Host would provide guest picnic basket and some fun picnic games and guests are able to go enjoy summer day close by park. Picnic location depends on Noli Studios sites location.
- Host hour

## August

- Noli goes private cruise.
- Noli Trivia night
- Host hour

## September

- Noli does wine and paint. Paint and party organize private evening where guest get to paint, enjoy good wine and each other's company. Paint and part events are held at Studio

& Bar in Helsinki. Private events cost 49€ for person, and Helsinki location have possibility arranges bigger events for more than 36 participant.

- Noli goes Nuuksio, day trip to experience Finnish nature in Autum.
- Host hour

#### October

- 1.10 Birthdays of Noli Katajanokka five years old, Noli Myyrmäki four years old and Noli Katajanokka II one year old.
- Pool table tournament.
- Halloween themes escape room.
- Host hour

#### November

- 1.11 Birthday of Noli Sörnäinen five years old.
- Biitsi volleyball or Biitsi bar games
- Host hour, Sunday brunch at common kitchen.

#### December

- Christmas tree decoration.
- Little Christmas, Christmas card decorations and eating and drinking glögg and ginger-bread.
- Christmas raffle.
- Host hour

## **6 Discussion**

The following chapter will examine the key outcomes of this thesis, how the outcomes can be utilized in the commissioner party and how the outcomes could be further developed.

### **6.1 Conclusion**

Objective of this thesis was to create community event calendar base for Noli Studios to help employees at Noli Studios sites to have clearer tool for organizing community events and have written and harmonized material on what and how commissioner builds and sustains sense of community. To reach out to desired outcomes, literature research, community event satisfaction surveys and authors own experience working at Noli Studios as well free conversation between author and other stakeholders in the commissioner party were utilized.

Key outcomes of this thesis are community event calendar which act as written theory base on how Noli Studios employees construct community events. Based on the practical principles was made draft of possible community event calendar for year 2024. Year 2024 community event calendar purpose is to make employees work easier for monthly community events planning process and having already some what idea of what kind of events could be organized in the next year. Community event calendar is not strict, and it can be still modified during monthly community event process.

Thesis was made for a commissioner Noli Studios, in the purpose of bringing employees helpful tool for organizing community events at Noli Studios site. Noli Studios did not have beforehand written information how community events have been planned and the thesis outcomes can be utilized at Noli Studios in the monthly planning of community events and as well as an orientational material for new employees and upcoming new Noli studios sites.

Outcomes can be further developed into more detailed handbook on how community events are planned at Noli Studios. Thesis gives commissioner party excellent base for written orientational material that can be further developed.

### **6.2 Learning outcomes**

As learning process this thesis gave the author more insight on building community events in international accommodation operator. Throughout research and development of the product author gathered important theoretical information on community building and sustaining already existing community. Based on the key result of this thesis key to successful community can be seen as having excellent interaction between stakeholder in the community and involving everyone in the

decision-making process. In the case of this product involving people in the decision-making process meant to get guest opinions heard to consider which type of community events Noli Studios guest feel most beneficial making them feel part of the community. Outcomes of the survey also show that building and sustaining community should not just be lean on originating events, but also everyday life in the sites and the interaction with host play as important role for making guest feel welcome in the community.

Writing process of this thesis was relatively problem free. Only potential problem that might have occurred was if community events satisfaction survey would not have gained any replies. To prevent of the potential failure author decided to make the satisfaction survey not just for the guests but also for employees. This helped to gain knowledge from employees perspective and which type of feedback employees have gathered during their work. Gaining knowledge from the past community events, were relatively easy. Past knowledge form community events were gathered by the author through free discussion with the hosts and other stakeholders. Easily accessible knowledge can be considered one of the strengths of this thesis, but at the same time it can be considered as a weakness since most of the knowledge of past events is gathered by discussion with the hosts, it is harder to gather harmonized and parallel information, because every hosts can have, their own way of doing certain tasks.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Consent Form

This survey researches the satisfaction of community and community events at Noli Studios. The survey result will be used for thesis regarding the developing community at Noli Studios. The survey is held anonymously, meaning that it does not collect any personal data from participants.

I hereby give my consent to participate in the research of satisfaction on community at Noli Studios.

The content of the research announcement has been explained to me, and I understand the nature of the study, what participation entails for me, how the data I provide will be used, and how it will be stored. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers to all my inquiries.

I understand that participation in the research is voluntary. I am aware that I can withdraw this consent at any time without giving a reason, and for instance, I can discontinue answering the survey if I so desire.

Please note that once the research results have been analysed, the contribution of a single participant cannot be retrospectively removed.

For additional information about the research, the thesis Reetta Turunen assistant host manager reetta.turunen@nolistudios.com can be contacted.

I have reviewed the content of the consent form, and I give my consent to participate in the research.

Yes

No. Completing the form requires giving consent. [Responding to the survey will be defined as ending]

Appendix 2. Community events satisfaction survey flyer



**NOLi** Studios

### **Appendix 3. Community satisfaction survey for guests**

Do you feel like you are part of Noli Studios community?

Multiple-choice answer:

- Yes.
- Maybe, I'm not sure.
- Not really.

What things make you feel welcome to the Noli Studios community? Open written answer.

How important is for you to feel part of the community? Likert scale: 1. Not so important, I can be just fine by myself. – 5. Very important, I feel the best when I'm part of a group.

What are the most important things for you in the community? Open written answer.

Do you think that current community events support building a community and make it easier to get to know people?

Multiple-choice answer:

- Not really, it's harder for me to get to know people.
- Maybe, not sure of the difference that it makes in my life.
- Yeah, I have got to know more people.
- Yes definitely, I have got many new friends via community events.

What hopes and expectations do you have for Noli Studios community and community events?  
Open written answer.

What kind of community events do you personally find beneficial for you and your well-being?  
Open written answer.

**Appendix 4. Community satisfaction survey for employees**

Do you think most of the guest at Noli Studios feel welcome and being part of the community?

Multiple-choice:

- Yes
- Maybe, not sure
- No

What kind of feedback have you received from past community events? Open write answer.

How important do you think community is for Noli Studios guests? Likert scale: 1. not so important – 5. Very important

What kind of community events do you find beneficial for Noli Studios guest and their well-being?  
Open write answer.

What hopes and expectations do you have for Noli Studios community and community events?  
Open write answer.

Do you wish to have some other tools or more tools when planning and executing community events? If yes what kind? Open write answer.