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# 1 Introduction

*This article is part of my qualification for coach and supervisor education in Aikido on a national level in Finland, level three. In Finnish called VOK-3 (valmentaja- ja ohjaajakoulutus taso-3).*

A common challenge that budo arts struggle with is to attract new members. The Aikido Federation in Finland, Suomen Aikidoliitto r.y. - Finland Aikikai r.f., has also noticed this, and is developing strategies to advertise Aikido (Aikidolehti, 1/2018, s. 3). The strategies are going to be available for all clubs that are members of the federation.

I am not going to further explain what Aikido is in this article. Depending on who you ask you will probably get different answers. I refer the reader to Finland Aikikai's website: [www.aikidoliitto.fi](http://www.aikidoliitto.fi).

So how can we attract people to join Aikido? Is there anything in Aikido that separates it from other budo arts, and if there is, can that be the key for advertising? If so, could that lead to an increase in new memberships in our clubs?

One key in maintaining any sport or interest is motivation. So what motivates those practising Aikido for many years? That is what part of my questionnaire among members in different clubs in Finland tries to

find out. The Aikido Federation was helpful in sending out the link to the questionnaire in March of 2021 to all of its club members. The questionnaire closed on April 1st.

## 1.1 Aim of the article

Based upon what I have problematized so far it becomes urgent to try to find opinions about motivation and advertising among Aikido club members in Finland. The overall purpose of this article is therefore to deepen the knowledge of what members of clubs in Finland are emphasizing regarding what it is that motivates them to practise and how they would advertise Aikido. If I problematize the overall purpose, the question I am trying to answer is: Can we advertise aikido to others based upon what motivates us to keep on practising?

There are many ways to do this research, but I have chosen to make a questionnaire with predefined answer options and two open ended questions. It is also important for me to stress that this article by no means tries to find comprehensive answers or solutions to the reduction of members practising aikido. It might, on the other hand, find clues as objects of development for further research.

## 1.2 Explanation of concepts

There are certain concepts that I use in this article that require some explanation. It is also important to note that although this article is written in English, my native language is Swedish.

## *Practise*

I have chosen to use “practise” instead of “train”. Practise can be described as doing an activity repeatedly in order to become more skillful at it. Train, on the other hand, can be used to describe learning new skills for a job or aiming for a good physical condition in order to be an athlete. Since we do many activities repeatedly in Aikido, the word practise is, in my opinion, more suitable (<https://englishhelponline.me/2010/12/06/the-difference-between-words-practice-train-and-exercise/>).

## *Club*

The concept “club” refers to associations that are members of the Aikido Federation in Finland, Suomen Aikidoliitto r.y. - Finland Aikikai r.f.

## *Advertise*

“Advertise” as a concept is used in this article in the sense that we try to “get the word out” to people who don’t practise Aikido. Advertising involves a mixture of media to best generate interest. Marketing is a similar word, but often involves some kind of product for sale (<https://online.csp.edu/program-resources/marketing-vs-advertising/>).

## *Practitioner*

“Practitioner”, “trainee” or “aikidoka” are some of the concepts commonly used when referring to someone who participates in Aikido activities. In



this article I use “practitioner”, since I also use practise when referring to the activity.

### 1.3 The arrangement of this article

In chapter 2 I will briefly touch on motivation, and in chapter 3 I scratch on the surface of advertising. In chapter 4 I will mention the choice of method for and implementation of this article and in chapter 5 I present and interpret the respondents material. Finally, in chapter 6, I summarize and draw some conclusions.

## 2 Motivation

In this chapter I am looking at motivation. One way of explaining motivation is that it is the driving force behind a behavior or an act (<https://www.motivation.se/innehall/motivation-den-viktigaste-framgangsfaaktorn/>). It is also quite obvious that motivation is needed in order to keep on accomplishing things. Motivation often goes hand in hand with interest. If you are interested in something, then you probably are motivated too.

If we find our own motivation for acting then we should also look for 'why' we should act (<https://tomas-oberg.se/motivation/>). To better describe this, I am going to look at motivation from two different perspectives. They are (2.1) external driving force and (2.2) internal driving force. Finally I will summarize this chapter (2.3).

### 2.1 External driving force

Motivation is for most people not based on internal driving force. It is mostly external driving forces that motivate us. I can be studying in order to get a better job or in Aikido take exams and advance in belt levels. Different social demands can drive us to do things. External forces are often challenging and most of the time we don't choose them (<https://cmoe.com/blog/the-forces-of-change-and-informal-strategic-leadership/>).

The external forces are illustrated in the figure (Figure 1) below. I will shortly give examples of the external forces related to Aikido practising (<https://multimediamarketing.com/motivating-channel-members/>).

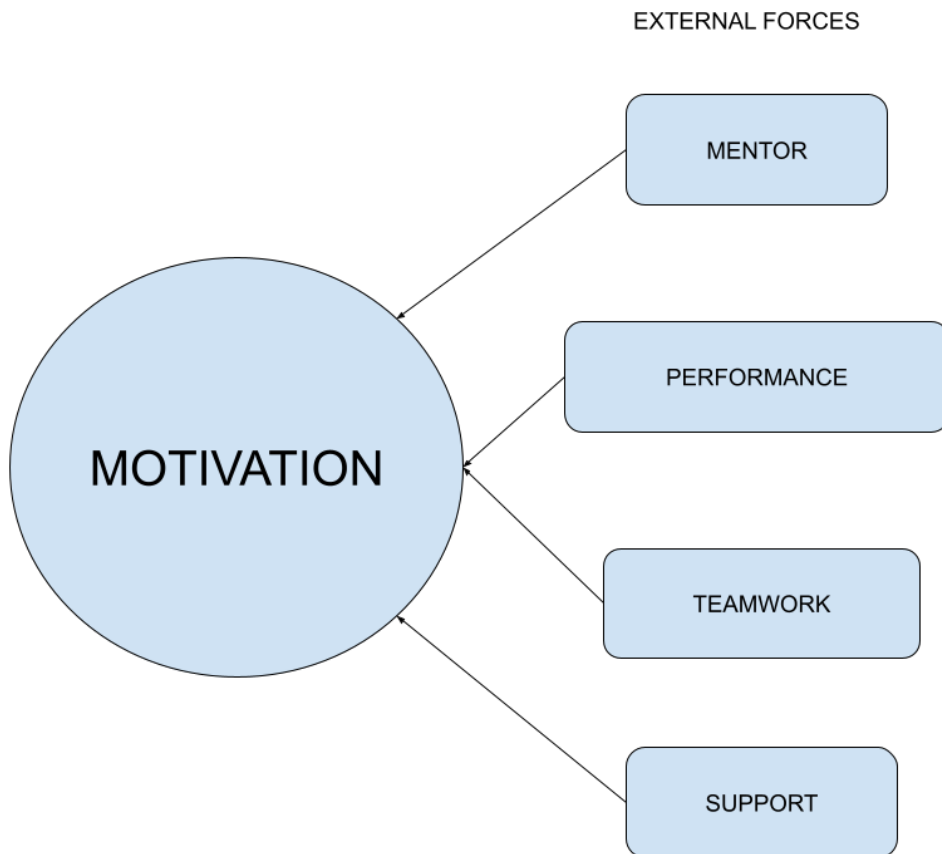


Figure 1: External forces of motivation

### 2.1.1 Mentor

One way of keeping the motivation for practising Aikido can be to have a mentor. A mentor is someone who is more experienced and also is willing to help. The role of a mentor is to focus on making his/her adept aware of values, options and consequences (Steinberg, 2004). The mentor should help the adept to find hidden qualities.

### 2.1.2 Performance

A performance can relate to at least two different things. On one hand, it has to do with the performance for an audience. That in itself can be very satisfying. On the other hand, it has to do with techniques and how they are performed. Encouraging words after performing some techniques is important and increases motivation.

### 2.1.3 Teamwork

To have a great team to practise with is very important for motivation. If the club members can help, encourage and praise each other, then the motivation is high in the team. It's good to have a team to fall back on when the motivation goes down.

### 2.1.4 Support

Support from club members, family and friends helps for motivation. Whenever you struggle to go practising, it helps to hear some encouraging words. They always have your back.

## 2.2 Internal driving force

Internal driving forces are motives that we choose by free will. We choose them because they are interesting. Curiosity is a good example of an internal force. The motive itself is the reward. When we feel the sense of personal development, self-realization and curiosity, then we

are easily motivated. Even though internal forces can be challenging too, we have more control over them. We are all, to some extent, hesitant to change. It is more comfortable to do as we always have, instead of doing something risky.

In the figure (Figure 2) below I illustrate the internal forces that increase motivation.

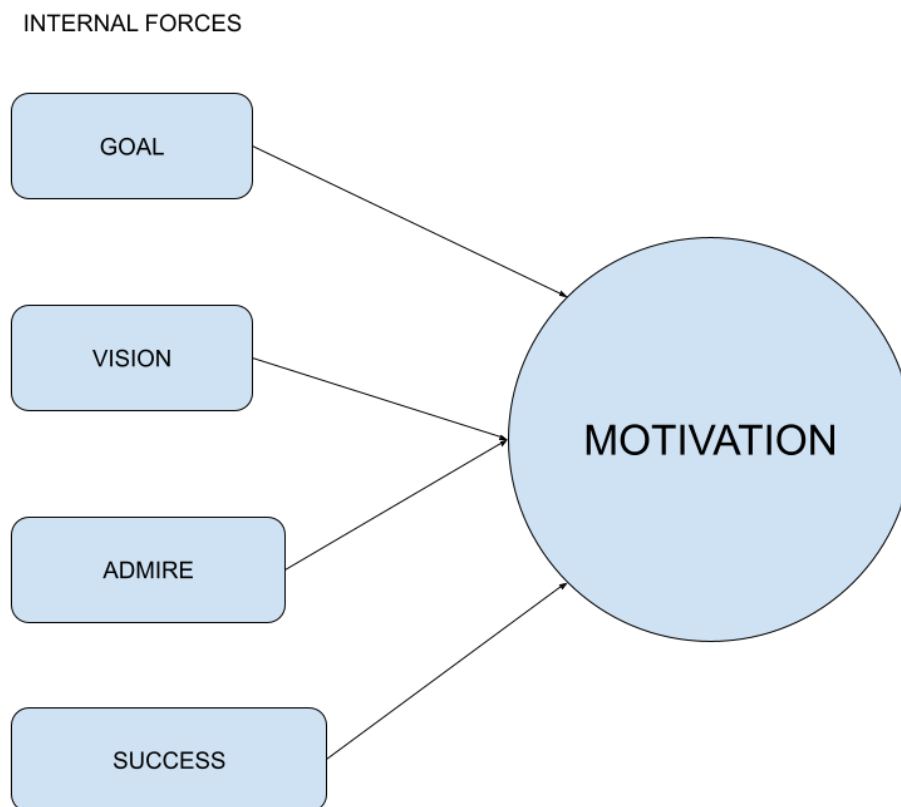


Figure 2: Internal forces of motivation

### 2.2.1 Goal

Everyone is unique, but one way of increasing motivation is to set goals. It is also important to set realistic goals, goals that are achievable within

a relatively short time. These goals work as an inner motivation, and we set these goals out of free will, which means that we also can change them whenever we feel like it.

### 2.2.2 Vision

Vision is in a sense similar to goals, with one distinct difference. While goals (preferable) are set in short intervals of time, visions tend to be more on the long term. A beginner in Aikido probably at some point will set a vision to take the black belt exam. Any vision, combined with goals, work as an inner force to increase motivation.

### 2.2.3 Admire

Every Aikido practitioner, maybe with a few exceptions, has someone they look up to, i.e. admire. For a beginner it might be the head instructor or another member in the club. Those who have been practising for many years maybe have some foreign instructor that they admire. It all comes down to inspiration. If we are inspired by someone else, then we are also more likely to be motivated.

### 2.2.4 Success

To feel success is very motivational. In Aikido it is often experienced when accomplishing a graduation or some other exam. Feeling of

success is also when the instructor tells you that you are improving. This is a good reminder to all instructors; remember to give praise.

## 2.3 Summary

Our motivation, as mentioned earlier, can be either external or internal. External motivation is most often changes or forces that we don't easily control, and are effecting us from 'the outside'. You could say that the advertising of Aikido via posters, media or live shows, in a sense, is an external force to those who don't practise Aikido. If friends of mine start practising Aikido, and I as a result of that, start practising too, then it is an external force that got me started.

Internal motivation comes from 'the inside'. It is important to have internal motivation, since it keeps up the interest in practising. It could also be an advantage to be able to advertise Aikido in such a way that it awakens an interest for the people that encounter Aikido for the first time. That way it could also bring up internal forces, leading to motivation for and interest in Aikido.

In the figure (Figure 3) below the aspects of motivation, both internal and external forces, are illustrated.

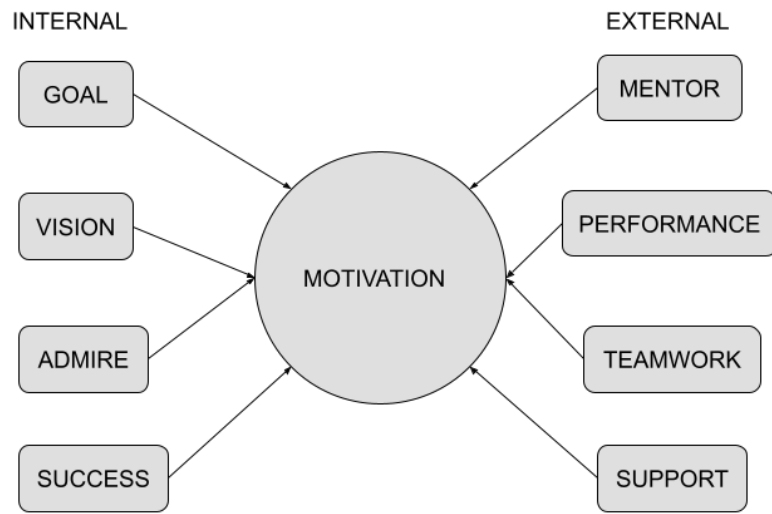


Figure 3: Internal and external forces of motivation (<https://multimediamarketing.com/motivating-channel-members/>)



### 3 Advertising

In this section I scratch on the surface of advertising. It is a large area to cover and differs to some extent depending on the angle it is approached. There is a lot of material on the internet about advertising products. It is a little bit challenging though to look at Aikido as a product. You can't easily wrap up Aikido in a nice package and advertise it as such. Aikido is much more complex.

The Aikido Federation in Finland has mentioned advertising in its Ethical principles. The principles are from 2004 and state that all advertisements, including shows, are to be reliable, objective and truthful. Each and everyone is obliged to follow good sportsmanship in advertising, and promote the appreciation and good reputation of the art in the contact with audience, authorize and media (<https://www.aikidoliitto.fi/liitto/materiaalisalkku/eettiset-periaatteet-ja-yhdenvertaisuus/>).

These are important words, but how do we advertise Aikido according to them? In chapter five, where I present and interpret the respondents material, I will come back to this question.

I choose to highlight two different approaches to advertising. The first is grassroots advertising (3.1) and the second is how to advertise (3.2). A short summary is done in chapter 3.3.

### 3.1 Grassroots advertising

The grassroots advertising (also called grassroots marketing) is the idea of advertising to an audience through the internet (<https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2016/12/08/grassroots-marketing>). It is a cost effective way and doesn't need much preparation. This advertising strategy aims for a specific audience or group of people. You could say that advertising in facebook groups is grassroots advertising, as is publishing events in the calendar that the federation has on its website. This is a strategy many clubs use when advertising seminars for example.

The advantage of advertising this way is that a club can reach many aikido practitioners at the same time. The disadvantage is that people who don't practise aikido hardly ever see these advertisements.

### 3.2 How to advertise

By surfing the internet you can find almost endless information about advertising. A second way of advertising that I chose to add in this article, is according to Business-know-how. On their website they walk through nine steps that are helpful when planning advertising (<https://www.businessknowhow.com/marketing/how-to-advertise.htm>).

#### **- know your customer**

It is important to know the customer. When advertising Aikido that could mean who we are aiming our advertising at (e.g. age-group).

**- know what your customer expects**

What are potential Aikido members expecting? What in Aikido are they looking for?

**- set goals for your ads**

Try not to think “increase members”. It could be more effective to think “5 more members within a month”.

**- choose the appropriate media to reach your target audience**

Not every product or service is necessarily good to advertise at the same place. Costs are usually linked to audience size.

**- advertise where your competitors advertise**

This is probably not something Aikido clubs would do among themselves, but maybe if they compete with other budo arts.

**- decide on the purpose of your ad**

The purpose is attracting more members. But be sure of the objectives before posting ads.

**- write with the prospects' interest in mind, not your own**

This is important. We should have the potential new members in mind.

**- start small**

Keep costs at a minimum. Aim for getting some new practitioners, not necessarily a complete new group of beginners.

### **- test and measure**

It is a good idea to evaluate the results of any ad. We might learn from them and know how to improve our next ad.

These steps can be helpful when planning advertising. It is important to stress though, that they are developed with profit in mind. Aikido clubs generally don't exist in order to earn money, but rather to cope financially with the help of their members.

### **3.3 Summary**

I have highlighted two ways to advertise Aikido in this chapter. The first approach was through different media channels, called grassroots advertising. It, at first hand, aims at people already practising Aikido and is great for advertising seminars for example. The second approach is extracted from the business world, with profit in mind. If the profit is ignored, it can still give some ideas that could be helpful when planning an advertising campaign.

There are many more ways to advertise. But this article has no intention of analyzing different methods of advertising, but rather highlight a couple of alternative methods that could be useful.

## 4 Method and implementation

As mentioned in the initial chapter (Chapter 1) the aim of this article is to examine whether it is possible to advertise aikido to others based upon what members in clubs say motivates them to keep practising Aikido. The question that arises is how to research perceptions of a certain phenomenon, i.e. motivation to practise. The concept 'perception' gives a researcher the opportunity to deepen the phenomenon that he/she is examining, i.e. a qualitative research approach.

In order to use a certain research approach there are some demands that have to be met. For example the researcher should present results in a way that offers others to check and review the sustainability of or conformity with the reality.

If my overall purpose of the article is to be pinpointed, it would be:

- in what ways, based upon respondents' perception of motivation for practising and advertising Aikido, can we advertise Aikido?

### 4.1 Choice of method

In research it is common to roughly distinguish between quantitative and qualitative research methods. The advantage of quantitative methods is that you can handle large amounts of data in an easier way compared to qualitative methods, but you also miss out on the possibility of finding deeper meaning, since it often has closed answer options. My article is approached with a qualitative method. It gives me the possibility of

finding perceptions among the respondents that had not been possible with a quantitative method.

The questionnaire is partly closed answer options and partly open ended questions. It is my intention to find some kind of relationship between them, and from the raw material derive methods to advertise Aikido.

Within quality research you go from a perception to a theory, so called inductive approach. It is typical to focus on depth in relatively small samples.

Based upon the above I have decided to do qualitative research, given the possibility of deepening, i.e. finding perceptions that are not tied to predetermined alternatives.

## 4.2 Reliability and validity

In this section I will shortly discuss the reliability and validity of qualitative research related to this article.

It is generally hard to prove reliability and validity in qualitative research. Often it is the researcher that must show that he/she has reported in a reliable way. One way of doing this is to show in what way analyzing and interpreting is done.

*Reliability* means how reliable a measurement is while *validity* means how well one succeeds in measuring or observing what one intends to measure. If the researcher has an understanding of what is being

measured, then the possibility of reasonable interpretation increases, since the researcher can relate to his/her own experiences. Since I have been practising Aikido for 20 years it can be stated that the validity of this article is quite high.

### 4.3 Respondents and implementation of the questionnaire

The raw material to this article consists of 115 respondents filling out a questionnaire via Google forms. The link to the questionnaire was sent out to clubs, with the help of the Aikido Federation, on March 9th 2021. The due date for filling out the questionnaire was March 31st.

The questionnaire consisted of six questions, three of which were closed answer options: *Gender (female, male, prefer not to say)*, *Age (6-12, 13-17, 18-25, 26-45, 46-65, 66-)* and *What motivates you to practise Aikido? Choose the option that is the most adequate (Visually attractive and interesting, Looking for complex development and interested in Japanese culture, Fulfilling my spare time, Development in self-defence skills and Other)*.

The other three questions were open questions: *Please elaborate your answer from above*, *How would you advertise Aikido to someone who doesn't practise Aikido?* and *Anything you would like to add?*

There could have been more options to choose from, but the options that I chose to include were the results of another similar research done in Poland in 2008 (cf. Reguli & Mlejnková 2008). Another important aspect when creating the questionnaire, and deciding on what options to use,

was that the researcher has to present arguments for what the raw material looks like in order to draw certain conclusions. Otherwise the interpretation would be random (Bjereld et al, 2011, s. 26).

The questions with closed answers are presented with graphs, complementary explanations and excerpts. The open ended questions are coded in descriptive categories, which stand for qualitative different perceptions of motivations.



## 5 Results and interpretation

The presentation of the results are divided into six parts, based upon the categories of description that are identified from the raw material. The interpretation of the material is based upon the aim of the article, described in chapter 1.1.

Initially I present figures in percentage on how the respondents were distributed according to gender, age group and options.

Gender  
115 svar

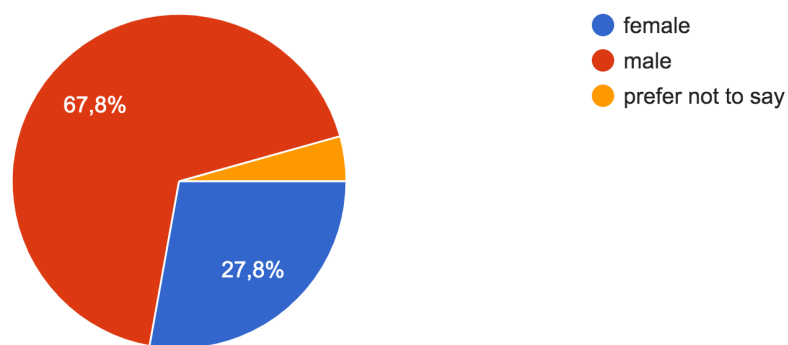


Figure 4: Respondents distribution by gender

Age  
115 svar

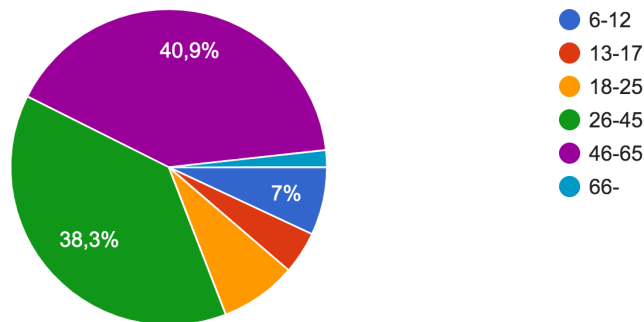


Figure 5: Respondents distribution by age group

What motivates you to practise aikido? Choose the option that is the most adequate.  
115 svar

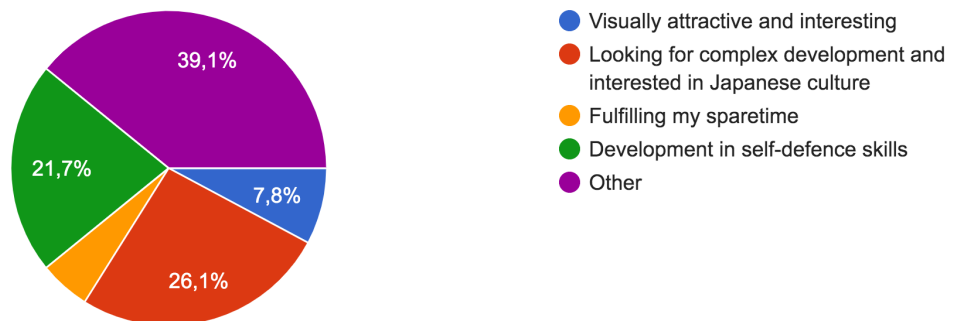


Figure 6: Respondents distribution by options

The questions with the closed answer options are presented in chapter 5.1 with figures, tables, excerpts and a short description. The open ended answers regarding how to advertise Aikido is presented in chapter

5.2. Respondents had the opportunity to add their own thoughts in the last open ended answer, which is presented in chapter 5.3. I end chapter 5 with a summary in chapter 5.4.

## 5.1 Motivation for practising aikido

Aside from the options to choose gender and age, the third question with closed answer options was *What motivates you to practise aikido?*. It was followed by a compulsory open question to elaborate their chosen option. Some of the respondents didn't elaborate, but put a random character. I will present each option in the following subchapters and include excerpts from the questionnaire to deepen the respondents' reason why they chose a certain option.

### 5.1.1 Visually attractive and interesting

Of all the respondents (n=115) nine of them chose this option (7,8 %). This option can be found in each age group, except in age groups 13-17 and 66- (Figure 7). Could it be that this option doesn't appeal to the majority of teenagers and those who are in their mid 60's?

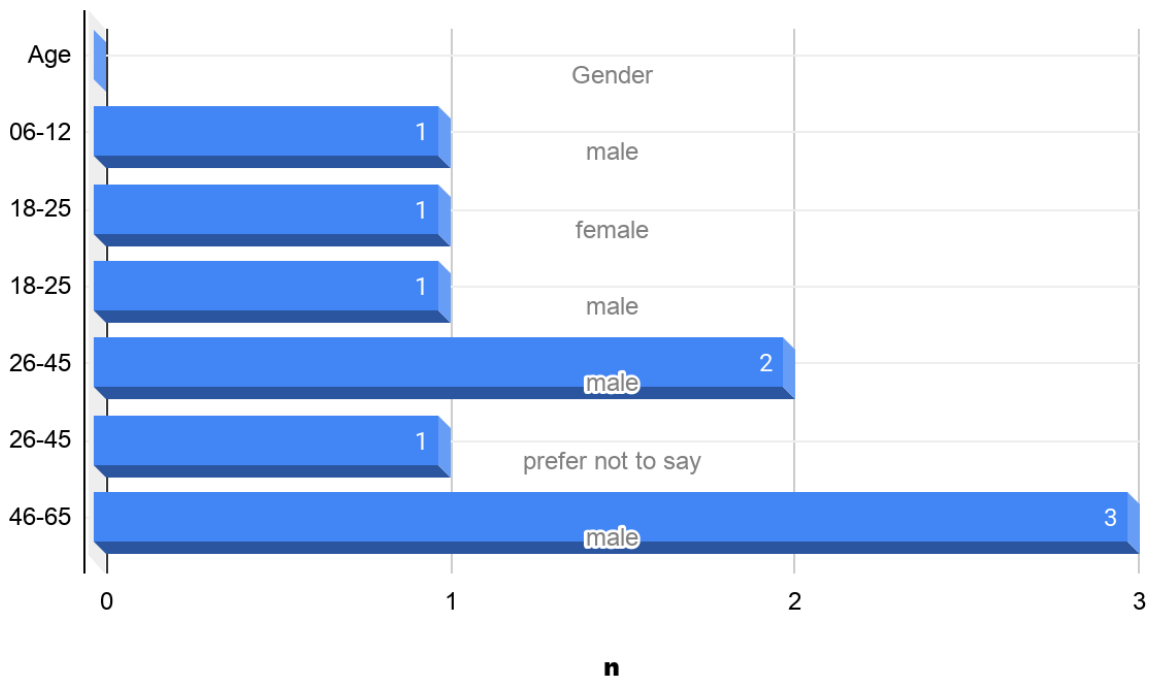


Figure 7: Visually attractive and interesting

When analyzing the open answers connected to this answer, it seems some of those who chose this option connect aikido to their daily life. Either it keeps them in shape or it helps them cope with obstacles they might encounter in daily life. They have an internal view on Aikido:

*- also helps to stay in shape and it's suitable for anyone (male, 46-65)*

*- the movement of aikido is very beautiful, the mentality of aikido is about discipline (prefer not to say, 25-45)*

*- Externally, the visual appeal of aikido, the beauty of movement in its various forms, is interesting. Internally, aikido can be used to confront other phenomena of life and everyday life, and aikido provides healing tools for dealing with and solving them. (male, 26-45)*

*- I like to advance and aikido always has something new to learn and I can see myself getting better. It's rewarding, fun and just helps me balance my lifestyle. (female, 18-25)*

Others look at aikido more from an external view. They analyze and recognize benefits. Aikido can be a path for development or it might be a nice experience to practise:

*- Layers, depths and always some new aspect or thing to learn. It's a road that is interesting to walk... (male, 26-45)*

*- it's nice (male, 6-12)*

Some see the complexity of Aikido. It is to them more than just visually attractive and interesting. They also recognize additional aspects:

*- self defense equally important (male, 46-65)*

*- needs more than force to complete whole technique (male, 46-45)*

From the open answers for visually attractive and interesting derives three different approaches, (1) an internal approach, where Aikido is integrated in daily life, (2) an external approach, where Aikido is observed and seen more as a path and an experience on the tatami, and (3) a complex approach, where Aikido is recognised as a complex budo sport, consisting of many different aspects (Figure 8).

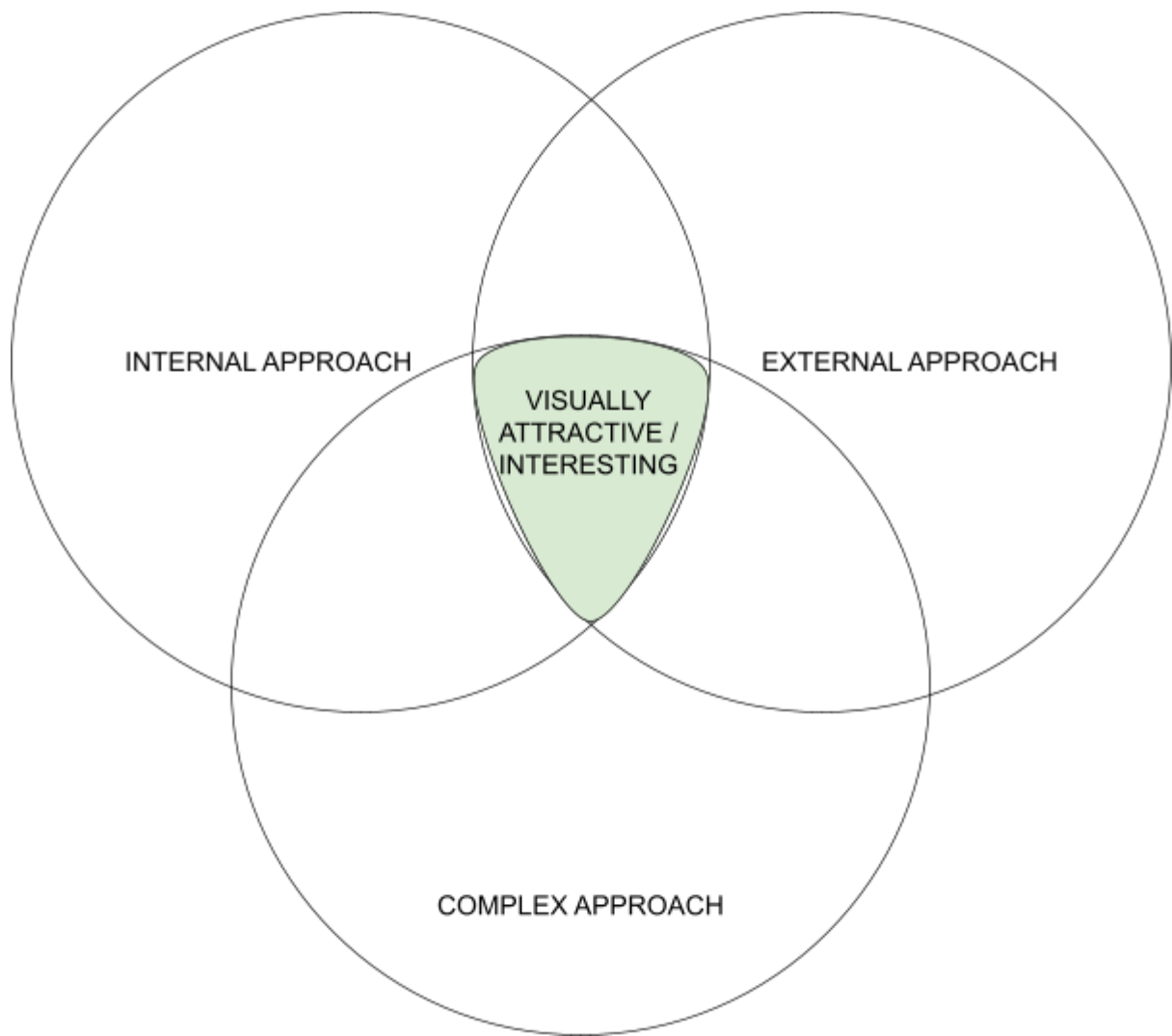


Figure 8: *Three approaches to visually attractive and interesting motivation for aikido practising*

This interpretation is based on a small number of respondents (n=9). Still, the answers give a good insight into the complexity of Aikido just by looking at how visually attractive and interesting Aikido can be.

### 5.1.2 Complex development and interested in Japanese culture

The second option the respondents could choose from was *Looking for complex development and interested in Japanese culture*. A total of 30

respondents chose this option (26,1 %). Four of the age groups were represented, 13-17, 26-45, 46-65 and 66- (Figure 6).

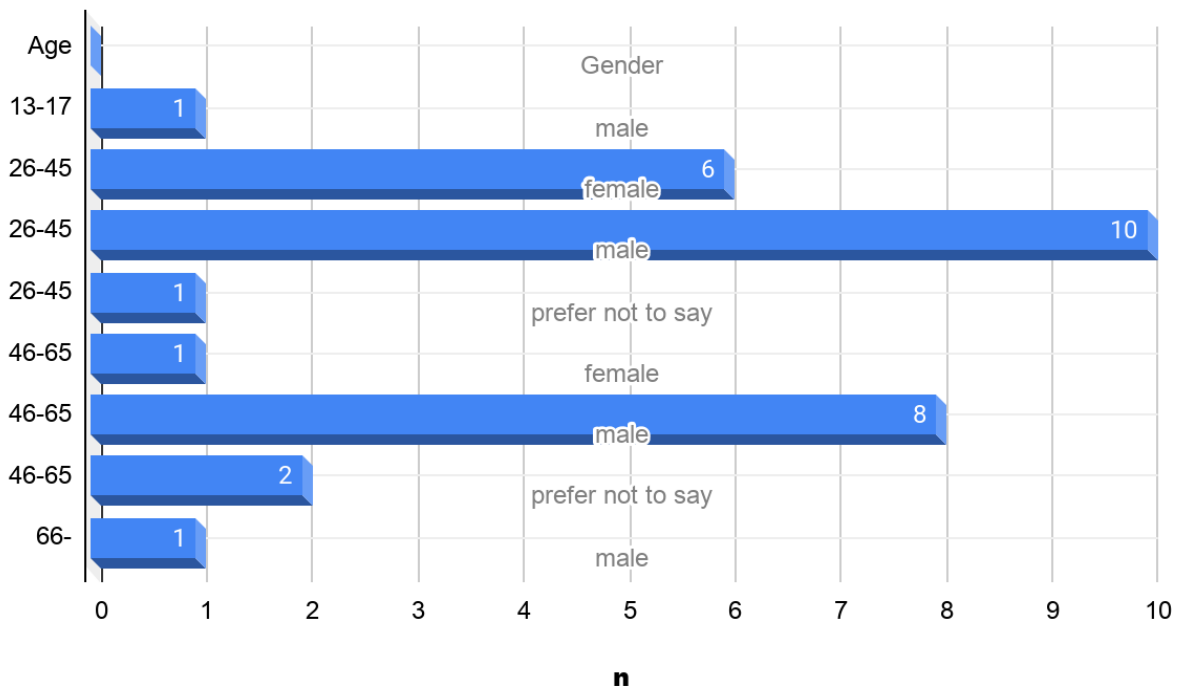


Figure 9: Looking for complex development and interested in Japanese culture

From the figure above (Figure 9) it is clear that the age groups 26-45 (n=17) and 46-65 (n=11) are the most represented. The elaborating answers are versatile. I have formed three different categories from the answers: *Practise ethics*, *Mental development* and *Physical development*.

The first category is *Practise ethics*. Only one of the respondents mentioned Japanese culture, and is therefore not included in the table (Table 1):

*...I also started studying the Japanese language (female, 26-45)*

The rest of the answers were categorized as followed (Table 1):

---

Table 1: Practise ethics

PRACTISE ETHICS (n=5)
Connection to an attacker More practise and you learn more Unrivaled Complements the budo Forever changing

---

Practise ethics relates to the activity on the tatami. It is an appealing activity that leads to increasing practise.

*- The more I practice, the more I learn to practice more (male, 46-65)*

The practise itself changes over a lifetime and it also works as a complement to other activities.

*- Forever changing practice for a lifetime, and very immersive. (male, 46-65)*

*- My main genre is judo, but aikido complements my budo image. (male, 26-45)*

One respondent views Aikido practising as a connection to the partner and to harness the movement and power it offers.

*- For me, aikido is about finding a genuine connection to an attacker and harnessing her movement and power (and quite definitely a martial art) (female, 26-45)*



Apart from these excerpts respondents also mention that Aikido is unrivaled, hence you can say that Aikido is kind of unparalleled to other budo arts.

The second category consists of answers that relate to *Physical development* (Table 2). The answers that are gathered in the category refer to developing the body, to stay fit.

---

Table 2: *Physical development*

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT (n=5)
Increases physical well-being Improves the body Keeps the body coordinated Versatile workout Endless platform for training

---

It seems that the older you get the more you focus on keeping your body in shape.

*- Aikido is by far the best way to keep your aging body coordinated and in shape. (female, 46-65)*

*- Aikido is a good way to increase your physical and mental well-being. (male, 46-65)*

*- I'm happy to see how I still can improve my body control and physical ability at my age. And I'm a fan of Japan. (male, 46-65)*

The somewhat younger respondents pay more attention to coordination, strength, flexibility and self-defence.

- I want to develop coordination, strength, speed and flexibility. The sport provides an endless platform for training and developing body use. I am not particularly interested in Japanese culture. (male, 26-45)

- Aikido is a new sport for me and I have not practiced self-defense before. This seems to be a good sport for an adult looking for a versatile workout. (female, 26-45)

Some respondents in this category also pay attention to mental wellbeing.

The third category is *Mental development*. It is presented in Table 3. There are cases that affect daily life. The respondents give many examples of how Aikido helps them to stay sharp at work and in daily life.

---

Table 3: Mental development

MENTAL DEVELOPMENT (n=13)
Self-development The movement, meditative Develops patience Exploration Stimulates/develops the body Makes me understand my body Recharges the 'battery' Endless road of self-improvement Mind, body and culture Develops mind and body

---

The answers they provide are interpersonal, ie. skills or social skills. Behaviors and reactions to interactions with others. These affect our ability to build relationships.

*- Aikido develops patience, as well as mind and body control and their connection. It's good to work out with nice workout buddies and patient instructors. (female, 26-45)*

*- Aikido makes me understand and utilise my body and mind better. (male, 26-45)*

Another aspect is how Aikido affects the work life and the interaction with people in daily life.

*- I competed in judo and wrestling as a teenager, aikido is a less physical way to keep going on the mat. Aikido helps me maintain creativity in the work and recharge my batteries. Aikido is also an endless road of self improvement and source of happiness. It also has helped me to adapt to new neighbourhoods and helped me to build networks internationally. It is a great hobby and sort of safe to practice fitness-judo. Sometimes I miss the pressure testing of the techniques but then I go to practice bjj. (male, 45-65)*

*- I like how aikido develops the mind and body and brings new social and physical perspectives to the world and interpretations. (female, 26-45)*

To summarize, the complex development of Aikido is categorized in three different categories (Table 4). When analyzing the answers it is important to decide an approach. In this case I decided to form categories, as shown in Table 4.

---

LOOKING FOR COMPLEX DEVELOPMENT
Practise ethics
Physical development
Mental development

*Table 4: Categories of complex development*

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Some of the answers could have been connected to two categories (for example development of mind and body), but I chose to connect them to one category.

### 5.1.3 Fulfilling my spare time

As a third option the respondents could choose *Fulfilling my spare time*. This option was not very frequent, only 6 respondents (5,2 %).

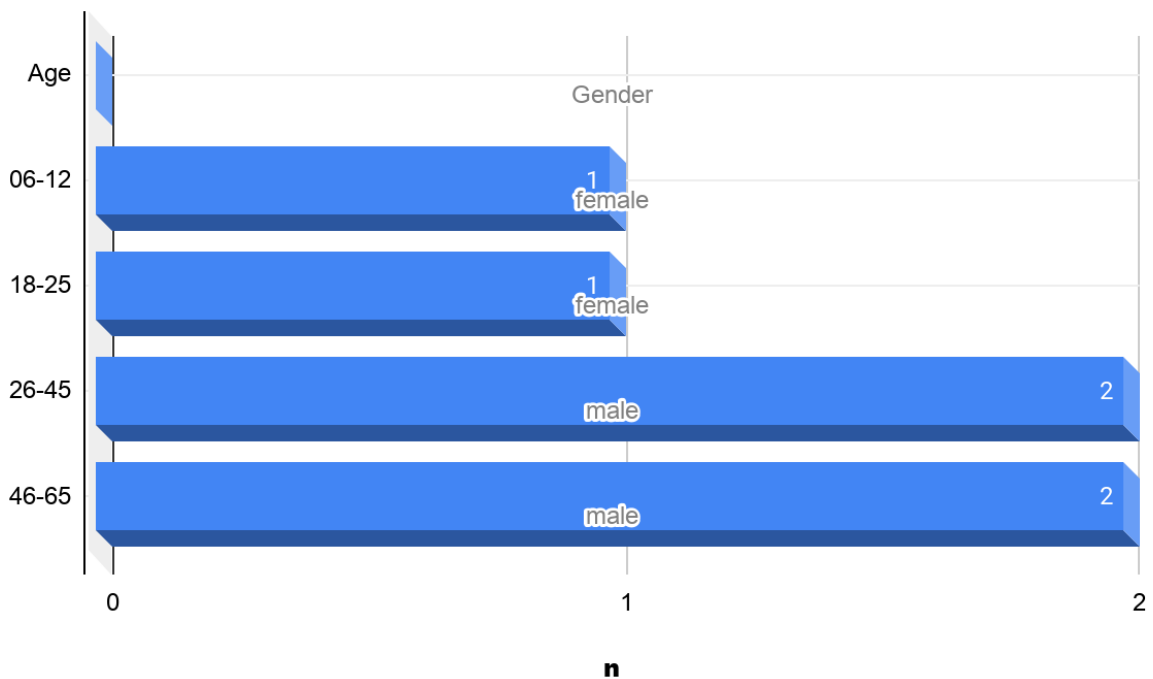


Figure 10: Fulfilling my spare time

Only one of them specifically mentioned that Aikido is for spare time:

- *Free time (male, 46-65)*

The rest of the respondents elaborated their choice in a way that they can be connected to the previous option (see 5.1.2), that Aikido is about complex development, both physically and mentally:

- Good exercise (male, 46-65)

- Aikido is more than just one hobby or skill. Movement in the sport is varied, one can practice physically and also practice concentration and calming skills. (male, 26-45)
- I want to have a sport that I can practice in easygoing manner without having to compete or engage in intense training program. (female, 18-25)
- Getting some kind interesting hobby, which may keep me fit and sane... you gotta do something. (male, 26-45)
- Nice to learn new things (female, 6-12)

It would be fair to say that these respondents consider Aikido as a hobby but still develop themselves in different ways. This is of course true for many participants. There are not many who practise Aikido on a professional level.

#### 5.1.4 Development in self-defence skills

This option was the fourth option. It was almost equally frequent, with 25 respondents (21,7 %), as the second option (see 5.1.2). It indicates that the aspect of self-defense in Aikido is to reckon with. All age groups were represented, except the oldest group (66-). This could suggest that the oldest participants see Aikido more as keeping physically and mentally fit, rather than developing self-defense skills.

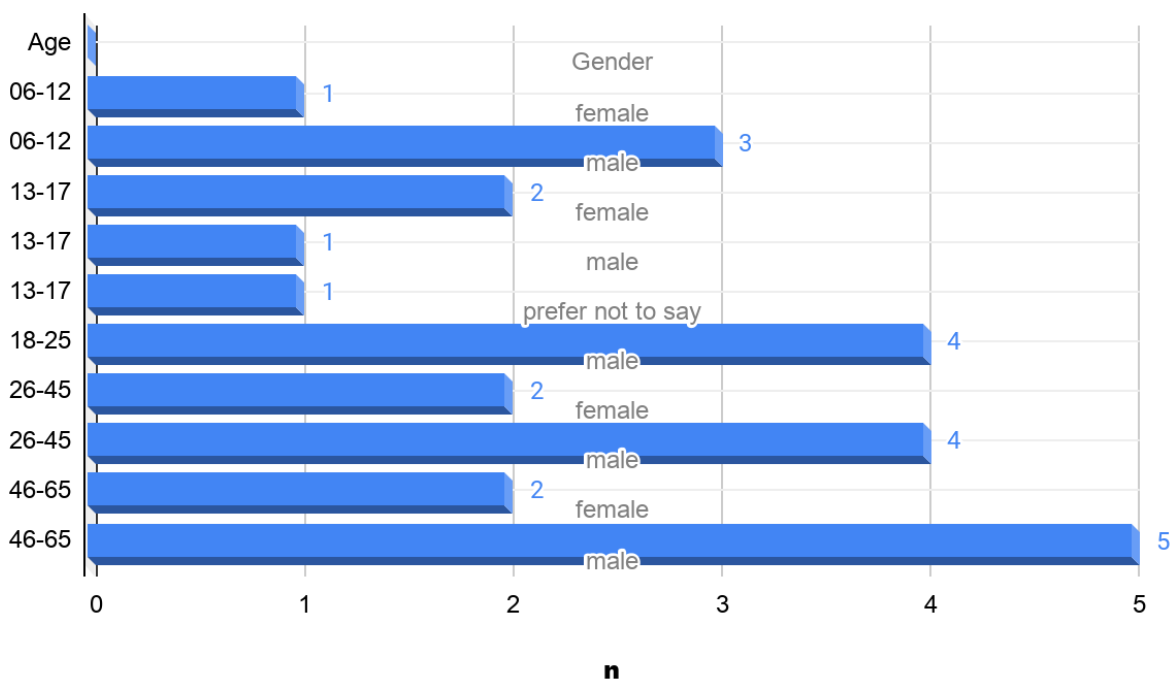


Figure 11: Development in self-defence skills

A large number of the respondents elaborated this option by adding other aspects to Aikido than self-defense (n=13). This is the advantage of having the possibility to elaborate a closed answer. Either they elaborate their thoughts on self-defense or they add aspects to their answer, which are directly related to other closed answer options.

- My Aikido is part of my general martial-arts skill set and I still found more and more from aikido when I practice other martial arts. (male, 26-45)
- I want to become stronger (prefer not to say, 13-17)
- Self-defense is an important knowledge to have at the same time as it is fun and good training for the body (male, 18-25)
- More options in my toolbox (male, 26-45)
- ...versatile exercise is of interest [and] Budo in general (male, 45-65)

- I myself am greatly interested in Japanese culture, the history of aikido and its role in Japan's history (male, 13-17)
- Making new friends, doing things with friends, doing difficult things, making progress, and getting to do fun things. (male, 6-12)
- Aikido is one of the martial arts, but it is also fitness, mindfulness, social, focusing, reaching your targets. (male, 46-65)
- Aikido is a good exercise, which also helps me keep my muscles under control. It's collaborative and social too. (female, 26-45)
- Aikido interests me in many different ways - by Japanese culture, aikido and budo is beautiful art, I want to develop myself and my skills, I want to learn self-defence and meet interesting people. (female, 26-45)
- activity (male, 6-12, female, 13-17)
- Aiming to gain more practical way of approach aikido techniques (male, 46-65)

The rest of the respondents (n=12) elaborated by clarifying what they mean with self-defense:

- It's good to defend yourself the right way (male, 18-25)
- I am interested in budo and self-defense training in aikido (male, 26-45)
- I would learn to defend myself (female, 6-12)
- It is very important to everybody to be able to defend yourself and the people who you love (male, 46-65)
- Self defence, body workout and friends (male, 26-45)
- I think practising aikido makes my self defence skills better, because I learn doing something else than just running away. It gives me confidence that I can defend myself even a little. (female, 13-17)



- Underlying the Aikido hobby is the will to be able to defend myself and my loved ones against both physical and mental violence. I am motivated by an excellent teacher in the gym [dojo] and nice and relaxed practice friends who practice aikido in a serious and respectful spirit. The spirit of learning together in the gym [dojo] is important to me. (female, 46-65)

- Improves my ability to defend myself and understand more about my body hurting others. (male, 18-25)

- Interested in protecting myself in a way that doesn't necessarily hurt anyone. Community and training buddies are an important part of training. (female, 46-65)

- started it to be able to defend myself as I am skinny and lightweight. I also liked the fact that there was no competition. Practiced for 5 years, stopped because had enough injuries, had an 18 year break, started again in 2014 and has been practicing ever since. Nowadays I am practicing Endo sensei style, and still very interested in the self-defense aspect. I am also interested in Japanese culture, language etc. (male, 46-65)

The aspect of self-defense in Aikido is very present among the respondents, which is interesting considering there are many clubs that do not necessarily emphasize that aspect. It is therefore important for every club to clearly inform potential new members about what kind of aspect of Aikido they emphasize.

#### 5.1.5 Other

The last option to choose from that motivates respondents to practise Aikido was *Other*. This option gave the respondents the possibility to describe their own motivations for practising Aikido. A total of 44 respondents chose this option (38,3 %). The age group 46-54 was most represented (n=24). The answers were so diverse that I chose to analyse them in categories according to chapter 5.1.2, and give some examples in the form of excerpts. There were answers that matched

more than one category, hence the frequency differs from the total number of respondents.

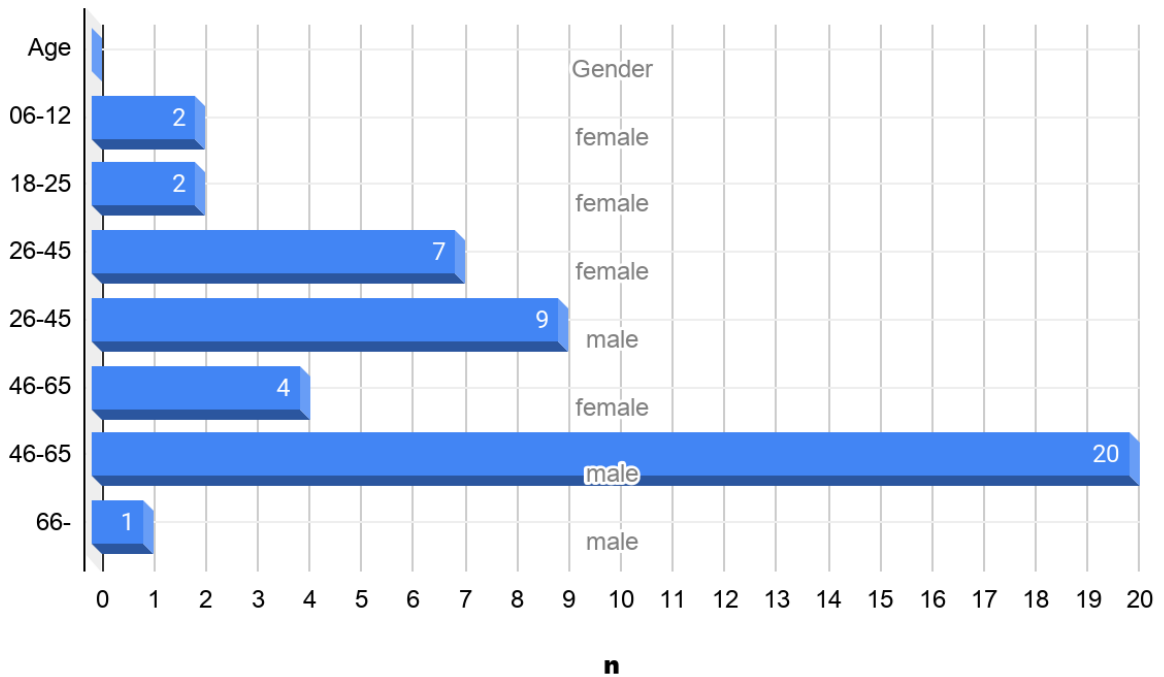


Figure 12: The option "other"

Table 5: Categories of option “Other”

<i>Category</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Excerpts</i>
Practise ethics	24	No competition Developing techniques Nice friends Not expensive Japanese culture	<p>Long-term development in complicated skills, not only self-defence skills (male, 46-65)</p> <p>...nice training friends, our company has a good value for money (female, 26-45)</p> <p>I try to understand my own center and at the same time my training partners center. Hope someday I do (male, 46-65)</p> <p>I would say that the peaceful atmosphere and the philosophy behind the martial art of Aikido are the main reason why I train Aikido. Other than that, the lovely people at dojo is one of my favourite things. (female, 18-25)</p> <p>There is no competition in Aikido. (male, 46-65)</p>
Physical development	26	Versatile workout Well-being Improves the body	<p>Health exercise (male, 46-65)</p> <p>Exercise; maintaining and developing balance and other physical characteristics (male, 46-65)</p> <p>It's a fun, exciting and intellectually stimulating yet relatively safe and healthy form of exercise and study of human interaction (male, 26-45)</p> <p>Versatile body care / management and well-being through exercise (male, 26-45)</p> <p>To keep / develop (if possible) physical basic abilities when ageing. Personal preferences in techniques, learning controlled ways of moving my own body - no combat. (male, 45-65)</p>

Mental development	27	Developing mentally Habit Good feeling Affects daily life	<p>Develops me as a person in a meaningful way (male, 46-65)</p> <p>It has grown to be a habit - that keeps motivation up for one side. For me aikido is eventually more than a bunch of self-defending skills; it's a DO - a way to be and think, a way to approach everyday routines and problems with a certain aiki-attitude (male, 46-65)</p> <p>Focuses my thoughts (male, 26-45)</p> <p>Interested in developing the body &amp; mind, and to become a better person in the society (female, 46-65)</p> <p>My own body condition and peace of mind. (male, 46-65)</p>
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All three categories were equally frequent. Based upon the answers it is obvious that the respondents who chose option *Other* did it because they saw motivation for practising Aikido more complex. They couldn't limit their answer to predefined options, but rather wanted to combine them. This was also my assumption and that is why I wanted to offer the possibility to choose *Other*.

The description of the categories above are either similar to or complementing the descriptions of the categories described in chapter 5.1.2. All the answers fit the three categories.

## 5.2 How to advertise Aikido to someone

The respondents had the opportunity to give hints on how to advertise Aikido to someone who doesn't practise Aikido. It was a mandatory open ended answer. Of all the respondents (n=115), nine of them didn't give any hints. They just added some characters in order to be able to send the questionnaire. It is not always easy to come up with examples of how to advertise, so it is understandable.

Some of the statements work very well as an introduction to how versatile the perception of Aikido is, and that is also reflected in the conception of advertising. There are some responses that are worth highlighting.

According to one respondent it is impossible to answer this question, because it depends on what people want to practise. It should be essential not to give the wrong picture of Aikido, meaning that the 'painted' picture of Aikido should meet reality. Potential members should know what to expect when they join. The clubs should honestly advertise what they practise, what kind of Aikido. This is important for all clubs to consider.

Another respondent addresses the commitment to Aikido. "Aikido doesn't fit those who can't commit to long term targets". This is something familiar to all clubs. There are many beginners that are active maybe for a year or even just for a few months and then give up. On the other hand this also could have to do with unclear intentions about what is practised in the club, what kind of Aikido.

Other respondents recommend telling that the “first two sessions are free of charge, and the only thing they need is a will to learn. That in itself might lead to a lifelong commitment. By practising Aikido you get to know yourself and what to develop”. This is something that many of those who have been practising for many years know. Those who have experienced a positive change in their life because of Aikido, tend to have a lifelong commitment.

So based upon this introduction to advertising Aikido, I choose to present the hints that the respondents provided. I read the answers and categorized them. Then I also noted the number of respondents in each category. The categories are sorted from most to least frequent.

*Improve/develop health and movement (n=40)*

*No competition or competing with one self (n=13)*

*Learn self-defense (n=12)*

*Gain good friends (n=12)*

*Suits all ages (n=9)*

*Practise at own level (n=9)*

*Invite people to practise (n=8)*

*No violence (n=6)*

*Use opponent's force against them (n=5)*

*Good for the mood (n=5)*

*Fun and challenging (n=4)*

*Something for everyone (n=3)*

*Share on social media (n=3)*

*Affordable (n=2)*

*Learn Japanese culture (n=2)*

*Versatile (n=2)*

*Be patient (n=2)*

*Weapon techniques (n=2)*

*Learn how life works (n=2)*

*Technically interesting (n=2)*

*Advertise in schools (n=1)*

*Tell them why I started (n=1)*

It is interesting to note that the hints provided for advertising Aikido are very similar to the motivation for practising Aikido. The most frequent answers in both cases are connected to development of mind and body. The two next most frequent are non-violence and self-defense. Also the feeling of belonging to others is important.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Aikido Federation has mentioned advertising in its Ethical principles. How do we advertise Aikido according to them? In order to be reliable and truthful, it is important for any club to clearly define their aspect of Aikido. With that aspect in mind they can advertise truthfully and reliably. Potential members won't be disappointed later on after joining.

It can be useful to have different aspects of Aikido in mind depending on what age group the advertisement is aiming at. I will come back to this in the summary (Chapter 6).

### 5.3 Additional information provided

The respondents were able to add additional information in the last open ended answer, *Anything you would like to add?*. A total of 44 respondents provided additional information (38,3 %). The answers were analyzed in the same way as in Chapter 5.2. I choose to present additional information that arose and left out answers that were similar to previous answers. Age group and gender were also left out, since they don't have relevance.

Most respondents wished me good luck in doing this article, saying that it is much needed and that they hope to be able to read it when it is finished.

- Good luck!
- Thanks for the survey, great if we can get new enthusiastic aikido enthusiasts to the sport through this!
- Pretty good set of questions
- Stay healthy and hopefully we'll see soon at tatami :)
- Great that you are doing this, interesting then read the finished article!
- An interesting survey, hopefully you will get answers from many age groups.
- Thanks for doing the survey, it's much needed!

Other mentions were hoping that Covid-19 hopefully will end soon and seminars will start again, that Aikido is fun. A new aspect that arose was the struggle other clubs have with advertising. The advertising of Aikido, according to respondents, has a great problem. Although Aikido is a



martial art it doesn't focus much on self-defense. This leads to a paradox where people try to avoid it, even though Aikido as a whole acknowledges self-defense. There are teachers that laugh when you talk about self-defense, still it is very viable.

On the other hand there are respondents who stress that Aikido is not about self-defense. They wouldn't recommend Aikido for self-defense as their first choice.

Another aspect is the struggle to advertise Aikido. Other clubs are working with the same questions, how to find words for what Aikido means to them. Some are in the process of creating "pitch talks libraries" to explain Aikido.

Clubs also stress the importance of sharpening the view on Aikido. Many beginners quit Aikido because it is hard to stay motivated without the feel of progress.

The mentioned aspects are the most common comments that the respondents provided. Hopefully this article will be to some help when taking into consideration the worries that many clubs experience.

## 5.4 Summary

The pinpointed aim of this article is to find out in what ways, based upon respondents' perception of motivation for practising and advertising Aikido, we can advertise Aikido. Looking at the results interpreted in

chapters 5.1 to chapter 5.3 there are two main ways to advertise Aikido.

The motivations for practising Aikido were:

- Visually attractive, 7,8 %
- Looking for complex development and interested in Japanese culture, 26,1 %
- Fulfilling my spare time, 5,2 %
- Development in self-defense skills, 21,7 %

This shows that the complex development of body and mind is the most important to the respondents. By adding the result from option *Other* (38,3 %) it becomes even more distinct (see Chapter 5.1.5).

The way the respondents would advertise Aikido correlates with the way most motivate themselves for practising Aikido. The most frequent hints on advertising are that Aikido can improve/develop health and movement.

Based on the results of this article it becomes clear that it is important to advertise Aikido as a way to improve and develop health and body movement. It is mainly the older age groups that are represented within this view.

When looking at the younger age group (18-25, 26-45) it is more common to view Aikido as a form to learn self-defense. This also correlates with advertising hints presented by the same age groups.

This is important to know when advertising Aikido. We will probably not attract younger members by advertising Aikido as a form to develop body and mind, but rather the aspect of self-defense. Whether a club emphasizes self-defense or not must be clarified when advertising. If the

club, on the other hand, emphasizes development of health and body, ie. via techniques, it might be easier to attract older age groups (46-65, 66-).

Fortunately this isn't that black or white. We all know that the Aikido practitioners in Finland are aging. The challenge is to attract younger people.

To answer the aim of this study, it is possible to advertise Aikido according to what motivates people to practise Aikido, and above I have clarified which aspects are the most important to consider, according to the respondents of the questionnaire.

## 6 Conclusion

In this chapter, where I conclude the article, I dare to suggest how to advertise Aikido to potential members. My suggestions are based on the result of this article and I supplement with my own ideas and experience.

It is first and foremost important for every club to reflect on their own Aikido style. I call it style since this article clearly shows that the perception of what is attractive about Aikido varies a lot. We have two main streams, either development of health and body or self-defense. Of course it isn't either or, but clubs should still clarify what they emphasize. The reason for this being that it is then easier to plan advertising. It is then also more clear to potential new members what to expect if they choose to join a club.

Based on the results most practitioners practise Aikido to develop their mind and body. The second most important is self-defense. Generally the somewhat older respondents state that Aikido is good for their body and health, whilst the younger age groups emphasize self-defense. This in itself is interesting. One can assume that older people care more about staying fit and younger people are more fascinated with the martial arts aspect of Aikido.

If a club clearly has reflected on their own style and decided what to emphasize, then the next step would be to advertise accordingly. If the advertising is aimed at others that already practise Aikido, then *Grassroots advertising* (see Chapter 3.1) could be one way to go.

When attracting new members it is also important to consider motivational aspects when advertising. Advertising is benefitting from including both external and internal driving forces (see Chapter 2). Setting up a performance and inviting people to come to watch, publishing videos or handing out flyers are examples of external driving forces. From the respondents came suggestions that the Aikido Federation could interview some Aikido teachers and publish that on media, or send the *Aikidolehti* (Aikido magazine) to people.

A more challenging part of advertising is to include internal driving forces. How do you set goals, visions or success in an advertisement? Some examples would be to offer personal mentors, clearly set dates for exams or introduce members of the same age, telling about their experiences of Aikido. New members also need a lot of encouragement and praise, especially when they progress.

It is also good to mention the teamwork that many respondents see as an important part of motivation. Telling potential members that we as a club look out for each other and have fun, that you easily gain new friends by joining. This can lead to a strong internal force.

In conclusion I hope that this article has the potential to give additional help and hints to clubs, when planning advertising campaigns. It isn't an easy topic and could be subject to further research. Interviews with Aikido practitioners and those who don't practise Aikido could deepen the understanding of the subject of this article. This is something that anyone who interested is free to do, and who knows, maybe I will someday.

A big thank you to all the respondents. This had not been possible without your help! Thank you also to the Aikido Federation in Finland, Finland Aikikai, for assisting in sending out the information about this survey to all the club members in Finland.

I also want to thank sensei Kustaa Ylitalo for being my mentor on the educational journey to an exam in VOK-3.

Hope to see you on the tatami!

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