

Customer Satisfaction Survey for Company A

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Degree programme Matkailun liikkeenjohdon koulutusohjelma	
Report/thesis title Customer Satisfaction Survey for Company A	Number of pages and appendix pages 62 + 10
<p>The thesis was done as a commission to a tour operator in New Zealand. The company prefers to stay incognito and will be referred as "Company A" in this work. The study focuses on the Company A's members who attend a four-day long "Tour X" to the northern parts of New Zealand. The aim of this thesis is to study German, British and North American cultures; the differences and similarities of them, to gain information how to improve the customer satisfaction of the "Tour X". More specifically what did these target groups want from this tour and how did their cultural preferences differentiate from each other. This thesis aims to generate more information to Company A about these target groups and the customer satisfaction of the "Tour X"</p> <p>The study was executed as a customer satisfaction survey. The survey was done using qualitative and quantitative methods. Research data was collected by using printed-out paper surveys and small interviews. The survey covers all the main activities of the tour and also has questions about cultural preferences based on the theoretical framework. The answers were gathered between the end of June to mid-November 2018.</p> <p>Overall results indicate that the members were satisfied with the tour. Three improvement aspects that came up from the results were accommodation, dinner at Thirty30 and generally meeting the expectations. To be able to improve these three aspects the accommodation should be either followed up or changed completely. Instead of burger dinner Company A could provide the members a bit more variety in their dinner choices. Meeting the expectations is a sum of all the aspects of the tour, to be able to increase it all the smaller aspects should be improved first. The study behind cultural preferences proves to be right as from the results it can be seen that Germans find it important to do all activities listed in the itinerary and they care for tangibles. British people on the other hand prefer to attend package holidays and they do not place that much importance on tangibles. The study was successful as it provided a good quantity of diverse results and all of the research questions were answered.</p>	
Keywords Customer satisfaction, culture, cultural preferences, customer satisfaction survey, tourism industry	

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1 Introduction

Customer satisfaction is an essential part of every company. It leads to company growth and it has several positive effects on the organization such as competitive advantages, improved profitability, improved customer retention and improved market share (Robson 2012, 28-29; Vavra 2002, 10-13). Customer satisfaction can be defined as how the customer sees a product or service in comparison of their experiences with the organization or product, and also in comparison what they have seen or heard about other organizations or companies (Szwarc 2005, 6).

This thesis is done as a commission to a tour operator which operates in New Zealand. The company prefers to stay incognito and will be referred as "Company A" in this work. The thesis focuses on customer satisfaction of Company A members and was written in co-operation with company mentioned before. The thesis aims to provide valuable information to the company about their customer groups and -satisfaction. More specifically this thesis focuses on a four-day "Tour X", to the Northern parts of New Zealand and the customer satisfaction of this tour.

The aim of this thesis is to study German, British and North American cultures, the differences and similarities of them to gain information how to improve the customer satisfaction of the "Tour X". More specifically what does these target groups want from the tour and how does their cultural preferences differentiate from each other. Final aim of this thesis is to generate more information to Company A about these target groups and possible solutions to improve the customer satisfaction based on the research results.

Then research questions this thesis focuses on are:

1. What are the cultural preferences for German, British and North American travelers?
2. Do these preferences differentiate from each other? If so, how?
3. Does the "Tour X" tour match the service expectations of these target groups?
4. What are the possible aspects that need to be improved to create more customer satisfaction?

The first part of the thesis is the theoretical framework, which focuses on the essential definitions of all the aspects affecting customer satisfaction, cultural studies about the target countries and the company itself. After defining the essential theory behind the customer satisfaction research, the thesis focuses on the research itself. The research was executed as a customer satisfaction survey. The last part of this thesis focuses on analysing and presenting the results and the research process itself.

2 Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is an essential part of almost every company's framework. Robson (2012, 28-29) argues that customer satisfaction leads to company growth when put together with service quality and meaningful interaction with people. It causes the existing customers base to stay loyal to the company or organization and new customers can be added. Vavra (2002, 10-13) also agrees that committing to customer satisfaction has several positive effects on the organization such as competitive advantages, improved profitability, improved customer retention and improved market share. These two arguments indicate that customer satisfaction is a vital part for the organizations if they wish to succeed in their determined markets.

The following chapters of the theoretical framework of this thesis discuss the essential concepts of customer service, customer experience, service quality and more deeply customer satisfaction. All of these concepts are highly linked to each other and to customer satisfaction and research behind it. For example, lac of service quality or poor customer service might affect the customer satisfaction quite drastically.

2.1 Customer service

Customer service is a product or service related interaction with customers. It is human interaction to which the same aspects and rules apply as to any kind of human interaction (Kannisto & Kannisto 2008, 6). When a company has a customer service department or actions, customer service is carried out by everyone at every point of interaction with the customer and it is a daily task rather than a special activity. True customer service is built-in at the point of delivery and it comes from everyone in the organization to meet the customer and his/hers needs. (Robson 2012, 86-87.)

Valvio (2010, 45-46) argues that services have four special characteristics which are partly intangible, processes or series of actions, used or experienced simultaneously as they have been produced and when using the services, the customer itself participates in the production of the service. According to Rissanen (2005, 20) another way to define service products is to divide them into five different characteristics. These characteristics are intangible, simultaneous, new products and distribution, heterogenous and unique variability, and that services have room for creativity.

Kannisto & al. (2008, 12-14) argues that good customer service consists of seven different factors. These factors are: listen to the customer, meet customers' needs and wishes, always put the customer first, respect the customer as a human being, give them time and a homogenous and trustworthy service.

Customer service can also directly affect customer experience and satisfaction. It is a vital part of any company that has any interaction with others. Good customer service also provides plenty of competitive advantages for the company. These advantages are loyal customers who stick with the company, positive feedback and references to potential new customers, increased profitability when new customers start using the company's services, and increased employee motivation which will help to provide even better customer service (Bhasin 6 March 2018).

2.2 Customer experience

Customer experience is the sum of feelings and mental image, which the customer acquires from all contact with the organization. Customer experience is not a rational decision but rather an experience which is strongly affected by feelings and subconscious interpretations. The company brand and how the customers feel about the brand also affect the customer experience. Companies are not able to directly affect customers experience but can aim to provide high quality and to meet the customers' expectations. (Ahvenainen, Gylling & Leino 2017, 9-10; Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 1.1 Asiakaskokemuksen määritelmä.)

According to Ahvenainen & al. (2017, 33-34) the comprehensive customer experience consists of three major parts. These are physical-, digital-, and subconscious encounters. The most known one is the physical encounter in which the customer and the company representative meet each other. Digital encounters play nowadays a big role as everything is starting to be in a digitalized form and in social media. Customers are more independent with their research and find the most suitable solutions for their problems on their own through internet. The last part is the subconscious encounters in which all the previous presumptions, visions and mental images affect the creation of overall brand image. Previous experiences, reviews, mental images between quality and price, marketing and first contact of different encounter points are all affecting the overall image of the company, the brand image and by this the whole customer experience. (Ahvenainen & al. 2017, 33-34.)

On the other hand, Löytänä & al (2011, 2.1 Neljä näkökulmaa) counter argue that the customer experience consists of four different aspects. These aspects are supporting the customers self-image, surprise and create experiences, stay in mind and makes the customer want more. By supporting the customers self-image, the customer is building their own identity and a huge mistake for a company would be their customer's feel bad about themselves or about their own identity. By surprising and creating experiences, the company is creating stronger feelings, encounters and mental images and thus enforcing the customer experience. The company wants the customers to have positive mental images about their brand and by this, make the customers remember them. The last part: making the customer want more is purely based on the fact that our brains are built so that we like to search pleasure. If the customer experience is pleasant and positive the customer is likely to come back purely based on instincts. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 2.1 Neljä näkökulmaa.)

Customer experience might be only way for some companies to differentiate from the competitors. Customer experience can be measured but a spontaneous smile might generate a lot customer satisfaction even though it might not be measurable. (Ahvenainen & al. 2017, 33-34.) Exceeding expectations is also a great way to increase customer experience and satisfaction positively. The elements to exceed the expectations are personalized, individual opportunities, authentic, tailored, at the right time, shareable, lasting, clear, valuable before and after the purchase, clearly and visibly expensive, impassioned, surprising and profitable. (Löytänä & al. 2011, 3.3 Odotukset ylittävän kokemuksen elementit.) It is not necessary to have all of these elements at the same time but instead the right element for the right customer.

2.3 Service quality

Quality is something that every person defines themselves. If you would ask a group of people what they think quality means, all of them would give you a different answer. Service quality and product quality have slightly different aspects to define them. Product quality is not as sensitive to human actions and emotions as service quality is. For example, if a clothing factory worker had a bad day it wouldn't affect the quality of the product as long as it is produced accordingly. However, if a restaurant worker had a bad day the customers would notice it and it would affect the service quality quite drastically. (Foster 2017, 27-29.)

Quality management is directing and controlling an organization so that quality is the core issue for the organization. The activities regarding quality management can be divided

into three overlapping functions. First on is the quality control, which means that the process is being analysed thoroughly. This includes, for example, monitoring process capability and stability, monitoring process performance and reducing process variability. The second function is quality assurance, which means guaranteeing the quality of a product or service. Tasks included in quality assurance are for example, process improvement, product testing, and failure mode and effect analysis. The last function is the quality management itself, which ties the two previous functions together. It also means that the whole organization is responsible for quality management and not only quality managers. Activities included in this function are for example, planning for quality improvement, providing leadership and support, providing training and retraining, and creating a quality organizational culture. Many quality related activities happen simultaneously because the three functions overlap, and it is crucial for the company to communicate with each department to be able to provide high quality services/products. (Foster 2017, 40-42.)

When thinking about service quality a realistic starting point would be thinking about the customer expectations and his/her perceived service quality. Service quality can be divided into “10 different service dimensions” or into “10 determinants of service quality” according to which the customer makes the assumption of the service quality. (Rissanen 2005, 214-216; Parasuraman & Zeithalm & Berry 1985, 47). The difference between these two is that “10 different service dimensions” define the dimensions to be able to produce good quality. “10 determinants of service quality” on the other hand are the factors that affect the customers’ expectations about the service.

The 10 different service dimensions by Rissanen (2005, 215-216) are **competency and professional skills** which means the main professional skills of the service provider. For example, travel agent is able to bundle a trip according to the customers’ needs and not sell different individual components. **Reliability** is providing the services flawlessly and precisely in a way that creates trust between the customer and the company. **Credibility** is the trust that the customer has towards the company to provide services according to the customers’ interests. **Accessibility** covers the reasonable access to the service provider for example, the customer does not have to be on hold for customer service on the phone for an hour. The customers’ feel **safety** towards the company and they trust the company not to act unjustly towards them. **Politeness** is the combination and aim of the way of actions, speaking, clothing and the whole personality of the service provider. **Readiness to serve and service level** are defined by the actions of the service provider. For example, the response time to a message and the language the service provider is using should be understandable for the customer. If for example, the customer does not understand the messages sent by the service provider it can be taken as a tool of power.

Communication should be the complete opposite of the earlier mentioned example about unclear messages. Communications should always be clear and easy to understand for the customer. For example, words used only by the professionals are not understandable for every customer, so these words should be avoided. **Recognition of customers' needs and understanding them** is vital for the service provider if they want to produce high quality services. Service provider should have the professional skills to deepen and recognize the customers' needs. The last dimension is the **service environment**, which includes all aspects related to atmosphere, appearance, cleanliness and even smell of the provided service.

Service quality is a result of comparing how the customers' expectations meet with the service performance. Determinants of perceived service quality are factors which influence the customers' expectations of the service quality and how did he/she experience it in the end. The 10 different determinants of service quality are **reliability** which means the consistency of performance and the dependability of the product, and also accurate accounting and following the set timeline. **Responsiveness** concerns the willingness and readiness of employees to provide services and also handling set assignments quickly and efficiently. **Competence** covers the required skills and knowledge to perform the services. For example, skills to manage employees or skills to sell a suitable holiday package to the customer. **Access** means the concrete easiness of accessibility and contacting the company itself. For example, their concrete location, opening hours and waiting time. **Courtesy** is the combination of politeness, respect, friendliness and consideration of the personnel. **Communication** includes explaining the services to customers, keeping the customers informed and using the language they can understand. Trustworthy, honest and having the customers interest at heart is the summary of **credibility**. **Security** combines physical- and financial security, and confidentiality. Customers' feel safe and secure when they use the provided services and they do not have to fear that their privacy is dis-respect. **Understanding/knowing the customer** means knowing and understanding the customer needs and making an effort to improve them. It also includes providing individual attention and recognizing the regular customers. **Tangibles** are the physical evidence of the service. This includes the physical facilities, tools or equipment used to provide this service, appearance of employees and the other customers. (Parasuraman & al. 1985, 42-48.)

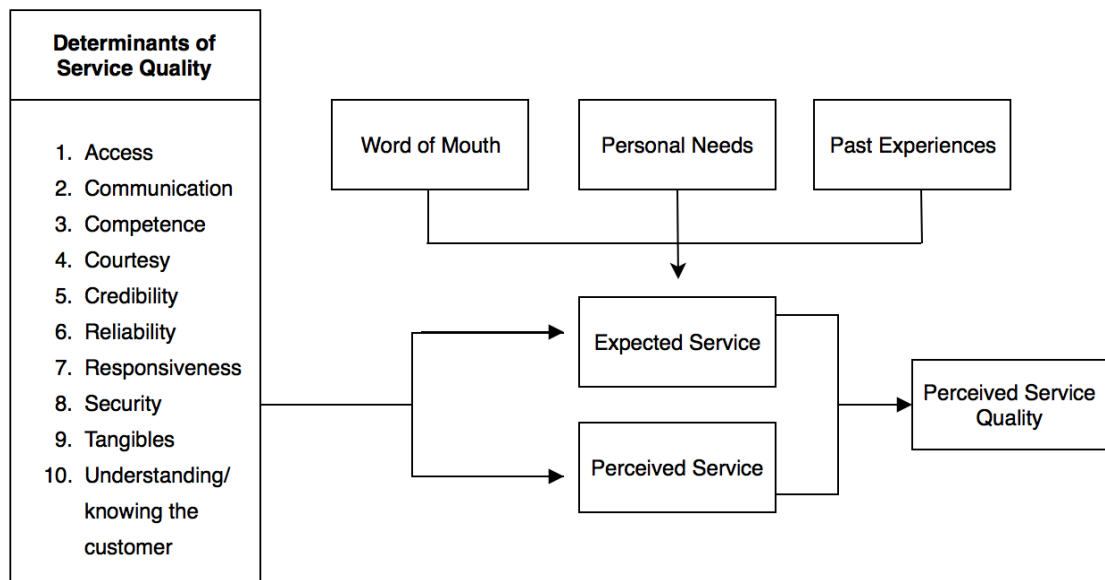


Figure 1. Determinants of Perceived Service (Parasuraman & Zeithalm & Berry 1985, 48)

The model of Determinants of Perceived Service Quality (Figure 1) can be divided into three sections. First are the 10 service quality determinants that affect both expected service and perceived service. All the factors listed work behind the scenes to create the service itself and the expectations of it. The company itself can affect these factors by matching the customers' needs with the determinants. By this they can create more quality to the customers in a way the customers want to experience it. Second part is the middle of the model. It defines the factor that influence the expectations among the 10 different aspects. These three new factors are word of mouth, personal needs and past experiences. The company itself cannot influence these as they are all defined by the customer itself either by his/her own experiences or by what he/she has heard about the company. The last part of the model is the outcome of the first and second parts of the model, the perceived service quality. It means what kind of service the customer got and if it met the expectations of the customer.

Service quality can be measured and improved by using different methods, such as Gap-model and SERVQUAL. Why measure service quality? It allows the company to locate service quality related problems and act accordingly to improve the service quality. Gap-model identifies five gaps or faults related to managerial perceptions and tasks that are associated with the customer. SERVQUAL is usually used when measuring service quality. It is quite similar to the Determinants of perceived service quality-model but a bit more simplified and the 10 determinants of perceived services are summarized into five. SERVQUAL has also influenced the Gap-model, the fifth gap is based on the SERVQUAL methodology (Sahin, 2-4; Parasuraman & al. 1985, 42-48).

2.3.1 SERVQUAL

SERVQUAL (figure 2) was created in 1988 by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry. According to SERVQUAL the service quality is the result of comparing perceived service to expected service. The five dimensions affecting these factors are **tangibles**, which means the physical environment, facilities and appearance of personnel. **Reliability** means the ability to perform according to the promised service. **Responsiveness** is the employees' willingness to help customers and provide great services. **Assurance** is the knowledge and ability of employees to inspire trust and confidence to the customers. Last dimension is **empathy** which means the individual attention and care that the company provides to its customers. (Sahin, 3-4; Rodrigues & Hussain & Aktharsha & Nair 2013, 11.) SERVQUAL is used as a questionnaire: the questions are based on the five dimensions and it allows the customer experience to be investigated and measured quantitatively. The results are viewed as low or bad if the customer expectations are higher than the perceived service. Service quality is seen as high or great if the customer's perception is higher than their expectations. (Adelekan, 28 March 2015.)

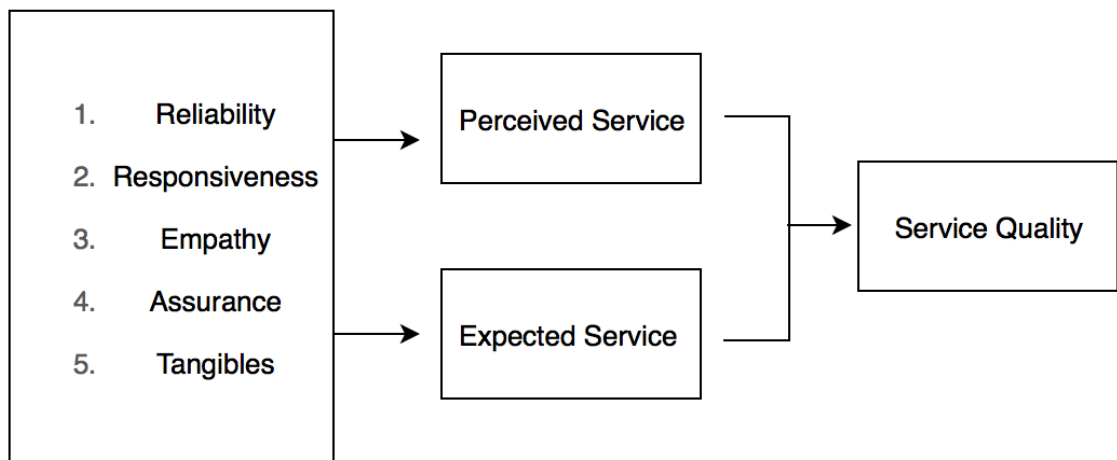


Figure 2. SERVQUAL (Rodrigues & Hussain & Aktharsha & Nair 2013, 11)

2.3.2 Gap- Model

The Gap-model (figure 3) or originally “Service Quality model” was created by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry in 1985. The model identifies the main five gaps or faults that can affect the service quality. The gaps are either in the company’s internal actions or how the company meets customers expectations.

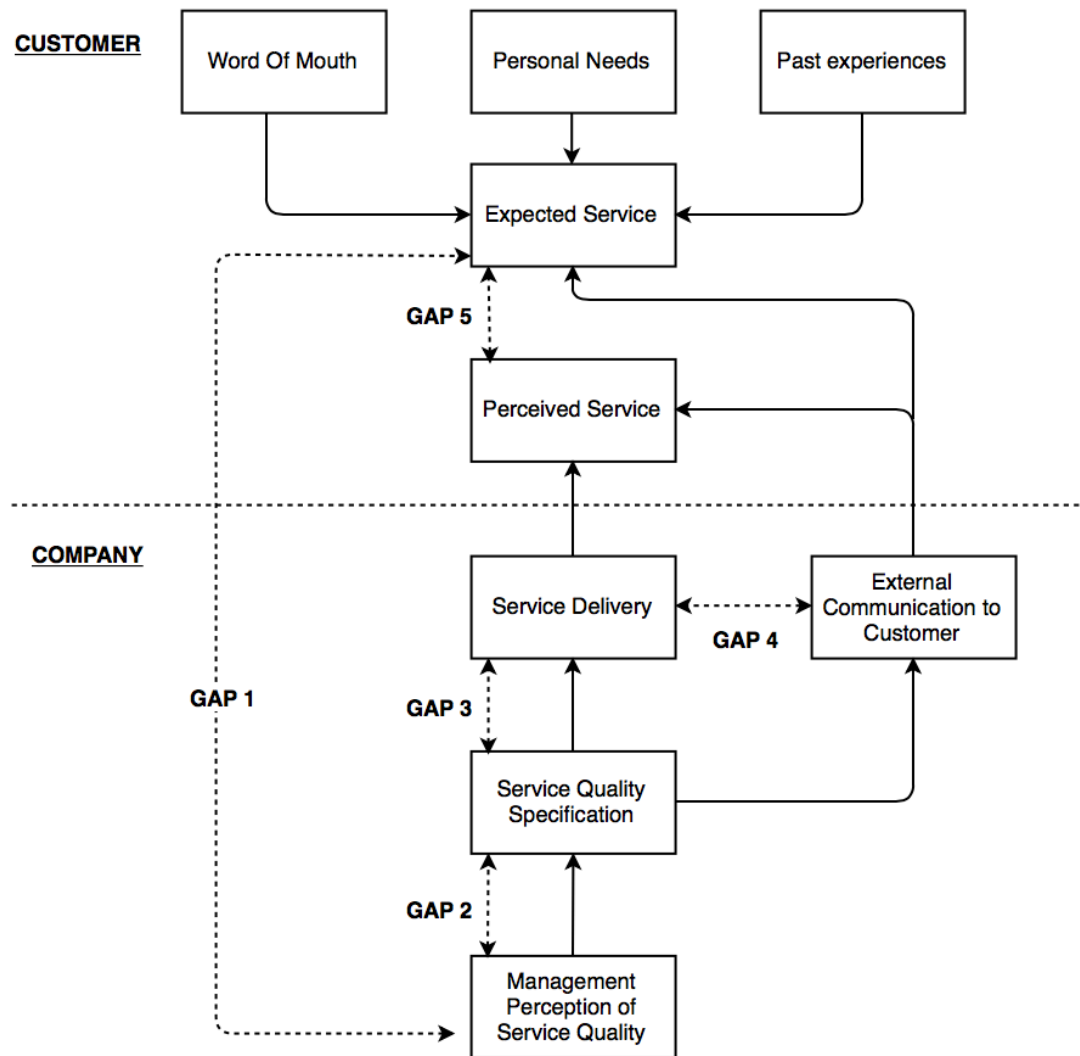


Figure 3. Gap-model (Parasuraman & Zeithalm & Berry 1985, 45)

The first gap (Figure 3) is between customers’ expected service and management perceptions of consumer expectations. This means that the management’s perceptions of customers’ expectations are not accurate, and that the customer has different expectations than assumed. For example, the company is trying to target non-existing needs of their target group. The second gap is between management perceptions of consumer expectations and service quality specification. This means the difficulty to meet or exceed the customers’ expectations even though the expectations are well known. This gap might occur

if the company does not have enough resources or the employees are not skilled enough to meet the expectations. The third gap is between Service quality specification and service delivery. This means the gap between what the wanted service quality is on paper and what kind of quality the employees perform. Even though companies would have specific quality standards it might be hard for the employees to deliver the wanted quality to the customers. Reasons behind this might be the lack of provided training, not clear enough instructions and goals, and of course the variables that occur every time when there are people working. The fourth gap is between service delivery and external communications to customers. This means all kind of communication to the customers and especially the advertising and promotion in every kind of media. Companies can make mistakes in this when they are advertising something they cannot deliver and by this the customers will automatically think the service quality is poor because the promises were not fulfilled. The last gap between expected services and perceived services is the combination of all the other gaps and it can be reflected to the SERVQUAL model. The key point to deliver exceptional service is to meet or exceed the customer expectations. Exceeding or meeting the customers' expectations can be a small act that changes everything. For example, telling the customer some extra information or providing extra services can be the key to exceed the expectations. On the other hand, not explaining why something is not possible or cannot be done can be the reason for the customer to think that the service quality is poor. (Parasuraman & al. 1985, 44-46.)

2.4 Customer satisfaction

"Customer service is defined by the supplier. Customer satisfaction is defined by the customer" (Scott 2000, 47). According to Szwarc (2005, 6) customer satisfaction can be defined as how the customer sees a product or service in comparison of their experiences with the organization or product, and also in comparison what they have seen or heard about other organizations or products. To put it simply, you are satisfied when you get what you want and if you do not you are unsatisfied. Szwarc (2005, 5-6) also explains that there are different factors that can affect the customer satisfaction, which are not necessarily related to the product or company itself, but rather are everyday situations. These factors can be emotional and rational, experiences of other people, sensory experiences such as taste or smell, and the service received from other companies.

Another definition to customer satisfaction by Vavra (2002, 5) claims that it is more related to the customer's emotional response, experience and expectations, and it will affect their future reactions towards the company. Customers can experience satisfaction through dif-

ferent aspects such as the overall product of the organization, specific performance aspects of the product, the overall sales process, the organization itself, their representatives and/or separate departments, the pre-purchase process between the organization and customer and through the post-purchase process between the organization and the customer.

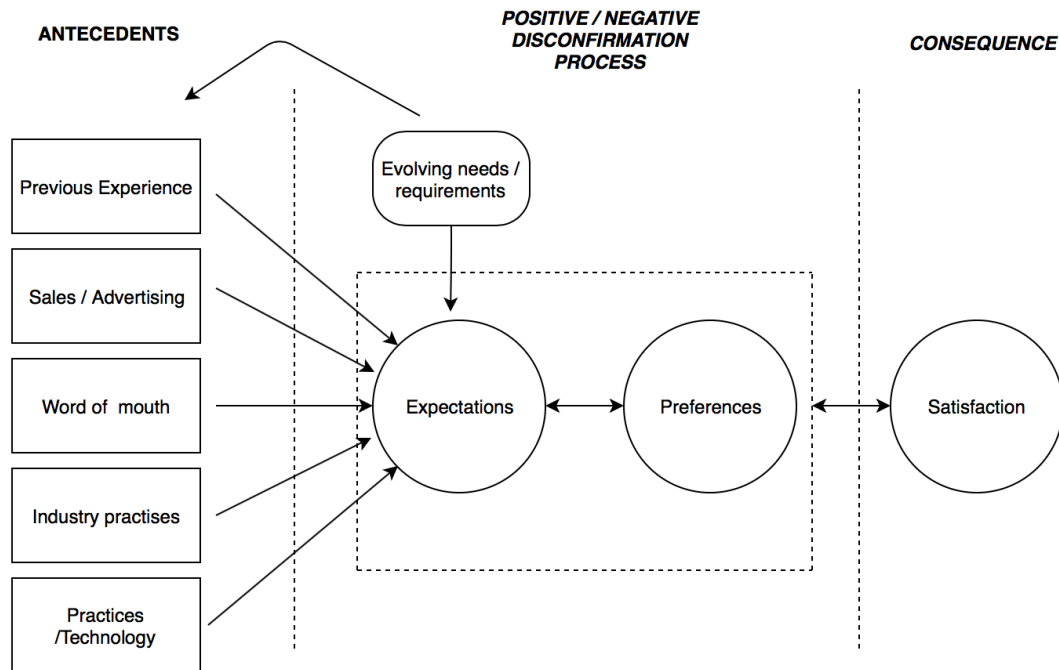


Figure 4. A "generic" Satisfaction-Dissatisfaction model (Vavra 2005, 25)

Customer satisfaction can be explained in a model seen above (Figure 4). The figure has been divided into three parts; antecedents, positive/negative disconfirmation process and consequence. Antecedents are the factors that might affect the customer's expectations about the product or service. Positive/negative disconfirmation processes is when the expectations and performance meet. In this stage the expectations can reform according to evolved needs or requirements. Consequence is the outcome of the whole process. Was the customer satisfied or not? The outcome is also affecting the whole process. It might change and evolve the expectations and performance according to the previous satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Robson (2012, 28-29) argues that customer satisfaction leads to company growth when put together with service quality and meaningful interaction with people. It causes existing customers to stay loyal to the company or organization and new customers can be added. True customer loyalty can be secured through a consistently satisfying experience. Robson (2012, 29) also argues that product quality or service process quality alone are not enough to create the "real loyalty". It is the real human attention that is needed to create

such deep loyalty and therefore create the source of repeating business. Vavra (2002, 10-13) also agrees that committing to customer satisfaction has several positive effects on the organization such as competitive advantages, improved profitability, improved customer retention and improved market share. These two arguments indicate that customer satisfaction is a vital part for the organizations if they wish to succeed in their determined markets.

How to measure and improve customer satisfaction and loyalty? Ways of measurement and improvement can be divided roughly into three categories: theories and strategies, qualitative methods and quantitative methods. Theories and strategies in this case cover common models that are used in the strategic level, operational level and in market research of the organization. These models are for example the balanced scorecard, strategic benchmarking, customer relation management and SERVQUAL. Qualitative research covers observational research, focus groups, interviews and mystery shopping. Quantitative research is based on measurement and it can be executed through multiple different research methods, one of them is customer satisfaction surveys. The main methods for customer satisfaction and loyalty research is to gather data through mail, face-to-face, telephone, internet and customer comment cards. (Szwarc 2005, 16-55.)

3 Cultural differences

The term culture can be used in several different contents, most commonly for ethnic groups, for political science, sociology or management, and for organizations (Hofstede 2011, 3). Culture has many definitions and there are many different ways to study it. Hofstede (2011, 3) describes culture briefly as “collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others”. Lewis (2006, 42) argues that culture is a process to which each of us has been subjected since birth. It is successful interaction within one’s own society and culture that has been taught to us by our parents and teachers. It is knowing the concept of good and bad, right and wrong, normal and abnormal and the way of how we should behave in certain situations. Each cultural group define these factors differently but each of the factor is still equally valid in their own environment. For example, the concept of normal and abnormal might be completely different in western countries than in eastern countries, but it does not make one wrong and another right, because both concepts are equally right in their own environment. As we grow up these concepts become our core beliefs, which might be almost impossible to discard. (Lewis 2006, 42.) These aspects are also the individual preferences of each culture. These Cultural preferences define how each culture prefers to act or think or believe in certain situations. Cultural preferences differ according to each country.

The writer of this thesis chose to concentrate only on Hofstede’s and Lewis’s culture theories, which are discussed more on the following chapters. For the purpose of this thesis the writer found that these two theories were the most accurate and helpful to define the cultures of each target country – Germany, United Kingdoms and America, as they provide diverse theoretical information of the cultures. Combining both theories gives a general overview of the cultures and brings out the main aspects of them that are relevant to this research for example, behaviour and expectations. According to the personal experiences of the writer and by discussions with people from these countries they themselves point out same cultural aspects as Hofstede and Lewis in their studies. More importantly to be able to connect culture and customer service, there has been a study about the connection of Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions and the customers’ service quality expectations. To be able to compare these cultures and find out the similarities and differences it is more effective to compare only a few different theories and keep it more specific than compare completely different theories between these countries.

3.1 Dividing world's cultures

According to Lewis the world's cultures can be divided roughly into three categories. These categories are multi-actives, linear-actives and reactivities. Multi-actives are lively, multitasking people, who plan their priorities according to the importance or relative thrill that the appointment brings to them rather than priorities according to a time schedule. Members of this group are for example, Italians, Latin Americans and Arabs. Linear-actives are for example Americans, British, Germans and Swiss people. People who plan, organize, schedule, pursue action chains and do one thing at a time. Reactives are those cultures that prioritize respect and courtesy, listen quietly and calmly to others and react carefully to other's proposals. People belonging to this group are Chinese, Japanese and Finns for example. (Lewis 2006, 19-20.)

When determining national characteristics, it is important to remember that there are always exceptions. For example, not every Italian is loud and talkative or every Finn quiet and thoughtful. There are always individuals who are not exactly as the stereotypical national character defines them. Culture is not only limited to national characteristics. In some countries, regional characteristics are on the ruling position. For example, Basques and Andalusians do not have much in common apart from a Spanish passport. Some cities have developed a strong cultural identity that overrules the regional or national characteristics. For example, Londoners or Parisians are said to be quite different than other people living in the same geographical area. Cultural groups are not only limited to certain geographical areas, different religions are also cultural groups as well as graduates from different universities have their own cultural identities. One's culture can also be affected by corporate, family, individual beliefs and by gender. (Lewis 2006, 19-20.)

3.2 Cultural dimensions

Hofstede (2011, 9-16) divides national cultures into six different dimensions. These dimensions are power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, Masculinity/femininity, long-/short term orientation, and indulgence/restraint. **Power distance** defines the division between power in the society. For example, in low power distance countries the education is more student centred and students are free to use the teachers first name. In high power distance countries, the education is teacher centred and the teachers are approached by their last names. **Uncertainty avoidance** means how the society deals with unstructured situations. For example, in low uncertainty avoidance countries teachers are allowed to say, 'I don't know' and jobs can be changed easily. In high uncertainty avoidance societies teachers are supposed to have all answers and one should stay

in their jobs even though they might dislike it. **Individualism** and **collectivism** are the opposites to each other. Individualism means that the society is more “I”-conscious and that one should only take care of themselves and their close family. In collective societies people are more “we”-conscious and are born to bigger families or groups which they should also take care of. **Masculinity** and **femininity** define the distribution between genders in a society. In masculine countries strength is admired, boys are not allowed to cry, and girls should not fight, men are head of the family and make decisions. In feminine countries there are sympathy for the weak, both genders are allowed to cry, and neither should fight, both parents are in charge of the family and decision making. **Long- and short-term orientation** defines the way how the society deals with past, future and the present. In short term orientation countries, the most important events in life occurred in the past or are happening now, they are supposed to be proud of one’s country and they believe that a good person should always stay the same (personal steadiness and stability). In long term orientation countries, the most important life events will occur in the future, they try to learn from other countries and they believe that a good person adapts to the circumstances. **Indulgence** countries find leisure and freedom of speech important and they are more likely to remember positive emotions. **Restraint** countries do not consider leisure important and freedom of speech is not a primary concern, and they are less likely to remember positive emotions. (Hofstede 2011, 9-16.)

3.3 German culture and traveling habits

According to Lewis’s cultural theory Germany is ranked as the first country on Linear-active scale. Generalization of German culture is that they put a lot of importance to analysing and tackling problems one at a time and by this achieve nearly perfect results. They are uneasy with people who do not act according to this manner for example, people from Mediterranean cultures. Some most common traits to Linear-active cultures are quiet, patient, planning ahead methodically, punctual, dominated by timetables and schedules, sticking to plans. What comes to interacting with different peoples and cultures, Germany is very data-oriented. Data-oriented countries do a lot of research and gather a lot of information and will act according to it; Germans love to gather solid information and use it as a base to conversations. Data-oriented cultures gather information from family and friends, reports, databases, project notes, colleagues, by reading and from TV and radio. Germans like to receive detailed information and instructions. Germans have a linear vision of time which means that time moves linearly from past to present to future. Germans are really concerned about their timekeeping and they put a lot of value to it, they also think that time is wasted if no decisions or actions are done. (Lewis 2006, 32-98.)

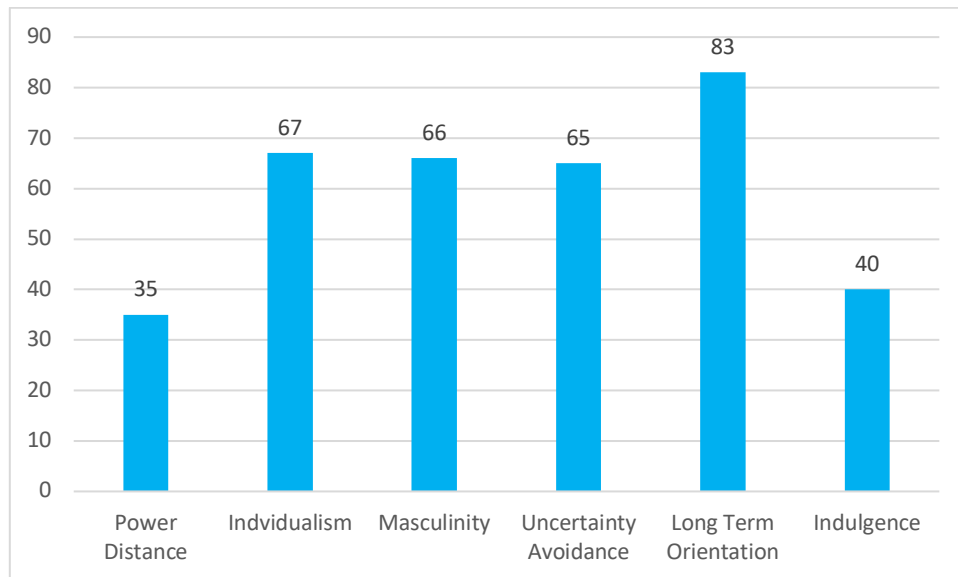


Figure 5. Cultural dimensions of Germany (Hofstede Insights 2018a)

Figure 5 shows how German culture scales on Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Power distance scored 35, which means the power distance in Germany is low. Individualism scored 67, which means that German people are highly individual. In masculinity versus femininity, Germany scored 66, which means that Germany is quite masculine country. Masculine cultures are driven by competition and performance is highly valued. In Uncertainty avoidance Germany scored 65, which makes it a high score. This means that details and rules are important to create certainty in the culture. In long term orientation German scored really high with 83 points, which means it is a very pragmatic country. Germany scored 40 in indulgence, which means that the country is restraint. This indicates that they are restrained in their nature and have a tendency to cynicism and pessimism. (Hofstede insight 2018a.)

When it comes to traveling habits, Germans are known to be one of the most travel-oriented countries in the world. Germans make 69.6 million long holidays (over 5 days) per year and spend 73.6 billion euros in total on traveling. The average duration of a holiday is 13.1 days. Most popular destinations for Germans are Spain, Italy, Turkey and Austria. What makes Germans a bit special from other countries is that they still prefer to use Travel agencies. Between years 2016 and 2017 there was a 6-billion euro increase in total sales revenue of travel agencies. (DRV 2018, 6-17.) Germans seek holidays that are not too boring nor too exhausting. In 2015 the top reasons to travel were: get distance to everyday life, charge new energy, time for one another, and being pampered and enjoying themselves. (ITB-Berlin 2015, 33-37.)

When Germans travel, they like to get their money's worth. If they have booked and paid for activities, they most certainly will also do it even if the environmental aspects would be horrible. Germans love to travel to many different places and even to places that are not that well known. Germans usually never complain about their travels and especially never about the weather. Their action plan usually involves hiking. Germans are known to be quite serious people and it applies also to the holidays as they tend to take them quite seriously; this applies also to the itinerary. Germans take the itinerary to the detail, and they will make sure that they will get to go everything that was mentioned in the itinerary. (Telegraph Travel, 28 February 2017.)

German travellers are the second biggest visitor market to New Zealand. Key market areas are independent professionals and backpackers. They are also the most widely travelled market as they cover in average 8 different regions in New Zealand. Germans are very independent travellers and they do a lot of research about New Zealand before arriving. They are also keen users of guidebooks. German travellers appreciate the New Zealand environment and culture, and they seek active encounters with both of them. (Tourism New Zealand 2018a.)

3.4 British culture and traveling habits

According to Lewis British culture is linear-active with reactive tendencies. This means they combine linear-active traits like, liking privacy, quiet, minding their own business, and reactive traits like being respectful, good listeners, reacting to partner's timetable and being thoughtful. British culture is also considered to be data-oriented but not as strongly as German culture. This means that British people get their information from family and friends, reports, database, project notes, colleagues, from reading and from TV and radio. English speakers, as British people are, tend to use their language skills to their advantage by keeping it vague to maintain politeness or avoid confrontations. They use a quiet tone to "score points" and always attempt to remain low key. As English language has many different accents, these also play a role in how the person wants to be seen. People from North England emphasize their accent in order to come across more genuine, sincere and warm hearted. On the other hand, people from Southern England use their accent to indicate their background or school they went. Lewis also claims that British people are not that concerned about time as German and American people are. (Lewis 2006, 33-75.)

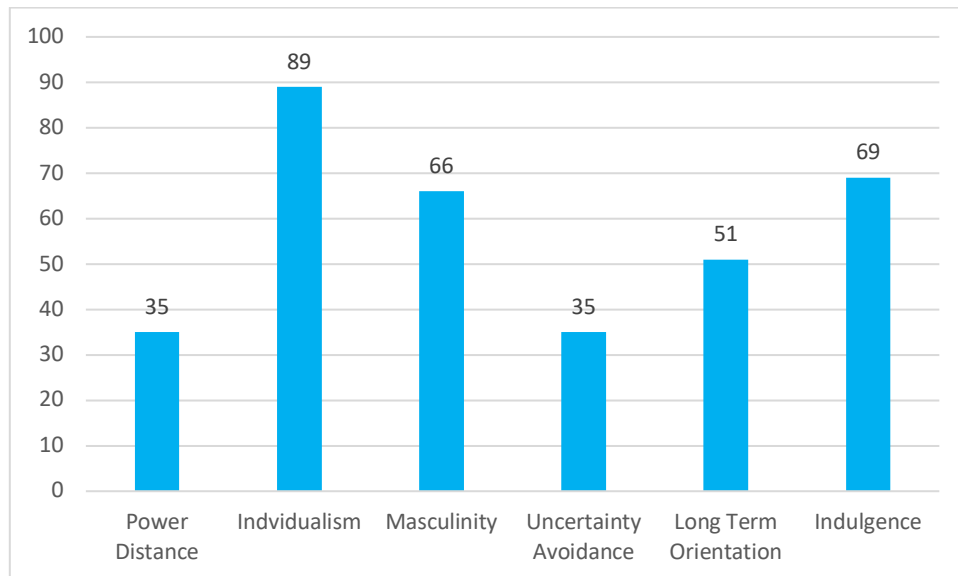


Figure 6. Cultural Dimensions of United Kingdom (Hofstede Insight 2018b)

Figure 6 shows how the United Kingdom (UK) scored in Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The UK score is 35 in power distance which makes it a low power distance country, which is quite interesting considering the historic class system in British culture. The British society believes nowadays that the inequality amongst people should be minimized and everyone should be treated in the same way. UK scores 89 in individualism, which makes it a highly individual country. Brits are highly individual and private people, who have been tough since childhood to think about themselves and find their own purpose in life. UK score is 66 in masculinity which means they are highly success oriented. What is crucial to understand about the British culture is the ability to "read between the lines" – what is said is not always what is meant. At 35 points the UK has a low uncertainty avoidance. Simply put it means as a nation they are quite happy to wake up in the morning and not know what the day will bring. British people don't mind changing plans as they go, and they are comfortable in ambiguous situations. British society does not have that many rules but the ones they have, they follow strictly. As the UK score 51 in in long- /short term orientation, preferences in British culture cannot be defined. The high score of 69 in indulgence means the people have a high tendency to optimism and have a positive attitude. They find importance in leisure time, act as they please and spend money as they wish. (Hofstede Insight 2018b.)

British people travel in average 3.8 days per year. The longest holidays 4.5 days per year are taken by older families, which means families that have children over 5 years old. 50% of travel with partner only and only 12% travelled alone. The most popular holidays are City Break, Beach Holidays and Countryside break. What comes to destinations, top Eu-

European destinations are Italy, Greece and France. Top long-haul destinations are Australia, India and the USA. The Brits book their holidays mainly through travel companies and agents. They feel more confident to book their holidays through professionals, who they trust, and they also feel that it saves time. This can be noticed by the preferred way of making bookings and by the type of their holidays. Almost all of the bookings are made online either with a laptop or desktop. Package holidays are still highly popular amongst British people. 75% choose package holidays because everything is taken care of and they do not need to worry about anything. (ABTA 2017, 2-7; Sayles, 27 November 2017.) British Company A members also prefer booking full packages. In year 2017 the total number of British Company A members was 45 and from these 42 attended the "Tour X", which means only three of the British members did not have pre-booked tour. (Company A 2018a.)

British travellers are the fourth biggest market in New Zealand. This traveller group finds New Zealand as a safe destination to escape to. British people who travel to New Zealand are mostly active (baby) boomers, independent professionals and backpackers. Half of the British visitors have been to New Zealand at least once before. British travellers are quite active and 73.2% of them visit regions beyond the main tourist centres. (Tourism New Zealand 2018b.)

3.5 American culture and traveling habits

Before starting with the American culture, it is important to define the geographical region first. This report focuses only on North Americans and Americans from the United States. United States is the geographical region bordered by Canada and Mexico (Briney 5 February 2018). North America is the geographical region that covers, Greenland, Canada, United States and also Mexico (National Geography 2018). Because of this thesis is focusing mainly on Americans from United States, it does not cover the culture of the other geographical regions.

According to Lewis's cultural theory Americans are very linear-active, but they have some differences in attitude. Americans live in the present and tend to race towards the near future and don't mind their past that much. Usually Americans just want to "get on with it" and not think about reasonings that are related to the past. Americans scale after Germans in the linear-active scale. Americans are also very data oriented and like to present facts and figures. Americans cherish their time like no-one else, as for them it is the most expensive. For Americans time is truly money and they tend to think that the harder you work and the more hours you work the more successful you will be. American English as

a language reflects the national energy and enthusiasm. Americans tend to exaggerate in order to simplify their words. With listening habits Americans tend to want specific information fast and to the point. They don't care to just listen for a long time but rather to get the facts and a bit of entertainment at the same time. (Lewis 2006, 32-74.)

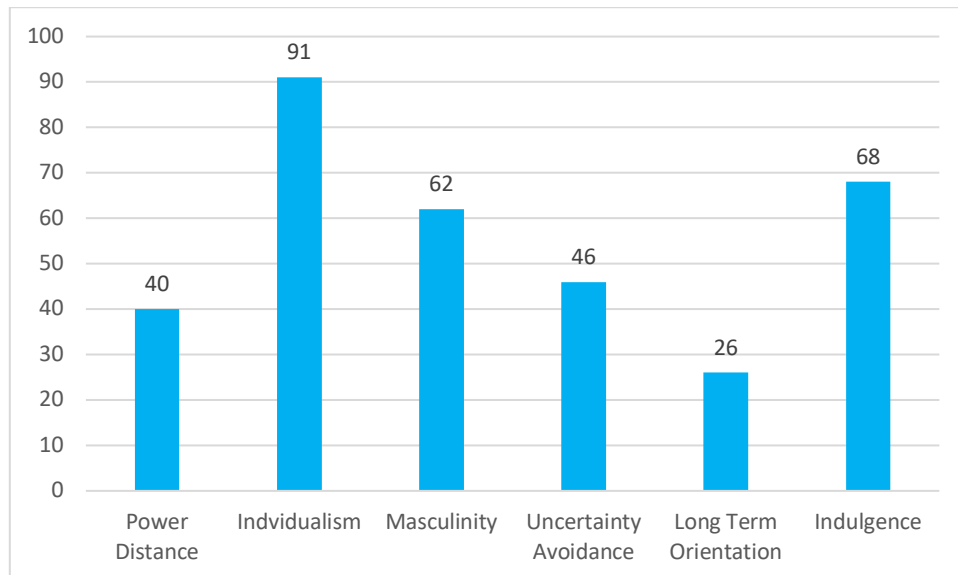


Figure 7. Cultural dimensions of the USA (Hofstede Insight 2018c)

Figure 7 shows how the United States scored in each of Hofstede's cultural dimensions. When combining the rather low score of 40 in power distance with one of the highest scores in individualism (91) it shows that American culture empathizes the equal right of everyone. Organization hierarchy is there only for convenience as the managers are accessible to everyone and they rely on each individual employee and team member for their expertise. The society expect that people take care of themselves and their close families and they should not rely on the authorities for support. Americans are not afraid to approach new people, but they might find it hard to make deep friendships. The masculinity score of 62, is high and it can be seen in the "typical" American behaviour. They talk freely about their achievements and have the mentality of "winner takes it all". In the American culture it is praised to be able to show your success and because of this most of the assessment systems in the USA is based on showing your success. USA scores 46 in uncertainty avoidance, which makes it a low score. This can be seen as tolerance and acceptance for new ideas and willingness to try something new or different. Americans do not require a lot of rules and they are less emotionally expressive. Score of 26 in long term orientation is very low, making America Short term oriented. Americans tend to check new information to know whether it is true. Most American's are not that pragmatic, but they are still very practical and have the "can-do" mentality. Many Americans also

have a very strong idea of “good” and “evil”, which usually concerns ethical issues. In indulgence the USA scored 68 making it a high score, which can be describes as “work hard, play hard”. This can be seen for example, in the wars against drugs and yet still drug addiction in the United states is way higher than in any other wealthy countries. (Hofstede Insights 2018c.)

What makes American travellers special is the passport. Only 42% of the whole population has a passport, which can be seen in their traveling habits. Majority of Americans do not travel to overseas, as they do not have passports, but when they do they spend around one or two weeks traveling. Americans who are able to travel outbound also do it a lot. One in five long-haul travellers has a US passport. Most popular destinations in the states are California, Texas, Florida (Miami) and New York. International top destinations are Mexico, Canada and Britain (London). When traveling internationally Americans choose famous destinations and they want to tick as many sights and activities off on their traveling to-do list. Americans are there to learn and to engage with their destinations. When traveling their main concerns are safety, space and hygiene. (Mulline, 9 October 2017; Telegraph Travel, 4 July 2018.)

Americans are the third largest tourism market in New Zealand and they are the most satisfied with their travels compared to other countries. Two thirds of Americans travel beyond the main tourism centres. Visitors from the US usually stay in New Zealand around 7 days on average, but some stay even 21 days, this does not cover people on working holiday visa. Americans take advantage of their travels all the way to New Zealand to also travel to different destinations like Australia and the Pacific Islands. US visitors are looking for places where to have fun, enjoy themselves and, feel happy and relaxed. The younger travellers have a stronger desire to feel exited, engage in personal challenges, get an adrenalin rush and feel good about themselves. Around half of all the US visitors are fully independent travellers who plan and organize their travels themselves instead of using agencies. (Tourism New Zealand 2018c.)

3.6 Comparing cultures and traveling habits

What comes to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, the biggest differences can be seen in individualism, uncertainty avoidance, long-/short term orientation and indulgence. Power distance and masculinity are almost the same in Germany, UK and USA. (Hofstede Insight 2018d.) Lewis on the other hand states that all of the three countries are linear-actives but all of them have different tendencies. (Lewis 2006, 32-98.)

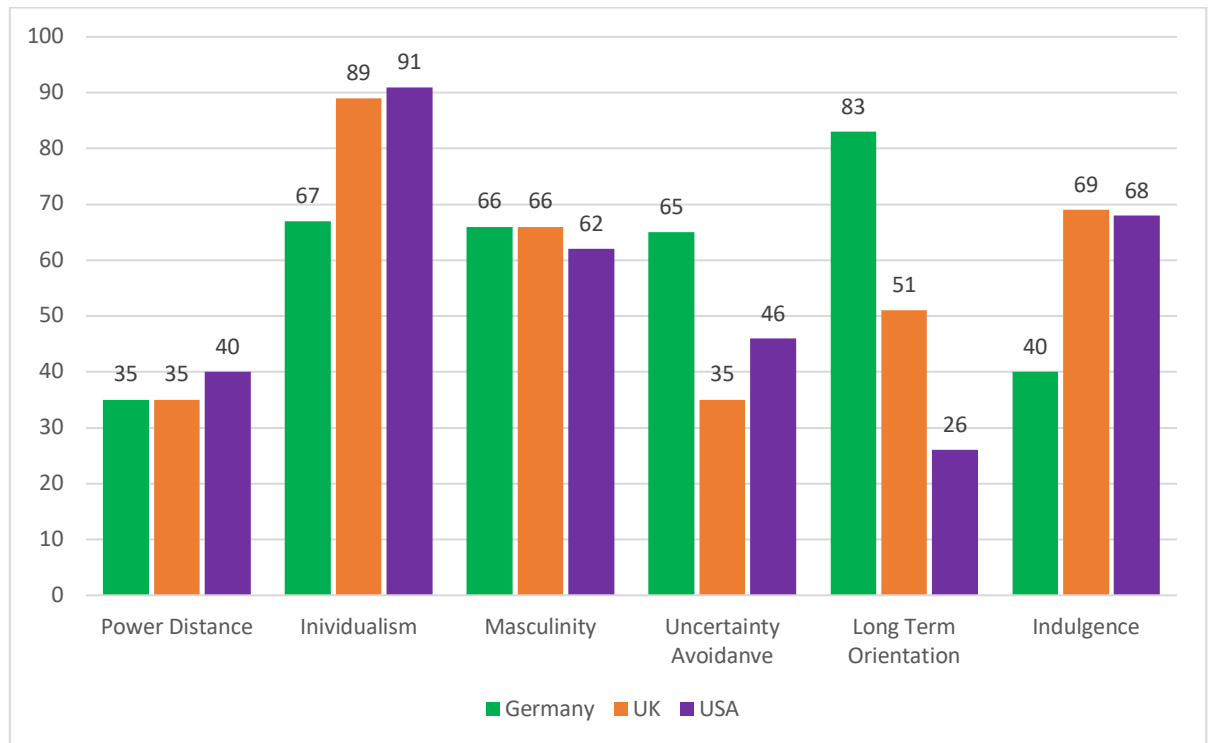


Figure 8. Country comparison (Hofstede Insight 2018d)

Figure 8 shows how the countries ranked compared to each other. In individualism, all of the countries are ranked high. United Kingdoms (UK) and United States of America (USA) are both highly individual countries leaving Germany behind quite a lot. In America people believe in their own individual right and liberty and they place a lot of value into it. In uncertainty avoidance Germany is the only country that has a high score. This means Germans place a lot of importance in rules and guidelines to make certainty in the culture. They want to know what is happening and how to act and proceed in certain situations. UK and USA scored low on uncertainty avoidance which means they don't place that much importance on rules and they are quite happy to wake up in the morning not knowing what the day is going to bring. They don't mind changing the plans as they go. In long-/short term orientation all of the countries score completely differently. Germany has a high score that indicates that Germany is a very pragmatic country. UK on the other hand scored intermediate / no opinion. They are neither short or long Term oriented. Their preferences cannot be defined. USA scored a low score which indicates that Americans are not that pragmatic but instead they have an "can-do" attitude. In Indulgence Germany is yet again the different one. UK and USA scored high, which means that the people have high tendency to optimism, find importance in leisure time and act and spend money as they wish. Germany scored rather low which means, that they are bit more restrained in nature and have a tendency to cynicism and pessimism. All in all, one could say that Germans are a bit more reserved and their culture differentiates from the other two the most.

Even though UK and USA have quite similar scores they too have their cultural differences, though not as big as Germany and either of UK or USA.

According to Lewis all of the three countries are linear-active and data oriented. There are still differences in their cultures. For example, Germans want to analyse and tackle one problem at a time and take their time to make decisions. Americans on the other hand are racing toward the future and they want to get as much done as possible and they might not necessarily understand the German way of taking time to analyse and take action, but rather act quickly and move on to next task. Britain on the other hand has reactive tendencies which makes it a bit different from the other two. British people are not as concerned about time as Germans and Americans, as for them time is value and money, they put a lot of value on time keeping and want to get as much as possible done. Germans might also take English speakers too literally and miss the humour, understatement or irony in their speak. One big difference between all of the cultures is the listening habits. Germans listen well for information and need to have context, they take things literally and don't care for jokes. Germans want to know the prices and explanations, "what happens if...?". British people listen politely, smile and nod, and occasionally interrupt for clarification. They need context and want low key, they expect humour and take mental notes. British people prepare for debates and they give good feedback in general. People from USA are harder to engage into listening. They listen in snatches and expects entertainment. As time is money for them, they want to know what is new and what is the bottom line. The best way to engage Americans to listen is to keep it simple and give the facts and figures straight away. In intercultural environment, misunderstandings might happen because of these cultural differences. (Lewis 2006, 32-98.)

To summarize the previous chapter about traveling habits: Americans, Germans and Brits have quite different traveling habits. As only 42% of the whole American population has passport, not that many Americans are able to travel abroad. Germans on the other hand are the most traveling country in the world. Brits are quite in the middle in this, they travel but not as much as Germans. British people prefer package holidays and to have everything sorted out for them, so that they do not need to worry about anything in the destination. Germans prefer to book their travels through travel agency and Americans are independent travellers who like to organize their travels themselves. Germans are very serious about their travels and want to get their money's worth. They expect to do everything mentioned in their travel itinerary no matter what. Americans want to tick as much as possible out of their travel list, in other words see as much as possible, they also prefer popular destinations. Germans love to travel all around, and they are not afraid to go to places that have not been discovered yet. British people find New Zealand to be a safe travel

destination where to escape their everyday life. Germans tend to do a lot of research before traveling to New Zealand and they enjoy the hiking possibilities New Zealand has to offer. Young Americans are after the adrenalin rush and engaging themselves in personal challenges in New Zealand.

3.7 Cultural effects in service quality and satisfaction

Culture has an impact on people's behaviour and by this it also affects their expectations about service and especially service quality. One way to study these impacts is through Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Table 1 "Culture's effect on service quality expectations by countries" (Appendix 1) shows four different cultural dimensions that have a connection to service quality expectations. These dimensions are power distance, individualistic / collective culture, long / short term orientation and uncertainty avoidance. In table 1 all the target countries; Germany Britain and USA are listed, explained how they score in these cultural dimensions and what kind of service expectation they have according to the cultural dimensions. The cultural effects in service quality are based on Donthu & Yoo's (1998, 181-183) study about cultural influence on service quality expectations.

As seen on the Table 1 "Culture's effect on service quality expectations by countries" (Appendix 1) all of the three countries are Low power distance countries. Low power distance countries have high expectations of overall service quality, they expect responsiveness from the employees and they expect to get reliable service. This means that the employees should have the ability to perform according to the promised service quality. All of the countries listed on the table are considered as Individualistic cultures, German being the exception and having quite low score in this. People who come from Individualistic countries have high service quality expectations and they expect to get empathy from the service provider and have a high expectation of assurance. They pursue their own interest and are not willing to accept poor service as their own benefit is the top priority. As Germany does not rank as high in this as the other two countries, Germans do not demand as much as the others and are bit more accepting towards the employees.

In long term / short term orientation all of the countries in the table scored differently. In general, long-term oriented cultures do not have that high expectations for service quality and they place less importance on responsiveness of the employees. Germany is a Long-Term oriented country. If Germans have a short-term customer service experience, they do not place a lot of expectations into it, they know that not every customer service experience can be perfect. They will give the employee time to improve and will be satisfied for poorer service to have better in the future. USA is a really short-term oriented country

which makes them appreciate service quality a great deal and they expect to get consistent service quality every time and everywhere. It does not matter what kind of a service contact it is, Short Term oriented countries like USA expect to have flawless, high quality services every time. Britain on the other hand scores intermediate in Long- /Short Term orientation. This means British culture is neither of the above but rather a combination. They do not have a strong opinion or preference according to their culture.

Germany is a high Uncertainty Avoidance country. They are cautious when choosing services, they want to take time in evaluation and they do not make hasty decisions. Because of their careful planning they are also more likely to develop high service quality expectations. Germans also use tangibles like surrounding and facilities, as a representative of the service quality, because for them these features are visible evidence of service quality. People from low Uncertainty Avoidance countries like Britain and USA make more rational and quicker decisions when choosing services. They do not put as much pressure on tangibles as Germans and do not develop such high service quality expectation. (Donthu & Yoo 1998, 181-183.)

In general, all of the three mentioned countries are quite different from each other. People from Germany appreciate a lot service quality but are willing to forgive lower quality if it is a short-term customer service experience only. They care about tangibles and associate it with the service quality – poor surroundings mean poor quality. People from USA have really high service quality expectations and as it is one of the highest ranked Individualistic countries, they pursue their own interest and own benefit more than the other two countries. They make quick decisions and do not care for tangibles. For them their own benefit is the most important and they do not let minor factors like tangibles affect their expectations for service quality. Britain is a bit more medium about service quality expectations than the other two. They appreciate service quality and they care for their own benefit. British people make quick choices and don't put a lot of pressure on tangibles. They have an intermediate approach to have great service every time. All in all, all of these countries appreciate service quality a lot and put quite a lot of pressure in it on their own way. Which makes it even more important to take service quality into consideration when dealing with customers from these cultural backgrounds.

4 Company A

Company A was established in 1996 and it is the largest working holiday service provider in Australia and New Zealand. Company A is operating in three different countries; Australia, New Zealand and Canada. In total there are five offices; in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Auckland and Vancouver. The head office is located in Sydney. Company A has 5500 new members and 30 000 tours/activities/accommodations each year. Company A offers its members full support year-round, job assistance, traveling support, accommodation assistance and 24h emergency line. Company A has an exclusive job database for its members, free Wi-Fi and access to computers in each office and also, they organize social events each month for the members to get to know each other. (Company A 2016a; Company A 2016b.)

New members will have an orientation day during their first week in the destination. During the orientation day they will have welcome, travel and job presentations, which cover the basic information and helps the new members get started. New members will also get help with their new bank accounts and tax numbers, which enables them to work in the destination. Every new member will receive a welcome package that includes a prepaid sim card, membership card and a map of the destination. Employees at Company A will help the members to find jobs easily and also arrange activities and trips for the members. (Company A 2016b.)

Company A's vision is to commit to provide guidance and assistance to young people who have the desire to work and travel overseas. Provide the cultural and employment link between the donor countries and Australia/New Zealand/Canada, and to offer world class cultural and employment opportunities for all Working Holiday Visa holders. Company A strives to protect the integrity of this booming industry while aims to meet the social, health, and learning needs of working holiday visa holders. Company A's mission is to enhance the true spirit of working holiday programmed and encourage young people to take part in it. And also connect the young working holiday visa holders with the locals and local businesses, which will give them an in-dept experience and understanding the local way of life. (Company A 2016b.)

Company A's office in Auckland is an open office located right in the city centre. Members are welcome to pop by in the office during office hours to ask questions or just to use the free Wi-Fi. The employees help them to find jobs, book activities and tours and also provide general information for the newly arrived members about traveling, jobs and New Zealand in general.

4.1 Concept of Working Holiday

Working Holiday Visa enables travellers to travel and work in Australia, Canada or New Zealand for a period of 12 months. Most people seek short-term jobs around the country, so they are able to travel to several destinations and save some money or fund their travels at the same time. To enable this adventure, one must have a Working Holiday Visa. The age limit is usually between 18-35 years (depends on the destinations) and the maximum stay is 12 months. Working Holiday Visas are based on the national agreements between the countries, and for this reason the requirements to be able to apply for this visa differentiate between each country. (InterExchange 2018; Kilroy 2018.)

4.2 Tour X

“Tour X” is a three-day tour to the most scenic places in the northern New Zealand organized by Company A. It is part of a week-long package for the newly arrived members (appendix 2). This package includes social activities and also orientation about New Zealand in general, working and traveling. This thesis will only focus on the scenic tour itself and not on the whole package, excluding the first days of the package.

The tour starts officially on Wednesday morning and lasts until Saturday afternoon. Wednesday morning the group departs from Auckland to Paihia. Around noon the group arrives to Paihia, and takes a ferry to explore Russell, the very first capital of New Zealand. After the day of exploring the beautiful peninsula, the group will have a burger dinner together in a local Craft Beer Bar. Thursday is a Maori culture day. In the morning the group will have a guided tour in Waitangi, New Zealand’s most significant historic site, led by a Maori guide. In Waitangi the group will also have a Maori cultural show, which includes Maori welcome outside the meeting house, *Waiata* (singing), *Poi* (performance art), stick games, Maori weaponry and *Haka* (traditional war dance) performance. After the Maori experience the group will go on a 5 km hike to Haruru Falls. Thursday evening is free time for the group, either the group can cook together or have dinner outside. On Friday the group will attend to a whole day guided bus tour to the most northernmost point of New Zealand, Cape Reinga. The highlights of the Cape Reinga tour are 90 miles beach, Sandboarding, Maori tales and seeing the Tasman sea meeting the Pacific Ocean at Cape Reinga. On Saturday the group has the option to take the bus back to Auckland in the afternoon or stay in Paihia and start own traveling from there. Saturday morning is free time for the group and they can explore the beautiful area of Bay of Islands as they wish. (Company A 2018b.)

4.3 Target group - Millennials

Segmenting and targeting customer groups is one of the core elements of a strategic marketing plan. Understanding the motivations and buying behaviour of the target group is an essential element of company's groundwork and preliminary analysis. In most cases a market has multiple different groups of customers with different needs and interest to trends. For example, tourism industry has target groups from families to business travelers. There are numerous ways for a company to define their target groups. The most common factors used to target the right group are demographical, geographic, psychographic and behavioural. Demographic segments are based on age, gender, education and profession. Geographical segments are for example, continents, climate, nation, region or even neighbourhood. Psychographic segments are based on social class, personality and lifestyle. Behavioural segmentation is based on the customers actions such as, loyalty status, user status, usage rate, benefit and buyer readiness. To define a unique position for their product, companies have to keep in mind their target groups and develop, monitor and adapt accordingly to possible changes. (De Pelsmacker 2013, 121-145.)

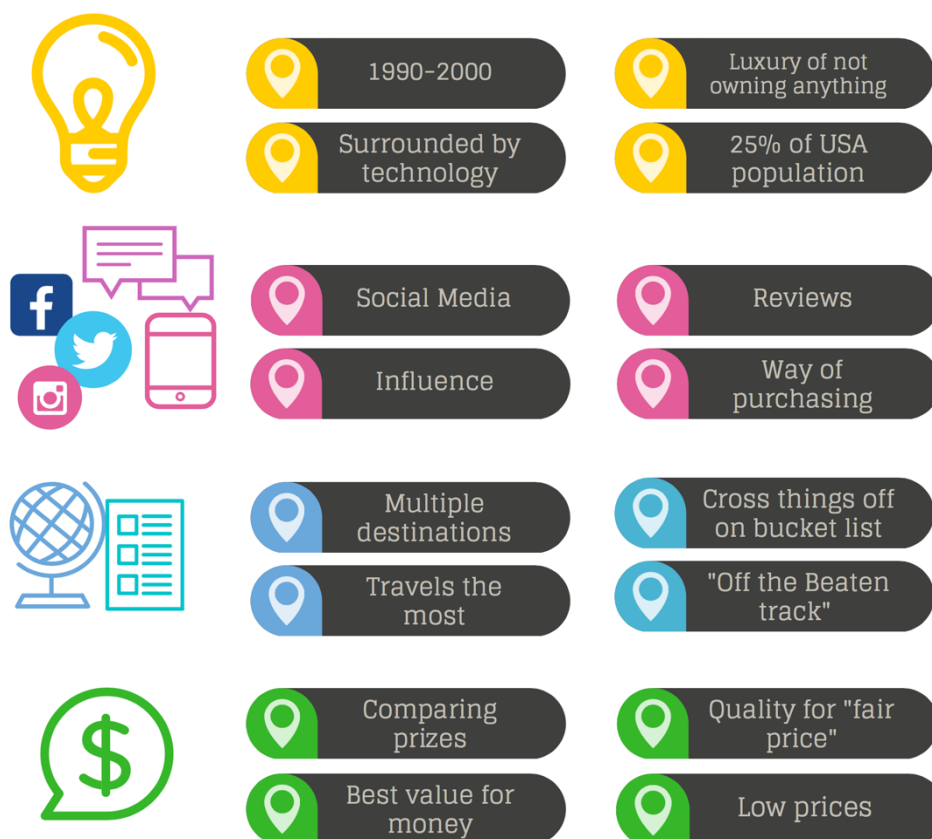


Figure 9. Key points of Millennials. Drawn according to Goldman Sachs and Gailewicz (Goldman Sachs 2018; Gailewicz 30 March 2014)

Millennials, also known as Generation Y or even the social media generation, are the first generation that has been raised surrounded by technology and feel themselves comfortable and natural around it. There are multiple different definitions about when are the millennials born. Some say they are the children of late 80s and early 90s, others claim that millennials are born between early 80s and all the way to beginning of 2000. Most common definition is that millennials are those born between late 80s and early 2000. In the USA the generation of Millennials is the biggest one by covering 25% of the whole population. As millennials have grown up during the time of change and globalization it has given them expectations and priorities that are really different comparing to previous generations. Millennials are not keen to buy houses, cars or luxury items. They prefer having access to these products without owning them. Millennials appreciate wellness and it's a daily activity for them. Wellness is a market the Millennials are willing to invest and spend quite a lot of money into. Millennials have an easy access to technology all the time, which shapes the retail and brand industry. Millennials are keen to compare prices, read reviews and access product information online, which makes them to prefer brands that can offer the maximum convenience at the lowest price (Figure 9). (Goldman Sachs 2018; Gailewicz 30 March 2014.)

Millennials rely on social media and sharing things with each other. They see technology as a way to improve life, make better choices and contribute to society rather than just a device for communication. Accessing different types of technology has shaped millennials into being multitaskers who watch TV and at the same time text with their friends. This shows how big part technology actually is in their lives and that companies should really invest in social media marketing and other digital platforms. To keep the millennials interested the brand should add value into their lives. Instead of just selling a product or service the company should sell by providing new, strong and relevant information to the millennial. Quality is also important for Millennials, but the price should still be fair. It is hard to define what "fair price" means, because every consumer has a different opinion about this. Brands should promote their products so that the product gives more to the consumer and by this makes it combatable with the mental image of "fair price" (Figure 9). (Gailewicz 30 March 2014.)

4.4 Millennials and traveling habits

Expedia's (2017, 4-20) study about millennials travel habits shows that millennials took the most trips in both business and leisure compared to other generations. However, the

length of their trips is the shortest, being in average 8.5 days, compared to other generation. To compare, the baby boomers took the longest trips by traveling in average for 10.5 days. Millennials prefer relaxing holidays over sightseeing, visiting family, family play holidays or romantic getaways. Millennials are the generation of technology and it shows also in their booking habits. They book their travels through online travel agencies. For millennial the budget is the key point, they spend most in accommodation then in flights and then food. They look for the best deals and most value for their money. When millennials travel, they want to travel anywhere that allows them to explore the outdoors and be active, cross things off their bucket list and take risks, get “off the beaten track” – see and experience what others haven’t and get recommendations from locals. They find activities, once in a life time experiences and cultural experiences to be the most important for them when traveling. Millennials are not bound for one destination. They decide between multiple different destinations and look for destination inspirations. They get influenced by travel pictures in social media either posted by their friends or experts. What matters the most in the decision making is the reviews of the destination, it can influence the whole decision. To reach millennials images and traveling deals are the most appealing and best way to contact them.

What comes to German millennials, they travel 4 times a year and their vacations usually last for 8.3 days. Most of German millennials prefer traveling internationally over domestic traveling. The most popular type of vacation was relaxing and after it came sightseeing, visiting family, activity-based holiday and lastly romantic getaways. Germans were choosing between two or more destinations and used online travel agencies to book their holidays. German millennials look for best deals and value for money and they want to travel to destinations that allows them to explore outdoors and be active. They prioritize activities and once in a lifetime experiences on the trip. From social media channels, Facebook influences the German millennials the most and they value to read reviews for example, from TripAdvisor before making decisions. When traveling they use mainly their smartphone, but when booking or looking for inspiration they use laptops or desktops. (Expedia 2017b, 4-22.)

British millennials get inspiration from their families and search engines. Three out of four digital users consume travel content. They have multiple destinations from where to choose. Their regional search is mainly focused on Europe, Australia & New Zealand get only a small portion of searches. They are multi device users and do not stick to only using one. Traveling is considered and time-consuming purchase, which leads the British millennials to visit hundreds of travel sites before booking their trip. (Expedia 2017c, 5-44; Expedia 2016, 3-26.)

American traveling millennials are a bit different compared to the two countries before. Americans have only one destination they plan to travel, and they prefer using mobile devices only. They get inspiration from their family and search engines and they plan most of their travels either domestically inside USA borders or to Europe. When American millennials are planning their holidays, they also compare prices and search for deals. They also search information about other content such as weather, customer reviews or travel tips more than the other generations do in America. They travel mostly with their partner or spouse and their travels are motivated by a special desire or need. (Expedia 2017c, 5-44; Expedia 2017d, 3-25.)

4.5 Company A service quality determinants

Figure 10 is a combination of a “generic” Satisfaction-Dissatisfaction model, determinants of perceived service quality and Gap-model. It aims to define the exact determinants of service quality of Company A and to show how do these aspects effect the customer expectations, satisfaction and performance. These three models were combined to create one clean model, that can be used to determine how the customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction is formed, how the company policies affect the satisfaction/dissatisfaction and possible gaps/errors the company might have. This model will be used later on to find possible errors and improvement suggestions based on the customer satisfaction survey results.

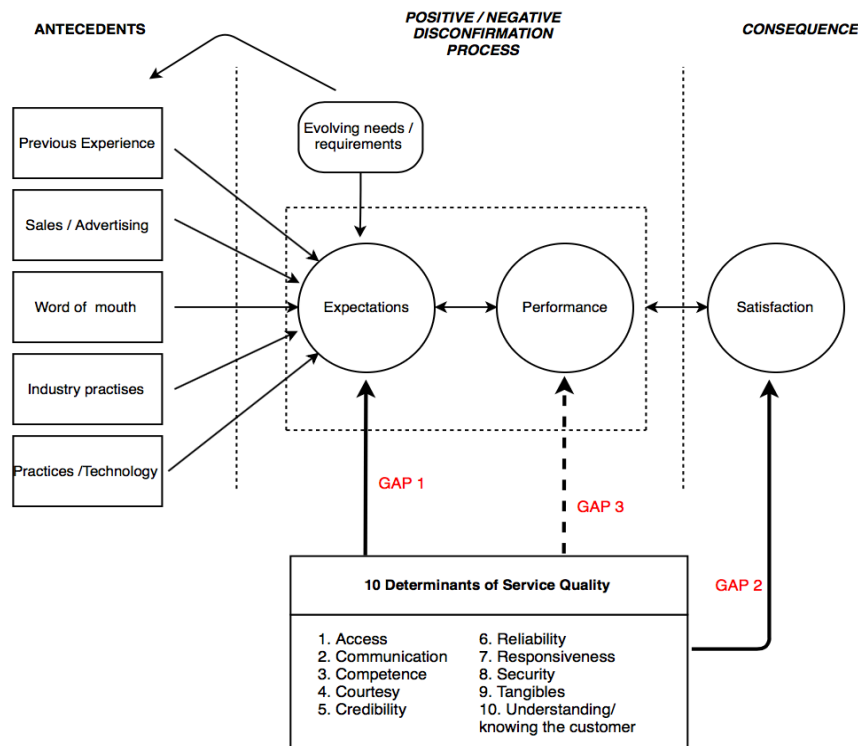


Figure 10. Gaps between service quality determinants and customer satisfaction

First it is important to go through what the Millennials want and how their expectations from. In Figure 10 this means the first part, antecedents. Millennials are keen to research previous experiences of other people. They read reviews online and discuss with their family and friends about their experiences. Best way to contact millennials is to advertise with pictures and provide reviews that are easy to access. Millennials want to stay on budget, spend time outdoors, cross things out of their bucket lists, experience new things and get off the beaten track. Even when traveling and spending time outdoors it is important for Millennials to stay connected and keep in touch with their social group through technology. Technology is also the way to contact this target group and they wish to be able to use their devices where ever they go. As millennials are keen to read reviews their opinions and expectation can change really quickly. This brings us to the middle part of the figure, The positive/negative disconfirmation process. Evolving needs/requirement affects both the customers' expectations and the Antecedents. Which means that the customers' expectations are always evolving according to the customers' needs/requirements, what makes it important for the companies to keep up with the customers and to be able to meet the changing needs and expectations.

The last two parts, positive/negative disconfirmation process and consequence are the parts where the company's actions, in this case 10 Determinants of Service Quality play the biggest role. These aspects affect directly customer expectations, company performance and satisfaction/dissatisfaction. The 10 Determinants of Service Quality should match or exceed customers' expectations to create satisfaction. To be able to create customer satisfaction and find out where possible errors are, it is important to define each of the 10 Determinants of Service Quality from the company's point of view.

From Company A's point of view **access** means open office for customers, office hours during weekdays 9:30 to 17:30, central location and easy access, multiple ways of contacting the staff members such as phone, email, skype and 24/7 emergency phone. Staff members answer customer enquiries within 24 hours, walk-in customers are helped and welcomed fast and there is always a free staff member to help them. The office has been the same for past four years which means that there has not been changes in the accessibility. **Communication** is provided through orientation during the first days which covers useful information of New Zealand, information of bank account and tax-number, travel tips and job seminar. Explanations of what staff can and cannot do are also provided for the members. Information is transparent, and it is provided through Facebook, email and face-to-face. Communication between other Company A offices and co-operation companies is through email and new information is shared with other staff members.

Official language in the office is English and it is kept simple and clear to make it easy for customers who are having troubles understanding it. Help for German members is also provided in their native language if they struggle to understand English. **Competence** is covered by orientation and ongoing training of new employees; branch manager is always present in the office which means help is always available. Staff members are trained to look up for information and knowledge how to do so, is provided during orientation and on daily basis. **Courtesy** is the combination of taking customers into consideration, being patient and helpful, readiness to help customers and look up information and confronting customers in a friendly and professional manner. **Credibility** is provided by helping customers anyway possible and keeping in contact with them. Promised service and help is always provided and staff members are always honest about changing situations and do not hide them from the customers. Overall the company has a good reputation and over 10 years of experience in the business, which makes it a trustworthy company. (Spooner 21 August 2018.)

Reliability is to follow set guidelines and rules for performance and to keep it the same for every customer. Staff provides always same information to every customer. Everything that the new customers need to get started with their experiences in New Zealand is arranged beforehand and everything is all good to go at the set timeline. This means that the customers only need to follow given instructions and guidelines and they do not need to worry about arranging anything themselves. Other aspects of reliability like accounting and other company procedures are always performed in set timeline. Staff members follow their monthly calendars which are prepared well ahead and perform accordingly to the tasks. **Responsiveness** can be seen in customer-oriented staff, who are flexible and always perform their tasks according to their best abilities. All the tasks and assignments given are done on time and not postponed, meaning that everything is kept up to date. Staff is quick to adapt to changing situations and handle busy days with teamwork for example by delegating tasks between people. Staff is there always for members and ready to help them even if it would mean postponing doing some other less important tasks. Company A is financially stable and doing well overall which is one of the **security** factors. The location of the office is safe and everything important is been held in a locked place or under a password. Work is done professionally, and the safety of all members is assured when using the services of Company A. Customer data is kept only for the company use and not distributed around, and the data can only be accessed by the staff members. One of tangibles is the easy access office that has a young and welcoming look. Customers are always welcome to the office to use the Wi-Fi or computers or just to hang around and meet other members. Staff appearance is clean and professional (smart casual clothing). Everything for the scenic trip is arranged and booked beforehand and

staff members know when and where to go and also are able to provide all this information to the members. Company A is putting a lot of effort to **understand/ knowing the customers**. The target group is quite small which makes it easier to study and to provide suitable services. Staff members are always helping members with their individual needs like bookings or applying to a job and members who are struggling for example, with language are taken into consideration and help in German can be provided. Regular members are recognized in the office and spoken by the name, regardless the aim is to provide same service to every member coming to the office. During the "Tour X" tour it is the same group of members for the whole week and staff members aim to remember the names and basic information and not ask same questions all over again and again. For this purpose, first night of the "Tour X" is to get to know the other members but also for the staff members to get to know the group and their individual needs. (Spooner 21 August 2018.)

In the figure 10 there are three different gaps that indicate the possible errors between the company and the customer. **Gap 1 is based on the error with expectation**, either the customer has wrong expectations, company has provided false information, or the company cannot meet the expectations. **Gap 2 is the error with concrete satisfaction**, what went wrong? Why wasn't the customer satisfied? What was the reason for the customer not to be satisfied with the service? **Gap 3 is based on to the company and employee performance**. Meaning that the performance is not in the right level and it effects the whole service performance.

These gaps were chosen to be used in the thesis to be able to spot where the possible errors are and how to improve them. The gaps cover all of the main aspects of customer satisfaction; error with expectations, error with satisfaction and error with performance. These areas are the ones where the most mistakes happen. For this reason, it is important to focus on these gaps to be able to find the reason behind the error and minimize it. By doing this the company is able to improve their own processes and create more successful business.

5 Customer satisfaction research

The core of this thesis is to research customer satisfaction for Company A. The aim of this research is to gain information how to improve customer satisfaction of the "Tour X". More specifically what do the target groups want from this tour and how do their cultural differences differentiate from each other. The final aim of this research is to generate more information to Company A about these target groups and possible solutions to improve the customer satisfaction based on the research results.

More specifically the research questions are:

1. What are the cultural preferences for German, British and North American travelers?
2. Do these preferences differentiate from each other? If so, how?
3. Does the "Tour X" tour match the service expectations of these target groups?
4. What are the possible aspects that need to be improved to create more customer satisfaction?

Questions one and two are based on the theoretical framework of this thesis and have been already discussed in the chapter 3.6 Comparing cultures and traveling habits. Questions three and four are based on the customer Satisfaction survey and the results of it. These answers will be reflected to the "Gaps between service quality determinants and customer satisfaction" model (figure 10). This figure will be used to identify possible error that were raised in the survey answers and how to improve them.

5.1 Choosing research method

For the purpose of this survey it has been decided to use both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The main reason behind it was to be able to gather all the needed information and answers for the survey and to be able to provide data of all the different parts of the "Tour X". Specific methods to gather answers were a paper print out of the survey, internet version of the survey which was sent via email and an interview. The main way of gathering answers was via printed out surveys and interviews.

Quantitative methods deal with data in a form of numbers and statistics. This data can be collected by surveys or from already existing records of data or from statistics. Most of surveys are done by using quantitative methods because the results are based on quantitative data for example, numbers. To be able to analyse quantitative data there should be enough results - the more results you have, more reliable the analysis is. (Walliman 2010, 113-114.)

Qualitative data is expressed in the form of words rather than by numbers. Qualitative research is focused on people and the data is gathered from interviews, focus groups, conversation analysis and analysis of text and documents. (Walliman 2010, 130-131.) Qualitative and quantitative research methods can be used together and quite often this is the case. One does not exclude the other and by combining them it is possible to gather versatile information. (KvaliMOTV 2008a.)

The main way of gathering data was to print out surveys and fill them out together with the members. This method was chosen because it guaranteed the answers and members could answer during the "Tour X". By doing this, members did not have to worry about it later on. This was also the best way to contact members and ask them to fill out the survey. Once the members start traveling and working all around New Zealand contacting them can take a while and getting answers is quite uncertain. Having the surveys printed out and filled out together with the members guaranteed the best response rates.

The survey was also sent to a group of members via email (Appendix 3). The link to the survey was sent to overall 12 members who attended the trip before the survey itself was done. It had been acknowledged that this way might not be the best way to contact members regarding a survey as they are busy with their travels and some of them do not have internet connection. The decision to still send the survey link electronically was made in co-operation with Company A in hope of more results and to give all of the members a chance to give their feedback.

The interviews were done either face-to-face with the members or by phone depending if the members came by the Company A Auckland office during the following week of the trip or not. This method was chosen because on Friday during the Cape Reinga tour there are no Company A tour leaders with the group. The interview is based only on this day and to gain data about the tour. The Cape Reinga tour is one of the highlights of the trip, so it is important to include it to the survey results. The only way to gather the information about this tour is by an interview as it was not an option to include this question to the survey papers. The original plan was to include the question into the survey but after discussing with Company A's management the decision was made that it is not possible to ask members to bring their surveys to the Company A office and by this change their own plans. All the members were informed that there is going to be one extra question for the survey about Cape Reinga tour and that the members would be contacted either via phone or face-to-face if they come by the office during the following week.

For the survey there was a lot of different methods used. It would have been more time efficient to use only one of the earlier stated ways to gather data but considering the circumstances these methods were the best way to gain important information about the customer satisfaction from the members. Alternative ways to execute the survey in a simpler way would have been a full interview after the trip or sending the survey to all the members electronically. With both of this option there were some concerns. If the survey would have been done as an interview it would have taken quite a lot of time and effort from both parties. Time management would have been the hardest obstacle to overcome as the writer of this thesis was working fulltime and the members have their own schedules to follow; some traveling, some working. Sending the survey via email to all members had the same problems as the interview; how to contact the members. It is really unlikely that even half of them would have had the time to fill out the survey during their own time even if it would have been sent to them and it would have taken only few minutes. This is purely because the members are traveling, working and exploring New Zealand and they do not have the time or interest to put effort into answering surveys. It can be seen in the results of how many members in total filled out the internet survey out of the 12 people it was sent to. For these reasons the survey was done with multiple different methods.

5.2 Customer satisfaction survey

“Tour X” customer Satisfaction survey (Appendix 4) was made in co-operation with Company A. The structure of the survey and the method of collecting answers was discussed with the Branch Manager and the Managing Director of Company A and decided together. Co-operation was vital to be able to make a survey that had all the needed components and can generate relevant information about the customer satisfaction.

The Survey itself consists of a short introduction text and 10 questions (Appendix 4). The printed-out survey has 8 questions and the last two questions were done by interviews. In the website form of the survey there is in total 9 questions. Question 9B was left out as it is a more specific questions only made during the interviews. **The first question is to fill out the full name** of the members. This question was chosen to enable looking up the customer data from the Company A internal database and by this find the demographic information of the member (nationality and gender). **The second Question is a simple star rating question** “On a Scale 1 to 5, how many stars would you give this trip?”. All the questions that have a scale 1 to 5 are rated so that 5 is the highest and 1 is the lowest score. **The third question is a based-on recommendations**, “Would you recommend this trip to a friend?” and has answer options of yes and no; why not. This gives the members a chance to explain why they would not recommend the trip. Questions two and three

are simply based on customer satisfaction measurements. The second question measures the quality of the trip on a familiar worldwide scale. Third question is based on the satisfaction; satisfied customers recommend the services/products they received and unsatisfied customers do not recommend the services/products. These questions were chosen to be presented in the beginning of the survey to gather more realistic information, that is based on the first impressions of the members. By doing this the first impressions and opinions do not get clouded or changed by the answers of other questions and by this are more reliable.

Question number four, “Rate the following questions on a scale 1-5”, has all the activities of the tour listed and also general questions about the atmosphere, meeting expectations, performance of tour leaders and accommodation. These questions were chosen to get specific information of all the different factors of the tour and to be able to map out what the best and worst factors of the tour are. With these questions it is easy to spot what the possible improvement points are and is there a trend about likes and dislikes between the different nationalities. **Question five “Answer the following claims” is based on the cultural preferences of the target groups.** The claims based on cultural preferences were; “I find it important that I got to do all the activities listed on the itinerary” – Germany, “The timetable was too busy” – German & America, “There was not enough free-time” – America, “The trip was worth the money” – German & British, “I would have preferred to do this trip on my own” – British. The answer options for this question was strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree and strongly agree. These options were chosen to give the members enough flexibility with their answers. **Question number six “What was the best part about the trip”,** is to find out in members own words what the best part of the trip was. **Question number seven “According to your previous answers, was there something you would like us to do differently?”** was designed to find out what is should be improved according to the members. With this question it is easy to find out what were the exact things that the members were the least satisfied. **Question eight is the last question on the printed out survey is for open feedback.** This question is an option for members to write down any possible other feedback the members wanted us to know.

Questions 9A and 9B were about the Cape Reinga tour that Company A members attend on Friday without any of the tour leaders with them. For this reason, these questions were executed in two different ways. On the online survey question 9A was included on the question number 4. For the printed-out survey both of these questions were asked during an interview that was held during the week after the trip. Question 9B is presented only during the interviews because it is a more specific question and it gives the members an

option to give open feedback again. As they have already filled out the open questions of the survey it is only fair to give them the option to tell a bit more about their own opinions about the Cape Reinga Tour. Question 9B is not in the internet version of the survey because the members have an option to write down their own feedback to the open questions.

5.3 Research analysis

The results of this survey were first reviewed between the Branch Manager of Company A and also the writer of the thesis. The Survey was created with Webropol and it had an open link which one could access as many times as possible. To gather and analyse the survey data each of the filled-out paper surveys were typed into the Webropol system using the website link. This was done by the writer of this thesis with extreme care and attention to detail.

Interview answers, demographics of the participating members and the numbers of answers and overall members attending the trip were documented to a separate excel sheet. All the results were analysed anonymously and the name in the survey was needed only for demographic information. All the interviews were transcript and documented by hand. Demographics of the participating members were searched from the Company A customer database based on the names in the surveys.

The paper surveys were not read nor browsed during the trip by the tour leaders. This decision was made because tour leaders might have made some intentional or unintended assumptions or attitude changes towards the members during the trip based on the survey results. After the trip the surveys were read through with the Branch Manager to see if there was some vital feedback that needed to be acted upon as soon as possible and to see if there was a specific trend that kept happening and needed to be improved. To be able to improve the customer satisfaction continuously, it was important for Company A to be able to see the results before the final report was done. This helped the company to do needed improvements as soon as possible.

5.4 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are the key points to a trustworthy research. These aspects should be considered throughout the study to minimize reliability and validity errors. Reliability of the research means the consistency and accuracy of what is being measured and that the research process stays the same throughout the research period (KvaliMOTV 2008b). In other words, this means that the measurements of a study are always done in the same

way using the same methods and scales of measurement. Validity means the accuracy to measure set objectives and to provide accurate results (KvaliMOTV 2008b).

This research was well structured and used consistently throughout the data collection period. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods consistently provided accurate data and results for the questionnaire. The data of the questionnaire was collected from a reliable source, the members itself who participated the trip this survey focuses on. The survey was based on theoretical framework of this thesis and by this aim to provide accurate results to answer the research questions.

Results were collected over the time period of end of June to mid-November 2018. In total during this time period there was seven "Tour X" tours. The total number of participants to these tours were 70 from which 61 answered the survey. The aim was to collect as many answers as possible during this time period, which turned out to be successful as only 9 survey results were missing out of the total number.

All in all, the questionnaire was reliable as it was executed in a consistent way and it measured accurately all the aspects of the trip and by this could provide data that answers the research questions. There were three surveys that had an overall really low grading for the whole tour. These results were not considered to be reliable for the analysing part of this study as they were already discussed with the management of Company A during the research process. These surveys were included in the overall results, but they will not be analysed in the results as it is not relevant for this study. What comes to validity some problems might have occurred related to tangible or intangible factors that cannot be predicted beforehand. For example, these factors could be the chemistry between the members and tour leaders or environmental factors such as weather. This is something that cannot be predicted nor changed beforehand. These errors can be minimized by providing consistent service to all members despite the changing factors. Despite these possible errors the overall results can be considered valid as there was always an option to look back into individual results to see if something major happened during the tour. By doing this the possible errors could have been spotted and taken into consideration and later on fixed.

6 Results

This chapter presents the result of “Tour X” customer satisfaction survey starting from the numbers of participants and demographics and moving on to each survey question individually. All the results were discussed individually with the Branch Manager to be able to do improvements as soon as possible if it was necessary. All the results were gathered between end of June and mid-November 2018. During this time there were seven “Tour X” tours in total. None of the questions were mandatory which is the reason why some questions have less answers than the total number of answers was.

Table 2. Total number of participants and answers (n=70)

TOTAL number of participants	70
TOTAL ANSWERS	61
- Website	3
- Paper	58

Table 2 shows the total number of members attending the tour, the total number of answers and how the answers were divided between paper survey and website link. Total number of members who attended the “Tour X” during this time was 70. Out of these 70 members 61 answered the survey. Out of the 61 answers 58 were given on the paper version of the survey and only 3 through the website link. The website link was sent in total to 12 people and it was re-sent once. The missing 9 results were from the groups the website link was sent to.

Table 3. Demographics of respondents (n=61)

Nationality	Male	Female	Total
German	20	21	41
British	9	4	13
American	0	1	1
Other	2	4	6
		Total	61

From the total number of answers, the division between nationalities and genders can be seen in the Table 3. In total there were 41 German members out of which 21 were female and 20 male. British members were only 13 out of which four were female and nine male. During these tours there was only one female American member. Other nationalities were

in total six. From which four were Austrian female, one Austrian male and one Belgian male. This information was based on the first question of the survey, where the members were asked to write down their full name to enable the writer to look up their demographics from the Company A member database.

6.1 Customer satisfaction survey results

This chapter focuses on the answers of questions two to five. The overall results give a good overview of the customer satisfaction. First two questions indicate clearly the overall satisfaction of the “Tour X” and from the rest of the results it can be seen what the best parts of the trip was and what should be improved.

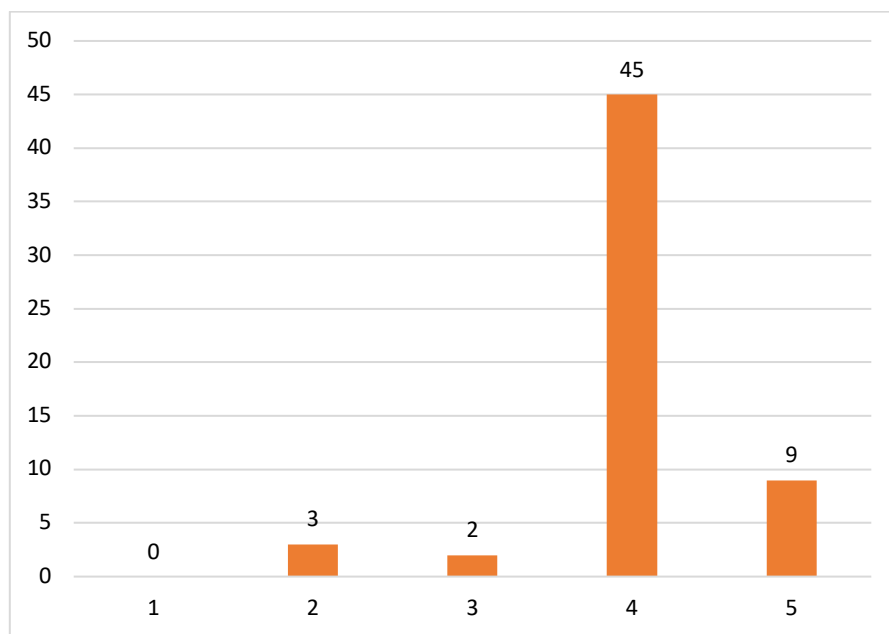


Figure 11. Star rating of the “Tour X” (n=59)

Figure 11 shows the star rating the “Tour X” got. The total number of answers is 59 from which; nine members rated the trip with 5 stars, 45 members gave it 4 stars, two members gave it 3 stars and three members 2 stars. The average star rating is 4.0.

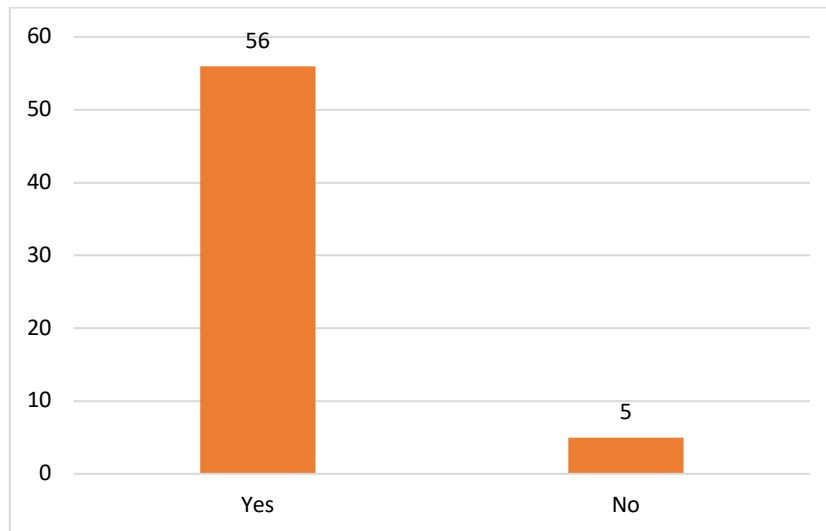


Figure 12. Recommending the tour to a friend (n=61)

Out of total 61 answers; 56 of the members would recommend the trip to a friend and 5 would not (Figure 12). The reasons behind not recommending the trip was: not worth the money, misleading information, very amateur tour guides, tour guides did not have enough knowledge of the area and that the trip was too rushed.

Table 4. Respondents answers about activities and overall tour

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
1. How well did the trip meet your expectations?	2	3	7	35	14	61	3.9
2. How did you find the group atmosphere of the trip?	2	2	9	20	28	61	4.2
3. How did you find the trip to Russell?	0	1	18	20	19	58	4.0
4. How did you find the burger dinner together at Thirty30?	2	6	22	21	10	61	3.5
5. How did you find the Waitangi tour?	0	2	1	21	37	61	4.5
6. How did you find the Haruru Fall Hike?	0	0	8	17	33	58	4.4
7. How did you find the accommodation?	3	11	25	15	7	61	3.2
8. How well did the tour leaders perform?	2	1	1	15	41	60	4.5

In general, Company A members were really satisfied with group atmosphere, trip to Russell, Waitangi tour, Haruru Fall hike and the tour leaders performance. However, there were a few aspects that got the lowest scores by the members. These were meeting expectations, burger dinner at Thirty30 and accommodation (table 4).

Table 4 shows the total number of answers each question got, how the number of answers were divided between each rating and the average result each question got. The

questions about **meeting the expectations got in average 3.9** as a result. Two members grade it as 1, three members as two, seven members as 3, 35 members as 5 and 14 members as 5. Total number of answers was 61. The question about **group atmosphere got in average 4.2** as a result. In total the question had 61 answers from which two members grade it as 1, two members as 2, nine members as 3, 20 members as 4 and 28 members as 5. **Tour Leaders performance got in average 4.5** as a result. Total number of answers were 60, out of which two members grade it as 1, one member as 2, one member as 3, 15 members as 4, and 41 members as 5.

In Table 4 all the aspects considering the activities and accommodation were graded as following. **The trip to Russell got in average 4** as a result. Out of total 58 answers no-one grade it as 1, one member grade it as 2, 18 members grade it as 3, 20 members as 4 and 19 members as 5. **Burger dinner at Thirty30 3.5 as an average** grade. Out of total 61 answers two members grade it as 1, six members as 2, 22 members as 3, 21 members as 4 and 10 members grade it as 5. **The Waitangi tour got in average 4.5**. Out of total 61 answers, no-one grade it as 1, two members grade it as 2, one member as 3, 21 members as 4 and 37 member grade it as 5. **The Haruru Fall hike got in average 4.4**. as a result. Out of total 58 answers, no-one gave the hike a grade less than 3. Eight members grade it as 3, 17 members as 4 and 33 members as 5. **The accommodation got in average 3.2**. Out of total 61 answers three members grade it as 1, 11 members as 2, 25 members as 3, 15 members as 4 and seven members as 5.

Overall results of question give (appendix 5) indicate that the members were quite divided what comes to concept of time. Answers considering free time and timetable were quite divided between the members. Majority of respondents thought that there were enough activities and majority would not prefer to do the trip on their own. Majority of respondents agree that they got enough information of the trip and they also find it important to do all the activities listed in the itinerary. What comes to social media the answers were quite divided between no opinion or somewhat agree. The majority agrees that the trip was worth the money, tour leaders were concerned about the members satisfaction and that the trip was a great experience. The results were presented in pie charts (appendix 5). Each pie chart shows the number of answers each claim got in total and also how were the answers divided between the five options; strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree and strongly disagree. Each of the answer results are colour coded, strongly agree – dark green, somewhat agree – light green, neither agree nor disagree – grey, somewhat disagree – orange and strongly disagree – red.

According to the answers of the first claim members were quite divided between if there was enough free-time or not. Eight of the members strongly disagreed, 24 somewhat disagreed, nine did not agree or disagree, 17 somewhat agreed and three strongly agreed. The majority of answers were somewhat disagree and somewhat agree. Meaning some of the members would have preferred a bit more free-time but the majority agreed that there was enough free-time. The majority of the answers of the second claim indicate that the trip is not too busy according to the members. Majority of the results were either somewhat disagree or strongly disagree. 12 members strongly disagreed, 17 somewhat disagreed, 17 did not agree nor disagree, 14 somewhat agreed and no-one strongly agreed. There were still a quite lot of members who did not have an opinion about this or who thought the timetable was a bit too busy. The majority of respondents agree that there are enough activities and no need for more. Two members strongly disagreed, four somewhat disagreed, seven neither agreed nor disagreed, 18 somewhat agreed and 30 strongly agreed. Out of 61 answers 48 either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that there were enough activities. The majority of members would not have preferred to do this trip alone. Out of total number of answers 18 members strongly disagreed, 17 somewhat disagreed, 15 did not agree nor disagree, 11 somewhat agreed and no-one strongly agreed, this means that out of the total number of 61 answers, 35 members would not prefer to do this trip alone. The answers of fifth claim indicate that the majority agrees that they did get enough information of the trip. Four members strongly disagree, four somewhat disagreed, eight neither agreed nor disagreed, 22 somewhat agreed and 21 strongly agreed. A strong majority (43 members) agreed or somewhat agreed in this claim, meaning there was enough information provided about the trip. (Appendix 5).

The answers of the sixth claim indicate that most of the members don't really put a lot of thought on being more present on social media pages. The next biggest group of answers was that members would like the trip to be a bit more presented in the social media sites. One member strongly disagreed, four somewhat disagreed, 28 neither agreed nor disagreed, 18 somewhat agreed and nine strongly agreed. 41 answers out of the total number of answers (61) were either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed, meaning that most of the members found it important to do all of the activities listed on the itinerary. One member strongly disagreed on this, two somewhat disagreed, 17 did not agree or disagree, 20 somewhat agreed and 21 strongly agreed. This indicates that majority finds it really important and only a few of the respondents did not put any importance in it. According to the answers of the eight claim the majority agrees that the trip was worth the money. Two members strongly disagreed, seven somewhat disagreed, eight did not agree or disagree, 22 somewhat agreed and 21 strongly agreed. 53 out of 61 one members either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that the tour leaders were concerned about their satisfaction

and took their individual needs into consideration. One member strongly disagreed, two members somewhat disagreed, five did not agree nor disagree, 23 somewhat agreed and 30 strongly agreed. This indicates that the tour leaders did their best to ensure that all members were satisfied, and no one was left alone during the trip. The answers to the last claim indicate that a strong majority of members agreed that the tour was a great experience. No-one strongly disagreed, two somewhat disagreed, one did not agree nor disagree, 24 somewhat agreed and 34 strongly agreed. This means that the members found the overall trip to be a really great experience. (Appendix 5).

6.2 Cultural preferences results

This chapter focuses on the cultural preferences of each target country. The question 5 was focused on the cultural preferences and had several claims that were directly linked with the cultures. These claims were:

- "I find it important that I got to do all the activities listed on the itinerary" – German
- "The timetable was too busy" - German
- "The trip was worth the money" – German & British
- "I would have preferred to do this trip on my own" – British

Originally there were three target countries that were supposed to be studied. During the time period the answers were collected, there were only two members from USA and only one of them answered the survey. For this reason, USA will not be included into this part of the research as there was only one result and it cannot be considered as a relevant one for the study. To have relevant information and to be able to actually study preferences based on survey results, it would require more answers to get more accurate results. Within a longer timeframe this could have been different if there would have been more results from this country. For future this could be something to change also for the company, as there are not that many members coming from USA it might not be the most relevant target group to focus on unlike Germans and British people who were quite a large group and more relevant to study.

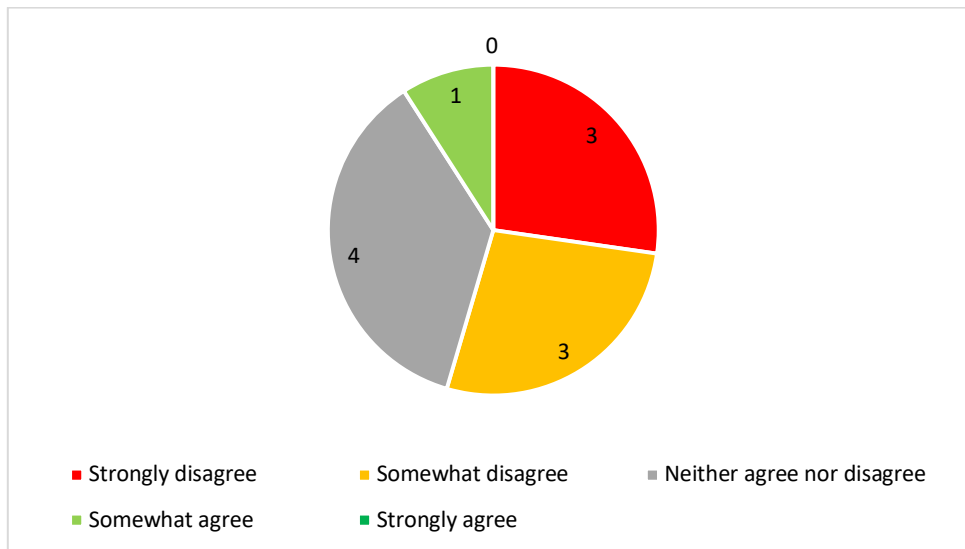


Figure 13. British members answers to claim “I would have preferred to do this trip on my own” (n=11)

British travellers tend to book their holidays as a package, so they do not have to worry about planning or traveling too much as everything will be ready for them. This can also be seen in the British participants of the “Tour X” (Figure 13). None of the members would have preferred to do the trip on their own, only one somewhat agreed that s/he would have like to do it on his/her own. Four didn’t have an opinion to it, but majority of six members out of total 11 would not have preferred to do the trip on their own.

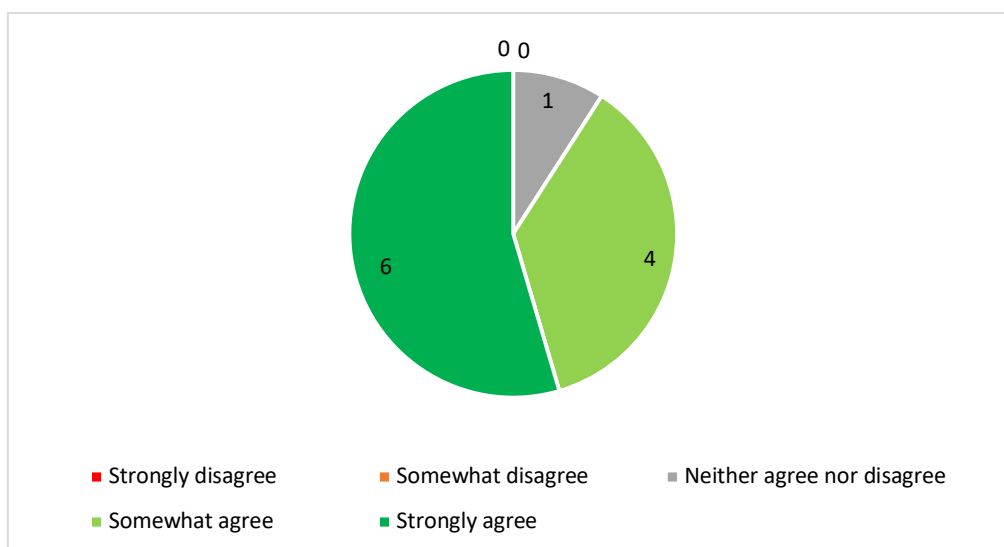


Figure 14. British members answers to claim “The trip was worth the money” (n=11)

British people like to book everything as a package, money has also value to them. Out of total 11 members 10 either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the trip was worth the money (Figure 14). Only one member did not give an opinion to this. Research results clearly show that the British members think that the tour was worth the money.

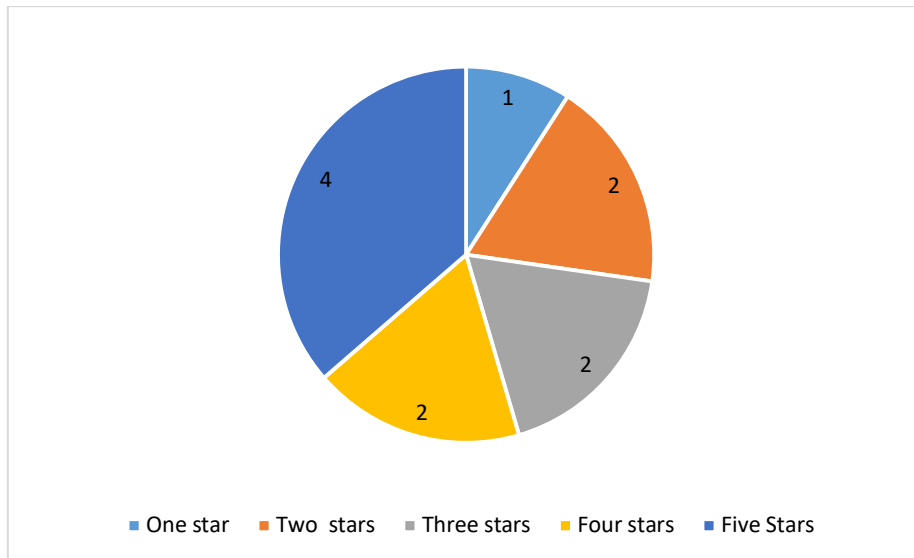


Figure 15. British members rating for the accommodation (n=11)

Accommodation in general got quite a lot of feedback. Over all, British people do not care too much about tangibles, like environment. This can be seen in the scores British members gave the accommodation (Figure 15). The majority (4) gave the hostel five stars, two members gave the hostel four stars, two members gave three stars, two members gave two stars and only one gave one star. The average result British people gave accommodation was 3.55, which is higher than the overall average.

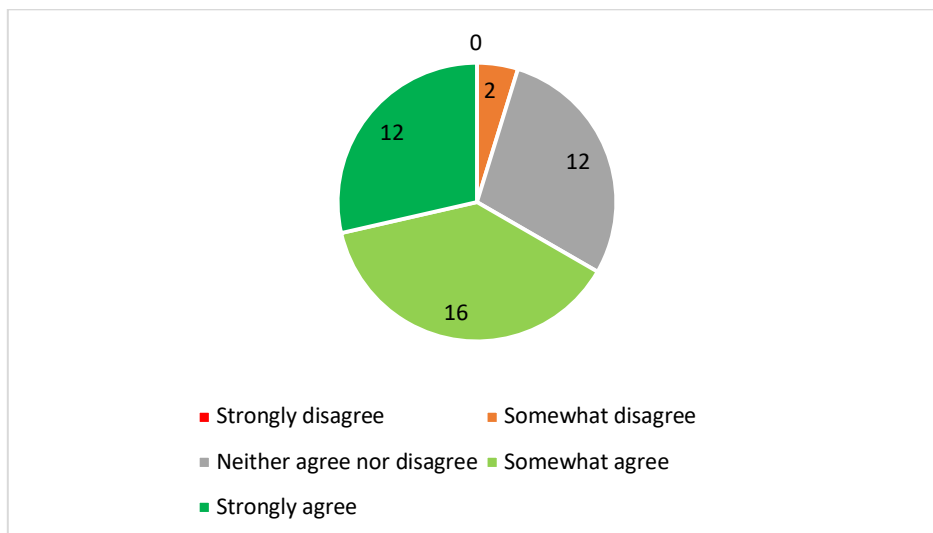


Figure 16. German members answers to claim "I find it important that I got to do all the activities listed in the itinerary" (n= 42)

Germans tend to take their travels seriously and really look into the itinerary of their trip. They want to do all the promised activities no matter what and are really concerned about

it. Out of the total number of 42 German members, 28 do agree that for them it is highly important to do all the activities listen in the itinerary (Figure 16). 12 members did not have an opinion about this and only two members somewhat disagreed.

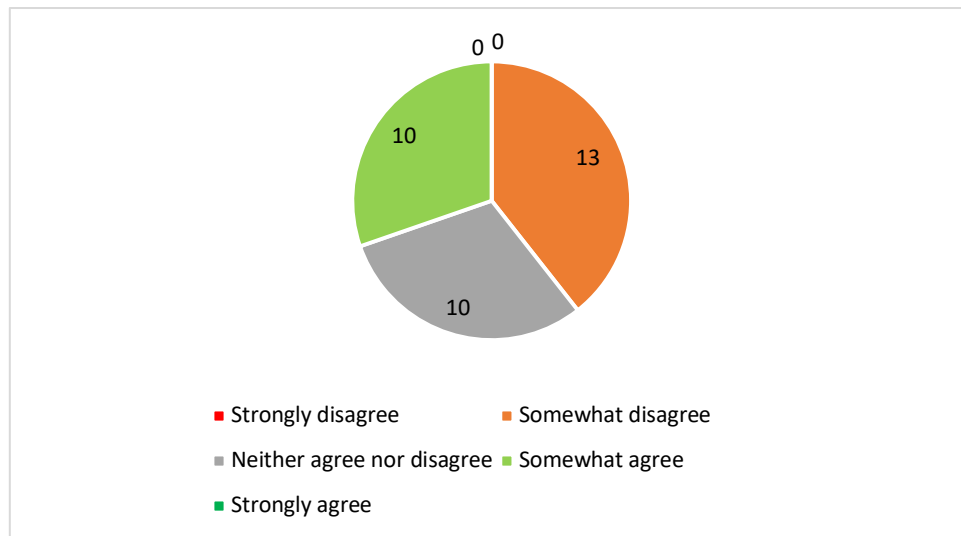


Figure 17. German members answers to claim "Timetable was too busy" (n= 42)

Germans value time a lot. German members who attended the tour were almost divided in half about the concept of time (Figure 17). 13 members out of total 41 found the time table not to be too busy, 10 members did not have an opinion about it and 10 members did find it too busy. To get more accurate answers the question could have been rephrased so the question would have been more accurate to answer this specific theoretical claim.

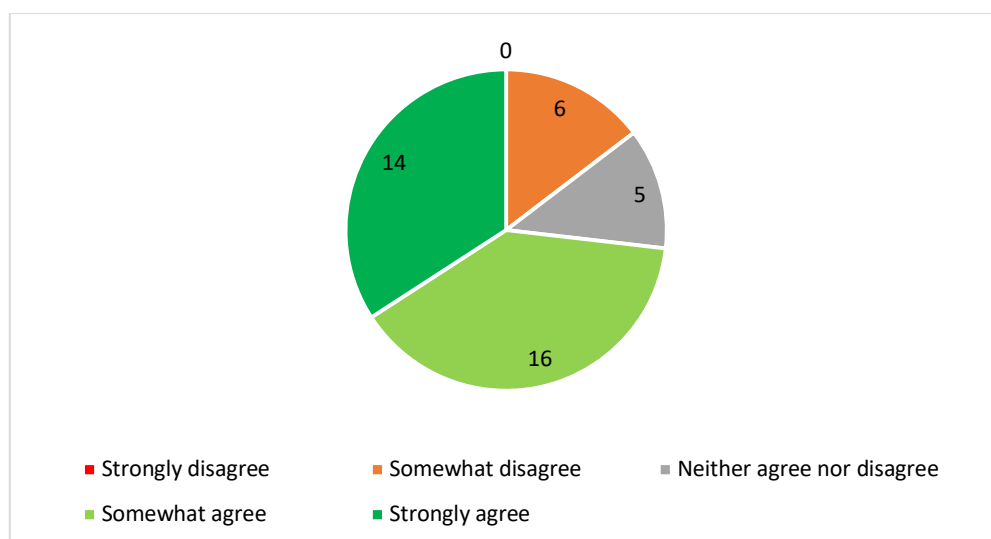


Figure 18. German members answers to claim "The trip was worth the money" (n=41)

Germans are concerned not only about time and itinerary of the trip but also how they spend their money. From the answers it can be seen that most of the German members

did find the trip to be worth their money (Figure 18). 30 members out of total 41 agreed or somewhat agreed that the trip was worth the money. No-one completely disagreed and only 6 members somewhat disagreed.

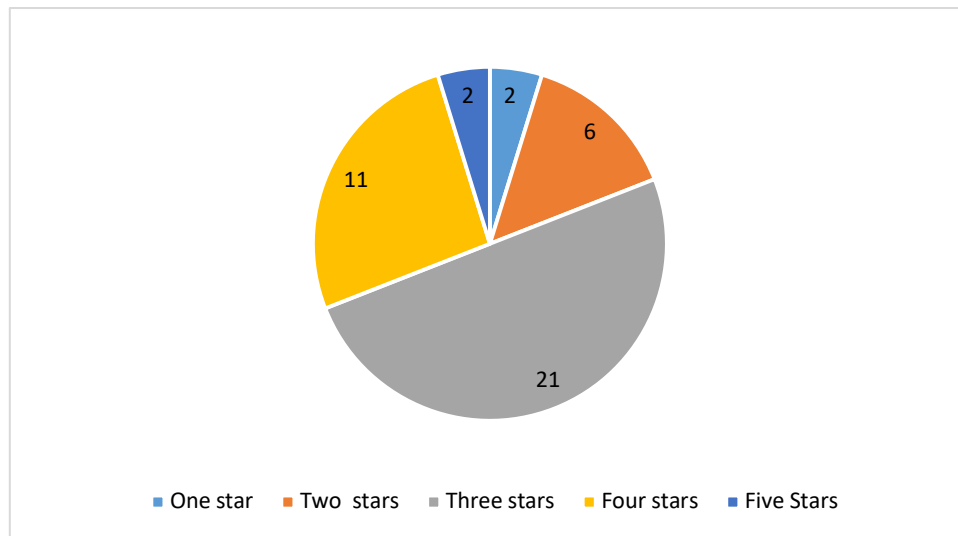


Figure 19. Accommodation rating by German members (n=42)

Germans are said to put a lot of importance to tangibles. It can be seen in the results of the accommodation rating (Figure 19). Only two members gave the accommodation 5 stars, 11 gave it four stars and half of the members (21) gave the accommodation 3 stars, six members gave it 2 stars and two members gave it 1 star. The average of German members answers was 3.12, which is even less than the overall average.

6.3 Open feedback results

The last three questions of the survey were open questions. The members had a chance to tell what the best part of the tour was, what should be improved and leave open feedback of the overall tour. All of the answers were reflected to the earlier questions in both good and improvement. What members commented to be the best was also graded high in the earlier questions. Open feedback and improvement suggestions repeated the same topic such as accommodation and food.



Figure 20. Best parts of the tour (n=59)

Figure 20 sums up the best parts of the “Tour X”. As seen on the Figure 13 the Waitangi treaty grounds / Maori experience and Haruru fall hike were the most popular amongst the members. The second-best part was the group atmosphere, people and the experience itself. Also, swimming, being on the beach and tour leaders were mentioned multiple times in this question. Overall 59 members answered this question out of the total 61.



Figure 21. Improvement suggestions (n=43)

Figure 21 sums up the improvement suggestions. The most criticized part of the trip was the accommodation. The hostel got a lot of feedback about cleanliness and overall environment. Other things the members would have liked to do differently were, more information about the trip, more food / multiple options, more free-time and not so early mornings, and more experienced tour guides. 43 members out of total number of participants gave improvement suggestions.

The last part of the survey was open feedback. Members had a chance to openly give their comments about the whole trip. The answers repeated the same topics as in the two earlier questions. Both highlights and improvement suggestions of the tour were mentioned. This question got 32 answers out of 61. The most common topics that were repeated over the answers were the great atmosphere and overall experience, accommodation should be cleaner or changed and the time management in both positive and negative points of view. Even though members had a chance to write any kind of feedback they chose to make an extra point about the positive points and improvements which shows quite clearly the exact points that were successful on the trip and also the improvement points. Other feedback also came up for example about the language spoken during the trip and also suggestions what else/extra activities to do during the trip.

Captions below represent the main topics of open feedback:

- *“Great people and Leaders, good program with a variety of interesting activities”*
- *“Was a little annoying almost everyone in the group spoke mostly German”*
- *“Maybe a game night or something like that (instead of the burger dinner)”*
- *“The hostel was quite unclean”*
- *“Change hostel in Paihia”*
- *“There was no rush at all, the leaders were perfect, nice and open for everything”*
- *“A little bit more free-time but it was so amazing, thank you! I would do it again”*

6.4 Cape Reinga question results

The overall results of the Cape Reinga tour are really good. It is one of the highlights of the week and Company A members are really satisfied with it. Most of the answers were gathered through interviews and only few through the website link.

Table 5. Number of interviews made (n=58)

Total number to be interviewed	58
Total interviews made	44
Phone	17
Face-to face	27

Table 5 shows the total number of interviews that were held regarding the Cape Reinga questions and how the total number of interviews were divided between each method. In total the Cape Reinga questions got 44 answers out of total 58 members that could have been interviewed. The total amount of members to be interviewed did not include the number of answers got through the website link. Out of these 44 interviews 17 were done

over the phone and 27 face-to-face. There are 14 interviews missing because the members could not be reached either by phone and/or they did not come by the office after the tour.

Table 6. Cape Reinga tour answers (n=47)

Interview answers	44
Website answers	3
Total	47

In Total Cape Reinga questions got 47 answers from which 44 were interviews and three were through the website link (table 6). Out of the total number of participants (70) only 47 members answered the questions about the Cape Reinga tour. The reason behind such a low number of results is because either members couldn't be reached for interviews after the tour or the members who received the website link, did not fill out it at all.

Table 7. Cape Reinga results

Rate 1-5	Number of answers / rating
1	0
2	1
3	2
4	15
5	29
Total	47
Average:	4,49

As seen on table 7, the Cape Reinga tour was rated to be the best of all activities. 44 members out of the total 47 gave the tour four or five stars. Only three people gave the tour bad ratings. The reason behind this rating was that the tour was too touristic, too much spending time in the bus and that there was not enough time on each stop that the bus did. The tour is a whole day long bus tour that takes the members to few different stops. As the distances are quite big the bus tour is long and most of the time is spent in the bus and not doing activities or visiting sights. In average the Cape Reinga tour got 4.49 out of 5, which shows that the majority of the respondents were really happy about the tour. From all of the interviews (appendix 6) captions below sum up the overall answers:

- *Person J: "5, Best Part of the whole trip"*
- *Person T: "4, Really Nice, Awesome Driver"*
- *Person C2: "5, Amazing. Highlight of the week!"*
- *Person N2: "2, Too touristic and not enough time during the stops"*
- *Person O2: "3, Beautiful destinations, but too much going by bus"*

7 Discussion

Overall the results of the customer satisfaction survey were really positive and there was nothing too drastic in them. Most of the members would recommend the trip to their friends and the average star rating of the overall tour was 4, which makes it a good result. The most successful parts were definitely the Cape Reinga tour and the Waitangi treaty grounds. What comes to improvements, accommodation was the most frequently mentioned aspect following the burger dinner on Wednesday evening and meeting the overall expectations of the members.

In the results there were three surveys that had an overall really low grading for the whole tour, this can be seen in the grading of the results. These results were not considered to be relevant for the analysing part of this study as they were already discussed thoroughly with the management of Company A during the research process to be able to fix the situation as soon as possible. For this reason, the results or improvement suggestions do not focus on these low grades but instead on the averages. These low grades do affect the overall results but will not be considered to be relevant to analyse separately as the issue was already taken into consideration right after the feedback was received.

All the average results of activities and overall tour (table 4) were between 3.2 and 4.5. In general, any grade more than 4 is considered to be good and anything less than 4 needs to be improved. A good way to start increasing the customer satisfaction is to start from the factors that got less than a 4 as an average grade. Fixing these factors first instead of trying to increase already satisfying results, is easier and it will help to increase the overall experience. The three factors that did not reach grade 4 were, meeting the expectations (3.9), burger dinner at Thirty30 (3.5) and accommodation (3.2). These three factors are being discussed in the following chapter “7.2 Improvement suggestions” using the figure 10 “Gaps between service quality determinants and customer satisfaction” to analyse the cause of the dissatisfaction. When every aspect of the tour is satisfying to the members the general satisfaction is going to increase automatically.

In the answers of the question five (appendix 5) it can be seen that the members were in general really satisfied with the tour leaders performance, they got enough information about the trip, they thought the trip was a great experience and worth the money, and there were enough activities. Out of all 61 members only 11 would have preferred to do the tour alone, which indicates that the members were happy they attended the tour. The claim about being more presented in social media pages did not get that clear answers as almost half of the members did not have an opinion about it. Even though the target group

was millennials it does not seem that they demand everything to be online, at least not this tour. What really divided opinions and should be taken into consideration is the time management. There were quite a few members who would have preferred more free-time and thought that the timetable was a bit too busy. On the other hand, the majority was still happy about how the time management was handled, and they did not find the timetable too busy or that there was not enough free-time. On a tour like this when there are certain schedules the leaders need to follow, it is really hard to actually meet everyone's expectations of time. It is only normal that different people find time management differently. What could be done to ensure that the timetables are not too busy is to make sure everything is well planned in advance and there is enough flexibility to give a bit more free-time or bit more time to spend in one place instead of just running from place to place. The overall timetable of the trip is not too busy and there is enough time reserved to each activity. What else could be done is to discuss with the members how much time they want to spend in each place, of course within certain limits, but to give them a bit more freedom to choose and by this be able give them a bit more flexibility and a freedom of not too rushed schedule.

Improvement suggestion from the members and open feedback tend to repeat the same topics. For example, the accommodation issue was raised multiple times again in these open questions. This shows how important it is to take it into considerations. As discussed before there has been already some changes and improvements to it. Also, the issue of languages was raised in the answers. The majority of each group was Germans, and they tend to speak only German to each other even though there were non-German speaker around. This issue has been discussed several times with the management of Company A. The official language in the office and during the tour is English to ensure no-one feels that they are left behind. In the office and especially during the tours the members are reminded multiple times that they should only speak English as it is quite rude not to when there are people around who do not understand the language the others speak. To ensure this wouldn't happen too much the tour leaders should remind the group that English should be the only language spoken during the tour.

The positive feedback was also repeated in the open questions. It is a good indicator that the members are enjoying themselves and that they are overall satisfied even though there are still few issues that should be improved. The best part of the tour was the Waitangi treaty grounds and Haruru Fall hike which were mentioned multiple times in the open questions and they graded really high as well, Waitangi tour got in average 4.5 and Haruru Fall hike got 4.4. Other positive feedback that repeated itself in open questions

was the tour leaders performance. This also shows that there is no Gaps/error in the performance of the operator. In figure 10 the third Gap is about the performance and there has not been any problems with it as the members are really satisfied with the tour leaders. This is a great indicator to the company that the employees are really committed to their job and aim to provide excellent service and high customer satisfaction.

Cape Reinga was definitely one of the highlights of the tour. It got really good grades in total and the feedback members gave about the tour during the interviews (appendix 6) was really positive and most of the members described it as the best part. The tour also got few bad ratings, but because it was only three members who gave the tour less than 4, it does not represent the majority and shouldn't be considered to be too relevant information. The Cape Reinga tour is operated by a third-party company, which means that Company A cannot make any major changes to the tour itself. If there was more "negative" feedback then Company A should start considering changing the tour into something else, but as almost all members were very satisfied with the tour it is not necessary to try to improve the negative feedback. The negative feedback was mostly about sitting in the bus for the whole day and that the sights are too touristic. Because the nature of the tour is to travel for the day in a bus and visit the main sights, it cannot be changed into being something else.

7.1 Comparison to the theoretical framework

Chapter 6.2. results indicate a clear connection between the claims based on theoretical framework of cultural preferences and also service quality. As accommodation got quite a lot of feedback it was chosen to be the indicator to measure the importance of tangibles and by this service quality. Claims about cultures were:

- "I find it important that I got to do all the activities listed on the itinerary" – German
- "The timetable was too busy" - German
- "The trip was worth the money" – German & British
- "I would have preferred to do this trip on my own" – British

From the results (figure 13) it can be seen that British people exactly prefer to have everything booked and arranged beforehand. For Company A it is a great thing, as they could start marketing more to the British markets and by this have more British members attend the tour. What comes to value for money research results clearly show that the British members think that the tour was worth the money (figure 14) hence it would be a wise decision to target the British markets more. The fact that British people do want to do the tour and also think it is worth the money is a great sign for the company and a good base to target this group of customers more. What comes to tangibles, in this case accommo-

dation British people are not too concerned about the accommodation (figure 15). The average result British people gave accommodation was 3.55, which is higher than the overall average. This confirms that British people are not too concerned about the tangibles but do still care about them and appreciate good clean environment.

Germans put a great value to be able to do everything listed in their travel itineraries. Figure 16 This shows that the cultural theory behind this claim is true and German travellers do care about their travel itinerary and find it important to be able to do all the activities listed in the itinerary. Germans put a lot of pressure to decision making and they do not want to waste money. Germans find time valuable and they do not want to waste it. As the results of claims considering time were quite divided it may indicate that the concept of time and the value of it is quite personal and different people prefer different phases (figure 17). Based on these answers it cannot be said if the German members value time as much as claimed in the theoretical framework of this thesis. The results show that Germans do care about how they spend their money and this tour was worth it (figure 18). It is the same as with British members that these results show that the tour could be marketed more as it will meet the preferences of these two groups. What comes to service quality and especially tangibles, the results show that Germans do put quite a lot of importance to the tangibles (figure 19). The average of German members answers was 3.12, which is even less than the overall average. This confirms it even more that Germans do care about tangibles and this should be taken into consideration when dealing with German customers, especially if the aim is to generate great service and have satisfied customers. From this it can be also seen how important it is to keep improving the accommodation rates as most of the members are Germans and they put value into it.

To conclude this chapter, the theoretical framework of these two cultures and service quality expectations was quite accurate. The results show clearly that the cultural preferences do apply also to these target groups and that they should be taken into consideration. British members were happy to do the tour as a group and they thought the trip was well worth the money. What comes to British people it can be seen from the results that they are not too concerned about tangibles. British members gave the accommodation 3,55 in average which is higher than the overall rating. What comes to German cultural preferences they do agree that it is important for them to get to do all the activities listed in the itinerary. What comes to the timetable, the results were quite divided. To get more accurate results the wording of the question could have been changed. Germans also put importance to their usage of money and the Company A members found the trip to be worth the money. Germans put quite a lot of pressure on tangibles and it can be seen

from the results. Germans graded the hostel in average 3.12, which is less than the overall average grade. Based on all of these answers it can be said that culture does play a key role with satisfaction and service quality expectations, even though it can be considered sometimes a bit stereotypical. To gain more competitive advantages and generate more customer satisfaction it is important to take these aspects into consideration and aim to provide services that match the cultural preferences of these countries.

7.2 Improvement suggestions

The three aspects that Company A should focus on to be able to increase customer satisfaction are meeting expectations, burger dinner at Thirty30 and accommodation. As stated, before all of these aspects got less than a four as a grade and therefore these aspects should be considered as improvement aspects. Even though each of the three aspects got less than a four as a grade, it does not mean the results were completely bad. None of the results got less than three as a grade which shows that there is room for improvements, but these aspects were not awful, and it is a good sign for the company. Even if there are aspects to improve these aspects can be improved rather easily and there is not such a huge gap to fix to be able to increase satisfaction.

Meeting the expectations got in average 3.9 which makes it the closest one to grade 4, out of all the questions that got less than 4 as a grade. This means there is still a bit to be improved. In figure 10 this would be Gap 1, meaning the error between the expectations. The error behind this is most likely false expectation from the members, misleading advertisement, the expectation could not be met by the company or the overall experience just did not meet the expectations. To fix this error and meet the expectations better, there are a few possibilities. New members, who attend the "Tour X" should be told truthfully and transparently what the tour consists of and what they should expect of it. By this the company can minimize the error of misleading advertising and also it could help the members to reform their expectations to be more realistic. To be able to meet the expectations the tour leaders should always perform to their best and provide the members an unforgettable experience. This could be done by simply adding a little extra to the days like cooking together when a dinner is not included or spending the free-time together with the members. If the overall experience did not meet the members expectations it could be fixed by focusing on the interests of the target group. To be able to meet the customers' expectations about the trip the company should provide consistent good service that follows the itinerary of the trip and provide customers transparent and truthful information.

The error about Thirty30 could be either Gap 1 or Gap 2 in the figure 10. Either there was an error with the expectation or the with concrete satisfaction. On Wednesday evening the whole group is having dinner together at a local Craft Beer Bar, Thirty30. The dinner is really basic burger with fries. As the burger is nothing too fancy and really basic, it can be a bit of a disappointment to the members. During the previous evening the members also have a barbeque which consists of a burger. Members might have expected to have a bigger or fancier burger or they were simply fed up with burgers because of the previous night or the burger was simply not tasty. One possible way to meet the customers' needs would be changing the dinner place or give the customers' different option from which to choose. This is not the easiest change to make as the package price and revenue should be taken into consideration if the alternative option is more expensive than existing one. Giving members the option to choose themselves gives them variety and also it is a great way to meet their needs and expectations directly. The down side to this is that the group might not have mutual preferences and by this it is very likely that not everyone is happy with the final decision. For this reason, it is better to leave the decision making to the management and have everything sorted out beforehand. Another way to improve the rating and satisfaction of the dinner the company could be in contact with Thirty30 and try to negotiate different options for the dinner for the same price or a bit more savoury burger instead of the really basic one. What else Company A could do is yet again tell the customer in advance what to expect, but this kind of topic they should present it in a positive manner, so the customers don't start making negative assumptions.

Accommodation in Paihia has been the most criticized aspect of the whole tour. In the surveys the accommodation has been mentioned multiple times, first in question 4 and then again in improvements and open feedback. The Hostel is a regular hostel with great location and environment for backpackers to stay. This error is Gap 1, gap between expectations. There are multiple reasons for bad ratings for this Hostel from the members. What might be the biggest factor behind the customers feedback is that before their trip to Paihia they are staying in a Hostel that is known for its high standard and quality. Changing from a high-quality hostel to a basic one might make the basic hostel seem worse than it is. As there has been also problems with the actual quality of the Hostel for example, cleanliness and broken showers and toilets, these matters have been discussed with the hostel management during the process of gathering results. After the first few results the Hostel was contacted and informed that Company A members are not happy with the quality and they find the hostel very dirty. To fix this the hostel bought new sheets and said to take extra care and notion with the cleaning during the following times. There wasn't a change in the results straight away, so the Hostel was notified again for the poor quality. During the last tour the members were considerably happier with the hostel and

gave it a lot better results than the previous groups did. From this it can be seen that the hostel is taking actions to fix the situation and that there have been some improvements. To ensure good results and more satisfied members it is important for the company to keep following up the situation and trying to find an agreement with the hostel about the quality they should be able to provide. If the quality does not change and the feedback continues to be negative then the hostel should be changed to an alternative one, which can provide better quality for the members.

7.3 Evaluation of own work

Overall execution of this study was good. Everything was done properly and according to the commissioning company's wishes. The biggest challenges were the time management and the limited number of tours. In overall thesis process it would have been better to leave the last tour out of the study and by this have more time for the analysis of the results. Because of the limited number of tours, the data collection process was very limited and there were no other possibilities to collect more data and make the study more relevant. Overall the results gave a good overview of the customer satisfaction. Results about cultural preferences were not as accurate as the overall results, because there were not enough answers from each target countries especially Britain and America. The limited number of members from each country also affected the study, which is why the whole part of American culture was left out. To make the results more accurate there should have been more responses to the survey, this could be possible if the survey was done over a longer time period. Evaluation was made strictly based on the number of members attending the tour. Even though the research was limited into only seven tours this study provides useful information to the company, which indicates that the study was successful.

During this thesis process the writer learned a great deal about time management, literature research, cultures and satisfaction surveys. The beginning and end of this process was quite rushed. The fact that the thesis was done as a commission to a company the writer of this thesis worked full time is one reason why the schedule was quite busy in the beginning and in the end. What else could have been done differently was to leave the last tour out of the survey and by this have more time for the last part. Even though the process was time to time quite busy it turned out to be a great learning experience and provided the writer a lot of great experience about this scale studies. The topic of this thesis was really interesting which made it a great project to work on. All in all, the process could have been planned out a bit more carefully, regardless this thesis was a great learning experience and it provides useful information to the commissioning company.

8 Conclusion

Even though culture can be considered to be stereotypical, this study indicates that to these target groups it was accurate. Germans are claimed to be quiet and patient people who plan ahead and are concerned about time. Their culture is very pragmatic, they put a lot of importance to rules and details, they care about their close families and they tend to be more restraint. British people on the other hand are quite optimistic people who are happy to wake up the next day not knowing what the day will bring. Brits are not too concerned about time and they tend to be quiet and respectful towards other people's schedules. Americans tend to have a "get-on with it" mentality and they do not care about their past too much. Americans tend to be quite optimistic people and they are willing to try something new. Americans do not rely on authorities and they are very practical people. As time is very valuable for Americans' they tend to make quick decisions.

All of the three cultures are quite different from each other, but they all appreciate service quality a lot. Americans are really concerned about the service quality and expect to have high quality always. British are intermediate in this as they do care about service quality but do not expect too much from it. Germans on the other hand are willing to forgive occasional poor service quality. Germans put a lot of pressure on tangibles and they take time to make decisions. British people and Americans on the other hand do not care for tangibles that much and they make decisions rather quickly. What comes to cultural preferences in a tourism environment British people prefer to book their travels as a package, they find it important to get their money's worth and they do not put too much pressure on tangible. Germans on the other hand find it important to get to do all the activities listed in the itinerary and they value time a lot. American culture was left out of the end results because there were not enough results and it would not be relevant for the study. For future notice this could be something that Company A takes into consideration when focusing on target groups. Focusing on a different target group instead of Americans could be more relevant for the company itself and by this the company could provide even more specific and expectation exceeding services to the members.

Overall Company A members were satisfied with the "Tour X" and almost all of the participating members would recommend it to a friend. Other indicator of a successful tour is the overall star rating that was four out of five stars. The best parts of the tour were Waitangi treaty grounds, Maori culture show and Cape Reinga tour. Tour leaders performance and group atmosphere got also positive feedback from the members.

Areas to improve that got repetitive feedback were accommodation, burger dinner at Thirty30 and meeting the expectations. Accommodation got a lot of feedback about its cleanliness and overall environment. Accommodation issue has already been taken into consideration during the research process and it should be followed up during the upcoming tours to ensure that the quality stays good and members are satisfied. If the Hostel is not able to provide good satisfactory quality, then Company A should consider changing it into another Hostel. Dinner at Thirty30 could be changed into another restaurant or both parties could discuss how to improve the dinner. For example, multiple options or more savoury burger. Meeting the members expectations needs only a little bit of improvement. Tour leaders should provide transparent and truthful information about the tour to ensure no false expectations are formed. To be able to meet the expectations of the members, Company A should try to meet the target groups' needs – which in this case means provide good quality services and keep in mind the cultural preferences of the target groups. Meeting expectation is a sum of all the aspects of the tour. If everything on the tour would be satisfactory for the members also the expectations would be met or even exceeded. For this reason, good way to get started is to follow up on the accommodation and improve the dinner at Thirty30.

Possible improvements can be analysed through figure 10 “Gaps between service quality determinants and customer satisfaction”. It provides a lot of valuable information where did the errors happen and how to improve them. All of the improvement aspects could be categorized in the one or more gaps, which indicates the usefulness of the figure. Figure 10 could be used more thoroughly in the future if these issues keep repeating themselves to be able to spot the exact point behind the issue. For future use, it is important to keep the information in this figure up to date as it can be used to spot possible errors also in the future. By using this figure as a tool in the future Company A can spot possible errors easily and improve them. Through the improvements the company is able to improve their own processes and by this the customer satisfaction.

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Appendixes

Appendix, 1. Table 1, Culture's effect on service quality expectations by countries

	HIGH / LOW POWER DISTANCE	INDIVIDUALISTIC / COLLECTIVE CULTURE	LONG / SHORT TERM ORIENTATION	HIGH / LOW UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE
GERMANY	Low power distance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High expectations of overall service - Responsiveness from the employees - High expectation of reliability 	Individualistic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High service quality expectations - High expectations for empathy from the provider - High expectations for assurance - Pursue own interest 	Long-Term oriented <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low expectations for quality - Less importance on responsiveness - Do not expect perfect service every time 	High uncertainty avoidance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High expectation for customer service - Place importance on tangibles - Careful decision making
BRITAIN	Low power distance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High expectations of overall service - Responsiveness from the employees - High expectation of reliability 	Individualistic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High service quality expectations - High expectations for empathy from the provider - High expectations for assurance - Pursue own interest 	Intermediate / Both	Low Uncertainty Avoidance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make decisions quicker - Do not put importance on tangibles
USA	Low power distance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High expectations of overall service - Responsiveness from the employees - High expectation of reliability 	Individualistic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High service quality expectations - High expectations for empathy from the provider - High expectations for assurance - Pursue own interest 	Short term oriented <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High expectations for quality - Importance on responsiveness - Appreciate high quality a lot 	Low Uncertainty Avoidance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make decisions quicker - Do not put importance on tangibles

Appendix, 2. Package Itinerary

ITINERARY

Sunday

Arrival at the airport and transfer to the hostel
Free and relaxing Day for early arrivals
Accommodation included

Monday

Light breakfast included

Morning: Welcome and Travel Orientation at Company A office and assistance to lodge your application to request an IRD number

Afternoon: Job Presentation

Night: get to know the group sharing some pizza and a drink

Accommodation included

Tuesday

Light breakfast included

Morning: appointments with the bank to open a bank account

Afternoon: Auckland City Tour: Explore Auckland City, Viaduct, check out Harbour Bridge, Mt Eden (volcano) and the Domain

Night: let's explore Auckland's night. We're going to have a BBQ and a drink in one of the most awesome rooftop bars in Auckland.

Accommodation included

Wednesday

Morning: Our bus departs at 07.30am from 172 Quay Street (across the ferry building) to Paihia – Bay of Islands. Gather at 06:55 in front of the YHA International.

You will arrive around 12 pm in Paihia. You will get the time to relax for a bit.

Afternoon: Take the ferry to explore the very first capital of New Zealand, Russell.

Evening: Later, go with the entire group in a local pub for a burger (included). Live music starts playing at about 8.00pm, make sure you stick around!

Accommodation included

Thursday

Light breakfast included

Maori cultural day

Morning: Walk to Aotearoa's most significant historic site, Waitangi, and enjoy the panoramic views of the beautiful Bay of Islands while following your Maori guide:

- See the biggest existing Waka (Maori canoe)
- Learn about the first exchange between Maoris and Pakehas (Europeans)
- Discover the story of the very first flag of New Zealand

After the guided tour, enter the marae for an unforgettable Maori cultural show host in the traditional *Marae*:

- Maori welcome outside the meeting house
- *Waiata* (singing)
- *Poi*, stick games, Maori weaponry
- *Haka* performance

After the show you will have the opportunity to interact with the performers, ask questions and have your photo taken with the group.

Afternoon: Take a hike to the Haruru falls, 6km hike.

Evening: Have a break at the beach on the way back to the hostel or jump in the hot tub.

Accommodation included

Friday

Light breakfast included

Cape Reinga day tour

Our bus departs at 7.00am to Cape Reinga, the northernmost point of New Zealand.

Highlights of the trip:

- 90 miles beach
- Sandboarding (weather dependant)
- Maori tales
- See the Tasman sea meeting the Pacific Ocean at Cape Reinga

On the way back, stop by Mangonui to try the famous Kiwi "Fush 'N' Chups" (own cost)

Evening: Jump in the hot tub, play some board games or watch a movie to relax. And if you want to party, head to one of the surrounding bars/clubs with the group.

Accommodation included

Saturday

Light breakfast included

Morning: Have a lazy morning and enjoy your last moments in Paihia.

Afternoon: Your bus departs at 12.15pm and arrives in Auckland around 4.30pm.

Appendix, 3. Email invitation to answer the Customer satisfaction Survey

Dear members,

I hope you are all doing well and enjoying your time here in New Zealand. If you have already left New Zealand I hope you are enjoying your time back home.

As a part of my bachelor thesis I am doing a Customer Satisfaction survey for our members who attended the T [REDACTED]. The aim of the survey is to find out your opinion about the trip and how to possibly improve it for the future. I would be really grateful if you would have time to fill out the survey and help us gather important information.

You can access the survey through this link: <https://www.webpolsurveys.com/S/84B7AF6498604EE1.par>

It will take approximately 5 minutes to fill out the survey. We ask members to fill out their names, just to find out the demographics (age, gender, nationality). All the results are presented anonymously in the final version of the thesis.

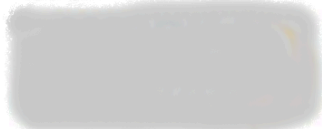
If you have any questions considering the survey please don't hesitate to contact me! ✨

Wish you all the best.

Best regards,

Elsa Torniainen Inbound Coordinator

[REDACTED]



SYDNEY | BRISBANE | MELBOURNE
AUCKLAND | VANCOUVER



Save paper, save the planet, think before you print this!



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Appendix, 4. "Tour X" Customer satisfaction survey

"Tour X" Customer Satisfaction Survey

Dear Company A Member,

This is a customer satisfaction survey for Company A members who attended the "Tour X". The aim of this survey is to find out your opinions about the trip and how to possibly improve the future trips. Based on the answers we try to improve our service and increase the customer satisfaction of this trip. This survey is part of Elsa's Bachelor thesis about Customer Satisfaction. At the end of the survey you have an option to leave open feedback for us.

Thank you for taking time to fill up this survey, we appreciate each and every answer!

1. Full Name:

2. On a Scale 1 to 5, how many stars would you give this trip?

1 being the lowest and 5 the highest

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. Would you recommend this trip to a friend?

☐ Yes

☐ No; Why not?

4. Rate the following questions on a scale 1-5

1 = Poor, 2 = Needs improvement, 3 = Neither good or bad, 4 = Good, 5 = Excellent

	1	2	3	4	5
How well did the trip meet your expectations?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How did you find the group atmosphere of the trip?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How did you find the trip to Russell?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How did you find the burger dinner together at Thirty30?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How did you find the Waitangi tour?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How did you find the Haruru Fall Hike?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How did you find the accommodation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How well did the tour leaders perform?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Answer the following claims:

	Strongly disagree	Some-what disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Some-what agree	Strongly agree
There was not enough free time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The timetable of the trip was too busy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There were enough activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find it important that I got to do all the activities listed in the itinerary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The trip was worth the money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would have preferred to do this trip on my own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I got enough information about the trip	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This trip should be presented more in Social Media pages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I found the tour leader(s) to be concerned about my satisfaction and they took my individual needs into consideration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This trip was a great experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. What was the best part about the trip?

7. According to your previous answers, was there something you would like us to do differently?

For example, bad review in one of the activities - what should we do differently?

8. Open feedback

Feel free to let us know any pros and cons of the trip or any other feedback you might have

THANK YOU FOR ANSWERING THIS SURVEY, YOU ARE AWESOME!

*** 9. A) How did you find the Cape Reinga tour on a scale 1 to 5?**

5 being the highest and 1 the lowest.

**** 9. B) Do you have any other open comments about this (Cape Reinga) tour?**

* Made by Face-to-Face or Phone Interview and listed on the online survey.

** Made by Face-to-Face or Phone Interview.

Appendix, 5. Results of the 5th question of the customer satisfaction survey

■ Strongly disagree

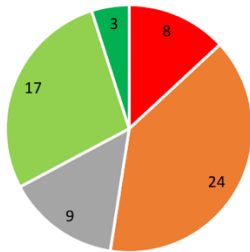
■ Somewhat disagree

■ Neither agree nor disagree

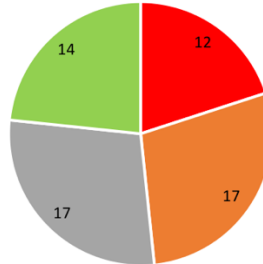
■ Somewhat agree

■ Strongly agree

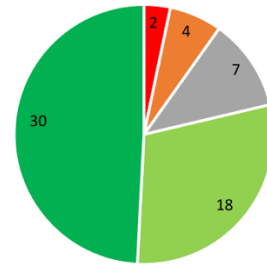
There was **not** enough free time, n=61



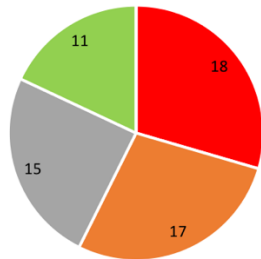
The timetable of the trip was too busy, n=60



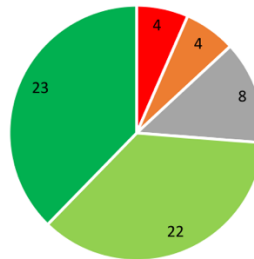
There were enough activities, n=61



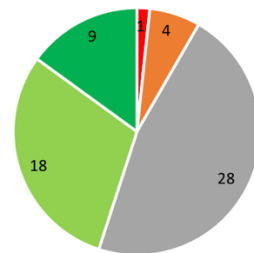
I would have preferred to do this trip on my own, n=61



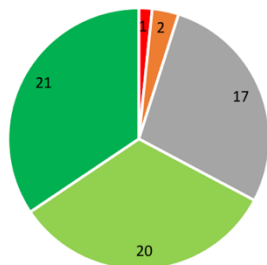
I got enough information about the trip, n=61



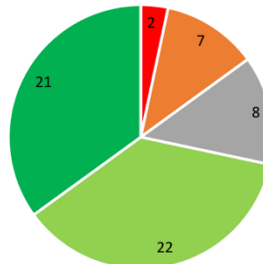
This trip should be presented more in Social Media pages, n=60



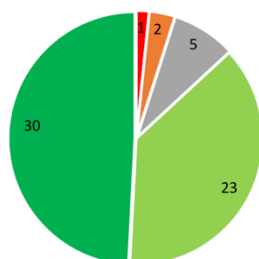
I find it important that I got to do all the activities listed in the itinerary, n=61



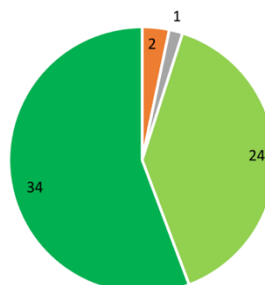
The trip was worth the money, n=60



I found the tour leader(s) to be concerned about my satisfaction and they took my individual needs into consideration, n=61



This trip was a great experience, n=61



Appendix, 6. “Tour X” customer satisfaction Interviews

Interview Questions:

- “How would you rate the Cape Reinga tour on a scale 1 to 5?” (5 is the highest)
- “Anything other to say / add?”

Interviews made: 3.-4.9.2018

Person A: “5”

Person B: “5, Nothing to Complain”

Person C: “5”

Person D: “5, Bus driver was Ace”

Person E: “5, Fish and Chips was not my thing”

Person F: “4 Fish and Chips was not good, and the bus driver drove weirdly”

Person G: “4, I really like Sandboarding and the view in Cape Reinga. Would have liked to stay longer in Cape Reinga”

Person H: “4”

Person I: “5 It was so cool and so amazing, nothing else to add”

Interviews made: 17.-18.9.2018

Person J: “5, Best Part of the whole trip”

Person K: “5, Fish and Chips not as good as in England. This was my favorite part of the trip”

Person L: “5, It was perfect. Best day in New Zealand so far!”

Person M: “5”

Person N: “5”

Person O: “5”

Person P: “5, Funny Bus driver and very nice informative also. Lots of things to do”

Person Q: “5, Most Awesome of all, really good!”

Person R: “4, All good, nice trip”

Person S: “4, Almost a 5 (rate)”

Interviews made: 8.-10.10.2018

Person T: “4, Really Nice, Awesome Driver”

Person U: “4, I liked Cape Reinga and 90 miles beach, but not the bus drive that much”

Person V: “4, Different Hostel; broken showers; bugs in the kitchen

Person W: “4”

Person X: “5, the best thing of the trip”

Person Y: “4, Really good”

Person Z: “4, Overall I liked it but didn’t like the bus drive”

Person A2: "3, because I have already done the tour to Cape Reinga before"

Person B2: "5, Bus driver was really funny and informative. WE had enough time to explore everything which was really nice"

Interviews made: 24.-25-10.2018

Person C2: "5, Amazing. Highlight of the week!"

Person D2: "5, Definitely the best part"

Person E2: "5, Amazing! The view (in Cape Reinga) was amazing!"

Person F2: "5, Nice. Sandboarding was fun"

Person G2: "5, Cape Reinga was the best!"

Person H2: "5, Cape Reinga was the best! Would even give it a higher rating"

Person I2: "5, It was Cool"

Person J2: "5, it was Brilliant"

Interviews made: 19.11.2018

Person K2: "5, Really good tour, really informative and friendly tour guide"

Person L2: "4, It was great but staying in the bus all day was bit too much"

Person M2: "5, I really liked it"

Person N2: "2, Too touristic and not enough time during the stops"

Person O2: "3, Beautiful destinations, but too much going by bus"

Person P2: "5, it was awesome"

Person Q2: "4, I enjoyed it but a very long day"

Person R2: "4, Good"