A research on guest satisfaction at Hotel St. George Helsinki

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Abstract

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In the dynamic and highly competitive hospitality industry, customer satisfaction plays as a vital role to the success of a company. Together with the customer reviews at the physical property, online feedbacks from Online Travel Agents (OTAs) and review sites have contributed to the reputation and the chance to be booked of a hotel.

This research study aimed to understand the guest satisfaction and its relationship between customer perspective and management perspective at Hotel St. George. Hotel St. George, opened on 2nd May 2018 in the heart of Helsinki, is a new generation of luxury hotel where art, design and wellbeing are blended into an authentic experience.

To support the thesis, a variety of literatures and theoretical framework were presented such as customer satisfaction and its measurements, hotel segmentation and competitive set, customer review methods and channels. In addition, some of the most primary theories about customer expectation and satisfaction such as Service Operation Management, Expectation Confirmation Theory and SERVQUAL instruments are examined. ReviewPro, a hotel online reputation management platform and its qualified customer satisfaction Global Review Index were also presented.

A mixed research method from both quantitative and qualitative was chosen to study customer satisfaction and management perspective at Hotel St. George. Data were collected by using ReviewPro, observation method and four in-depth interviews with Hotel St. George's Heads of Departments. 1140 reviews were collected for the time period from April 2019 to April 2020. Reviews were collected from six leading OTAs and review sites: Booking.com, TripAdvisor, Hotels.com, Google, Expedia and Facebook.

The results showed that customers were generally very satisfied with their experience at Hotel St. George. The Global Review Index of the hotel was very high at 92,5 out of 100 and was most of the time above the average of the competitive indexes. The location, cleanliness and service scores were also very highly graded with relatively 96, 95 and 92 while customer found the hotel more expensive than the value of money. The value score was only 82. Management perspective towards customer satisfaction was studied and at the end of the results, a situational analysis of the hotel customer satisfaction was demonstrated. Suggestions for development ideas were also discussed to help Hotel St. George improve its guest satisfaction.

The thesis project started in November 2019 and ended in the middle of May 2020.

Keywords
Customer satisfaction, Customer satisfaction measurement, Online travel review, Hotel segmentation, Hotel competitive benchmarking

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1   Introduction

There are many businesses in the hospitality industry nowadays. Helsinki accommodation sector is an emerging and growing market. More and more hotels have been opened during the current decades which increase the competition of the market. Due to the evolution of world-wide-web, the world of hospitality is more competitive and transparent than ever. As a result, hoteliers have paid lots of attention to improve their service quality and hence, sustain their properties' guest satisfaction. Hotels not only need to improve customer satisfaction from on-property feedbacks but also take online reviews more seriously as consumer behavior has changed dramatically in the past few decades thank to the internet. Today, consumer can purchase online most of the products or services and hotel bookings are not an exception.

Contribute to the whole experience event, there are several stages that consumers display such as searching for, comparing, staying, evaluating and disposing the product or service which they expect to satisfy or even outperform their needs (Schiffman, Kanuk et al. 2012, p. 11). Therefore, it is extremely important that hoteliers must recognize and satisfy their customer to get the profits and repurchasing in the future.

This thesis attempts to conduct an in-depth research to understand the customer satisfaction by using data collection methods, both quantitative and qualitative.

Commissioning company

Hotel St. George Helsinki is the chosen commissioning company for this research-oriented thesis. It is the tenth hotel of Kämp Collection Hotels as well as a new member of Marriott Design Hotels. Opened on 2nd of May 2018 at a prime location right opposite the Old Church Park, Hotel St. George Helsinki aims to challenge the world of hospitality by a new concept of luxury - total wellbeing. From August 14, 2019 Kämp Collection Hotels (KCH) was acquired by Nordic Choice Hospitality Group (NCH) and later on November 1, 2019 ten hotels of KCH officially participated to Nordic Choice Hotels portfolio. The commissioning company Hotel St. George Helsinki is now part of Nordic Hotels & Resorts, a collection of independent hotels and resorts belonging to Nordic Choice Hospitality Group.

At Hotel St. George, both business and leisure guests experience an authentic stay fulfilled with many moments of wellbeing and personal choices. In the context of the hotel, total wellbeing is blended into a harmony mixture of security, privacy, art, design and holistic experience.

After its first two years in operations, Hotel St. George has written its name on the Helsinki's hotels map with many achievements such as New hotel to check out in 2018 by The New York Times (Elaine Glusac 2018), The best new hotels in the world in 2019 by Travel + Leisure (Travel + Leisure 2019) and lately, Hotel St. George even strengthened its position by being awarded Hotel of the Year in Finnish Travel Gala 2019 (Kämp Collection Hotels 2019).

Directly contribute to those achievements, a strong and effective management regarding guest satisfaction plays a crucial factor. The journey continues, it is tremendous important to enhance customer retention, hence foster the competitiveness of the hotel in the market by improving guest satisfaction.

Purpose and Objective

The purpose of the thesis is to construct an in-depth understanding research on guest satisfaction, which acts as an example and suggestion for Hotel St. George in its journey to improve service quality. Both qualitative and quantitative methods provide data how St. George guest satisfaction indicators have been performing and the perspectives of management team toward the guest satisfaction issues. By understanding current situation and results analyses, the hotel management can act corresponding to each and every issue hence, having solution on time.

This thesis, including the survey data is a non-profit research which does not insist any investments for means, tools and software used during the progression of reaching final outcomes. However, the thesis used several free and paid online and offline tools to maximize the accuracy and effectiveness of its income data. This thesis aims to not only provide the commissioning company a suggestion of improving its guest satisfaction, but also to help the author understand deeper the field of service quality and guest satisfaction and has a chance to construct a real working-life research in this hotel industry.

The objective of the final outcome is to answer the research problem and questions which are defined in the next paragraph and hence propose to the commissioning company an in-depth analysis toward its guest experience indicators. The outcome result targets to help the commissioning company attract more customers and also increase amount of return guests, hence enhance the online review rates and competitiveness of the hotel

against its competitors. The success of meeting these objectives gives the hotel more attention of upcoming guests and then boosts the hotel occupancy, sales and revenue to achieve desired Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Research problem and questions

After two years in operations and getting attention from the industry, Hotel St. George has built its position in Helsinki hotel market and named itself among the top reviewed hotels through OTAs and review sites. However, as St. George is still newly opened, the hotel did not get enough reviews and not achieve the target position as planned (the target position is in top 3 best review hotels and the current situation is among top 10). Moreover, in Helsinki area, there are recently many new opening hotels which start to compete against Hotel St. George. Based on these situations, the research problem is formulated:

− What is the current situation of Hotel St. George's guest satisfaction on property and through online review platforms?

This research problem plays as the backbone of the whole study. In order to resolve this problem, three research questions are made in correlation with the commissioning company:

− How customers see and evaluate the hotel from their own perspective?
− What are the points of views from St. George's management regarding customer satisfaction issues?
− What are the advantages and disadvantages of the hotel versus its competitors?

Scope of the thesis

Service quality and its operations are relatively wide for conducting undergraduate theses. Thus, this thesis will be focused and emphasized on the guest satisfaction aspect which includes how the commissioning company is scored through online review channels as well as how willingness the guests would like to recommend the hotel to their friends and families. The final outcome will include suggestions for Hotel St. George to shortly act against negative feedbacks and improve its customer satisfaction through all the departments.

Secondly, this thesis does not conclude an in-depth guidance how to master tools and software which are used when constructing the thesis. Outcome data are used as researched sources in order to analyze background information to reach the desired and trusted insights.

Furthermore, one customer segmentation is chosen and used as targeted customer group of the commissioning company. This thesis does not cover all customer segmentation

while conducted. The reason for this is to narrow the topic and enhance the focus to one determinant group of guests that affect the commissioning company tremendously. As Hotel St. George is an upscale accommodation operator, the emphasis of the thesis and the commissioning company's competitors focus on upscale to luxury segment of tourism industry.

Key concepts

The following definitions below describe briefly the key concepts that are used throughout the thesis. These terms will be defined more specifically in the theoretical frameworks.

– Customer satisfaction: a measure of how happy and satisfied a customer is when he or she do business with a company (Cambridge Dictionary 2020).
– Hotel segmentation: the customer type (transient, group, contract, etc.) by which rooms sold and revenue are broken down (STR 2020b).
– Hotel benchmarking: a process of analyzing a hotel performance compared to its competitors by using historical data (Hood & Vinson 2017, p. 59).
– Competitive set: a group of hotels that compete directly to a subject property and is selected for benchmarking competitive performance (STR 2020a).
– Online review site: a website, section of a website or online platform that contain consumer reviews (European Economic and Social Committee 2015).

Structure of the thesis

This sector provides an overview of the thesis structure and briefly explains the process of the whole thesis.
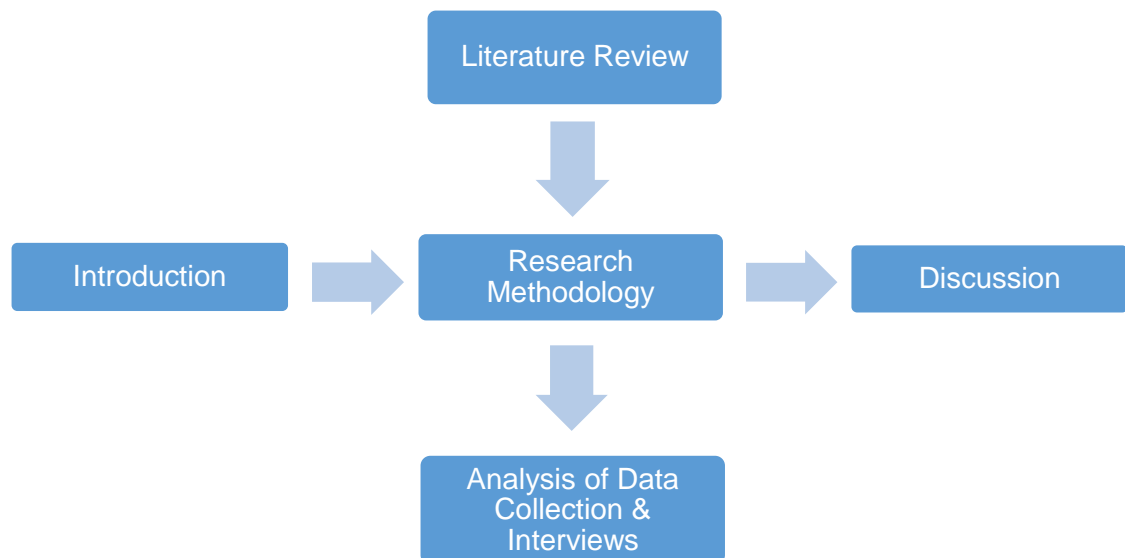

Figure 1: Structure of the thesis

As it is showed in the figure 1, this thesis is comprised from five main chapters. The first chapter introduce the general idea of the thesis topic, purpose and objectives, research

problem, questions and background information including choosing the commissioning company and the research delimitation part. The second section is literature review which also known as theoretical frameworks. This section is one of the most important elements, is a backbone of the whole thesis. The framework provides the concept of guest satisfaction and its measurement methods, as well as relevant theories and analysis methods needed for the author to choose the methodology and then analyze the data results. The third stage is research methodology which provides the research process and methods used when constructing the thesis as well as research data collection process and a sample of data analysis. Chapter 4 processes and analyzes collected data from online travel reviews and interviews in order to get the research results. In addition, the results part also analyzes the situation of the commissioning company by using SWOT model. The last main chapter is discussion, which studies the trustworthiness and ethical viewpoints of the whole thesis. Results are also concluded and suggestions for development ideas are given in this chapter. Last but not least, the chapter discusses the self-evaluation process of the author and recommendations for future research

In the end of the thesis, a list of references is built by using RefWorks application with the Harvard standard, which is also used as the intext reference standard along the thesis.

2 Customer satisfaction

This theoretical framework forms a foundation for the author to study the topic, choose research method and later on supports to analyze the collected data and creates thesis outcomes. In this chapter, the concepts of customer satisfaction, customer satisfaction measurement method, hotel segmentation and competitive set will be studied and defined through relevant literatures. In addition, online review channels and their effects on booking behavior will also be explained. In order to receive a full understanding of market situation and how the commissioning company performs against its competitors, SWOT model is presented and used as situational analysis.

2.1 Customer satisfaction definitions

Customer satisfaction plays a critical role of contribution to the success of a business. According to Gerson (1993, p. 5), customer satisfaction is the customer's perception that his or her expectations have been met or surpassed. If a customer is not satisfied, there is no longer business. All the actions a business does to attain quality and to provide exceptional service are not substantial at all if it does not satisfy its customer (Gerson 1993, p.5).

In addition to Gerson study, customer satisfaction is described by Schiffman and Kanuk (2012, p. 8), as an individual's perception of the performance of a product or service toward that individual's expectation. Customer service is provider-determined rather than customer-determined, whereas customer satisfaction must always be determined by the customer" (Scott 2000, p. 48). Therefore, fulfilling and outperforming customer expectations will create the satisfactory feeling.

To achieve customer satisfaction, it is crucial to anticipate and to acknowledge customers' needs in order to satisfy them. Business which can promptly recognize, deeply understand and satisfy their customers' needs and expectations, generate better profits than those which fail to figure out and satisfy them (Barsky & Nash 2003, pp. 173-183).

Moreover, to support the existing literature, it is important to study and understand the Service Operations Management concept which was defined by Johnston and Clark (2008). Service Operations Management, also known as Customer and Operational Perspectives concept, is described as an activity that is concerned with both what service a business delivers and how it is delivered to customers (Johnston & Clark 2008, pp. 3-5).

Two perspectives that influence the overall customer experience and satisfactions are de-termined as the service provided from the hotel operation's point of view and the service received from the customer's point of view (see figure 2).

Operation

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SERVICE OPERATION



Inputs:
        Service Process           Outcomes
People  ─────────────────▶
Facilities    Experience



        SERVICE PRODUCT
                                    Customer
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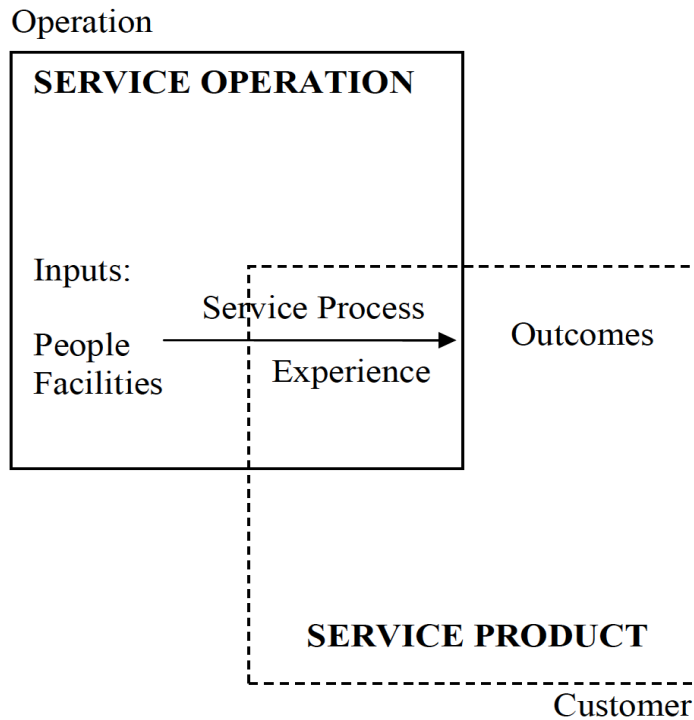
Figure 2: Service Operation Model (Customer and Operational Perspectives) (Johnston & Clark 2008)

In 2008, Johnston and Clark established a service operations model (input, process, out-comes) that analyzes the emphasis of managing customers properly. The figure demon-strates the overlapping perspectives of provided service and received/perceived service e.g. service operations include both service experience and service processes. As a re-sult, service outcome plays a critical role of service operation as it defines the customer overall perception of the provided service and affects to the later on judgment of the ser-vice quality. Additionally, experiencing a service generates customer emotional feelings such as powerful, subjective or physiological (Purves et al. 2018, p. 687). These feeling-based judgments regardless good, bad or neutral will result in intentions, such as the in-tention to give feedback or not, the intention to complain or not, the intention to recom-mend the service to others, the intention to repurchase or not (Johnston & Kong 2011, p. 5). Realizing the importance of service operation management and emphasizing the cus-tomer perspectives in the overall experience are vital to any business. Both operational factors and customer factors generate significant impact on business performance out-

come, namely customer satisfaction and customer retention (Kumar 2010, p. 52). Therefore, to be succeeded at customer satisfactions, service providers must precisely focus on both operational service quality and customer perceived quality.

Another cognitive theory that is used often to explain post-purchase and post-adoption satisfaction is Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT), also known as Expectation Disconfirmation Theory which is developed by Richard L. Oliver in 1980. Expectation confirmation theory states that customer satisfaction is defined by the interplay of expectations and perceived performance of delivery. The theory is constructed as below:

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┌─────────────────┐
│  Expectations   │──────────┐
└────────┬────────┘          ↓
         │          ┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐
         ↓          │ (Dis)comfirmation│─────→│  Satisfaction   │
┌─────────────────┐ │   of beliefs    │      │                 │
│    Percieved    │→└─────────────────┘      └────────↑────────┘
│   performance   │- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - ┘
└─────────────────┘
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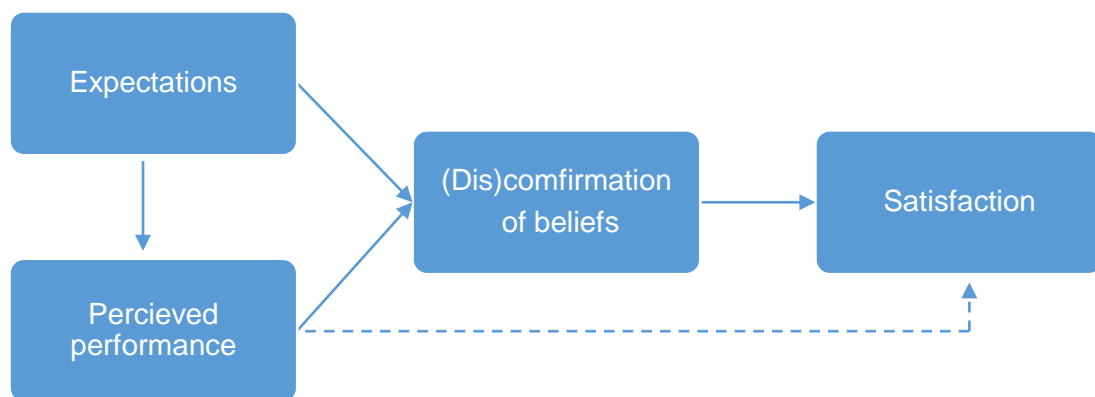
Figure 3: A model of Expectation Confirmation Theory (Oliver 1980)

The figure 3 above shows a basic model of Expectation Confirmation Theory which comprises four main constructs: expectations, performance, confirmation (or disconfirmation) and satisfaction. Expectations server as the mainstay comparison in the theory, it shows what customers expect, use to assess the performance and then form a confirmation or disconfirmation judgment (Halstead 1999, p. 17). Expectations do reflect anticipation of customer (Churchill & Surprenant 1982, p. 491-504) and are predictive over product and service attributes at a later time point (Spreng et al. 1996, p. 16). Performance refers to an individual's perception that evaluates the product or service quality. If a product or service meets or exceeds expectations (confirmation), the consumer is probably satisfied. If a product or service fails to meet consumer's expectations (disconfirmation), post-purchase dissatisfaction will result (Spreng et al. 1996, p. 15). Disconfirmation is typically determined directly, or as a different evaluation between expectations and perceived performance. However, occasionally disconfirmation is unnecessary when expectations and performance influence directly the satisfaction.

Expectation Confirmation Theory uses the determined satisfaction as a prior foundation to further theories which explain consumer behavior (Oliver 1980). Consumer satisfaction

will lead to further positive actions (Tesch, Jiang & Klein, 2003, p. 111) such as a repurchase of products or services. Satisfaction serves as an anchor determinant for any business which primely aim to quality product, service or performance.

2.2 Customer satisfaction measurement methods

The first ideas of measuring customer satisfaction started during the 1980s. Oliver (1980), Churchill and Surprenant (1982), Bearden and Teel (1983) are among the first researchers who worked on the operationalization aspect of customer satisfaction and its precursors. A few years later, SERVQUAL is developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) and became the most common instrument and widely used method for measuring customer expectations and perceptions (Kanji et al. 2005, pp. 17-18) through five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

The SERVQUAL methodology can be divided into two divisions: expectations and perceptions which cover the mentioned five quality dimensions (Parasuraman et al. 1988, p. 23), are explained as follow:

− Tangibles: this determinant is understood as the appeal of physical facilities, equipment, appearance of service personnel and company communication materials.
− Reliability: this determinant relates to a service firm ability to perform and provide the promised service to its customers accurately and faithfully.
− Responsiveness: this means the willingness of a service firm to respond to customers precisely, ready to help customers with their requests and hence, provide prompt service.
− Assurance: this determinant regards to employees' behaviors to be confident to convey customers' trust. Employees' knowledge and courtesy are also taken into account.
− Empathy: this shows how understanding, caring and individualized attention a service firm can provide to its customers.

A SERVQUAL-based customer satisfaction survey is typically conducted with 22 standard statements. Respondents are asked to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with these statements in a scale of 5 or 7 points. The next task is to assign the respondents with a weighting section by providing 100 points that need to be scored within the five dimensions. The final SERVQUAL score is determined by subtracting the expectations score from the perceptions score (Kanji et al. 2005, p.19). This final score shows whether the perceived experience is above or below the expectations

Although nowadays the SERVQUAL dimensions are still featured as the basic for service quality and customer satisfaction measurement, contemporary customer satisfaction programs have become more effective and been widely used. The integrated customer satisfaction measurement programs affect many organizational levels and functions (Allen 2004, p. 20). Measurement, along with customer satisfaction, must be associated in any

company's overall system. Measurement concludes the essential elements that determine whether service level and overall experience are meeting and exceeding customer needs. These measurement opponents expose how a company is managing its customer service functions and will be a guide tool for marketing activities (Gerson 1993, p. 31).

In the age of internet when the influence of online customer review on purchasing decision is growing rapidly and heavily, an increasing amount of customer satisfaction programs is taking the role of conventional measurement methods. Customer satisfaction measurement programs can influence organizational system in many ways:
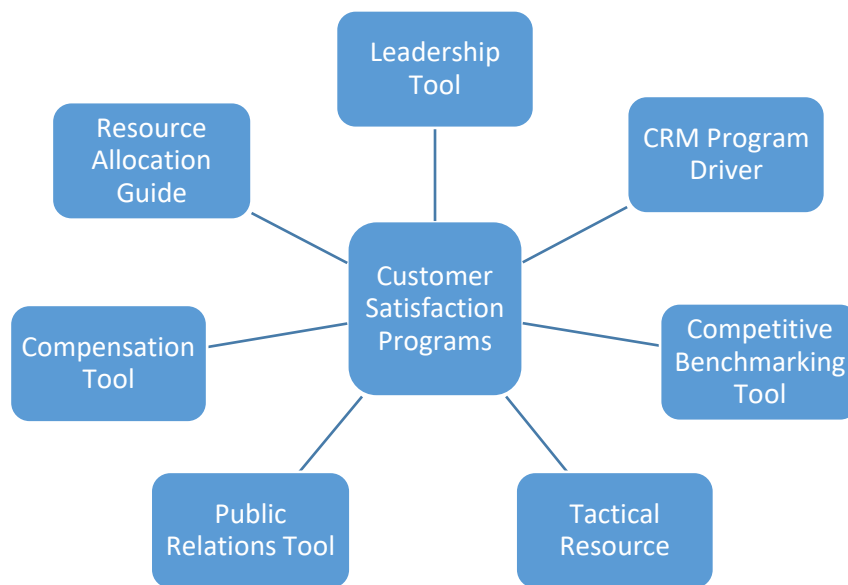
Figure 4: Multiple roles of customer satisfaction measurement programs (adapted from Allen 2004)

Leadership tool is commonly used by senior and managerial levels. Customer satisfaction is served as a tool to motivate employees and provide them direction as well as objective feedbacks. Several businesses use customer satisfaction as fundamentals to form company's vision, mission and value.

Customer Relations Management (CRM) program driver redefines how the company interact with the customers. It changes the focus of the organization from products to customers. Therefore, customer feedback eventually contributes as vital input to these CRM programs.

Competitive benchmarking tool plays as a critical strategic implication for any business in the hospitality sector when the market have become so dynamic and competitive. Knowing how competitors are performing and meeting customer expectations can help hoteliers draw up their strategic plans.

Tactical resource provides transaction-determined guest satisfaction programs which have the main focus on the most up-to-date customer interaction. These resources give constant feedbacks that help company's system improve key operations e.g. problem determination, accuracy, positioning and other processes.

Public relations tool not only helps service firm execute customer satisfaction professionally but also includes mechanisms addressing customer problems that need immediate attention. Due to the lack of follow-up issues with respect, unresolved problems may rebound on customer relationship negatively and cause more misgivings.

Compensation tool: an explicit relationship between customer satisfaction and personnel compensation programs is seriously taken into consideration in many organizations. Linking employee compensations to an association of business growth, profitability and customer satisfaction feedback is extensively practiced nowadays and have become an adequate reward method for employees.

Resource allocation guide acts as key-driver analysis that assists management decide which service excellence and product quality need to be more emphasized and developed. Theses analyses aim to maximize key measurements such as guest overall experience, satisfaction, loyalty or purchase retention.

Nowadays, customer satisfaction can be easily measured by using corporate methods which are currently most common and useful namely Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT), Customer Effort Score (CES) and Net Promoter Score (NPS) (Startquestion 2017). Among the three mentioned methods, Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT) is the oldest but the most widely used method which asks the customer to evaluate their specific experience or satisfaction on a linear scale such as 1 to 3, 1 to 5 or 1 to 10 (Birkett 2019). Customer Effort Score (CES) is fairly similar to CSAT but instead of asking how the customer are satisfied, CES measures how much effort customer spent to complete an action (Pietruszewska 2019) which can be at pre-purchase, purchase or post-purchase stage. Another customer satisfaction measurement method is Net Promoter Score (NPS) which is commonly used in many international hotel brands. Like other methods, NPS measures how likely a customer is to recommend or refer a service, product or brand to others.

However, the benefit of this method compared to others is that NPS is not about an emotion of satisfaction but rather than a willingness of referring, which is easily done (Userlike 2016).

Last but not least, as social media and online review channels have had an emerge impact on customer relationship and purchase retention to many business and company, any positive or negative customer experience can be shared with families, friends or potentially millions of people (Userlike 2016). Therefore, monitoring online reputation is a significant and vital activity that business must keep an eye on and get it done properly.

2.3 Customer segmentations and hotel segmentations

Customer satisfaction will be easier and more effective when a business or company has its own targets (Scott 2000, p. 52). A business defines its target customer group by capturing all of the relevant customer characteristics that determine someone as being in the target market. These characteristics can be geographic, demographic, behavioral, psychographic, or based on customers' needs. Dividing a large market into specific smaller sub-sets based on characteristics is called market segmentation (Olsen 2015, p. 23).

In the Handbook of Market Segmentation, segmentation is defined as a partitioning process of broad markets into groups of potential customers who share similar attributes and perform relevant purchase behavior (Weinstein 2004, p. 4). The segmentation process aims to study and analyze markets then find and develop a defensible niche and benefit it to the company's competitive position. The benefits can be used for marketing activities including customized marketing programs to reach the targeted one or more groups of consumers (Weinstein 2004, p. 17-18). In another word, segmentation means the subdividing of a market into groups of end-users who display maximally similar within each group and maximally different between groups (Coughlan et al. 2006, p. 55).

In addition to the definitions of customer segmentation, the following paragraphs explain a more hospitality-specific term called hotel segmentation. According to the Hotel Industry Foundations from STR (2017, p.2), Hotel segmentation is categorized into two types: geographic and non-geographic. Geographic category is divided into 6 major components which respectively are world, continent, sub-continent, country, market and submarket whereas non-geographic category is classified by star ratings, scale and class (Hood & Vinson 2017, pp. 20-42).

Market is one of the most important geographic categories under country, especially for a hotel General Manager. Hotel markets are generated by the number of participating hotels in an area which is commonly thought as a city. However, markets are also used to present some rural areas outside of the major cities. The amount of markets depends on the develop level of the country or area but no markets cross country boundaries (STR 2017, p. 77).

Submarket is a geographic subset within a market. There may be anywhere from one to ten submarkets in a market. Especially in a metro market, it is common to have a submarket for the Central Business District (CBD) (Hood & Vinson 2017, pp. 94-95). The idea of submarkets is represented because when it comes to define the hotel segmentation and create the competitive set, hotels must choose the right opponents within its market or submarket. Additionally, understanding about market and submarket also helps researcher study the hotel situational analysis more precisely.

On the other hand, non-geographic categories of hotel industry are formed by star ratings, scale and class. Star ratings are very important for hotels. They show the classification of a hotel according to its quality (Hensens et al. 2012, pp. 1-2). Hotel rating, grading or classification are quality assessment methods by which subject hotels are evaluated and categorized usually in five levels/stars and the star symbols are the most typically used around the world (Vine 1981; Cser & Ohuchi 2008). In some countries, the stars are accredited by the government, a country hotel association or a third-party independent organization. In some countries, hotels can have 1-5, 1-4 or 1-7 stars whereas some hotels have half a star e.g. 3,5 or 4,5 stars in some other countries (STR 2017, p. 105). Additionally, with the growth of social media and customer-review sites, stars can be assigned by OTAs and online review companies. Due to this globally inconsistence, professional hotel analysis is typically not based on star ratings or star categories. Class and scale are more reliable and consistent methods of hotel assessment (Hood & Vinson 2017, p. 106).

The class/scale is the most popular way that the industry classifies different hotels. While scale category concludes six chain-hotel types ranging from economy up to luxury and one category for all independent hotels, class category comprises six similar categories from economy to luxury for all the hotels and there is no separate class for independent hotels. Class is used globally and is more common whilst scale is more popular in the North America (STR 2017, p. 126). Due to the high consistence and being the most reliable hotel classifying method, class categories are used the most nowadays. Class categories are slotted into economy, midscale, upper midscale, upscale, upper upscale and luxury (STR 2017, p. 129).

2.4 Competitive sets

Precisely determining a competitive set is crucial for hotel market study and research because the collected data provide an accurate perspective on hotel operation performance and then form a basic for planning the hotel future performance strategies (Wight 2012, p. 2). A competitive set is a group of a minimum of 4 to 5 hotels that are ready to qualify as principal and direct competitors of a subject hotel (Insights 2019). According to STR (2017), a competitive set is a group of hotels that are competitive in nature, competing each other for the same guest segmentation and sharing the same quantitative and qualitative features (Hood & Vinson 2017, p. 144). In addition to the purpose of comparing key performance benchmarking, aide sales and marketing activities, internal and external analysis (e.g. microeconomic indicator) and many hotel reports (e.g. STAR Report, Bandwidth Report) (STR 2017, p. 147), competitive sets are also used for situational analyzing and benchmarking guest satisfaction against other competing hotels.

To precisely identify which opponent hotels are competing with, the subject hotel must carefully consider various factors which determine the accuracy of competitive set. In many large hotel or chain hotel, the competitive set is typically defined by the hotel owner, management company, general manager or sales, marketing and revenue department (STR 2017, p. 154). Key considerations when it comes to create a competitive set is commonly based on The Four P's in a Pod (Insights 2019) which is broken-down as below:

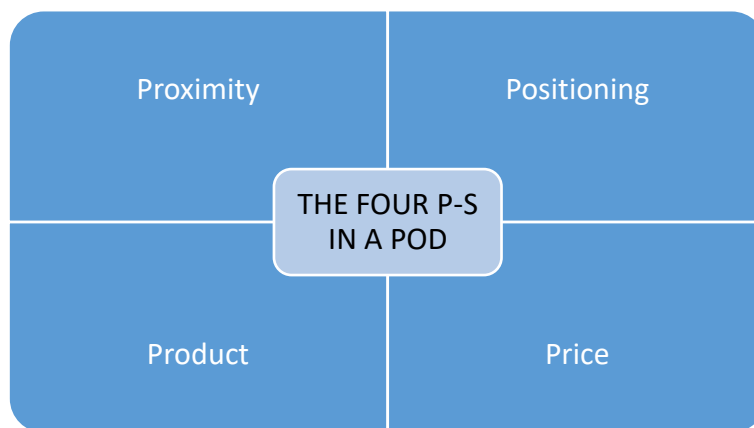Figure 5: The Four P's in a Pod model (Insights 2019)

The first element of the four P's is the competitors' proximity which is defined whether the competing hotels are relatively close to the subject hotel (STR 2017, p. 158). It is obvious to understand that hotels which have high geographic proximity to a subject hotel, featuring likely same attributes, are highly competitive. Moreover, hotels which provide slightly

different products or positioning level, but have a very close proximity to a subject hotel, are also exceptionally competitive. This assumption is true especially during high seasons or peak periods when customers must be present at a particular place and would choose hotels within that area, whether or not these hotels can be lower or higher positioned or priced (Insight 2019). The location can be categorized as city center, airport, highway, convention center, resort, sub-urban or rural, etc. Each of these locations has a particular mix of demand generators (Rushmore et al. 2012, p. 148).

Secondly, positioning plays an important role when choosing competitive sets. Hotels which are sharing the same positioning or customer segmentation regardless it is economy, midscale, upper midscale, upscale, upper upscale or luxury, are highly competitive. A hotel intending to achieve sole positioning must sharply distinguish itself from competing hotels on the most relevant attributes to its target market. Furthermore, higher competitive hotels are reflected by differentiated products, services together with price, amenities and guest communication (Brown & Ragsdale 2002; Torres & Sheryl 2006).

The next factor that contributes to the process of defining a competitive set is the product type. As explained above, the product type plays a significant role in defining a property's positioning. However, similarly positioned hotels with comparable proximity may not be considered as highly competitive to a subject hotel if these assets do not provide equally comparable product types (Insights 2019). Product type in hotel sector concern to the facilities that are available at the property and can be classified as full-service, limited-service or extended-stay (Wight 2012, p. 3).

The last P of the Pod is the hotel price, also known as room-rate which mainly affects an individual's decision to stay in a specific hotel. In most cases, the competing hotels will have similar pricing to the subject hotel (STR 2017, p. 158). Therefore, the Average Daily Rate (ADR) of the hotels in a market or submarket is a determinant metric to consider when choosing a competitive set (Wight 2012, p. 4). Some other important factors that affect to the competitive set process can be demand segments, online rates and reputation (Insights 2019), quality and the brand (Wight 2012, p. 3).

By identifying the appropriate competitive set, both a good base for projecting supply-demand management and a more accurate picture of the competitive market, are given to the subject hotel. Moreover, in addition to direct competitive set, multiple comp-sets and dynamic comp-sets are also applied by many hotels nowadays (OTA Insight 2018).

2.5 Customer reviews

According to Business Dictionary (2020), customer review, also known as customer feedback, is an information resource coming directly or indirectly from an individual who purchased a product or service then expressed how the satisfaction or dissatisfaction level that client feels with the product or service. Customer review can be either positive, negative, or neutral. The information can be given through written or oral traditional surveys provided at the business property or by online forms. Additionally, customer feedbacks are also procured through emails, letters or phone calls to the company. Customer reviews regardless they are positive or negative, are important for company to address customers' wants and needs, hence have a chance to improve customer satisfaction (Business Dictionary 2020).

Defined by Startquestion (2020), customer review or feedback is clients' information that evaluates whether the clients are satisfied or dissatisfied with the purchased products or services or/and the general experience they had with the company. Monitoring and managing customer feedback play an important role to help a company get a full picture of how their customers perceive their products, services and the brand. Top performing companies anticipate and understand the importance of customer feedback even though it is positive or negative, prompted or unprompted and later focus on consistently listening to their customers and improve their performance. Without customer feedbacks, companies will never know if their customers are getting the values or not (Startquestion 2020).

There are dedicated review sites and channels which provide both customers and company the platforms to communicate and interact regarding product quality and service excellence. According to Trustpilot, the world's most powerful review platform, the mission of review platform is to bring people and companies together in one place where people can share their experiences and companies can turn feedback into business results by improving better experiences (Trustpilot 2020).

For hotels and accommodations sector, there are two main methods of giving and handling reviews, through online travel review channels or at the property. The more in-depth literature about these two methods are explained in the following sub-chapters.

2.5.1 Online travel reviews

The technology development and the improved accessibility to Internet on a worldwide scale have influenced the hotel industry tremendously as well as the way hoteliers market their products and services. Internet has created several new distribution channels that

open up a huge market for company to promote and sell their products. As a result, hotels cannot be sustained without being present and competitive on online distribution channels (Noone & Mattila 2009, p. 272). Therefore, an increase of online review platforms that help travelers to search, compare and evaluate is formed.

Online review platforms are known as third-party websites that provide benefits to both guests and the hotels. It consists of Online Travel Agents (OTAs e.g. Booking.com, Hotels.com, Expedia) and social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Google, TripAdvisor). Through those online channels, customer have the possibility to search for and review products before purchase decision making. Additionally, OTAs also provide customers the chance to compare rates and help to book direct from their websites. Among these specialties that online travel platforms have brought to the table, the most important feature is to assist consumer to review and compare hotels then choose the one that defeats others. According to Gretzel and Yoo (2008, p. 37), online reviews are a powerful and useful information source for many travelers to generate motive and intension before making trip decision. Rapidly anticipating and understanding how online review affect traveler intentions, are undoubtedly essential for hotels to optimize marketing presence and to boost their competitiveness (Zhao et al. 2015, p. 1345). Additionally in several researches, experts reported that online travel reviews have become a critical tool and important resource for online travelers to assess and score product quality, service excellence, value of money and overall consumption experiences (Litvin et al. 2008; Ye et al. 2011; Dickinger 2011).

With the rapid growth of the Internet and the increase of social media, the most threat for conventional hotel evaluating organizations is the emerging of web-based platforms that dedicate in online traveler reviews and provide independent platforms for customer feedback (Zarrella 2010, p. 131). In the early part of 2013, Dimensional Research conducted a survey regarding how online reputation effects to consumer purchasing decision on 1046 individuals and later in October 2018, another survey on 1044 individuals who have received phone or online customer service were conducted. According to Dimensional Research results, a dominating 90% of respondents who experienced online purchasing claimed that positive online reviews influenced their buying decision whilst 86% of them stated that negative online reviews affected their buying decision (Gesenhues 2013; Zendesk 2018). While Facebook was most commonly found for positive reviews, negative reviews were mainly found in online review sites (Gesenhues 2013). In addition, a number of different researches were carried out and made the point that almost all local consumers (97%) nowadays use online media for shopping (BIA/Kesley 2010), 91% of consumers aged 18-34 trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations (BrightLocal

2019) and 93% of consumers claimed that online reviews impact their purchasing decisions (Podium 2017).

The effects of online travel platforms and reviews have been continuously strengthened every day. In the last quarter of 2019, TripAdvisor claims to be the world's largest travel platform with over 463 million monthly unique visitors (TripAdvisor 2020), while Expedia Group characterizes itself as "The World's Travel Platform" with more than 675 million monthly visits over 75 countries (Skift 2019). In addition, Booking Holdings (the parent of Booking.com platform) also touts its name as the world leading provider of online travel and related services with 96,4 billion gross travel bookings and 844 million room nights in 2019 (Booking Holdings 2020). According to TripAdvisor factsheet in November 2019, this platform provides over 859 million travelers' reviews and opinions of 8,6 million accommodations, restaurants, airlines and other travel services. These numbers above have proven the significance of both online travel platform in general and the online travel reviews to many businesses, especially in hospitality industry.

2.5.2 On-property reviews

Prior to the advent of the internet and the increasing amount of online review channels, customers have reviewed products and services through comment boxes, paper survey or service contact points. These physical location methods are still in continuance nowadays despite the significant growth of internet review sites.

Unlike small restaurants, retails and other brick and mortar businesses where the company normally does not have customer contact detail (Oisin 2018), hotel industry gives hoteliers better conditions to provide and collect customer feedback online. However, offline or on-property feedbacks are still in used by many hotels regardless the scale of the hotel. Surveys are conducted by asking customer questions about their overall experience with the purchased products or services. Two most common methods for creating and collecting survey questions are Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT) and Net Promoter Score (NPS) (Wonderflow 2019). Customer Satisfaction Score measures satisfaction level with a purchase, brand or interaction. Questions are usually answered by a number scale which displays how the consumer agrees with the mentioned issue in the question. Another common method is to use Net Promoter Score which analyzes how likely consumers are to recommend the product, service or the brand in general to others (Net Promoter 2020). In addition to these two main methods, customers can provide their reviews to the hotels by telling what they like and what do not. Sometimes, customers are also interviewed how they are satisfied with the hotel.

These on-property review collection methods are simple to set up, easy to digest in small quantity and independent to the Internet but they remain some critical cons for example, the lack of analytical dashboard and more importantly it is challenging to follow up (Oisin 2018). All the digital channels mentioned in the previous subchapter would have those features as the cores of each channel.

2.6 Situation analysis

Before conducting customer satisfaction research, marketing strategy or development plan, it is necessary to analyze the current situation of the company so that managers understand how the company is performing and what factors are affecting the business. The outcome can be mind-opening and help company to determine its business strategy toward the competing market (Lake 2019). Situation analysis is defined as a strategic analysis which comprises internal and external factors that contribute to the success of a business. By doing situation analysis, company can identify its business capacities, define customers and potential customer, determine competitors and analyze business environment (Lorette 2019). In addition, situation analysis supports project or research management to understand the environment in which the plan is implemented (IAEA 2019). The situation analysis can consist several methods of critical analysis such as The 5C Analysis, The SWOT Analysis or Porter's Five Forces Analysis (Examples 2020). In this thesis, SWOT Analysis is chosen to be the situation analytical method to examine the current situation of commissioning company.

SWOT Analysis is an effective tool for strategic planning and strategic management. It can help organizations to create organizational strategies and competitive strategies. SWOT Analysis consists two dimensions: internal and external. Internal dimension includes organizational factors: strengths and weaknesses, while external dimension includes environmental factors: opportunities and threats. (GÜREL 2017, p. 995).
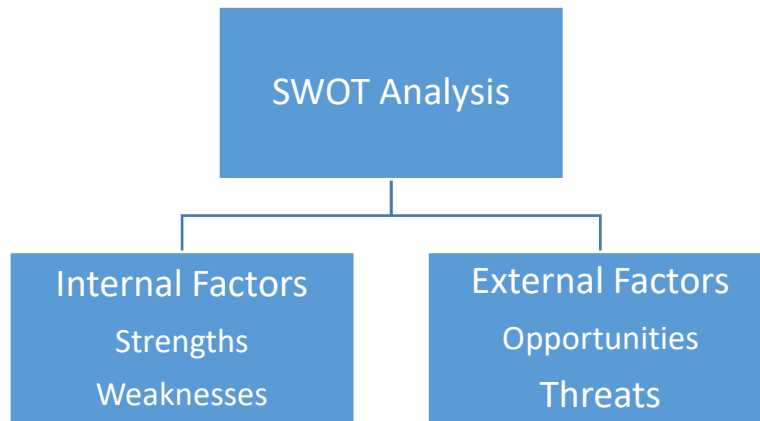
Figure 6: SWOT Analysis

By conducting an internal analysis, the organization identifies its organizational strengths and weaknesses and help itself determine which of its competences and capabilities are more likely to be its competitors' resources and advantages. On the other hand, external analysis which emprises critical opportunities and threats inside its competitor environment. By conducting external analysis, the organization clarifies how the competition in its market is likely to be and which of the environment factor critically affects to the organization.

SWOT analysis comprises four components which are explained below:

Organizational Strengths: Strength is something that adds value for organization and differentiates it from others. Strengths give an advantage to the organization compared to its competitors. Strengths, at organizational level, comprise capabilities and abilities by which the organization gains its advantages over the competitors. According to Omer Dincer, Ekrem Tatoglu and Keith W Glaisterin (2006, pp. 206-218) in The strategic planning process: evidence from Turkish firms, an organization defines a strong, equal or weak position over its competitors' through five criteria: relative market situation, relative financial structure, relative production and technical capacity, relative research and development potential, relative human capacity and management effectiveness.

Organizational Weaknesses: Weakness refers to something which is lacking. Weakness means that disadvantages are more meaningful than advantages. Weakness is negative and unwanted. Weakness at organizational level links to the situations in which the current circumstances and capacities of an organization are weaker compared to other organizations and competitor organizations.

Environmental Opportunities: Opportunity means the situation that enables an activity. Opportunity is an advantage and the driver for an activity. Opportunity has a positive and wanted characteristic. Opportunities are those that would cause positive results for the organization determined as a result of the analysis of its environment.

Environmental Threats: Threat is a situation that risks the actualization of an activity. It refers to an unwanted situation. It has a negative nature that should be avoided. Threat can be the element that makes hard or impossible to reach the organizational goals.

3   Research methodology

This chapter provides the methodology that is used to conduct the research in order to get the answer to research problem and questions: What is the current situation of Hotel St. George's guest satisfaction on property and through online review platforms?; How customers see and evaluate the hotel from their own perspective?; What are the points of views from St. George's management regarding customer satisfaction issues?; and What are the advantages and disadvantages of the hotel versus its competitors?

Research methodology first clarifies research process which formulates how the research is conducted and later on discusses and explains the approach and tools which are used for gathering and analyzing the data of the research. The chosen methodology was data collection method by collecting online reviews from several online platforms, using Review Pro tool. In addition, four interviews from Heads of Departments are also conducted as a qualitative method.

3.1   Research process

The main work of the research is emphasized on the matters of guest satisfaction in Hotel St. George Helsinki. During the research, both perspectives from customer side and the hotel management will be analyzed based on the collected data and conceptual analysis.

The research starts from the idea of the author when he was working as Duty Manager in the commissioning company. At Hotel St. George, Guest Satisfaction Forum is held every three-week by the management team with the idea of discussing and reviewing matters relating to how the customers are liking the hotel, what are still not performing well and how to improve those disadvantages. After participating in several Guest Satisfaction Forum meetings, the author came to an idea to conduct an in-depth research which studies how the customers leave reviews to the hotel and how the management responds against them. To help conduct this survey, ReviewPro is used as a strategic tool for dealing with online reviews. ReviewPro will be introduced in the next sub-chapter. In addition, an extra survey how the staying guests willing to recommend the hotel to their friends and family is conducted by using NPS standard.

Moreover, intense interviews from managers in different departments of the hotel will be taken into account to clarify the perspectives of the research problems and collected data from managerial points of views. As Hotel St. George is a big and luxury hotel, each and

every encounter plays a critical role in the progress of proving the best customer experience. Come hand in hand with any encounter, problems and negative guest responses can be happened in any encounter, hence interviews with several Heads of Departments are extremely needed.

The next step in the research process is to analyze research data based on relevant literate regarding guest experience, guest satisfaction and service quality. Come after the analyzing part, explanations and recommendations are provided to help the commissioning company understand its current situation and get the improvement into actions.

3.2 Research methods

Academic research in education is commonly divided into two main methods: quantitative and qualitative. This thesis is conducted in a mixed-methods approach which consists of both quantitative methods and qualitative ones.

3.2.1 Quantitative research method

Described by Aliaga and Gunderson (2002, pp. 473-481), quantitative research or analysis is "explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics)". According to USC Libraries, quantitative research methods focus on objective measurements such as statistics, mathematical data or numbers which are collected through surveys, questionnaires or polls (Labaree 2020). Conducting quantitative requires lots of respondents and it is important to choose and use the right data analyze tools (Muijs 2011, pp. 1-3). However, quantitative data, nowadays, is usually handled by using computer programs such as SPSS, ASA, MicroCase or other specific tools in particular industry (Babbie 2016, p. 437).

One of the most common approaches to conduct quantitative research is doing surveys. In this research thesis, based on NPS standard, a survey of how satisfied the customer experiences are by leveling the recommendation willingness of the hotel to others. This survey is used to measure customer satisfaction through on property channel such as at the reception. The survey is normally assigned to every guest during their checking-out. Another quantitative data source is customer online reviews/rates through several online travel platforms. To measure the customer satisfaction level, rated scores such as location, cleanliness, service, value, etc. are collected and analyzed.

3.2.2 Qualitative research method

Qualitative research is normally placed in opposition of quantitative research. While quantitative methods emphasize on statistical and numeral data, qualitative research methods provide a closer observation into the depth and meaning of the problem (Muijs 2011, p. 9). Qualitative method means examining research data without converting them to a numerical format. In another word, qualitative data analysis is "the nonnumerical assessment of observations made through participant observation, content analysis, in-depth interviews, and other qualitative research techniques" (Babbie 2016, p. 381). Among these qualitative approaches, observation and in-depth interviews are chosen to be conducted in this thesis.

Observation in qualitative research is considered to be one of the oldest, most basic but very important research method approaches which collect data by using one's senses, particularly looking and listening in an analytical and purposeful technique (Given 2008, p. 573). Observations can also be measured by nonvisual senses such as smell, taste, hearing or touch. In this thesis, the author observes customer feedbacks through NPS report as well as customer online reviews through online travel platforms. The observations help the author examine and understand how customer experiences and service excellence are perceived through customers' points of views.

In addition, four in-depth interviews are conducted with specific topics after the author's observations. In-depth interview is one of the most common and widely used qualitative methods of data collection (Blaikie & Priest 2019, p. 199). In this thesis, in-depth interviews are formed based on semi-constructed format. The semi-constructed format provides interviewees the chance to answer questions in a conversational manner that interviewees are able to pursue the issues they consider as important (Longhurst 2009, p. 580-584). The purpose of in-depth interviews in this thesis is to give the author understanding of managerial points of views from the same topic compared to the collected customers' points of views. Therefore, an analysis of how company provided service meets customer perceived experience is defined.

3.3 Data collection process

During the research, both quantitative and qualitative data are collected through online review channels and management interviews. Only six platforms: Booking.com, TripAdvisor, Hotels.com, Google, Expedia, Facebook are chosen for online data collection. The reason of choosing these review sites because they are among the most common and popular platforms globally which receive largest customer traffic and attraction, hence the result

confidence and accuracy will increase due to high respond rates (Survey Statistical Accuracy 2016).

Quantitative data of customer online reviews from six mentioned platforms are collected for 12 months period of the current year by using ReviewPro tool. The one-year period of time is chosen to be analyzed in order to clarify how the customer satisfaction level has been performed throughout the year. This analysis can help commissioning company understand why there are too much differences in different areas. Hence, strategic solutions can be given to improve the problems.

On the other hand, qualitative data such as how customer feel about their experience through online review platforms and how the managers response to customer feedbacks through interviews are also collected in the same period. There are several reasons for this time limitation for the quantitative and qualitative data collection method. First of all, the amount of reviews how customer feel about their experience is too overwhelming if the whole two-year in operations is chosen to analyze (nearly 3000 reviews). The main method of analyzing the qualitative data is observation and it is too much to handle. In addition, many of the guest satisfaction issues happened long time ago and were already handled, hence the author will focus on the most up-to-date and unresolved issues during the current year in operation from April 2019 to April 2020. Another reason to limit the time period is because the competition analysis comes hand in hand along the research and there is a competitor that was just opened during the first quarter of 2019. It is unfair and not precise to analyze and compare two-year data from one hotel to only one-year data from another.

To help the author collect the research data properly, customer online reviews is gathered and scored in one common scale of 100 scores by ReviewPro tool.

3.3.1 ReviewPro Tool

ReviewPro is the world leader in Guest Intelligence solution for hospitality industry. It uses cloud-based data to obtain customer review insights and operational management to help hoteliers leap their guest satisfactions and rankings on online review platforms, outperform competitors and eventually increase revenue (ReviewPro 2020a). ReviewPro provide numerous solutions for hotelier but in this thesis, only Online Reputation Management and Guest Satisfaction Surveys are studied and used. These two solutions help hotels collect, score and analyze guest reviews and ratings across online distribution channels such as review sites and OTAs.
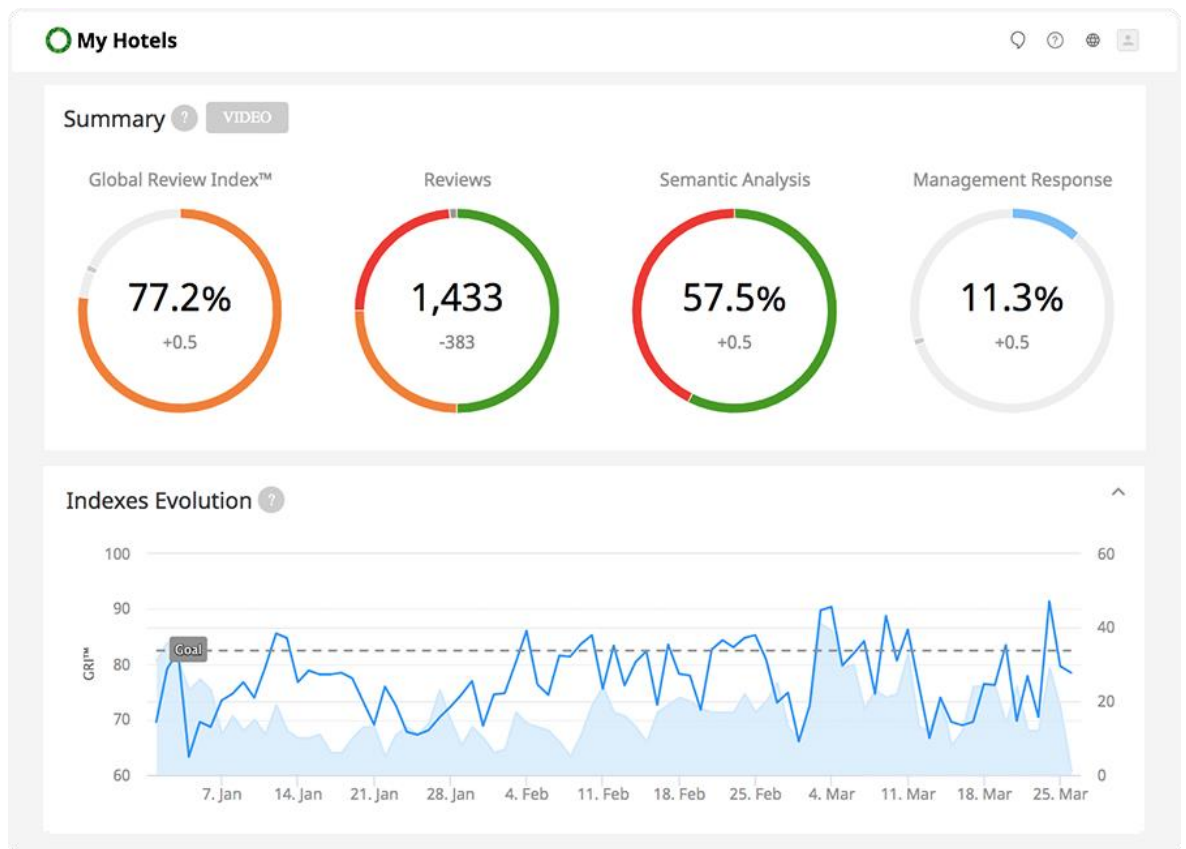
Figure 7: Example of Online Reputation Management from ReviewPro

As can be seen from figure 7 above, four main determinants of ReviewPro Online Reputation Management are Global Review Index, Reviews, Semantic Analysis and Management Response.

Global Review Index (GRI) is an exclusive online reputation score from ReviewPro. GRI is widely used by over 60 000 hotels around the globe as a benchmark for online reputation management. One given GRI point for a time (e.g. day, week, month or year) is calculated based on data from 175 online travel agencies and review sites (Review Pro 2020b). Studied by Cornel University, School of Hotel Administration (2012), one GRI point increase in a hotel equals to an increase of 0,89% Average Daily Rate (ADR), 0,54% Occupancy and 1,42% Revenue per Available Room (RevPAR). As a result, GRI data has been compared with STR hotel pricing data in the field of studying customer decision-making process (ReviewPro 2012). Monitoring and managing online guest satisfaction using GRI enable hotel managers and owners to evaluate and measure revenue growth generated from increased guest satisfaction.

The second aspect to consider is Reviews which provides a clear summary how a subject hotel is being rated across a set of chosen online review sites and OTAs (see figure 8 below).
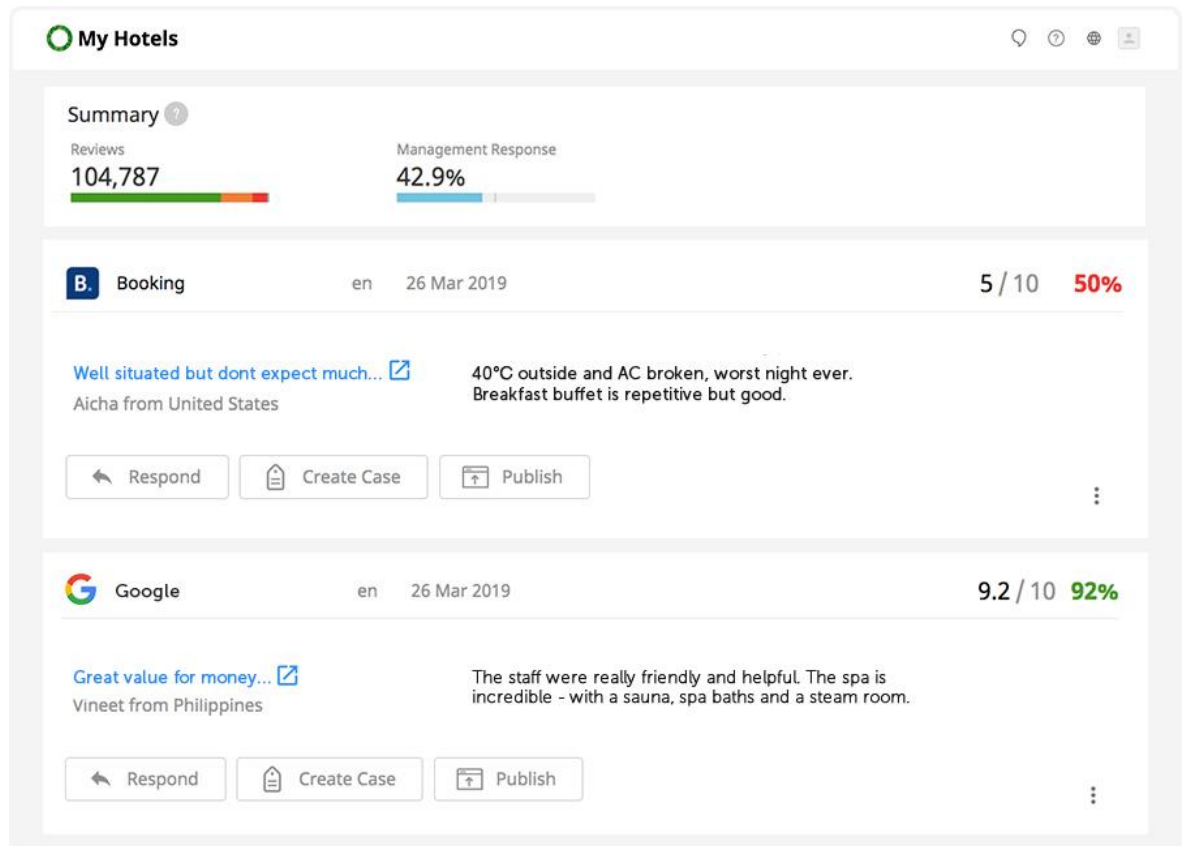

Figure 8: An example of Review Monitoring feature from ReviewPro

Review Monitoring feature help hotel managers track what people are saying about the subject hotel and brand and yet provide proactive actions towards those review in a real-time platform. Although hoteliers can manually go to a few leading review sites and OTAs to observe their hotel's ratings, it is much more time consuming and inconvenient compared to Review Monitoring feature on one unique platform on ReviewPro. Additionally, the idea of choosing a set of major review sites provide hoteliers a wider view of how their hotels are performing online. One ranking position on a certain channel does not mean the same equal rank on other sites (ReviewPro 2011). Moreover, not only the issue with time consuming and ineffectiveness to check reviews manually, there is also another issue with rating systems. Every review site has its own rating system and standard. For instance, TripAdvisor uses 5-point scale while Booking.com works with a 10-point system. Different rating systems prevent hoteliers from analyzing online review manually and comparing own hotel's performance on different source.
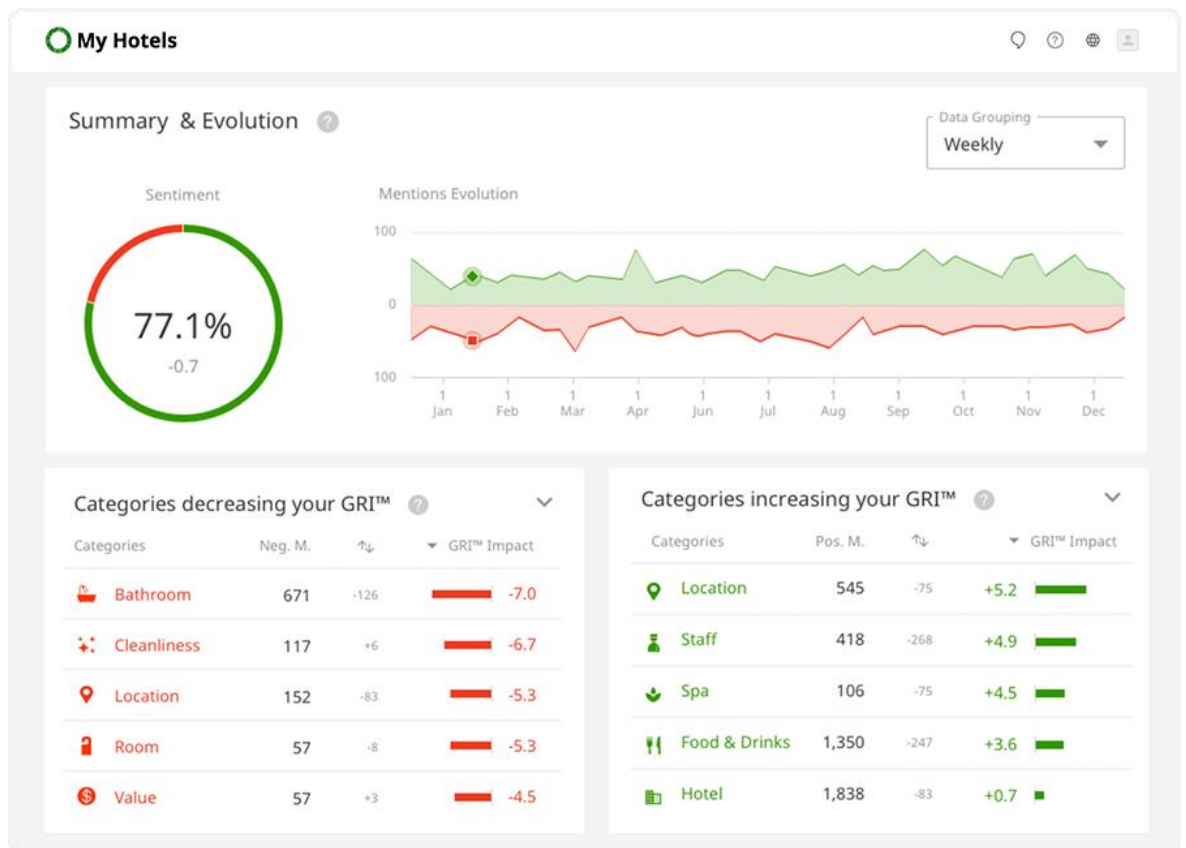
Figure 9: An example of Semantic Analysis from ReviewPro

In addition to GRI and Review Monitoring, ReviewPro provides its users Department Indexes which is also known as Semantic Analysis. Hundreds of thousands of reviews are collected from different sources, calculated and categorized into 26 standard categories: location, service, value, cleanliness or staff, just to name a few. Semantic Analysis allows hotelier to obtain specific insights as well as hotel strengths and weaknesses in different departments or encounters. Results can also be compared to hotel's direct competitors (ReviewPro 2020c).

The last but not least major determinant in analyzing hotel guest satisfaction is Management Response. Travelers are writing and reading thousands of reviews every day and how the hotel management response to reviewers has tremendously influence their booking decisions. Researched by TripAdvisor (2017), 85% of reviewers agree that attentive management responses to bad reviews enhance their impression to a hotel.
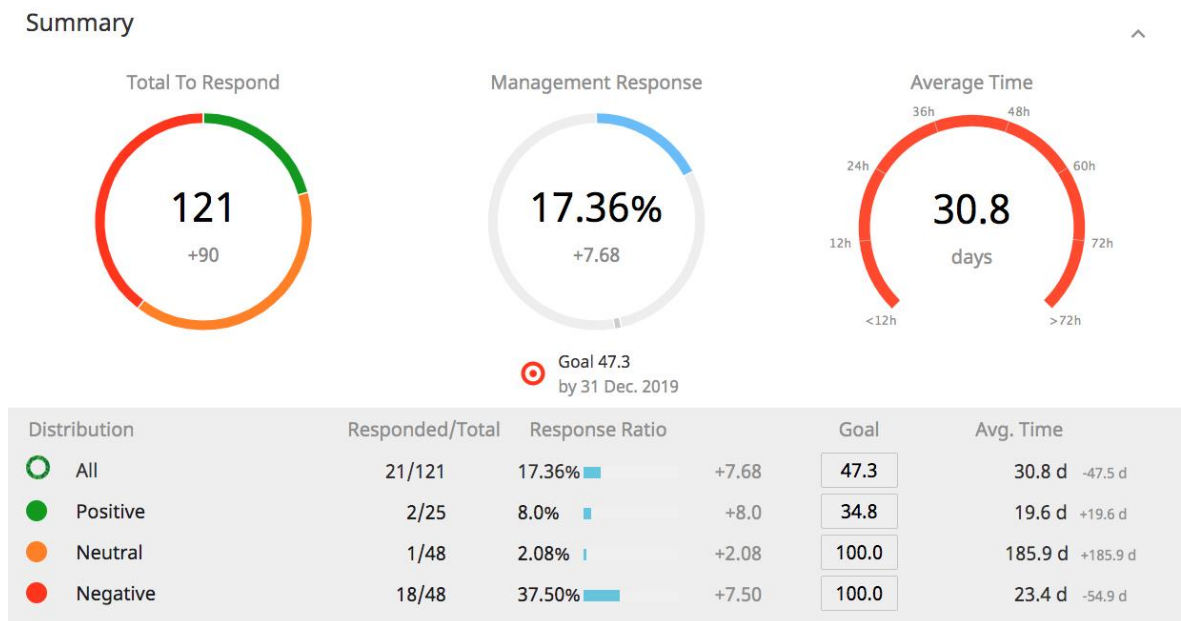
Figure 10: An example of Management Response feature from ReviewPro

The Management Response summary gives hoteliers all relevant data as a brief. As showed in figure 10, Management Response provides a total volume of survey responds in separate distributions: positive (green), neutral (orange), negative (red) and not rated (grey). Secondly, a percentage of management responses displays how many reviews are responded. However, not all the reviews are respondable due to the lack of contact details. The last function of the summary exposes how long it took for management to respond to reviews. If average response time is equal or less than a day, it shows in green; if response time takes 25-72 hours, it shows in orange and more than 72 hours responses are shown in red color (ReviewPro 2017).

3.3.2   Net Promoter Score through Qlik Tool

The main idea Net Promoter Score (NPS) is already explained in the chapter 2, this chapter emphasizes on how to collect NPS scores and reviews during the data collection process.

When guests check out, they are asked about their overall experience with the hotel. "How was your stay with us?" is an example. Hence, customers are asked to rate the recommendation survey by answering the question: How would you like to recommend Hotel St. George to your family and friends? Answers are in the scale of 10 and hence are inverted into the percentage scales (10/10 equals to 100%). Moreover, customers are welcome to expand their answers into details if they wish. In the end, data is gathered by

Qlik, a data-base analytic management tool. Through Qlik, NPS scores, reviews and response rates are calculated and exported to NPS daily, monthly or annual reports.

3.4   Data analysis process (Sample)

ReviewPro is used as a collecting and analyzing tool for this research. There was an overall of 1140 reviews through six online review sites namely Booking.com, TripAdvisor, Hotels.com, Google, Expedia and Facebook. 1140 reviews were collected since April 2019.

Firstly, all collected online reviews are categorized into four main department accordingly service, value, location, cleanliness and one special generated GRI score from Review-Pro. An increase or decrease amount and the percentage of positivity level of those reviews are also given and analyzed. Additionally, a line chart which clarifies how the indexes have been changing through a timeline is given.

Secondly, based on the literature of competitive set (compset) in chapter 2.4, a group of 5 competing hotels which are Hotel F6, Lapland Hotel Bulevardi, Hotel Indigo Helsinki Boulevard, Hilton Helsinki Strand and the subject Hotel St. George Helsinki is formed. Review volume, compset Gross Review Index (GRI) and Competitive Quality Index (CQI) are taken into consideration and hence analyzed. An overall ranking is given eventually.

The third section is to analyze Management Response. This section emphasizes on calculating the amount of responded reviews, changing in response ratio and average response time of Hotel St. George through six chosen review sources. At last, Management Response by Competition is demonstrated with competitive response ranking, compset average response ratio and average response time from the compset.

In addition, geographic analysis is also provided with review indexes, changing ratio, mentions and positivity level. There are 6 main countries/areas that contribute the largest portion of review to Hotel St. George: Finland, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, Japan, Germany and Spain.

The next analysis is about offline reviews which are collected mostly during guest's checking-out time. Due to the change in operations after the acquisition of Kämp Collection Hotels from Nordic Choice Hospitality Group, Net Promoter Score is no longer available and in use in Hotel St. George. To provide the alternative resource to the offline review, data is collected by interviewing Mari Suhonen, Head Hostess of the reception and Linda Ekholm,

Head of Wellbeing. Offline reviews are taken at the spot/hotel location by conversing with the guests during their departure.

Physical property reviews are collected mostly face to face, hence the reliability of these review is considered as highest level. Therefore, the author will observe and go through the most common reviews during the interviews and hence, together with the analyses from ReviewPro, build a semi-constructed interview section to the hotel management team.

Four in-depth interviews are conducted as the last part of the research analysis. Three interviews are conducted through mobile cellular calls and one interview is done by sending questionnaires by email. Interviews are recorded and transcriptions are made with the assistance of Otter.ai, a web-based application that helps to convert chat dialogues. Questions for the interviews are formed based on the results of ReviewPro and offline review analysis. Additionally, most common review issues and unresolved problems regarding guest experience and satisfaction are mostly emphasized. The interviews are taken by the thesis author as interviewer and the list of interviewees concludes Mari Suhonen – Head Hostess of Reception, represents hotel reception/guest relations; Marianna Alastalo – Housekeeping Manager, represents hotel cleanliness sector; Johanna Sainio – Restaurant Manager, represents food and beverage area; and Linda Ekholm – Head of Wellbeing, represents spa/wellbeing area.

Based on the management interviews, an analysis of how service provider meets customer experience is given. To support this analysis, Service Operation Model (Customer and Operational Perspectives) will be used to identify the resemblances and differences in perspective of customer point of view and provider point of view.

Last but not least, to end up the analyzing part, an overview of situational analysis which clarifies how Hotel St. George is performing using SWOT analyzing model.

4 Results

Data collected from the tool ReviewPro and managerial interviews are displayed and analyzed in this chapter. The results of the surveys identify factors that affect guest experience, hence lead customer to the decision of leaving a review while managerial interviews show the perspectives of managers who represent the hotel management. Furthermore, the SWOT analysis of commissioning company's guest satisfaction situation is also examined.

4.1 Analysis of online reviews

The following subchapters will expose the overall customer online satisfaction of Hotel St. George Helsinki. Moreover, commissioning company's performance will be compared to its strategic competitors which are Lapland Hotels Bulevardi, Hotel F6, Hotel Indigo Helsinki Boulevard and Hilton Helsinki Strand.

4.1.1 Global Review Index

From the period of April 2019 to April 2020, Hotel St. George Helsinki received a total of 1140 reviews including 992 positive reviews which take 87%, 79 reviews which take 6% while negative reviews take only 2%, equal to 24 reviews. After this 1-year period, Hotel St. George Helsinki retains 92,8% of Global Review Index. The following chart will display more details accordingly to each quarter.
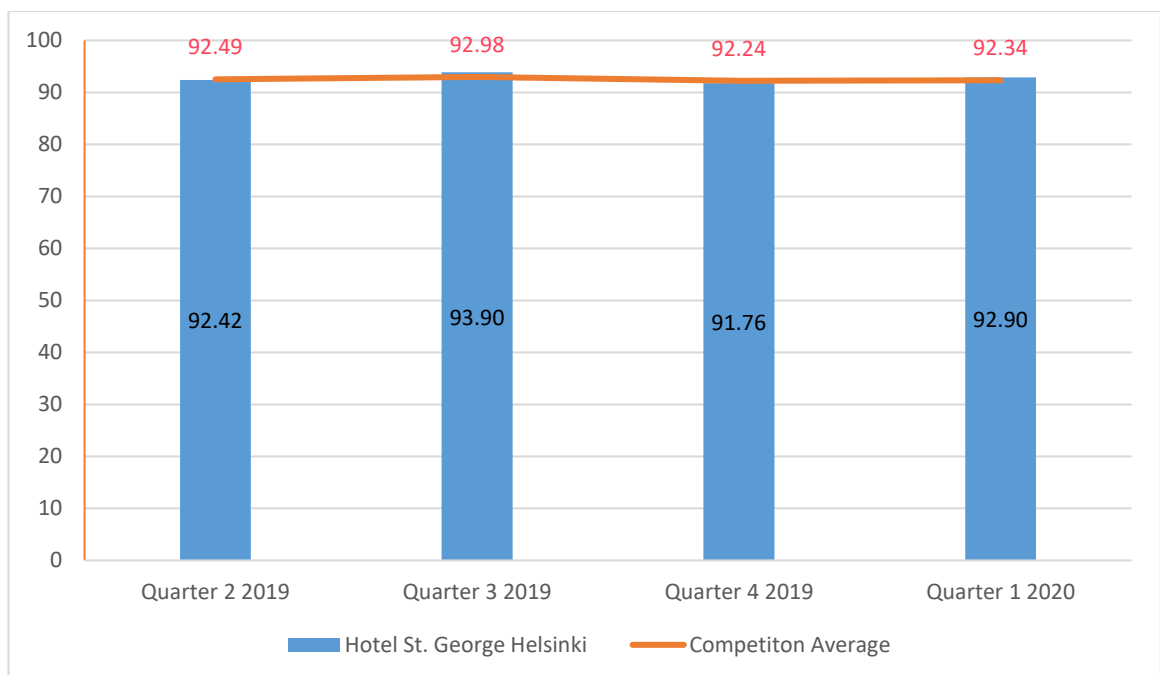

Figure 11: Global Review Index

As can be seen from the figure 11, GRI of Hotel St. George Helsinki in the 2nd quarter of 2019 was nearly same as its competitors' while GRI in the 3rd quarter of 2019 and the 1st quarter of 2020 were slightly higher. However, during the 4th quarter of 2019, Hotel St. George Helsinki fall behind its competitors with only 91,76 GRI whilst the competition average GRI was 92,24.

4.1.2 Competition Online Reviews
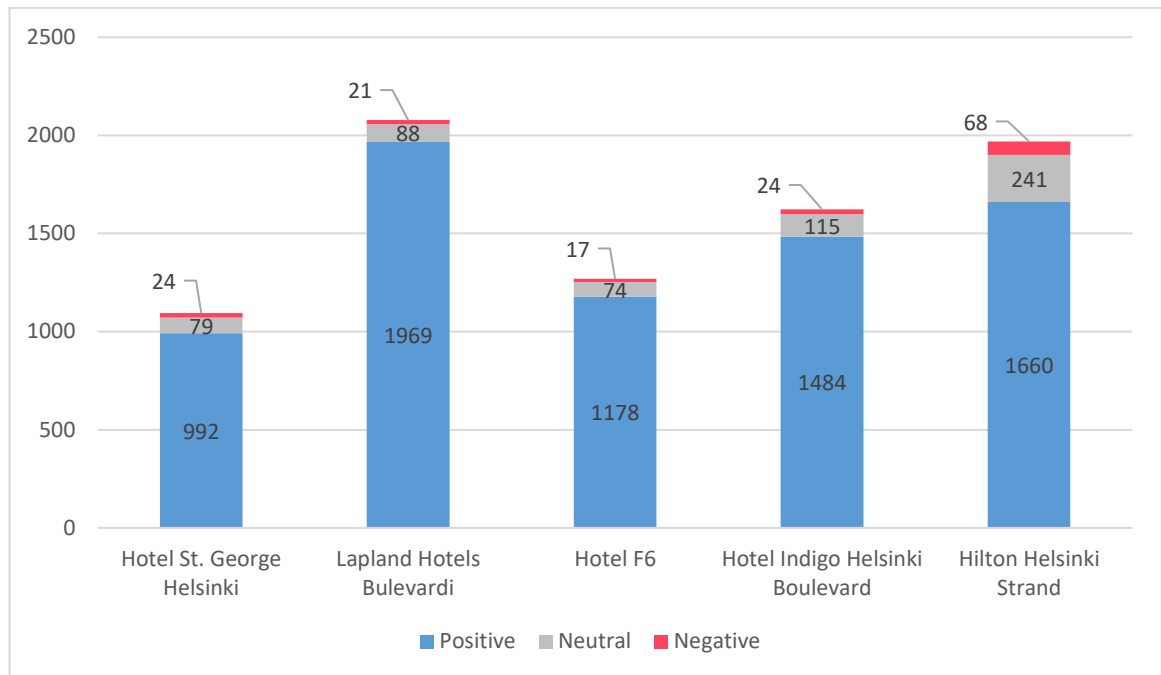
Figure 12: Competition Online Reviews

Hotel St. George Helsinki has the smallest review amount, accounting for 1140 reviews while Lapland Hotels Bulevardi and Hilton Helsinki Strand receive roughly double quantities which relatively are 2125 and 1969 reviews. Lapland Hotels Bulevardi also outperforms all of its competitors with the largest amount of review, largest amount of positive review (92% of its review are positive), smallest amount of neutral review (4%) and none of the reviews is negative (0%).

The second-best performer is Hotel F6. Despite of a relatively small amount of review (only 1286), 91% of its reviews are positive, 5% are neutral and only 1% of negative reviews. The commissioning Hotel St. George Helsinki is ranked as number 3 with the percentages of quality are relatively 87%, 6% and 2%.

Hotel Indigo Helsinki Boulevard ranks as number 4 and the number 5 is Hilton Helsinki Strand. Although Hilton Helsinki Stand has the second-biggest amount of review (1969), only 84% of the review are positive, 12% are neutral and the hotel has the biggest amount of negative review: 68 reviews which account for 3% of total review.

4.1.3 Sources and channels

Two main sources of online reviews come from Booking.com which contributes 486 reviews and Google which contributes 262 reviews. Other sources which are TripAdvisor, Hotels.com, Expedia and Facebook, contribute to a total of 392 reviews.
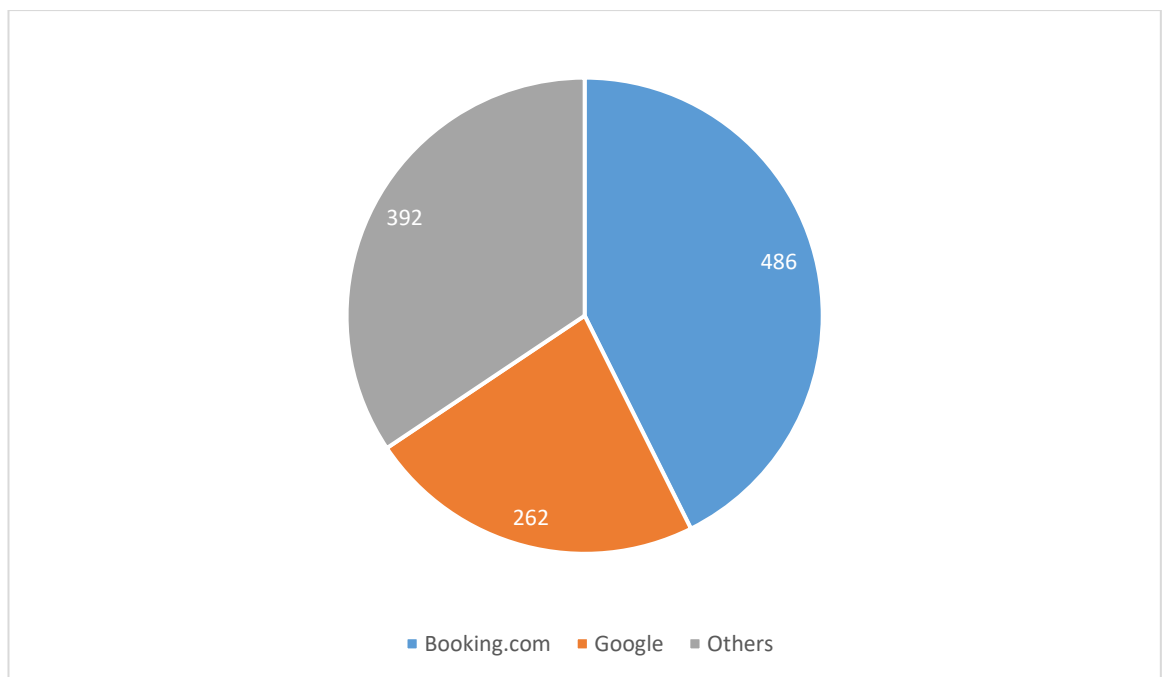
Figure 13: Sources of online reviews

In addition to the sources of review, a research in how Hotel St. George Helsinki and its competitors are recommended through social media and recommend sites are conducted. Five main hotel-recommended sites are Facebook, Holidaycheck, Ctrip, Tophotels and Trip24h. Among these five sites, Hotel St. George Helsinki are mainly recommended through Facebook and Holidaycheck.

Hotel St. George Helsinki got 97,7% recommended on Facebook with 42 out of 43 votes yes. All the other four competitors got 100% recommended from Facebook. The biggest amount of vote belongs to Lapland Hotels Bulevardi with 47/47 votes. On Holidaycheck, all five hotels in the competitive set are 100% recommended and Hilton Helsinki Strand has the biggest number of 34 votes. The commissioning Hotel St. George Helsinki got

only 5 recommended votes. On the other hand, Hilton Helsinki Strand is the only hotel that got recommended on Ctrip, Tophotels and Trip24h. All the votes are positive which means Hilton Helsinki Strand got 100% recommended from these three sites.

4.1.4   Semantic analysis

Semantic analysis studies how the commissioning Hotel St. George Helsinki are performing in different departments. Four main chosen department are Service, Location, Cleanliness and Value, plus one additional index GRI from ReviewPro.
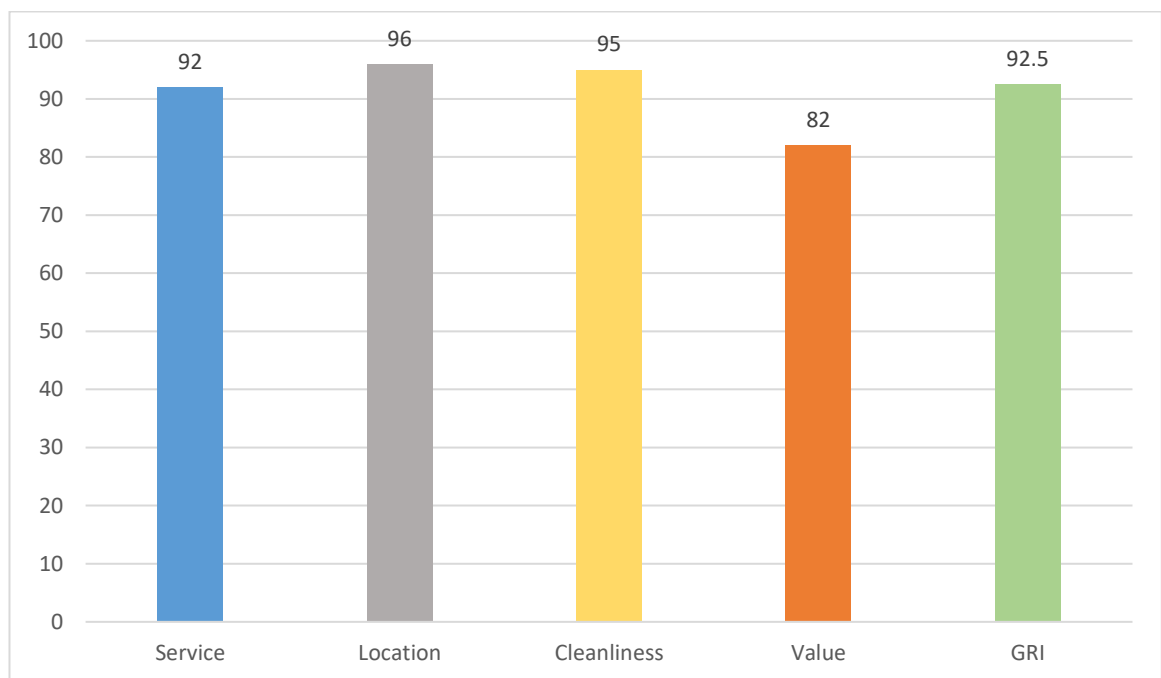
Figure 14: Semantic Scores

As can be seen from figure 14, Hotel St. George Helsinki has very high scores for all of its quality aspects except Value. Location score is 96 out of 100 as the hotel is located in the heart of Helsinki and the Design District. In addition, Hotel St. George Helsinki face straight to the Old Church Park with very good view sight and close to all of the attractive spots in Helsinki. Being easy to reach by public transportation also contributes to this very high score of location.

Cleanliness is the second-highest score with 95 out of 100. This is understandable since the hotel is fully refurbished and all the facilities and furniture are brand new. Directly contributing to the success of the high-rated cleanliness, a team of professional housekeepers is counted.

Service score is 92 out of 100, which is also considered as relatively high. Hotel St. George Helsinki is a next generation of luxury and rated as a five-star hotel which provides full-service experience. Services also include shuttle service, concierge, 24-hour front desk and room service, complimentary fitness center with swimming pool, etc.

The lowest level of review rate is about Value of money. Only 82 out of 100 scores are graded for Hotel St. George Helsinki. Low Value score means customers are not satisfied with their received experience compare to the price paid. This low score in Value also drags the overall score of the hotel down.

4.1.5 Countries and languages

Six main countries that brings the most traffic to Hotel St. George Helsinki online reputation are: Finland, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, Japan, Germany and Spain.

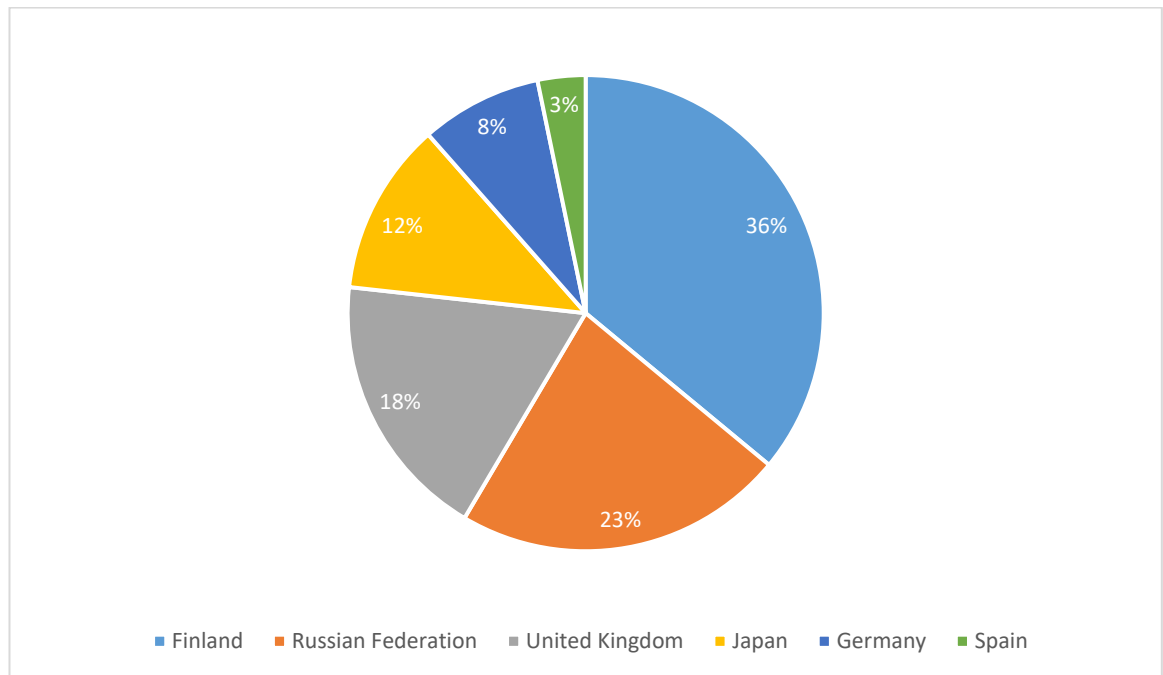Figure 15: Online review country contribution

The biggest amount of reviews comes from Finland with 144 reviews, accounting for 36%. The second largest review number is 90 reviews which come from Russian Federation and take 23% of total reviews. The rests of review come from United Kingdom (18%), Japan (12%), Germany (8%) and Spain (3%). Reviews from other countries are not taken in this analysis.

In addition to the quantity of reviews, positivity level of those reviews is also taken into consideration. 79,1% of reviews from Finland, 78,8% of reviews from United Kingdom and 81,1% of reviews from Russian Federation are positive. Japan and Spain are the countries that brings most of positive reviews to Hotel St. George Helsinki, accounting for relatively 93% and 91,3% positivity. However, Germany seems to be a rough market when only 71,1% of the review from Germany are positive.
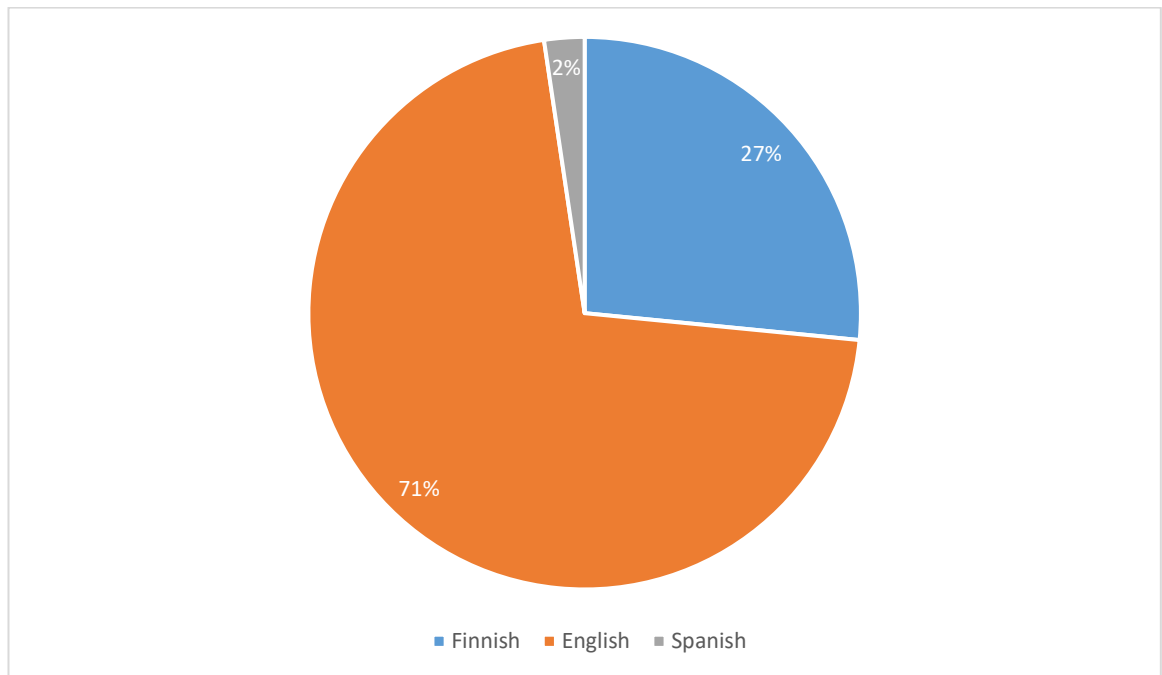
Figure 16: Online review languages

Online reviews are mainly written in English, Finnish and Spanish languages. Among the total amount (excluding reviews written in other languages), 332 reviews are in English and dominate 71%, 27% of review are in Finnish as the Hotel St. George Helsinki is located in Finland and Spanish reviews take only 2%.

In addition of 332 reviews in English, Hotel St. George Helsinki got mentioned 2457 times from all the channels. Positive mentions take 82% with the sum of 2014 and negative mentions take 18% with the sum of 443.

4.2   Analysis of offline reviews

According to Ms. Mari Suhonen, Reception Head Hostess, the guests are generally very satisfied and most of the feedbacks are good. Guests are usually satisfied with the customer service that made them feel welcome and feel that their requests are fulfilled. Customers are also satisfied with the selection of services that the hotel provides, for instance the hotel unique bar Wintergarden, in-house St. George Bakery and the Spa. Hotel St.

George Helsinki also get a lot of feedbacks of its magnificent décor, how beautiful it is all around the hotel and in the rooms.

Hotel St. George also has a specific reception for Spa guests in the Spa area. Feedbacks are taken when customers finish their experience or treatment in Spa. According to Ms. Linda Ekholm, Head of Wellbeing, customers are very satisfied with Spa's massages, treatments and the expertise of Spa's therapist. Spa's facilities for example, swimming pool, sauna, steam and lounge are always included for all the hotel guests and guests who book the treatments.

However, the hotel also receives negative feedbacks like any other hotels alive. The most of negative feedbacks are about inconveniences happened during the opening time of the hotel, when everything is not very ready to be in operations. Crowded breakfast and spa during weekends and the age limit of Spa are also among the negatives. Some of the negative feedbacks happened and self-resolved during a certain time that the hotel cannot affect. For example, noises from the nearby construction during the renovation of the neighbor hotel Marski by Scandic. On the other side, some negative feedbacks are recurring and need to be corrected or changing in procedures: the mechanism of how the hallway door is opened in the way that hits the customer every time they cross or people are allowed to smoke in the balconies which affect other guests and against the concept of a non-smoking hotel, just to name a few.

All in all, the general level of guest satisfaction is still very good in the hotel despite of some inconveniences and obstacles that need to be fixed.

4.3 Analysis of management perspectives

In addition to customer overall perception of the received service, it is important to examine the perspective of the service provider to understand the experiences that were designed to be, compared to the actual received experiences by the customers and how service provider meet customer expectation (see figure 17 below).
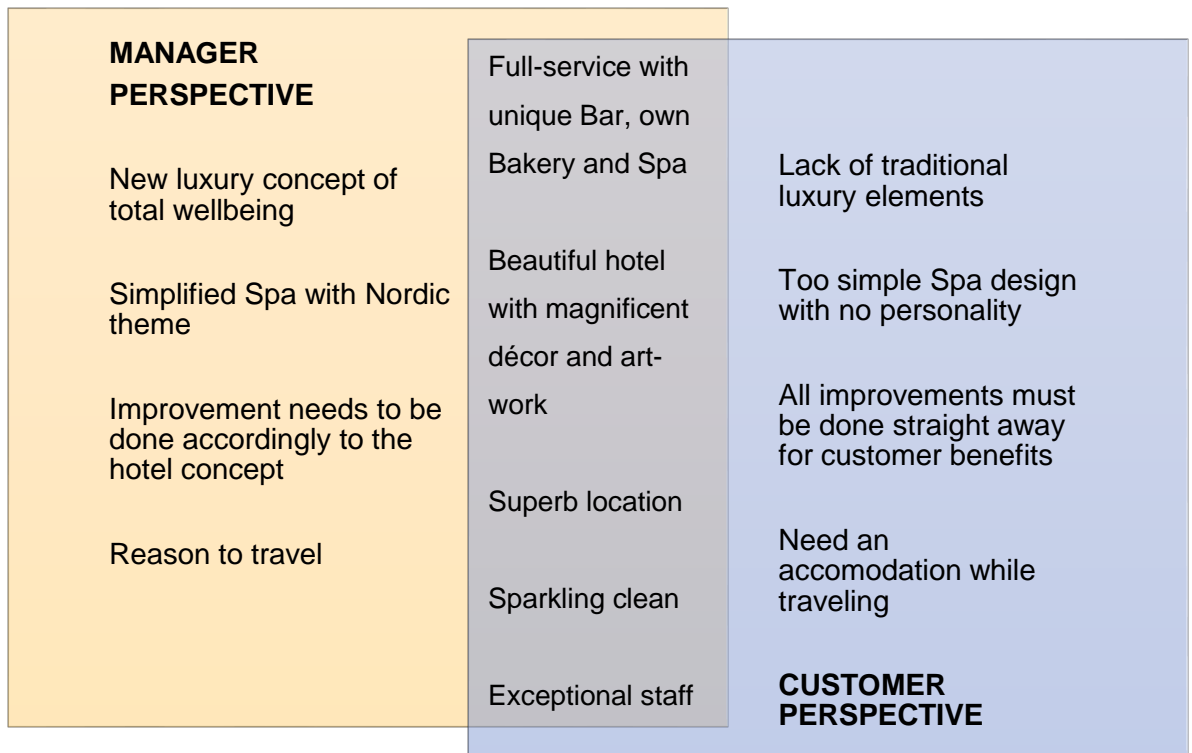
MANAGER PERSPECTIVE	Full-service with unique Bar, own Bakery and Spa	
New luxury concept of total wellbeing		Lack of traditional luxury elements
Simplified Spa with Nordic theme	Beautiful hotel with magnificent décor and art-work	Too simple Spa design with no personality
Improvement needs to be done accordingly to the hotel concept		All improvements must be done straight away for customer benefits
Reason to travel	Superb location	Need an accomodation while traveling
	Sparkling clean	
	Exceptional staff	CUSTOMER PERSPECTIVE

Figure 17: Guest satisfaction between customer's and manager's perspectives

Stated by the managers, Hotel St. George is a five-star luxury hotel. Unlike its sister classic and traditional luxury Hotel Kämp, Hotel St. George concentrates on wellbeing, art and design. These are major factors in creating the guest experience, the hotel targets the art and design enthusiasts, people who want to experience something new and people who value health and wellbeing. Mari Suhonen, hotel's Head Hostess described that "Hotel St. George is a place of relaxation for the mind and body and the hotel really is a reason to travel, not only some hotel that you stay in because you travel".

Also pointed out by Ms. Suhonen, "the fact that St. George is a five-star hotel but very different kind than what people usually think of a five-star hotel, creates a challenge". If the guest does not receive enough information of the hotel's idea and concept of the new kind of luxury that St. George wants to convey, the guest might be disappointed by the low-key elements and atmosphere in the hotel as they have expected in a more traditional grandiose hotel.

To measure and manage customer satisfaction, hotel management team put their efforts in many different sources and channels. In addition to the feedbacks the hotel gets by conversing with the guest during their stay and mostly when they are checking out, a survey is sent to the guest's email in the following day after their stay. To manage customer

online reputation, feedbacks from OTAs and review sites are collected and scored by Re-viewPro and lately now Loopon due to the change by Nordic Choice Hospitality Group.

Customer satisfaction is measured and handled department by department. Head of each department will be in charge for any feedback regarding their department. However, Guest Satisfaction Forum is a bigger forum for the whole hotel where customer satisfaction is discussed throughout all the department. Target scores are set up and then compared with the hotel general received scores.

When it comes to negative feedbacks, handling procedures differ from each department and depend on the nature of the feedback: is the feedback received on spot or afterward, is the guest giving feedback face-to-face or indirectly by email for example. When the feedback come directly to the hotel during customer stay, actions are made immediately to correct the possible mistakes if there is one. "Making actions straight away is rule number one", said Marianna Alastalo, Housekeeping Manager.

However, according to Ms. Johanna Sainio, Restaurant Manager, never has any decision been made before she spoke with the staff who involved to the received feedback. She wants to understand both sides of the story because "sometimes they are very different", said Ms. Johanna Sainio.

Furthermore, Ms. Mari Suhonen gave an example of how a complaint should be handled. "When we receive a complaint, you always need to apologize sincerely for the possible mistake if there is one, empathize, and do your best to resolve the issue already on the spot. Listen and identify the issue, reflect the guest's delivery of the feedback so you can respond in the best possible way. The guest is not to be made feel bad for complaining, but they should feel their feedback is taken seriously, appreciated and measures to fix the issue/to compensate are taken. Usually it is best to handle a complaint yourself but in case the gravity of the complaint is high or the hoped result needs management handling, then you can forward the complaint onwards".

To improve customer experience and hence guest satisfaction, managers have different way of expressing but a same philosophy of making right from the start to give the guest the best possible service and all of the needed supports to make their stay memorable. In that way, consistency of service quality is the number one. All the staffs need to know what they are doing and perform the same service in a five-star manner. To succeed at that quality consistency, staff training is indeed required. The training of the staff must be

upkept since the hotel is changing and making improvements every day. Staff skills and knowledge should not be a one-time achievement.

In management perception, there are things that made the guests happy but some do not. Improvements are made time by time but there are stuffs that belong to the hotel concept and some technical issues that cannot be changed. Balancing costs versus profits is also another obstacle that slow down the service experience. Making and maintaining customer satisfaction is an anchor to the success of any hotel but if there is no business, there won't be any satisfied customers.

4.4   Situational analysis

After conducting the research and analyzing its data, a situational analysis of how the commissioning company is performing with its internal strengths, weaknesses and external environmental factors that affect as opportunities and threats to the company.

Table 1: SWOT analysis of Hotel St. George Helsinki

Strengths	Weaknesses
Newly refurbished premises	Many stuffs that not ready to perform during opening time
Superb location with stone distance to most of the attractive sites of Helsinki	Noise from the street and the busyness of city center
Brand visibility	Low value for money
Five-star service and facilities	High price
Excellent staffs	Lack of ordinary luxury standards
Support from Marriott Bonvoy loyalty program and Nordic Choice Club	High demand in membership benefits from Bonvoy
	Confusion of choosing only one loyalty program to use
	Busyness in Breakfast and Spa during weekends
	Age limitation of entry to Spa
Opportunities	Threats
Helsinki hotel market is booming	New international and high-profile hotel competitors
More international hotel operators and investors have come to Helsinki	High expectation of luxury standards
Helsinki is among the world's most livable cities and a new tech hub in Europe	Climate change declines the demand of tourism

Wellness travel and luxury are among the new megatrends in tourism 2020 Partnerships with other companies and organizations to bring additional values to the customers	More competitors come from other industry Coronavirus pandemic causes significant crisis in tourism

Housed in a magnificent and historic building with a fully refurbishment, Hotel St. George Helsinki offers its customer outstanding five-star facilities and services. The hotel is located in the heart of Helsinki, a superb location to reach by public transportation and visit sightseeing spots in walking distance. Hotel St. George has a high brand visibility from Kämp Collection Hotel, the finest accommodation hotel group in Finland. The hotel brand visibility is very high as it is an independent property from Nordic Hotels & Resorts as well as a member of Design Hotels from Marriott International. Furthermore, Marriott International is still in a dominating position of the biggest hotel group in the world. As an affiliate of Marriott Design Hotels, Hotel St. George has the chance to share the best-in-class loyalty program Bonvoy and marketing support from Marriott. From November 2019, Hotel St. George also officially participated to Nordic Choice Club, a benefit from the acquisition of Kämp Collection Hotels from Nordic Choice Hospitality Group. Nowadays, customers can choose one loyalty program they want to collect bonus points and redeem the membership benefits.

The main weakness of Hotel St. George was the hard time during its opening when everything is not ready to be in operations. In addition, high room rate and low value for money are among the worst elements of the hotel. As Hotel St. George is a new art, design and wellbeing luxury hotel, it lacks the ordinary services of a traditional five-star hotel. Noises from the city center are also bring many complaints to the hotel guest satisfaction. Another weakness that brings negative effects to Hotel St. George guest experience is from the diversity of loyalty program. Besides the benefits, the more loyalty programs a hotel participates to, the more confusions for customers in direct booking channels, difference in membership rates and choosing the one to collect bonus points as well as redeem membership benefits. The last and most common negative in the hotel is the busyness in St. George Breakfast and Spa during the weekends. Customer had to wait for quite a longtime before getting seated during rush hours.

In 2018, Tourism in Finland hit the record level of nights spent by non-residents increased by 1,3%, reached the new record of 6,8 million and Helsinki capital area is among the major tourism regions (Business Finland, 2019). This booming tourism market will open up many opportunities for Hotel St. George to get more customers. Helsinki is becoming the

most functional city in the world (City of Helsinki 2019) and the new tech and conference hub in Europe (Signal from Helsinki 2019). More and more business and start-up events are held in Helsinki which attracts companies and business travelers. Moreover, Helsinki is among the world's liveable cities for several years (Daily Finland 2018) and getting more people coming both to live and to visit the city. Inside Finland, more people are also moving from rural areas to the capital region. This increase in population will create more opportunities for the hotel to sell its services. As Hotel St. George's customer segment is both business and leisure, this growing market will increase a significant number of customers to the hotel.

In addition, according to Skift (2020), wellness travel and luxury are among the megatrends for tourism in 2020. As Hotel St. George Helsinki is a wellness luxury hotel, the concept of the hotel is still on trend and attracting more people who appreciate health and wellbeing. Moreover, Hotel St. George's expanding partnerships with many companies and organizations such as Hintsa Performance, Crisis Management Initiative, Virta Wellbeing, and young artists, will create the chance to provide additional values to the hotel customers.

The rapid growing hotel market in Helsinki, on the other hand, create vital threats to any existing hotels in the area, including Hotel St. George. There have been many new hotels opened in Helsinki recently such as Marski by Scandic, Lapland Hotels Bulevardi, Hotel U14. In the near future, Rubi Hotel Helsinki, the first German hotel group with its "Lean Luxury" philosophy will open in the first quarter of 2021 and following by a five-star Hyatt Grand Hansa will open its doors in 2022. These two are examples of soon will be opened high-profile competitors, which will share the international luxury hotel market in Helsinki and directly compete against Hotel St. George. Moreover, when the luxury is continuing being the top megatrend in hotel industry, there will be higher demand and challenges to fulfill and surpass the customer expectations. As Hotel St. George provides a variety of products and services, the hotel will get more competitions, even not from the hotel industry, which provide alternative products and services to the customers. Co-working spaces, conference halls, beauty clinics, can be the examples.

Furthermore, climate change scenarios have been affecting the tourism industry tremendously. Maximum reductions in seasons, together with changes in humidity and isolation, creating difficulties and causing loses for certain types of tourism, including winter tourism sector (Grimm et al. 2018). As Finland has been popularly known among the top winter holiday destinations during the last decade (Foreigner.fi 2018), these climate change scenarios will have more or less negative affects to the country tourism and lately to the Hotel

St. George. Even though the hotel is not located in the north of Finland where is well-known for northern lights hunting, snow-boarding, ice fishing, horse or dog safaris, many of the tourists who travel to the north, stopover in Helsinki for a couple of days.

Last but not least, the world is currently facing to a global health crisis, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic (WHO 2020). As a result, this Coronavirus crisis imposes a great consequence to tourism industry. For instance, hotel revenue and occupancy dropped to a historic low level during the first quarter of 2020 and many hotel properties have closed (Skift 2020). Hotel St. George is not an exception and has gotten lots of difficulties from the crisis and has been closed its property since March 2020. In addition, nowadays many of the events and conferences were canceled or changed to distance methods due to the Coronavirus disease. This change in working behavior is predicted to be continue even after the crisis. More and more business, events and meetings will be held online (Figueiras 2020) and hence, cause a significant reduction in business traffic to the hotel industry.

5   Discussion

This discussion aims to provide an overall assessment of the whole study. As it is a re-search-oriented thesis, the trustworthiness and ethical viewpoints are reviewed firstly. The second part is to reflect the research method and results against thesis framework. The next parts are to conclude the research results and then present development ideas to the commissioning company about the research topic. Lastly, an evaluation of the whole thesis process, researcher's self-learning outcomes and suggestions for future research are provided.

5.1   Research trustworthiness and ethical viewpoints

It is critical to conduct a trustworthy research ethically. Research trustworthiness refers to different aspects depending on research methodology is quantitative or qualitative while research ethics remain similar meaning regardless the research methods.

Quantitative research trustworthiness focuses on the data and the use of data instruments which establish metrics about validity and reliability (Statistics Solutions 2016). However, qualitative research emphasizes on data trustworthiness rather than the data itself be-cause qualitative research measures things that might not be defined as metrics in quanti-tative research. Qualitative data trustworthiness consists four key elements: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Small Business 2020). Defined by Del Siegle (2015) in the Educational Research Basics from University of Connecticut: "a quan-titative study cannot be valid unless it is reliable, a qualitative study cannot be transferable unless it is credible, and it cannot be credible unless it is dependable. Criteria defined from one perspective may not be appropriate for judging actions taken from another per-spective".

As this research is conducted in a mixed-method which involves both quantitative and qualitative, six aspects of research trustworthiness as well as ethical viewpoints are exam-ined as below:

5.1.1   Reliability and Validity

The first phase is to examine the reliability level of this research which concerns to three main aspects: test-retest, interrater and internal consistency (Scribbr 2019). Firstly, quanti-tative data was gathered by collecting all the reviews of customers through 6 review sites. All these six channels do not provide reviewers opportunity to edit their reviews. The only

way is to delete and submit new reviews once for the same experience. Hence, if the author repeats the data collection days, weeks or months later, there might be a small possibility that the results can be very slightly different. Since travelers seem to leave reviews and very rarely change them, this research is considered as steady high test-retest reliability.

Secondly, in the term of consistency across raters or observers, quantitative data is collected by ReviewPro tool, hence the totally same results will be displayed regardless the collector or observer. Therefore, this research assessment checklist has a definite high interrater reliability.

Lastly, the researcher split the amount of data into 2 halves, one half contain data from three channels and the other half contains data from the other threes, there is a strong correlation between these two halves of data. For instance, Hotel St. George is rated 4,5/5 (equal to 90%) on TripAdvisor and is rated 9,2/10 (equals to 92%) on Booking.com. These two results are likely to be relevant and indicate that the research is strong internal consistency.

The second phase is to examine the research validity which emphasizes on appropriate time scale, methodology and sample method (Research Methodology 2020). The research was conducted in the first quarter of 2020 and quantitative data is collected in a proper time scale from April 2019 until April 2020. This time span is chosen to fulfil a whole one year in-operations of Hotel St. George. By choosing a full year in-operations time of data collection, the author gains an overall observation of how guest satisfaction has been performing in the commissioning company and its competitors through different time of the year, including seasonal difference and special events.

The author chose both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to conduct this study as guest satisfaction is measured in both customer perspective and hotel management perspective. Quantitative data is collected for customer perspective analysis and qualitative data is collected for hotel management perspective analysis.

Data collection process and analysis sample were studied in chapter 3.3 and 3.4 with the supports of ReviewPro Online Reputation Management Tool and Otter.ai interview transcription tool. ReviewPro is known as the world's leading platform for guest intelligence and guest satisfaction while Otter.ai is well known for AI-powered tool in voice transcription.

In addition, this research validity is also asserted by construct, content and criterion validities. This guest satisfaction research is conducted with the measurement of 5 main traits which are GRI, Service, Value, Location and Cleanliness. All these 5 traits have a strong correlation with the main concept of measuring guest satisfaction. Therefore, a high construct validity is asserted. In addition to these main 5 aspects, other 21 different extended aspects are also taken into observation such as Room, Staff, Spa, Food & drink, etc. Thus, a high content validity which covers the overall aspects of guest satisfaction is well conducted in this research. Lastly, this research is conducted to measure the guest satisfaction in Hotel St. George. If in the near future the performance of guest satisfaction is improved accordingly to the suggestions of development ideas which is presented in chapter 5.4, this research is considered as high criterion validity. This matter will be clarified by the near future.

5.1.2 Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability

To examine the credibility of the qualitative part of this thesis, the author used triangulation and member checks method. Firstly, by using triangulation during the interviews, the author/interviewer asked the same questions of different participants and collected data from different sources though different methods to answer the same questions. Secondly, the author also applied member checks to give participants the chance to review the data collected by the author and the author's interpretation of that data. All the interviewees have access of intentionality of their despondences. Interviews were recorded and interview transcripts were sent to all the interviewees for their ability to correct errors. These interview transcripts create opportunities to the author to summarize raw data which is among the first step to data analyses. All the interviewees also provided additional volunteer support with their information if the interviewer need. Moreover, overall adequacy of the data is taken care in addition to each interviewee individual data. By all of above examinations, this qualitative research is considered as high confident in the truth of the research study's findings. In another word, the study is high credible.

Transferability exposes the ability to apply research findings to other contexts or with other respondents. The fact that knowledge obtained from one context can be applied to or have high relevance for other contexts or for the same context but in different time frame, cannot be proved definitively. However, during the research, the author collected sufficient data information, detailed descriptions and all the observations are defined by the specific contexts of the study. In this case, transferability belongs to the readers of the study whose would apply the study to their receiving contexts. By this way, this study is considered to be likely transferable.

Dependability is the extent in which the research can be replicated by other researchers. This research contains sufficient contextual information from literatures to methodology so that if one researcher wanted to repeat this research, he or she would have enough information to obtain similar findings as in this research.

Finally, confirmability examines the level of neutrality of the research findings. Qualitative data from interviews were recorded and survey results were extracted to be raw data before analyses while qualitative data from online reviews by using observation method were reported in Excel and ready to be used as input data for analyses. By doing this way, research findings are based on participant's responses and independent third-party sources such as review sites, not any potential bias or personal motives of the author have conscious or unconscious bias to the accuracy of participant's data. This high confirmability ensures that researcher bias does not distort another interpretation from what the research participants provided to fit a certain narrative.

5.1.3   Research ethical viewpoints

There are several ethical fundamentals which define the research ethics for undergraduate theses. In this thesis, the author chose to use five research ethical principles based on the research strategy of Laerd Dissertation (2012), which relatively are: minimizing the risk of harm, obtaining informed consent, protecting anonymity and confidentiality, avoiding deceptive practices and providing the right to withdraw.

Firstly, this research does not create any harm for all the involved parties such as online reviewers, interview participants, commissioning company and the author. Online reviewers need to accept review policies from OTAs and review sites before they can leave a review. These reviews are voluntary and both review sites and ReviewPro tool are following GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) inside the Europe. All interviewees accepted the consent form before any interviews. Interview Consent Form is made base on the guide from School of Geosciences, part of University of Edinburgh (see appendix 1). By accepting the consent form, interviewees agreed that they are voluntarily involve to the research. Interviewees understood that they do not have to take part and have the right to stop the interview at any time and skip the questions they do not want to discuss.

While collecting reviews by using ReviewPro, no personal information is collected. The research focus on what reviewers wrote about Hotel St. George rather than reviewers' personal data. However, all data that ReviewPro collected in this research are public data

provided by Google. In addition, interviewees are provided the chance to keep their confidentiality when the thesis is published, information in the interview that could identify the interviewees are not revealed. None of the interviewees wish to anonymize their identities. Along the consent form, interviewees give the author authority to use their direct quotations without made-up names. Therefore, anonymity and confidentiality are well kept for the commissioning company, the interviewees, and the reviewers.

Moreover, to prevent the deceptive practices, this research is conducted with an agreement with the commissioning company and the Interview Consent From states clearly the research topic, research purpose, researcher name and educational organization information. By doing these actions, this thesis is considered as a non-covert research.

Lastly, this thesis provided the participants the right to withdraw from the research process. As can be seen from Interview Consent Form, interview transcripts can be sent to participants upon requests and participants have the opportunity to correct any factual errors from the interview. In addition, before any interviews, interviewers always repeated about participants' rights to stop the interviews at any time as well as the opportunities to withdraw from the research process.

By all of the above examinations, this thesis is considered to be ethically conducted.

5.2 Reflection of the research against thesis framework

This chapter compares the relevance and support of theoretical framework to the research method and results. Firstly, the framework supports the thesis objective and provides sufficient knowledge to understand the thesis topic and related aspects such as guest satisfaction, customer review, hotel segmentation, competitive set, etc. Secondly, based on the Service Operation Model, the author chose accordingly a mixed-method to conduct the research, which covers both perspectives of guest satisfaction: from customer and from service provider.

During the research data collection, a set of hotels is chosen to be the competitors of Hotel St. George while comparing the performance of guest satisfaction. This competitive set is formed based on the criteria of how to establish an appropriate compset from STR and Four P's in a Pod model.

Data collected by using ReviewPro and observation are categorized into positive, neutral and negative which are highly related to the confirmed and disconfirmed judgments context in Oliver's model of Expectation Confirmation Theory. These confirmation and disconfirmation reviews are brought to the management interviews to see their perspectives and then a comparison between provided service operations and received service experience is made based on Service Operation Model.

The lowest level of correlation between theoretical framework and data results lands in the guest satisfaction measurement methods. The traditional SERVQUAL instrument was not directly used to classify and analyze guest satisfaction indexes. Instead, a more effective and up-to-date platform named ReviewPro is alternatively used. ReviewPro is widely used nowadays as an integrated computer program to measure guest related issues such as CRM, competitive benchmarking, tactical resource and resource allocation guide. However, the concept of SERVQUAL can be clearly found in ReviewPro determinants. For example, tangible factors are reflected by facility, cleanliness and location while intangible factors can be service, and value of money.

At the end of the results part, a situational analysis of Hotel St. George's guest satisfaction is presented and analyzed through both internal and external factors based on SWOT model.

5.3   Research results conclusion

According to the analysis of guest satisfaction results, customers of Hotel St. George were generally satisfied with their stay experience. Although the fairly limited amount of reviews compared to Hotel St. George's competitors, the hotel achieved really good Global Review Index which has been most of the time higher than the average index of the competitive set. Customers were extremely happy with the cleanliness and location of the hotel which were scored accordingly 95 and 96 out of 100. Service quality was also in satisfied level with 92 out of 100. However, value score was negatively graded with only 82 out of 100. The core 82 of value is considered as an urgent notice to make improvement in order to enhance the overall score.

Most of the positive reviews went for the hotel facilities, friendly and professional staffs and the significant design of the hotel. Whilst, negative reviews came for busy breakfast during weekends and age limitation of access to Spa.

The biggest online sources of review traffic came from Booking.com and Google with relatively 43 and 23 percent. The rests of review came from TripAdvisor, Expedia, Hotels.com and Facebook. English is the most common language of reviews with 71% and Finnish is in the second position with 27%. Although St. George is an international hotel with soft brand recognition from Marriott International, Finnish guests are still dominating the amount of stays and the following positions name Russian Federation and the United Kingdom.

In management perspective towards customer reviews, managers were happy that the hotel has been recognized and positively responded from customers. In managers' opinions, there are things that need to be fixed and corrected straight away to improve guest satisfaction but there are also many things that cannot be changed due to the hotel's concept, regulations and financial issues.

5.4 Development ideas for commissioning company

As many of the negative feedbacks come from the misperceiving the hotel philosophy of new luxury, the philosophy can play as a harmful risk against the hotel if the customer does not perceive its idea. To prevent disappointing customer from their expectation of a classic and traditional luxury in Hotel St. George, clear hotel branding actions and customer communications are needed. Focusing on marketing the hotel concept before the guest's arrivals can be a solution.

The second most common complaint came from the busyness of St. George Breakfast during the weekends. The hotel already put some effect to solve this problem for example limiting the coming of non-residence guests from outside or boosting communications between guests and receptionists during arrivals so that guests will get noticed about the busy time and come to breakfast earlier or later but not during the rush hours. Shortening the breakfast duration in reservation system from 2 hours down to 1 hour or 45 mins and grant access to St. George Bakery or Wintergarden Bar to share some of the breakfast traffic can be taken into consideration.

Sixteen-year-old age limitation of access to Spa, in addition to constituting the peace of relaxation in Spa, brings many of negative feedback from leisure guests who travel as families. One suggestion can be lowering the age limitation down to 10 years old, but the children must be under strict supervision of parents who guarantee that the children will not make noises and be under good behavior. By this way, the peace of St. George Spa is

still well kept while families can have relaxing time without leaving their children back in the hotel rooms.

Next, the hotel already has a lighting system in front of every room which has two light options: red light of do not disturb and blue light of informing there is a house attendance cleaning inside the room. Many of guests misunderstood that the blue light means "clean my room", but it is not. To make customer experience be more convenient, the current system of "notification lighting" should be updated so that when customer put the blue light of cleaning on, the system will send some housekeepers to the corresponding room.

In addition, a smart TV is equipped in every room and has programmed to have communications between the hotel and the guests. The hotel has not taken good use of this feature yet, only some hotel information of opening time for different outlets is used at the moment. However, the Smart TV facility can be upgraded to welcome guests with their own names and send wishes to their special anniversaries. Hand-written note card is obviously more preferred for personal touch. The TV can also be used to send message to the staying guests and keep them updated with sudden changes in operations, for example "Today the restaurant will be closed at 10pm instead of 11pm due to the Finnish holiday opening hour". Furthermore, the TV can be a lively menu which presents the most up-to-date items with photos or illustrations for food and beverage. The TV can be a complimentary marketing tool for the hotel to inform the customer about current events that is happing in the hotel. For example, "there is a free entry live jazz performance in Wintergarden Bar tonight from 20:00 to 23:00 that you should not be missed". However, to prevent overusing the marketing by in-room TVs from being too aggressive and disturbing, event information can be showed only at the home page when the TV is on.

Top notch technologies can help the hotel be more effective in its operations and hence, improve guest satisfaction. However, the more IT-equipped experience a service has, the less personal touch the service can deliver. To prevent this scenario, Hotel St. George should take good use of IT supports but also set some limitations not to depend too much on technology and lose the chance to provide professional but personal quality service to its customers.

5.5 Learning outcomes and suggestions for future research

This research study has been a valuable experience for the learning development of the author. During the whole process of the thesis, the author has acknowledged intensive

amount of hospitality industry insights, customer satisfaction and the relationship between customer perspective and management perspective.

The thesis process started with a totally different topic in a different thesis type of product compared to the current thesis. After all, the author with the support from the same thesis supervisor, had made the decision to change the topic to the field that he really masters and has high confidence about, guest satisfaction. Even though the thesis's new topic is rather common and not extraordinary in the industry as well as among the undergraduate theses, the importance of guest satisfaction as a vital factor to the success of any hotel cannot be denied. The author's whole study had shown a depth-research in this matter, which contribute to not only the author's professional development, but also to the commissioning company's operational improvement. Although the thesis was reconstructed again from the beginning, the author has finally finished the thesis properly after five months. The original thesis process started in November 2019 and the thesis with new topic was carried-out from January 2020.

There were many obstacles during the thesis process. Corona virus pandemic is an example. The Corona virus has had very bad affects to the hospitality industry that the commissioning company was closed from March 2020, during the most important time when the thesis just moved to the data collection part. Due to this closure, all the communications between the author and the commissioning company were through phone calls and emails. Interviews were also conducted though phone calls instead of face-to-face method.

Another obstacle happened which affected to the thesis research data limitation. For example, the customer offline satisfaction should have been conducted with the collection of Net Promoter Score (NPS). However, due to the change in operations after the acquisition of Kämp Collection Hotels from Nordic Choice Hospitality Group, NPS was no longer used in the commissioning company. Therefore, NPS data was not collected and interview data was used instead.

Thanks to the experience and good personnel relation the author had while working in the commissioning company, the thesis was managed to be done precisely and on time. It was a valuable training for the author to manage sudden and unexpected changes as well as built the mindset that always have backup plans for the changes. Risk management, problem solving, self-studying and respecting deadlines undoubtedly contribute to the success of the thesis.

During the thesis, the author also learnt how to conduct a research with a real company and actual data. The more sources of data a research has, the more variable and less subjective that research is. However, this thesis is constructed partially based on the interviews. Four in-depth interviews from four different persons was taken and due to the different in schedules, it is not easy to conduct and review the interviews quickly. ReviewPro also played an important role as data provider and it took over a month to get the full data from ReviewPro. Due to this reason, the author learnt that in addition to the high variety and low subjectivity, the more parties involved in a project, the longer time that project needs to be completed.

Finally, some of the hypotheses that were supposed to be presented in the literature review, were dismissed because of the low validity. A research, in addition to its reliability of theoretical background, sources must be valid and most up-to-date, especially in the dynamic field that is rapidly changing and developing such as hospitality and tourism. Thus, it is important to recheck and consider the date and use of sources so that old and invalid sources should be avoided.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Interview Questions and Consent Form

Research project tittle: A research on guest satisfaction at Hotel St. George Helsinki.
Research investigator/interviewer: Alan Phan
Research participant name:

Interview goals: To understand current situation of customer satisfaction in different departments in Hotel St. George Helsinki and to gain management viewpoints toward certain customer reviews.

The interview will take 15 - 30 minutes. Interviewer doesn't anticipate that there are any risks associated with interviewee's participation, but interviewee has the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

Guest satisfaction Interview questions

The questions you see below are semi-constructed so that you can direct the topic in the way you feel most comfortable and skip the questions you don't want to discuss.

1. Can you please tell me briefly about yourself, your position and how you have been working here in Hotel St. George?
2. What is the hotel segmentation (target group, business/leisure, etc.)?
3. What do you think about the hotel guest satisfaction in your department? What feedback your received recently? What satisfied and dissatisfied the customer?
4. How the guest satisfaction is measured in your department?
5. When it comes to hotel complaints, how is the process to handle them in your department?
6. What are the major challenges regarding guest satisfaction that your department are facing to?
7. Have you ever stayed in the hotel as a guest, if yes how do you think about the hotel quality and if you must rate your stay experience, what would be the score?
8. Do you have any proposals to improve guest satisfaction in your department or in the hotel in general?
9. According to my research results, your department is recently facing to these issues from guest reviews (a list of issues is given accordingly to the department), what is your perspective regarding these?

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the research project. Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from Haaga-Helia UAS require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation.

Would you therefore read the accompanying information sheet and then sign this form to certify that you approve the followings:

- the interview will be recorded, and a transcript will be produced
- you will be sent the transcript and given the opportunity to correct any factual errors if you wish
- the transcript of the interview will be analyzed by Alan Phan as research investigator
- access to the interview transcript will be limited to Alan Phan and academic colleagues and researchers with whom he might collaborate as part of the research process
- any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed if you wish
- any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval

A quotation agreement could be incorporated into the interview agreement

Quotation Agreement

I also understand that my words may be quoted directly. With regards to being quoted, please initial next to any of the statements that you agree with:

	I wish to review the notes, transcripts, or other data collected during the research pertaining to my participation.
	I agree to be quoted directly.
	I agree to be quoted directly if my name is not published and a made-up name (pseudonym) is used.
	I agree that the researchers may publish documents that contain quotations by me.

By signing this form, I agree that;

- I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time;
- The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above;
- I have read the information sheet;
- I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation;
- I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality;
- I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.

_____

Printed Name

_____   _____

Participants Signature   Date

_____   _____

Researchers Signature   Date