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Customer satisfaction research for Company X

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Customer satisfaction research for Company X

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Tämä opinnäytetyö on asiakastytyväisyystutkimus ICT (informaatio- ja kommunikaatioteknologia) palveluntarjoaja Yritys X:lle. Työ tehtiin, jotta saataisiin selville Yritys X:n asiakkaiden tyytyväisyys tarjottuihin palveluihin. Lisäksi tutkittiin, miksi asiakkaat päätyivät valitsemaan Yritys X:n palveluntarjoajakseen. Tutkimuksessa otettiin myös selvää asiakkaiden tulevista hankintasuunnitelmista sekä siitä, olivatko viimeaikaiset organisaatiomuutokset Yritys X:ssä vaikuttaneet asiakassuhteisiin. Näiden tietojen perusteella tehtiin johtopäätöksiä asiakastytyväisyydestä sekä parannusehdotuksia, jotka auttavat Yritys X:ää parantamaan palveluaan.

Asiakastytyväisyys on tärkeää, koska se vaikuttaa yrityksen tuottavuuteen ja asiakkaiden pysyvyyteen. Yritys X:n ongelma oli se, että kunnollista asiakastytyväisyystutkimusta ei ollut tehty vuosiin, ja erityisesti nyt organisaatiomuutosten jälkeen asiaa oli tarpeellista tutkia. Opinnäytetyö myös sisältää myös teoriaosuuden, jossa selvitetään miksi asiakastytyväisyys on tärkeää, miten se syntyy ja mitkä asiat vaikuttavat siihen. Myös käytetyt määrälliset tutkimusmenetelmät kuvaillaan yksityiskohtaisesti.

Asiakastytyväisyyskysely suoritettiin olemassa oleville Yritys X:n asiakkaille ja vastaukset kyselyyn kerättiin puhelinhaastatteluiden avulla. Tutkimus oli määrällinen, ja sitä varten laadittiin kyselylomake, joka perustui asiakastytyväisyystutkimuksen teoriaan sekä Yritys X:n tarpeisiin. Suurimmassa osassa kysymyksiä oli annettu vastausvaihtoehdot, joista vastaajat saivat valita sopivan, ja joissakin kysymykset olivat avoimia, jolloin asiakkaat saivat vastata kysymykseen omin sanoin.

Tutkimuksen tulokset viittaavat siihen, että asiakastytyväisyys Yritys X:ssä on keskimääräistä parempi ja siis melko hyvä, mutta parantamisen varaa on erityisesti kommunikoinnissa asiakkaiden kanssa, laskutuksessa ja asiakaspalvelussa. Palveluiden luotettavuuteen, tuotteistukseen ja myyntihenkilöstöön ollaan kyselyn perusteella tyytyväisiä. Myöskään organisaatiomuutokset eivät vaikuttaneet suuresti asiakassuhteisiin.

Asiasanat: asiakastytyväisyyskysely, palvelut, määrällinen tutkimus

Eira Kaukonen

Customer satisfaction research for Company X

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This thesis is a customer satisfaction research for the ICT (information and communication technology) service provider Company X. The thesis was conducted in order to find out the customer satisfaction level of the customers of Company X. Also studied were the reasons why customers ended up choosing Company X as their service provider. The study also examined the customers' future purchase plans and if the recent organizational changes in Company X had affected the customer relationships. This information was then used to form conclusions of the customer satisfaction and suggestions for improvements which help Company X to improve its service.

Customer satisfaction is important, because it affects company profitability and customer retention. The problem at Company X was that there had been no proper customer satisfaction research conducted for years, and especially after the recent organizational changes it was necessary to research the matter. This thesis also includes the theory part on why customer satisfaction is important, how it is formed and which factors affect it. The used quantitative methodology is also described in detail.

The satisfaction research was conducted among the existing customers of Company X and the answers to the survey were acquired by phone interviews. The research was done utilizing a quantitative method and by designing a questionnaire form based on the theory of customer satisfaction research and the needs of Company X. Most of the questions had fixed answers from which the respondent could choose, and some questions were open-ended so customers could answer in their own words.

The results of this research imply that customer satisfaction of Company X is above average and thus quite good, but there is room for improvement, especially in the areas of communication with the customers, billing and customer service. According to the questionnaire, customers are satisfied with the reliability of the services, service branding and sales personnel. Also the organizational changes did not have a major influence on customer relationships.

Keywords: customer satisfaction, services, quantitative research

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	6
2	Theoretical framework.....	7
	2.1 Thesis research	7
	2.2 Why customer satisfaction is important	8
	2.3 Services	9
	2.4 What is customer satisfaction.....	10
	2.5 How customer satisfaction expectations are formed	11
	2.6 Customer satisfaction research.....	11
3	Methodology	13
	3.1 Research process	13
	3.2 Research problem	14
	3.3 Research objective.....	15
	3.4 Quantitative method	15
	3.4.1 Survey method	16
	3.4.2 Designing the questionnaire	16
4	Empirical research	18
	4.1 Telephone interview.....	18
	4.2 Questionnaire outline	18
	4.3 Reliability & validity.....	21
	4.4 Executing the research.....	22
5	Results of the research.....	23
	5.1 Analysis of the answers	23
	5.2 Conclusions and summary	33
	List of references	35
	List of electronic references.....	36
	List of figures	37
	List of tables.....	38
	List of appendices	39

1 Introduction

Today customer satisfaction is important for any company, as the competition is tough in almost all branches of industry. In many fields of businesses the basic service offerings are very similar, and for a company there is no easy way to differentiate from the competitors by only emphasizing the offered products or services. Thus a major way of standing out from the mass is for example by offering excellent customer service which is perceived that way by the actual customers of the company. This makes the customer satisfaction level an important key performance indicator which should be measured periodically in order to improve it. Customer satisfaction can be measured for example by conducting a customer satisfaction survey and interviewing the customers.

This research was conducted in order to find out the levels of customer satisfaction of the ICT (Information and Communication Technology) service company Company X. The reason why finding out this information is important is that in this heavily competed business area it is crucial to commit the customers to the service provider, and one way to do this is by offering excellent services, products and customer service to achieve a very satisfied customer. This information can then be used to improve customer retention among existing customers. Thus it is important to measure customer satisfaction continuously to find any negative or positive changes in it, which could affect the company's customer turnover and revenue. (Aaker, Kumar & Day 1998, 716.)

What brings interest to this research and Company X in general, is that at the moment the area of IT service providers who aim their services to the SME (small and medium enterprises) field is heavily competed. For example, the online company phone book Eniro.fi finds over 1000 IT (information technology) service providers only in the Helsinki area, and from personal experience as a sales manager it is evident that customers are quite well up to date of the available options in the service provider field and systematically put their acquisitions through the tendering process. Thus it is important to stand out from the mass with good customer service and solutions, as basically most of the companies offer the same services in a different package.

Company X operates in the ICT service sector, offering different kinds of ICT-outsourcing services for small to large-sized companies. Company X employs around 15 people, but is a part of a large national Group Z which operates on many different fields of ICT and all over Finland. The services and products of Company X consist of cloud-based everyday business IT tools (such as e-mail and backup services), hardware equipment, data center services and related telecommunications services. Also they offer IT-support and consulting services. Most

of Company X's customers are billed monthly for the service usage, so the customer relationships are often longer than occasional one-time buying.

Company X is one of the many ICT-service providers, which today aim to brand their services as solutions to customers. Their marketing emphasizes the model that by investing in the right IT tools to improve efficiency in everyday work and professional IT people to do the everyday IT-upkeep and fixes, a customer can save much of their time and money. Many of the services offered are immaterial; For example a cloud e-mail service does not come with a physical product but as an immaterial service, and it is marketed as a solution to a customer's communication needs. The old way was to bring a physical server to the customer's office with an e-mail software – the new "cloud" way is to serve the customers with an e-mail service which is produced directly from the service provider's data centers.

I studied how the customers rated different areas of services as well as the company as a whole. Also this study provides vital information to the sales team of Company X of the reasons why the customers chose Company X as their service provider and what kind of purchase plans they are making in the near future. The end of this thesis provides insight on the results of the interviews and suggestions for improvement based on the customers' feedback and common practices. The research is based on theory relating to customer satisfaction and the practice of conducting a questionnaire to the current customers, which was based besides the theory also on the needs and wished of Company X. The results were analyzed in order to find interesting or exceptional patterns and results, which could provide information on particular successes or problems in customer satisfaction.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Thesis research

I had been working for Company X for approximately one year, and we discussed the need for this kind of customer satisfaction research for about six months with my supervisors before actually starting the thesis process. The need for this thesis came from the acute need from the marketing and sales departments, as no customer satisfaction research has been made for many years, and there had recently been organizational changes in the company. This means there was a gap in the current knowledge of the customer's stance of Company X.

Thus a problem was that Company X did not have real and up-to-date information about the status of their customer's satisfaction. I discussed the matter and scope of the thesis with many departments (Marketing, Development and Sales) in order to find out what the current issues to address were and what kind of objectives we set for the thesis. This served as a

qualitative pre-research for the study, as I was able to find out different attitudes and opinions about what affected the customer satisfaction and this information support the designing of the research. Discussion with all of these departments was necessary also in order to make sure that the research target questions had not been recently surveyed and that I could make sure the “right kind” of questions would be asked, so the new acquired information would not be worthless or replicate already known information. (Wilson 2003, 23.)

2.2 Why customer satisfaction is important

Storbacka, Strandvik & Grönroos (see Grönroos 2000, 147–149) present with their customer relationship profitability model that customer satisfaction as a part of this model is closely related to customer profitability.

The customer relationship profitability model includes four main links:

From value to satisfaction: The value of the service is determined by the customer on how the quality of the service is perceived compared to the perceived sacrifice of the customer. Satisfaction occurs, when the sacrifice (e.g. monetary) is not too high. Satisfied customers are more likely to commit to the other party through trust, and thus also this leads to the bonding of the parties. This bond ties the customer to the service provider because of makes the transactions process between them more comfortable.

From customer satisfaction to relationship strength: Thus the good customer satisfaction makes the relationship stronger, and the customers more loyal. The relationship is stronger with those customers who say they are “very satisfied” compared to only “satisfied”. (Xerox, see Hart & Johnson 1999, 10; Johansen & Monthelie, see Gummesson 1998, 301.)

From relationship strength to relationship length: The stronger the relationship between parties is, the longer it will last. Also, customers feel that there are fewer reasons to choose alternative solutions. In longer relationships the parties get to know each other’s way of doing business and thus allow more personalized way of service. These factors also usually lead to more purchases by the customer, thus increasing the value of the customer.

From relationship length to relationship profitability: The length of the relationship affects the profit positively, and also the relationship provides higher revenues streams due patronage concentration. Also this has a positive effect on relationship revenues, allowed a more cost-efficient service process and lower relationship costs. Thus customer satisfaction is in a major role on a way to achieving more profitable customers. Storbacka et al. imply that these links are not “totally clear-cut”; this is why the customer relationships should be followed

in order to see how the model applies, and measurements of these factors if important where applicable. (see Grönroos 2000, 146–148.) Also it has been studied in the University of Michigan “that on average, every 1 percent increase in customer satisfaction is associated with a 2.37 percent increase in a firm’s ROI, whereas a 1% decrease in satisfaction is associated with a 5.08% drop in ROI.” According to this it could be said that a decrease in the customer satisfaction rate is twice the damage than the benefits with a similar increase in satisfaction. This implies that customer satisfaction directly affects the company’s success. (See Anderson & Mittal 2000, 118.)

2.3 Services

Lovelock & Wirtz define services as “economic activities that are offered by one party to another”. Being described as time-based performances, they bring value or a solution to the customer in exchange of money, time and effort, but this value comes from customer accessing value-creating components rather than transferring the ownership of a (physical) product. (Lovelock & Wirtz 2011, 37.) According to Grönroos, customers want solutions and packages which generate value to their own everyday activities. Thus, companies should accommodate these needs and offer solution packages which include all the elements and processes needed to create this value to the customers. (Grönroos 2007, 4.)

Nowadays many ICT service firms try to distinct themselves from the old-fashioned way of selling mainly hardware and software and try to move into the area of being more service-oriented with a large service offering, becoming the customer’s companion in solving any IT-related challenges. The new cloud and data center technology has been a significant factor in this, as the services can be produced over the internet from a single point of contact, that being for example the service provider’s own server farm. This way the different services (e-mail, business software etc.) can be sold and provisioned to the customer with a few clicks and with no additional installation or hardware required at the customer’s end. Also the service provider takes care of all the service-related updates, backups and support. This means that the service offerings are quite homogenous between providers (such as e-mail), so service providers must find other ways to stand out from the crowd, for example with excellent customer service.

Service quality is closely related to customer satisfaction. According to Grönroos, a good outcome of a service is necessary for good perceived quality of the service, but excellent service creates a distinct and sustainable competitive edge. (Grönroos, 2000, 61.) He also states, that in the literature about service quality it is often stated that the quality of a product or service is whatever the customer perceives it to be; as services often are subjectively experienced processes where different interactions between the buyer and seller happen, these

interactions have a significant impact on the perceived service (Grönroos, 2000, 63). Figure 1 illustrates the factors which influence how the customer perceives service quality. This model includes different external and internal factors of which some the company can control, and others which it cannot (e.g. word-of-mouth information). Good quality is perceived when the experiences quality meets the customer's expectations (expected quality); factors such as the customer's unrealistic expectations can cause the perceived quality to be low, even if the experienced quality would be deemed as good in an objective measurement. (Grönroos 2000, 67.)

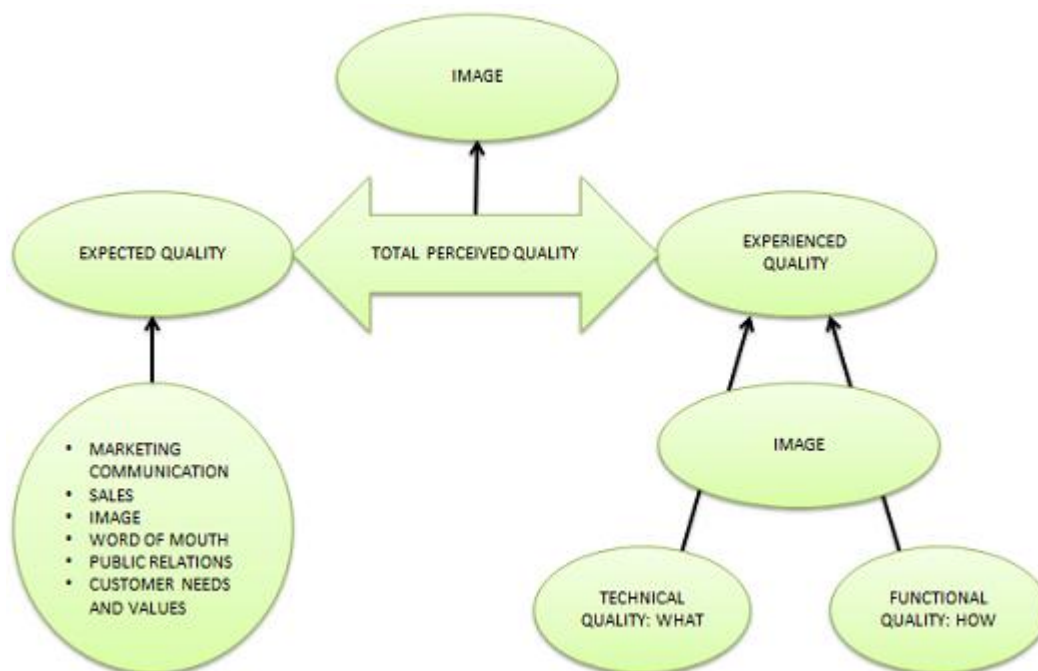


Figure 1: Total perceived quality (Grönroos 2000, 67.)

2.4 What is customer satisfaction

In a nutshell, customer satisfaction measures how the product/service of the organization performs in relation to a customer's requirements. If the service/product does not meet the customer's expectations, the customer is unsatisfied. If they are met, then again, the customer is satisfied. And if they are exceeded, the customer is extremely satisfied. This concept is relative, as the expectations of different customers are not identical. (Hill, Brierley & MacDougall, 2003, 7.) Another description is that satisfaction is that it is the customer's reaction or judgment to a particular purchase act or service performance (Yi, see Lovelock & Wright 2002, 87).

Also in the business literature the relationship between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction is discussed closely and even used synonymously, though others state that

“perceived service quality is just a component of customer satisfaction, which also reflects the price/quality trade-offs” (Zeithaml & Bitner, see Lovelock & Wright 2002, 87).

2.5 How customer satisfaction expectations are formed

According to Kotler & Keller (2006, 144) customers form their expectations from already happened past buying experiences, advice from friends and associates and also the marketing information and promises from companies and their competitors. They also discuss, that the expectations must be set correctly by the marketers. If it is too high, the customer will be disappointed with the received product or service, and if it is too low, it will not attract customers, even though it will satisfy the buyers.

The satisfaction process can be described with the confirmation/disconfirmation theory; the customer has an expectation of the service standard (which is often influenced by word-of-mouth information, company image, price etc.) and after the purchase and utilization they observe the service performance and delivery (and compare this experience to the expectations and e.g. monetary and timely trade-offs), and then form satisfaction judgments and evaluations based on these comparisons. The resulting evaluation “is labeled negative disconfirmation if the service is worse than expected, positive disconfirmation if better than expected, and simple confirmation if expected.” The positive disconfirmation means that the service exceeded the expectations and thus it is more likely to result in a very content customer who will profit the company also in the future. (Oliver, see Lovelock & Wright 2002, 87.)

2.6 Customer satisfaction research

According to Grönroos, there are different ways of monitoring customer satisfaction, for example by studying the market share, ad hoc customer satisfaction surveys and in the service industry by utilizing a relationship marketing strategy. By ad hoc customer satisfaction studies it is meant “traditional” surveys, which are often periodically done and for example used by the consumer packages goods industry, and of which this research is also an example of.

The relationship marketing strategy approach pursues to continuously gather various feedback data directly from the customers in daily interactions. This type of data does need a suitable data management system. Customer satisfaction can also be monitored by studying the market shares and particularly how large share of its customers the company has over time. This is important, as even with a high market share, if there is no long-term relationships between parties and the customer base is constantly new, it means that most likely the customers are not so satisfied. According to the literature, it is always more expensive to get a new customer (due e.g. marketing costs of attracting a new customer) instead of having an existing cus-

customer re-purchase. When adopting a model where the customer base is managed in such a way that the management is focused on improving the customer relationships and aims to get a larger share of its customers and their total purchases, the customer base will become healthier. (Grönroos 2000, 255–258.)

According to Aaker et al., satisfaction research should be executed at regular intervals in order to be able to track satisfaction over time. This is because over time, managers will try and do different things in order to improve the customer satisfaction, and take different measures after these improvements, and examine the results in order to find out if the changes made had a positive effect on the customer satisfaction. (Aaker et al. 1998, 716.) Thus it is vital to track whether or not the changes implied by customer satisfaction research results are actually valid and right things have been measured, as the aim of a customer satisfaction research is to provide new information on which the managers can base their decisions on, in order to improve customer satisfaction.

Johnson & Gustafsson write about the frequency of surveying this kind of continuous development; according to them it should be an ongoing process, but the frequency of performing such a survey depends on the customer base; if the base is not too large, the surveys shouldn't be done too often in order to avoid making it a burden to the customers. Also, any changes should be executed before the next survey, as otherwise the customer will question answering these kinds of surveys if the feedback does not result into visible actions. They make a recommendation of performing the survey at least yearly. It is also noted, that customer should be contacted more frequently in times of "critical stages of the product life cycle and market dynamics." (Johnson & Gustafsson 2000, 42–43.) I would say that with the prevailing competition situation and ongoing organizational changes, this research is a particularly topical matter.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research process

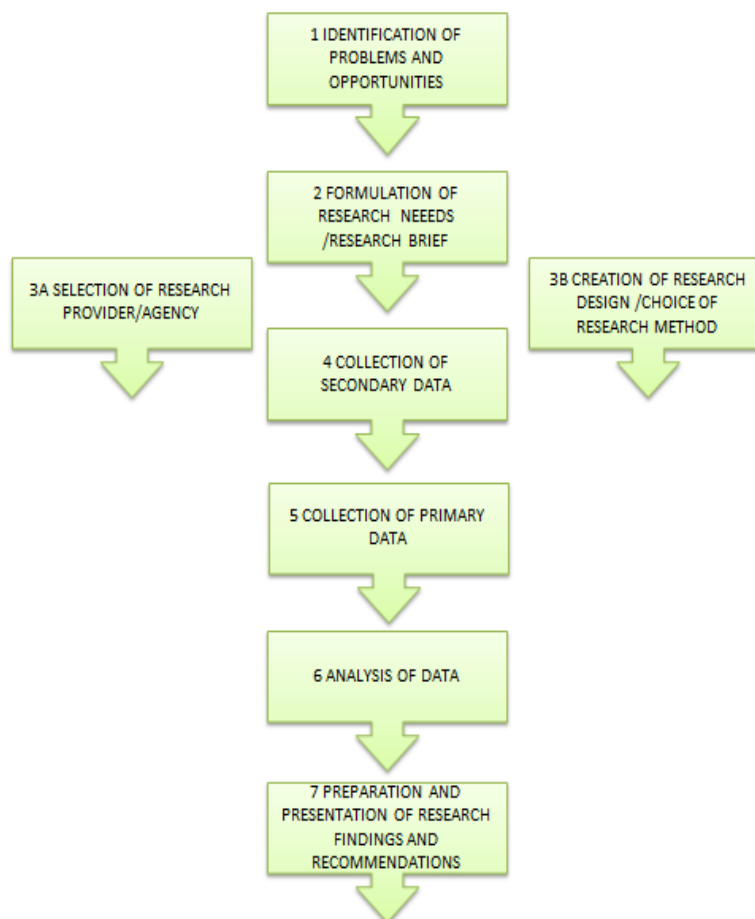


Figure 2: The marketing research process (Burns & Bush 2010, 21.)

I have aimed to schedule and process this study according to the model flow chart by Burns & Bush. It takes into account many of the important points in a research process, which are described in this paper. There are three types of research designs, which are the set of planned decisions on which the plan of the research is based when specifying the methods and procedures to gather and analyze the information. They are traditionally classified into exploratory, descriptive and causal research method. These basic sets can be many times matched to the current research problem and as such aid the decision-making process for finding the best problem solutions. (Burns & Bush 2010, 143.)

This study represents the descriptive method, because the aim of the research is “to measure the state of a variable of interest”, which in this case is the state of the customer satisfac-

tion. As this survey is a “snap-shot” of the current customer satisfaction situation, it is described as being a cross-sectional study. (Burns & Bush 2010, 143.)

3.2 Research problem

The changing environment of markets mean that managers have to constantly find ways to respond to different kinds of problems and challenges in their work. The information provided by marketing research can provide solutions to many of these problems; this means that the identification of the research problem in marketing research is important, as an accurate description of the problems helps to understand the information that will be needed for the research and thus contributes to the identification of the research objectives. (Wilson 2003, 21–22.) Wilson also indicates that “Any gaps in the information may also indicate areas where research is needed.”

The research problem in the case of Company X is that it has been years since any customer satisfaction research has been made, so there is no collected information on about how satisfied the customers are with Company X and its services. Customer feedback is mostly passed to the technical help team or sales team in occasional discussions, or in rare cases, written in e-mail comments, but there is no system for constant gathering of this kind of information. Also, the feedback is often circulated sometimes between a few people and so the management of the organization does not often know about it. This does not allow the management to fix any possible problems with a particular area of customer dissatisfaction, and this causes a risk of losing customers. Any customer dissatisfaction also may cause the customers not to buy any new additional services or products and thus the full potential of the customer relationship is not being used.

According to Reichheld & Sasser, when the customers receive good service, the profit gained from customers increases each year they are customers of the company. This is why customer loyalty is important, as there are costs involving in the acquisition of new customers, for example advertising, promotions and so on. (1990, 105–111.) Also research conducted by Keiningham, Perkins-Munn and Evans (2003, 37–50) indicate, that positive customer satisfaction is linked to intentions of repurchase, actual repurchase, market share and word-of-mouth information, though such effects occur usually on the higher end of customer satisfaction levels. This means that it is important to keep the customers as satisfied as possible in order to get them to continue purchases. This means that information about the current customer satisfaction rate is important. Only when this information has been gathered and analyzed, it is possible to address any issues that cause discontentment. A discontent customer is not likely to be retained and encouraged to make new purchases, so by keeping the customer satisfied

the company can raise its chances to keep the customer and profit more from the customer retention.

3.3 Research objective

Research objectives depend on the problem, but instead of describing the problem, the objective defines what kind of information must be gathered by the researcher in order to solve the research problem (Burns & Bush 2010, 110). Also according to Malhotra, when forming the objectives, in order to successfully execute the research there must be an understanding of the goals of the organization and the decision maker (Malhotra 2007, 45).

The objective of this research is to find out the satisfaction rates of the customers of Company X, and other kind of input about what they think of Company X and its services.

Other objectives are updating the right contact person information into the Customer Relationship Management of Company X, and this will happen naturally at the same time I am contacting the person for the survey and evaluating I have the right contact person at hand.

The questions of this research are also quite centered on the sales and sales-team related areas. This is because the customers are assigned a key account manager from the sales team, who is a contact point for the customer and thus has a good opportunity to receive customer satisfaction feedback. By analyzing the findings and results of the research, it is expected that it gives us information that will be useful in improving the customer satisfaction in the future and enables Company X to address any particular discontentment issues among customers.

3.4 Quantitative method

The data in this research is primary in nature, as it is formed and collected by the researcher, for addressing a specific current problem (2007, 143). In this study, the gathered data is quantitative. Quantitative research is often defined as research which involves the use of structured questions, for which the response questions are set in advance. Usually the amount of survey respondents is large in these kinds of researches. (Burns & Bush 2010, 235.) In this research most of the questions have a set of answers from which the respondents can choose from, and few open-ended answers.

Quantitative data is practically different kinds of statistics, which can be effectively measured and compared with statistical computer programs. Wilson also compares qualitative and quantitative research methods by saying that the qualitative research is used to seek out and understand attitudes and behavior, and quantitative research to largely scattered and widespread these attitudes and behaviors are. (Wilson 2003, 121.) As often done when performing

a research, I will also be mixing the quantitative questions with some qualitative questions, as this gives us deeper understanding of the motives behind the answers of the respondents.

3.4.1 Survey method

I chose to execute the research as a survey, as in this type of research the sample size is considerably large. The method chosen enables the interviewer to collect a large amount of data “in an economical and efficient manner” in comparison to many other methods. (Burns & Bush 2010, 267.)

According to Burns & Bush, the five advantages of surveys are that they:

- Provide standardization (the questions are set and arranged in a same particular way for each of the interviewees, so the process is uniform with a same set of questions and answers for the respondent. This assures the researcher of the information quality.)
- Are easy to administer (the interviewer needs to administer the interview situation less with a survey, compared to a focus group or in depth interview).
- Get “beneath the surface” (by direct questioning the researcher can get information that is not otherwise observable.)
- Are easy to analyze (compared to qualitative analysis which requires deep subjective interpretation, quantitative data can be analyzed in many ways with the help of statistical analysis software.)
- Reveal subgroup differences (with a large quantitative sample group can be divided into different kinds of groups, that can be then compared for finding interesting differences.) (Burns & Bush 2010, 267-268.)

The right sample group is important to define, as the researcher needs to know the population of interest for the research (Wilson 2003, 176). In the case of this survey this was fairly simple, as I chose the existing customer base to be the sample group, so there was no other sampling involved than extracting the information of active customers from Company X’s billing system. The sample size of the customers was 137, and almost all were billed monthly so the customer relationship was active. The questionnaire was answered by 49 people (35.8% of the sample size), which was a little disappointing but nevertheless a good turnout.

3.4.2 Designing the questionnaire

A questionnaire is a tool to gather data. It enables data collection using structured questions and is often used when conducting a survey. When planning to use a questionnaire, it is very important to properly analyze what one wants to measure with the questions and word them

carefully. The question wording also depends of the research objectives and the target groups. (Proctor 2005, 190.) The challenge in a questionnaire design is to form the questions so that it communicates the researcher's question effectively to the respondent, and the respondent's answers effectively to the researcher. Badly constructed and worded questions or complicated answers cause "distortion in that two-way communication" between the parties, which means that the parties do not fully understand each other and thus this affects the research validity of the comparisons made between the respondents and answers. (Wilson 2003, 145.) Pretesting and revising of the questionnaire is important, because in the initial drafting phase the questions are often unclear and cumbersome. By testing, the questionnaire can be fixed according to feedback before actually administering the survey in case of any faulty or misleading questions. (Proctor 2005, 205.)

The questions topics were determined based on the information Company X wanted to find out about their customers and their satisfaction, and the questions were formed so that the theory of marketing research supports them. After vigorous discussion, revising and discussion with my contacts at Company X and consulting the thesis lecturer, I decided to run a test interview with a few colleagues who had good knowledge of our customer base. This was extremely helpful as I was able to catch any unclear or badly formed questions and answers and receive feedback of the whole interview process and execution.

The types of questions created for this questionnaire consisted of mainly four types;

1. Closed dichotomous questions, which gave the respondent a chance to choose between yes/no answers. This provides simple responses to simple questions.
2. Multiple-choice questions with collectively exhaustive answers (the respondent has a chance to select many options from all the answer choices, and also an open "other" answer possibility. This allows the respondent to give exhaustive answers.
3. Questions with a non-comparative answer scale, meaning that choices are given to answer the question with rating numbers of 1-5, within a frame of reference (low price to high price, for example).
4. Open-ended questions, in which the respondents can answer to the question using their own words (no pre-set choices of answers). (Wilson 2003, 146–157.)

The wording and answers of the questionnaire were formed with the execution method of the interview in mind – as this is a phone interview, the questions cannot be too long or complicated and the answer choices must be kept at minimum. The abovementioned question types were also chosen because of their simple nature to be understood and used successfully in a phone interview, as graphic or pictorial scales could not be used. The research was conducted in Finnish, so the Appendix 3 Questionnaire form is a translation from the Finnish questionnaire form.

4 Empirical research

4.1 Telephone interview

I chose to execute the questionnaires as a telephone interview, because I felt that it would be more effective in reaching the interviewees, as they often are busy businesspeople in the company management responsibilities and would not be likely to answer to a postal or web-survey or have to arrange a meeting. Though most of the respondents were situated near in the capital area, nevertheless many live all over Finland, which would make arranging face-to-face interviews difficult and financially too expensive.

The advantages of telephone interviews are the relatively low cost of the interview processes, and the speed on which the information can be gathered. Also because the survey is conducted by the researcher, quality control can be done right after the questionnaire has been completed. The disadvantages of telephones surveys are that many respondents can have a bad attitude towards being interviewed on the phone. (Wilson 2003, 126.) Also for example many managers do not like to be asked to tell about their company's private data on purchases or plans on the phone. Other disadvantages include the lack of being able to use visual aids over the phone or provide long lists of options or text - as everything has to be communicated to the person on the phone, questions and answers must be quite understandable, short and simple enough to communicate them effectively to the respondent. To make the documenting process as efficient as possible, I filled out the respondent's answers straight into an excel-spreadsheet on the computer while conducting the research. Besides speeding up the process, as notes would not need to be transferred from paper form to digital form, this minimized the possibility of errors whilst the transfer process. The excel file would then later be imported straight into SPSS (IBM SPSS Statistics program) for analyzing.

4.2 Questionnaire outline

The first part of the questionnaire gives us basic customer information about the questionnaire target group: This data helps us identify the different kinds of customer groups of Company X. The questionnaire starts with the questions "Are you the administrative person regarding Company X's services? Who is in charge of the technical correspondence?" By asking this I'm making sure and I have the right person at hand, as this questionnaire is aimed at the administrative person. This is also double-checking the customer data I received is up to date. The questionnaire takes off with the question "Do you want to answer anonymously?" and gives the respondent a chance to answer anonymously. Otherwise the questionnaire data is linked to the customer's Customer Relationship Management data.

Question “Which services from Company X are you using now?” is a multiple choice question which gives us detailed information about the purchased services and in statistical analysis it is possible to measure, which service users are the most content and most discontent and how the services used are scattered among customers. The multiple choice answers are 1) Office infrastructure 2) office productivity tools as a cloud service c) hardware purchasing or leasing d) data center services e) IT-Support and administration and f) other, what - which is an open-ended question.

The question “How large is your monthly billing to Company X?” identifies if the customer is using the services on an on-going basis or a one-time buyer. It also identifies the customers' current revenue size to Company X. This is a multiple choice question, with different value categories, them being 1) 0-100€, 2) 101-500€, 3) 501-1000€ 4) 1001-2000 € € over 2000€ or 0) we are not billed monthly.

The second part of this questionnaire deals with the customers' satisfaction with Company X's services: In the first question the respondent is asked to “choose two criteria which affected most your decision to choose Company X as your service provider.” The criteria are 1) price 2) quality 3) reliability 4) technical know-how 5) a good sales contact person 6) well branded services and 7) good web pages. This question measures what the respondent has valued in the initial decision-making process, and gives us insight on what the customer thinks is important in Company X's services.

The next question's answers were designed using the itemized rating scale, where the respondent can choose the score that best reflects their answer. Also questionnaires using itemized rating scales are usually easy to fill and analyze (Wilson 2003, 155.)

Question “How well the services of Company X have lived up to your expectations?” Measures how well the customers feel that Company X has responded to their initial expectations since purchase. The answer scale is from 1 to 5, 1 being very low satisfaction and 5 very high satisfaction.

These next questions measure the amount satisfaction related to the certain actual services, value and price of Company X's services (Burns & Bush 2010, 149). “Answer the following questions on a scale from 1, 1 being the least satisfied and 5 the most satisfied. How satisfied have you been with:” a) The delivery processes of the services b) the functionality of the services c) how fast the customer service solves any problems d) the price/value of Company X's services e) the contact and service efforts of the sales team of Company X. These are important questions, and they give us information about the actual level of satisfaction that that can be pin-pointed to a particular area of activity.

The following question maps out the customer's buying intents for the next 6 months. This is vital information for the sales team, as it gives information what kind of purchase intentions Company X's customer field has and on which product/service area, so possible marketing activities can be planned in advance. "Are you planning to purchase any of the following products/services in the next 6 months?" Choose multiple if applicable. The answer choices are a) office hardware purchases, phones, connections b) cloud services, like e-mail or back-up services c) data center services d) IT-support and administration services e) Other, what? This is an open-ended question. The final and exclusive question is f) not planning any purchases.

The follow-up question to the previous question is about what the customer is planning to do if there is a purchase intention. It is asked if a customer replies to the previous customer anything other than f) not planning any purchases. a) "Are you thinking about requesting for quotations from Company X?" Answers choices are yes, no and a zero value if this question is not applicable.

The follow up to this question depends on the customer's answer. If the customer replies that they are planning to request for bids from Company X concerning one of their previously mentioned purchase intentions, I am asking them which reasons led to this. Also, if the customer replies that they are not going to request for bids from Company X, which reasons led to this as well. These questions are closely related to the customer satisfaction in the point of view of the sales team - the answers to the open questions give straight answers to what why the customer thinks he/she should or should not buy from Company X, based on previous experiences with Company X. Like in the previous question, if the customer replied that they have no purchase intentions also these questions have zero value.

The third part deals with the satisfaction on how Company X performs as a company: The first question is about the recent organizational changes and how it has affected the customer relationship with Company X. "Last year Company Y merged with Group Z, and changed its name to Company X. How has this affected your business relationship with Company X?" The answer choices are 1) has improved the relationship 2) has not affected the relationship 3) has weakened the relationship and 4) I don't know of the matter, cannot say

This information is valuable, as previously there has not been feedback on what the customers actually think of the transition. Also if there are implications that the relationships has weakened or customers do not know enough about it, that Company X has not put enough effort into informing its customer and thus should do so, in order to dispel any insecurities which could lead to losing customers.

The next two open open-ended questions “In what are you particularly satisfied in Company X? In what are you particularly dissatisfied in Company X?” provide interesting insight on the particular issues that cause satisfaction and dissatisfaction. This kind of question can also bring out information that has not been recognized before, as this allows the respondent to describe the answer to the question in his/hers own words. (Burns & Bush 2010, 149.)

The question “Would you recommend Company X to others?” is interesting, because according to Hart & Johnson, only very satisfied customers (compared to only satisfied customers) become “free” marketing and salespeople and market the services to others in the word-of-mouth manner. Very unsatisfied customers then again can become “terrorists” by sharing negative experiences to others and scaring away potential customers. (Xerox, see Hart & Johnson 1999, 10; Johansen & Monthele, see Gummesson 1998, 301.)

This is important to note, as in the capital area the ICT service provider field is heavily competed due to the small size of the market, the customers and people in the industry are very knowledgeable of the service providers due to spreading of word-of-mouth information, so if there are indications that customers are very unsatisfied, the necessary measures must be taken to find out the reasons for such a situation and how to fix it. This especially applies to a service provider such as Company X, which services require high credibility and availability. This is not always possible to demonstrate to the potential customer in advance of the purchase, so word-of-mouth is a very important factor as a purchase recommendation. (Lovelock & Wright 2002, 87.)

The question “Which “school grade” would you give to Company X” is simple and effective, as the scale from 4 to 10 is familiar to almost everyone in Finland and it is intuitively used to rate things. A reliable mean can be easily calculated from the answer to give a good view of how Company X's is rated as a whole. The question “Would you like someone from Company X contact you to tell more of their new services?” gives information to the sales team of the amount of current customer interest towards Company X's new services. It therefore hints if there is good potential to do marketing activities in near future to this existing group of customers with this topic in mind.

4.3 Reliability & validity

Reliability of measurement means, that if a question is repeated in the same circumstances (person, occasion) the respondent will answer similarly. If the answer differs majorly from the previous answer, there is something wrong in the question as it does not enable the interview to be repeated successfully with similar results. (Proctor 2005, 199; Burns & Bush 2010, 319.) In the question design process I have tried to keep the questions simple so they would

be understood as well as possible by the respondents, so there would not be a change of misunderstanding when answering a question. I have tried to execute the interview in a similar manner for each respondent, and as I have been an employee of Company X, I recognized that I must distance myself from the company and my job in order to avoid any bias towards the research in forming the questions or executing the interviews.

Validity is described as whether or not the questions you are asking are actually measuring what you think they are measuring, as the response depends on for example how honest the respondent is, or how good is his/hers memory or understanding about the question topic. The validity is doubtful, if the respondent does not answer to the questions according to the actual facts. (Proctor 2005, 198.) I have tried to form the questions to be as understandable as possible and easy to answer regarding any sensitive questions. If the respondent does not understand the question, as this survey is executed as a phone interview, I will be able to explain any unclear parts of the questionnaire. Also I will give the respondent a chance to skip any question he/she does not have answers for, in order to avoid gathering data which the respondent is not sure about or is a result of guessing at random.

4.4 Executing the research

The questionnaire research was conducted on September 26-30, 2011. It was fairly easy to get answers from the smaller customers, as they often had only few people in charge of the business so it was easy to get hold of the administrative persons. In bigger companies it was harder to reach the right person or have him/her take some time for the survey, as they were often quite busy. Many still wanted to answer the survey, so it was easy to reserve a time when they were free and could be reached for the survey. This way it was possible secure as many questionnaire answers as possible of the sample customer base.

The actual interviews were a success, and the interviewees understood the questions quite well and I did not need to explain them deeper too many times. The only times there were indecision about the answers were when I asked question related to the delivery of the services or why the services were chosen, if the respondent was no longer the "original" purchaser of the services. This was often solved by leaving the answer blank, to avoid including any guesses or other kind of false information to the research data. Each interview took about 15 minutes, which was the maximum in my opinion for this kind of phone interview.

5 Results of the research

5.1 Analysis of the answers

The answers were analyzed in SPSS using many basic tools (frequencies, descriptive statistics, multiple response sets) in order to find prominent answer groups and percentages.

The open-ended responses were coded into response groups with a descriptive title, and then measured into groups. Examples of the actual responses can be found at the end of this paper. The basic customer data provided by Company X was quite up to date, so it helped in reaching the right people. Even those who did not want to answer the survey were happy to confirm my contact person information and provide the right information for missing or wrong data. This data was asked before starting the actual survey in order to confirm the right interviewee, and was afterwards added to the Company X's customer system.

The majority of the survey participants (63.27%) opted to answer anonymously. The questionnaire information of those, who did not want to answer anonymously (36.73%), was added to Company X's customer system.

Services in use - Frequencies

		Responses
		N
Services in use ^a	Company X outsourcing concept in use	7
	Company X cloud services in use	38
	Company X hardware purchases in use	9
	Company X data center services in use	18
	Company X IT-support and administration services in use	14
	Other Company X services in use	8
Total		94

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Table 1: Services in use by customers - Frequencies

According to the results shown in Table 1 the most used services by customers were the cloud services and data center services. Respondents had the chance to choose multiple answers in this question, so the numbers presented are the totals of times a customer has mentioned using such service. Undoubtedly the most used services are the cloud services and data center services, which are Company X's core solutions. One must note that the outsourcing concept includes many or all of the mentioned service models, thus these customers bring in significantly more revenue.

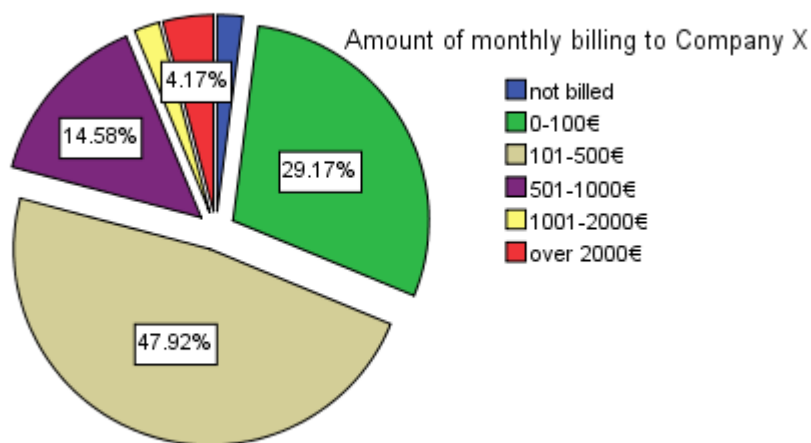


Figure 3: Amount of monthly billing to Company X

The majority of customers who answered the questionnaire were in the small to medium size range, as their monthly billing was 101-500€ per month. Ultimately these customers form the majority of the customer base. A fair quarter was composed of very small customers with a billing under 100€. According to my discussions with my instructor at Company X, this represents the customer distribution of Company X fairly well, so it can be considered a reliable measure. Also the Pareto principle can be seen here; 20% of the customers bring 80% of the revenue volume (Grönroos 2000, 150–151).

Criteria 1 and criteria 2 for choosing Company X as service provider - Frequencies

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Criteria ^a	Price	15	19.0%	35.7%
	Quality	8	10.1%	19.0%
	Realiability	16	20.3%	38.1%
	Technical know-how	12	15.2%	28.6%
	Good sales contact person	13	16.5%	31.0%
	Well branded services	14	17.7%	33.3%
	Good web-pages	1	1.3%	2.4%
Total		79	100.0%	188.1%

a. Group

Table 2: Criteria 1 and 2 for choosing Company X as a service provider

Customers were asked to choose two criteria which led them to choose Company X as a service provider. In table 2 it is shown, which criteria got chosen the most. These were reliability, price and well branded services. It surprised me that a good sales contact person got so many responses in this question, as in this industry technical competence is seen usually as a big factor. I conclude that most of the respondents will largely form their expectations of Company X based on the abovementioned criteria. As customers were not asked to prioritize the answers, I will not interpret it as such, that the first answer would have been the most important criteria for choosing Company X.

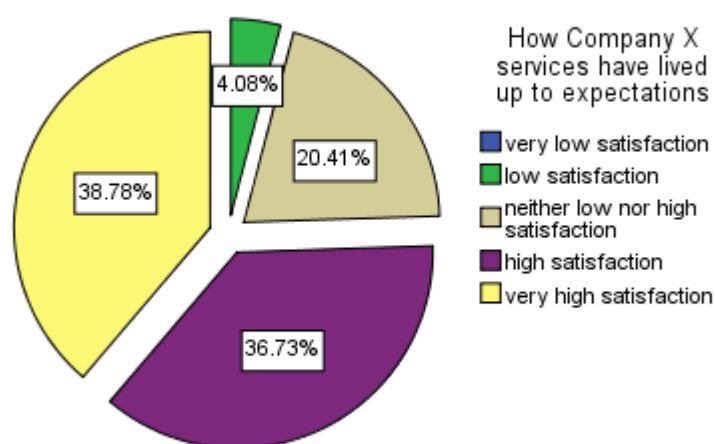


Figure 4: How Company X services have lived up to expectations

According to the results of this question, the services that customers have purchased from Company X have responded well to their expectations of the service. As shown in table 2, reliability was seen as one of the most important criteria for choosing Company X as a service provider, and together with this figure and the high satisfaction with the service functionality shown in the following figure, it is valid to say customers have been very satisfied with the expectation of reliability of the services. This is a very positive result, as highly satisfied customers are more likely to tolerate an occasional service failure without considering changing service providers (Lovelock & Wright 2002, 87).

How satisfied in different areas - Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
How satisfied in delivery process of Company X	47	1	5	3.94
How satisfied in service/product functionality of Company X	49	2	5	4.16
How satisfied in customer service know-how of Company X	45	2	5	3.87
How satisfied in customer service speed of Company X	44	2	5	3.57
How satisfied in Company X service/product value	47	2	5	3.74
How satisfied in the sales team of Company X	48	1	5	3.69
Valid N (listwise)	41			

Table 3: How satisfied customers are in different areas of service

In the question about customer's satisfaction with particular areas of service, table 3 shows that the grade average was above 3, meaning that customers thought that the service areas were a little bit above average. I see this as a good result, and it is also positive that nothing was seen as particularly bad. The best grade was given to the functionality of the services and products, meaning that the services function well and are reliable. The delivery process was also just below 4, though it also received minimum grades of 1. Customers were least satisfied in the speed of the customer service and sales team, but still considering all the grades and their means, customer satisfaction with these areas is above average.

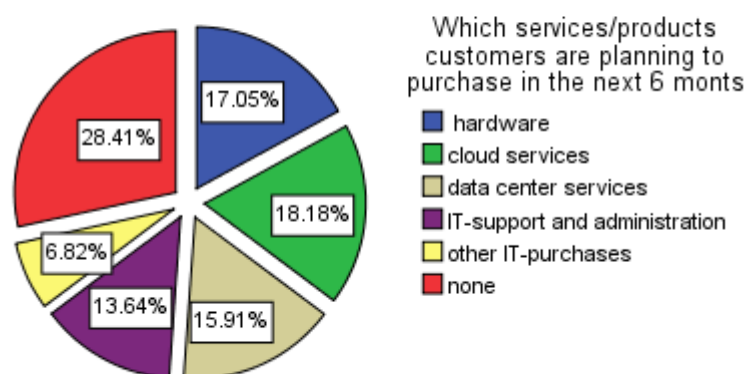


Figure 5: Which products/services customers are planning to purchase

Company X was interested in getting information of what kind of purchases the current customers are planning in the next 6 months. As customers could choose multiple choices in the questionnaire, figure 5 illustrates which options got most mentioned. Cloud services, hardware and data center services were most mentioned. This result does not surprise, as currently the industry media is publicizing cloud and data center services, and according to research by The Finnish Information Processing Association, companies estimate that in the next three years, the share of cloud services from the company IT will increase from 6% to 19% (Tietotekniikan Liitto ry, 2011). Customers could also specify other services they were planning to purchase, and some of the responses included specialty software and software development services, consulting services and photocopy equipment.

If planning purchases, planning to request for quotations from Company X

	Frequency	Percent
Valid does not apply (no purchases planned)	24	49.0
yes	21	42.9
no	4	8.2
Total	49	100.0

Table 4: If planning purchases, planning to request for quotations from Company X

49% of customers interviewed did not plan any kind of purchases. This information revealed that half of the existing customers did not have in mind new ICT purchases, and this also gives incentive to consider marketing activities which could stimulate this group of customers to even consider new acquisitions. Of those who did plan purchases, the majority were also planning to request for quotations from Company X. A follow-up question to this question was to ask the reason why they did or did not want to request bids from Company X.

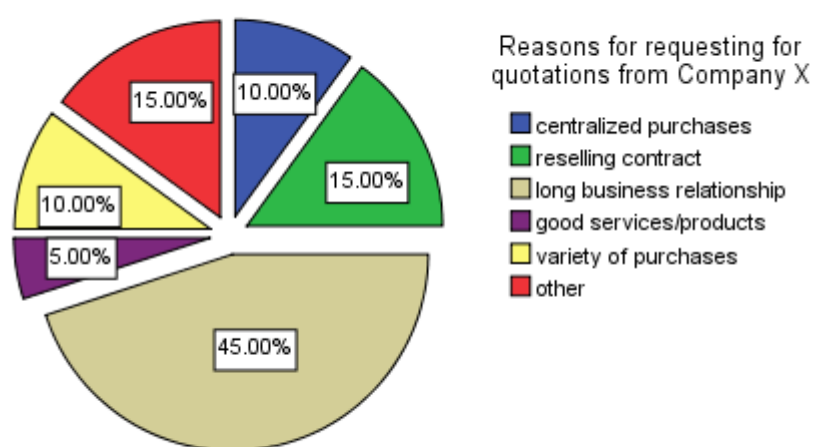


Figure 6: Reasons for requesting for quotations

Figure 6 shows that the biggest reason for requesting for quotations was that the company already has a long business relationship with Company X. This way it is natural and beneficial for both parties to do business with partners who already know each other's way of working and doing business, and thus Company X gets a "larger share of the customer's wallet". This is called patronage concentration. (Grönroos 2000, 148.) Another meaningful reason for using Company X when it came to purchases were existing reseller contracts with Company X, and wanting to buy the services from a single point of contact.

Other reasons included bidding from many different places, including Company X, and satisfaction with the current services already owned. Only four existing customers answered that they were planning IT-purchases but did not want to involve Company X in the bidding process. Reasons for this were in two cases that they had the access to such services/products themselves without needing someone separately deliver it (resellers), one already had a provider for the purchase in case which they wanted to use and one had already started the purchase process.

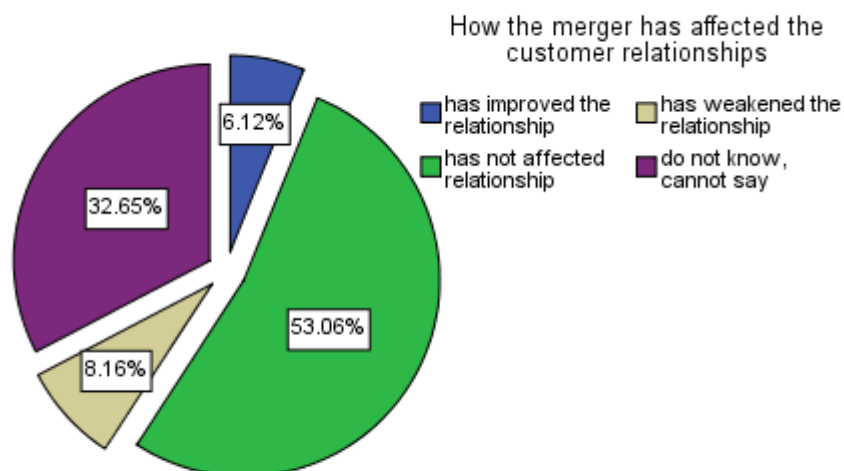


Figure 7: How merger has affected customer relationships

Company X wanted to know how their recent organization change had affected the customer relationship, as they transformed from a small private company to being part of a national group. The results shown in figure 7 were quite easy to interpret; the merger had mostly not affected the relationship and not many even knew about it. A logical reason for this is that such a customer would have become one afterwards of this operation and thus were not involved during the transition process. Of those with whom the process had changed the relationship, more said that it had weakened the relationship. One comment from a customer might shed light on the matter, as he told that things had gotten more process-oriented and stiff from the old, more free-spirited ways of doing business.

Galpin & Herndon present in their article which focuses on examining mergers and acquisitions 12-24 months after the actual deal close of the merger, that in a survey conducted at the University of Dallas Graduate School Of Management's, almost half of the respondents to a 2006 "Mergers and Acquisitions Survey - The Current State of M&A Integration" indicated that their company is not fully functional after the merger and thus needs "merger repair." Symptoms of this includes e.g. suffering service levels, customers confused on where they are supposed to buy from and the firm's lacking achievements on performance targets. According to the customer's answers, this doesn't seem to be the case from the customer's point of view for Company X, but as the merger is not very old yet, this is a matter which effect to the customers should be measured for the next couple of years. (Galpin & Herndon 2008, 4–12.)

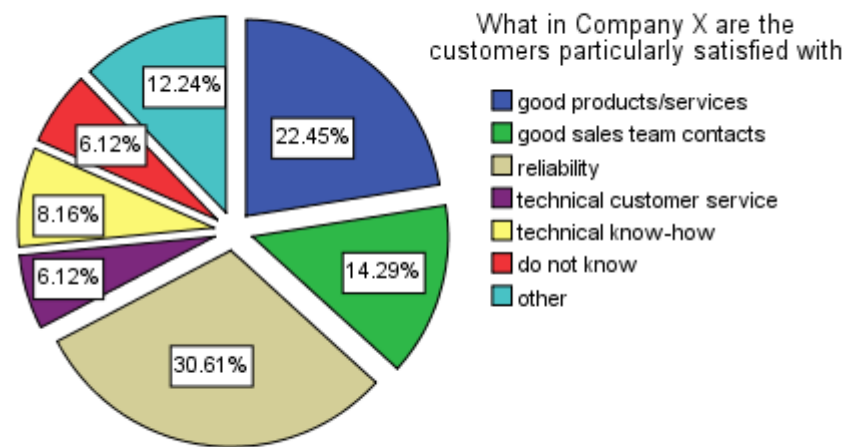


Figure 8: In what are customers particularly satisfied in Company X

Customers were asked an open-ended question about what they were particularly satisfied with in Company X. I have sorted the comments into different categories presented in figure 8; the comments themselves can be seen at the end of this thesis in appendix 1. Customers were most satisfied with the reliability of the services, which is also one of Company X's main selling points. The services and product were seen as being good in quality and functionality as well. Good sales team contacts and particular people in the sales team got also many mentions. The rest were quite equally divided and other reasons besides these included for example good problem solving skills at Company X and respondent's personal contacts straight to the decision-makers. Locality and high quality data centers were also seen as important factors.

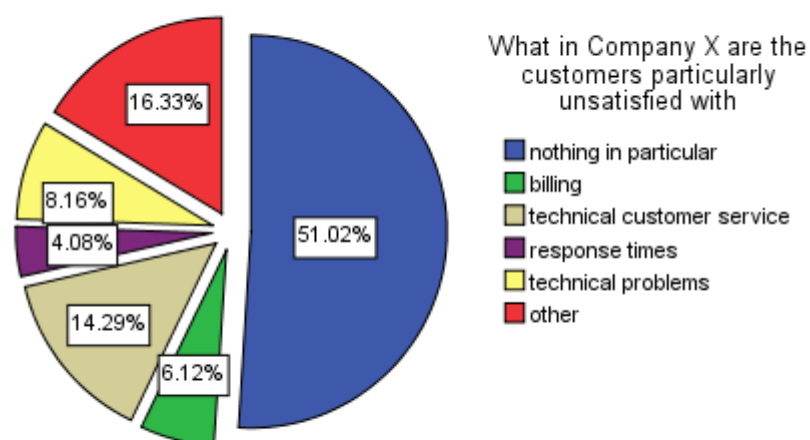


Figure 9: In what are customers particularly unsatisfied in Company X

The other open-ended question, in which customers could give their input on what they were particularly unsatisfied, provided surprising results; over half of the respondent couldn't think of anything in particular that they were not content with. This could be seen as a very interesting and a positive result. Customers did have problems with the technical customer service and technical problems. Many of the responses were quite miscellaneous so they were marked into the "other" category and many of these responses included the fact that the customers do not understand the "high-tech" slang used at Company X, problems with finding the right contact person, reliability, usability and price.

A valid percent of 89.6% would recommend Company X to others, so this can be considered a good result and an indicator that customers are fairly content with Company X. Only a valid percent of 10.4% would not recommend Company X to others. Nevertheless as mentioned in page 7 and 19 of this paper and shown in the research done in the United States and Sweden, (see Lovelock & Wright 2002, 200) customers with strong views are more likely to share their opinions, thus only very satisfied customers are more likely to actually become "free sales-people." When examining table 5 and counting up the customers who gave Company X an grade of 9 or above; 38,7% of the respondents could be seen as potential word-of-mouth marketers. This theory, of course, applies to the very unsatisfied customers; luckily these are a minority in Company X's customer base.

Which school grade would the customers give for Company X

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	6	1	2.0
	6½	3	6.1
	7	3	6.1
	7½	1	2.0
	8	12	24.5
	8+	3	6.1
	8½	7	14.3
	9	10	20.4
	9+	6	12.2
	10	3	6.1
	Total	49	100.0

Table 5: Which school grade would the customers give to Company X

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Which school grade would the customers give for Company X	49	6.00	10.00	8.3622
Valid N (listwise)	49			

Table 6: Which school grade would customer give to Company X, statistics

The customers were given a chance to rate Company X on a commonly used “school grade” from 4 to 10. As table 5 indicates, the lowest grade given was 6, and the most gave a grade of 8 or 9. These are fairly good grades, and the mean resulted to be an 8.36, which could be rounded up to an 8½. This is a good grade but not an excellent one, so there is a lot of room for improvement to be able to raise it to a 9, which could be considered a very good grade. At the end of the interview, I asked if the customers wanted to have a sales person contact them in order to tell more of Company X’s services. 14.3% of the customers wanted to have a further contact. This was valuable information for the sales team and led to contacts.

When measuring the common satisfaction by cross-tabulating the monthly billing with the school grades that companies have given Company X, it can be seen that smaller-billed customers are generally giving higher grades than the larger-billed customers. Gummesson quotes Jan Lapidoth Sr.’s service paradox; according to it, the customers are more satisfied the more unprofitable they are, and the more profitable customers are less satisfied. This seems to apply to the result of the cross-tabulation. (Gummesson 1998, 302.)

5.2 Conclusions and summary

The outcome of this research and thesis as a whole was provided to Company X to be examined. The results are to be used in the internal discussions among staff in order to go through the results and suggestions, and for this I also provided my instructor with a slideshow of the facts in a nutshell. Also it was discussed, that some of the results could be used in marketing activities to customers. The research as a whole was received positively at Company X and provided new information on the satisfaction levels of customers, customer opinions and plans.

In conclusion it could be said that the customers of Company X are fairly satisfied with their service provider. However, there is room for improvement as there is a long way from fairly satisfied to very satisfied. The role of the salesperson was more important than I expected, as the importance of it as a factor of choosing the service provider and overall satisfaction stood out in the questionnaire. Thus it is important for Company X to keep up with this result and encourage the sales team to keep a customer-oriented approach. Also the reliability and the quality of the products and services got good grades, so this is another factor in which Company X has succeeded so far. I suggest that one reason for this is the good branding of the existing services, which also was a largely chosen reason why Company X was chosen as a service provider.

Practical suggestions for improvement:

- The technical customer service team could have a more customer-oriented approach, meaning that when discussing with the customer, they would use non-technical slang in order to improve the communication towards the customer, as many people contacting the customer service are often non-technical by nature. This might improve the satisfaction rate of the customer service.
- Keeping the customer better up to date during problem solving or delivery, by periodically informing the customer of the status of the process. This could also affect the slightly lower score in customer service speed in a positive way, as the customer would feel being more up to date of the status of his/hers delivery or issue.
- Many complained about the problems with billing. Company X should straighten out their billing problems and thus directly improve the customer satisfaction.

As this is the first customer satisfaction research in a long time in the history of Company X, the company could use this research as a starting point for beginning the regular measuring of the customer satisfaction. This research will hopefully give pointers on which things to consider improving in the near future to achieve better customer satisfaction and how to successfully measure changes in it. The research also gave some pointers on the customer's planned

purchases. Marketing activities could be planned to the existing customers with especially cloud services, hardware products and data center services in mind, as these were the most popular in the purchase plans. These activities could increase the revenue per customer if successful.

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List of figures

Figure 1: Total perceived quality (Grönroos 2000, 67).....	10
Figure 2: The marketing research process (Burns & Bush 2010, 21)	13
Figure 3: Amount of monthly billing to Company X.....	24
Figure 4: How Company X services have lived up to expectations	25
Figure 5: Which products/services customers are planning to purchase	27
Figure 6: Reasons for requesting for quotations	28
Figure 7: How merger has affected customer relationships.....	29
Figure 8: In what are customers particularly satisfied in Company X	30
Figure 9: In what are customers particularly unsatisfied in Company X	31

List of tables

Table 1: Services in use by customers - Frequencies	23
Table 2: Criteria 1 and 2 for choosing Company X as a service provider	25
Table 3: How satisfied customers are in different areas of service	26
Table 4: If planning purchases, planning to request for quotations from Company X.....	27
Table 5: Which school grade would the customers give to Company X	32
Table 6: Which school grade would customer give to Company X, statistics	32

List of appendices

Appendix 1. Open-ended question answers; what in Company X are customers particularly satisfied with.	40
Appendix 2. Open-ended question answers; what in Company X are customers particularly unsatisfied with.	41
Appendix 3. Questionnaire form	42

Appendix 1. Open-ended question answers; what in Company X are customers particularly satisfied with.

Examples:

“fantastinen tuote!”

“myynnilliseen yhteyshenkilöön (jonka maalaisjärjen käyttö!)”

“palvelut toimivat kun ne saadaan perille asti”

“projektiasioissa yhteistyö, valmiudet vastata vaikeisiin kysymyksiin”

“pilvipalveluiden joustavuus; räätälöidään tarpeiden mukaan”

“silloin kun jotain tehdään tosissaan, niin saadaan aikaiseksi jotain”

“osaavat työntekijät”

“toimivuus, paikallisuus”

“tavoitettavuus, yhteyshenkilöt”

“nopea käyttöönotto kun sopimus saatu tehtyä”

“palvelu toimii moitteettomasti”

“tekninen osaaminen”

“kotimaiseen toimivaan tuotteeseen”

“laitesali on korkeatasoinen”

“kokonaisvaltainen suhtautuminen asiakkaan palvelutarpeitten miettimiseen”

“Asiantuntijuuteen; aina on löytynyt ongelmaan ratkaisu”

Appendix 2. Open-ended question answers; what in Company X are customers particularly unsatisfied with.

Examples:

“työnjako pompottelee toisiaan, ei puhuta samaa kieltä”

“halutaan tehdä asiat vaikeaksi prosessikaavioiden kautta”

“Laskutusasiat; ei muuten”

“joskus tuntuu, että Yritys X:llä poikasia töissä”

“palveluhalukkuus”

“asiakaspalvelun ammattislangi”

“laskutusväli voisi olla harvempi”

“ongelmanratkaisuun”

“myyjän tarjous ei vastaa tarvetta”

“toimitusprosessiin”

“automaattinen laskutusjärjestelmä”

“Teknisiin kysymyksiin vastauksen saaminen kestää joskus turhan kauan”

“pitäisi olla vain yksi yhteyshenkilö, eli keskittäminen”

“asiakaspalvelu ja yhteydenpito”

“tiedottaminen, sopimustekniset asiat”

“laskutus täysin epäonnistunut, jälkilaskutus”

Appendix 3. Questionnaire form

Good day, I am Eira kaukonen and I am studying at the Laurea University of Applied sciences. I am calling you because you are a customer of Company X, and at the moment I am conducting a customer satisfaction research for them for my thesis. Company X uses these results to develop their services and actions. Is it a good moment for answering 15 questions about the topic?

Questionnaire for Company X

BASIC CUSTOMER DATA

Are you the administrative person regarding Company X's services? Who is in charge of the technical correspondence? _____/_____

1. Do you want to answer anonymously?
Yes = 1 no =0
2. Which services from Company X are you using now? Choose all which apply.
 - a) Office infrastructure/Y-IT
 - b) Office productivity tools as a cloud service
 - c) Hardware purchases or leasing
 - d) Data center services
 - e) IT-support and administration services
 - f) Other, what? _____
3. How large is your monthly billing to Company X?
 - 1= 0-100€
 - 2= 101-500€
 - 3= 501-1000€
 - 4= 1001-2000€
 - 5= over 2000€
 - 0= we are not billed monthly

COMPANY X'S SERVICES

4. Choose two criteria which affected most your decision to choose Company X as your service provider.
 - 1= Price
 - 2= Quality
 - 3= Reliability
 - 4= Technical know-how
 - 5= Good sales contact person
 - 6= well branded services
 - 7= Good web-pages
5. How well the services of Company X have lived up to your expectations?
Answer on a scale from 1-5, 1 being very low satisfaction and 5 very high satisfaction.
6. Answer the following questions on a scale from 1-5, 1 being the least satisfied and 5 the most satisfied.
How satisfied have you been with:
 - a) The delivery process of the service(s)
 - b) The functionality the services
 - c) The technical know-how of the customer service
 - d) How fast the customer service solves any problems
 - e) The price/quality value of Company X's services
 - f) The contact and service efforts of the sales team of Company X

7. Are you planning to purchase any of the following products/services in the next 6 months? (Choose multiple if applicable)
 - a) Office hardware purchases, phones, connections.
 - b) Cloud services, like e-mail or back-up services
 - c) Data center services
 - d) IT-support and administration services
 - e) Other, what? _____
 - f) Not planning any purchases

8. Are you thinking about requesting for quotations from Company X?
 - a) 0=does not apply 1= yes 3= no

 - b) If so, for which reasons?
0= does not apply
1=Reason? _____

 - c) if not, for which reasons?
0= does not apply
1=Reason? _____

COMPANY X as a company

9. Last year Company Y merged with Group Z and became Company X. How has this transition affected your business relationship with Company X?
 - 1= has improved the relationship
 - 2= has not affected the relationship
 - 3= has weakened the relationship
 - 4= I don't know of the matter, cannot say

10. Answer shortly; what in Company X makes you particularly satisfied?

11. Answer shortly; what in Company X makes you particularly unsatisfied?

12. Would you recommend Company X to others?
Yes= 1 no = 0

13. Which "school grade" would you give to Company X?
(Grade rating from 4 to 10)

14. Would you like someone from Company X contact you to tell more of their new services?
Yes= 1 no = 0