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**CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND
VISIBILITY RESEARCH FOR KAJAANIN HOKKI**

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<p>Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli selvittää syitä siihen, miksi jääkiekkjoukkue Kajaanin Hokin kotiotteluiden yleisökeskiarvot ovat olleet viime vuosina niin alhaiset suhteellisen hyvästäkin menestyksestä huolimatta. Hokki on koko ajan toimintaansa kehittävä urheiluseura, joten on luonnollista, että tähän yhteen sen suurimmista tulonlähteistä, yleisömääriin, on löydettävä uutta puhtia. Tarkoituksena oli selvittää ovatko syyt asiakastyytyväisyydessä ottelutapahtuman sisällä vai kenties markkinoinnin tehottomuudesta johtuvasta näkyvyyden puutteesta.</p> <p>Kysely toteutettiin molempia, kvalitatiivisia ja kvantitatiivisia metodeja käyttämällä. Ensimmäinen tutkimus tutki Kajaanin Hokin kotiotteluissa jo käyviä ihmisiä ja heidän asiakastyytyväisyyttään. Tutkimus suoritettiin jakamalla kyselylomakkeita katsomoihin ja jäähallin kioskeille. Palautettuja lomakkeita oli yhteensä 123. Toinen osio tutkimuksessa oli selvittää Kajaanin seudulla asuvien ihmisten yleisiä mielipiteitä Hokista, sen toiminnasta ja näkyvyydestä katukuvassa. Tarkoitus oli saada mahdollisesti selville syitä, miksi ihmiset eivät ole kiinnostuneet tai eivät jostain muusta syystä käy Hokin kotiotteluissa. Tämä vaihe suoritettiin lyhyin haastatteluin Kajaanin kaduilla. 32 Haastateltavaa valittiin sattumanvaraisesti.</p> <p>Tutkimuksesta selvisi, että kotiotteluissa Hokin peliesityksiin oltiin suhteellisen tyytyväisiä, mutta jäähallin puitteisiin oltiin hyvin pettyneitä. Katsojat eivät tunteneet Hokkia omakseen suuren pelaajavaihtuvuuden ja kainuulaisten pelaajien vähäisyyden vuoksi. Hokin näkyvyys katukuvassa ei myöskään ollut tarpeeksi. Ihmisillä oli yllättävänkin vähän tietoa Hokista ja sen toiminnasta. Markkinointia ja mainontaa pidettiin yleisesti riittämättömänä ja houkuttelemattomana.</p>	
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<p>The aim of the research was to find out reasons behind the low attendance in the home games of a Finnish ice hockey club, Kajaanin Hokki. Despite the good success that Hokki had had recently, the attendance seemed to stay low. Hokki is a small sports club, constantly thriving at developing its operations, so it is only natural that they are looking for new ideas in the progress of developing one of the biggest sources of their income – the spectators in the match event. Aim was to see are the reasons of low attendance hidden behind the customer satisfaction towards the match event itself or possibly due to the lack of visibility and ineffective marketing.</p> <p>The research included both qualitative and quantitative methods. The first part of the research studied the views and satisfaction of the current customers of Hokki. It was executed by distributing questionnaire forms to kiosks in the stadium and also to seats and stands and total of 123 filled forms were returned. The second part of the research aimed to discover the general opinions about Hokki, its operations, image and visibility in Kajaani. The second part also tried to discover reasons why people are not interested in the games or other reasons why they do not participate. It was executed by interviewing people in Kajaani city centre. Participants were chosen randomly on the streets. Altogether 32 people were interviewed.</p> <p>The research revealed that people were mostly satisfied with the on-ice-performance of Hokki, but at the same time they were very dissatisfied with the game venue. People felt that there were not enough players from Kainuu region in the team and there are too many changes within the team each year. Because of this, people did not feel that Hokki is their own team. People also felt that Hokki is not visible enough in Kajaani. The participants had surprisingly little knowledge about Hokki and its operations. Marketing and advertisement were also seen as unattractive.</p>	
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	5
2 HOKKI ON THE FINNISH ICE HOCKEY MAP	7
2.1 Spectator Amounts in Finnish Ice Hockey	8
2.2 Kajaani as a Sports Marketing Area	11
3 SPORTS MARKETING	13
3.1 Special Features of Sports Marketing	14
3.2 Marketing Mix	16
3.2.1 Product	16
3.2.2 Price	21
3.2.3 Place	25
3.2.4 Promotion	27
3.2.5 Sponsorship	38
3.3 The Four Dimensions of a Brand	42
3.4 Modelling Sports Marketing	43
3.5 Fans and Fandom	46
4 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY	48
4.1 Experiences and Customer Satisfaction	49
4.2 Customer Satisfaction, Loyalty and Profitability	51
5 THE RESEARCH PROCESS	55
5.1 Methods and Execution of the Research	55
5.2 Validity and Reliability	56
6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	58
6.1 Customer Profile	58
6.2 Customer Satisfaction	66
6.3 Conspicuousness and Public Image of Hokki in Kajaani	71
7 SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS	76
SOURCES	
APPENDICES	

1 INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this piece of work was to conduct a customer satisfaction survey for Kajaanin Hokki, an ice hockey club in Kajaani, Finland. Secondary purpose of the study was to interview people in Kajaani about the visibility of Kajaanin Hokki. The study also aimed at finding several reasons for low attendance numbers in Hokki's home games.

Kajaanin Hokki is a team on the second highest level, called Mestis, of ice hockey in Finland. It was founded in 1968 and its home games are played at Kajaanin Jäähalli (Kajaani Ice Stadium) in Kuntokatu 1, near the city centre. The office of Hokki is also situated near the city centre, in Koskikatu 3. This work was of current interest to Hokki since their average attendance has been going down for several years. In the season 2004-2005 average attendance was 1000 people per game and a year later it was only 830. In the end of year 2006, near the half way mark of the season 2006-2007 this trend seemed to be going even worse, and Hokki decided to order this study. Season 2006-2007 ended up to average of 790 people per game.

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to conduct this study. The customer satisfaction survey was held at two home games of Hokki in February and March 2007, by asking spectators to fill out a questionnaire form. Through the customer satisfaction survey a simple general profile of customers was created and they were asked about factors affecting their interest and their views about the current state of match events. In addition to finding ways to attract more customers, Hokki was also looking for finding ways to keep current customers more frequent buyers and more satisfied.

The second part of the study was made through interviews about the general visibility and conspicuousness of Hokki in Kajaani. The questions were open ended questions and they were asked from people who were picked semi-randomly on the streets of Kajaani in the spring of 2007. The purpose of these interviews was to study how visible Hokki is in Kajaani and in its surroundings and what is the general opinion of people about Hokki. Some suggestions of what was wrong with Hokki's marketing were received through interviews as well.

Three hundred customer satisfaction questionnaire forms were distributed and 123 of them were returned. A little later 32 street interviews were held. The results suggested for example that the game venue needs improvements in order to increase customer satisfaction and that people wish for more local (from Kainuu region) talents on ice. Marketing results and visibility of Hokki were also lower than expected.

The theory part of this study includes general information of the ice hockey series system in Finland, sports marketing as a special field of marketing. Other theories used include for example sports fandom and customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

2 HOKKI ON THE FINNISH ICE HOCKEY MAP

Ice hockey has a long history and is one of the most popular sports in Finland. *The Finnish Ice Hockey Association* is the governing body of ice hockey operations in Finland. The highest competitive level of ice hockey in Finland is called the *SM-league* (Finnish Championship league) and it is itself, an individual organization. It is not directly controlled by the Finnish Ice Hockey Association, although the two naturally work in cooperation. The SM-league was officially formed in 1975, but it replaced the SM-series that had started already in 1928. SM-league is also now *a closed league*, meaning that no team is relegated from, or promoted to SM-league without special negotiations. The league has expanded twice in its history while being a closed league. The latest expansion followed the season 2004-2005. 14 teams are currently competing in the SM-league. There was a slim chance of expanding to 15 teams for the season 2007-2008. One team could have been promoted to SM-league if their financial background was solid, if they win the Mestis Championship and if they would win the last team of SM-league. This did not happen. (SM-Liiga)

The second highest level of ice hockey is called *Mestis* (the name derives from the Finnish word for championship) and it is the highest level league directly under the Finnish Ice Hockey Association. There are currently 12 teams in Mestis. Each team plays against each other 4 times during the regular season. Additionally each team in Mestis plays one home game per year against Finland's under-20-year-olds national team. This means each team plays 45 games during the regular season, after which the best eight teams, compete in the play off games.

Underneath Mestis comes Suomi-Sarja (Finland-Series). During the season 2007-2008 this league was divided to four groups, mainly according to their geographical locations. Earlier Suomi-Sarja had 18 (2006-2007) or 20 (2005-2006) teams in two groups. Due minor changes in the system, there are now 23 teams in Suomi-Sarja (there would be 24 without financial problems of some teams). (Finhockey)

Before the year 2000 the series system itself in Finland was similar, except the SM-league was not a closed league. The names of the different levels were also different. SM-league was

called SM-league, but what is currently called Mestis, was the *first division* and what is currently known as Suomi-Sarja was then called the *second division*.

Hokki, an ice hockey club based in Kajaani, Finland, was founded in 1968. In 1993 a division was made within the organization, to separate the youth operations and the competitive first team, thus forming two organizations, Kajaanin Edustushokki ry and Junnuhokki ry. After the season 2006 – 2007, the club's A-junior team (under 21 years old) was transferred back, to be under Kajaanin Edustushokki ry's organization.

For the most part of its 39 year history Hokki has played in the lower divisions (third division or lower). Hokki was promoted to what was then called the second division, currently called Suomi-series, in 1990. Hokki then played 12 seasons in the second division and Suomi-series, until they were promoted to Mestis for the season 2002-2003. Untill present day, during their stay in Mestis, Hokki has reached the playoffs every year. The fifth Mestis season for Hokki during 2006 – 2007 was historical for the club. A new club record for points during the regular season was made, as well as receiving medal for the first time in Mestis, which turned out to be a gold medal in the end. (Hokki)

Due to the league structure in Finland and the status of Mestis champions, Hokki can currently be viewed as the 15th best team in Finland (14 teams in SM-league). This is quite good situation, since the Finnish Ice Hockey Association has over 63.000 registered players (Fin-hockey).

2.1 Spectator Amounts in Finnish Ice Hockey

Ice hockey has been a very popular sport in Finland for decades. On the highest level of hockey in Finland, the SM-league, the entire league's average attendance between years 1976 and 2007, has been 3747 at its lowest, in the year 1984. The general trend has been going downward for several years now. The season 2006 – 2007 had the lowest average attendance in ten years, while the peak was in the year 1998. During that peak season, the average attendance was 5299 people per match and during the season 2006 – 2007 the average was at 4957 spectators per game. (MTV3)

In Mestis the spectator amounts are much lower than in SM-league. Since 2001 the general trend has been upward with the peak average being achieved in the 2004 – 2005 season. During that season there were two considerable factors contributing to this peak. First, a decision was made that after the indicated season, the Mestis champion would be promoted to SM-league. The second factor was the NHL lockout in USA and Canada. Due to the cancellation of NHL season resulting from the lockout, many NHL players came to play in European countries, including Finland. Even Mestis received a few NHL players, as well as players from SM-league, who lost their places in their respective teams to NHL players. In addition to these factors, during season 2004 – 2005 there were the most “big teams” than there has been since. Figure 1 shows the average attendance in Mestis games between the years 2001 and 2007. (Suomen jääkiekkoliitto, Mestis Info 2006 - 2007)

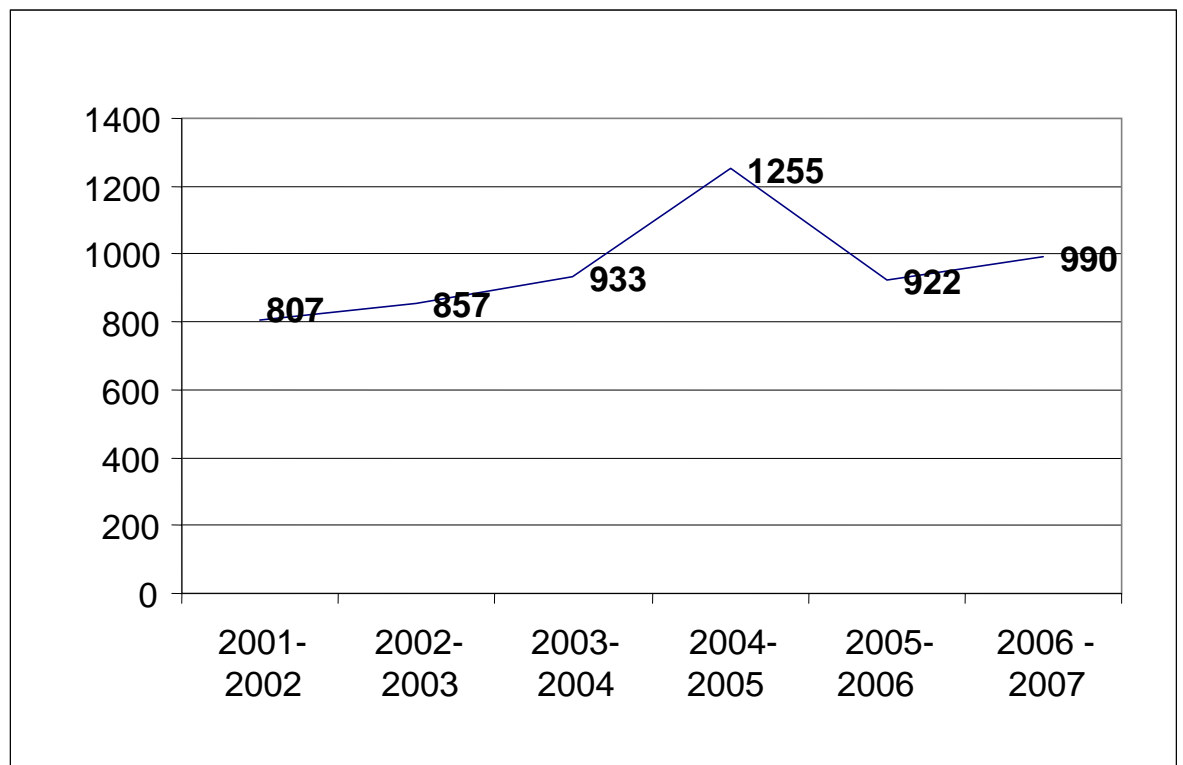


Figure 1 Average attendance of Mestis between the years 2001 – 2007

Figure 2 shows the attendance in Hokki’s home games, game-by-game. The figure shows that only in one game the attendance was below 600 spectators. This supports the results of the research, which will be discussed later.

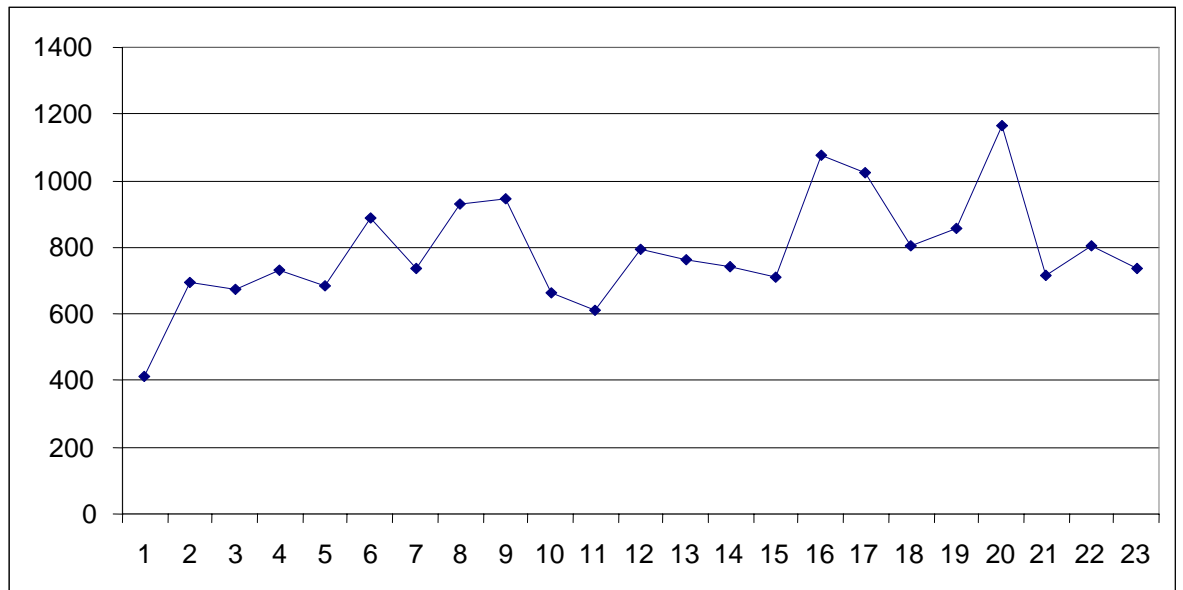


Figure 2 Attendance to Hokki's home games in 2006-2007

Figure 3 shows how the overall Mestis average attendance and Hokki's average attendance compared with each other. Hokki has never been above the Mestis average in attendance. The alarming fact now is that the general trend for Mestis shows that the average attendance is going upwards, except on the season after the peak. In the case of Hokki, the trend is the opposite. Hokki's averages peaked during the same season as the entire Mestis did, but excluding that season, the attendance is going downward. (Suomen jääkiekkoliitto, Mestis Info 2006 - 2007)

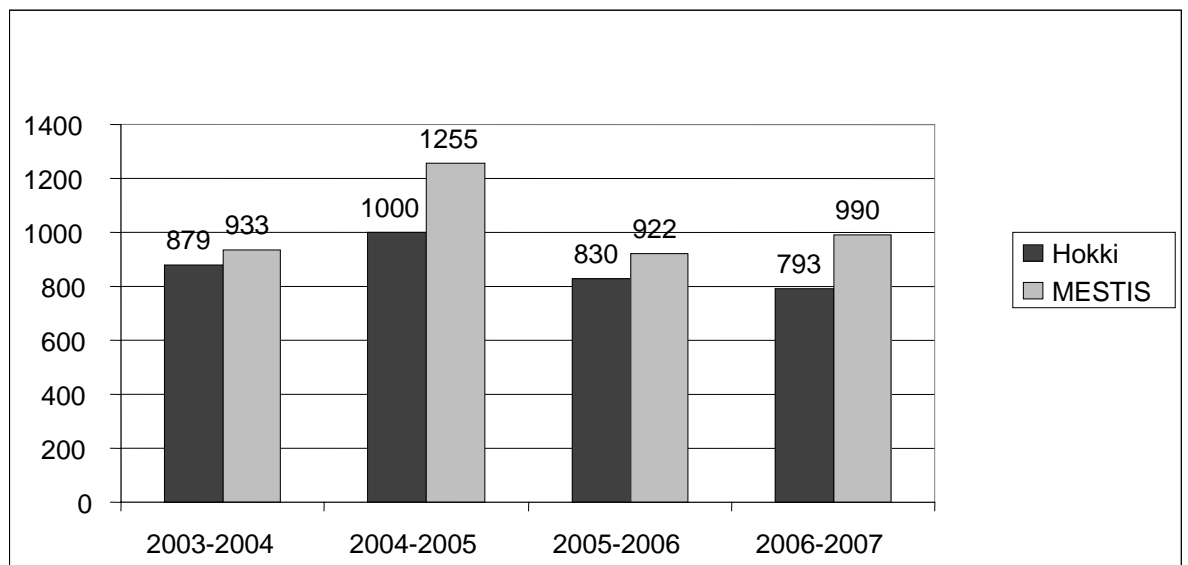


Figure 3 Hokki and Mestis average attendances compared

If the years in between 2003-2007 are used as an example, only eight out of twelve teams have played in Mestis during all of those seasons. Out of these eight teams four have lost spectators and four have gained spectators. Hokki's loss has been 10% from 2003 to 2007. The biggest spectator losses have been experienced in Forssa, where the local team FPS has lost over 23% of its spectators between 2003 and 2007. FPS was relegated to Suomi-Sarja after the season 2006 – 2007. The biggest gainers have been Sport from Vaasa, whose spectator average has gone up almost 35% in four years and TuTo from Turku, who has been able to increase their spectator amounts by an amazing 53% in four years. TuTo's average attendance rose by over 28% from the season 2005-2006 alone. One of the reasons behind this could be the new arena which was built in 2006. (Suomen jääkiekkoliitto, Mestis Info 2006 - 2007)

2.2 Kajaani as a Sports Marketing Area

Kajaani is a small city, with about 38.000 inhabitants, located in northern Finland. According to the official web page of the city of Kajaani about 51% of the population are female and 49% are male. The population by age in Kajaani is shown in table 1. Interesting fact is the small portion of 25-39 year olds; this age group covers only little over 16% of the population. (Kajaani)

This same age group was the largest age group participating in ice hockey games in the study conducted in Turku (Anttila & Ruonavaara, 2001.).

Under 25 years old	11820
25-39 years old	6124
40-59 years old	11668
60+ years old	8415

Table 1 Population by age in Kajaani, 31.12.2006 (Kajaani)

In addition to relatively small population, the level of unemployment is relatively high in Kajaani. According to the statistics of TE-keskus, the unemployment rate of Kajaani was over 12% in September 2007, while in whole Finland it was only little over 7%.(TE-keskus)

In Kajaani, as well as in any other place in Finland, separate companies and organizations are struggling to get a portion of people's leisure time. There have not been major changes in the amount of leisure time that people have, in two or three decades, but there has been a big change in how the time is used. One example is watching television. In 1979 an average Finn watched television for 9 hours and 10 minutes per week. In 1999 the time spent in front of the television had raised to 15 hours and 11 minutes. In 2006 the rise still continues, and the time spent to watch television had more than doubled from 1979 statistics, to 19 hours and 43 minutes. That means that an average Finnish person spends almost one full day every week watching television. Computers and video games are some other "new hobbies" that are consuming peoples' time more now than ever before. (Suomen Tilastokeskus)

Even though accurate statistics of how leisure time was spent on cultural and entertainment events (including sports events) are missing, some conclusions could be drawn. These cultural and entertainment events altogether have not lost any serious amount of used time over years, but the division within this group has changed. Compared to 1979 or 1989 the amount of time spent in movie theatres today has risen significantly. Sports events in general suffer from this, but there are changes also within sports events. In the 1990's floorball (sali-bandy in Finnish) has become one of the most popular sports in Finland. Even though it still is far behind ice hockey in spectator numbers, floorball might just be one reason behind falling numbers of ice hockey crowds. (Suomen Tilastokeskus)

From Hokki's point of view there might be too many options for sports events in Kajaani. Football and other summer sports do not necessary compete with Hokki for spectators, but other sports that are over-lapping with ice hockey season are possibly reducing customer amounts.

3 SPORTS MARKETING

Within the latest centuries the world has changed. Business is not restricted by the lack of commodities or products, but quite opposite, by the lack of customers. Marketing is a solution to a question about how to compete in a world of over-production without dumping prices. Marketing is often, but wrongfully seen equal to selling, or as means to get rid of the produced goods. Production and selling can be outsourced, but marketing is what makes companies successful. (Kotler 2003, IX.)

Marketing and selling are often said to be the same as or at least the two sides of the same coin. Eventually they are quite opposite from each other and the final objective of marketing is to make selling unnecessary. (Drucker 1973, 64 - 65.)

It is said that marketing management is an art and a science of choosing a target group, attracting and retaining customers that is done by creating, offering and delivering superior value to customers. (Kotler 2003, XI.)

In today's world, sports are no longer just sports in their traditional meaning. They have become a part of an even larger field of entertainment. For sports marketing this means that there are far more financial interests than ever before, since entertainment has become one of the biggest businesses in the world. (Alaja 2000, 27.)

One definition of sports marketing holds the opinion that "sports marketing is building a highly identified fan base such that fans, sponsors, media, and government pay to promote and support the organization for the benefits of social exchange and personal, group, and community identity within a cooperative competitive environment." (Wakefield 2007, 12.)

Marketing oriented companies must create customer value and satisfaction to attract and retain customers. This value and satisfaction comes from many sources outside the product itself, but will be discussed more deeply in chapter 4. (Jobber 1998, 11.)

The increased amount of free-time, new ways of spending free-time and ever increasing supply of options has driven entertainment providers and marketers into fierce competition.

Sports business has become a part of this battlefield. Different forms of sports are competing for the spectators, athletes, premises, sponsors, popularity and publicity. This has led to a situation where marketing has become more involved with sports, and “it has come to stay”. Times have changed from the old days and today to be successful, organized marketing is needed. (Alaja 2000, 17.)

The combination of sports and marketing has created the term *sports marketing*. After the year 1980 the first sports marketers became part of sports organizations in Finland. The major breakthrough of sports marketing came almost 20 years later in the late 1990's. Marketing was no longer to be a magic trick for sports, but rather to be an instrument in maintaining the soul of sports and to make them still interesting to people and financially profitable for the organizations. It is difficult to make sports a business and to make it only a business. The soul of sports needs to be kept alive. (Alaja 2000, 17 – 18.)

In Finland, the culture of sports marketing is still very young resulting in a shortage of professionals in this field. Therefore the early part of the 21st century has been an era of practise and improvement for sports marketers. It is important to realize that marketing has become a vital part or a life line, needed for an organization to survive.(Alaja 2000, 18.)

Important fact to remember is also that marketing is more than just a department in a company that sends out brochures, designs advertisements or answers to customers questions. Marketing should include involvement of personnel, customers, subsidiaries and other interest groups. (Kotler 2003, XII.)

3.1 Special Features of Sports Marketing

Just as traditional marketing also sports marketing derives from the idea that “the customer is the king”. Sports marketing includes all the aspects that are needed to satisfy the needs and desires of a “consumer” of sports. Two of the main purposes for a sports marketer are, firstly, to promote sports gear and other consumer goods and secondly to promote products of separate industries through sponsorship. Sponsorship is big part of financing professional sports. (Alaja 2000, 26 - 27.)

Sports marketing can be divided into two parts: spectator marketing and marketing to people who are interested in doing sports. In the case of the latter, the marketer is trying to activate a consumer to join a sports club, a gym, or some other similar activity, as well as to buy sports clothing or equipment. In spectator marketing the main focus is on attracting the consumers to follow sports events as a spectator, having a little bit more passive, but yet very important role. (Alaja 2000, 28.)

The product in sports marketing is very different from traditional marketing. A sports consumer experiences sports from his or her own point of view. It is always a personal experience in one way or the other. Consuming sports relies heavily on emotions and feelings that the consumers experience. Understanding the consumers' emotions and experiences is in a way the main task of a sports marketer; however this requires a significant amount of skill and sensitivity from a marketer. (Alaja 2000, 28.)

As a regular consumer item can have even millions of exact copies of the same product, sports events as a product, are never the same. Even if the referees, the game venue, the time of the event, players and the spectators were exactly the same in two different ice-hockey games a week apart from each other, the two games would still not be the same. A sports event is full of variables: weather, injuries, reactions of the spectators, players' current form and so on. These are all having an effect on the result and thus to the satisfaction and the level of entertainment of a customer. Surprises make sports interesting and exciting, while at the same time they make sports marketing a difficult and challenging field. Nothing is guaranteed in sports. The champions must fall sometimes. If sports were less surprising, then for example sports betting would not be such a big business. (Alaja 2000, 28.)

When a sport itself is a product, both consumption and production happen simultaneously. People who have come to see a sport event are enjoying the event itself and in addition they may enjoy the additional services offered by the organizer. In these ways spectators also play their own role in creating an atmosphere for the event. There are not many regular consumer goods that have similar attributes. In a way it can be said that a consumer in a spectator sports event is a part of producing the product as well. (Alaja 2000, 28)

Speciality in sports as a product is shown also in the sports product being hard to control. Marketers are often part of development and production of industrial products and fast

moving consumer goods. In sports marketing this is rarely possible. Even though the marketing point of view is considered important in decisions about schedules and programs, the decisions are determined by many other factors as well. Sports marketing personnel often have to leave the core product to a coach or manager who is responsible for success. They are the ones who build up, train, and direct the team according their own views. The task for marketing personnel is to create additional services and value around the core product. Even a team that is estimated to be the last in the league needs to be made interesting and attractive to consumers and sponsors. Marketers' task is to create a brand that attracts the people and makes them want to be identified with the brand. (Alaja 2000, 29.)

3.2 Marketing Mix

In order to be effective as a marketer one needs to understand competition, and the ways an organization approaches its customers and other interest groups. Each organization forms their own plan, the ways they can compete and their own marketing mix. (Bergström 2003, 147.)

The marketing mix is a combination of four elements: product, price, place and promotion. This combination, created in the 1960's by an American, Jerome McCarthy, is called the 4P-model. (Bergström 2003, 147.)

In addition to this well known 4P-model, in sports marketing also a fifth element, sponsorship, needs to be taken into consideration. (Alaja 2000, 30.)

3.2.1 Product

Product is an essential method of competing for a company or an organization, because the other ways of competing are all built around the product. The business idea defines the customer groups, whose needs are to be satisfied. After that, a company or an organization needs to define with which products or services these needs are met with. (Bergström 2003, 165.)

Product is a marketing term which means either an actual product, or a service. It also means the entity created about the product by marketing personnel, not only the end product. For example, the product is not only the ice hockey team, or even less the entrance ticket alone. It is the combination of the team, atmosphere, services, fan products, entertainment and many other parts of the whole. Customers are not only buying a material item, but rather solutions to their needs and problems, and desires for benefits and pleasure. In practice, products are formed from different parts. For example, many of the services include a material item (to go to an ice hockey game one needs to buy an actual ticket) and many products include services (for example guarantees). Sports events and other events alike often include tangible products (ticket, fan memorabilia), services and people (players, other spectators, safety personnel). (Alaja 2000, 72 - 73.)

The product is understood as an entity that is based on the core product and supported by the other parts or layers. There are three main layers in a product: the core product, the additional benefits and the perception or the image of the product. Because sports events are service products, these layers need to be observed from the service point of view. The layers of a service product are:

1. *Core service* is what the customer is primarily buying and therefore what is offered to a customer. This is also the company's reason for being in the market at all. For example in the case of an ice hockey club, the core product to be sold is the opportunity to watch the actual match that the team is playing.
2. *Additional services* are often vital part of the service. The additional services are used to complete and to assist the use of a core service. These additional services are intended to make the core service, no matter how abstract it is, closer and more real to a customer. For example in an ice hockey match, additional services may include such things as the announcements that provide information and thus makes following the match, the core service, easier.
3. *Supporting services* are used to make the core service as pleasant as possible for the customer. Supporting services are also used to add value to the core service and to gain competitive advantage. Supporting services mainly add value to the core product and differentiate the service from others. They are not supporting services in a way that

would make the use of core service any easier, but they support the core service in its value adding way and make it more pleasant for customers. In an ice hockey match some of these services are program hand outs, shows during the breaks between periods and so on. (Alaja 2000, 74.)

A sport as a product is unique. It is unpredictable and surprising. It is not a simple product, but it includes many dimensions or elements (Alaja 2000, 75 - 76.) in addition to its' core product:

- *The sport itself/competition*

In the end, sports are about competition in some form, which results in having winners and losers. Winning and losing is a big part of the basic philosophy of sports, it could be called the soul of sports. Different sports have different rules and therefore different sports attract different types of customers. Golf is quite easy going and quite slow while ice hockey is physical and fast.

- *Star athletes*

All organizers of sports events would like to have certain star athletes in their event. The track and field *Grand Prix*- or GP-events are a prime example of a show of star athletes. They contain something for everyone. In many cases the sport itself falls behind in meaning and the star athletes seem to be the core product. People are fascinated by "stars" and people need stars along with their personalities. One can become a star by using other assets than their success and skills. Former tennis player Anna Kournikova earned more money by modelling than by playing tennis.

- *Entrance ticket*

The ticket always has its own value. A ticket ought to be viewed as more than just a ticket. It is a receipt, it may guide people to their own seats and it defines the terms of purchase. While tickets are a source of income for the club or organization, they are also one more marketing tool to be used wisely. They are often used, for example, as an advertising media (sponsors, special offers etc.).

- *Organization*

It is vital for a sports organization that fans feel that their favourite team is local. The team needs to be part of the town or city, and the town or city needs to be part of the team. Spectators and fans want to talk about their “home-town team”, their own team. The organization behind an athlete or a team has an important role. They must earn the trust of their fans, especially in modern days, as sports franchises can be sold to different locations. In North America this is a reality already. In the National Hockey League (NHL) history, there are several examples where the actual team, players, organization and especially the brand, has been sold to another city or country. The Jets from Winnipeg, Canada, were sold to Phoenix, Arizona and later became Phoenix Coyotes. The Minnesota North Stars were sold and moved to Dallas, Texas, thus becoming The Dallas Stars. In these situations it is even more difficult and more important to earn the trust of the local people.

- *Circumstances*

Most forms of sports need their own space for amateur or competitive activities. Some modern sports, such as *footbag* or *parkour* do not need special premises of their own, but most forms of sports do. Therefore, circumstances are an important part of the sports product. Creating great circumstances and atmosphere is one of the most important tasks of the management of a sports organization. The atmosphere, premises and circumstances have effect on the athletes and the spectators, which makes this element twice as important in today’s sports marketing. When the circumstances at the sport venue are good, it can help the results become better, but more important, the surroundings make the sport itself and the organization look better immediately. Spectators are able to enjoy the total experience more when the surroundings are pleasant and comfortable. From an organization’s operational point of view, better circumstances will create more revenues from advertising. Lately, one of the major interests for the sports organizations in Finland has been their sport venues. This factor has an effect on their image, their sponsor sales and it also creates more possibilities for additional and supporting services, which are growing to be an important part of their revenues.

- *Outfits and equipment*

Different types of gear or equipment and clothing items also belong to the sports product. People are very fashion and consuming minded today. Even the game outfits should be stylish and somewhat fashionable, especially in the spectators' view. In the NHL for example, the teams do not have any sponsor logos in their equipment, except the logo of the company that produced the item. In female volleyball the outfits were changed to be much tighter than they used to be, in order to give more style and sex appeal to the game. Replicas of the team outfits and other fan memorabilia have a massive impact on the finances and the brand image of many of the organizations. The fans feel more unity with their team while wearing similar outfits as their favourites and idols do.

- *Service personnel and service process*

Another part of the sports product is the service personnel and the fluency of services. Personnel are the individuals who in some way deliver the product to the customer and therefore are required to have a close interaction with the customer. For a customer the service always is, or at least should be, a unique experience. A failed service can never be taken back. Ticket sales, information services, safety services, condition of toilets and other public areas play an important role as elements in the sports product. If they do not reach the minimum level that the customer requires, the customer will not return to use the service for the second time.

- *Image*

A good image is very important for every team or organization, not only in sports. Even though most organizations have the same basic principles, each organization or sports product have their own specific attributes in their respective images. Every team has a brand image whether or not they have purposefully created one. If one city has several teams for the same sport, image is one of the leading factors contributing to customers decisions about which

one to follow. Performance and success, as well as circumstances, are all parts of creating image in a customer's mind.

Every product, company or organization has an image. An image is a perception of an organization, company or product in someone's mind. To that person it does not matter if his perception or formed image is accurate or even based on a fragment of truth; only thing that matters, is that it is his image of that product or the company. Each person might have a different image in his mind about the same product. Is one of them more truthful than the other one? On factual basis that might be the case, but in the end everyone makes their buying decision on their own, according to their own image. If a company does not actively try to form a certain image, its image will be unclear to customers. (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 49 - 50.)

3.2.2 Price

Price is the only element in a marketing mix which actually brings money to organizations' accounts. Since price and pricing is a very complex element in marketing, a lot of thought should be given to it. Pricing has at least four meanings and they should all be taken into consideration while thinking about pricing techniques and policies. The four meanings of pricing are (Alaja 2000, 89.):

1. *It forms and measures the value of a product*

Firstly price tells is the value of the product to the customer. If luxury image is wished for, it has to show on price tags. An organization should not undervalue its own product. On the other hand the price asked should not be too high, so that customer becomes unwilling to pay the price, if he does not feel that he receives value for the price he paid.

2. *It is a way to compete*

Especially in sports business (match or sports events) price has to be low enough. Otherwise it is difficult to compete with the other options for

free-time activities. For example, if a movie ticket is clearly cheaper than a ticket to an ice hockey game many customers may feel that a movie is a more tempting option.

3. *It affects profitability*

Product price affects sales volume, and through that it affects profits. Selling with lower prices may increase the sales volume, but lower the profitability at the same time. By raising prices one can increase profitability, if the additional cost does not affect sales volume negatively. In making choices about pricing one has to consider the effect of price to both on volume and profitability.

4. *It affects positioning*

Both too low and too high pricing may restrict the sales of a product. Price has to be accepted by the target group, those who will buy the tickets. Different prices suit different target groups even though the product would be equivalent. In ice hockey games it is quite common to have different discounts available, for example student discounts or discounts for pensioners. Different target groups may also choose their seats from the chosen area of the venue; even though it would cost a little bit more. VIP seats are becoming more and more common also in the lower leagues or series.

Price formulation is not always simple, because it is affected by many separate factors, such as markets, product, goals, expenses and public authorities (Alaja 2000, 89 - 90.):

- There can be many *markets* and all of them may have different price levels. Prices are affected by the relationship between supply and demand of similar products in the market. The study of the size and the purchasing power of the market also play an important role on price formulation. Also the pricing of competitors is important information to have. If there is another club or organization in the same town, even if they are doing another sport, this should be taken in consideration (as the example about sports versus cinema that was mentioned earlier).

- *Public authorities* affect pricing by charging different types of taxes and other payments, or in some cases the prices must be accepted by the authorities. Value-added tax and others are often included in the price mentioned in the advertisement, but it seems to be more common to tell the price in the form of “50 € + VAT 8%”. In sports however, this method is extremely rare.
- *Goals* set by the organization create the basis for pricing. They need to think about the relation of image goals to pricing. Other affecting factors are goals for market share, goals for sales and goals for profitability. Before a new season begins, each club sets a goal for spectator amounts in attendance at their home games. This is one of the most important factors in creating the budget for the season. In the case that a club achieves and exceeds their goal, there is more room to play with during the next season. If the goals are not achieved, then pricing and other factors need to be rethought.
- *Product* is naturally a major part of pricing. Is the product sold only as a core product or are there additional and supporting services? A company or an organization also needs to think about the positioning of the product in comparison to competitors and which individuals make up their target group. The more differentiation there is in a product, the more freely it can be priced. For example in ice hockey, during the season, the ticket prices are basically on the same level, but when the post-season, or play-off games start, the ticket prices may rise significantly. A play-off match is a more unique and differentiated product. Even though prices are much higher the demand grows, because of the success of the team and the excitement following the nature of play-off games.
- *Expenses* and costs set the minimum price. It is important to define the costs from the product plus all the costs that are caused by the product to the organization (for example costs of labour). Even though it is not profitable, in some special cases a product can be sold for a lower price

than what the minimum price is, but the resulting losses need to be covered in some other way. Occasional free tickets might attract someone to become a regular customer. If the ticket to a specific match costs 1€ less than normally, each cup of coffee or each sausage sold during that game might cost an extra 30 cents.

Factors that affect to the product price are various, but they might have different importance in different situations. In addition to above mentioned five factors, there are at least two more factors that can be added (figure 4). These are target group and company resources (Mäntyneva 2002, 96 - 98.):

- *Extra company resources* are sometimes needed during peak seasons, which may lead to price increase.
- *Target group* is very essential in pricing decisions. In company's mind the correct price is the highest price that the customers are willing to buy the product. Price may be, in a way, differentiated to each customer group.

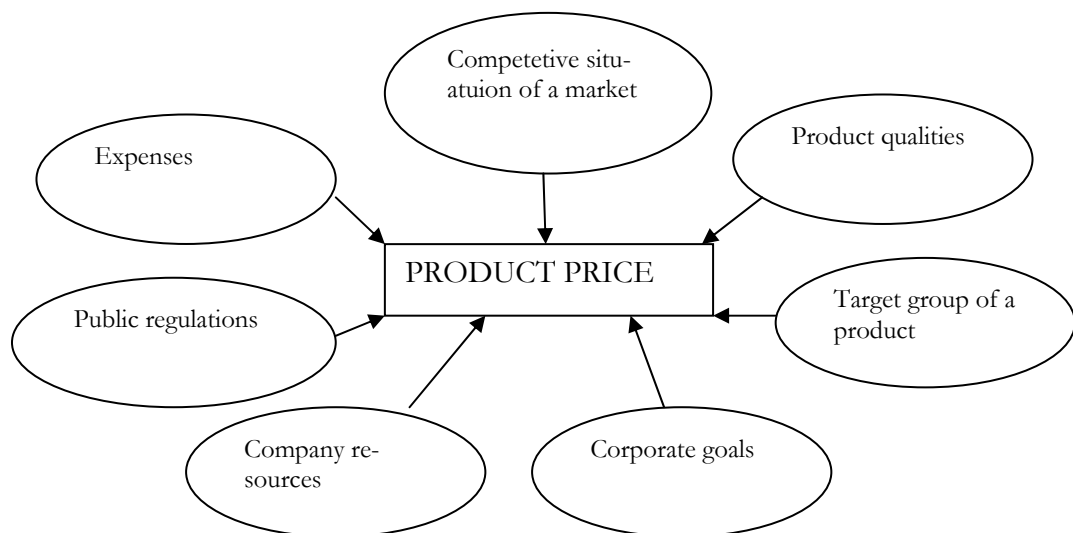


Figure 4 Factors affecting product price (Mäntyneva 2002, 92.)

When a product is priced (in this case the ticket for a match event) one needs to figure out the critical price level. Critical price level is that psychological level of price after which the interest and demand are starting to get lower and the customers are not willing to buy or cannot buy the product. The price of the product needs to be presented enticingly and attractively. This is called *psychological pricing*, which means that the price is made to seem or feel low. (Bergström 2003, 226.)

One can play with prices also through creating price steps or by price differentiating. This means that the same product is sold to different people with different price. More often this means discount prices, but in some cases this can be used as a means to charge higher prices. Discounts are usually offered to students, pensioners, children and sometimes even the unemployed. Higher prices can be asked for VIP-seats or a private function for a company for example. (Bergström 2003, 225.)

Regular customers can also be rewarded for their loyalty. An example of this could be season ticket buyers, whose payment per game is lower than those who buy single ticket to each game. Season ticket buyers are often rewarded with some form of fan memorabilia as well. Price steps and differentiation can be used to attract customers outside the target group by temporarily lowering the prices. This may help in attracting new testers, who might develop into regular customers. (Bergström 2003, 225.)

3.2.3 Place

Accessibility might be one of the most effective factors of choosing a certain product. The product needs to be available where a customer wants it to be, when he needs it. Information has to be spread to customers about where and when the product is available. When the product is easily accessible and available, it is easy to choose and buy. Accessibility includes two connected sectors: marketing channel and distribution. (Bergström 2003, 234.)

Marketing channel is a chain of companies, through which the product is sold to different markets. The product, its ownership and information is passed through the marketing channel. The term “marketing channel” can be used for both products and services. It does not necessarily include any movement of physical product. It can serve solely as an information

channel, through which customers receive knowledge about the product or service. (Bergström 2003, 234.)

Distribution and logistics include moving the goods, storages and internal distribution. Distribution and logistics are meant to reduce the geographical and time differences between production and consumption. (Alaja 2000, 98.)

When discussing an organization's accessibility, both marketing channel and distribution channel are connected. Marketing channel is a basic decision, according to which the accessibility is organized. Distribution is responsible for the results of the accessibility. (Alaja 2000, 98.)

In theory the accessibility and place in marketing mix in both, sports marketing and traditional marketing, are similar, but in practise there are quite clear differences between the two. Excluding sports gear industry, sports product usually has very short physical distance from production site to consumption site. In many cases the production site is the consumption site. This leads to increased importance of the sports venue (location, entrances, transport connections and appearance) for the marketer. (Alaja 2000, 98 – 99.)

Location of the venue is vital for most of the different sports. The venue needs to be easily accessible and near to a main route, so that spectators can arrive by public transportation or by their own vehicles. The parking area should also be located within a considerably short distance of the venue itself. There should also be sufficient number of parking places. A rule of thumb is that the amount of parking places should be one fourth ($\frac{1}{4}$) of the amount of spectators. If the venue can hold 10 000 spectators, there should be 2500 parking places. If the situation requires, proper traffic guidance and security services should be organized as well. Often those who are organizing and guiding the traffic and parking are the ones who give the first impression about the organization and of its image. Security arrangements are very important. Security needs to be organized in a way that it runs smoothly and fluently, but yet is as invisible as possible. (Alaja 2000, 99.)

The popularity of a venue is highly affected by several image factors. The word about service levels goes quickly by the word of mouth. This is the reason why the services of the sport venue ought to be customer friendly. The personnel need to be personal and willing to

serve. The importance of the accessibility of services and the overall tidiness of the public areas in the sport venue should never be overlooked. (Alaja 2000, 99.)

Sport marketing's main product is often the entrance ticket. The ticket sales system requires a lot of thought, since its purpose is to make getting a ticket as easy as possible for a customer. Everything has to work properly since ticket sales is the biggest source of revenues for a club. In ticket sales there are sales methods commonly in use: advance booking and sales at the gates of the venue. (Alaja 2000, 100.)

Every event organizers' goal should be to sell the event out through advanced booking. This helps to avoid risks during the event, for example cancellation of participating athletes. Aatos Erkkö, who has planned the ticket sales system for many large events in Finland, has said that "a good ticket is a sold ticket". That sums it up for the marketing point of view. From a customer's point of view it can be said in an opposite way that "a good ticket is a bought ticket". By booking in advance a customer gets the seat he wants and advance booking usually also mean smoother entrance to the event. On the other hand, it also eases up the organizers work at the entrance. Sometimes advance tickets are also cheaper than the tickets sold at the gates. (Alaja 2000, 100.)

3.2.4 Promotion

"Marketing promotion" is defined as making the company and its products visible, therefore promotion is one of the main factors in creating brand image and desire for purchasing. Promotion also increases the reputation and the corporate image and gives information about the products, prices and the places of purchase and thereby affects in the demand of a product. (Begström 2003, 273.)

The objectives of marketing promotion are:

- Informing about the company, product, price and availability
- Attract attention and differentiate from competitors
- Create interest and positive attitude
- Activate customers and raise desire for purchases
- Increase sales
- Strengthen the buying decision of a customer and maintain the customer relationships. (Bergström 2003, 273.)

In designing marketing promotion, a model called AIDASS model can be used. This is expanded version of the better known AIDA-model (Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action). The basic principle of this model is that objectives and goals are set for each step, and the means of achieving the goals are well thought out. In each phase goal achievement is monitored and, if needed, the promotion can be changed in the next step.

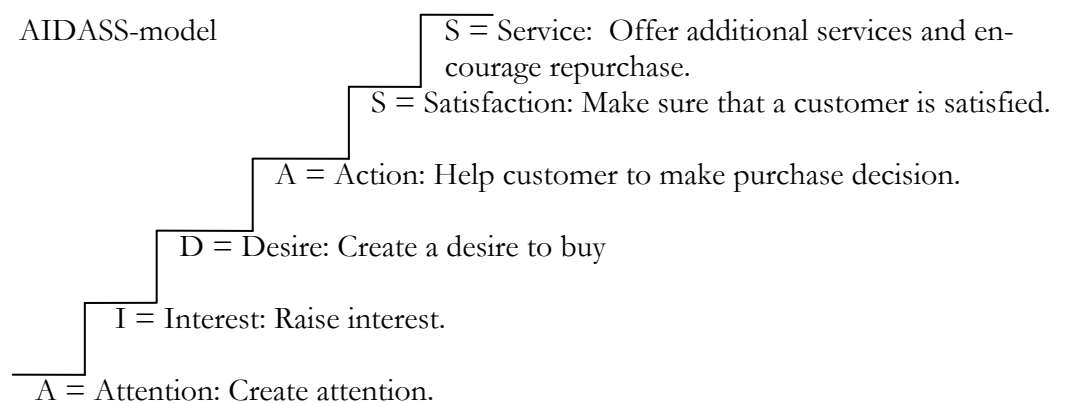


Figure 5 AIDASS- step model (Bergström 2003, 275)

Marketing promotion is a complex task and it has many different subtasks in it. It includes committing, informing, advertising, PR-work, sales and promoting. From a financial point of view it is important to understand that for promotion there is budgeted only as much money as is necessary and as organization can afford to. (Alaja 2000, 150.)

Committing

Committing, also referred to as internal marketing, is one of the most important parts of promotion. It has two objectives; firstly the personnel of an organization has to accept and understand the business idea of the organization. Secondly, every member of an organization has to be willing and ready to work in a manner that the objectives of a company are going to be achieved. Committing, or “internal marketing”, is not about giving orders, but about interaction, where every employee is committed to a common goal. (Alaja 2000, 171.)

Some of the ways to commit employees are: informing, training, encouraging and creating a sense of unity. Internal informing ensures that the personnel understand the business idea and the objectives as well as the everyday activities and tasks. Information is shared internally by internal announcements, notice boards and different meetings. Training in its turn ensures the capabilities and skills of the employees. Training should cover all levels of personnel. (Alaja 2000, 171.)

Different incentives are also important ways in committing your personnel. Incentives ensure the personnel’s willingness and desire to fulfil the goals of the organization. Showing personal, genuine gratitude is a good way to help the personnel to perform their daily tasks well. Different incentives can be, for example: giving personal feedback, participation in decision making and rewarding for a job well done. The fourth part, creating a sense of unity, is important for the well being and morale of the personnel. A sense of unity and belief in success in the future add to this morale. Company parties and other events are some ways to strengthen unity. The most common methods used to build up a sense of unity are uniforms, symbols and signs. These can have a huge effect on building belief of success and sense of unity. For the same aforementioned reason, fans buy replicas of team’s game outfits for themselves. (Alaja 2000, 171 - 172.)

After an organization is committed, it becomes even more important to commit customers. It is important to notice that customer commitment is much more than customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction does not ensure that a customer relationship has been created, even though dissatisfaction prevents the birth of such a customer relationship. A company has to separate factors that create satisfaction and factors that create dissatisfaction. This can be done by using customer satisfaction questionnaire. (Rope 2000, 188.)

Properly committed customers are also financially profitable, since they save organizations expenditures on marketing activities. For a club it is cheaper to keep old customers than to gain new customers through marketing efforts. When “committing” is handled properly it can bring more opportunities for other marketing activities, because valuable time does not have to be used any longer for committing customers. In practise committing activities are closely linked with other marketing activities, for example sales and public relations. Committing does not happen quickly, and takes a lot of time and effort, but is worth the sacrifice, if successful. (Alaja 2000. 173 - 174.)

Public relations

In modern media society the need and importance of information and public relations has practically grown explosively; some even feel that it has gotten out of hands. Fierce competition is going on just for the space in newspapers, and it requires professional touch from a company’s public relations to win the competition. Those who want the biggest crowds and biggest sponsorship deals need to get their names to the media. (Alaja 2000, 178.)

While marketing is focusing on markets, distribution and customers, public relations is more wide ranging than marketing. Public relations also affects to employees, shareholders and local community and many other groups. Therefore public relations are actually creating an environment in which marketing is more easily conducted. Publicity, corporate advertising, seminars, lobbying and charitable donations are all part of the public relations activities. (Jobber 1998, 428.)

Published news in newspapers, television or on the internet is always a big thing, whether it is about player transfers, match results or changes in organization. Properly shared information that leads to a news story brings credibility to the organization and the story itself. The story is more real and true, when it is published as news. Information sharing and public relations are the best possible form of advertisement. Not only it is cheap, or even free, it is also often more effective than a paid advertisement. In the eyes of a customer an advertisement always has the flavour of advertisement, but news is informal and more respectable and therefore taken more seriously by consumers. Let us take an example of this. The marketing people have to do a lot of work convincing people about a team being the best in their league or series. No matter how hard they try, they can not convince everyone. But if

the news flash tells that a team is topping the table with a big difference to the next team, it makes this claim about being the best team much more respectable and much more true. (Alaja 2000, 179.)

The main idea of public relations is sharing information. It is better to share too much than too little information, but an organization needs to take care that an announcements are not made out of empty words, but that the news have importance and credibility. It is absolutely vital for public relations to be handled openly and honestly. This also creates a credible basis for cooperation with the media and that is an advantage worth of gold for the whole organization. Therefore it becomes vital that the public relations in an organization are handled by professionals. By and by each professional publicist creates their own network of connections. These networks can be used effectively for the benefit of the club. (Alaja 2000, 179.)

Public Relations are important and can be effective especially in building an image to a company or in adding visibility. Only a well-known company can have a strong corporate image. From a company's point of view, the results of well handled public relations are extremely valuable. A positive article in a leading journal or newspaper brings significantly more attention and respect to a company. A good publicist must have good contacts and a wide web of networks. To know good reporters and to have good relationship with them is vital for effective information sharing. Good public relations and media relations are a good investment for the future. (Siukosaari 1999, 88 – 89.)

Although public relations have its positive effects, it also has its own weaknesses. To get the desired message through to be circulated by the media can be very difficult. During the process of it, the original message could be altered. The timing of the release could also go wrong from the company's point of view. These problems can be conquered in most of the cases with good planning and professional touch from the publicist. (Siukosaari 1999, 101.)

As mentioned earlier one should not release news if there is nothing to announce. Message should be included and it should have an importance of some kind. Examples of potentially news worthy topics include sponsorships, new products (or players), price changes, new logos, achievements, employment changes, financial statements, awards, success stories and anniversaries or other significant days. (Jobber 1998, 431.)

Through public relations activities the image of an organization can also be shared to the public and interest groups. One of the main rules of marketing is that “everything is sold through emotions, even though it is important to a customer that he can rationally justify his decision to himself and to others”. Marketing personnel and the company management has to understand that purchases are done based on customers’ emotions, perceptions and images, but a company needs to build their brand image in a way that customer thinks he knows exactly why he made the decision, without mixing his emotions to it. (Rope & Vahvaselkä 1997, 67.)

Advertising

Advertising is often the most important method of interaction with potential customers for an organization. Advertising is paid and goal oriented information about products, services, events, ideologies as well as general facts concerning the organization. Advertising uses mass media or other tools to inform the masses simultaneously. The advertiser should be clearly recognizable from the advertisement. (Bergström 2003, 208.)

Some of these advertising types are:

1. Media advertising
 - Advertising in newspapers and magazines
 - Television and radio advertisements
 - Outdoor advertisement (signs and billboards)
 2. Direct marketing
 3. Other advertisement
 - Advertisement in offices, events and networks
- (Alaja 2000, 189.)

Advertisement planning is always based on a marketing plan. The goals and objectives of advertising should be set in a way that advertising as a competitive factor can achieve those goals by itself. Types of objectives could be, for example; operational objectives, objectives for content and objectives for conspicuousness. (Alaja 2000, 189.)

An *objective for conspicuousness* could be, for example, that within a year a certain percentage of the target group recognizes the name of the sports club. An *objective for content* could be, for example, that a certain percentage of the target group has been reached by advertisements and that 40% of those remember the price for the ticket mentioned in the advertisement. *Operational objective* could be that the customer satisfaction questionnaire receives 120 returned coupons, or that a recruiting campaign leads to 100 new members of a club or organization. (Alaja 2000, 189 - 190.)

In sports marketing, in comparison with traditional marketing, the special characteristics of sports have to be taken into consideration. In sports spectators are very emotionally charged. Emotions of the fans, as well as of the athletes show strongly. Sports are connected to peoples' free time and their own, chosen hobbies and in that way, make it very personal. Sports affect to both the body and the mind of the spectator. They can invoke amazing actions. A quiet and charming businessman might yell aggressively during the game, or a normally shy and introverted person might feel like "part of the gang" as a fan in a larger group. These emotional factors should be considered in sports marketing and advertising.

Separate sports might have their own slang, which makes it important for the advertiser to speak the correct language to the fans. Wrongly used terms and phrases may be viewed as ridiculous and seriously harm the effect of an advertisement. If a journalist makes this kind of mistake, it does not affect the team, but rather the journalist and the magazine or newspaper he is writing for. If a marketing person makes this kind of mistake, it gives a bad impression of the entire organization. (Alaja 2000, 195.)

Sharing basic information is the most vital part of advertising a sports event. Many think that sports advertisements are boring and dull, which is often due to the lack of resources. Sport organizations often think advertisements only as expenses, without a clear vision of investments and future profits. This attitude is and needs to be changing; the quality of sports advertising is increasing and advertising and marketing have become more common. This progress can be seen also in growing interest and specialising of advertising agencies towards sports marketing. Even in Finland agencies that specialize in sports marketing are beginning to arise. (Alaja 2000, 195.)

In sports marketing, it is important to know the target group, their inner thoughts, desires and wishes. Loyal customers (fans) need to be remembered and taken in consideration and the consumers are not to be underestimated. Advertising ought to be kept within the limits of good taste; opponents should not be ridiculed, but rather the intensity and competitiveness of the match should be highlighted. In sports marketing also patience will pay out. The chosen marketing policy should stay content for a long enough time in order to it really sticking into the minds of the people. (Alaja 2000, 196.)

Advertisements are designed to affect to people in a certain way and to create a desired image of a product. Advertising has become a part of everyone's everyday life, and maybe even further than that: it has practically become a social institution. Advertising affects people's life, their perceptions and beliefs. Advertising is an effective and a important part of marketing, since it works on a psychological level, affecting to a persons knowledge, values and emotions. (Siukosaari 1999, 67 - 76.)

Often when advertising is discussed about, over spending money is criticized, which partially derives from the high prices of television or newspaper advertisements. Therefore it is vital to know the resources and limits within which one has to operate. Advertising decisions are always connected to spending company resources and should be seen as an investment just as any other investment to company's progression and development. (Siukosaari 1999, 68 – 72.)

A company should always ponder if the advertising campaign will improve customer satisfaction more than investing the same amount of money to developing the product and its services. The better the product or service is, the less it needs advertisement. Satisfied customers are likely to repurchase even without advertising. Satisfied customers are also likely to promote your product or service for free. These are some reasons why spending on product or service development is often more profitable than advertising. In addition customers attracted by the advertisements are inclined at running after special offers and therefore less committed and loyal. (Kotler 2003, 78.)

Main tasks of advertising are:

- Advertising is communicating.
- Through advertising it is possible to affect the creation of an image.
- Advertising creates additional value.
- One can sell through advertising.
- Advertising works as a reminder to keep the company and a product in mind.

(Siukosaari 1999, 82 – 85.)

PR-activities

The definition of PR-activities according to Erkki Alaja is: “*Public relationships and PR-activities are planned actions for the management and the whole organization that aims to create, maintain and strengthen positive attitude towards the organization*”.

Targets or subjects for PR-activities are the interest groups of an organization. Target groups are an organization’s links to the outside world, thus planning of pr-activities starts from interest groups’ expectations. Through its interest groups an organization may receive important information to improve its own operations. Interest groups provide important resources and opportunities for any given organization. (Alaja 2000, 205.)

Not all organizations and situations have the same set of interest groups, since the nature, amount and form of interest groups may vary from time to time. An organization should check their interest groups regularly. If this is not done, an organization may accidentally consider one group as a main interest group, even though it is not any longer necessary or suitable for their needs. Some of the interest groups are for example local community, internal interest groups, business life, public authorities, mass media, financial institutions, customers and many others. (Alaja 2000, 205.)



Figure 6 Interest group network of an organization (Alaja 2000, 205.)

Public relations activities can be divided into four separate phases:

1. Getting acquainted and making the organization known
2. Strengthening and maintaining relationships
3. Information sharing
4. Discussion and development

The largest amount of work and other resources are used in the first phase. When an organization is made well known and the first phase is completed, in the second phase the relationship can be strengthened and maintained with a much smaller expenditure of resources. In the ideal marketing world, there would be no need for other PR-activities than one way information sharing. Nevertheless, in reality most cases require that the relationships are enriched with personal visitations and special events. (Alaja 2000, 206.)

Philip Kotler (2003, 126) has created a memory list of PR-activities, called "PENCILS of PR", which includes:

- **P**ublications
- **E**vents
- **N**ews
- **C**ommunity affairs
- **I**ntity media
- **L**obbying
- **S**ocial investments

Personal sales

An important part of marketing communication is personal sales. Advertising is doing the background work for sales personnel's work, since attitudes are formed and information shared through advertising. Pederson, Wright and Weitz define personal sales as follows: *"Personal sales are a process where the salesman ensures, activates and satisfies the needs of a buyer in a way that both parties will continuously profit and are satisfied."* Sales work can be divided into two categories: outlet sales and field sales. An outlet sale is when customer comes to the seller and field sales when the seller comes to the buyer. Personal sales are important in marketing to sponsors and other cooperating companies, but not so much in marketing to ordinary customers. (Alaja 2000, 212.)

Sales promotion

The two objectives of sales promotion is to encourage buyers to buy and sales people to sell a given product. Through advertising mainly information, attitudes and emotions are passed on. Sales promotion in its turn, is aiming directly to selling. Sales promotion is making other marketing communication stronger. Sales promotion targets the end buyer as well as members of sales organization (salesmen, representatives, marketing channel groups). (Alaja 2000, 217.)

Sales promotion, targeted at the end buyer, has objectives to get the customer to try new products and to use the product more often. It also aims at speeding up purchase decisions and gaining new customers. Sales promotion which targets the sales organization aims at encouraging for extra sales, getting new product through marketing channel, increasing brand loyalty, expanding distribution, adding the awareness of advertising, shortening the products storage time and activating personnel to sell the product. The target and means differ, but the end goal is the same. (Alaja 2000, 217.)

The most common methods of promotion to end customers are direct discounts, coupon offers and special offers ("buy one, get one free"). Price discounts may have quick and strong effect on sales, but as mentioned earlier in the section about pricing, it may lead to lower profitability. A discount has to be well planned, so that it does not take away from the value of a product, or from its image. The wrong type of discounts may lead customers to

always expect discounts. This will lead to sales decreasing rather than increasing. Other types of promotions are fairs, competitions, raffles, free samples and other give-aways. (Alaja 2000, 217 - 218.)

Today promotions have become more profitable for the companies, making it a great alternative for advertising. As mentioned earlier, advertising in different types media is often very expensive, so when resources are limited, different types of promotion offer a possibility to keep a product or a company visible. Special promotions that continue for a too long time or are repeated too often will quickly reduce its effects. (Siukosaari 1999, 115 - 116)

3.2.5 Sponsorship

In addition to the 4P's of traditional marketing, in sports marketing also sponsorship ought to be considered. The common definitions of sponsorship most often look at sponsorship from the sponsoring organization's point of view, instead of the sponsored organizations view. One definition of sponsorship has been created by Kimmo Lipponen (Alaja, 2000, 105.)

“Sports sponsorship is a way for a company to communicate with a certain group by borrowing the good image of a sports target. For a sports target sponsorship is a way to improve its ability to compete. The target of sports sponsorship could be an athlete, sports event, sports organization, sport television program and so on. Sports sponsorship is a part of company's marketing communication and it is impossible to separate from other marketing communication ways. Sports sponsorship should be for both, the sponsors and the targets mutual benefit.”

The goals and objectives for sponsorship depend on each individual company, because different companies have different motives for sponsorship. Those motivations could be based on strengthening the brand image, marketing of a product or reaching out to a certain target group.

Despite the obvious similarity between them, sponsorship is not the same as advertising. The image and features of a media can be predicted, but the effects of sponsorship are highly affected by the success of the athlete/team and the publicity they are attracting. Unlike advertising, sponsorship is indirect communication and also its message is eloquent and indi-

rect, planned for a specific reason, for example strengthening an image. The sponsor is attaching the company name to some target outside of its own field of business. (Tuori 1995, 7.)

Sponsorship is still currently relatively new form of marketing communication, so it gives the sponsoring company a touch of modern image. When compared to many traditional medias, sponsorship is fairly effective also. These traditional medias are often battling for the time of a target group, sponsoring usually reaches the target group at the same place where the target group spends its free time. This is very important, since people are more open and sensitive for marketing messages while they are in a place of their own choice. The same effect comes from sponsoring not being too commercial and straight forward marketing. Sponsoring in its best case scenario is forming an emotional link to a customer. Nevertheless, one needs to remember that sponsoring alone is not enough, but sponsoring is used to support and complete other ways of marketing communication. (Tuori 1995, 12.)

Sponsorship is also often criticized to move too much decision making power from teams or organizations to sponsoring corporations. A sponsored team might get too dependant on a sponsoring company. If the sponsoring company withdraws from the deal, the team's whole operation might be at risk. (Tuori 1995, 58 – 59)

The most serious effect of sponsorship is said to be that sports are being commercialized. Many people think that sports have lost a big part of its original and traditional image, which was what attracted people to sports in the first place. (Tuori 1995, 59.)

Brand image objectives

Increasing the visibility of a company has always been one of the strongest motivations for sponsoring. Sports events offer versatile and reasonably priced opportunities to increase the visibility of a company, product or brand name. Another motive could be, for example, a company showing responsibility towards the local community. Companies want to be part of positive things, showing that they are part of the surrounding community. The third motive is to improve the company image and therefore the target for sponsoring should be chosen according to desired image. (Alaja 2000, 109 - 110.)

Product marketing objectives

Business and making money has risen to be important factor in setting goals for sponsorship. Through sponsoring a company receives direct and indirect opportunities of doing business with certain customer group, or for example, with other companies sponsoring the same target. This is why companies are setting financial goals for their sponsoring. Reaching the desired target customer group requires information about the customer profile of a target. Just as in brand image objectives also in product marketing objectives, the company is looking to improve the product image and increase its visibility. Often companies will want to attach the name of a product or group of products, when sponsoring, instead of company name. In some cases this could help differentiate from competitors. (Alaja 2000, 109 - 110.)

Interest group objectives

Interest group objectives are growing in importance for sponsorship. Increase in event sponsoring, especially sports and culture, offers the companies an excellent opportunity for effective work with different interest groups. Guests at events often include celebrities or other VIPs, media representatives, share holders, top customers etc. Thus sponsors often require their targets to have high class VIP services that run smoothly. (Alaja 2000, 109 - 110.)

Sponsoring benefits companies in many different ways, such as in informational, marketing and PR-activities.

1. *Marketing usage*

The sponsor is visible with the target

- Naming the target (for example Hartwall Arena, Red Bull Racing)
- Outfits, posters, handouts, rink sides and banderols
- Promotions, shows, expeditions and competitions
- PR-materials

Themes of sponsorship used in own advertising

- Corporate image, brand image, direct marketing
- Brochures, posters, packaging
- Sales venues, promotion, cars and uniforms

2. *Informational usage*

- Stories and news in company newspaper or magazine
- Using the target as product reference
- Trophies, records etc.
- Involving media with the project (provide stories and photographs)
- Taking media as a part of sponsorship or use of own exclusive media
- Reporting about the target

3. *PR usage*

- Inviting important target groups to a sponsored event
- Combining free time and business in an interesting manner
- Offering experiences

(Alaja 2000, 114 - 115.)

The investments in sponsoring can be compared to other marketing investments and by so doing one is able to create some kind of basic comparison, but it is not easy to separate sponsoring from other marketing activities. Success of sponsoring is affected by competitors' investments, other marketing investments and the usage of sponsoring (the sponsor should use the target in its own marketing), the start level of visibility and image and the practical co-operation with the target. It can be said that sponsorship has been effective, if the company is better known, the image has improved or the company is linked with the target. (Alaja 2000, 115.)

When sponsoring a sports team is discussed about, one main objective is to get the team and the people within the organization feel the sponsoring company to be "their own". This requires that they are familiar enough with the company and know its operations and products. When this happens, the people are seeing the company more positively and therefore gives more value to the money they receive from the company. (Siukosaari 1999, 168.)

3.3 The Four Dimensions of a Brand

A Swedish branding professional Thomas Gad created a theory called 4D-brand model. This theory suggests that a well-built and functional brand or perceived image consists of four different dimensions. These dimensions are the *functional dimension*, *social dimension*, *ethical dimension* and *psychological dimension*. (Gad 2001, 132 – 140.)

The functional dimension is normally the easiest to find and define. The creation of a brand usually starts from a more or less unique service or product. Functional dimension describes the experienced benefits that come from using a particular service or product. (Gad 2001, 132.)

Sometimes a company or a brand can achieve somewhat of a cult status, which implies the existence of a very strong social dimension in that brand. Harley-Davidson is probably one of the best examples of this. Two Harley-Davidson owners, even though they had been unknown to each other previously, could immediately have a strong connection between them when they meet each other. Another sign of Harley-Davidson's social dimension is that there are not many brands whose customers are willing to tattoo the logo on their skin, to show that they are going to be loyal for this company for the rest of their life. Social dimension reflects customers desire to belong to a certain group of people. It is an answer to question "*what do others think about me, if I use this brand?*" (Gad 2001, 134 – 135.)

It would be easy to assume that the social and psychological dimension are closely related to each other, however actually the psychological dimension does not have anything to do with what others think about you. It is more concerned with what people think about themselves. One example is Volvo, for which the psychological dimension is that the customer feels that he is driving the safest car in the world. It satisfies the customers need for feeling safe. IKEA had an advertisement campaign that said "*not for the rich, but for the smart?*". In this way IKEA used their psychological dimension to beat their more expensive competitors, because no one wants to be rich and stupid. Rich or poor, everyone likes to think they are smart. (Gad 2001, 138.)

Last, but not least, comes the ethical dimension. It seems as though ethical issues, whether it concerns fair trade, air pollution, human or animal rights, are becoming more and more im-

portant to a growing share of customers. Firms, like Body Shop, are almost totally based on their ethical dimension. (Gad 2001, 140)

3.4 Modelling Sports Marketing

For a long while sports marketers has been longing for a simple and clear model. Erkki Alaja has created one model, called the ARPA-model (ARPA means a raffle ticket, or a scratch card in Finnish, but stands also as an acronym for Finnish words for *sensing, tailoring, pillaring and earning*. If the order is changed, it could be used in English as STEP-model). The purpose of this model is to inspire and encourage sports marketers to logical and successful progress. It is all about applicable modelling that includes all competitive factors of sports marketing, as well as theories used in sports marketing and therefore gives a summary of the whole topic. ARPA-model is divided into four main phases: sensing, tailoring, pillaring and earning.

Sensing

Sensing starts with the collection of basic information, which means that they need to find out the information about the sales, profitability, customers and their needs, consumer behaviour, and all other possible information about the market. When basic facts are gathered, the general opinion needs to be examined. That means that they seek after critical views, people's inner thoughts, media publicity, and customers views are analysed. For a proper analysis one needs to understand the current trends in the market and in society. Current trends, economical fluctuations, political situations, and customer needs are all affecting sports marketing. (Alaja 2000, 52.)

Naturally, the above mentioned phase ought to analyse the gathered information, and based on that analysis, draw conclusions. Based on those conclusions, clear, measurable and realistic goals need to be set. At this phase is decided who the main target group is, and to whom the marketing activities are aimed.

The sensing phase is giving a good over all starting point for the marketing of a product. It gives the potential customers a realistic view of the product and of its opportunities. This

sensing phase requires special skills and sensitivity. In this phase comes the comprehension of customers' needs and wishes, according to which a product can be tailored for a customer. (Alaja 2000, 52.)

Tailoring

Four competitive tactics are used to form one practical unity in tailoring. Included in these are: price, product, place, and sponsorship. These uses of competing do not necessarily have to follow the order given in the ARPA-model. One may apply it as they see best.

Creating a service or product that appeals to a target group, begins as customer's needs and wishes are discovered. By tailoring the product to be more personal and unique, a competitive advantage should be created in comparison to other equivalent products on the market. (Alaja 2000, 53.)

In addition to product, sponsorship, pricing and availability (place) are important factors in the tailoring phase. Price is determined by the value that customers place on a product. Place ensures that the product is easily accessible and available so that a customer is able to get the product at the right time, right place, and also in the right sized portions. Sponsoring is not always a necessary part of tailoring, but most often it is at least an important addition to it. Sponsorship gives the product and the marketing of a product financial and operational advantage and as well as advantages by way of image. All the above mentioned ways of tailoring are naturally causing increasing expenses and these should be taken into consideration through budgeting. A good budget is realistic and has appropriate investment/output-ratio. (Alaja 2000, 53.)

Pillaring

Pillaring includes the fifth way of competition in marketing, namely the marketing promotion. The basic pillar is committing personnel that encourage employees to work towards set goals and objectives. Information sharing, advertising, personal selling, PR-activities and sales promotion make pillaring one unit, in which each activity is supporting and completing each other.

The importance of advertising or information sharing may differ, but sales work is always essential. The use of these pillaring activities and their relation to each other should always be carefully considered. Budget is of course setting its own limits to separate actions of pillaring. A good sports marketer is always networking to all directions. Connections to people in many different areas of business, sports and so on can give opportunities and ideas to make pillaring more effective and a good use of a effective network may save money from marketing budget. (Alaja 2000, 54.)

Earning

Measuring the results will give information about the products commercial success, ticket sales, spectator amounts, fan memorabilia sales, media visibility and everything alike. These results can be measured through different researches pertaining to changes in image, market shares or in other goals. Result may be measured also through customer feedback, which should be gathered to be as correct information as possible. (Alaja 2000, 55.)

When the results are analysed they are compared to the set goals. Big differences between the goals and the results need special attention and reasonable explanation should be found as to what caused the difference. When the results are analysed, reports should be written down clearly, pointing out all important information. These reports may be handed out to company personnel, or at least to key people, and possibly also to close cooperation partners. (Alaja 2000, 55.)

The organization personnel and most, if not all of other interest groups, should be thanked for their support and help. In each case the suitable way of showing gratitude ought to be found. In many cases a simple *thank you* will be enough, if possible company personnel may earn a bonus or at least a party and main sponsors could be thanked publicly, mentioned by their name. Showing gratitude prepares an atmosphere for the next project. (Alaja 2000, 55.)

3.5 Fans and Fandom

The internet based dictionary, Wikipedia, defines a fan as “someone who has an intense, occasionally overwhelming, liking of a sporting club, person, group of persons” or something else to a similar content. (Wikipedia)

Debates over the origin of the term fan have been raised over the years. Some say it comes from the word *fancy*, which was a name used to define followers of boxing in the 19th century in England. These days in England a word *fancy* means *to like* or *to love* something in general. The word *fan* is more likely to be derived from the word *fanatic*, which in turn is derived from a modern Latin word *fanaticus*, which originally means someone devoted to something or a special type of a temple servant. (Wikipedia)

In his book *Team Sports Marketing* Kirk L. Wakefield uses a definition from Dictionary.com, which says that a fan is an ardent devotee or an enthusiast. Therefore it is safe to assume that a sports fan is more than just a regular customer. At some level a fan feels that he or she is part of the team.

Whether one is *fancying* or liking some sports, club, or person, or being a fanatic about something, millions of sports fans are found all over the world. There are some common characteristics among fans and these are:

- Fans are willing to focus their time and resources intently on their area of interest.
- They have a desire of external involvement (posting online messages to forums, participating events, etc.)
- Wish to acquire material objects related to the area of interest (fan products, autographs, memorabilia)
- Desire for social interactions with other fans (fan clubs)

(Wakefield 2007, 2.)

Sports fans usually voice their pleasure with a team or player by *cheering* and their displeasure by *jeering*, thus creating the atmosphere to the match venue. This can be a great encouragement for the home team and discouragement for the visiting team and that is why fans are

often described as an extra player for the team. Therefore fans must not be viewed only as passive customers, but as an active interest group. Fans are no doubt an important source of revenues (in a form of tickets and fan merchandise), but a good fan base can have contribution also to much more, for example to general atmosphere and indirectly to a team performance. (Wikipedia)

The reasons behind choosing the target for fandom are often unthought-of. Choosing happens mainly subconsciously. Probably the most common reason is location, either according to home place or place of birth. In certain cases certain social factors have an affect as well. For example in England in earlier days it was common to have two football teams in the same town or city, one team for working class and one for upper class. (Wikipedia)

A unique characteristic of a fan as a customer, may give a deeper meaning for *customer loyalty* and *customer satisfaction*, as it will be discussed in the following chapter.

4 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY

Many companies pay more attention to their market share than to their customer satisfaction. This could be a serious mistake, since market share is a value that derives from what has been done in the past. Customer satisfaction is telling the future direction of a company. (Kotler 2003, 12.)

J.D. Power III (1996, 23.) said that “*when we measure satisfaction, what we’re really measuring is the difference between what a customer expects and what the customer perceives he gets.*” Thus we could write a simple formula:

Customer satisfaction = what a customer perceives he gets – what a customer expects to get

The more a customer perceives he or she gets from the experience the better his or her satisfaction is. If customers’ expectations exceed the perceived value, the satisfaction is negative. While measuring the satisfaction is important, it is even more important for companies to understand *customer sacrifice*.

Customer sacrifice = what a customer wants exactly – what customer settles for (Pine & Gilmore, 1999. 78.)

In sports business this plays an important role. A fan wants a team to always win, but they are likely to also settle for the fact that they cannot win every time. As another example, a fan would like his team to win with a good game, but he will settle for winning the game no matter how the team played. Customer sacrifice should be minimized. In sports business the product is not necessarily the team itself. The product should be the total experience of a match event, or even a series of match events. Therefore for satisfaction there are many more affecting factors than only a team’s success. According to Pine & Gilmore’s (1999, 78.) 4E-model esthetics (=aesthetics), entertainment, escapism from the everyday life and education are all affecting in the total experience and to total customer satisfaction.

Sports fans are a customer group that is probably ready for more customer sacrifice, especially about success than any other group of customers, if not willingly, at least forgivingly.

One of the most effective ways to reduce customer sacrifice is interacting with the customers. Interaction, in the case of a sports club and its customer, can happen in various ways. The online forums for the club are one very easy way to interact with the customer. As mentioned previously in a chapter about fans and fandom, many fans have the desire for external involvement. From online forums a club can receive some feedback, views, opinions, wishes and fears that the customers have, but which often are thought to be the ones that are not voiced out. Other ways of interactions are also surveys, fan meetings, and also through public relations operations such as press conferences and press releases. An open interactive environment with information shared both ways, can reduce customer sacrifice, but also increase customer involvement and engagement. (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, 78.)

As mentioned in the book *RED* (stands for Relationship Experience Design), the perceived value that a customer feels to receive for his or her customer relationship is not solely depending on whether the service or product fulfils his or her actual needs. The customer needs to be satisfied also with the experiences of the interactions he or she has with the company. (Storbacka, Korkman, Mattinen & Westerlund, 2001, 29 - 30)

4.1 Experiences and Customer Satisfaction

What is an experience? Experiences can be defined as events that engage individuals in a personal way. It is said that commodities are fungible, goods tangible, services intangible but experiences are memorable. (Pine & Gilmore 1999. 6 - 12.)

Experiences can also be defined as processes of actions, thoughts and emotions that happen through senses. We, as humans, have five senses and the more senses are being used effectively in creating an experience, the deeper, richer and more memorable the experience can potentially be. (Storbacka et. al. 2001, 85 - 86.)

Also mentioned is that for customers, experiences are challenges that cause changes in customers' emotions, actions and ways of thinking. Experiences are not only single moments, but in a way, learning processes. (Storbacka et. al. 2001, 86.)

For a customer, what is the difference between an ordinary service and an experience? *“When a person buys a service, he purchases a set of intangible activities carried out on his behalf. But when he buys an experience, he pays to spend time enjoying a series of memorable events that a company stages – as in theatrical play – to engage him in personal way”* (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 2.)

Customers are also becoming more active in many fields of business. This is one of the special characteristics of sports business, in which customers are not merely passive customers, but in their own way taking an active role in the sport club operations. Active customers are likely to use their power, by being loyal only to the brands that are able to offer them new opportunities continually. That is why a company, or a brand, has to be dynamic and try their hardest to make people participate and commit in order to improve satisfaction in the general experience of being a customer. (Storbacka et. al. 2001, 22.)

The customer experience should not be only entertaining, but also it should be engaging. This is similar to committing that was discussed earlier. Committing was talking about organizations internal commitment, now the question is about customer engagement. Pine and Gilmore has introduced the earlier mentioned 4E model that suggests that a customer experience should include four different aspects. Out of these dimensions a picture of four “realms” of experience can be drawn.

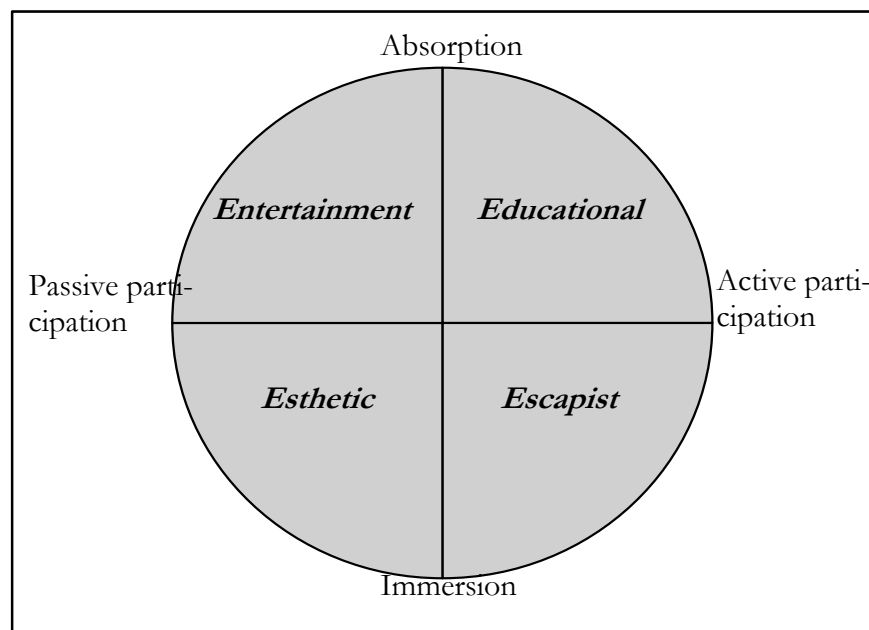


Figure 7. The Experience Realms (Pine & Gillmore 1999, 30.)

According to figure 7, entertainment (for example watching television) is *passive absorption* and education is *active absorption*. A person who is studying is actively trying to absorb information into his mind, while entertainment also “goes into” a person, but in this a person is passive. An experience could be part of only one of these realms, but an experience will be much better and more memorable if it has all aspects in it. It should be entertaining at some level (fun, interesting, enjoyable), it should be educational (learn, realize, get information), the surroundings should have a certain atmosphere and a good experience also takes a person away for a moment. It lets people to be immersed to the experience (“I lost the track of time while I was playing this new computer game”).

A company can create experiences through senses, emotions, thoughts, and feelings of unity. These experiences can be passed on or transmitted to customers through visual and verbal identity (name, logo etc), communication (public relations, press releases etc.), internet and environment (match venue, office etc.), and the personnel. (Lindberg-Repo 2005, 155.)

4.2 Customer Satisfaction, Loyalty and Profitability

“An effective sports marketing is primarily based on building fan identification. Customers can identify with a branded good or service. In this way it can be said that identification is a deeper level of loyalty.” (Wakefield 2007, 12 - 13.)

It is often thought that the perceived quality improves customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and customer profitability. According to a research there is a big difference between *very satisfied* and *satisfied* customers' loyalty. For example Pitney Bowes had noticed that 78,2 % of the customers that were *very satisfied* said they would stay with the company in the future, while from the group of *satisfied* customers only 20,9 % said they would stay loyal to the company. The same research also revealed that the least loyal customers were the most profitable. (Johansen & Monthele, 1996, 17.)

The most loyal customers in sports usually have season tickets, which are not as profitable as single tickets when calculated per game. Loyal customers are very important for the club financially. They bring in their money before the season starts, so it is available for spending

earlier. So even if season tickets are not as profitable as single tickets, they are less risky and the revenue from them is better available.

Table 2 shows a matrix about individual customer's satisfaction, loyalty and behaviour. It creates four different types of customers according to their satisfaction, loyalty and behaviour.

	Satisfaction	Loyalty	Behavior
Apostle	High	High	Staying and supportive
Terrorist	low to medium	low to medium	leaving or having left, and unhappy
Mercenary	high	low to medium	coming and going; low commitment
Hostage	low to medium	high	unable to switch; trapped

Table 2 Individual Customer Satisfaction, Loyalty and Behaviour Matrix (Reichheld & Sasser 1996, 159 - 162)

Customers with high satisfaction and high loyalty are the customers who will stay loyal and supportive. They are called *Apostles* by Reichheld and Sasser Jr, but could be described as satisfied fans in this context. *Terrorists* are the customers with low or medium satisfaction and low to medium loyalty. These customers are either considering leaving or have already left due the dissatisfaction. The loss of spectators is the result of this group's growth. Also *Mercenaries* are a risk for a club or a company, since their loyalty is low or medium as its best. These customers come and go, depending on a team's success. (Reichheld & Sasser 1996, 159 - 162)

As discussed earlier, these customers are nevertheless the most profitable ones. *Mercenaries* are unlikely to buy a season ticket, but if the team is successful, this group will show up to the games. *Hostages* are the customers who have a high loyalty, but low satisfaction. They feel unhappy with the current situation, but do not have other options or for some other reason they are unable to switch to another company. This is quite common among sports fans. Finland, for example, has long distances and therefore locality is an important factor, even if the results do not suffice in a customer's mind. They want to participate in a particular sports event and a local club can be the only real option for them. (Reichheld & Sasser 1996, 159 - 162)

Importance of customer satisfaction shows in the following four facts:

1. Attracting new customers is 5 to 10 times more expensive as satisfying and retaining existing customers.
2. An average company will lose 10-30 % of its customers every year.
3. A 5% decrease in losing customers could increase profitability by 25 to 85%.
4. The profitability level of a customer increases over time.

(Kotler 2003, 13.)

In the US based study of “the honeymoon effect” of the new stadiums in the Major League Baseball attendance from 1950 to 2002 the study showed that the new stadium increased the attendance 32% - 37% in the opening year of the stadium. The stadiums built between 1960 and 1974 were able to keep the attendance up only for two years, but the newer stadiums did that for 6 to 10 seasons. (Clapp & Hakes 2005, 237 - 263.)

Is the new venue really that important? Many teams in many cities are struggling with problems with their venues. In the case of Jyväskylä, Sinuhe Wallinheimo, a professional goalkeeper for JYP Jyväskylä, said that in the beginning of 1990's it was still possible to be successful in the SM-league, because the work was done well or better than in other teams, but today it is professional sports and the good work alone is not enough. He adds, that through better extra services at the venue, more people will come to the games, the fan base grows and in that way, the team is able to receive more revenues, more sponsors and to develop the team further. (Kulmala & Kettunen, 2007.)

The second highest level in Finnish ice hockey, Mestis, is now in the same situation as the highest level, SM-league was in the 90's. Mestis is on the verge of becoming a professional league and soon it will not be enough to make things better than other teams, but the teams have to operate professionally in all aspects, in order to keep customers loyal and interested.

Notwithstanding the decreasing spectator count, Hokki had a very good season during the years 2006 – 2007. They were on top of the league for several weeks, but in the end of the regular season they fell to the fourth position. According to statistics, both of Hokki's goalies and several players were top quality in the league (Finhockey, 2007.). In this light, both by success and by the level-of-play, spectators should be attracted to come and see the games and to be satisfied with the performance. A lot of the improvements should focus on the

building and strengthening of the image of a professional ice hockey team. That will not happen overnight but takes years of hard work with a clear vision in mind of what to follow.

5 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The purpose of the research was to find out why the customer numbers are so low in the games of Kajaanin Hokki. For this purpose there were two separate researches conducted; customer satisfaction research and research about the marketing and image of Hokki from the point of view of the people in Kajaani.

5.1 Methods and Execution of the Research

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used during the research process. Quantitative method was used to produce statistical comparisons, while qualitative method was used to receive broader and more personal answers and results.

Customer satisfaction survey was held at the Kajaani ice stadium in February and March 2007 in two separate home games. The survey was executed through a questionnaire form (Appendix 1) which included both qualitative and quantitative questions. The forms were distributed to the seats and stands before the matches and they were also available at the cafeteria, bar and other public areas at the stadium. There were altogether about 300 questionnaire forms available and 123 of them were filled and returned. All spectators in those matches were allowed to participate in the questionnaire, so that the sample would be random.

Responding to the questionnaire was kept simple, easy and quick, so that as many responses as possible could be gathered. To motivate customers to participate two gift vouchers worth 20€ each, were raffled away. The quantitative parts of the survey were processed through SPSS- statistics program. Other responses were processed manually. Excel spread sheet program was used to produce figures of the results.

The latter part of research was conducted during the spring of 2007 all over Kajaani by interviewing people in various locations in Kajaani. The questions that were asked in this part of the research were qualitative. People were chosen randomly to answer the interview questions, but still in a way that people would be from various age groups and backgrounds. Al-

together 32 interviews were held, which included 19 male and 13 female participants. All participants were presented with the same set of questions (Appendix 2) but also additional questions were asked to clarify some answers, if needed. Since the questions in this part of research were open ended questions, all answers were processed manually.

5.2 Validity and Reliability

The research is valid if it gives answers to those questions that were sought after in the beginning. Validity also means the lack of systematic errors in the research process. A systematic error is an error made in data collection that affects the whole data sample and in that way distorts or corrupts the result. Systematic error is much more serious than a random error, since random error is not affecting to the whole research result. (Heikkilä 2001, 29.)

Reliability means the accuracy and credibility of research. Received research results can not be random, meaning that the research should be possible to be repeated whenever by whomever without the results varying. Since the society is constantly changing and the world is evolving it has to be remembered that variations are inevitable within certain limits. Also noticeable is that in the case of customer satisfaction research, some results are wished to change over time. (Heikkilä 2001, 30.)

To make this research valid, conversations with the team management were held in order to get a picture of possible problems and to come up with factors affecting customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction survey produced considerable high amount of returned forms, compared to the expectations and estimates of an answering activity. These factors contributed to the validity of this research. One systematic error was found in the questionnaire sheet. This error does not corrupt or distort the results seriously, since the error has more affect to customer profile than to customer satisfaction. The error was in question 1, “how often do you attend to the Hokki Match events per season?”. The last answering option should have been “3 times or less” and instead it stated “less than 3 times”.

Reliability of this research is mainly dependant on the honesty and truthfulness of the participants. Questions were formed to be as simple as possible in order to avoid misunderstandings and possibilities to interpret questions differently. To ensure reliability, in few rare occa-

sions the answer forms needed to be dismissed due to the insufficient or faulty answers. The collected data has been processed as thoroughly and carefully as possible in order to avoid errors. The results have been interpreted carefully with a lot of consideration.

6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following chapters will introduce the results of research. Chapter 6.1 will map out the profile of a respondent. Not only will it tell the profiles of current customers, but it will at the same time point out the need for improvements in marketing focus. Chapter 6.2 will discuss about the customer satisfaction and views.

Dependencies between variables were examined by using cross tabulation and χ^2 -independency test. The tests were supposed to clarify whether there is statistically relevant dependencies between variables or if the result is subject to a coincident. (Heikkilä 2005, 212.)

The dependency between variables is portrayed with Sig (Significant Level p) or p-level. The smaller the p-level is, the smaller is the effect of a coincident and the stronger the dependency between variables is. The dependency is determined in a following manner:

$p \leq 0,001$	Dependency is statistically extremely significant
$0,001 < p \leq 0,01$	Dependency is statistically significant
$0,01 < p \leq 0,05$	Dependency is statistically almost significant

In the above mentioned cases a valid dependency exists. The dependency is considered coincidental or random if p-level is above 0,05. (Heikkilä 2005, 277.)

6.1 Customer Profile

In the customer satisfaction questionnaire held at the match venue, 123 people responded the first questionnaire. The average spectator amount for Hokki's home games during the season 2006-2007 was 798 spectators per game. This questionnaire's sample represents over 15% of the average spectator amount of one game. Out of 123 people returning the questionnaire 85 were male and 38 were female. By percentage 69% of total amount were men and 31% were female. (Appendix 3)

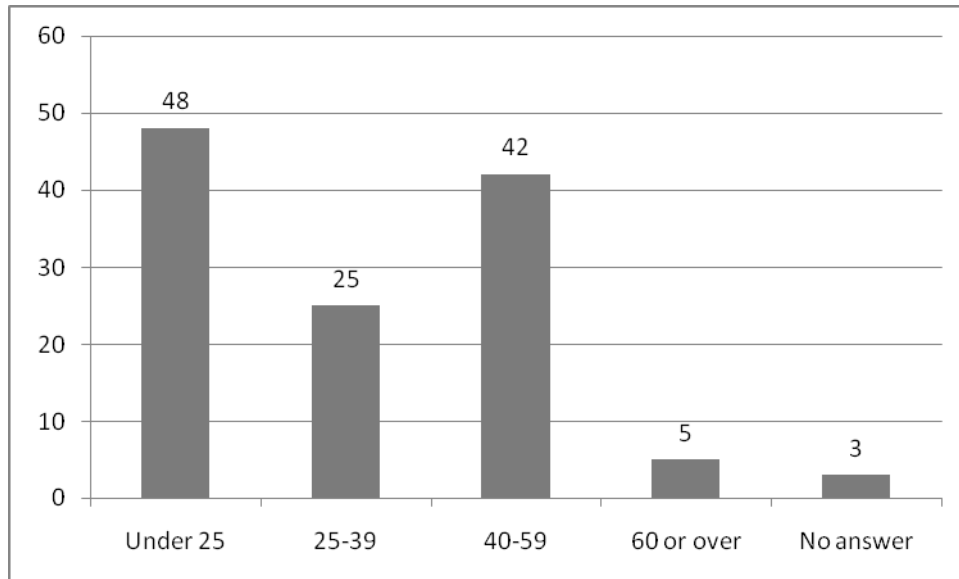


Figure 8 Participants by age group

The figure 8 shows questionnaire participation by age groups. The largest age groups were under 25 year olds and the age between 40-59 years (Appendix 3). In Anttila's and Ruonavaara's research the largest group was 25-39 year olds. This figure shows clearly which groups are absent from the games. In general, the age group of 25-39 year olds is surprisingly low. As mentioned earlier, only about 16% of the inhabitants of Kajaani belong to this age group. That could be one major reason behind the low attendance in this age group.

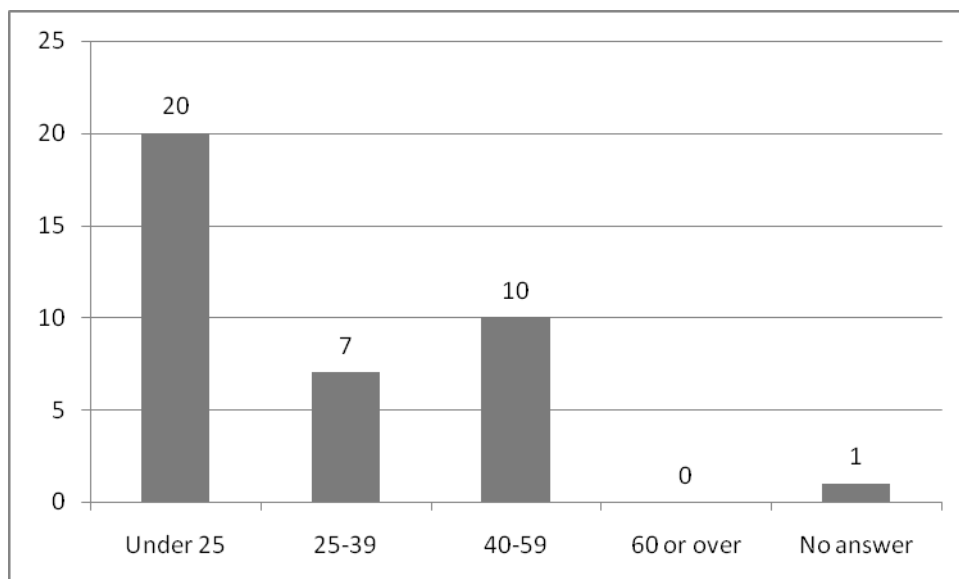


Figure 9 Female participants by age group

In the research made by Anttila and Ruonavaara in Turku, Finland, in 2001 the results were almost the opposite. The 25-39 year olds were the largest age group in games. About 60% of the female spectators were between 25 and 39 years old and about 30% of male spectators belonged to this same age group. Therefore the result of the survey in Kajaani was very surprising and almost opposite to the assumptions made in the designing phase of research. Figure 9 shows that in Kajaani research more than half of the female participants were under 25 year old and only about 18% (Appendix 3) were 25-39 years old (compared to 60% in Turku, this is a big difference).

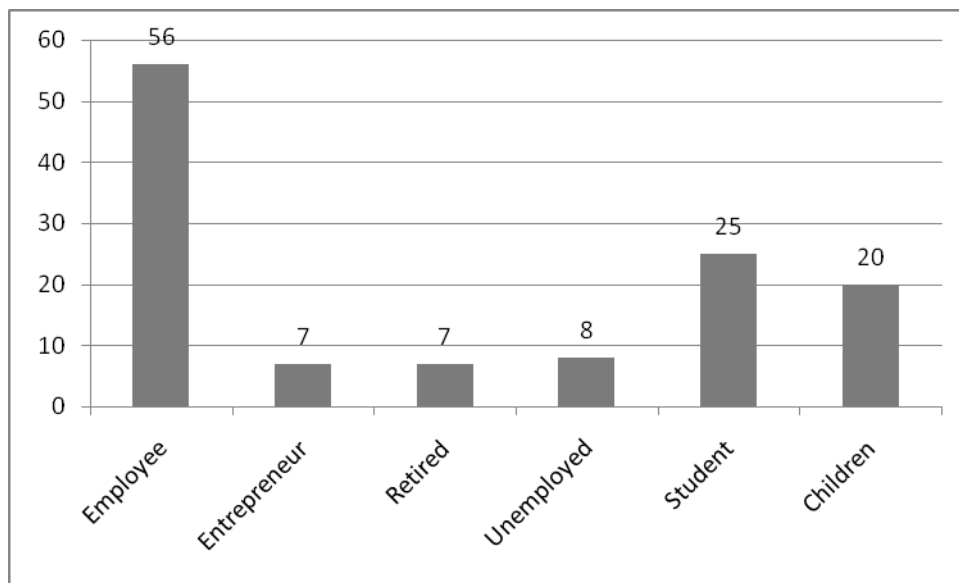


Figure 10 Spectators separated by status

Separation by status (Appendix 3) did not bring surprise elements to the research. These statistics are very similar with the ones presented by Anttila and Ruonavaara. The main difference between these two studies was that in Turku under 20 year olds were excluded almost totally from the interviews and in Kajaani school children contributes a considerable share of the audience. The largest group of customers in the audience are employed people, followed by students and school children (Figure 10).

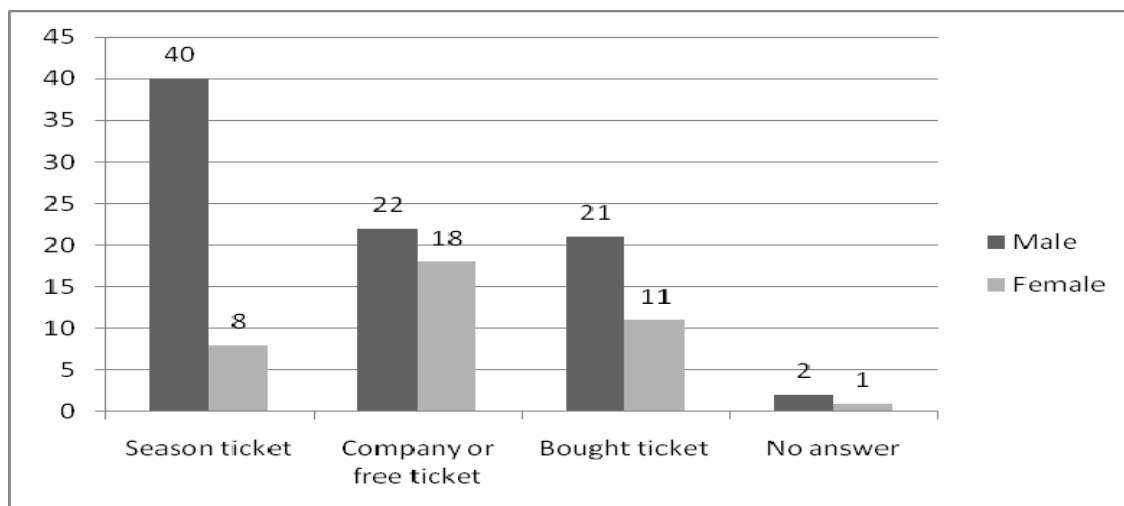


Figure 11 Ticket type by the sex of a spectator

With the help of cross tabulations and χ^2 -independency test it was examined if sex or age has a dependency in relation to ticket types. Sex ($p=0,014$) and age ($p=0,021$) had statistically almost significant dependency. Only 8 out of 38 (21%) of women had season tickets, while 40 out of 85 (47%) of men had season tickets.

The problems that Hokki is facing start to show in the ticket types (Figures 11 and 12). Only 26% (Appendix 3) had actually bought their ticket to that specific game. From female participants 18 out of 38 used company- or free tickets. From 123 participants 48 held season tickets. Out of these 48, only 8 were female. Season tickets are not quite as profitable as single tickets for the club. However, season tickets are very important for the club, because the money from them is available for the club to use earlier, even before the season starts. The problem is that 33%, or 40 people out of 123 people who participated in the survey, used company or other free tickets. 39% of the participants held season ticket which creates a solid base for the audience. If the research sample represents the average audience, this would mean about 311 season ticket holders from total of 798 spectators.

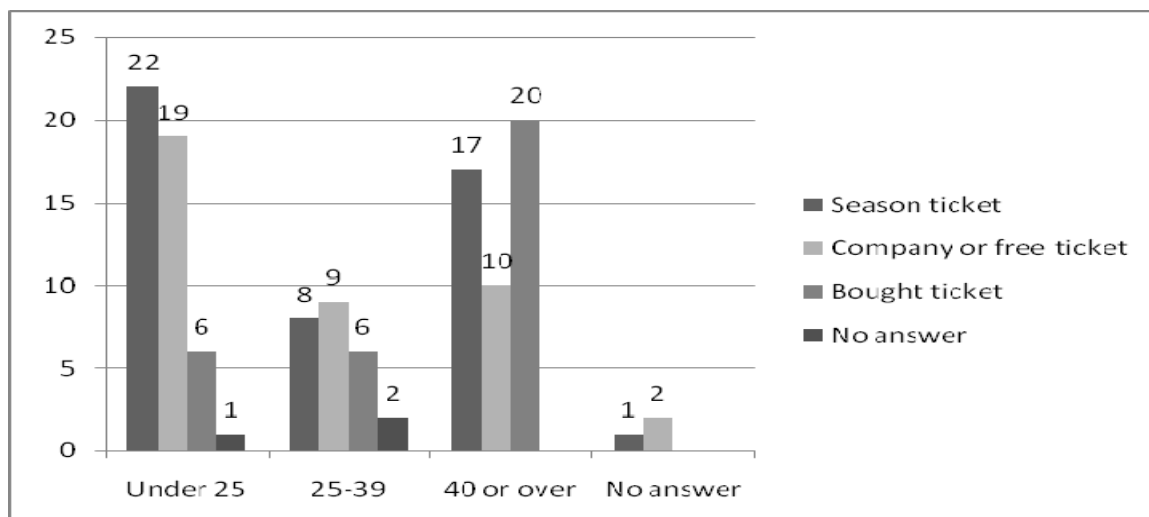


Figure 12 Ticket type by age of the spectators

Figure 12 is also pointing out the problem of attracting the age group of 25-39 year old people. This age group covers only 17% season tickets and 19% of bought tickets (Appendix 3). At the same time 9 out of 23 in this age group used company or free tickets. Both of these numbers relate to this group being the most active in the labour markets. Working schedules might prevent them to participate in match events. Some of them have the opportunity to come to games with the tickets provided by their employer. On the other hand it is possible that many who work shifts are not able to buy a season ticket, or it would not be smart for them.

The most profitable group of spectators seem to be the over 40 year old people. From single ticket (the most profitable for the club) buyers 62,5% belong to this age group and they also cover 36% of season ticket holders (Appendix 4). Taking into consideration that this age group is sharing the place of the largest age group in the Hokki games, and being the most profitable, they can be considered the most important group for the club at this moment. On the other hand, the groups to be focused on in the marketing efforts are the potential female customers and both sexes from the age group of 25-39 years old, in which there is the biggest potential to grow.

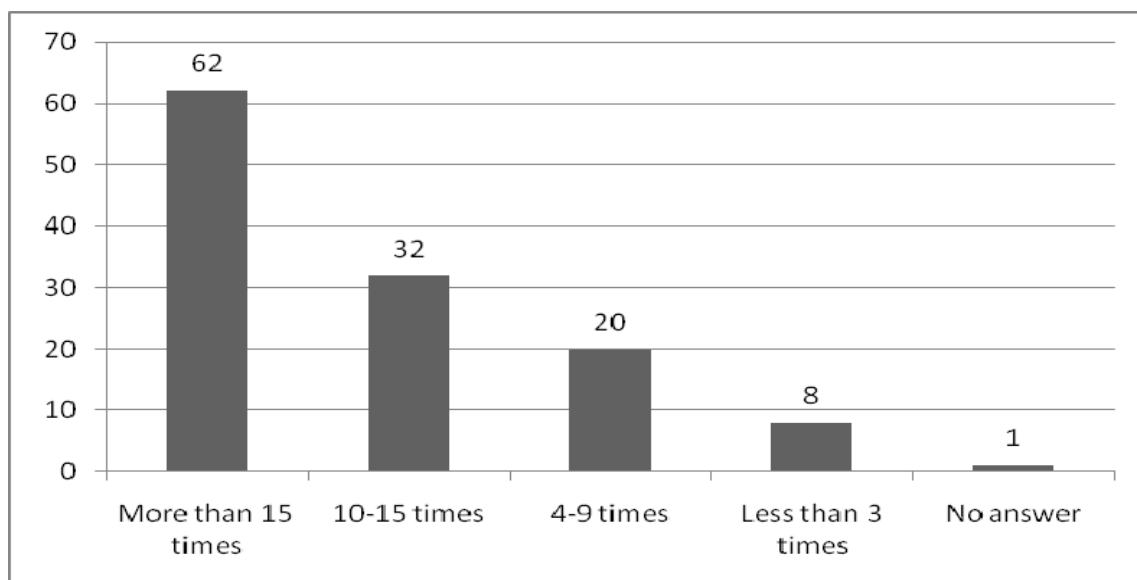


Figure 13 Attendance frequencies

According to the questionnaire it seems like Hokki's fan base is small, but quite active. Out of all 123 participants, 62 participated in more than 15 matches per season and 32 said to participate 10-15 times. While each team play 23 home games per season and over 76% (Appendix 3) of the people answered to attend to at least 10 matches per season, Hokki does not seem to have a big problem in retaining the customers at this moment. The main problem at this moment is to attract *new* spectators. If the research sample would be an ideal sample and represent the average situation, over 600 people out of the average attendance of 798 (in the season 2006-2007) people would be participating in at least 10 matches. That gives the club quite a solid base for the attendance, especially when about 400 people would attend at least 15 games per season. This can be seen in the spectator amounts during the season 2006-2007, since there was only one game with less than 600 spectators.

In comparison to the study of Anttila and Ruonanvaara it seems that by percentage the fans of Hokki seem to be more frequent attendees than the fans in Turku. In the study in Turku, 49% attended in less than half of the games.

As presented in figure 13, the largest parts of the spectators are at least considerably frequent participants and committed to the club. This is, as mentioned earlier, creating a solid future fan base. Especially with such a large share of people being under 25 years old, the base for the future is there. This will affect future attendance only in the long run, but meanwhile something needs to be done to attract more people. When Hokki is able to at-

tract the age groups of 25-39 year olds, over 60 year olds and females in general, then the spectator amounts will grow substantially.

Participating in an ice hockey game is not only entertainment; it is strongly a social event as well. A well built brand should have four dimensions to it; namely these dimensions are *functional dimension*, *social dimension*, *ethical dimension* and *psychological dimension*. Every company, product or service has some kind of perceived image in a customer's mind, whether the company has purposefully built it or not. This perceived image will now be called a brand. The functional dimension in an ice hockey game could for example be that people are entertained and possibly feel the sense of winning alongside the team.

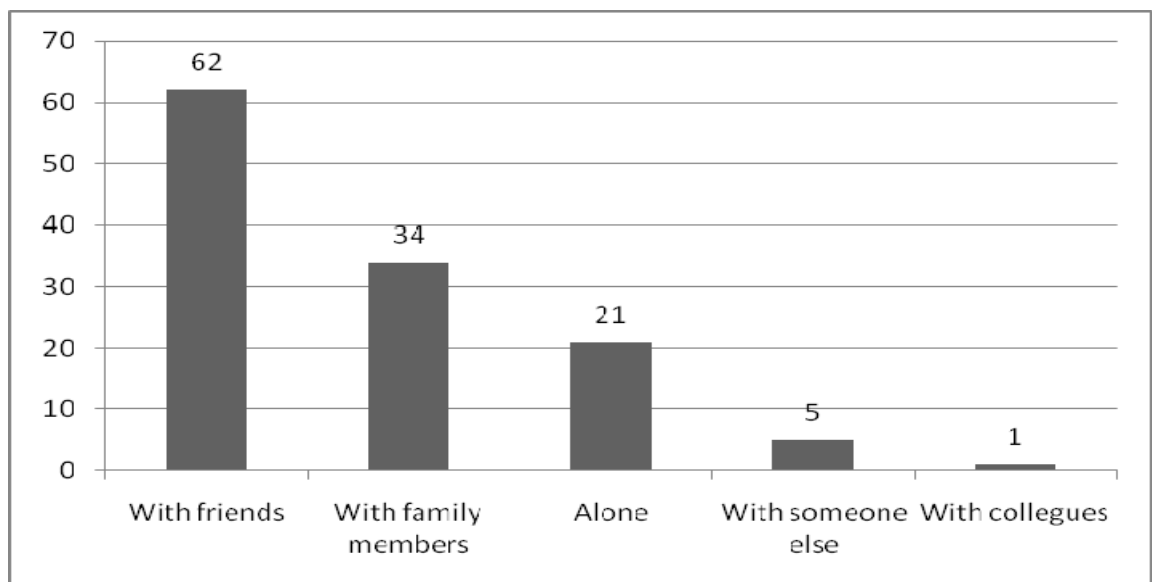


Figure 14 With whom are the spectators participating

The social dimension could be as simple as feeling a certain unity with the team or other participants. When brands grow stronger, the statement that one wants to be affiliated with the certain club or brand also grows stronger. The effect of a social dimension can be seen in figure 14. Only 21 out of 123 mentioned that they participate alone. More than half of them (62 out of 123) said to participate with friends (Appendix 3).

The organization needs to think and decide what kind of dimension it wants to offer to its customers and also try to find out how the customers perceive these dimensions. According to the questionnaire's answers such factors as locality are fairly important. Locality can be seen as ethical or social dimension. At the same time many people criticize that the youth

teams are not run properly. This is a negative factor in a social or in an ethical dimension. As it will be discussed later in more detail the current customers feel that Hokki has a positive affect on Kajaani. This can also be part of an ethical dimension. Whether the people believe this positive effect to be a mental effect or economical effect, or something else, it will add to Hokki's ethical dimension.

Psychological dimension could be the sense of escapism from the regular life for a few hours. A normally elegant and calm business man can feel free for a few hours and cheer or jeer loudly without a fear of loosing his face or reputation. Escapism and psychological dimension could and often is walking hand in hand in an ice hockey fan's mind.

People were also asked to share their opinions of what the factor is that attracts them to go and see the games of Hokki. The participants were allowed to give several answers in this question. On average every participant gave 2,6 attraction factors.

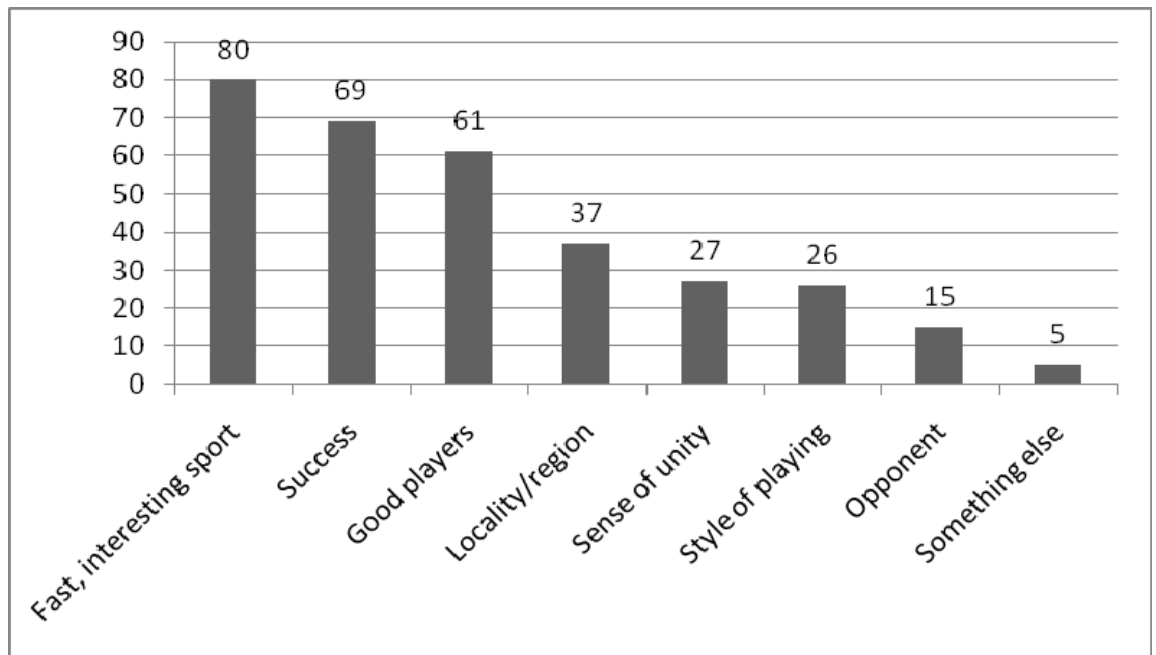


Figure 15 Factors that attract the crowd to the games

Ice hockey as a sport itself is so popular in Finland that it is no surprise that almost 65% (Appendix 3) of the participants are attracted by the sport itself. The team's success is of course important for customers. That relates to customer sacrifice that was mentioned before. Everyone would like to see their favorite team win every time, but the fans settle for

much less than that in most cases. Almost 56% of the participants admitted that the success is an attraction factor for them.

This fact is both good and bad for Hokki. Good, because they have reached the finals for two years in a row and therefore more success-driven spectators are likely to be interested in the future. It is also bad because it could signify a lower commitment towards the club. If there will not be great success (compared to customers' expectations), these 56% of the people might slowly stop coming to the games. This is the group of people who either turn out to the venue or do not, according to the success. These are often called *fair-weather fans*, *bandwagon fans* or even *gold diggers*. Nevertheless, one needs to remember that success is not necessarily the primary attraction for the participants, but merely one of the attraction factors. The third most common factor of attraction was good players. None of the factors can be overlooked or overestimated.

Nevertheless it was surprising how locality and the opponent were undervalued in people's minds. If one could measure the actuality, not just the perceptions of the participants, these two factors would possibly rank much higher. Locality is something that is possibly not thought of, but in fact is a factor for most of the participants. Why do they go to see the games of Hokki instead of the games of Jukurit (in Mikkeli) or Sport (in Vaasa)? Locality would probably be one of the main reasons, if not the biggest.

Also the opponent seems to be stronger attraction than the people think it is. Certain opponents are attracting bigger crowds time after time and other teams fail to attract any other than season pass holders. There lies one reason for Hokki's falling spectator amounts. Hokki has lost two dear enemies within the last few years, as KalPa was promoted to SM-league and Hermes, from Kokkola, was relegated to Suomi-series. They were geographically the two closest teams to Kajaani when they played in Mestis.

6.2 Customer Satisfaction

Customers' opinions and satisfaction were asked in a series of questions and the participants were asked to rate their answers on the following scale: *strongly disagree / dissatisfied, disagree more than agree, agree more than disagree, satisfied / strongly agree*. (Please note that in some of the

questions the word *agree* could be replaced by the word *satisfied*.) At first the answers were supposed to be valued from 1 to 4, but the differences proved to be too small to make a proper comparison. Therefore there was a need for another way to measure the satisfaction. A simple form of customer satisfaction index was used to clarify the results. Index number is formed by first giving the answers certain weight, or a multiplier, from -1 to 1. The weights were given as follows:

-1 = I strongly disagree

-0,5 = I disagree more than agree

0,5 = I agree more than disagree

1 = I strongly agree

According to these weighed values a simple formula can be used to calculate the index:

$$100 * \frac{\text{weighed positive values} + \text{weighed negative values}}{\text{Number of all answers}}$$

For example, if there is 50 answers and four of them are strongly dissatisfied, 24 are more dissatisfied than satisfied, 16 more satisfied than dissatisfied and six are strongly satisfied the weighed values are $4 * (-1) + 24 * (-0,5) = -16$ for negative values and $16 * 0,5 + 6 * 1 = 14$ for positive values. The index itself is then calculated according to the formula $([14-16]/50) * 100 = -4$. This would suggest that there is a minor dissatisfaction among the customers.

The index number can be anything between -100 and 100. In this survey the average of all indexes or the general customer satisfaction index was 35,8 (Appendix 5) Therefore it can be said that all questions where the index was below 35,8 are the issues that need special attention since their index is below the average. All values below 0 can be viewed as very critical, since people are clearly more dissatisfied than satisfied.

First opinion based question was about the team's professionalism and the professionalism of the club organization on a scale from 1 to 4 (1 being amateur and 4 being professional). The team (players, coach) received an average of 3,11 and the organization averaged at 2,72. When the customer satisfaction index is applied, the team would get an index of 51,7. Organizations index value is also positive, but much lower than teams, only 20,7.

Had this survey been made after the season, the result would most likely have differed substantially. Customers' view is therefore that the organization is handling the operations more in a professional way than amateur way, but is also suggesting that the professionalism is only beginning to be part of Hokki's operations and there is still a lot to learn and to improve.

The team's index suggests that the players are handling their part in a professional manner, leaving room for improvement as well. One has to bear in mind that it is people's personal perceptions that are affected by their expectations and that is having an effect on their answers.

The next question is about the spectators' satisfaction of the team's current league position. At the time of the survey, Hokki was on the third position in Mestis. This position was higher than anyone thought in the beginning of the season, and that showed in the survey since no one said that they were totally dissatisfied with the situation and about 50% of the people were totally satisfied. The index raised up to 67,5 out of the maximum 100. This is a very good result keeping in mind that the lowest possible score is -100 and the total average of all satisfaction indexes was only 35,8.

Spectators' satisfaction to a teams on-ice performance was little bit lower, but still clearly above the average at 49,6. This would suggest that either the customers do not feel that the game is entertaining enough or that the team is making too many mistakes, keeping in mind that the team had lost a series of games prior to the survey. Either way, the result is still rather positive.

The next question was whether the spectators feel that Hokki's performance or success has an important meaning for the city of Kajaani and the inhabitants thereof. Almost 57% (Appendix 3) of all participants strongly agreed and 89% at least somewhat agreed. The index number rose to 69,1. When asked if the customers feel that ice hockey is the number one sports in Kajaani the index rose to an amazing 74,4 which was the highest index value out of all the questions. This is also correct on a factual basis. Excluding some junior teams, no other sports team in Kajaani is on a higher level than Hokki is. Also the spectator amounts

are bigger in hockey games than in other events. Nevertheless many other sports have a longer history in Kajaani than ice hockey does.

The next claim was “I get enough information about the coming match events”. Among the people who go to the games the information seemed to be available. The index was 69,9. The next claim was connected to the previous one, but from another point of view. The point of this claim was to see whether the spectators feel that Hokki has decent visibility in the everyday life in Kajaani. The index was clearly lower than the previous, and this time below the average, at 32,1. This suggests that there is not enough information or visibility for those who do not yet go to the games. People who go to the games know where to receive the information, but people who do not go to the games are not constantly bombarded with Hokki advertisements. Posters, fan products, visible office, and events that bring the team closer to the people will burn the image in people’s mind.

The last six claims were all more in connection with the match events and the customer environment. The overall atmosphere at the games was not very satisfying for the participants. The index was only 19,1 which is considerably lower than the average of indexes. This question is difficult to analyse perfectly, since it is a very important factor in the total customer experience. If the team wins game after game, but people feel that the atmosphere is not good, their experience is not enjoyable. On the other hand, it is the people themselves who create the atmosphere. In addition it is also clear that the atmosphere is varying somewhat from game to game. In the middle of the season, in one seemingly unimportant game there could be only 400-500 people sitting still and quiet throughout most of the game. In a play-off game there could be over 1400-1500 people cheering loudly without a pause. The fact remains that the spectators have voiced their opinion. Even though the index did not fall to the negative side, 19,1 is still very low and attention should be paid by the club organization to make some contribution to this.

According to the results the most critical situation is with the physical environment at the match venue. The index value for the spectator stands was the lowest of the whole survey at -37,4. Over 74% (Appendix 3) were more dissatisfied than satisfied or strongly dissatisfied with the stands. In actual numbers, only 7 people answered to be strongly satisfied with the seats.

Also other parts of the match venue were seen as inadequate. Other customer premises (such as toilets and kiosks) received an index of -18,7. That is also very critical for the total customer experience and satisfaction. The environment, the match venue itself needs improvements badly. Unfortunately these improvements can be very expensive, but in this manner even small changes could improve the satisfaction and total experience significantly. People especially complained about the venue to be “freezing cold” and the hallways being too crowded. The team and the city of Kajaani have already started to make improvements on the premises which will hopefully also have an effect on the customer satisfaction.

According to the survey held in Kajaani, the new stadium would not only potentially attract more crowds, but would significantly increase the customer satisfaction of current customers. Increased customer satisfaction, in turn, is very likely to increase the customer activity – satisfied customers are likely to commit themselves, especially in sports, because sports often create very strong emotional bands between the team and its fans. The survey suggests that 33% (Appendix 3) of the current customers are strongly dissatisfied with the stands for the audience at the moment, and over 41% are slightly dissatisfied. With over 74% of current customers being dissatisfied, this issue is very critical for Hokki.

Other customer premises were also strongly criticized. One third (Appendix 3) of the customers were slightly dissatisfied with kiosks, toilets, the bar and other premises and almost 27% were strongly dissatisfied. That adds up to over 61% of customers being at least slightly unhappy with the situation. A new arena or venue for Hokki would most likely have some kind of effect in at least keeping the current customers more satisfied. Most likely the honeymoon effect would bring in some new customers for a short period of time. In the long run a nice arena is still not enough.

One has to take into consideration also the effects on other matters. If the location of the venue would remain about the same and the spectator average would increase about 35% (as Clapp and Hakes suggested) to about 1080 spectators per game that would make the parking area even more crowded. Currently 44% (Appendix 3) of the spectators felt that the parking premises were inadequate.

So also the parking spaces were criticized strongly. The index was only 7,3. The parking area for the match venue is considerably small. Nearby the venue is a large parking lot that can be

used during the games so the lack of space is not the main reason for the criticism. According to some feedback received with the questionnaire, people were more dissatisfied with the crowded roads before and after the games than the parking lots.

The extra services (café, kiosks, ticket sales etc) are handled by the volunteer workers. These volunteer workers were awarded with a good index value, 63,4, with over 90% (Appendix 3) of the people being at least more satisfied than dissatisfied to the service they received. With some improvements on the environment of these services (kiosks, café and ticket sales) the index would most likely be even higher.

Satisfaction index towards the ticket prices was surprisingly high at 32,9. There were no major complaints about the prices. This is partially because the club lowered the prices at one point of the season. In the beginning of the season online forums received a lot of postings about ticket prices being too high. The prices are not significantly higher than other top teams, but even lower than for some other teams. In the beginning of the season student tickets were 8€, which is more expensive than student tickets to some of the SM-league games. That might seem unfair to some. Towards the end of the season the student prices were lowered to 5€ which seemed to be a satisfying amount.

6.3 Conspicuousness and Public Image of Hokki in Kajaani

The second questionnaire (Appendix 2) or interview round was held in the spring of 2007 to clarify the image and conspicuousness of Hokki in the minds of Kajaani residents. The second aim was to possibly get some direct suggestions on how Hokki could improve their operations. Interviews were held mainly on the streets of Kajaani city centre. The questions were mostly kept open ended in order to receive longer, more accurate answers. Out of 32 participants 19 were male and 13 were female. The participants were semi-randomly selected, since there were no strict criteria for choosing the participants, but aim was to reach both men and women from all ages.

In the first question participants were asked how much and how well they know Hokki. After their first response they were asked if they knew who are the manager and the coach of the team and if the participants knew the location of Hokki's office.

Nearly all knew Hokki by name, but they did not know much more about Hokki. Over 59% knew manager Olli-Pekka Hakkarainen by name and the coach, Kai Suikkanen, was correctly named by almost 44% of the people. These percentages are quite high considering that the people interviewed were chosen randomly. Coach Suikkanen was a famous professional player himself and the team has played very well under his direction, so it is quite surprising that he is known for less than half of the participants. One has to bear in mind, that he had been coaching the team less than a year while interviews were held. Nevertheless, his fame as a player could have been used more in PR activities and especially in media.

The location of the office, however, was known only to about one out of three people. If the office was located in city centre, more people would know its location and at the same time Hokki would be more visible to many.

In the second question participants were asked to describe their views of Hokki, or the image of Hokki. Some gave more than one answer to this question. Altogether 39 answers were received with following frequencies:

1. A good, successful team (12 times)
2. An unyielding, persistent team (11 times)
3. A local team (6 times)
4. A young, youthful team (5 times)
5. A small club with very limited resources (5 times)

This would suggest that Hokki's success attracts people and the success is a big part of the image. Team's unyielding attitude has also made a positive mark in people's minds. Locality is naturally part of the image as well. Hokki was seen also as a young or youthful team but also a small club with limited resources. During the season of 2006-2007 Hokki had the youngest team when measured on average age of players, so this image has a factual basis. Both good and bad was seen in being young and youthful. Team full of young players might add to the negative image of being just a small club without resources. At the same time the youthfulness can be linked to being unyielding and fighting until the end. It also gives base for the future of the team. Many considered Hokki as an underestimated team, since they

challenge the bigger teams year after year, even though they start the season as underdogs, due to their limited resources.

Also the logo of Kajaanin Hokki was seen as a memorable one by some of the participants, having a strong link to the city of Kajaani. The logo of Hokki includes a big letter H, looking like two towers of a castle. The crest of Kajaani also has a castle in it and also the colouring of these two crests or logos are similar. The logo of Hokki also includes two crossed hockey sticks and a burning puck.



Picture 1 The logo of Hokki and the crest of the city of Kajaani. Similar colors and the castle figures are used in both.

Without exceptions Hokki's effect to Kajaani and Kainuu was seen positive. About four out of five participants thought that Hokki has a strong good effect or at least a moderately positive effect. One fifth thought that there is a very small effect or no effect at all.

The success of Hokki and the media visibility that comes along with it was seen as a very positive visibility to the whole Kainuu. "At least we are not in the news only for racist attacks", said one participant. Another participant proudly said that it "sends forth an impression that also in Kajaani we know how to do things, and brilliant things happen in Kajaani". Kajaani has suffered from unemployment and other difficulties, so Hokki's success seems to genuinely bring joy and pride to people in Kajaani. Nevertheless, some criticism was given, that the effect could be even more positive if the image of the club would be brought to people's consciousness more.

The media visibility of Hokki divided opinions. For the most part, participants agreed that the visibility was not strong, or versatile enough. People seemed to receive the most information from different newspapers (Kainuun Sanomat, Koti-Kajaani, Kiekkoutiset), but positive and negative comments were given quite evenly. Twelve people thought that the match advertisements were good and noticeable. Eleven people had an opposite opinion and said that the adverts can be seen, but they need more color and size. They were often seen as dull and colorless. Six people did not answer the question and three people were uncertain if the adverts were good or bad.

Even if many people seem to be fairly happy with the visibility and advertisement, there is something else to think about also. Many people said that the adverts are “quite ok” or “just fine”. These might be too mediocre, lukewarm answers for marketers to be happy. Marketing and advertising are supposed to raise emotions and feelings, either for or against something. “Just fine” is often neither a strong “yes”, nor strong “no”.

Participants were reluctant to give any specific suggestions how to improve advertisement. Ten people did not answer at all and the rest of the participants gave suggestions very generally. Eleven participants said that if the quality of current advertisements would be improved, it should be enough. Seven people said that there should be more advertisements and articles in media and seven said that the best way of improving advertising and marketing would be to add visibility in the everyday life of Kajaani. People in favor of increasing the media advertising suggested that especially radio adverts should be aired more, because a lot of people are listening radio in a car or at work.

Some people thought that the best advertising would be to get the match venue and other resources to a professional level. Those who suggested improving the quality of current advertising said that the current advertisements are informative, but not attractive or tempting enough. They should be more unique from game to game and bigger and more colorful.

Interviewed people were not very active match participants. Only 4 out of 32 said that they are frequent goers, 10 out of 32 had never been in a Hokki game. Twelve people said that they go to the games, but not regularly.

When asked what would make participants to participate more often, four answers rose above others. These four answers were:

- a) better stadium
- b) cheaper ticket prices
- c) more time to participate
- d) promotion to another level, or a possibility of promotion

SM-league has now been a closed league for several years and that seems to be restrictive factor in people's minds, since Mestis teams could not be promoted to SM-league. Now SM-league will be re-opened and future will tell if that is going to make a difference and increase the interest of people in Kajaani and Kainuu region.

In the end of the interview the participants were asked to say two positive and two negative opinions about Hokki. Success, being in Kainuu region, strong personalities (the manager and the coach) and the development of young players were seen as the main positive sides. Two important negative sides rose up: the stadium was seen as very unattractive and people also felt that the team itself stays distant and unfamiliar to people in Kajaani, partly due to the big changes in a team year after year.

7 SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

There are many basic ways to increase the attendance and these are also applying to the situation of Hokki. One of the most important facts is that a winning team attracts crowds. Fans want to feel unity with a successful team. This was seen also in Kajaani. When Hokki reached the playoffs in the spring of 2007 and started giving signs that they will succeed, the venue started to be filled. The home games of the final series were sold out.

Payrolls of the players may also tell about the attendance. This naturally requires that the payrolls are sensible and reflect the real value of the star players. Star players attract the crowds and signing of these star players is also a great possibility for sharing information and news through media, using several marketing channels for free. After their championship, Hokki lost several key or star players, many of them to SM-league, and this was shown in the customer numbers in the beginning of the season of 2007-2008.

The third big factor is the post-season performance. Its effect will most likely be lagged and show in the coming years, but as seen in Kajaani, it may have an effect already during that post-season. The further the team continues, the more crowds will participate. Hokki has now reached the finals twice in a row, and if they would fight for a place in the finals for several years in a row, an effect is bound to be made on attendance. People will start to expect them to succeed.

Also the stadium or arena should be attractive. The venue does not have to be new. In many ways it should be modern, but not necessary new. Some vintage stadiums are such classics that people want to be able to visit those stadiums just because of their reputation. That means that it is important to build an image for the venue as well as for the team itself. Vintage or new, the stadium has to be in most cases attractive and high quality in order to increase attendance. Hokki (with its sponsors) and the city of Kajaani should sit down together and find a way to improve the ice stadium in cooperation. The stadium is owned by the city of Kajaani, so therefore they need to be the biggest contributor for the renewal. Hokki is, if not the biggest, at least the most visible user of the stadium and also the biggest gainer in this deal, therefore Hokki should participate in this project with significant help as well. The better surroundings and better image would also help the sponsors. Especially

some of the major sponsors should offer their helping hand and to participate in this project in order to maximize the profits of their investment and to make themselves clearly visible through Hokki.

Good traffic communication may also help in increasing the attendance. 44% of the people of the survey answered that they were not satisfied with the parking places and many added that the traffic is too jammed before and after the games. Good and fluent traffic makes it easier to people to attend. This also includes the location of the venue.

For Hokki, it is an unfortunate fact that the age group that often is the most active participants in sports events seems to be missing from Kajaani. The study conducted in Turku suggested that the largest share of the audience is from the age group between 25 and 39 years old. This same age group covers only about 16 % of the population of Kajaani and less than 20% of the spectator amounts in Kajaani. Hokki should focus more on attracting this particular age group, since from this age group the growth is more likely. On the other hand, this is the smallest age group in Kajaani and therefore the resources spent on marketing to this age group should be carefully used.

An additional reason for this age group being absent from the Hokki games is that this same age group are most likely group to have little children, which might make it more difficult to participate in ice hockey games. This is especially keeping women at home. One possible solution to attract more customers, especially women and 25-39 year olds at the same time is to create an option of buying a family ticket. A family consisting of two parents and up to two children would normally have to pay between 30€ and 40€, depending on what type of seats they would like to have, to participate in the match event. At the moment, women mainly participate with their families and the possibility to buy a family ticket for a little bit lower price could increase the participation of women and families. The reasonable price for this family ticket should be carefully thought of, but it should stay between 20€ and 25€ to be both attractive and profitable.

The organization of Hokki needs to start making the club more familiar to the people of Kajaani and especially to fans. After the championship Hokki came among the people of Kajaani with a championship party and over thousand people attended. This type of events, even though in smaller scale should be organized more often to unite the team and the fans

and other people in the city. Fan meetings are easy to organize after each game. These meetings could be held at the match venue right after the match or for example in a restaurant shortly after the match. If one or two members of the team would meet with the fans after the game, the fans will become closer to the team. If similar meetings would be held with the general population more people might become interested with the team. These meetings could be organized through sponsoring companies. In this way sponsors will have opportunities to be connected to the team and to reach the people of Kajaani. In some cases these are opportunities for sponsors to attract people to their stores or offices. This would give more value to sponsoring cooperation for both, the team and the company.

If sponsors see that they receive more value on their investment, they are more likely to increase their investment also. Well-handled sponsoring cooperation may also attract opportunities to receive more or bigger sponsors. Bigger sponsorship deals are one key to development of the team and its organization. This allows team to attract players with a star status, it allows the team to spend more money on marketing and brand creation and it allows the team to move towards more professional operations.

The results of the questionnaire and suggestions for improvements were presented to Hokki in August 2007. Some improvements were started immediately. The team web page and newspaper advertisements were re-designed. They became more colorful and the newspaper advertisements focused also more on each separate match than previously. In the season 2007-2008 the average attendance rose to 854 per game, meaning that there were more than 8% increase already in the first year. In total there were 1487 spectators more than on the previous year (Finhockey, 2008). Another significant fact was that all Mestis teams received new web pages on 3 September in 2007, all created by the same company. Three weeks later Hokki's pages were visited by 25.000 people, while the average of all Mestis teams was 5.000 visits. (Hokki, 2008).

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LIST OF APPENDICES

- | | |
|------------|--|
| APPENDIX 1 | QUESTIONNAIRE 1 (CUSTOMER SATISFACTION) |
| APPENDIX 2 | QUESTIONNAIRE 2 (VISIBILITY INTERVIEWS) |
| APPENDIX 3 | CUSTOMER SATISFACTION QUESTIONNAIRE'S FRE-
QUENCIES |
| APPENDIX 4 | CROSSTABULATIONS AND INDEPENDENCY TESTS |
| APPENDIX 5 | CUSTOMER SATISFACTION INDEX NUMBERS |

Pyrimme kehittämään asiakkaidemme viihtyvyyttä ja siksi Sinun rehellinen mielipiteesi on meille tärkeä. Ympyröi mielestäsi sopivin vastausvaihtoehto. Kiitos osallistumisestanne!

Sukupuoli: Nainen Mies **Ikä:** Alle 25 25 - 39
40 - 59 60+

Ammattiluokka: Työssä Yrittäjä Eläkeläinen
Työtön Opiskelija Koululainen

1. Kuinka usein käyn Hokin kotipeleissä kauden aikana?

Yli 15 kertaa 10 – 15 kertaa
4 – 9 kertaa Alle 3 kertaa

2. Minulla on: kausikortti yritys- tai muu vapaalippu ostettu irtolippu

3. Käyn peleissä: yksin kaveriporukalla perheen kanssa
työporukalla joku muu: _____

4. Arvioi Hokin toiminnasta asteikolla 1 – 4 (1 = harrastelijamaista, 4 = ammattimaista):

a) Joukkueena (urheilullisesti): 1 2 3 4
b) Organisaationa (toiminnallisesti): 1 2 3 4

Perustele vastauksesi muutamalla sanalla: _____

5. Mikä Hokin peleissä viehättää (voit valita monta vaihtoehtoa):

Hyvät pelaajat Kainuulaisuus Menestys Pelityyli
Me-henki Vauhdikas laji Vastustaja Joku muu, mikä?

6. Mitä sinulle tulee ensimmäisenä mieleen Kajaanin Hokista?

7. Arvioi miten seuraavat väittämät sopivat omaan mielipiteeseesi. Rastita sopivin vastaus vaihtoehto:

	täysin samaa mieltä	jokseenkin samaa mieltä	jokseenkin eri mieltä	täysin eri mieltä
Olen tyytyväinen Hokin tämän hetkiseen sarjasijoitukseen	—	—	—	—
Olen tyytyväinen Hokin pelillisiin esityksiin	—	—	—	—
Hokin menestys on tärkeätä Kajaanilaisille ("Kun Hokki voittaa, me voitamme!")	—	—	—	—
Jääkiekko on Kajaanin ykköslaji	—	—	—	—
Saan riittävästi tietoa tulevista otteluista	—	—	—	—
Hokki on näkyvästi esillä Kajaanissa	—	—	—	—
Tunnelma katsomossa pelin aikana on hyvä	—	—	—	—
Katsomo-olosuhteet ovat viihtyisät	—	—	—	—
Hallin muut tilat (WC:t, kahvio, kioskki jne.) palvelevat nykyisiä asiakasmääriä hyvin	—	—	—	—
Saamani palvelu on hyvää ja miellyttävää (lipunmyynti, järjestysmiehet, kioskki, kahvio jne.)	—	—	—	—
Parkkipaikat on järjestetty hyvin ja opastus on riittävä	—	—	—	—
Lippujen hinnoittelu on toimiva	—	—	—	—

8. Ehdotuksiani viihtyvyyden parantamiseksi (missä on puutteita?) tai muuta palautetta Hokille:

Yhteystietoni arvottavia palkintoja varten:

QUESTIONNAIRE 2

1. Miten tuttu Kajaanin Hokki on sinulle (tiedätkö kuka on valmentaja, manageri, missä on toimisto)?
2. Millaisia mielikuvia Kajaanin Hokki herättää sinussa?
3. Millainen on mielestäsi Kajaanin Hokin vaikutus Kajaanin tunnettavuuteen ja imagoon?
4. Millainen on mielestäsi Kajaanin Hokin medianäkyvyys Kainuussa?
5. Millaisia ovat mielestäsi Kajaanin Hokin ottelumainokset?
6. Miten muuttaisit Kajaanin Hokin mainontaa (ulkoasu, miten, media)?
7. Käytkö Kajaanin Hokin peleissä?
8. Mikä saisi sinut peleihin useammin?
9. Mainitse kaksi positiivista asiaa liittyen Kajaanin Hokkiin?
10. Mainitse kaksi negatiivista asiaa liittyen Kajaanin Hokkiin?

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION QUESTIONNAIRE'S FREQUENCIES

Sukupuoli

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Nainen	38	30,9	30,9	30,9
	Mies	85	69,1	69,1	100,0
	Total	123	100,0	100,0	

Ikä

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Alle 25-vuotias	48	39,0	40,0	40,0
	25 - 39 -vuotias	25	20,3	20,8	60,8
	40 - 59 -vuotias	42	34,1	35,0	95,8
	Yli 60-vuotias	5	4,1	4,2	100,0
	Total	120	97,6	100,0	
Missing	System	3	2,4		
Total		123	100,0		

Ammattiluokka

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Työssä	56	45,5	45,5	45,5
	Yrittäjä	7	5,7	5,7	51,2
	Eläkeläinen	7	5,7	5,7	56,9
	Työtön	8	6,5	6,5	63,4
	Opiskelija	25	20,3	20,3	83,7
	Koululainen	20	16,3	16,3	100,0
	Total	123	100,0	100,0	

Millä lipulla on tullut peliin

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Kausikortti	48	39,0	40,0	40,0
	Yritys- tai muu vapaalippu	40	32,5	33,3	73,3
	Ostettu irtolippu	32	26,0	26,7	100,0
	Total	120	97,6	100,0	
Missing	System	3	2,4		
Total		123	100,0		

Miten usein käy kotipeleissä

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yli 15 kertaa	62	50,4	50,8	50,8
	10 - 15 kertaa	32	26,0	26,2	77,0
	4 - 9 kertaa	20	16,3	16,4	93,4
	Alle 3 kertaa	8	6,5	6,6	100,0
	Total	122	99,2	100,0	
Missing	System	1	,8		
Total		123	100,0		

Kenen kanssa käy peleissä

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yksin	21	17,1	17,1	17,1
	Kaveriporukalla	62	50,4	50,4	67,5
	Perheen kanssa	34	27,6	27,6	95,1
	Työporukalla	1	,8	,8	95,9
	Joku muu	5	4,1	4,1	100,0
	Total	123	100,0	100,0	

Mikä viehättää

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
\$Mikäviehättää(a)	Hyvät pelaajat	61	19,1%	49,6%
	Kainuulaisuus	37	11,6%	30,1%
	Menestys	69	21,6%	56,1%
	Pelityyli	26	8,1%	21,1%
	Me-henki	27	8,4%	22,0%
	Laji	80	25,0%	65,0%
	Vastustaja	15	4,7%	12,2%
	Muu	5	1,6%	4,1%
Total		320	100,0%	260,2%

a Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Ammattimaisuus organisaationa

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	6	4,9	5,2	5,2
	2	29	23,6	25,2	30,4
	3	71	57,7	61,7	92,2
	4	9	7,3	7,8	100,0
	Total	115	93,5	100,0	
Missing	System	8	6,5		
Total		123	100,0		

Ammattimaisuus joukkueena

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	3	2,4	2,5	2,5
	2	5	4,1	4,2	6,7
	3	87	70,7	73,1	79,8
	4	24	19,5	20,2	100,0
	Total	119	96,7	100,0	
Missing	System	4	3,3		
Total		123	100,0		

Tyytyväinen sarjasijoitukseen

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Jokseenkin eri mieltä	8	6,5	6,7	6,7
	Jokseenkin samaa mieltä	52	42,3	43,3	50,0
	Täysin samaa mieltä	60	48,8	50,0	100,0
	Total	120	97,6	100,0	
Missing	System	3	2,4		
Total		123	100,0		

Tyytyväinen pelillisiin asioihin

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Täysin eri mieltä	1	,8	,8	,8
	Jokseenkin eri mieltä	13	10,6	10,8	11,7
	Jokseenkin samaa mieltä	75	61,0	62,5	74,2
	Täysin samaa mieltä	31	25,2	25,8	100,0
	Total	120	97,6	100,0	
Missing	System	3	2,4		
Total		123	100,0		

Hokki on tärkeä Kajaanille

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Täysin eri mieltä	1	,8	,8	,8
	Jokseenkin eri mieltä	8	6,5	6,7	7,6
	Jokseenkin samaa mieltä	40	32,5	33,6	41,2
	Täysin samaa mieltä	70	56,9	58,8	100,0
	Total	119	96,7	100,0	
Missing	System	4	3,3		
Total		123	100,0		

Jääkiekko on Kajaanin ykköslaji

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Täysin eri mieltä	3	2,4	2,5	2,5
	Jokseenkin eri mieltä	7	5,7	5,8	8,3
	Jokseenkin samaa mieltä	24	19,5	20,0	28,3
	Täysin samaa mieltä	86	69,9	71,7	100,0
	Total	120	97,6	100,0	
Missing	System	3	2,4		
Total		123	100,0		

Otteluista on riittävästi tietoa tarjolla

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Jokseenkin eri mieltä	9	7,3	7,5	7,5
	Jokseenkin samaa mieltä	41	33,3	34,2	41,7
	Täysin samaa mieltä	70	56,9	58,3	100,0
	Total	120	97,6	100,0	
Missing	System	3	2,4		
Total		123	100,0		

Hokki on näkyvästi esillä Kajaanissa

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Täysin eri mieltä	4	3,3	3,3	3,3
	Jokseenkin eri mieltä	33	26,8	27,5	30,8
	Jokseenkin samaa mieltä	46	37,4	38,3	69,2
	Täysin samaa mieltä	37	30,1	30,8	100,0
	Total	120	97,6	100,0	
Missing	System	3	2,4		
Total		123	100,0		

Katsomo-olosuhteet ovat viihtyisät

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Täysin eri mieltä	40	32,5	33,1	33,1
	Jokseenkin eri mieltä	50	40,7	41,3	74,4
	Jokseenkin samaa mieltä	24	19,5	19,8	94,2
	Täysin samaa mieltä	7	5,7	5,8	100,0
	Total	121	98,4	100,0	
Missing	System	2	1,6		
Total		123	100,0		

Tunnelma katsomossa on hyvä

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Täysin eri mieltä	11	8,9	9,2	9,2
	Jokseenkin eri mieltä	30	24,4	25,0	34,2
	Jokseenkin samaa mieltä	59	48,0	49,2	83,3
	Täysin samaa mieltä	20	16,3	16,7	100,0
	Total	120	97,6	100,0	
Missing	System	3	2,4		
Total		123	100,0		

Yleiset tilat ovat riittävän tasokkaita

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Täysin eri mieltä	33	26,8	27,3	27,3
	Jokseenkin eri mieltä	41	33,3	33,9	61,2
	Jokseenkin samaa mieltä	33	26,8	27,3	88,4
	Täysin samaa mieltä	14	11,4	11,6	100,0
	Total	121	98,4	100,0	
Missing	System	2	1,6		
Total		123	100,0		

Parkkipaikat ja opastus ovat riittäviä

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Täysin eri mieltä	13	10,6	10,9	10,9
	Jokseenkin eri mieltä	39	31,7	32,8	43,7
	Jokseenkin samaa mieltä	51	41,5	42,9	86,6
	Täysin samaa mieltä	16	13,0	13,4	100,0
	Total	119	96,7	100,0	
Missing	System	4	3,3		
Total		123	100,0		

Palvelun laatu on hyvä

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Täysin eri mieltä	3	2,4	2,5	2,5
	Jokseenkin eri mieltä	5	4,1	4,2	6,7
	Jokseenkin samaa mieltä	55	44,7	46,2	52,9
	Täysin samaa mieltä	56	45,5	47,1	100,0
	Total	119	96,7	100,0	
Missing	System	4	3,3		
Total		123	100,0		

Lippujen hinnoittelu on toimiva

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Täysin eri mieltä	4	3,3	3,4	3,4
	Jokseenkin eri mieltä	26	21,1	21,8	25,2
	Jokseenkin samaa mieltä	63	51,2	52,9	78,2
	Täysin samaa mieltä	26	21,1	21,8	100,0
	Total	119	96,7	100,0	
Missing	System	4	3,3		
Total		123	100,0		

CROSSTABLATIONS AND INDEPENDENCY TESTS

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Millä lipulla on tullut peliin * Sukupuoli	120	97,6%	3	2,4%	123	100,0%

Millä lipulla on tullut peliin * Sukupuoli Crosstabulation

			Sukupuoli		Total
			Nainen	Mies	
Millä lipulla on tullut peliin	Kausikortti	Count	8	40	48
		% within Sukupuoli	21,6%	48,2%	40,0%
Yritys- tai muu vapaalippu		Count	18	22	40
		% within Sukupuoli	48,6%	26,5%	33,3%
Ostettu irtolippu		Count	11	21	32
		% within Sukupuoli	29,7%	25,3%	26,7%
Total		Count	37	83	120
		% within Sukupuoli	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8,470(a)	2	,014
Likelihood Ratio	8,774	2	,012
Linear-by-Linear Association	3,758	1	,053
N of Valid Cases	120		

a. 0 cells (,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9,87.

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Luokiteltu ikä * Millä lipulla on tullut peliin	117	95,1%	6	4,9%	123	100,0%

Luokiteltu ikä * Millä lipulla on tullut peliin Crosstabulation

			Millä lipulla on tullut peliin			Total
			Kausikortti	Yritys- tai muu vapaalippu	Ostettu irtolippu	
Luokiteltu ikä	Alle 25-vuotias	Count	22	19	6	47
		% within Millä lipulla on tullut peliin	46,8%	50,0%	18,8%	40,2%
	25 - 39 -vuotias	Count	8	9	6	23
		% within Millä lipulla on tullut peliin	17,0%	23,7%	18,8%	19,7%
	Yli 40-vuotias	Count	17	10	20	47
		% within Millä lipulla on tullut peliin	36,2%	26,3%	62,5%	40,2%
Total		Count	47	38	32	117
		% within Millä lipulla	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11,552(a)	4	,021
Likelihood Ratio	12,039	4	,017
Linear-by-Linear Association	5,780	1	,016
N of Valid Cases	117		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6,29.

Asiakastyytyväisyyskyselyn indeksiluvut ja erotus indeksien keskiarvoon

	Indeksiluku	Erotus keskiarvoon
Tyytyväisyys sarjasijoitukseen	67,5	31,7
Tyytyväisyys pelillisiin asioihin	49,6	13,8
Hokin on tärkeä Kajaanille	69,1	33,3
Jääkiekko on Kajaanin ykköslaji	74,4	38,6
Otteluista saa riittävästi tietoa	69,9	34,1
Hokki on näkyvä Kajaanissa	32,1	-3,7
Tunnelma katsomossa on hyvä	19,1	-16,7
Katsomo-olosuhteiden viihtyvyys	-37,4	-73,2
Yleisten tilojen tasokkuus	-18,7	-54,5
Palvelun laatu	63,4	27,6
Parkkipaikkojen ja opastuksen riittävyys	7,3	-28,5
Hinnoittelu	32,9	-2,9
Indeksilukujen keskiarvo	35,8	