

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences  
Faculty of Business Administration, Lappeenranta  
Degree Programme in International Business  
Specialisation in International Business  
Bachelor's Thesis 2014

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**Efficient Marketing Communications towards  
Russian Customers. Case: Grande Orchidée  
Fashion Center**

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## ABSTRACT

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Efficient Marketing Communications towards Russian Customers. Case:

Grande Orchidée Fashion Center, 47 pages, 2 appendices

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The objective of this thesis was to research what are the most efficient marketing communications of Grande Orchidée Fashion Center towards Russian customers. The focus was kept on individual customers who come regularly to do shopping in Lappeenranta.

The theory part of this research work includes an examination of conventional theories of marketing communication tools and analysis of modern marketing in Russia.

The empirical part was implemented by studying the current marketing communications of the company. The data collection methods included a semi structured interview with the CEO's assistant at the company and a customer survey.

The outcomes showed the most efficient communication channels that can be utilized and that can positively contribute to the company's marketing strategy.

Keywords: marketing communications, Russian customers, fashion center

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

With a 1,300-km long border separating Russia and Finland, Russian tourism has a great impact on the Finnish economy, especially in the southeast part of the country. Russian travellers have been a significant source of income for the local retailing businesses, because the main purpose of visiting Finland is shopping. That is why companies are interested in identifying the right ways of communicating their value to Russian customers and attracting them.

Most of the Russian tourists travel across the border by cars on short shopping trips. However, the economic slowdown and weakened ruble have weakened the purchasing power of Russian customers in euros, so that their number in stores has decreased and the consumption has been reduced during the winter period. This tendency could easily be observed in the Lappeenranta and Imatra regions, where less Russian shoppers were visiting. (Kauppa.fi 2013.)

However, according to a study conducted by Mediatalo Toimelias Oy (2014), by comparing the Yandex search engine keywords and search volumes in February 2013 and March 2014, Russian customers are still interested in Finnish products and services, and their interest even seems to grow in almost all the search areas.

Examples of results can be found in Figure 1 below:

Search phrase	Amount of searches in February 2013	Amount of searches in March 2014	Change %
Shops in Finland	23760	31313	+31%
Online shops in Finland	5702	7623	+33%
Products from Finland	15162	15939	+5%

Figure 1. Amount of Yandex Internet searches by Russians (Mediatalo Toimelias Oy 2014).

Thus, despite the current uncertainty, businesses remain positive about the future and this situation is seen only as a temporary phase. So it is still wise and important for Finnish companies to take advantage of the potential of Russian shoppers and head their businesses towards the Russian market.

The topic of efficient marketing communications towards Russian customers touches upon the interest of a new fashion center in Lappeenranta – Grande Orchidée. Therefore, this thesis was commissioned by the owner of the case company in order to identify the right actions that can facilitate the achievement of desired marketing communication objectives and contribute to the successful development of their business. The case company will be described in chapter 1.4.

## **1.2 Objectives and the research question**

The main aim of this thesis was to identify the most efficient marketing communications in the Russian market for a case company, Grande Orchidée Fashion Center in Lappeenranta that was opened relatively recently.

Accordingly, the research question was:

*What are the most efficient marketing communications of Grande Orchidée Fashion Center towards Russian customers?*

In order to answer the research question the following issues were studied:

- What are the currently used marketing communication tools?
- What are the company's marketing communication performance and customer service from customers' point of view?
- What are the available communication channels and how they can be used?

Other goals included to find out where Russians usually find information about shops in Lappeenranta and to take a brief look on the main features of advertising to Russian consumers. Moreover, besides the research topic, there were some other issues investigated concerning customer service on the case company's request.

All in all, the main goal of this work was to give suggestions to the case company for how to upgrade its market communication strategy to the highest level, reach more Russian customers and keep the existing ones.

### **1.3 Delimitations of the study**

The theory part of this study focuses only on marketing communication methods and how they can be used. Thus, the other components of marketing mix are excluded from the study. This provides a focus on relevant issues.

The empirical part is oriented on a specific area, where only Russian customers are taken into consideration, and only those who do not permanently live in Finland.

This thesis will offer an idea for the case company about how they could efficiently promote themselves in the target market. In overall, the marketing communication plan for Grandee Orchidee has already been created on a general level.

### **1.4 Grandee Orchidée Fashion Center**

Grande Orchidée is the newest fashion center in Lappeenranta that was opened in November 2013. This shopping center is unique because it is the largest luxury department store in Finland at the moment. The area is 3500 square meters.

The main target group of Grande Orchidée is high income Russian tourists, so the assortment of fashionable items is selected in a way to generate interest primarily among wealthy Russian customers. At the moment, the volume of Russian customers is approximately on the same level as Finnish customers.

Grande Orchidée has gathered the best Finnish boutiques in one place, offering men's, women's and children's clothing, shoes, accessories, cosmetics and perfumes, from globally recognized, luxury brands including Armani Collezioni, Armani Jeans, Paul&Shark, Zanotti, Fabi, Baldini, Hugo Boss, Guess, Kenzo, Karl Lagerfeld, Michael Kors, Dior and many others. (Grande Orchidée Fashion Center 2014).

## **1.5 Research methods**

In this thesis work both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used. Such a method is called pluralistic, and it is used in order to gain the advantages of both methods and increase the validity of findings. (Burns & Bush 2014, p. 147.) This method was chosen primarily because it is not bound by strict requirements to think and interpret the results in one particular way. Conversely, it tends to deepen and broaden the understanding of the research results and overcome the limitations provided by a single method.

The survey questionnaire formed the biggest part of the study and it included both quantitative and qualitative types of questions. There was quite a large number of respondents who participated in the survey. The target group was 100 people and the survey was successful reaching 96 customers. The quantitative survey helped to understand the demographics of customers, which city they come from and how frequently they visit Finland.

The qualitative part gathered views and attitudes towards Grandée Orchidee. It helped to understand customers' feelings about the new Fashion Center, how they knew about it, their preferences and brand orientations. Because of the nature of the information, analyzing qualitative data required more time to interpret the results.

Another part of the qualitative research was a semi structured interview with the CEO's assistant at the company. The main aim of the interview was to find out information about currently utilized marketing communications towards target customers. There were open-ended questions used in order to get in-depth responses and talk about marketing communications in detail.

The survey was implemented during July 2014. The results of the survey were analysed using the qualitative method, in order to get a deeper understanding and make assumptions based on the results.

## **1.6 Thesis structure**

The thesis report includes four main parts: introduction, theory part, empirical part and conclusions.

In the first section, the background of the study, objectives, delimitations, research question and method are discussed.

In the second section, relevant literature and the theoretical framework is presented, supporting the empirical part. The theory part of this study was conducted by analyzing specialist literature in marketing about the marketing communication methods. This chapter reviews the conventional theories.

The third part of the study is the research part, which includes the empirical findings collected through the semi structured interview with the CEO's assistant and customer questionnaires. In the conclusion part the fundamental findings and recommendations based on the results are discussed, together with suggestions for further considerations.

## **2 Marketing communications**

Nowadays, marketing is much more than developing a good product with an attractive price and making it accessible. Companies must also *communicate* their value propositions to customers and it is a vital part of a company's marketing.

According to Kotler & Keller (2012, p. 476) marketing communications can be defined as “the means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade and remind customers - directly or indirectly - about the brands they market”.

Marketing communications is the last element in a company's marketing mix, involving activities used to create, communicate and deliver value to the customer (Kotler & Keller 2012, p. 973). Figure 2 presents the position of marketing communications within a company's marketing mix. Once a company determines the product, price and distribution, it is ready to plan its marketing communications (Arens et al. 2013, p. 202).



Figure 2. Communications within marketing mix (Modified from Kotler & Armstrong 2010, p.76).

The strategic planning of a marketing communication process begins with a review of the marketing plan, leading to a target audience selection, forming the brand decision process, identifying the best positioning for the brand, establishing the communication strategy, and then selecting the media compatible with the chosen strategy to deliver the message effectively (Percy 2008, p. 28). Therefore, when planning marketing communications, it is important for most companies to answer the questions of to whom, when, how and how often to communicate (Kotler & Keller 2012, p. 475).

## 2.1 Objectives of marketing communication

Marketing communications normally has three principal aims. The first one is to create a brand awareness for a company, the second one is to define a need the product or service can fulfill, and the third aim is to encourage customers to behave in particular ways that are beneficial for the company.

In overall, marketing communication objectives are long-term goals, where different kind of marketing methods are intended to increase the value of a company over time. Thus, communication goals succeed only when customers are persuaded through constant support that a company can offer all benefits they want or need. (Stafford 2012.)

## 2.2 Communication process

Communication is the transmission of a message from a sender to a receiver in a clear and understandable way. Communication can be defined as a process of exchanging verbal and non-verbal messages.

To communicate effectively, it is important to understand how communication works. A communication process model is shown in Figure 3. Two major factors in communication are sender and receiver. The major communication tools are the message and the media. Four other components represent major functions, including encoding, decoding, response and feedback. The last element is noise, which refers to any type of an obstacle that prevents messages from being efficient and effective. (Clow & Baack 2007, p. 7.)

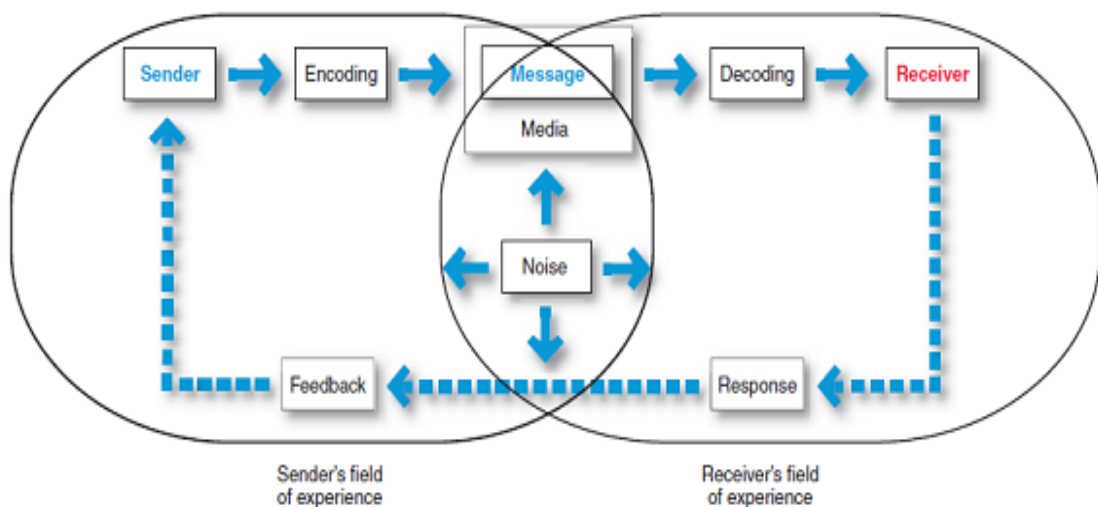


Figure 3. Elements in the Communication Process (Kotler & Armstrong 2010).

The communication process is a vital part of any advertising or marketing program. It is important to pay attention to each part of the communication model and make sure that the right audience receives the messages (Clow & Baack 2007, p. 8).

### 2.3 Elements of marketing communications

Marketing communication mix refers to a set of tools that can be used in various combinations and different degrees of intensity in order to implement the communication's functions (Fill 2006, p. 13). Every marketing decision of a company depends on its utilization of different marketing communication tools. These tools require different amounts of attention from the company, but all of them require long-term commitment (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, p. 426). Ac-

According to Kotler & Keller (2012, p. 478), a company's marketing communication mix consists of the following modes of communication:

- advertising
- sales promotion
- personal selling
- public relations
- direct marketing
- interactive marketing
- viral marketing.

These models can be further grouped into personal and non-personal activities. Nowadays there has been a significant shift from *intervention*-based approach, which is based on seeking the attention of a customer who might not necessarily be interested, towards *permission*-based communications that focuses on communications with people who have already expressed an interest in a market offering. In other words, permission-based communications has become the standard for companies' interaction with their clients, driven together by the desire to increase a base of loyal customers, engage them with compelling cross-channel interactions, and to comply with today's tightening regulatory environment. This has a particular effect on direct marketing, interactive marketing and, at some level, personal selling. (Fill 2006, p. 13.) Thus, permission-based communications should be highly valued by companies striving to to grow and retain loyal customers.

## **2.4 Non-personal communication channels**

Non-personal communication channels are those through which the message is delivered without personal contact to more than one person. It includes advertising, sales promotion, public relations, and interactive marketing.

### *Advertising*

Advertising is any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of market offerings by an identified sponsor. The main aims of advertising are to attract attention, increase sales and customer awareness. (Kotler & Keller 2012, p. 478.)

Advertising uses different media and the choice of suitable tools of media depends on the effectiveness and efficiency of the solution it provides for achieving marketing objectives. A wide selection of paid advertising media is available. Some of them are:

- broadcast ads (TV and radio)
- print ads (magazines and newspapers)
- brochures and booklets
- posters and leaflets
- billboards
- packaging
- motion pictures
- directories
- display signs
- symbols and logos.

Some media are more focused than others, depending on specific geographic areas or target audiences. As the most dominant form of communication in consumer marketing, advertising often is the first point of contact between marketers and customers, serving to build awareness, inform, persuade and remind. (Lovelock & Wirtz 2011, p. 196.) Advertising plays an essential role in providing factual information about services and educating customers about a product. At the same time, advertising can have high costs, is less interactive and it cannot be personalized.

### *Sales promotion*

Short-term incentives intended to increase sales of a product or service are called sales promotion (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, p. 426). Sales promotion is usually connected closely with advertising. The basic types of sales promotion presented by Percy (2008, p. 106) are:

- coupons
- sampling
- refunds and rebates
- loyalty and loading devices
- premiums and gifts

- sweepstakes, games, and contests.

The difference between advertising and sales promotion is that whereas advertising offers reason to buy, sales promotion offers reason to buy it now (Kotler & Keller 2012, p. 519). The primary communication objectives of these tools usually are: stimulation of consumer trials, increase of rebuy rates and reward of loyal customers in order to fasten the selling process. The target group for sales promotion includes dealers, a company's own sales force and customers. Promotion should not be used as an ongoing program, as it is only a short-term tactic. Otherwise, it can easily lower the price of a brand. (Percy 2008, p. 121.)

### *Public relations*

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2010, p. 426) public relations refers to "building good relations with the company's various publics by obtaining favorable publicity, building up a good corporate image, and handling or heading off unfavourable rumors, stories and events". These "publics" are a company's stakeholders such as suppliers, employees, customers or governments. As it derives from the definition, the aim of public relations is to develop and maintain the liking of the publics.

Public relations activities can include:

- press relationships
- press releases
- sponsorships
- product placement
- events management
- crisis management.

Public relations, often referred to as PR, is an effective and economical method to increase public awareness and build a good reputation. When some media writes or publishes news stories or articles about the company, it does not cost anything for the company, while it can be very beneficial. The company should encourage its employees to create events that attract representatives of different media to carry positive stories about the company. Another aspect why a company should use media to increase its visibility is the reliability of

the media among the publics. Readers feel that if an objective third-party newspaper or magazine is highlighting a company, it must be doing something truly valuable. (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, p. 441.)

However, PR has such a drawback as a lack of control, so there is no guarantee that the message will necessarily be presented in a desired way. Planning and preparation can significantly reduce the chances of getting bad publicity. (Percy 2008, p. 140.)

## **2.5 Personal communication channels**

Personal communications involve person-to-person contact with customers. Personal communication channels include personal selling, direct marketing and viral marketing.

### *Personal selling*

Personal selling involves face-to-face activities undertaken by the company's sales representatives of a particular brand or product with the aim to inform, persuade or remind a customer to take appropriate action (Fill 2006, p. 14). The most common examples of personal selling are:

- sales presentations
- sales meetings
- incentive programs
- samples
- fairs and trade shows.

The main advantage is the ability of sales personnel to observe a customer's body language, answer questions, tailor message, negotiate terms and present the market offering. Sales representatives tend to influence the target customer. According to research, many purchase decisions are made by consumers in the retail environment, so the effect of sales staff may contribute either positively or negatively. (Arens et al. 2012, p. 565.)

Moreover, Arens et al. (2012) state that salespeople may provide a company with useful information on customers' needs, wants, abilities, competition, and prospects. The author also tells that sales people should be relationship marketers, as people want to buy from the sales representative they trust and like.

### *Direct marketing*

Direct marketing is a tool by which companies communicate with carefully targeted individual consumers to both obtain an immediate response and develop stable customer relationships (Kotler & Armstrong 2010).

The basic characteristics of direct marketing, according to this definition, are that it requests for a response and that it can be highly targeted. In fact, it can be targeted on a single person or a very small group of people. (Percy 2008, p. 153.)

A company might use the following ways of communication with specific consumers:

- postal mailshot
- e-mail
- telephone
- applications, such as for mobiles
- Internet.

According to Arens et al. (2013, p. 554), companies can reach individual customers in a way that they perceive themselves as unique. The author also states that direct marketing offers accountability, and thus, marketers can evaluate its effectiveness. Another important point highlighted is that direct media can be conducted privately without the competitors even knowing about it. However, letters, phone calls, emails and texts must only be sent to people and businesses that have given permission to be contacted (Kotler & Keller 2012, p. 536).

### *Interactive marketing*

According to Kotler & Keller (2012, p. 478), interactive marketing refers to “online activities and programmes designed to engage customers or prospects and directly or indirectly raise awareness, improve image or elicit sales of marketing offering”.

Some forms of interactive marketing are:

- company website

- search advertisements
- banner advertisements
- Internet specific advertisements
- sponsorships of particular content on websites
- e-mails (as part of direct marketing)
- mobile.

Interactive marketing offers the possibility to match the requests of potential customers by placing advertisements on websites corresponding to market offering, inserting ads based on search engine keywords and relevant topics, or use behavioural targeting by positioning ads of previously visited webpages when a customer is browsing an unrelated page. The effect is measurable and it provides a possibility to analyse the consumers' behavior once they click on an ad. (Kotler & Keller 2012, p. 479.)

### *Viral marketing*

Viral marketing is word-of-mouth marketing that describes any strategy that stimulates people to share the marketing message with others by means of person to person conversation or through digital communication. It is a form of unconventional marketing and one of the most influential marketing methods.

Viral marketing involves creating a web site, video, e-mail, cell phone message, advertisement, or other marketing message that is so infectious that it encourages customers to pass it on to others (Kotler & Keller 2012, p. 549). This form of marketing is cheaper than traditional marketing, as people pass the message to each other by themselves. Moreover, the message has more chances to be viewed if it has arrived from a friend.

With the growth of the Internet, digital and social media marketing tools are proving more and more popular as they make it easy for people to exchange information quickly between themselves. These channels of communication make word-of-mouth more effective because they can enhance the audience reach not only in their locality but even on a national and global scale fast, easy and cheap. (Woerndl et al. 2008, p. 34.)

It is assumed that WOM is more influential than any other marketing tools because personal sources are perceived as more trustworthy and in many situa-

tions people do not want to rely on marketers' suggestions or advertising to make a purchase decision.

### **3 Modern marketing in Russia**

It is important to consider the Russian cultural aspect as effective marketing in Russia needs strong cultural adaptation and understanding. Today there are many viable opportunities for marketing in Russia, from traditional advertising media, such as television, print media, outdoor billboards, magazines to modern alternatives.

The most popular media in Russia is TV, with 70% of the population watching it every day. Thus, television is the most popular source of information for Russians and has a great impact on their lives. Radio is also an effective way of advertising in Russia with 82% of population listening to it. It is also cheaper than TV advertising. Advertisers appreciate radio for the ability to directly reach the target consumers, considering the ease of selecting a radio station in accordance with the target audience. (Sostav.ru 2010.)

Russia has a very wide range of print media. There are over 400 daily newspapers, covering every field, and offering all kinds of perspectives. Newspapers are the second most popular media in Russia, after television. Local newspapers are more popular than national ones, with 27% of Russians consulting local newspapers routinely and 40% reading them occasionally. (Slideshare 2012.)

Internet and Social Media advertising are the fastest and most effective advertising segments in Russia. As one of the most active social media markets in Europe, around 90% of Russians have an account on at least one social networking site. The most popular social networking sites include Vkontakte with 88 million members and Odnoklassniki.ru with 45 million members respectively. Comparatively, Facebook only have around 1.5 million users in Russia. According to the statistics, almost one in four Russian Internet users state that he or she relies on information from social media before making a purchase. (Joinville 2014.)

The most popular search engine in Russia is Yandex with 54% of the Russian market share. It includes about 20 different Internet services, such as free e-mail, hosting area, network games and catalog. Every day the first page of Yandex has about 750 000 visitors who make 3.2 million queries in the search box, in response to which the system produces an average of 63 million result pages. Thus, the banners on the front page of Yandex are very popular and can be both linked to the subject of the request or not. (Best CEO Blog 2014.)

The main difference between Russian customers and any other European customers, who mostly speak English very well, is that Russians prefer to search information on the Internet in Russian. Moreover, Russians appreciate an in-depth understanding on things. Thus, they require more information about a product or service with high quality photos and locations. (English-and-russian.com 2014.)

Below the line advertising is common for consumer products, offered for the mass. For example, advertising via SMS is a popular way of promotion in Russia, as the main advantage of sending SMS is efficiency. Also, this method is financially most affordable in comparison to other methods of promotion. Outdoor advertising is mostly common in big and modern cities, such as Moscow or Saint Petersburg and is used on walls, billboards, in the underground, other public transport and shopping centers. Indoor advertising is also becoming more and more popular in Russia. It includes advertisements such as brochures, stands, product samples and other advertising structures in places with high people flow such as commercial and business centres, restaurants, airports, and cinemas. (Nastojashii hosting kartinok 2014.)

Brand loyalty is a relatively new concept in Russia and still most of Russians try out new brands most or all of the time. Therefore, by using BTL advertising companies can offer customers a chance to test products. However, brand loyalty does exist in some categories more than others, with electronic goods, cosmetics, and health and beauty—particularly with Western products. (Birkner 2014.)

## **4 Research results**

### **4.1 Current marketing communications**

In this thesis research project, the marketing and customer survey was partly based on an interview with the CEO's assistant, which took place on 2 July 2014 at the company's sales premises. The aim of the interview was to gain information about current marketing communications towards the target segment in order to assess its efficiency and define what other tools could be used to reach more Russian customers and keep existing.

The interview provided a better understanding of the present situation, the specifics of marketing communications at the case company and the attitude of the CEO's assistant towards various communication methods to make practical suggestions, as it has a significant impact on the applied practices.

The main target group for Grande Orchidée is high income Russian customers. According to the interview there are more Russian than Finnish customers shopping in Grande Orchidée at the moment. Russian consumers are known worldwide for their love of expensive luxury goods and the main reason for that is because by using such symbolic goods, including luxury clothing and accessories, they communicate meaning about themselves to others. Russian consumers by nature are easily influenced by public opinion, and it is therefore important for them that the product they choose is recognized by others. Basically, this is the main difference between the Finnish and the Russian buying behavior and clothing preferences.

Grande Orchidée does not use any publications in Russian for advertising, such as *Stop in Finland*, *Terve*, *Fintourist*, because the effectiveness of this advertising method is not proven. Thus, the outcome of this research was intended to help to find out whether it is really not worth the money to advertise with them due to a low level of readers or whether people read those magazines regularly and advertising there could be effective in reaching more tourists. At the moment Grande Orchidée advertises in the Finnish newspaper *Etelä-Saimaa*, but this advertising is targeted on Finnish customers.

Grande Orchidée has its own website that is available in three languages, including Russian. There is information on customer services, including opening

hours and location, available brands and information about shopping in Finland. Also, Grande Orchidee has profiles in social networks – on Facebook, Vkontakte and in Instagram. The latest offers and sales are posted there, people can see photos, comment and ask questions. This is quite an effective way of promoting and attracting new and keeping existing customers. In the context of Russian customers, Vkontakte is the best way of promoting, since this social network is widely used in Russia. In Grande Orchidée one person is responsible for managing social presence.

Another way of promotion that is used is flyer distribution in Laplandia Market (both Grande Orchidée and Laplandia Market are owned by Atma Trade Oy), which is a very popular shop among Russian tourists coming to Finland. After making a purchase at Laplandia Market a customer gets a flyer about Grande Orchidee with a special offer. For example, if the customer makes a purchase worth 100 euros, a discount of 25% is given.

Grande Orchidee has in total 20 sales assistants. Almost half of them are Russian speaking. The importance of the Russian language cannot be underestimated, because Russians prefer customer service in their native language, even though some of them can speak English. Finnish sales staff sometimes does not understand Russian customers, not only because of the language barrier but also because of different behavioral models.

Grande Orchidée also offers a membership system for its clients. Everyone can join by signing up after making a purchase and get a card. The card is cumulative, so the more it is used, the more benefits it provides. Regular customers are entitled to discounts offered by Grande Orchidée and its partners. The partners are Auto-Suni, a car repair and service company in Finland, SaimaaTravel cruising, Scandic and GallaDance dance club. For example, regular customers of Grande Orchidée Fashion Center get a 20 % discount on accommodation in the Scandic Patria Hotel.

Moreover, at the moment there is a direct marketing project under development. It will be in the form of email-based campaigns that are sent to targeted recipients, but only to those who give permission to use their e-mail for marketing purposes.

## **4.2 Customer survey**

The questionnaire was first developed in Russian, and then translated into English. In order to minimize misunderstandings and incorrect questions, a pre-test was conducted on a sample of three respondents before the actual survey. There were 16 questions in total that included multiple choice, attitudinal scaled questions and open-ended questions. The aim was to get a minimum of 100 replies in order to achieve reliable estimates. It is assumed that the larger the sample size is, the lower is the sampling error.

The customer survey consisted of two parts. The first one was carried out at the premises of Grande Orchidée Fashion Center during several days in July. The second part was conducted by distributing questionnaires online.

The customer survey had six background questions, and the main idea was to understand what kind of people do shopping in Grande Orchidée in Lappeenranta. The background information displayed the gender of the customers, the average age, the level of income, the city they came from, whether they had been shopping there before or if this is their first time in Grande Orchidée. After the background information there were questions related to marketing communications and customer service.

The survey results were analysed with Google Drive. The questionnaire results that were filled in online were saved directly on Google Drive Spreadsheet. Data from other forms were entered there manually. After that, the results were transferred to charts and tables in order to make the output more understandable.

## **4.3 Survey results**

The customer survey was successful in reaching 96 customers. The survey began with the background questions. Of all the respondents 65% (n = 62) were women and 35% (n = 34) were men. This percentage might be based on a presumption that women shop more than men. However, according to the author's own observations during the survey, Russian customers mostly shopped with their partners, so it was rather a coincidence that most of the re-

spondents were women.

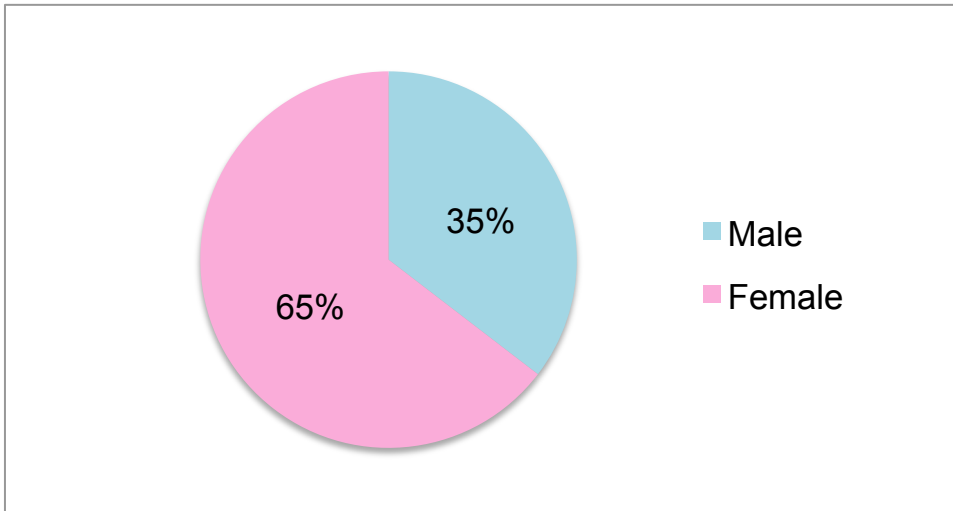


Figure 4. Gender of the customers.

According to the survey, most of Grande Orchidée's customers are in the age group of 36 – 45 years (35%). The next biggest groups are those of 46-55 years (24%) and 26-35 years (22%). Below there is a chart of the results:

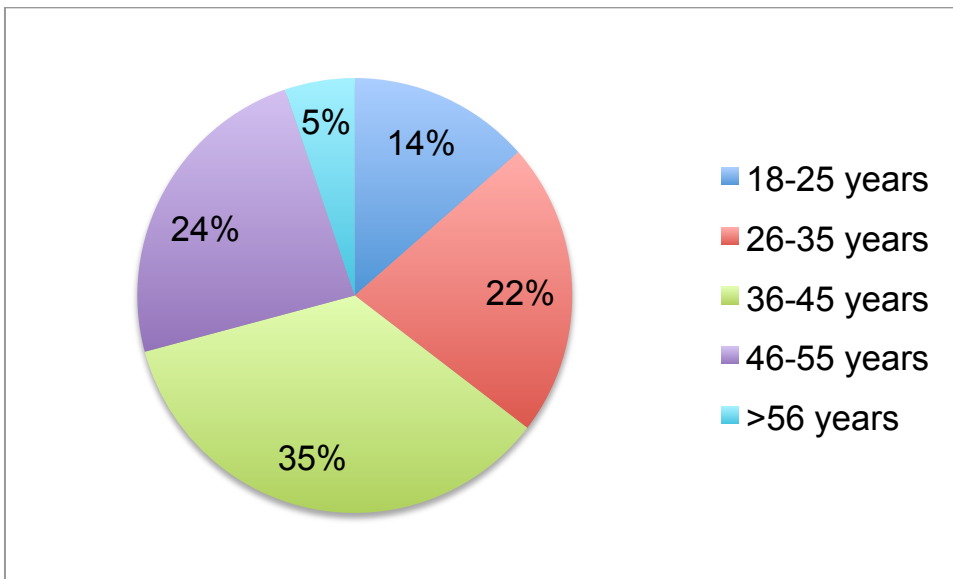


Figure 5. Customers' age distribution.

Even though the largest age group was “36-45 years”, the age distribution of the customers is more or less equal, meaning that people of different ages shop in Grande Orchidée. So in order to maintain the current tendency, the assortment of goods should always be suitable to generate interest for all ages, as different age groups have different preferences. Moreover, marketing activities should reach all target groups.

The next question inquired customers' profession, and the results are shown in Figure 6.

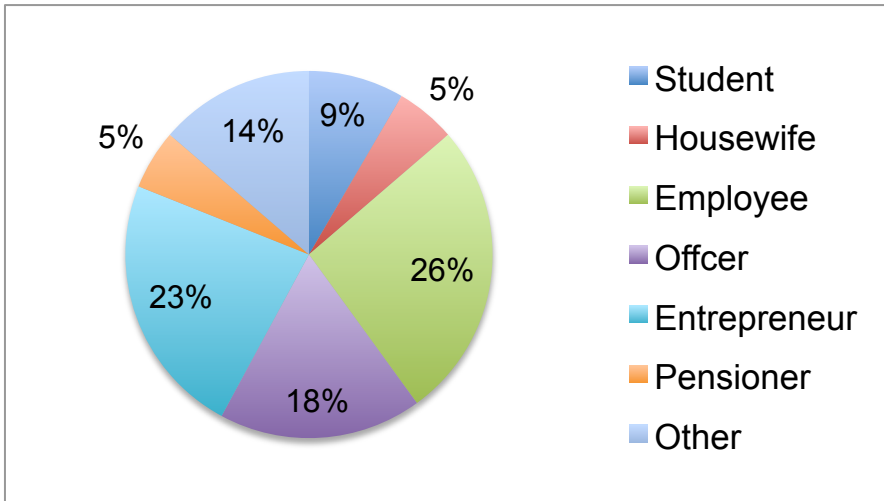


Figure 6. Profession of the customers.

The survey shows that most of the customers (26%) belong to the group «Employee». The next biggest group is «Entrepreneur» with 23%, followed by «Officer» with 18%. There was also a group «Other», where people could categorize themselves, if there was not any suitable option. Some of the titles reported by the respondents were: hairstylist, doctor, sportsman, teacher, freelancer, researcher. Hence, most of the customers are well-educated and have a stable income.

When asked about the level of gross income in a month, the results were as follows:

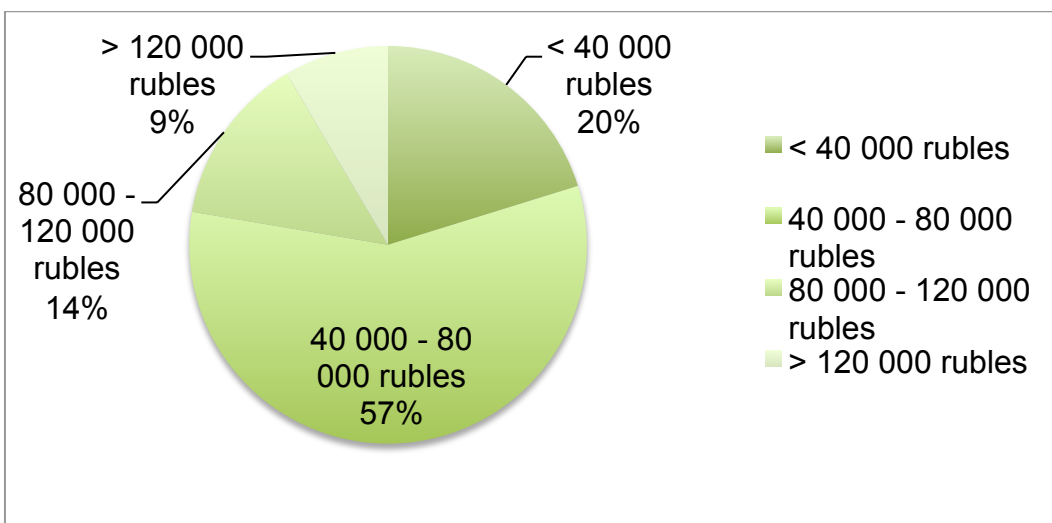


Figure 7. Level of gross income in a month.

The survey shows that most of Grande Orchidée's customers, 57%, have a gross income of 40 000 – 80 000 rubles in a month, which is equal to 800 – 1600 euros. 20% of the respondents have a gross income of less than 40 000 rubles. 14% of the customers had an income of 80 000 – 120 000 rubles, which is about 1600 – 2500 euros, while the rest 9% of the respondents had an income of more than 120 000 rubles in a month. Thus, most Grande Orchidée's customers fall in the category of middle income, meaning that the targeting should be not only on high-income people, but also on the middle class.

Figure 8 shows the home towns of the customers in Russia.

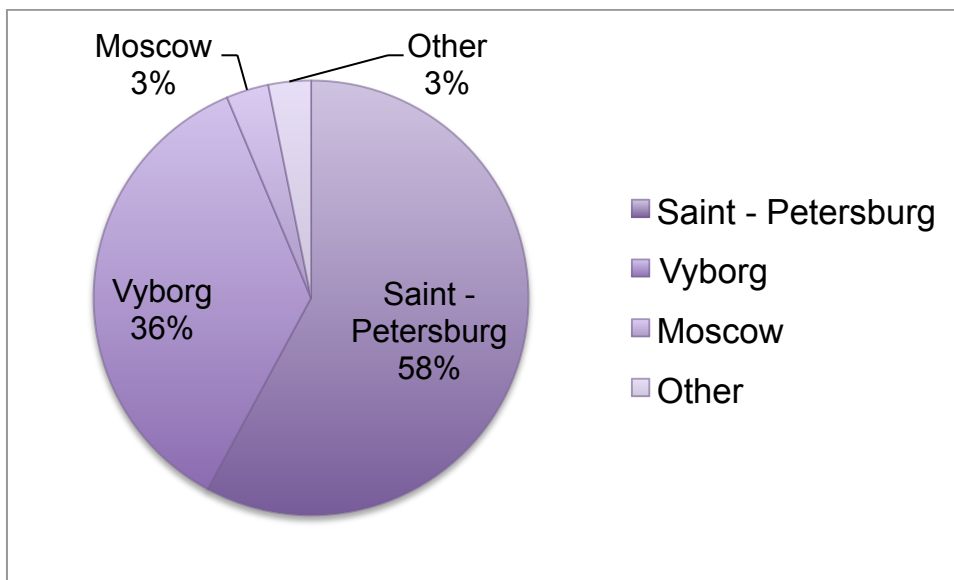


Figure 8. Home town in Russia.

The majority of Russians, 58 %, came from Saint Petersburg, 36% from Vyborg, 3% from Moscow and 3% from Svetogorsk. The fact that most of the customers are from Saint Petersburg was predictable, as most of Russian tourists coming to Finland are from Saint Petersburg. This, basically, means that most of the marketing activities should be oriented on tourists from Saint Petersburg and on the Saint Petersburg area, if considering possible implementation of any advertising in Russia.

Figure 9 indicates the respondents' frequency of travelling to Lappeenranta.

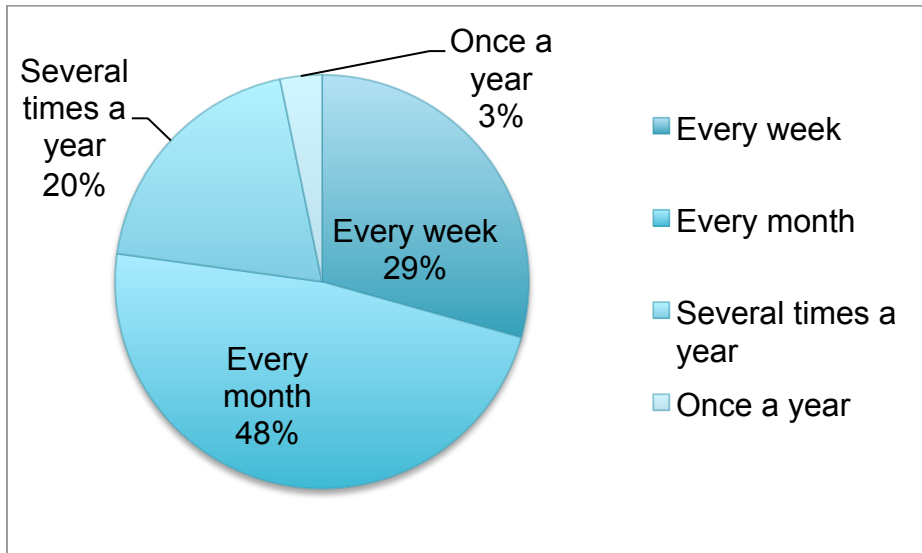


Figure 9. The frequency of visiting Lappeenranta.

The figure shows that most of the customers – 48% - travel to Lappeenranta every month, 29 % every week, 20% several times a year and only 3% come to Lappeenranta just one time per year or rarely. To conclude, about 70% of the respondents come to Lappeenranta very often. Thus it is important to remind customers of Grande Orchidée in order to stimulate their visits every time they come to Lappeenranta.

The next section of the questionnaire was directly related to Grande Orchidée. When customers were asked how many times they had been shopping in Grande Orchidée, the most common answer (45%) was “more than three times”.

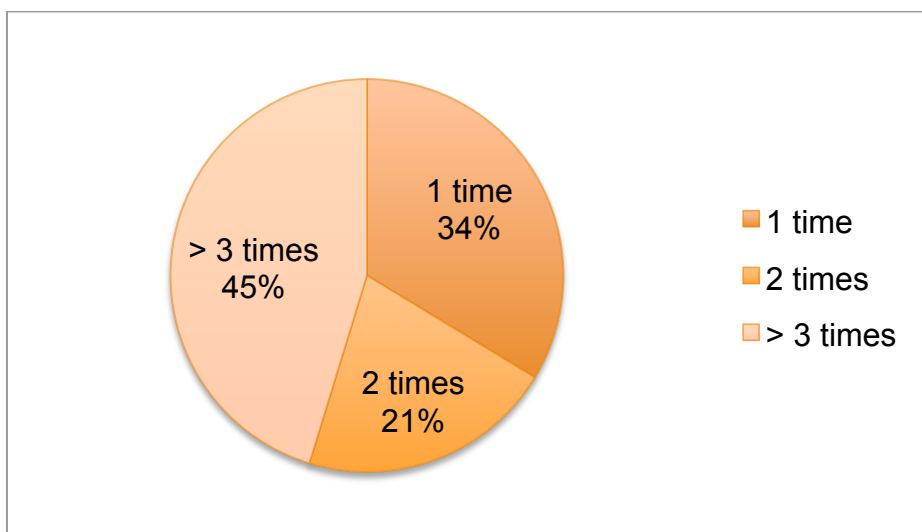


Figure 10. The frequency of shopping in Grande Orchidee.

21% said that this was their second time while for 34% it was the first time shopping in Grande Orchidée. Therefore, for most of the customers Grande Orchidée is a familiar place for shopping and they have liked it because they came back. So they can be already characterized as loyal customers.

The main purpose of Figure 11 is to illustrate how Russian tourists found out about Grande Orchidée Fashion Center in Lappeenranta, through which information channel. Customers could reply to this question by choosing several options, therefore % part of this question was impossible to make.

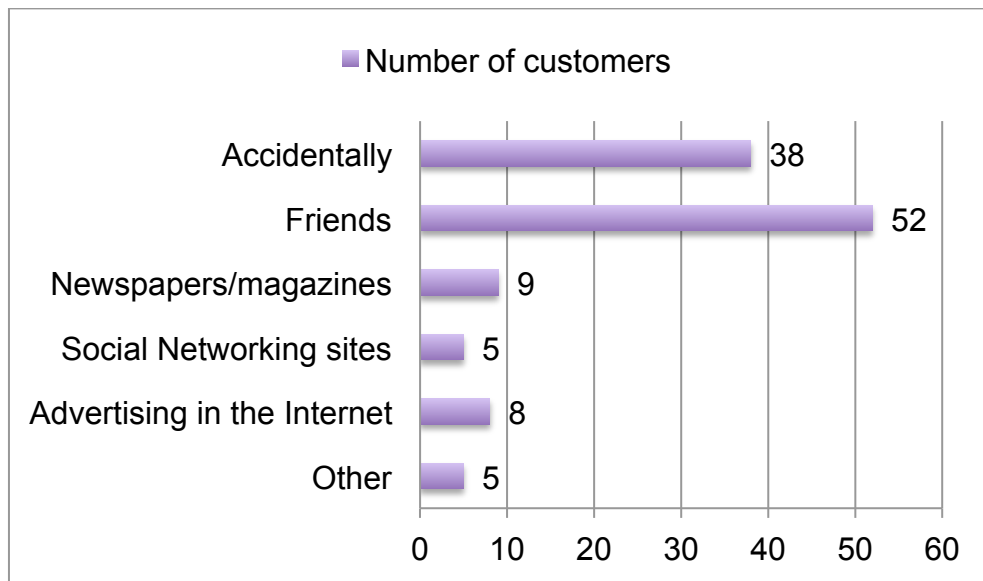


Figure 11. Information channels.

According to Figure 11, most of the customers, 52, found out about Grande Orchidée through friends. The next biggest group, 38 customers, said that they came there accidentally; most of the respondents from this group mentioned that they were driving in the Myllymäki area when they saw a beautiful new building and decided to check what there is. 9 people found out about Grande Orchidée through newspapers or magazines, 8 people in the Internet, 5 through social networks and 5 chose the option “Other”, where 2 respondents specified that they had seen the construction works last year, 2 said that their tour guide had recommended this place, and 1 person said that he got a flyer under his windscreen wiper. The gathered data is logical, because Grande Orchidée does not heavily advertise in media focused on Russian tourists at the moment. At the same time it was shown that word-of-mouth has the biggest power.

In the next question the customers were asked about criteria that are important for them in choosing Grande Orchidée for shopping:

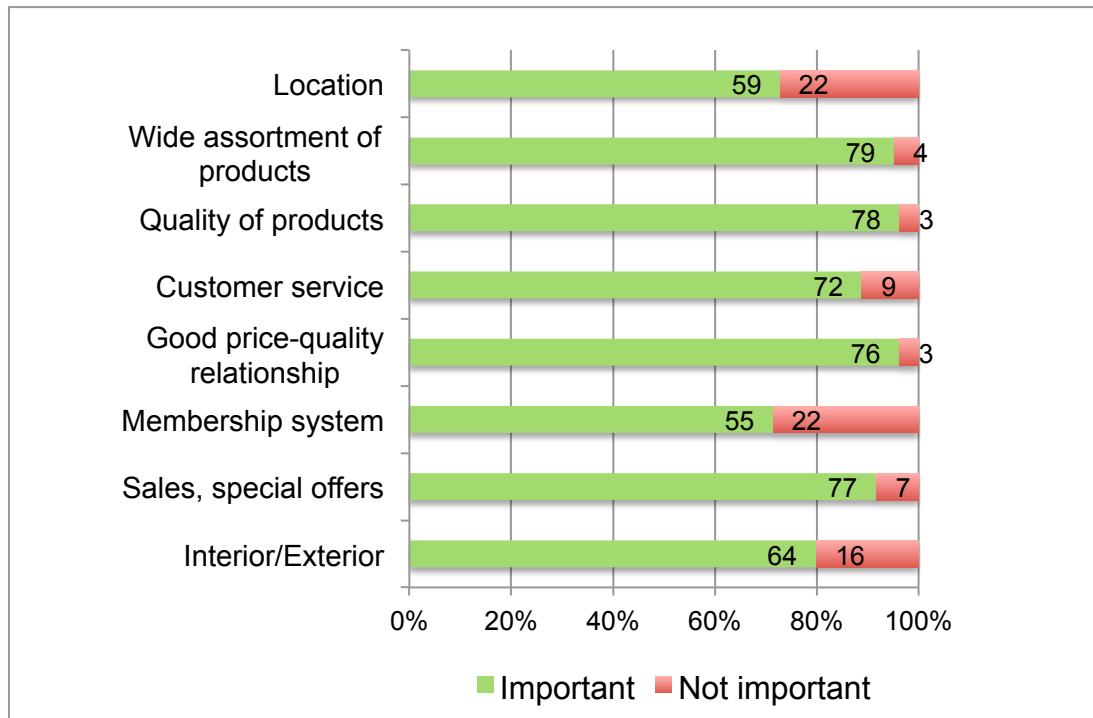


Figure 12. Factors that customers value.

According to the survey, 59 respondents said that the location is important for them. Grande Orchidee Fashion Center in Lappeenranta is situated in the Myllymäki area, where also some other companies are located, e.g. Lidl, Biltema and Gigantti. So it is convenient for customers to do the shopping at different places, as everything is in close proximity. Another factor might be Highway 6, which is located near the shopping center, so it is easy to access Grande Orchidée from there.

As for the wide assortment, 79 respondents considered it as an important factor and were happy about it. The quality of products was also an important factor for most of the respondents (78 customers). The next factor was customer service, which 72 respondents mentioned as an important factor, while 9 people regarded it as not important.

For most of the customers, 76 people, the good price-quality range was an important factor in Grande Orchidee; however, 3 customers said that the prices are too high.

When asked about the membership system, 55 customers considered it as important. However, 22 said that it is not important for them at all. Such results could be explained by the fact that Russian customers sometimes are not very keen on customer memberships, as they come to do shopping in Grande Orchidée anyway. They would definitely value this membership, but it would not considerably increase sales. However, when asked about sales and special offers at Grande Orchidée, most of the respondents (77) said that they are very important and that they encourage them to come to Grande Orchidée as some of the products are expensive.

64 respondents considered the interior of the fashion center as an important factor. They said that it is very beautiful and that shopping in Grande Orchidée is a great pleasure.

The purpose of the next question was to identify whether customers have seen any advertising about Grande Orchidée and where. The respondents could choose several options. The results are shown in Figure 13 below:

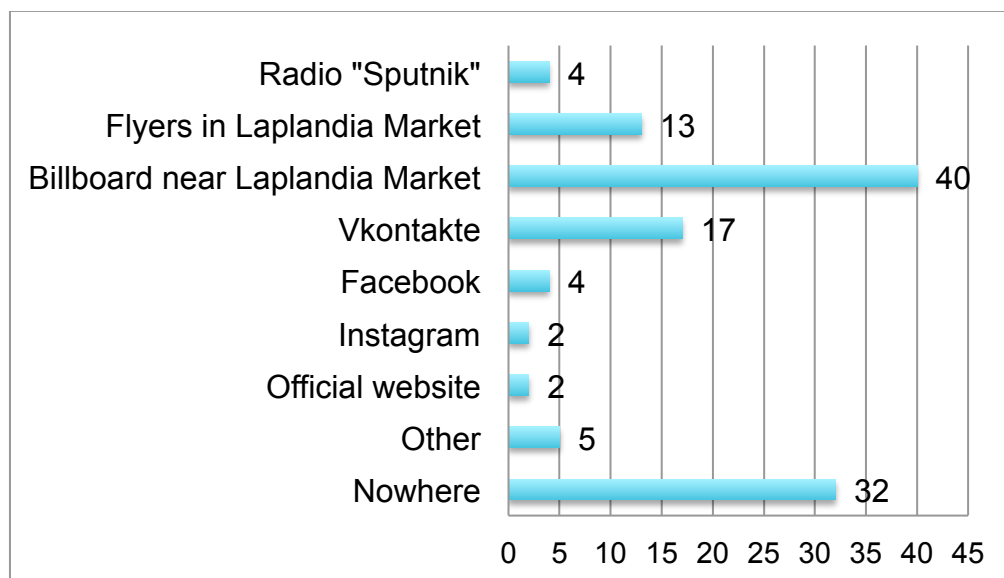


Figure 13. Where customers have seen information about Grande Orchidee.

40 people had seen an advertising billboard near Laplandia Market and 13 respondents got flyers in Laplandia Market. 23 had seen the company's pages on social network sites, 4 customers had heard advertising on radio Sputnik and only 2 had visited company's official website. The second biggest group was "Nowhere" with 32 customers who had not seen any advertising about

Grande Orchidée at all. Also, in the option “Other”, 5 of the respondents mentioned their own comments: 2 customers had seen advertising inside Laplandia Market, 2 customers had seen advertising in a magazine (but they did not remember its name), and 1 customer had seen a mark in the tourist guide.

Figure 14 clarifies how people usually find out information about shops in Finland, especially in Lappeenranta.

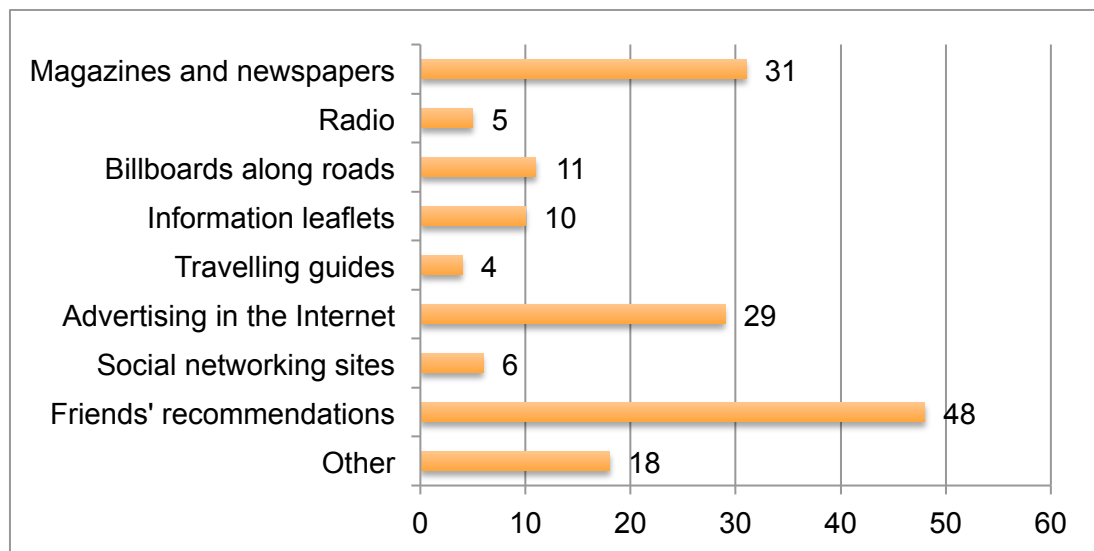


Figure 14. Information sources.

According to the survey, most people prefer social sources, such as recommendations from friends or relatives when looking for information about shops in Lappeenranta (48 respondents). Also magazines and newspapers for Russian tourists (31 respondents) and the Internet (29 respondents) were mentioned. 11 customers had found information on billboards and 10 in information leaflets. 6 people mentioned Vkontakte, 5 the radio and just 4 had used travelling guides. 18 customers chose the option “Other”, where they said that they do not search for information about shops in Lappeenranta at all, as they come here shopping regularly and know the town very well without any additional information.

In the next question customers were asked about magazines and newspapers targeted on Russian tourists that they know and read. The magazine and newspaper options were STOP in Finland, Terve, Fintourist, New horizons, Venäjän kauppatie lehti, Spektr and Shopping guide.

STOP in Finland, Terve and Fintourist are glossy magazines quite similar in format about people, places, events, and entertainments in Finland. Venäjän kauppatie lehti and Spektr are newspapers that are mostly focused on advertising, but also contain current news about Finland with illustrative material. New horizons is a magazine about Northern Europe, not just Finland. Its priority topics are: economics, politics and businesses, including practical advice for every-day life, interviews with interesting people and events in the region.

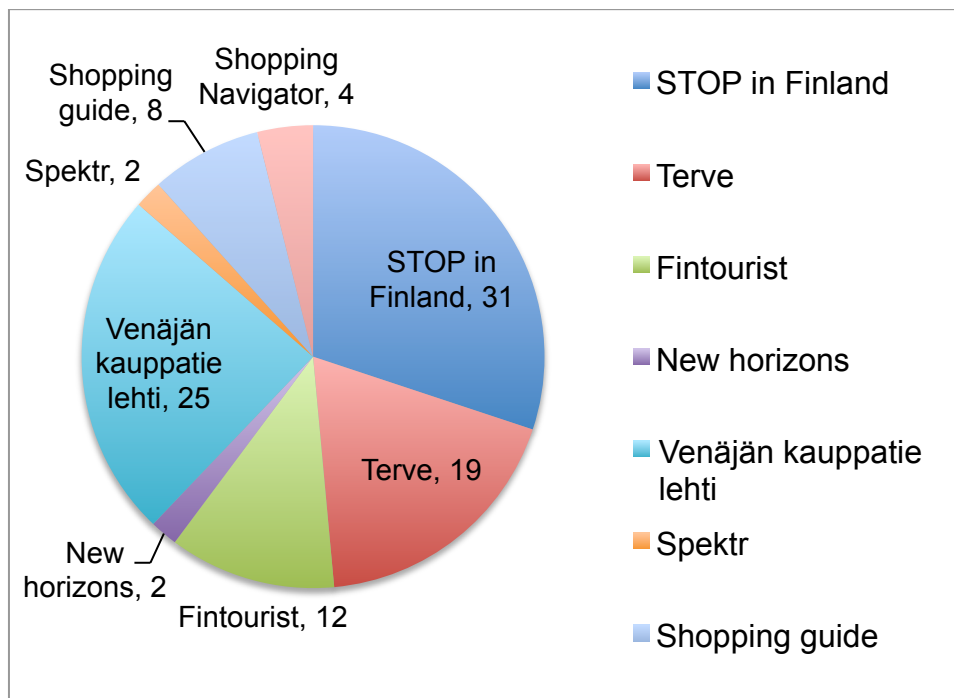


Figure 15. Magazines.

Customers could reply to this question by choosing several options, and therefore the percentages were impossible to calculate. Respondents also had the opportunity to write their own option of a magazine but nobody did so. 32 of the respondents did not answer this question at all. The most popular magazine was STOP in Finland, followed by Venäjän kauppatie lehti and Terve. So if considering advertising in magazines targeted on Russian tourists coming to Finland, STOP in Finland would be the best option.

When customers were asked whether they are satisfied or not with the assortment of brands and goods offered in Grande Orchidée, most of the customers, 89% (n = 85), said “yes”, while only 11% (n=11) said “no”. The next question was an open-ended subquestion for those who did not find any par-

ticular brand, providing the opportunity to write it. Below are some comments from the respondents:

- G-Star, Bench, Massimo Dutti, Cos
- Scotch&Soda, Marc by Marc Jacobs
- Marco Polo
- Chanel, Prada
- Tommy Hilfiger
- few Italian brands, e.g Armani
- Max Mara (although it was on company's website)
- Small choice of Guess, Calvin Klein
- Etro.

Figure 16 shows the answers to the question about whether customers are going to continue shopping in Grande Orchidée in the future or not.

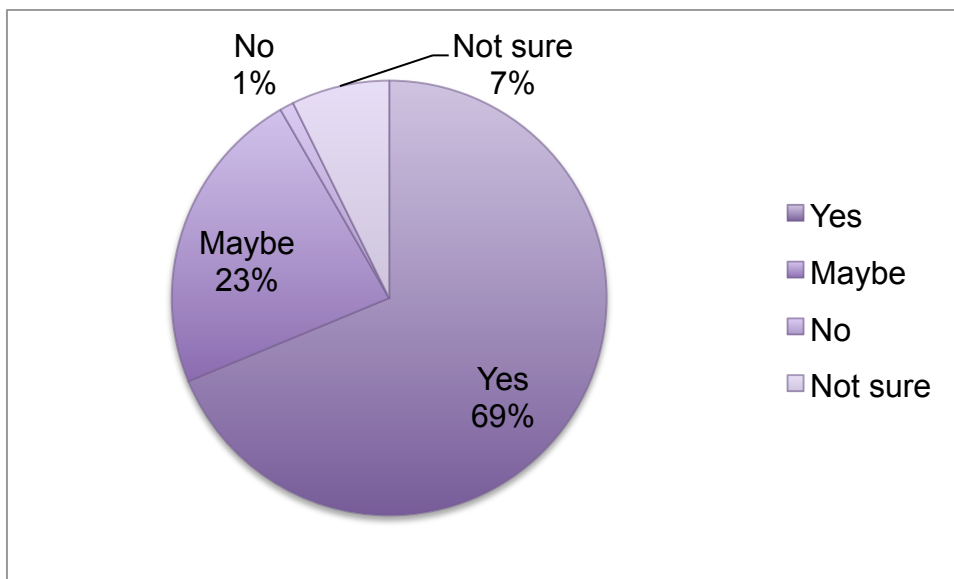


Figure 16. Are customers going to continue shopping in Grande Orhchidée.

The overall forecast is positive, as most of the customers, 69%, answered "Yes" and 23% "Maybe". Only 1 % said "No" and the rest 7% chose the option "Not sure".

In the last question customers had the chance to write some comments and suggestions regarding Grande Orchidée Fashion Center in Lappeenranta. Below some of the customers' unmodified comments are presented:

- Free wi-fi.
- More activity in social networks (Vkontakte, Facebook, Instagram).
- Extend the brand range.
- If Grande Orchidee is oriented on Russians, it makes sense to open a sushi bar here.
- It is necessary to have more sales personnel during sales.
- A small assortment of bigger sizes both for men and women.
- Too much synthetic material, it is better to have more clothes made from organic fabrics.
- Add more women's shoes in sizes 35.
- I didn't like to put the clothes back by myself in their places after fitting; I got angry and because of that didn't buy anything.
- Extend the product range in the children's department. Not all of the clothes are made from cotton. Too many synthetic fibers.
- Add more youth and casual style clothing.
- Rare clothing updates, sales personnel are not always attentive.
- Add more accessories, for example scarves, some jewellery.
- Very beautiful design of the shopping center, very beautiful toilets. I also liked bags with Grande Orchidée's logo.
- Too expensive.
- I don't have any complaints. Wish you prosperity and many customers!
- Very nice design inside the building, the service is very good, right product placement within the store.
- Maybe you could add shopping bags.
- My favourite shop!
- I would like to get information about sales by e-mail.
- Parking is very convenient.
- As for the clothing, the shopping center is interesting because of its pricing policy, as there are many other shops in Lappeenranta where I can find many interesting things. As for the shoes and bags department – it is very good.
- It is a pleasure that the sales personnel speak Russian.
- Everything is perfect! 5+!!

- Advertise more.
- Thank you very much!
- There are no road signs with directions how to get here.

Mostly, customers wrote about extending the product range, adding bigger/plus sizes, adding more clothing for the younger audience, and discounts. In overall, most of the respondents did not have any special comments; they just said that they were satisfied with everything.

#### **4.4 Recommendations based on the the results**

Since the company does not have any specific communication tool targeting Russian customers, there is still a large number of potential customers who do not know about Grande Orchidée and need some kind of information and stimulation. Therefore, awareness about the company should be increased.

The importance of Russian customers is significant, and thus it is suggested to consider different kinds of marketing campaigns targeting Russian tourists that would increase awareness about the company.

##### *Internet*

Since nowadays the Internet has a big impact on people's lives and quite a high number of the respondents mentioned that they usually use the Internet as a source of information, especially Yandex and Google searching platforms, it makes sense to consider contextual online advertising. It is one of the most inexpensive but effective tools for attracting potential customers. Contextual advertising is based on the principle of correspondence of the ad to the content of the web page where this advertisement is placed. This could be easily done with the help of Yandex Direct and Google Adwords. By choosing key words and topics relevant to Grande Orchidée in Yandex and Google, those programmes would match the ad to relevant sites by using contextual targeting. The main principals of working are:

- ads are shown only to those who are interested in
- prices are flexible – you can identify your own
- placement of ads is based on price and efficiency

- popular searching portals and thematic websites are used for ad placement.

### *Billboard*

Marketing activities can be situated on the Russian-Finnish border, since every Russian tourist who comes to Finland crosses it. One of the options could be a billboard located, for example, on the Saimaa Canal. An innovative and beautiful billboard design can be very hard to miss and it would attract peoples' attention. It can help to create long-lasting recall and brand recognition.

### *Flyers*

Another option how to spread the word about Grande Orchidée for those who have not been there yet, is flyer distribution. Since nowadays the market is full of printed advertising and people get it almost everywhere, advertising should be implemented in a creative way in order to catch attention and avoid being a «paper waste». For example, a flyer could be printed in the form of Grande Orchidée's logo – Orchid flower. The quality of paper should also be carefully selected, as it should create a favorable image of the company and its products and also because such a printed media has a longer life. Flyers should be distributed in places with high people flow, e.g. the border, or there can also be special stands for leaflets and magazines in duty free shops, or shopping centers such as Galleria, Iso Kristina, and Prisma.

### *Entertainment and education*

Mini-fashion shows could be held a couple of times a year at the beginning of a season to display new collections and show the latest trends. Such shows will create publicity and attract customers.

Another suggestion is to organize master classes, workshops or any other kind of training connected with fashion or make-up in the premises of Grande Orchidée. Education helps the shopper to understand what the product is, how to use it, and how it helps them to solve a problem. Education events provide value for the customer. For example, the opportunity to learn to dress for your figure type or makeup tips for your eye colour, hair colour and face shape

have a high value for the right shopper. These kind of events can bring in new clients, and keep shoppers coming back.

### *Improving social media presence*

As for the social networking presence, even though there is a relatively high number of followers (2926 people) on the Vkontakte group page and the information is regularly updated, the level of activity is very low: people do not share any information, there are no discussions and just a few “likes” if any. The Instagram account has very few followers at the moment (188 people) and it is not updated regularly. The social network VKontakte is one of the most powerful tools to attract customers and keep the existing ones. If utilized effectively, it can contribute positively to the business. Thus, the attractiveness of the pages in social networks should be improved. Below there are recommendations that would help to increase the credibility and attractiveness of Grand Orchidée’s social pages.

1) The content of the Vkontakte page should be diversified. It is not enough just to upload photos of existing products and information about sales. Below there are some ideas that can create interest in group and products:

- tips and tricks related to the products, for example tips related to the clothes care
- interesting facts, for example exciting facts about the history of fashion
- instructions for use, for example creating completed looks from clothes and accessories or treating ladies with make-up master classes
- inspiring phrases and thoughts
- quotes of famous people related to the products
- polls.

2) Moreover, in order to attract more people to the Vkontakte group and increase activity and interest among existing followers, it is recommended to conduct competitions from time to time. Such competitions should be interesting and offer meaningful rewards. One example could be a photo contest. Followers could be asked to submit a photo on a chosen theme under a unique hashtag (for example, #GrandeOrchidéeFriends) and upload pictures connected with shopping in Grande Orchidée: in the premises, after a purchase

with shopping bags, etc. The winner will be the one with the highest number of “likes” under the photo. The main advantage of such a contents is that it works like word of mouth. At minimal cost, it is possible to achieve a great coverage of the target audience.

3) Another option is promoting Grande Orchidée’s group through other popular communities and groups connected with shopping in Finland, especially the Lappeenranta region. Based on the content, number of followers and activity in the groups, some of the suitable options could be:

- ФИНЛЯНДИЯ НА ВЫХОДНЫЕ (FINLAND FOR THE WEEKEND)
- Финляндия|Регион Лаппеенранта и Иматра|GoSaimaa  
(Finland|Lappeenranta and Imatra region|GoSaimaa)
- Электронная Финляндия (Electronic Finland)

Cooperation with those groups is possible, but the acceptability of the conditions can only be discovered by contacting them personally.

#### *Direct marketing*

There is also a possibility for direct email marketing. The company could modify the procedure of issuing customer loyalty cards, and ask, in addition to personal details, also the customer’s email address and permission to send advertising. Email marketing enables to proactively communicate with existing customers to increase customer loyalty and retention. These communications can include newsletters, preferred customer promotions, sale notifications, new service announcements, event invitations, and greetings.

#### *Magazines*

As follows from the survey results, advertising in STOP in Finland might be useful when considering the options for magazines or publications oriented on Russian customers. Most of the respondents said that they like this magazine and always take it at distribution places.

## 5 Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to identify the most efficient marketing communications of Grande Orchidée Fashion Center in the Russian market. The first part of the thesis comprised a theoretical review, which described the different marketing communication tools that could possibly be utilized by the case company. The second part consisted of the actual customer survey that was conducted.

As a result of the work, the case company received valuable comments from customers about the products and service. It also became clear through which communication channels people usually prefer to get advertising. Thus practical suggestions for further actions were developed based on the results. Several channels that can improve the marketing communications of the case company were suggested, particularly taking into consideration the availability of resources. The marketing communications that Grande Orchidée could possibly use in the future include contextual online advertising, direct email marketing, advertising billboards, flyer distribution, entertainment and education programmes, and magazines.

Due to a limited time, there were 96 customers participating in the research. As a further recommendation, it is suggested to conduct a more comprehensive survey with a larger number of participants. Another recommendation is to conduct a similar research focusing on the other large target group (Finnish customers), and, based on the results, identify efficient marketing communications in the Finnish market.

The thesis was an important learning process for the author as it significantly developed the knowledge of marketing communication tools in theory and in practise. The customer survey part of the thesis succeeded very well. There were enough active customers eager to participate in the survey, which made it easy to accomplish the study. The author received valuable experience and can consider participation in similar projects in the future.

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## Appendix 1 (1)

Questionnaire form in English

# Grande Orchidee Customer Survey

### Gender

- Male
- Female

### Age group

- 18-25 years
- 26-35 years
- 36-45 years
- 46-55 years
- >56 years

### Professional field

- Student
- Housewife
- Employee
- Officer
- Entrepreneur
- Unemployed
- Pensioner
- Other

### Level of gross income in a month

- < 800 EUR
- 800 - 1600 EUR
- 1600 - 2500 EUR
- > 2500 EUR

### Hometown in Russia

- Moscow
- Saint-Petersburg

## Appendix 1 (2)

- Vyborg
- Other

### How often do you come to Finland?

- Every week
- Every month
- Several times a year
- Once a year

### How many times have you been shopping in Grande Orchidee?

- 1 time
- 2 times
- > 3 times

### How did you get to know about Grande Orchidee?

- Internet
- Social networks
- Official webpage
- Magazines/newspapers
- Friends
- Accidentally
- Other

### What factors are important for you in choosing Grande Orchidee for shopping?

	Important	Not important
Location	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
High assortment of products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Customer Service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Good price-quality relationship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Membership system	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sales, special offers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Appendix 1 (3)

	Important	Not important
Interior/Exterior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Where have you seen information/advertising about Grande Orchidee?

- Official webpage
- Vkontakte
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Radio "Sputnik"
- Billboard (near Laplandia Market)
- Flyers (in Laplandia Market)
- Other

### How do you usually find information about shops in Finland?

- Magazines/ Newspapers for Russian tourists
- Radio
- Billboards along highways
- Leaflets/flyers
- Tourists guides
- Internet
- Advertising via email
- Social networks
- Companies' official webpages
- From friends
- Other

### Which of the following magazines/newspapers do you know and read?

- STOP in Finland
- Terve
- Fintourist
- Vena "ja" n kauppatie lehti
- Shopping guide
- Spekts
- New horizons

## Appendix 1 (4)

Shopping Navigator

Other

Are you satisfied with the assortment of brands and products?

Yes

No

If no, what brand or product you didn't find?

Will you continue shopping in Grande Orchidee?

Yes

Maybe

No

Not sure

Your comments and suggestions

## Appendix 2 (1)

Questionnaire form in Russian

# Опрос клиентов Grande Orchidee Fashion Center в Лаппеенранте

Данная анкета будет частью дипломной работы Екатерины Евтихевич из Санкт-Петербургского Университета Прикладных Наук с целью изучения и улучшения маркетинговой политики Grande Orchidee.  
Данные опроса являются полностью анонимными и будут использованы только для статистики в совокупности.  
Заранее спасибо за ваши ответы и большое спасибо за участие!)

### Ваш пол

- Муж  
 Жен

### Возрастная группа

- 18-25 лет  
 26-35 лет  
 36-45 лет  
 46-55 лет  
 >56 лет

### Сфера вашей профессиональной деятельности

- Студент  
 Домохозяйка  
 Рабочий  
 Служащий  
 Предприниматель  
 Безработный  
 Пенсионер  
 Другое:

### Уровень ежемесячного дохода

- менее 40.000 руб  
 40.000 - 80.000 руб  
 80.000 - 120.000 руб  
 более 120.000 руб

### В каком городе вы проживаете?

- Москва  
 Санкт-Петербург  
 Выборг  
 Другое:

### Как часто вы ездите в Финляндию?

- Каждую неделю  
 Каждый месяц  
 Несколько раз в год  
 Раз в год

## Appendix 2 (2)

- Еду в любой свободный выходной день

Сколько раз вы посещали Grande Orchidee?

- 1 раз  
 2 раза  
 >3 раз

Как вы узнали о Grande Orchidee?

- Реклама в интернете  
 Социальные сети  
 Официальный веб сайт  
 Газеты/журналы  
 Друзья/знакомые  
 Случайно  
 Другое:

Какие факторы заставляют вас выбрать Grande Orchidee среди других торговых центров?

(Отметьте один вариант ответа в каждом ряду)

	Не важно	Важно
Расположение	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Высокий ассортимент товаров	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Качество продукции	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Обслуживание	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Соотношение цены и качества	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Дисконтные карты, бонусы	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Скидки, специальные предложения	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Оформление, дизайн торгового центра	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Где вы видели информацию/рекламу о Grande Orchidee?

- Официальный веб сайт  
 Вконтакте  
 Facebook  
 Instagram  
 Радио "Спутник"  
 Газета Etelä-Saimaa  
 Рекламный щит (около Laplandia Market)  
 Флаеры/листовки (раздаваемые в Laplandia Market)  
 Другое:

Как вы обычно находите информацию о магазинах в Финляндии?

- Информационно справочные газеты/журналы о Финляндии для русских туристов  
 Радио  
 Рекламные щиты вдоль дорог  
 Информационные листовки

## Appendix 2 (3)

- Туристические путеводители
- Реклама в интернете
- Реклама присылаемая на электронную почту
- Социальные сети (Вконтакте, Facebook)
- Официальные веб сайты компаний
- Рекомендации друзей/знакомых
- Другое:

Какие из представленных ниже информационно справочных газет и журналов вы знаете и читаете?

- STOP in Finland
- Terve
- Финтурист
- Финляндский торговый путь
- Shopping Guide
- Спектр
- Новые рубежи
- Рекламный буклет Shopping Navigator
- Другое:

Довольны ли вы выбором брендов/товаров в Grande Orchidee?

- Да
- Нет

Если нет, то какого бренда/товара вы не нашли?

Продолжите ли вы и дальше делать покупки в Grande Orchidee в будущем?

- Да
- Возможно
- Нет
- Не уверен

Ваши замечания, пожелания и предложения