



IMPROVING MALE CUSTOMER LOYALTY FOR PARTURI-KAMPAAMO HIUSVINKKI

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Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena on ollut etsiä keinoja miesasiakkaiden asiakasuskollisuuden parantamiseen Parturi-kampaamo Hiusvinkissä. Työn toimeksiantajana oli Parturi-kampaamo Hiusvinkki, ja idea työhön kumpusi yrityksen tarpeesta parantaa asiakasuskollisuutta tässä asiakasryhmässä. Samalla haluttiin selvittää yrityksen asiakastytyvääisyyttä ja syitä, miksi asiakkaat valitsevat Hiusvinkin. Tavoitteena oli löytää yritykselle konkreettisia keinoja, joilla se voisi parantaa asiakastytyvääisyyttä ja asiakasuskollisuutta. Parturi-kampaamo Hiusvinkki on Tampereella toimiva parturikampaamo, joka tarjoaa parturi-, kampaamo-, kosmetologi- ja muita hyvinvointipalveluita.

Opinnäytetyön teoreettinen kehys koostuu pääasiassa parturikampaamoalan erityispiirteistä sekä asiakastytyvääisyyteen ja asiakasuskollisuuteen liittyvistä teorioista. Asiakastytyvääisyys on tärkeää asiakasuskollisuuden kannalta, sillä suurempi asiakastytyvääisyys johtaa yleensä suurempaan asiakasuskollisuuteen.

Opinnäytetyön tutkimusosio toteutettiin kahtena kyselytutkimuksena, joihin pyydettiin vastauksia Parturi Kampaamo Hiusvinkin miesasiakkailta. Kyselytutkimukset toteutettiin vuosina 2017 ja 2023, ja tuloksia myös verrattiin keskenään. Tuloksia analysoitiin sekä kvalitatiivisesti että kvantitatiivisesti.

Kyselytutkimuksen tulokset viittasivat siihen, että Parturi-Kampaamo Hiusvinkin miesasiakkaat ovat varsin tyytyväisiä yrityksen palveluihin. Suurin osa vastanneista kertoi myös käyttävänsä yrityksen palveluita säännöllisesti, ja heitä voidaan siten pitää uskollisina asiakkaina. Vastauksissa annettiin positiivista palautetta erityisesti Hiusvinkin hyvästä asiakaspalvelusta ja osaavista työntekijöistä.

Kyselyyn vastanneet eivät antaneet kielteistä tai korjaavaa palautetta yritykselle juuri lainkaan. Vastauksista saatiin kuitenkin arvokasta tietoa siitä, miksi asiakkaat valitsevat Hiusvinkin ja mitä yritys tekee toiminnassaan oikein. Tutkimustulosten sekä kilpailijanalyysin avulla yritykselle pystyttiin myös antamaan konkreettisia suosituksia, miten sen voi pyrkiä lisäämään miesasiakkaiden asiakasuskollisuutta ja houkuttelemaan uusia asiakkaita tästä ryhmästä.

The aim of this thesis has been to find means for hairdresser salon Parturi-kampaamo Hiusvinkki to improve customer loyalty among male customers. The commissioning company is Parturi-kampaamo Hiusvinkki, which had a need to improve customer loyalty in this customer segment. At the same time, the company wanted to gain more understanding of its customer satisfaction and why customers choose Hiusvinkki. The objective was to find concrete means for the company to improve its customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Parturi-kampaamo is a hairdresser salon located in Tampere and that offers barber, hairdresser, cosmetologist and other wellbeing services.

The theoretical framework of the thesis consisted mostly of the special characteristics of the hairdressing industry as well as theories related to customer loyalty and customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is important from the point of view of customer loyalty, as greater customer satisfaction usually leads to greater customer loyalty.

The practical research for the thesis was conducted as two customer satisfaction surveys for the male customers of Hiusvinkki. The surveys were done in 2017 and 2023 and the results were also compared to each other. The results were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

The results of the surveys suggested that male customers of Hiusvinkki are quite satisfied with the company's services. Most of the respondents also said that they use the services regularly, and they can be seen as loyal customers. The respondents gave positive feedback especially about Hiusvinkki's good customer service and skilled workforce.

Very little negative feedback was given. However, the results gave valuable information as to why customers choose Hiusvinkki and what the company is doing right. Based on the results and competitor analysis, concrete recommendations on how to increase male customer loyalty and attract new male customers could be given to the company.

Keywords Customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, hairdressing salon

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Contents

1	Introduction	1
	1.1. Research Objectives	1
	1.2. Structure of the Thesis	2
	1.3. Commissioning Company	3
	1.4. Research Methodology	3
	1.5. Research Background.....	4
	1.6. Research Question	5
2.	Theoretical Framework	5
	2.1. Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty.....	5
	2.2. Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty in Hairdresser Salons	9
2	Methodology	12
	3.1. Current situation.....	13
	3.2. Research Method and Data Collection	13
3	Results (Analysis)	14
	4.1. Results of the surveys.....	14
	4.2. Competitor analysis.....	19
5.	Recommendations	26
6	Conclusion	29
	References	32

1 Introduction

The first section of the thesis is an introductory chapter, where the background for the chosen thesis subject, the research questions and the research methods chosen to answer to those research questions are described. Basic facts about the commissioning company hairdresser salon Parturi-kampaamo Hiusvinkki are also presented in this chapter, as well as some basic characteristics of the hairdressing industry.

1.1. Research Objectives

The main purpose of the thesis is to find means for Parturi-kampaamo Hiusvinkki to improve its male customer loyalty. Ideally, as a result, the first-time customers and the "perhaps once in-a-year" -customers would become loyal for Parturi-kampaamo Hiusvinkki in larger numbers than they currently are. This would essentially happen by improving customer satisfaction, as is stated in the thesis. The idea for this topic came directly from the company, which has a need to increase its customer loyalty particularly among males as well as attract new male customers.

Therefore, the intention of this thesis is to find different ways for Parturi-kampaamo Hiusvinkki to improve customer satisfaction and as a result of that to improve the customer loyalty among males as well. Even though the main research question and the title of the thesis are related to customer loyalty, the topic is closely related to customer satisfaction as comes clear in the theoretical part of the thesis. In addition, means how the company could attract more males as customers are also studied in the thesis.

For the purpose of this thesis and to reach the above mentioned objectives, the target group of the research has been narrowed only to include male customers. The target group includes all age groups and all barber-services used, but not any of the other mentioned services available in Hiusvinkki. Female customers were excluded from the research target group, as the objective is to study male customers. This would also have been made the target group too generic.

The main reason for choosing males as a target group is that the business wants to attract more male customers than they currently have. In addition, the research topic is of wider interest because males are generally less researched in the field of beauty care and hairdressing. Quite often the focus is on women who traditionally use this kind of services

more often. However, males are also a considerable customer group for barbers and salons and thus well worth researching. Obviously, they have a large potential to increase sales and widen the customer base in businesses like Hiusvinkki.

1.2. Structure of the Thesis

In terms of the structure, this thesis consists of six different parts. The first part is introduction which goes through the background information of the company and other basic knowledge related to the thesis. The second part consists of the relevant theoretical background. It discusses existing knowledge and research particularly related to customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and improving them. All of these topics are closely related to the aim and purpose of this thesis and they constitute the most relevant theoretical background of this thesis.

The third part of the thesis consists of the research data that has been gathered for the purpose of this thesis and is used as the empirical evidence in the thesis. In addition, the research methodology used for the purpose of this thesis is presented in that chapter. The data for the research was gathered by using customer satisfaction surveys. The details and results of those surveys which is the empirical evidence also belongs to the third part. This is the research objective two.

The fourth section of the thesis consists of a careful analysis of the data gathered using the above-mentioned research methods, the surveys. The results and the customer's responses to each survey question are discussed in detail, and conclusions are drawn from the responses. In addition, this section includes a competitor analysis focusing on Hiusvinkki's main competitors. Based on those findings, Hiusvinkki's strengths and weaknesses are determined and discussed.

The fifth part of the thesis consists of the recommendations that can be given to the commissioning company Parturi-kampaamo Hiusvinkki based on the results of this research and gathered evidence. It also further analyzes the strengths, weaknesses and challenges that were learned during the research process. Giving concrete recommendations to the commissioning company was one of the main objectives of the thesis, and those recommendations are given in that section. Lastly, the sixth and final part of the thesis is the conclusion section, which briefly summarizes most essential parts of all the sections of the thesis as well as concludes the most important findings made based on the research.

1.3. Commissioning Company

This thesis project has been conducted for Parturi-kampaamo Hiusvinkki. Hiusvinkki is a barbershop/hairdresser salon, but its services also include massages, cosmetology, nails and selling beauty hair products as well as personal training services. It is located in Tampere, in Lielähti, which is an area about 7 kilometers west of the Tampere city center. The barbershop currently has its premises in shopping mall Like, which is a relatively small shopping center, with about 20 businesses, such as restaurants and clothing stores. There is also one other barber shop, M Room, in that same shopping center. (Kauppakeskus Like, n.d.; Hiusvinkki n.d.)

Hiusvinkki was originally founded in 1992. It is a small business with two entrepreneurs and approximately seven professionals who are renting the space to give their own beauty services. There are currently two barbers, two barber-hairdressers, one hairdresser/nail technician, one cosmetologist/nail technician and two massage therapists. During its history the company has relocated two times, but it has always stayed in the Lielähti area. Because of this, there is a group of local, loyal customers based in this area that has formed over the years. (Hiusvinkki, n.d.; Sirkkola, 2023.)

Due to the fact that the amount of competition has grown tougher in the area over years, customer loyalty has become a key factor and is needed for the company's success going forward. The reason for writing this thesis is mainly to attract more male customers to the business and also increase their loyalty. The topic is of wider interest because these facts apply to several fields of businesses. It is well known that customer satisfaction and loyalty are key to every company's success that serves customers. (Sirkkola, 2023.)

Hiusvinkki wanted this thesis to be written for them, as they want to attract more male customers to their business. They also want to increase the male customer loyalty and better understand the reasons why males choose a certain hairdresser salon. The business-owner is interested in finding out which factors contribute to customer loyalty and customer satisfaction particularly among males, which are an important target group for the business. (Sirkkola, 2023.)

1.4. Research Methodology

The method used in this thesis is a qualitative type of research, done through two customer

surveys conducted with the hairdresser salon's male customers. There have been two different surveys, one survey conducted already in 4/2017 and another in the summer 2023. As some time had passed after the first survey, it was decided to be repeated to ensure that the research data is up to date and of sufficiently high quality. The results from these two surveys were also compared with each other. The surveys were conducted on all male customers of Hiusvinkki that visited Hiusvinkki at the time and were willing to answer. The sample size was altogether 43 respondents. The responses were anonymous and therefore it could not be determined if there had been same persons answering to both surveys.

The result method used in the empirical part is for the most part qualitative, as the research data is mostly in the form of words. However, some quantitative analysis has also been made, as the numbers and percentages of responses are counted and discussed. Also, the changes in these figures between the two years are discussed.

1.5. Research Background

The research background of the thesis consists mostly of theories related to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. They both are important from the point of view of the research topic of the thesis, how to attract more male customers to Hiusvinkki and increase customer loyalty. This part of the thesis concentrates mainly on definitions and current theories of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty and how they relate to each other, and what these concepts mean particularly for hairdressing business.

Hairdressing services have been traditionally seen as services used mainly by females. However, currently males have become more and more important group consuming hairdresser and barber services. Based on data gathered by market insight company Statista in 2023, the global male grooming market is expected to be worth \$115 billion by 2028. In 2022 this figure was \$80 billion. Nowadays, men are more interested in their hair and appearances in general than they used to be. Today even more males are interested also in things such as skin care and even make-up, which have traditionally been seen as interests of women. This may be due to marketing and also some metrosexual idols, such as football star David Beckham. In addition, the rise of social media, such as Instagram and TikTok also play a role, as appearance is heavily emphasized in those channels. (Van den Boreke, 2023.)

This development emphasizes the fact that males are an increasingly important target group for businesses in the beauty industry, such as hairdresser salons, and they cannot be

ignored as consumers of those services. Especially for many younger males it is not enough anymore to have their hair cut the same way a few times year, but hair and looks are something that they are willing to invest money and time in. Thus, researching male customer loyalty and finding ways to attract male customers is important also for the commissioning company and its profitability.

1.6. Research Question

The main research question chosen for this thesis is: How to improve male customer loyalty in a hairdresser salon? Other important sub-questions are: How to attract more male customers for Parturi-kampaamo Hiusvinkki? What affects the choice of a hairdresser salon among males and What makes certain customers choose the same hairdresser salon over and over again and become permanent customers? The hairdresser salon used as the research beneficiary in this thesis is Parturi-kampaamo Hiusvinkki located in Tampere, Finland.

2. Theoretical Framework

This section consists of theoretical framework and existing research on the thesis subjects used as the basis for this thesis. At first, the definitions and general theories on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are discussed. After that, a closer look to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty particularly at hairdresser salons is taken.

2.1. Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

Customer satisfaction is a term that may have different meanings to different people. It is also one of the most popular phrases in business. In previous studies, it has been defined in many different ways. For example, it can be defined simply as a measure of how the organisation's "total product" performs in relation to a set of customer requirements. Expectation is also an essential part of the satisfaction process. The satisfaction does not depend only on the actual quality of a product or a service, but also on the expectations that the customer has on the product. (Hill et al., 2003, p. 7; Güngör, 2007, p. 13.)

In essence, customer satisfaction reflects the evaluated service performance, customer's comparison between the results and the expectations and the actual experience. In addition, customer satisfaction can be defined as the main criteria for defining the quality received by

the customers through products or services. In short, customer satisfaction is present when the services or products are better than the customer expected. Naturally, if the customer is not happy with the services or the products, customer dissatisfaction has occurred. Thus, it can be said that customer satisfaction means evaluation of the quality of products or services that complies with what the customer wants. (Hartini & Ahmad, 2014, p. 17.)

A difference can be made between transaction-specific and cumulative customer satisfaction. The transaction-specific approach refers to customer satisfaction as the customer's emotional response to the most recent single experience with an organisation. It means his or her experience with a particular product transaction, episode or service encounter. However, this approach might be problematic, as sometimes one good experience may be neutralized by other worse experiences. (Hartini & Ahmad, 2014, p. 18.)

In contrast, the cumulative perspective on customer satisfaction emphasizes customer satisfaction not as a one-point-in-time experience but as a cumulative evaluation of a particular product or service. This emphasizes customer satisfaction as a linear combination of satisfaction experiences that are associated with specific products or services of a company or other organization. To put it short, cumulative satisfaction means the consumer's overall evaluation of a service or product over a longer time period. (Hartini & Ahmad, 2014, p. 18.)

In addition, it should be noted that transaction-specific and cumulative customer satisfaction are two different things. They can even be contrary to each other when reviewing a single customer's experience. For example, a customer can be very satisfied with his or her latest visit to a particular restaurant (transaction-specific approach). However, at the same time the customer's cumulative customer satisfaction related to that restaurant may be much lower, if he or she has had previously had several worse experiences with the same restaurant. (Hartini & Ahmad, 2014, p. 18.)

What influences one's opinions about a service? It seems certain that improved service quality increases customer satisfaction. Emotional and rational factors are both important. For example Güngör (2007) has listed six elements that contribute to customer satisfaction. According to him, the elements contributing to customer satisfaction are price (money or cost the product or service is used), product, convenience (accessibility and ease of being a customer), service quality (reliable, accurate and timely services), service treatment (the way the firm treats customers) and positive emotions (towards the firm, "brand attitudes").

All these factors contribute to customer satisfaction. In addition, the experiences that are heard from advocates can make a difference on customer satisfaction. Many people tend to make comparisons between the places they go about their service, as well. Customer satisfaction is a customer's view of a product or service from company or organization depending on the experiences with that company or organization. Also, it happens in comparison with other companies or organizations. In measuring customer satisfaction all these details have to be taken into account. (Güngör, 2007, p. 15, p. 48.)

Customer satisfaction is closely linked to customer loyalty. Customer loyalty is a term widely used within the field of consumer behaviour for several years. It has been widely studied in both academic field and business world. It is a term that is easy to use in everyday conversations, but defining it might not be as simple. It has been defined for example as deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-use a preferred product or service in the future, despite situational factors. (Donio et al, 2006, p. 445; Güngör, 2007, p. 14; Olayiwola, 2012, p. 20.)

Customer loyalty is considered to be essential for successful businesses. This is largely due to the fact that attracting new customers is much more expensive than retaining the existing customers. This indicates that a high customer loyalty indeed comes important to businesses, and loyal customers are generally considered to be a competitive asset for a business. It has been said that customer loyalty is probably the single best measurement of success in any organization. It has even become a decisive factor in long-term business profits. Businesses realize this and for example different loyalty programs are widely used as a tool to increase loyalty. Customer loyalty has many positive effects on a business, such as revenue growth due to repurchases and referrals, as well as cost decline due to lower acquisition costs. Also, employee retention may increase a result of job satisfaction. Due to this, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are also closed linked to business profitability. (Donio et al, 2006, p. 445; Güngör, 2007, p. 14; Olayiwola, 2012, p. 13, p. 22; Nyrönen, 2017, p. 17.)

As stated earlier, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are closely related concepts. While they are two separate things, it is generally thought that excellent customer satisfaction is necessary to achieve customer loyalty. A large part of research suggests that customer loyalty is a consequence of customer satisfaction. It has been said that increased loyalty stems from high levels of customer satisfaction. (Güngör, 2007, p. 14; Olayiwola, 2012, p. 22.)

However, it has also been noted that while satisfaction may indicate the beginning of loyalty, it cannot guarantee it. Even if a customer is satisfied with a single product or service encounter, it does not mean that he or she necessarily becomes a loyal customer. Consequently, the problem is that even if the customer is satisfied and happy with the product and the whole experience, it does not mean he or she is fully engaged and not going to give a chance to competing business. The customer could still be considered a free agent with a wandering eye. This is why “good” customer satisfaction cannot be taken as true customer loyalty, real commitment to the business. (Güngör, 2007, p. 14.)

In addition to customer satisfaction, there are two other antecedents for customer loyalty. One of them is switching cost, both financial and non-financial that the customer has to pay if they want to switch the business from which they purchase a certain product or service. This is related to the intention of a customer willing to repurchase. Switching cost is positively related to customer loyalty. The other antecedent is corporate image. Corporate image and customer satisfaction mutually affect each other. (Olayiwola, 2012, p. 22.)

Customer loyalty can be divided into two categories: proactive loyalty and situational loyalty. Proactive loyalty occurs when a consumer frequently buys a certain brand and does not accept any substitute. On the other hand, situational loyalty means that the buyer purchases a brand for a special occasion. In addition, customer loyalty can be classified into behavior loyalty and attitude loyalty. Behavior loyalty refers to the long-term choice probability for a brand, such as repeat purchase probability. Attitudinal loyalty on the other hand focuses on brand recommendations, resistance to superior products and repurchase intention. (Olayiwola, 2012, p. 20.)

Another important concept related to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty is service quality. According to studies, service quality predicts customer satisfaction, purchase intention, customer trust and customer loyalty. Previous studies have indicated that service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty programs have increased customer loyalty.

In addition to these concepts, Suhud et al. (2020) have studied the customer trust as a preceding customer loyalty. According to them, previous studies on different service fields suggest that customer trust and satisfaction impacted significantly on customer loyalty. Suhud et al. (2020) studied the effect of customer trust, customer satisfaction and service quality on customer loyalty on Indonesian barber shops and found a strong correlation. The more satisfied the customers were, the more the more loyal and more trusting they were towards the barber shop.

They also noted that customer trust is particularly important in hairdresser salons and barber shops. The customer sits in a chair at the salon and lets the barber touch and cut his hair. Thus, there is a physical connection with the customer and the barber. If the customer did not trust the barber, the service experience would probably not be pleasant. If the barber does a mistake, that may not be easy to fix. (Suhud et al., 2020, pp. 1–7.)

Image 1. Relation between service quality, customer satisfaction, customer trust and customer loyalty (Suhud et al., 2020, p. 3).

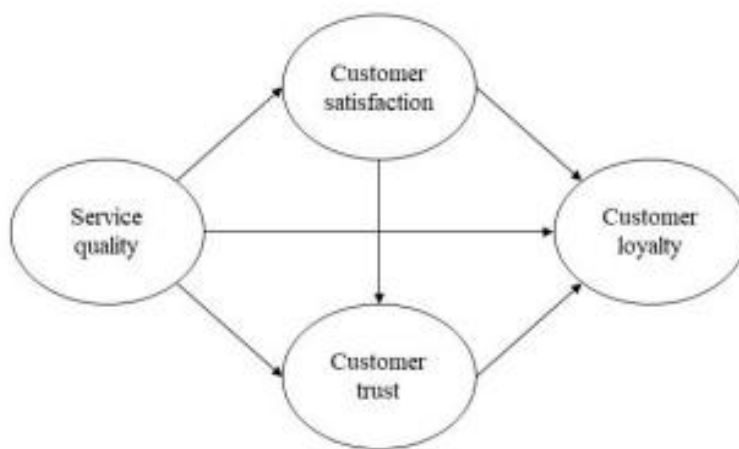


Figure 1. The theoretical framework

2.2. Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty in Hairdresser Salons

This chapter concentrates on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty particularly on the field of barber and hairdresser industry. What does customer satisfaction and customer loyalty mean from the perspective of hairdresser salons? What factors affect customer satisfaction and loyalty in hairdresser salons? What kind of special characteristics do these fields have?

A barber can be defined as a person who cuts men's hair and shaves or trims beards as an occupation. Male grooming services are not a new phenomenon, as they have existed as early as 2000 years ago. A barber shop usually refers to a hair cutting shop for men, while a hairdressing salon typically refers to a styling store for both men and women. Today, appearance is not important only for women but also for men. For many men today, hairstyle

is an important part of their appearances and follows the latest trends. (Shahrulnizam et al., 2020, p. 2.)

As explained above, hairdresser salons are businesses that offer services, haircuts and other services related to hair. When it comes to service sector, service quality becomes an especially central dimension. In essence, service is an action offered by one party to another party. A service is intangible in nature and does not result in any ownership. Services are usually carried out to provide satisfaction desired by a customer. (Arifin et al., 2020, p. 80, p. 84).

In 2022, the Finnish hairdresser salon Promise Helsinki conducted an extensive research on barbers' and hairdressers' work in Finland. The research subjects consisted of 1000 customers of hairdresser salons and 100 hairdressers or barbers. The results indicated the average Finn visits a barber or hairdresser every other month and as many as 85% of them tend to use the same barber or hairdresser every time. Therefore, it seems that customer loyalty may be higher than average in this sector compared to many other sectors. (Promise Helsinki, 2022.)

According to the study, more than 80% of Finns appreciate the skills of the barber/hairdresser highly. It was noted in the study that the service experience at a barber/hairdresser is not only about haircut, but also the social aspect is important. It is quite common that the barber/hairdresser and the customer also talk about other, not hair-related topics. About every fifth person even talks to the barber/hairdresser about very personal and even sensitive things. This indicates that the relationship between the professional and the customer can often be very confidential and close. (Promise Helsinki, 2022.)

According to the study, two out of three customers wish that the barber/hairdresser is chatty and has a good sense of humor. Every fifth wishes that the barber/hairdresser does some chatting but keeps a professional distance. This wish was a little more common among males than females. In the study, it was also noted that negative feedback about the service quality or price is not given by the customers very often. Only 30% of the barbers/hairdressers had received negative feedback during the past year. This may be related to the often personal relationship with the professional and the customer that makes giving negative feedback more difficult. (Promise Helsinki, 2022.)

Business in the service sector relies on trust of customers. It relies heavily on service quality provided to the customers. The hairdressing industry has evolved into a very competitive

industry in both developed and developing economies. A study conducted by Arifin, Hartoyo & Yusuf (2020) indicated that perceived service quality, customer satisfaction, trust and customer loyalty are closely linked together in an Indonesian hairdresser salon that they studied. The results they got indicated that if customer perceived high service quality, it will result in high customer satisfaction. The customer satisfaction correlated with customer loyalty in the barbershop that was studied for this particular research. The variables used in the research by Arifin, Hartoyo & Yusuf were service quality, price perception, trust, satisfaction and loyalty. Service quality included five dimensions: tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. (Arifin et al., 2020, p. 82, p. 87.)

They also noted that hairdressing services differ from other retailing sector services in that the experience they receive in a salon is intangible. In addition, the prices of hairdressing and barber services are difficult to understand for an average consumer. The prices consist of several things, such as the products used in addition to the hairdresser's work. The services cannot be kept, demonstrated, returned or resold. They cannot be sold or transferred to a third party either. (Arifin et al., 2020, p. 87.)

Considering all the things mentioned above, an ideal customer experience at a hairdresser salon would be so that it would be considered nice and friendly, customer having urge to come back, because they would think of the customer service person as likeable.

Unfortunately, things cannot always go perfectly, customer service person might have a bad day that influences interaction with the customer or there could be some miscommunications and therefore end-product would not match customers' needs and expectation, thus him becoming unsatisfied customer and perhaps a customer of a competitor. Of course, not all things cannot be planned, there could be sudden sick leaves or delays in ordered products, which then again might leave the customer experience lacking and unsatisfactory. These can be things that cannot be predicted. Even so, product and service experience need to be designed to perfection, foreseeing everything that is possible.

For hairdresser salons and barber shops, service delivery is a very important part as well and should be paid large attention to. Its importance is best shown by these two examples related to this thesis topic, which have been given by London School of Barbering (n.d.). Customer A comes into barbershop, goes to desk. He is greeted with nothing more than grumpy face. Customer shows a picture of haircut he likes to have, that is only reacted with a nod of a head. Then they proceed to barber's chair and without saying a word the job is finished. The end result happens to be extremely satisfactory to customer, but still he leaves the business unhappy, most likely not coming back, because of the poor customer service, even though

the product (haircut) itself was perfect. (London School of Barbering, n.d.)

The other way around, customers receive the perfect possible service they can imagine, they are greeted from door with a big smile, and during the haircut they have nice and friendly conversation with the customer service person, afterwards the customer even receives free hair-product samples. Then at home the customer notices a big, bald spot at the back of his head. Once again, they are most likely not returning, this time because of a poor-quality product (failed haircut). (London School of Barbering, n.d.)

Third important thing is timelines. Although in a barbershop this might be less important than in some other fields of business. Obviously if the timelines are hugely exaggerated it becomes a big issue. This could mean when calling for a time for a next few days there's none available for two weeks. Or basic haircut taking unexpectedly large time to perform. Scheduled time for 13:00 but the barber is with another customer till 13:30 for no apparent reason. So, these things need to work as planned, even in barbershop and it definitely is a factor in customer satisfaction. (London School of Barbering, n.d.)

Effective problem resolution process is required as well. Is the customer not happy with the haircut they got? That needs to be fixed, and if satisfied after that is fixed, the customer might just become loyal customer, something they might not have become if there was no problem at the first place, paradoxically. Of course, creating these problems intentionally and then fixing them is not acceptable by any means. (London School of Barbering, n.d.)

In addition, one especially important thing for barbershops to do is personalization, which means creating personalized relationships with the customers. That, if anything, will bring the customer back. Getting on personal level with customers can be difficult at first, especially in country like Finland where things are generally not easily shared, but if that can be done successfully it will pay off. Of course with all customers it is not possible, many people like to keep their privacy. A good way to start creating this kind of relationships is for barber to tell stories of own life and that way start creating deeper relationships with customers. (Yadav, 2015.)

2 Methodology

This chapter briefly introduces the background for the empirical part of this thesis and the research methodology used in the research.

3.1. Current situation

Based on discussions with the business owner, the situation as of now for Parturi-kampaamo Hiusvinkki is financially relatively good. Business is sustainable and cash flow is good enough for making the business profitable. However, fact is also that competition is getting tougher and tougher. In particular, there are new competitors on field that can attract especially younger people with branding and giving out different benefits to customers, such as barbershop chain M Room. Due to this, Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki needs to develop its services to match competition, to help keeping current customers and preferably to attract new and loyal customers, especially increasing the male customer numbers. (Sirkkola, 2023.)

3.2. Research Method and Data Collection

The research method used for this thesis has mostly been qualitative research. Qualitative research is a type of research that is based on data consisting mostly of words, such as descriptions, accounts, opinions, feelings, as opposed to numbers. This type of data is typical when the research concentrates on people and their feelings, and thus the qualitative research method can be seen as most suitable for this thesis. However, there are also some elements of quantitative research in the study. Quantitative research means a type of research in which the data is mostly in the form of numbers, and mathematical operations are used to analyze the data. The numbers and proportions of the respondents' answers to each survey question have been counted and analyzed, which brings a quantitative element to the research. (Walliman, 2021, p. 156, p. 177.)

Research method chosen for this thesis was customer satisfaction survey. The survey was written in Finnish and a traditional paper form was used. Paper form was considered as the easiest way to conduct this kind of survey in a hairdresser salon. The surveys were handed to the customers by the business owner. The surveys consisted mostly of multiple choice questions, in which the respondents had to choose from a few options, but there were also two open questions.

The survey was targeted to male customers of Hiusvinkki all age. The customers have filled the survey right after getting their hair cut in Parturi-kampaamo Hiusvinkki. As a way of getting enough answers, there has been one gift card worth 20€ to be drawn among the customers who answered the survey. The translated customer satisfaction survey can be

found in Appendix 1 of this thesis.

The customer satisfaction survey research was on Hiusvinkki's male customers was conducted twice. The first survey was conducted in April of 2017. In total, 23 male customers answered to this first survey.

For the second part of data collection, a new customer satisfaction survey with similar questions was conducted in June-August 2023. The target group and the way of conducting the survey was similar as in 2017. This time, 20 customers in total answered to the survey. In the analysis part of this thesis, there will also be comparisons between the surveys to see have there been any major changes in results.

3 Results (Analysis)

In this chapter, the results of the two customer satisfaction surveys are presented and analyzed. In addition, competitor analysis is presented in the latter part of the chapter.

4.1. Results of the surveys

In the following analysis section, the results of the empirical part of the thesis are presented. The analysis revolves mainly around the surveys and their results, but it aims also to reflect them to the theoretical background presented earlier. From the results of the surveys, many interesting facts about Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki's customers could be gathered. The results offered some answers to the original research question of this thesis, "How to improve male customer loyalty for Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki?" It also gave insight into what customers think of Hiusvinkki and what they are currently satisfied with.

The sample size for the first survey was 23 existing male customers of Parturi-kampaamo Hiusvinkki. The first survey was conducted already in 2017. Because that was quite long time ago, a second survey was done more recently, in June-August 2023 to get better insight into the current situation. The objective was also to compare the results from the two surveys to see if anything has changed over the six-year period between surveys.

Exactly same set of questions was used for both surveys so that the surveys would be comparable to each other. For the second survey, the author received 20 responses from the male customers, so the sample size remained relatively similar in both surveys. Although the

number of responses could always be higher, the sample size is large enough when taking into consideration the small size of the case company. Altogether 43 responses to the survey were received.

In short, the survey results of both sets were relatively similar. This indicates that there have not been very dramatic changes in the customer's experiences during the years between the surveys. However, some changes can be seen between the surveys at least with part of the questions. The results of each question from both surveys are compared and discussed later on in this section. Those differences that can be noticed between the two surveys are also discussed in this chapter and possible explanations for the differences are sought.

In the surveys, the first question was about the age of the respondent. When taking a look at the age groups of the people who answered, it can be noticed that the customers of Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki tend to be adults who are 30 years old or older. The number of young customers is lower. In the surveys, 82,6% (2017) and 80% (2023) of answers were from people of age 30 and older. In 2017, 43.5% of all the respondents belonged to the older segment, 50 years or older, and in 2023 survey, the percentage of respondents older than 50 years old was 45%. The number of young adults was lower in both surveys, 8.7% in 2017 and 15% in 2023. The number of responders younger than 17 years was very low, only two respondents in 2017 and one in 2023. Based on these results, the customers' age distribution has remained fairly similar from 2017 to 2023.

Judging from these results, one challenge for Hiusvinkki is to renew and widen their customer base and attract younger customers. However, discussions with the workforce and owners of Hiusvinkki indicated that the actual age range of customers might be more evenly distributed in terms of age than the survey results suggested. Adult male customers (age groups over 30 and over 50 years old) were more likely to answer the survey than younger ones based on the consultation with the entrepreneur. Very young male customers, such as children and teens, were less likely to answer the surveys, which could cause some slight bias to the results in terms of age. However, even when taking that possible bias into consideration, one can still definitely assume that the customer base leans more towards adult and middle-aged males as opposed to very young adults or teenagers. (Sirkkola, 2023.)

Based on the responses to question 2, "How often do you visit Parturi-kampaamo Hiusvinkki?", it can also be seen that the customer base already seems to be very loyal.

According to the responses, 65,2% (2017) and 70% (2023) of people visit Hiusvinkki monthly or more often while only 8,7% (2017) and 10% (2023) were first time visitors. The differences here are not very large, but some differences can however be seen. The number of very loyal customers visiting monthly or more often seems to have increased by almost 5%. In addition, the proportion of first-time visitors has increased with 1.3%.

What could contribute to this change in loyalty? One possible explanation is that the hairdresser salon moved to a new business space inside the shopping center Like in 2021. The new space is located on the ground floor, while the previous space was located in the mall's basement. The current space is more available and easier to find than the previous one in the basement. The new space is probably more favorable for business and can attract spontaneous visitors and maybe also new loyal customers. Of course, there was six years between the surveys, which can also in part explain the higher number of very loyal customers. Some less loyal customers, visiting maybe once a year, may have over the years become more loyal.

However, also here it should be noted that according to Hiusvinkki owners, loyal and well-known customers were more likely to answer the survey than people coming in first time or more rarely. This is due to the fact that the most loyal customers are often well-known to the barbers of Hiusvinkki and are probably more likely to say yes when asked to answer to the surveys. Thus, as with the age question explained earlier, there might be a slight bias towards the loyal customers versus one-time visitors. Even so, it can be said based on the results that the clientele consists more of loyal, regular customers than of spontaneous visitors that only visit the salon once.

Because of the large proportion of loyal customers, it is interesting to take look at the four first time customers across both surveys and compare their answers with the rest. What one can learn from them is that they are younger than average (18-29 and 0-17) and that they obviously visit also other barbershops frequently. Based on the surveys, their reasoning behind coming to Hiusvinkki were its price and location. This clearly differs from other customer base: skilled workforce was the reason to come Hiusvinkki for 60,7%(2017) and 60% (2023) of the respondents.

It is noteworthy that all new customers (first time visitors) would come to Hiusvinkki again. They evaluated the customer service as "good" when the majority had evaluated as "excellent" (73,9% in 2017, 80% in 2023). While first time visitors think the customer is good, but majority evaluates it even higher, as excellent. This would indicate that the more loyal the

customers are, the more satisfied they also are with the service and vice versa. In the theory part of this thesis, it was stated that there is big difference between "satisfied" and "completely satisfied" customers and their loyalty. Therefore, one important thing for Hiusvinkki is to get these new customers "completely satisfied" instead of "satisfied", because with "satisfied" customers, it can be expected that they are at least more likely to visit competitors. As was noted in the theoretical section, previous research has emphasized that customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are closely linked to each other and customer satisfaction leads to greater loyalty. Also the results of this thesis seem to confirm that assumption.

As mentioned above, the proportion of respondents who evaluated the customer service as "excellent" has risen from 73.9% to 80% between 2017 and 2023. While this difference is not dramatic, it is still noteworthy. It is difficult to find a single reason for this change. However, it is possible that the skills (in both customer service and haircuts) of the barbers have improved over the years as they have gained more experience. In addition, it seems that the number of respondents saying "excellent" has risen approximately in the same proportion with loyal customers visiting Hiusvinkki monthly or more often. The experienced quality of customer service seems to increase as the loyalty increases. Loyal customers tend to evaluate the quality as high.

From responses to the question 4, "Why did you choose Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki?", one can see that the main reason in both surveys is "skilled workforce", which was chosen by 60,9% (2017) and 60% (2023) of the respondents. Location also made some difference with 21,7% (2017) and 20 % (2023) of answers. These numbers have remained relatively similar from 2017 to 2023.

Only 8,7% (2017) and 0% (2023) of the respondents said that price was the main reason to choose Hiusvinkki. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the price is not the main competitive advantage of Hiusvinkki, and now even less than six years ago. Customers seem to choose Hiusvinkki for some other reason than prices. In fact, when comparing prices of Hiusvinkki and other Tampere-based competitors, it can be seen that there are cheaper hairdressing salons available. In conclusion, people come to Hiusvinkki because of its service quality even when there would be cheaper alternatives available.

The price was given as the main reason to choose Hiusvinkki in 2023 (0%) even less often than in 2017 (8,7%). This is probably due to the fact that Hiusvinkki has had to increase its prices to some extent between 2017 and 2023. Between that time frame, the Covid-2019

affected the economy and service sector in particular. Also the current economical situation with inflation has taken place and has forced Hiusvinkki to increase its prices.

Question number 5 was an open question: "As a customer what do you think Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki should add or change to its services?" In both surveys, the respondents either left this question empty or wrote "nothing" or something similar. This indicates that based on the surveys male customers are happy with the services that Hiusvinkki offers and they do not have any particular need for added services.

From the questions 6-9, it can be concluded that the existing customers are definitely extremely happy with Hiusvinkki and they do not see many reasons for improvements. In question 6 "What do you think of customer service in Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki?" the results are good with 73,9% saying "excellent" in 2017 and 80% in 2023. In both 2017 and 2023, there were only two people saying "excellent" to that question and answering "yes" to question three, "Do you also visit other barbershops frequently?" Thus, it can be assumed that those people answering "excellent" to Question 6 are generally very loyal ones. There seems to be a strong link between the opinion about the customer service and the customer's loyalty towards Hiusvinkki.

In question 7, "Were you satisfied with the quality of work in Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki?", 100% of the respondents in 2017 said that they were satisfied. In 2023, one of the respondents answered "Cannot say" but otherwise everyone was satisfied. This is a very good result and indicates that in general the male customers are very satisfied with the service and the haircuts of Hiusvinkki. Quality of the end product and the customers' satisfaction with the haircuts are essential to a hairdresser salon.

This above result is also in line with the research by Promise Helsinki (2022) that was referenced in the theory section. According to that research, hairdressers and barbers in Finland generally get only a little negative feedback about the end product or price. Thus, it is also worth considering that also in the surveys of this thesis the customers might not easily give negative feedback. Many of them are long-time customers and might have a personal relationship with the barber. However, even when taking this into account, the customers' satisfaction at Hiusvinkki seems excellent based on the results. In general, the lack of negative feedback at hairdresser salons is most likely at least in part due to the nature of the situation. Usually, the hairdresser or barber asks from the customer after the haircut if he or she is happy with the result. It may be difficult to give negative feedback face-to-face about the hairdresser's or barber's work.

The question number 8 was “Would you recommend Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki to your acquaintance?” Also this result was excellent in both 2017 and 2023: 100% of the respondents in both years said that they would recommend Hiusvinkki to an acquaintance. This also reflects very high customer satisfaction. Recommendations from acquaintances are often very effectful in attracting new customers.

Question number 9, “Would you revisit Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki?”, also gave a perfect result for the company. In both years 2017 and 2023, 100% of the respondents answered that they would revisit Hiusvinkki. This is of course a very good and encouraging result for the business, as it aims to attract loyal (male) customers going forward. As mentioned earlier, also the first-time visitors responded that they would visit Hiusvinkki again. Based on these findings, it seems that when the customers find Hiusvinkki for the first time, they are also willing to return later. The challenge might be to find means how to attract potential customers, who have not yet used Hiusvinkki’s services. After their first visit to Hiusvinkki, most of the customers are satisfied and will return later thus becoming potentially loyal customers.

The final question on the surveys, Question 10, was an open question in which open comments were asked from the respondents. A total of 14 respondents had answered this open question (6 respondents in 2017 and 8 respondents in 2023). All of the open comments given to Hiusvinkki as a response to this question were short and positive. Reoccurring themes in these open comments were especially good location, friendly service and skilled workforce at Hiusvinkki. Also, a few comments mentioned that it is easy to book a time at Hiusvinkki. Also long opening hours were mentioned as a positive thing in one of the comments.

4.2. Competitor analysis

Based on the findings represented above, Hiusvinkki has many strengths that come across in the respondents’ answers. What about Hiusvinkki’s competitors? How does Hiusvinkki do compared to other hairdresser salons in the area and what kind of services do the competitors offer?

Based on the analysis, perhaps the most important competitor for Hiusvinkki is M Room, which is located in the same shopping center, Kauppakeskus Like, as Hiusvinkki. M Room is a Finnish barber shop chain founded in 2008. M Room shops offer only barber shop services, so their target customer segment is males only. On M Room’s web page, it is

explained that they wanted to develop something particularly for men, as before that the Finnish hairdressing industry had developed completely around female customers' needs. On the web page, it is stated that "Men as customers want easy and effortless service without having to plan the barber visit beforehand" (translation by the author). Thus, M Room chain has a very clear target customer segment, as it is only specialized in hairdressing services for men. (M Room, n.d.-a)

For example Kyllönen (2016) has also previously studied M Room's service concept. According to him, M Room's basic idea is that women and men have different consumer behavior and that men's needs are completely different from women's when it comes to hairdressing services. Men might not always feel comfortable in hairdresser salons that offer services to women. They might not be familiar to products that are intended for men's hairstyles. Due to this, barbers are known as grooming specialists in M Room. M Room wants to give services that fit the specific needs and preferences of men. Men tend to make impulse buying decisions and they might decide to get a haircut even on the same day without planning beforehand. This is reflected in M Room's concept. Their services are always offered without appointment, and the customer can only walk to a shop whenever he wants to. An important part of the concept are also membership cards that M Room offers. (Kyllönen, 2016, p. 2.)

Today, M Room employs over 200 barbers in three different countries. It has shops in 34 cities in Finland, and it also has shops in Estonia and Norway. In Tampere, there are a total of five M Room barber shops at the moment. As mentioned, one of them is located in the same shopping center with Hiusvinkki and the others a little bit farther away. According to the web page, M Room offers a wide variety of barber services for men, such as haircuts and beard care. (M Room, n.d.-a)

According to the web page, essential part of M Room's service concept is that they offer haircuts without booking time beforehand. It is not possible to book a time even if the customer wants. However, there is a mobile service via which the customers can place themselves in a queue at their nearest barber shop and they can see at what time they should go to the shop. In this way, they don't have to wait at the shop for their turn. (M Room, n.d.-b)

Based on these findings, there are clear differences to Hiusvinkki's service concept. One clear difference is that the customer has to book a time beforehand. There are instructions in Hiusvinkki's web page on how this can be done. The customer can book a time via online

booking service called Timma or by phone. When booking a time via Timma, the customer can also choose which one of the Hiusvinkki professionals they wish to be served by. The web pages give the impression that Hiusvinkki does not serve customers without booking time beforehand. (Hiusvinkki, n.d.)

Another notable difference between Hiusvinkki and M Room seems to be that Hiusvinkki's staff members are presented with names and photos together with their professions at the company's website. One can also book time to a certain member of staff, if one wishes. Meanwhile, no photos or names of the staff can be found on M Room's website. When the customer goes to an M Room shop, they do not know by whom they will be served, unless of course they are already familiar with the staff in that particular shop. Even so, they probably don't get to choose which barber cuts their hair, since the services are offered without time booking on a "first come, first served" basis. For example, the M Room shop in Lielähti has its own page under M Room website, but it only has information about location, contact details and opening hours. There are no photos or names of the employees listed in that page. (M Room, n.d.-c)

In Hiusvinkki, on the other hand, the customer most likely knows which barber is going to cut their hair, and they might even have a regular staff member that they wish to be served by every time. In that sense, the service and the image of Hiusvinkki seem to be much more personal compared to M Room. The employees have names and faces. The M Room web page and service concept gives the impression that it does not really matter which one of the barbers cuts the customer's hair or beard, the end result of the services is still the same. (M Room, n.d.-b)

Opening hours of M Room compared to Hiusvinkki are also important to take into account. M Room in Lielähti is open 10 AM to 18 PM on weekdays and 9 AM to 16 PM on Saturdays. Also the other M Room shops seem to have the same opening hours, so this is probably standardized in the whole chain. Hiusvinkki is open 9 AM to 19 PM on weekdays and 9 AM to 17 PM. In this comparison, Hiusvinkki has better opening hours. It is open two hours more per week day and one hour longer on Saturdays. A few of the respondents in the survey also commented that Hiusvinkki has good opening hours, so this seems to be a clear advantage for Hiusvinkki.

The prices of the two businesses for their most essential services are of course also interesting to be compared. M Room web page has one price list that seems to cover all of the barber shops. To be able to compare the prices easier, the prices of M Room and

Hiusvinkki's most essential services were compared to each other in the following simple table.

Table 2. Comparison of prices between M Room and Hiusvinkki (M Room, n.d.-d; Hiusvinkki, n.d.)

Name of the service	M Room	Hiusvinkki
Basic haircut, including washing and finishing	35 €	29 €
More extensive haircut (change of hairstyle)	43 €	47 €
Hair clipping	24 €	16 €
Men's haircut and dye	46 – 80 €	48 – 75 €
Shaving and styling of beard	23 – 45 €	9 €
Haircut for boys under 7 years	27 €	24 €
Haircut for boys under 12 years	-	27 €

The table only includes the services that both M Room and Hiusvinkki offer. M Room has also some services that are not included in Hiusvinkki's price list, so they were left out of the above table. That kind of services are for example removal of nose and ear hair and activation of scalp. On the other hand, Hiusvinkki's price list has a permanent for men, while M Room does not have this on its list. (M Room, n.d.-d; Hiusvinkki, n.d.)

Based on the table above, it can be seen that Hiusvinkki's prices are slightly lower in most of the services. The only exception is more extensive haircut, which is slightly more expensive

at Hiusvinkki than at M Room. However, one has to take into account that all the services might not be totally comparable to each other. For example, there are different kind of dye options available at both shops. Also, M Room's prices for beard cuts and saving seem very expensive compared to Hiusvinkki, but those services seem to be more extensive than Hiusvinkki's. Hiusvinkki only has one service for beards, "clipping or tidying of beard", while M Room has three different services for beards with varying price and extensiveness.

M Room also gives the opportunity to join as a member and get discounts. There are different levels of membership available. The price and the number of barber visits included in the membership varies. The most expensive is Platinum membership that costs 750 EUR per year and includes 25 visits to M Room barber shops annually. Then there are other cheaper alternatives, covering 10 to 20 visits to M Room per year. Obviously, this kind of membership program increases customer loyalty, as the customer has paid for the services in advance and it does not make financially sense to use any other companies. M Room also offers discounts for students and children. For example, students can get the basic haircut for 31.50 EUR. Based on the web page, Hiusvinkki does not have similar kind of discounts or membership programs (M Room, n.d.-d; Hiusvinkki, n.d.)

All in all, M Room and Hiusvinkki both have their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, both have quite different concepts and target groups from each other. M Room has a very clearly defined and more narrow target customer group, as it only offers barber services intended for males. Of course, it is stated in their web page that they serve customers of any gender, but the haircuts their staff is able to do are those traditionally intended for men. On the other hand, Hiusvinkki's target customer group is based on the research more versatile and wider. Their services are offered and marketed for customers of any gender and age, whoever has the need for a haircut and other related services.

In addition, Hiusvinkki seems to offer a more wide range of services from haircuts to cosmetologist services and massages and even to personal trainer services. M Room, on the other hand, has a more narrow selection of services, as it mostly concentrates on traditional barber services. It cannot be said that either of these concepts of target customer groups would be better or worse, they are simply different. Since M Room is a large barber shop chain, naturally its resources and basic business idea vary from Hiusvinkki, which is an independent small business with only one salon.

All in all, it can be said that M Room concept seems to be to offer effective and easily accessible barber services for men. Key part of the concept is that the customer does not

have to book a time in advance, but he can simply walk into the nearest M Room shop. These can also be seen as strengths of the business. The services are available on a low threshold. The customer can go the barber shop spontaneously, without planning the visit beforehand. At the same time, the customer does not know which barber is going to cut his hair and the experience is probably more impersonal in that sense. In M Room's concept it does not play a role which barber serves you, the end product is the same regardless.

Meanwhile, Hiusvinkki's business concept is more traditional. The customer books a time beforehand online or by phone and then goes to the salon on the agreed time. The customer knows in most cases the name of barber beforehand. Hiusvinkki has many long-time customers who have visited the salon and maybe even the same barber for many years. In cases like this, the customer-barber relationship is close and the customer experience is more personal. Based on this, good and personal customer service can be seen as one of Hiusvinkki's advantages compared to M Room. On the other hand, a visit to Hiusvinkki might require more planning from the customer.

In Lielähti area, there are also a few other hairdresser salons in addition to Hiusvinkki and M Room, such as CM Hiusatlo. It is a hairdresser salon franchise that is related to Finnish Citymarket supermarket chain. The salons are always located together with Citymarket supermarkets. Also this Hiustalo salon is located together with the Citymarket supermarket in Lielähti. It is located close to Hiusvinkki, less than one kilometer away in the same concentration of shops and supermarkets. (Hiustalo, n.d.)

According to Hiustalo Tampere Lielähti, there are three barber-hairdressers working currently at the salon. The salon offers both hairdressing and barbering services. As opposed to M Room, the photos and names of the employees can be seen on the web page, which gives a more personal impression. The location of the hairdresser salon is also quite good, since the customer can have their hair cut and do grocery shopping during the same visit. (Hiustalo, n.d.)

Hiustalo Tampere Lielähti is open from 9 AM to 20 PM on weekdays and from 8 AM to 17 PM on Saturdays. Based on this, it has more extensive opening hours than either of the other salons, M Room or Hiusvinkki. The shop does not accept cash payments, which seems to be a difference to M Room and Hiusvinkki. The customer has to make an appointment to come to Hiustalo, so this is similar to Hiusvinkki. On the web page, there is a link to the time-booking system that is used by the whole Hiustalo franchise. The customer can there make an appointment to a certain barber or hairdresser, or they can also choose "Any worker" if

they don't have a preference. This concept is pretty similar to Hiusvinkki in that one has to book a time in advance and cannot just walk in to the shop without making appointment. (Hiustalo, n.d.)

Based on these findings, Hiustalo salon seems to have a lot of similarities with Hiusvinkki. They serve both men and women and making appointment is required. However, Hiustalo has less workers and their variety of services seems to be limited to haircuts, hair dyes and other most common hair-related services. They do not have for example massagists or cosmetology services as Hiusvinkki does. (Hiustalo, n.d.)

According to the Hiustalo price list on the web page, their barber service costs 35 to 50 EUR. On the list, there seem to be no other services targeted especially to men. There are for example no mentions about hair clipping for men or services related to beard or moustache. If Hiustalo offers these services, they are at least not marketed on the web page or price list. Therefore, the web page gives the impression that the main target group of the company are females. The company is not particularly trying to attract male customers based on these findings. The impression is that male customer can get a basic haircut but it seems questionable if there are other services for male hair. (Hiustalo, n.d.)

Thus, based on these findings, it seems that Hiustalo might compete with Hiusvinkki about female customers, but it might be a less relevant competitor when it comes to male customers. It seems that Hiusvinkki offers a wider selection of services for men and tries to attract male customer more than Hiustalo. However, Hiustalo's advantage compared to Hiusvinkki seems to be more extensive opening hours. (Hiustalo, n.d.)

In addition, one more noteworthy competitor could be found from the Lielähti area. Parturi-kampaamo Diva is also located in Lielähti a few hundred meters from Hiusvinkki. It is a hairdresser salon chain that has 10 hairdresser salons in Tampere and the nearby area. According to the price list, the salon offers a quite variety of hair-related services from haircuts to different hair dyes, hairdos and permanents. There are also services related to eyelashes and eyebrows. (Parturi-kampaamo Diva, 2023.)

According to the price list, Diva offers men's haircut at 26.50 EUR, hair clipping at 16.50 EUR and beard clipping at 13.50 EUR. Thus, the pricing seems to be roughly at the same level with Hiusvinkki. The pictures or names of the employees are not presented in the web pages. There web page seems to be common for all Diva salons, there are no pages for individual salons. All the salons serve customers by appointment, except for the salon in Tampere city

center, which also serves customers without making appointment. All the salons are open from 10 AM to 18 PM and 8 AM to 16 PM on Saturdays. (Parturi-kampaamo Diva, 2023.)

In the web page of Parturikampaamo, there are no photos or names of the hairdressers and barbers mentioned, so this is a difference to Hiusvinkki. There is a link for making an appointment in the web page. Via the link, one can make an appointment to whichever Diva salon one wants to. In this booking service, the customer can also see the names of the employees. Based on these findings, there seems to be a lot of similarities between Diva and Hiusvinkki. Diva is a little bit different business, as it has salons in different locations. In Diva's web page on the front, there are photos of also men's hairstyles. This implies that men seem to be a more remarkable customer target group than for example for Hiustalo that was presented above. (Parturi-kampaamo Diva, 2023.)

Based on these findings, there is definitely though competition in the area and there are a few noteworthy competitors. However, Hiusvinkki has a good chance of succeeding in the competition with its strengths, such as quality customer service. It seems to be also the oldest of the businesses discussed above, which can also be seen as an advantage.

5. Recommendations

In this section, the strengths of Hiusvinkki are reviewed and some recommendations are given. What are the main strengths of Hiusvinkki based on the two surveys and other facts? As explained earlier, the business has a long history of over 20 years in Lielähti-area, which has made it a locally well-known business. It has always been located in the same area. It is not located in the city center but rather in a suburb, where there are less hairdresser salon options available. This has clearly helped the company to develop a loyal, local customer base over the years. The company also offers a quite wide variety of different beauty-related services: from barber and hairdressers services to massages and cosmetologist services. Based on the surveys and the competitor analysis Hiusvinkki's strengths are also its wide opening hours, and also its prices seem competitive compared to for example its main competitor M Room.

Based on the results of the surveys conducted as part of this thesis, some recommendations on how to improve Hiusvinkki's business in the aspect of improving male customer loyalty and attracting more male customers can be given. As mentioned in the previous part "Analysis", based on the results of the surveys one can conclude that among existing

customers loyalty is already on a solid level. As discussed earlier, the results indicated that majority of the customers visit the hairdresser salon monthly or more often and can thus be seen as loyal. This indicates that Hiusvinkki is already doing many things very well in its business and customers are generally satisfied with the services. Of course, while the customer loyalty is at good level, it can always be improved.

Based on the findings of this thesis, the actual challenge for the company is attracting younger, new customers to Hiusvinkki. The competition among hairdresser salons is tough and there are a few rival companies nearby. Hiusvinkki is not a part of any hairdresser chain, it is an individual small business. Large hairdresser chains may have larger resources and are more capable of competing with price and discounts. For example, the hairdresser salon chain M Room discussed in more detail in the analysis section has a membership card system, in which the customer pays the yearly fee and then can visit M-Room as many times per year as he wants. This is a lot more inexpensive alternative than paying individually for each haircut. M-Room also offers haircuts without booking a time beforehand. (M Room, n.d.-b)

According to the results of the survey, price was not very often given as the primary reason by the customers to choose Hiusvinkki. However, the competitor analysis indicated that Hiusvinkki's list prices were actually in general a little bit lower than its main competitor M Room's, which was slightly surprising. Thus, its pricing might be more competitive than initially was thought. Still, Hiusvinkki probably cannot compete with membership discounts with larger barber chains such as M Room.

To attract new customers, one thing that Hiusvinkki could try could be possibility to get haircuts without booking a time in advance. This is something that M Room strongly relies on in their barber shop concept. Currently, in Hiusvinkki the customer has to book the appointment in advance. Offering haircuts without making appointment could attract new customers from men who visit the shopping center for other things and do not intend to get a haircut. If they do not have to book a time in advance, they could be attracted to a spontaneous haircut. This could also give Hiusvinkki advantage compared to other competitors, Hiustalo and Parturi-kampaamo Diva.

This thesis had two objectives from the point of view of Hiusvinkki. One is finding ways to improve male customer loyalty and the other is finding ways how to attract new customers. Based on the results of the surveys, the loyalty is on relatively good level already, but it can always be improved. And of course, the loyal customers might not always remain loyal. The

current loyal customers were especially happy with service, so ensuring good customer service is essential for improving and maintaining loyalty.

To improve loyalty, the company could also try for example some kind of membership program. Or they could offer for example every tenth haircut for free or -50% of the price. These are quite commonly used means in many hairdresser salons to increase loyalty and give a reason for the customer to come back after the first visit. Hiusvinkki also offers personal training services. They could utilize this for example with special offers: such as a free or cheaper haircut for personal training customers.

Based on the results, Hiusvinkki might have more challenges in attracting new customer than improving loyalty. Based on the results, Hiusvinkki could try to attract new customers from the large segment of people that are looking for traditional barbershop services. The company's profile is more traditional compared to for example M Room. Hiusvinkki is a smaller company and has less workers, and only two barbers, so the regular customers probably become familiar with the barbers.

From the results it can be concluded that Hiusvinkki's customer base is very happy with its service and skilled workforce. Based on that, what Hiusvinkki should do is to focus on bringing up their long history and experienced, skilled workforce in their marketing to attract new male customers. They should emphasize their excellent customer service and good quality of work. They should not forget to emphasize that they also offer services to males. Hiusvinkki has a good web page, but they could perhaps add more photos about male haircuts etc. Now the photos on the web pages seems to be more concentrated on women's haircuts and hairdos.

As discussed above, the customer loyalty is important to maintain but the most important thing for the company might be to attract new customers. Thus, based on the results, the focus should definitely be put more on marketing aspects and getting in the new customers that way. Hiusvinkki should use the strengths, such as their experience and locality, in their marketing. The company has its own webpage hiusvinkki.fi and a Facebook page. Hiusvinkki could perhaps consider using also other social media channels, which could reach more potential customers. Also, the web pages could be developed further and new contents could be added. Thus, based on the results, the final recommendation would thus be new marketing plan focusing on Hiusvinkki's strengths that the author has found out from survey.

6 Conclusion

In this section, a short summary and the most important conclusions of this thesis will be given. The topic of this thesis has been about improving male customer loyalty and attracting new male customers for Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki, which is a hairdresser salon located in Tampere. The most important research question in this thesis was "How to improve male customer loyalty for Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki?" Additional research question was how to attract more male customers to Hiusvinkki.

The most important objective of the thesis was to find ways for the company to improve male customer loyalty and attract more male customers and thus improve business profitability. The aim was also to give the company some concrete recommendations on how to reach these goals. This particular topic was chosen as the company had a need to find answers to these questions and improve their customer loyalty especially among male customers.

The theoretical background of this thesis consisted mainly of general theory on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in business. As discussed in the theory section, these topics are closely related, while they do not mean the same thing. The theories suggested that high customer satisfaction usually leads to high customer loyalty. In addition, based on the existing theory, these concepts are also closely related to service quality and customer trust. Based on previous research, high customer satisfaction, service quality and customer trust have proven to usually lead to greater customer loyalty.

The empirical part of the thesis was conducted by doing two surveys that were handed out to male customers of Hiusvinkki. The first survey was conducted in 2017, and the survey was redone in 2023. The questions asked from the customers in the two surveys were the same. About 20 respondents responded to the surveys in both years, and the sample size altogether was a little bit more than 43. The results from the two different years were also to some extent compared to each other. There had been some changes in the answers to some of the questions. For example, even more of the respondents were very loyal and very happy with the customer service of Hiusvinkki in 2023 than in 2017. Thus, it seemed that the customer satisfaction and loyalty had improved during the time period between the two surveys.

All in all, the results of the surveys indicated that existing customers were in general very satisfied with the services of Hiusvinkki. Also, majority of the respondents were customers that visited Hiusvinkki monthly or more often and can therefore be described as loyal. The

results also indicated that excellent service was the most common reason for the respondents to choose Hiusvinkki. All of the respondents were also ready to recommend Hiusvinkki to their acquaintances. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that customer base of Hiusvinkki is generally quite loyal and satisfied.

Therefore, based on this research, to improve customer loyalty Hiusvinkki should maintain their high quality customer service. That seems to ensure that first time visitors also return to Hiusvinkki. As previous research discussed in the theory part also indicates, service quality strongly contributes to higher customer loyalty. However, it seems that less of the respondents were first time visitors, so the challenge might be to encourage customers who have not visited Hiusvinkki before. It should also be noted that loyal customers regularly visiting Hiusvinkki might have been more willing to answer the surveys, as opposed to those first time visitors. Thus, the group of respondents might have been slightly different compared to the whole customer base of Hiusvinkki.

In addition, a competitor analysis was conducted on Hiusvinkki's local competitors. Hiusvinkki's main competitor seems to be M Room, a barber shop franchise located in the same shopping center. Based on the analysis, both shops have their strengths and weaknesses, and their service concepts are quite different. M Room's strengths are mostly that it is easily accessible and serves customers without booking time in advance. However, the prices in general seem to be slightly higher than in Hiusvinkki. Meanwhile, Hiusvinkki can be seen as a more traditional hairdresser salon that trusts good customer service and a more personal customer experience.

When it comes to attracting new male customers, the recommendation given to the company is to improve marketing and to create a new marketing strategy based on Hiusvinkki's strengths. Based on the findings of this thesis, Hiusvinkki's strengths are good customer service, skilled workforce and being locally well-known. These aspects could be utilized in the company's marketing even more than they are currently used. Also, to attract more male customers Hiusvinkki could pay attention to marketing aimed at men. Their webpages and social media channels could be updated and more content related to services for men could be added.

In conclusion, the results indicated that Hiusvinkki's customers are generally very satisfied with the service and quite loyal. When it comes to getting new customers, it is largely about efficient marketing and trying to differentiate from competitors. Hiusvinkki might not be able to offer the cheapest prices, but they need to focus on attracting potential customers by

emphasizing their experienced staff and high-quality and personal service.

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Appendix 1. Survey 1

Customer satisfaction survey for Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki

1. Age?

0-17

18-29

30-49

50+

2. How often do you visit Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki?

First time

Once in a year or less

Couple times a year

Monthly or more often

3. Do you also visit other barbershops frequently?

Yes

No

4. Why did you choose Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki?

Skilled workforce

Location

Price

Recommendation from acquaintance

Something else, what?

5. As a customer what do you think Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki should add or change to it's services?

6. What do you think of customer service in Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki?

Excellent

Good

Can't say/Don't know

Weak

Extremely weak

7. Were you satisfied with the quality of work in Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki?

Yes

Cannot say

No

8. Would you recommend Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki to your acquaintance?

Yes

No

9. Would you revisit Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki?

Yes

No

10. Other comments?

Appendix 2. Survey 2

Customer satisfaction survey for Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki (7/2023)

1. Age?

0-17

18-29

30-49

50+

2. How often do you visit Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki?

First time

Once in a year or less

Couple times a year

Monthly or more often

3. Do you also visit other barbershops frequently?

Yes

No

4. Why did you choose Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki?

Skilled workforce

Location

Price

Recommendation from acquaintance

Something else, what?

5. As a customer what do you think Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki should add or change to it's services?

6. What do you think of customer service in Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki?

Excellent

Good

Can't say/Don't know

Weak

Extremely weak

7. Were you satisfied with the quality of work in Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki?

Yes

Cannot say

No

8. Would you recommend Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki to your acquaintance?

Yes

No

9. Would you revisit Parturikampaamo Hiusvinkki?

Yes

No

10. Other comments?