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Digital Marketing in Travel Industry. Case: Hotel Landing Page Optimization

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Abstract

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Landing page optimization is implementation of the principles of digital service
design to improve the website's user experience. Well done landing page opti-
mization can have a significant positive effect on the usability and profitability of
the website. The objective of the study was to optimize the Russian language
version of Vuokatti landing page in order to increase conversion, defined as the
number of clicks to accommodation search button.

A literature survey was made to determine the main elements of a successful
landing page. Based on the knowledge obtained from the literature, landing
pages of three hotel websites were compared and evaluated. Additionally,
Vuokatti landing page was evaluated and changes for its optimization were
suggested. A part of these changes was implemented and A/B testing was ap-
plied to determine the effect of the optimization on website's conversion rate.
The data for the A/B testing was collected through Google analytics service.

The results of the A/B testing indicate an improvement in the landing page con-
version after optimization with high statistical confidence. The optimized version
of the landing page has replaced the original version. Other suggested changes
could be implemented and tested with the same methodology as presented in
this thesis.

Keywords: Digital marketing, Landing page optimization, Hotels, Conversion

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Appendixes

1   Introduction

We are living in a world of digital revolution where internet plays an incredible role. Digital technology has made it possible to communicate in a fundamentally new way and has become a part of our everyday life. According to World Stats (Internet World Stats 2016), 3.7 billion people on the globe have access to the internet which has made it the mass market of the future, which requires a completely new approach in business maintenance. The goal of every successful organization has to be learning how to efficiently use digital media and its channels in marketing and interacting with customers. (Ryan 2016, p. xiii)

In the past it was enough for a company to have a physical place of sales and give advertisement in newspapers, billboards, or other public media. Nowadays one of the needed presences in the digital world is a website, which is a must especially for a hotel as travel products and services are ideal for online sales. While other online channels like the social media have increased rapidly their popularity, still the most important information for the customer can be found from the hotel's website. For a company, it is important to make a good impression on a potential customer who enters their website from the beginning and to maximize the profit from the website.

A landing page is a place where visitors of the website "land" after arriving from any source, such as a search engine. It is the first impression a visitor gets about the business of a previously unfamiliar company. First impressions are important as they cannot be made again and bad first impressions can result in visitor leaving. To have a successful business, a hotel needs to focus on converting as many of the website visitors to customers as possible. Optimization of the landing page can be used to help better achieve this goal.

While many companies' attention is often turned to search engine optimization and buying traffic for the website to increase the amount of visitors, more effort should be devoted on the quality of the landing pages. Attracting more visitors to the website does not automatically guarantee more sales, while landing page optimization has been shown to improve the conversion of a website (Patel & Jacob 2016).

Landing page optimization is a part of digital marketing and is closely related to user interface and experience design. In this thesis landing page optimization methods for hotel website are discussed and applied on accommodation providing website. Differences in conversion rate of the website are compared before and after the change to analyze the effectiveness of the landing page optimization. The objectives of the thesis are recognizing the most important aspects of a hotel's successful landing page and increasing conversion by optimizing the landing page of accommodation provider Vuokatti's website.

The content of the thesis is organized as follows. Chapter 2 contains a literature survey on digital marketing and landing page optimization. Information obtained from the literature is applied in chapter 3 for analysis of three existing hotel landing pages. In chapter 4, the proposal and realized optimization of Russian language version of Vuokatti landing page are presented. Chapter 4 shows the results of eight weeks long A/B test of the landing page. In the final chapter, conclusions are made based on the presented findings.

2 Digital marketing

Digital marketing is marketing of products and services with the help of digital technologies (Financial Times 2016). Digital marketing is often referred to as online marketing, but it also contains mobile, radio and TV and all other forms of digital media used for promotional purposes (Technopedia 2016).

According to Dodson (2016) digital marketing channels include: Search engine optimization (SEO), pay per click advertising (PPC) or search engine marketing (SEM), digital display advertising (e.g. web banner advertising), email marketing, social media marketing, mobile marketing (SMS and MMS etc.) and website analytics (Dodson 2016, p. 2). Landing page optimization belongs to this category as well due to its close connection to pay per click advertising and search engine optimization (Patel & Jacob 2012).

Digital marketing has the same concept as traditional marketing – it is all about understanding people's behavior, but technology allows the use of new platforms for advertising. In digital marketing, it is important to learn to employ these new channels and to understand how people use them. (Ryan 2016, p. 12)

As more and more people spend their free time in the internet, digital marketing has become a great medium to reach this large audience (Ryan 2016, p. xiii). Digital media has great advantage over other marketing channels as it allows the advertiser to obtain information about the behavior of the audience (Ryan 2016, p. 2).

Digital channels belong to addressable media – all of the digital devices connected to the internet have their own IP-addresses. For example, computers, tablets, mobile phones, digital TVs (internet protocol television) etc. have their addresses. These addressable devices produce unique information which is possible to monitor, analyze and use for marketing purposes. (Wertime & Fenwick 2011)

Thus, digital marketing has become more targeted and relevant to the customers' needs than traditional marketing. Addressable digital channels make the results more easily measurable through data analytics tools and present oppor-

tunities to constantly optimize and increase marketing campaigns' efficiency by creating customized messaging and content. (Wertime & Fenwick 2011)

Digital marketing in travel industry

Thanks to breakthrough in technology and high speed internet, nowadays travellers book their holidays online. They can compare offers, prices and reviews within few minutes and have more choices than ever on where to book and stay. Consequently, travel industry has changed from a business-centered to a customer-centered model where the consumer's interests come first. (Paragon 2016) Companies put efforts in creating a strong presence across digital channels, with special focus on mobile channels, for example, in apps (Vogel 2016).

In 2015, online travel sales were 533.52 billion US dollars and this figure is expected to increase up to 762 billion dollars by the year 2019 (Statista 2015). A Google (Thinkwithgoogle 2014) study shows that search engines and hotels' websites have become the most popular online trip planning tools for travelers. Figure 1 presents online sources used by leisure and business travellers.
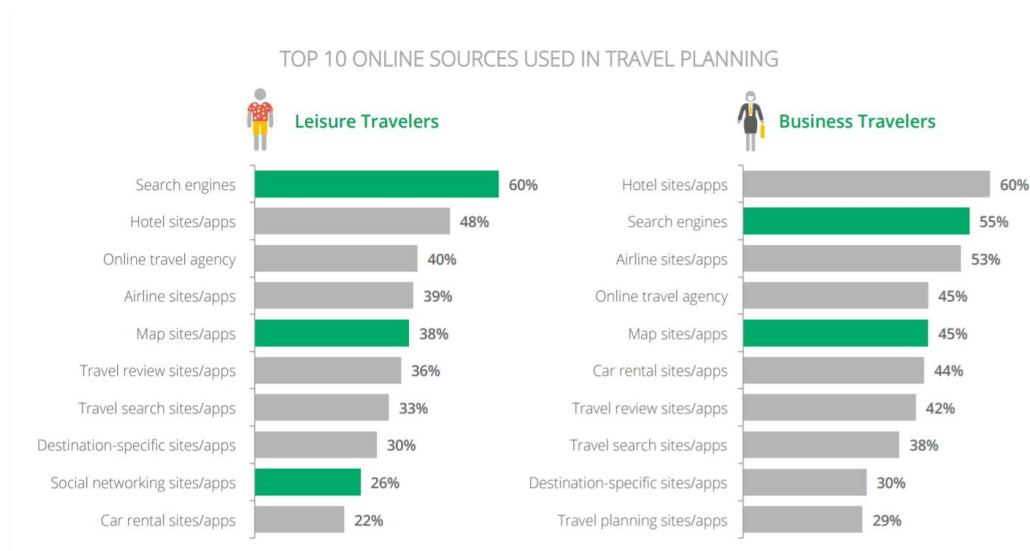

Figure 1. Most used online tools for leisure and business travellers. (Thinkwithgoogle 2014)

According to research by Expedia (Expedia Media Solutions 2016), consumers visit about 38 travel websites before booking a trip. This fact already brings challenge and at the same time huge opportunity to hotels.

Customers are searching for better alternatives. They want a good experience and a good price. Additionally, online travel agencies (OTA, for example Expedia.com, Hotels.com, Booking.com) provide information about available rooms from several different online sources thus reducing the customers' need to book directly from service providers e.g. individual hotel websites. (Boswoth 2015)

With many different possibilities, it is especially important to give the visitors a reason to stay at the hotel website and convince the visitor to book by offering the best price and good website shopping experience. Latter can be achieved by good service design and through optimization of the hotel's landing page.

3   Landing page optimization

This chapter describes the landing page and the elements related to landing page optimization.

3.1   What is a landing page

A landing page is a webpage where visitors of the website "land" after arriving from an online source, such as internet advertisement, social media, email link or search engine result. Landing page often serves as continuation of online ads and is created to convince the visitor to take a desirable action on the website. (Scherer 2015; Harwood & Harwood 2009) According to Ash, Page & Ginty (2012) landing page can be a part of a website or a separate page specially designed to get traffic from an online marketing campaign.

The primary function of the landing page is to get a visitor to perform an action desired by the company. This action could be for example buying, downloading, completing a form or a click-through to another page, viewing a video, taking a demo tour or providing a product evaluation. Good landing page carries the visitors through this process and converts visitors into customers. (Harwood & Harwood 2009) Ash et al. (2012) state that to achieve remarkable results, not only the landing page should be optimized but the whole route from the landing page to a conversion action such as purchase, lead generation, email subscription etc. Due to the scope of the thesis only landing page optimization will be covered in this paper.

3.2 Difference between search engine optimization and landing page optimization

Search engine optimization (SEO) is a popular term used in online marketing. It is important to understand the difference between SEO and landing page optimization (LPO). SEO is a process of improving the website to make it appear on the highest positions in search engine results for related keywords. SEO is used for increasing the amount and quality of traffic from search engines to the website. LPO or conversion rate optimization (CRO) is a process of improving landing page to increase website's efficiency. LPO's goal is to encourage people to act (convert) after they come to the landing page. (Ash et al. 2012, p. 117)

Search engine spiders appreciate lots of text devoted to particular topic which is why SEO pages contain more information than LPO ones. Most of the landing page visitors prefer to do a quick scan of the page, therefore LPO pages have short texts with possibility to get to action. (Ash et al. 2012, p. 117)

3.3 Types of landing pages

According to Ash et al. (2012) and Gardner (2009) landing pages can be categorized in the three main types: internal website landing page, microsite, and standalone landing page.

Internal website landing page is the most common type of landing page and it is a part of the main website. It can be a *Homepage* or a *Product description page*. A homepage represents the laziest type of landing page – it has many choices and distractions such as navigation, links, banners etc. Homepage rarely has one clear and designed conversion goal. Large variety of options often drives visitor away from the intended action. Despite its shortcomings homepage continues to be a popular destination point for many advertising campaigns. Product description page contains information about the product for sale and is another popular type of landing page. It is easy to use as it does not require additional efforts for building a separate page but has the same disadvantages as the homepage.

Microsite is a miniature version of a website (or sitelet) created as a supplement of the main website and having its own different URL. It does not have the infrastructure of the primary site and provides easier-to-find content such as more specific and detailed presentation of the product. Microsite is used to promote a particular brand, product or service, and has one objective. It has more consistent sales message that enables it to push the visitor to a desired conversion action.

Standalone landing pages are pages specially created for online marketing campaigns. They have the highest conversion rates but are not well ranked in search engine results due to duplicate content. Standalone landing pages can be *Click Through, Lead-Capture, Infomercial* or *Viral landing pages. Click Through landing* page provides information about advertisement offer – its main goal is to convince the visitor to proceed to the main website and to complete the transaction. *Lead Capture landing page* is created to receive visitor's contact details such as name and email address in exchange for an incentive. *Infomercial landing page* promotes product or offer in emotional and excitable way to persuade the visitor take a desirable action. *Viral landing page* has two main elements – a great content and sharing enablers. It includes social media tools, for example, re-tweet button in the beginning and at the end of the post. (Ash et al. 2012, pp. 17-19; Gardner 2009)

On the other hand, Harwood & Harwood (2009) claim that homepages and microsites don't belong in the category of landing pages, i.e. only Product description and Stand Alone pages would be classified as landing pages. In this thesis, it is considered that landing page could be any page a visitor arrives after clicking on search result, external website link or advertisement, including homepage and sitelet.

3.4   What is conversion process

The conversion process takes place when a visitor commits conversion action that brings a measurable benefit to the company. Depending on the website's type the required action could be buying, downloading, completing a form or a click-through to another page, viewing a video, taking a demo tour, or providing

a product evaluation. The goal can also be reaching certain amount of page views during one visit, amount of repeated visits or return frequency, length of one visit and a high website rating on the survey tools. Conversion rate is calculated as follows: Conversion rate = Number of conversions / Unique visitors. (Ash et al. 2012, p.13)

Hotel websites relate to e-commerce websites. Thus, conversion action for the hotel can be a purchase or subscription, form-fill, review, rating or social media sharing. (Ash et al. 2012, p. 31) For commercial websites the average conversion rate is 1-2%. For the good highly optimized websites it can be 15-25%. (Ash et al. 2012, pp. 25-27)

Conversion process for the landing page should be defined beforehand – it should be measurable and with a clarified benefit to the company. The most common problem of any landing page is that it has no defined purpose or value preposition; instead it is a mix of unrelated pieces of information competing for visitor's attention. So, to begin the process of LPO it is essential to understand what the purpose and desired conversion of the landing page are. (Ash et al. 2012, p. 13)

3.5 Service design

To achieve a successful landing page, it is important to understand who the customers are, recognize their needs and what they are trying to accomplish at the website and clearly present them available choices (Ash et al. 2012, p.43-44). Landing pages are optimized in order to make them efficient, user friendly and to reach the audience, thus their design must serve needs and goals of the users. This is where service design is applied.

Service design is a complex, customer-centric approach implementing design methods, instruments, processes and knowledge about customer needs to create services that meet customer expectations and provide a positive value proposition (Schleibs 2016).

Service design involves principles of ergonomics and knowledge about human-computer-interaction to enhance efficiency. Besides functionality, much atten-

tion in service design is paid to attractiveness and aesthetics of the webpages. (Goodwin 2011, p. 4) Elements of a successful landing page described in chapter 3.8 are all part of good service design.

3.6 Cultural factors in webpage design

There are cultural differences in the way people process information. One of the greatest challenges in web design is developing cross-cultural websites taking into account psychological peculiarities inherent in different cultures. Thus, according to Faiola & Matei (2006) visitors manage to find necessary information faster when using a webpage created by designers from their own culture.

As one of the objectives of the thesis is optimization of Russian language version of Vuokatti landing page, the discussion in this chapter is focused on Russian internet users' behavior that should be acknowledged when designing and optimizing a landing page in Russian language.

According to Goehner & Richmond (2015) Russians are impressed by big sizes and numbers. Affinity for the group is essential for Russian culture because in social orientation Russians belong to interdependent group. This means that feedbacks and testimonials from others could play an important role in increasing of landing page conversion.

Russians value stability, predictability and prefer to avoid financial risk. Tried and tested is much more welcome than something new and unfamiliar. Thus, Pesu (2013) states that Russians do not trust new companies and will not easily submit credit card information. Due to a lack of trust in online payment security it is essential to provide landing page in Russian with trust symbols.

Russians value good quality and creativity in design. As a result, among best examples of Russian hotel webpages were those with outstanding and original appearance. (Tihonov 2014) For many Russians quality of webpage design correlates with company's status and quality of its services (Polyakov 2010).

3.7 A/B testing

The effect of changes on the landing page has to be analyzed, for example by comparing the results before and after the changes. A/B testing (split testing) is a widely used analysis method for landing page optimization. In A/B testing, the incoming traffic is split between different versions (A and B) of the page to discover which variant brings better conversion rate. The test is usually run for at least one week until the statistical significance (confidence level) exceeds 90% which would mean that conversion rates of A and B versions of the page differ for the reason other than chance fluctuations. (Unbounce 2016d)

3.8 Elements of a successful landing page

This chapter describes the key elements that should be considered in landing page design and optimization process.

3.8.1 Above the fold area

Fold is a viewable area on the screen seen without vertical or horizontal scrolling (Harwood & Harwood 2009, l. 1322). A well-organized fold area plays a very important role in the success of the landing page as it could be the only place a visitor would see (Harwood & Harwood 2009, l.1351). All the most important information should be seen above the page fold without the visitor having to scroll it down. Horizontal scrolling should also be avoided (Ash et al. 2012, p. 131). An exception could be made for pages with expensive products / services where more detailed information is essential for visitor's decision making process (Ash et al. 2012, p. 241).

Information in the fold area should correspond to visitor's expectation arisen from promises on the traffic sources (online advertisements, links from other websites etc.) (Ash et al. 2012, p. 83-85). Text on the landing page should be suitable for scanning and easy to absorb as most of the internet users do not read but scan web pages (Harwood & Harwood 2009, l. 1389).

Screen resolution, operating system and size of browser windows should be considered when designing the fold area. For example, according to RapidTables (2016) in 2014 the most commonly used screen resolution was

1366x768 pixels. Page load time must be also taken into account. (Harwood & Harwood 2009, l. 1389) According to Work (2011) almost half of the users expect the website to load within 2 seconds and leave the page when the loading time exceeds 3 seconds. Figure 2 shows how the fold area is seen in different screen resolutions.
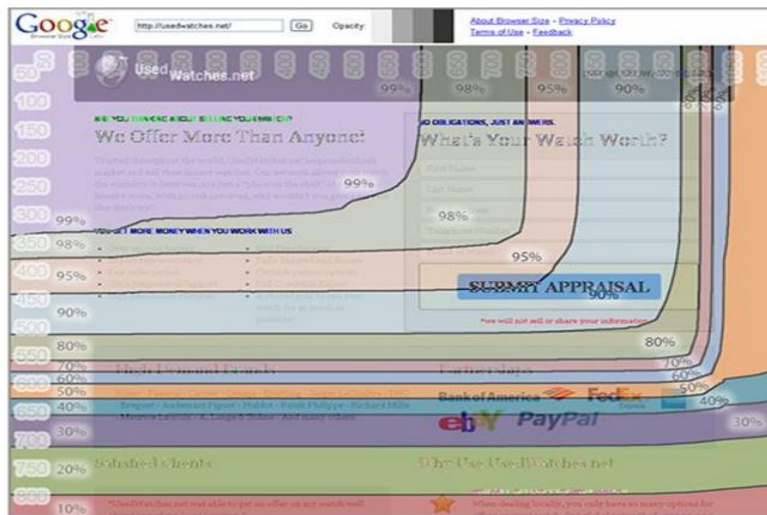

Figure 2. The fold area in different screen resolutions. (Ash et al. 2012, p. 241)

3.8.2 Heading and subheading

The landing page should be designed so that it acquires visitor's attention and evokes curiosity. One of the important elements of landing page is strong **compelling headline** giving the visitors a reason to stay on the page. (Ash et al. 2012, p. 241) Heading is the most scanned element of the page. According to Ash (2012), 8 out of 10 visitors read only the headline. After reading headline the visitor decides whether to stay or leave. (Ash et al. 2012, p. 191)

The heading should be an extension of the advertisement, email or link that brought visitor to the landing page (Smith 2016). It must be clear and express the idea (purpose) of the whole page (Ash et al. 2012, p.70). Heading should also relate to solving visitor's needs or be written in a form of question (Ash et al. 2012, p. 241). It should be simple and concise (Harwood & Harwood 2009, l. 1715). At the same time phrases in the heading shouldn't be too general (Morris 2014). It is also important to find the right font size and color for the headline (more detailed information will be given in chapter 2.7.9) (Ash et al. 2012, p. 241). Thus, it must stand out from other text on the page.

Aaron (2013) suggests following ways for writing a better headline:

- Headlines with 8 words work best (click-through rate (CTR) increases by 21% above the average).
- Titles containing odd numbers have 20% higher CTR than the headlines with even numbers.
- A colon (:) or a hyphen (-) in the heading have a greater CTR than an exclamation mark.
- A triple exclamation mark (!!!) brings two times more clicks than any other punctuation mark.
- Using numbers (for example "7 Ways to ...")
- Appealing to the reader ("The reasons why you should ...")
- Using word how ("How to save ...")
- Offering new information ("Ways to ...")
- With a question ("Looking for a best place for your holiday?")

In some cases landing page has a **subheading** which helps to keep the headline short and extends its idea (thelandingpagecourse.com 2016). In cases when there is no need to clarify heading's message, subheading could be omitted.

3.8.3 Body text

Effective body text has inverted pyramid structure; it is brief and hype-free (Ash et al. 2012, p. 191). It supports the headline by for example explaining the key benefits of buying the product or service from the company.

Pyramid structure means that conclusions and main points are mentioned first. Not so important and supporting data is put further down. (Ash et al. 2012, p. 191) Briefness means that the concepts are simplified and text paragraphs shortened to easy-scanned bullet points. Each bullet should not be longer than one line. Optimal amount of bullet points is from 3 to 7. (Ash et al. 2012, p. 242-243)

If it is decided to use text paragraph, its length should not exceed 3-4 lines (Harwood & Harwood 2009, l. 1736). Each paragraph should express one main

idea. Most important data should be placed in the beginning and at the end of each paragraph. The text should be also checked for spelling and grammatical mistakes. (Harwood & Harwood 2009, l. 1772)

Additional information from "read more" or "see details" should be moved to supporting pages (Ash et al. 2012, p. 242-243). Optimal amount of words on the page should be not more than 200. Pages having more than 200 words show significant decrease in the amount of total pages read. (Ash et al. 2012, p. 191)

Hype-free content means avoiding writing in excessive promotional style. Due to the large amount of advertisements in our daily lives most internet users have created a defense mechanism against hype and learned to filter out most of it. Thus, given information should be objective and the page should concentrate on the needs of its visitors. The text should be factual, task-oriented and precise. Metaphors, idioms and puns should be avoided as they could be misunderstood in different countries. Short and simple words and sentences would make information easier to recall and absorb. Other recommendations include using active voice and active verbs, descriptive link text, using numbers instead of words, highlighting important words, using clear fonts to mark headings and subheadings (more information in chapter 2.7.9), applying not more than two indenting levels for headlines and bullet lists, and using additional links to direct visitor to "see also" related pages. (Ash et al. 2012, p. 193, Harwood & Harwood 2009, l. 1751)

3.8.4 Clear call-to-action

The most important part of a landing page is the call-to-action (CTA) button or link as it has a direct influence on conversion rate. CTA element must be located within the fold area and accessible to the visitor without scrolling. (Harwood & Harwood 2009, l. 1832)

Message of the call-to-action should be obvious, clear and focused on a single action (Ash et al. 2012, p.68). It should tell what the visitor is expected to do on the page. If he is expected to follow a link, CTA could be "Follow the link right now", if he is expected to scroll the page, CTA should mention scrolling action. (Martin 2012) Effective CTA also includes benefits the customer receives by

ordering, for example: "Book now to get free room upgrade!" (Ash et al. 2012, p.66, p.243).

It is good to avoid using too general phrases like "submit" or "continue" in CTA text. If the aim of the landing page is an immediate sale, the call-to-action should give a sense of urgency: "Only now! Reserve a double room for just 60€!" (Harwood & Harwood 2009, l. 1793)

Successful button design depends on layout and context of a particular landing page (Aagaard 2013). There is no one-size-fits-all template for call-to-action button but there are a few rules that help to create efficient CTA element:

1. The button should look like a button and be easily recognizable. Its design should be simple and following a common sense.
2. The button should not be small in relation to other objects (blocks of text, images, title, etc.).
3. The color of call-to-action element should be bright and stand out from the rest of the page. At the same time it should fit in with the overall design and color-scheme of the site. According to Aagaard (2013), green and orange colors often show good results in test as they excel out on many landing pages.
4. Wording of the call-to-action should be carefully planned and correspond to proposal's context.
5. Use a contrasting tone (light on dark or vice versa), and color for inscriptions on the CTA-element.
6. Use a font which is already present on the page and, if necessary, emphasize CTA button in "bold"). (LPGenerator 2011)
7. It is recommended to have different versions of button styles and call-to-action text and test them with A/B testing method (Ash et al. 2012, p.243).

3.8.5 Hero shot

Hero shot is an image or a video showing the product or service in use. It is a face of the landing page and one of the most important emotional triggers. Hero shot should help the visitors to imagine themselves using the product. (Un-

bounce 2016a) According to Otting (2015) there are four main categories of hero shot: *the happy user, the product shot, how it works* and *imbedded videos.*

The happy user is the most commonly used hero shot - it shows a smiley person enjoying the product or service provided by the company. Image for this type of hero shot should be relevant to the company's potential customers so that they can easily associate themselves with that happy user.

The product shot is used in case when it is important for the visitor to see what he receives at the end. In this case landing page should include description of product and how it works, as well as screenshot of how the product looks like.

Explanation video is a great way to tell information about the product while keeping visitors' attention. The video should be short (not more than 2.7 minutes) and tell about the company, what it is doing and why people should use its product / service. (Liptrap 2016; Otting 2015)

Hero shot for hotels

Hero shot is an essential element of any hotel's website (Charlesworth 2014, p. 120). The saying "a picture is worth a thousand words" is particularly applicable for hotel industry. High-quality images lead to better conversion and good photos of the hotel help to sell rooms.

For hotel landing page it is important to include image with accommodation, though having a shot of beds is not enough. Hotel is viewed as a non-permanent home, so image creating a feeling of hotel's atmosphere should be essential. (Steinberg 2015)

According to Expedia's research, one of the most effective images for a hotel is a "room with a view". For example, rooms with windows looking out onto attractive landscape – sea, swimming pool or garden. (Steinberg 2015)

Images using natural light are most preferable by online visitors. Images of hotel's unique features are highly appreciated as well. On the contrary, using of images distorted by fisheye lenses or taken from odd angles is not recommended because they are viewed as suspicious, creating a sense that a hotel has

something to hide. (Steinberg 2015) Figure 3 demonstrates an example of an attractive image for a hotel landing page.

Figure 3. An example of an attractive image for a hotel's landing page. (Steinberg 2015)

3.8.6 Trust elements

Most of the visitors do not trust an unknown company when arriving first time on its landing page. Decision about page's credibility is made within seconds while looking at the landing page design, scanning its content and reading supposedly real testimonials for the company's products/services. (Unbounce 2016b) Trust elements on the landing page are needed to influence visitor's behavior, relieve hesitation and fear about making a wrong decision when buying product or ordering services from the company (Ash et al. 2012, p.46).

Trust elements include company's privacy policies, trust/guarantee seals, social proof/third party validation (reviews, testimonials, referrals and endorsements), mentions in media – blogs, websites, press, partnerships with trusted companies, lists of clients and their logos, studies about amount of market share or degree of customer satisfaction, ratings/rankings, industry awards (Ash et al. 2012, pp. 100-101; Unbounce 2016b). Harwood & Harwood (2009) include company's contact details into this category as well.

Social proof is one of the most effective emotional triggers. Its idea is very simple: consumers trust business and believe in the effectiveness of its offer, if

they see positive feedback (recommendations and reviews) from other people (Nanavati 2013).

Trust/guarantee seals, for example, transactional assurances help to convince the visitor that it is safe to deal with the company – to transfer money, give email and other contact details etc. For a hotel, transaction assurances could be safe shopping symbols promising that visitor's personal data will not be stolen or privacy symbols telling that visitor will not be spammed by email or his email address will not be given to third parties. (Ash et al. 2012, p. 96)

It is important to show trust elements in the right place of the landing page. Visitors' or industry experts' testimonials, clients' logos (for business-to-business customers) and number of clients could be presented in a right column on the page or under the call-to-action text. (Ash et al. 2012, p. 243) Transaction assurances could be shown before checkout process and displayed so that they could be easily noticed (for example, in the upper left corner of the page) (Ash et al. 2012, p. 96).

Having a **telephone number** on the page makes visitors feel that they are dealing with an existing company and there are real people at the end of the line. It can be a good option for clients who do not like online booking but are interested in the offering. (Unbounce 2016c)

3.8.7 Attention focusing design

Visitor's attention is the most valuable thing a company gets. Success in managing visitor's attention means success in conversions. Well-designed landing page makes it clear for the visitor what he is supposed to do next. Attention focusing design helps to direct visitor's attention to the right place and turn the most important page elements into noticeable and memorable (Liptrap 2016).

Contrast is one of the most powerful visual techniques used in attention focusing design. The fastest way to attract visitor's attention is to emphasize most important element (such as CTA) from the rest of the content, making it the dominant component of the landing page. (Georgieva 2016)

Heading and subheading together with call-to-action are often united into an action block - a place for a visitor to interact with the landing page. To make the action block outstand from other parts of the page it is emphasized with subtle background color while other parts of the page are left plain and discreet. (Ash et al. 2012, p. 68)

Another most common way to manage visitors' attention is the use of **whitespace** around different elements of the page. The more whitespace there is around the element, the more noticeable is becomes. (Liptrap 2016) It also helps to organize page's structure and makes it clear in which order to absorb the information (Ash et al. 2012, p. 95). White space between the letters and lines affects readability. Silverman (2015) states that increasing the font size and space between the lines could dramatically increase website conversion rate.

Ash et al (2012) mention two rules for websites. 1) If the visitor can't find something easily, it does not exist. 2) If too many items are emphasized, all of them lose importance. (Ash et al. 2012, p. 38) Effective landing page should have **as few distractive elements as possible**. All the unnecessary images and text should be deleted because they create clutter and make visitors feel confused. (Ash et al. 2012, p. 242) Only few of the page elements need special emphasis (Ash et al. 2012, p.41).

Other things to avoid include (Ash et al. 2012, pp. 78-81):
1. Wild background colors
2. Gaudy text (large fonts with edging effects, contrast colors) (see more about fonts in Chapter 2.7.9)
3. Too many visual decorations (pages work much better and bring more profit without them)
4. Use of animation and video irrelevant to conversion goal
5. Entry of pop-up windows (they annoy and restrain visitors from reading the webpage content)

3.8.8 Usability and cognitive fluency

Good landing page should look simple and be easy to deal with. Visitors should instinctively understand how it works and what they are expected to do on the page – this is called "**cognitive fluency**". According to Walker (2013), Google study has found that "visually complex" webpages are commonly rated as less attractive while "highly prototypical" webpages with simple design are considered to be the most beautiful. Simple **niche design** forms a sufficient level of trust to the brand and offer as visitors don't need to do extra cognitive effort to understand page's performance - they could start to act right away. (Walker 2013)

According to studies of visitors' **eye-path,** the upper left corner is a place to which people pay most of their attention. Central part of the page is a place where people look for an important content. Upper right and lower left corners are thus usually ignored. (Ash et al. 2012, p. 253) It means that important elements are expected to be on the upper left and central part of the landing page.

There are common principles about where most frequently used **elements** of the page are **expected to be located**. For example, navigation menu usually appears on the top of the page or in the left sidebar. (Crestodina 2013) Brand logo is placed in the upper left corner of the page with the page heading nearby. Shopping card and search field are found in the upper right corner. (Walker 2013) Applying these basic principles would contribute to better orientation and understanding of landing page content by the user.

3.8.9 Visual appeal, use of colors and fonts

It is essential to make the landing page **visually appealing**. Visual presentation is important as it creates the first impression of the page. Visitors react emotionally on the page design and decide whether or not it looks unprofessional. (Ash et al. 2012, p. 171-172) In professional design fonts, colors and graphical elements blend into neat and complete look (Ash et al. 2012, p. 95).

3.8.9.1 Colors

Color is one of the most powerful tools used in design. It includes colors for fonts, buttons, backgrounds, links and other elements. Color is important because it is a part of the branding. (Harwood & Harwood 2009, l. 2075) Smith (2014) states that color creates 62-90% of impression about the product.

There is no universal advice on the use of colors because they have different meanings depending on a culture and would have different effects on people from different countries (BlogKissmetrics 2010). Despite differences in color perception there are few general rules that could be good to follow.

Colors should create pleasant visual experience. Color schemes used on the landing page should not be boring or chaotic. Complementary colors would help to create contrast and balance. Applying light colors for background and dark for the text would help to increase text's readability. (Harwood & Harwood 2009, l. 2075) To avoid overloading the page with the colors not more than 3-4 colors, including shades, should be used (Smith 2014).

Blue color is often associated with trust, tranquility and serenity. People perceive it as "peaceful", "calm", a safe color. Yellow is used for warnings - call for attention. Green is the color of nature and is associated with "open air", "ecology", "nature", "environment". It is viewed as a safe but vibrant color. Orange is perceived as a "cheerful" and means activity, fun and togetherness. However, sometimes it is perceived as a "cheap color." (Smith 2014) Red is an emotionally intense color associated with energy, danger, strength, desire and love. It is an accent color used to encourage people to make quick decisions. (Color Wheel Pro 2015) Black color creates a feeling of luxury and value. It is the color of elegance, sophistication and power and is often used by expensive brands. Gray often feels soft, modern and clear. As for the white color – lots of white space creates feeling of freedom, space and openness. (Smith 2014)

According to Smith (2014), numerous A/B tests have shown that the best colors for the CTA-elements are red, green, orange and yellow. Harwood & Harwood (2009) state that about 15% of companies use red color for CTA button. Never-

theless the main button's color should be bright and contrast with other colors on the page.

Whatever color scheme is decided to be used for the landing page, it should be tested to find an optimal variant. Thus, few colors could be tested for the main elements. As claimed by LPGenerator (2016a), friendly, open and creative website look could be made using a combination of blue and green tones, with touches of yellow and orange (for CTA-elements) on a white or light gray background.

3.8.9.2 Fonts

The font on the landing page should look simple and be easy to read. It should be browser friendly and display correctly in most of the browsers and machines whether it is a PC or Mac. (Harwood & Harwood 2009, l. 2343) Table 1 presents browser-safe and reader-friendly fonts.

Font	Readability	Character style
Arial	Easy to read but only at bigger sizes	Streamlined, modern look
Arial Black	**Easy to read at any size**	**Very clean and versatile**
Comic Sans MS	Easy to read at any size	Informal and friendly but overused looks ridiculous and amateur
Courier New	Okay in smaller doses, not widely used	Based on a typewriter face, used for sample computer code
Georgia	Very good at any size, designed for online reading	Modern, friendly and professional
Lucida Console (Monaco on Mac)	Easy to read at any size	Very simple and straightforward
Tahoma	Ideal when small text is needed	Sturdy and assertive
Times New Roman	Great at 12 point and higher	Serious, formal and businesslike
Trebuchet MS (Helvetica on Mac)	Easy to read at any size	Streamlined and modern, but friendly
Verdana	Excellent, easy to read in all sizes	Modern, friendly and professional

Table 1. Browser-safe and reader-friendly fonts (Harwood & Harwood 2009, l. 2343). Each mentioned font used in size 9 points.

There is no common rule for the font size, but the following recommendations could be useful to apply. As the goal of every landing page is to get its visitors read the message, it is better to use larger font size than smaller. Different font sizes are suited for different page elements, for example: Body text – 10-12 pt, Headings – 14, 16 or 18 pt, Subheadings - 12 or 14 pt, captions - 8, 9, 10 pt.

(Harwood & Harwood 2009, l. 2343) Silverman (2015) states that font size between 14-16 maximizes text readability.

Various font types are designed for use in different situations. Fonts Serif (one of them is Times New Roman) is often associated with professionalism, academicism and seriousness, while San-Serif fonts (like Helvetica) are more modern and less formal. (LPGenerator 2016a) Fancy or non-standard typefaces should be avoided as they can impact reader comprehension and thus, decrease page's conversion. When using a web-based font it is important to check that it does not affect the page loading rate.

3.8.10 Responsive web design and page load time

Responsive web design is another important issue for a successful landing page. In responsive web design the layout of the page changes depending on the device of the user whether it is desktop, tablet or phone. Content is resized, hided, shrank, enlarged, or moved to make it look good on any screen size, platform and orientation. (w3schools.com 2016)

Nowadays people are constantly connected and "online". They expect to get seamless experience regardless of the device they use. (Starkov & Mechoso Safer 2014) Recent increase in smartphone use has changed the way people search and consume information in the internet. TripAdvisor study revealed that in 2015 42% of travelers around the world used smartphones for planning and booking of their holidays, including accommodation. (Carter 2015) According to Google Survey in the same year conversion rates on mobile travel websites increased 88% (Gevelber & Heckmann 2015). Thus, creating mobile-friendly landing pages optimized for conversions is essential.

Many online studies have shown that **page load time** has a great impact on conversion rate. According to Work (2011) almost 50% of the visitors expect a webpage to download within 1 or 2 seconds and leave it if the loading time exceeds 3 seconds. One second of delay decreases conversion by 7-12% and 2 seconds of delay - by 50% (ECommerceGenome 2016). To reduce the page load time it is recommended to (ECommerceGenome 2016; Smith 2016; LPGenerator 2016b):

1. Ensure that above the fold information loads quickly
2. Reduce files sizes with GZIP compression; resize and compress images
3. Compress HyperText Markup Language (HTML), Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) and JavaScript for example, with Minifier program
4. Keep number of apps with JavaScript to minimum; place JavaScript at the end of HTML document
5. Minimize redirects
6. Limit WordPress plugins
7. Host all the page components on fast web servers (Kinsta, WP Engine, Pagely)
8. Deliver images with a Content Delivery Network (CDN)
9. Check website's load speed in Google Analytics (Google Analytics > Behavior > Site speed)

4 Analysis of hotel websites

Websites of three Finnish hotels were chosen and their landing pages evaluated based on the recommendations presented in the theoretical part of the thesis. Homepages of the websites were considered as landing pages. The comparison included English versions of the following hotel websites: Sokos Hotels, Holiday Club Saimaa and Omena Hotels. The English language versions of the websites were compared.

Hotels' landing pages were evaluated based on the following parameters:

1. Key information location above the fold area.
2. Heading and subheading - clarity of the message, appeal.
3. Body text - pyramid structure, shortness.
4. Call-to-action – clearness, CTA element is well seen.
5. Hero shot – attractiveness, relativeness.
6. Presence of trust elements.
7. Attention focusing design - use of space, contrast colors, fonts and other elements.
8. Usability and cognitive fluency – clear menu, niche design; elements are located where they are expected; it is easy to understand what the page

is about, what is required to do on the page, easy to find necessary information.

9. Visual appeal, use of colors and fonts - overall impression, professional design, use of colors, graphics and fonts.

10. Responsive web design and page load time – all important elements are seen on mobile/tablet devices, page load time does not exceed 3 seconds.

Each parameter was given a grade from 1 to 10, with 10 corresponding to the best score. Attention Wizard tool (Attention Wizard 2016) was used to estimate how visitors would interact with the page. It showed visitors' predicted eye-movements and attention heatmap allowing to see which elements of the page were most noticeable.
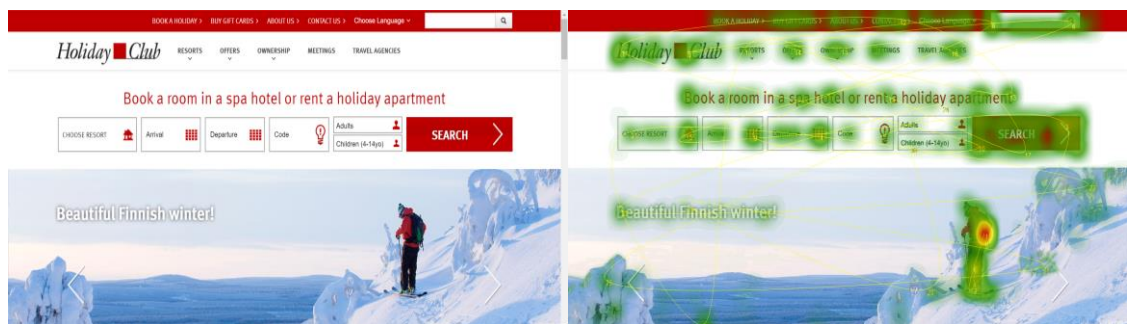
4.1   Sokos Hotels
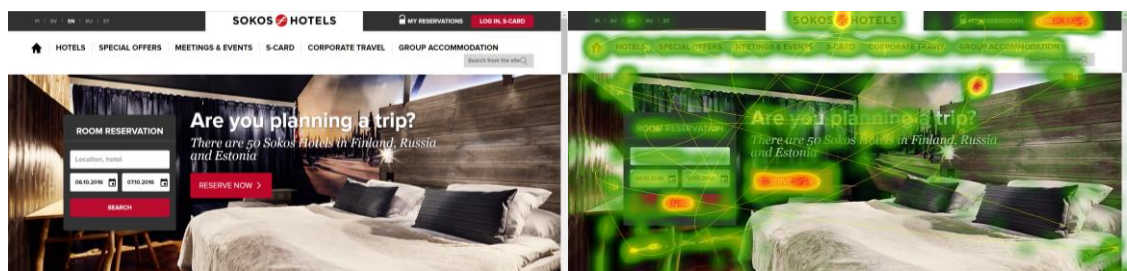
Figure 4. Screenshot of the above the fold area and attention heatmap for Sokos Hotels' landing page. (For the entire page's screenshot see Appendix 1)

1. **Above the fold area – 10.** Most important information (booking and booking search button) is located above the fold area.

2. **Heading and subheading – 8.** Heading and subheading are present. Heading is written in the form of question, appealing to visitors' needs ("Are you planning a trip?"). Subheading sentence presents solution to the problem – "There are 50 hotels in Finland, Russia and Estonia".

3. **Body text – 5.** There is not much body text – it is presented in three columns under the fold area but not related to booking information. Each column has its own idea. There is some information about benefits to the customer (S-card) but it is not related to the booking itself.

4. **CTA – 7.** There are two CTA buttons on the page - the booking button and the search button. Red color of the buttons creates contrast with

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other elements of the page. Text on the first button says "search" – it sounds general and has functional meaning. Text on the second button calls out "reserve now" – which is a standard CTA choice for many accommodation website.

5. **Hero shot - 10.** The hero shot picture attracts attention – it isthe image of a hotel room typical for hotel websites. A wallpaper with a picture of Finnish winter landscape successfully replaces "view from the window". The quality of the picture is high and fits the overall design of the page.

6. **Trust elements – 5.** There are a few trust elements (Terns of use, Privacy policy, Our partners, contact telephone number) present on the page though most of them are not well noticeable as they appear on the very bottom of the page. Our partners element is mentioned as a link without partner companies' logos making it almost imperceptible. TripAdvisor's logo is present on the page but there are no customer's feedbacks. There are no community ratings and social plugins either.

7. **Attention focusing design – 9.** There is enough space between different sections of the page. Interaction form (Room reservation) is outlined with grey frame making it standing out. Other sections are also visually divided by light grey frames. There is enough space between the elements. The page does not look cluttered. The page is easy to scan as it is divided to few zones. Most important elements are outlined with color, space, font size.

8. **Usability and cognitive fluency – 9.** The page is easy to understand and use. Information structure is clear. The menu is logical, other elements appear on expected places: homepage button on the left from the menu, search field on the right from the menu, login field in the upper right corner, booking search and reservation button on the left side and in the center of the page.

9. **Visual appeal, use of colors and fonts – 9.** The design of the website looks professional. Contrast colors and good quality photo make the page look attractive. The first impression is good and creates feeling of trust. Colors used are also associated with Sokos Hotels brand. Fonts used for essential elements are large and clear. The font used for body

text is a bit too small (10.5 pt.) though it helps to emphasize more important parts of the page.

10. **Responsive web design and page load time – 10.** The page looks good on the screens of different devices including laptops, tablets and phones. The page load time does not exceed 3 seconds.

Recommendations for improvements

A short Body text should be included describing what Sokos Hotels chain is as well as benefits of booking from the company. Visitor's feedbacks should be added on the page. If the hotel was awarded with some rewards, this information should be placed above the fold area. For example, Solo Sokos Hotel Paviljonki, Solo Sokos Hotel Lahti Seurahuone and Solo Sokos Hotel Tammer were chosen as "Travellers' choice 2016" on TripAdvisor. Furthermore Solo Sokos Hotel Paviljonki was included in the list of 10 best hotels in Finland by TripAdvisor. This information could be good to add to the homepage - it will increase landing page's credibility. CTA text could be improved by making it more specific and including some benefit for the customer, for example: "Reserve now and get the best price".

4.2 Holiday Club

Figure 5. Screenshot of the above the fold area and attention heatmap for Holiday Club's landing page. (For the entire page's screenshot see Appendix 2)

1. **Above the fold area - 10.** Most important information (booking and booking search button) is located above the fold area.

2. **Heading and subheading – 7.** The booking section has a heading which is written in the form of call-to-action ("Book a room in a spa hotel or rent a holiday apartment"). There is no subheading. Instead under the booking section there is a banner carousel with two line changing text. Ban-

ner's first line text and booking section's text are of the same size which makes them compete with each other. Furthermore banner's heading text is emphasized with bold drawing some attention away from the booking section's heading.

3. **Body text – 6.** Body text is located under special offers' section. There is some information about Holiday Club ownership benefits; however information about other clients' benefits is indistinct. The body text has grey color and small font (10.5 pt.) making it difficult to read. Information about benefits of spending holidays with Holiday Club is more clearly presented in section "Relaxing Holidays at Our Resorts" which is located on the lower part of the page. Text "Did you know" has too small amount of text and much blank space making it look unaccomplished.

4. **CTA – 6.** There is an accommodation search button located in the booking section in the above the fold area. The text says "Search >>" which is standard text for a hotel website though it does not contain benefit statement or reason for the visitor to book. The size of the booking button is good; the text is written in capital letters and is large enough, too. The button color is red and has a contrast with many elements of the webpage except the upper small menu which has the same color. Red color is also used in Holiday Club's logo. Booking section's font has red color, too. Menu's red color makes the button less recognizable than it would be without it.

5. **Hero shot - 8.** There is a banner carousel with a few banners under the booking section. Hero shots show holiday destinations, possible views from the window, swimming pools, aquapark, etc. Pictures are of good quality, attract attention and give idea about what a holiday in Holiday Club could be. However, there are too many images and they all have their own text. The pictures are nice but the text is a distraction.

6. **Trust elements – 4.** There are no other trust elements except payment methods and telephone number present on the homepage.

7. **Attention focusing design – 4.** There are two menu levels, booking section with heading and banners with their own texts in the upper part of the page. Altogether they create clutter and diffuse visitor's attention. It is

not clear which elements are more important as all of them seem to be emphasized.

8. **Usability and cognitive fluency – 4.** As it was already mentioned, above the fold area is overloaded with text, colors and images and it is hard to understand which part of the page is better to interact with. Double menu makes it hard to absorb information. "Book a holiday" and "Buy a gift card" offerings are not expected to appear in the upper menu and are superfluous. Drop down menu "Choose language" would not be understood by a user who does not know English. After all, logo and the search field appear in the right place. Besides, under the fold area is divided to different sections making it easier to work with the page.

9. **Design and overall impression – 9.** The design looks quite professional and attractive. There are some elements that could be improved (for example, too much free space in "Did you know…" section. Otherwise the colors look bright and blend with each other. The first impression is good.

10. **Responsive web design and page load time – 10.** All important elements are seen on mobile/tablet devices. The page loads within 3 sec.

Recommendations for improvements

1. The upper menu information should be moved to under the fold area to reduce the load from above the fold area. 2. Drop-down flag menu should be used for the language as it would be intuitively clear for the users from different countries. 3. The booking section should be out framed to make it more outstanding and emphasize its font with bold letters. 4. CTA should be made more specific, for example extend its text to a phrase: "Find best accommodation options >>". 5. Banners' text font size should be decreased. Common headline should be created for all the banners, inspiring visitors take a desirable action on the page. Another option could be to move booking section to the lower part of the banner and make banner's headline booking section's heading. 6. More persuasive benefits should be included to the body text. Body text's font size should be increased to 12-14 pt. Sections "Relaxing Holidays at our Resorts", "Ownership", "Meetings", "Did you know" should be deleted; their information should be moved to the body text and presented it in a form of a bullet points. 7. Partner's

logos, visitor's feedbacks, community ratings, social plugins and privacy policy should be included to the page.

4.3 Omena Hotels
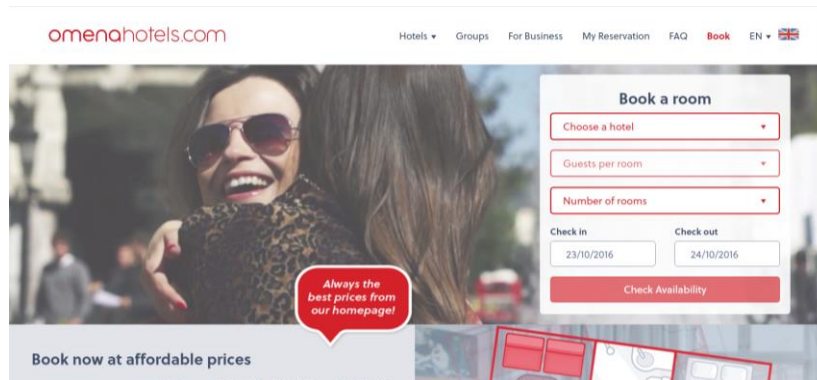
Figure 6. Screenshot of the above the fold area for Omena Hotels' landing page. (For the entire page's screenshot see Appendix 3)

1. **Above the fold area – 10**. The key information – menu, booking form, CTA are located above the fold area.

2. **Heading and subheading – 10.** There are two headings visible in above the fold area – "Book a room" and "Book now at affordable prices". There is also a subheading/comment near the second heading – "Always the best prices from our homepage!" All the texts are written in a form of call-to-action. They explain benefits at one stroke.

3. **Body text – 10.** Information on the page has pyramid structure. The text is short, clear, written in a form of bullet points and explaining customer's benefits.

4. **CTA – 10**. The light red CTA-button in booking section says "Check availability" which is a continuation of the heading "Book a room". CTA is written in a form of active verb. The color is less intensive than the color of the message "Always the best prices from our homepage" making it second thing to be noticed after information about the benefits.

5. **Hero shot – 3.** There is no hero shot but a video in the above the fold area. The video does not show hotel rooms but smiling people meeting, spending time together, and playing sports. The video is colorful and of good quality but not related to the hotel.

6. **Trust elements – 2.** There are no other trust elements except "Terms and conditions" present on the homepage. "Contact us" link is given in-

stead of a telephone number. Facebook, Instagram and YouTube logos are present but no customers' feedbacks or hotel ratings.

7. **Attention focusing design – 10.** Website design is minimalistic. There is lots of space, different sections are outlined, and the page is easy to scan.

8. **Usability and cognitive fluency – 10.** The menu is short and clear. It is easy to understand page's idea. The booking form and room prices help to proceed straight to the booking procedure. It is easy to find necessary information as it is divided into few blocks.

9. **Visual appeal, use of colors and fonts – 8.** The website looks professional. Every detail is on its place. The colors blend into a neat complete look. Mobile and tablet versions of the page look professional as well. The only thing that embarrasses is the slightly unrelated video on PC version of the website.

10. **Responsive web design and page load time – 10.** The page loads within 3 seconds. All essential elements are shown on mobile/tablet devices.

Recommendations for improvements

Another video should be created showing the hotel and its clients enjoying their time in the premises or a good photo of a hotel room should be placed to the homepage. Trust elements (privacy policy, customer feedbacks, hotel ratings, telephone number) should be added to the page.

4.4 Comparison results of the hotels

The results of website analysis are compared in Table 2. Landing page of Omena Hotels received the most points and got the maximum score for most of the evaluated elements except hero shot, trust elements and visual appeal. Sokos Hotels received only one point less than Omena Hotels and got high scores for hero shot, attention focusing design, usability and cognitive fluency as well as visual appeal. Holiday Club got fewer points than Omena Hotels and Sokos Hotels, but showed good results for some elements including hero shot and vis-

ual appeal. All three hotels received maximum points for above the fold area, responsive web design and page load time elements.

Evaluated element	Sokos Hotels	Holiday Club	Omena Hotels
Above the fold area	10	10	10
Heading and subheading	8	7	10
Body text	5	6	10
Call-to-action	7	6	10
Hero shot	10	8	3
Trust elements	5	4	2
Attention focusing design	9	4	10
Usability and cognitive fluency	9	4	10
Visual appeal, use of colors and fonts	9	9	8
Responsive web design and page load time	10	10	10
Overall points:	**82**	**68**	**83**

Table 2. Comparison of landing pages of Sokos Hotels, Holiday Club and Omena Hotels. Each aspect evaluated from score 1 (low) to 10 (high score).

5 Case Vuokatti

5.1 Presentation of the partner

To implement theoretical knowledge in practice, a website with accommodation reservation possibilities was chosen. Vuokatti joint marketing company became a partner for the research.

Vuokatti is a popular holiday and ski resort situated in the east of Finland in Kainuu region. It provides accommodation, sport activities and entertainments for its visitors all year round. Vuokatti joint marketing is responsible for providing accommodation in Vuokatti. Accommodation options (on the Russian pages of the company) include accommodation in hotels, apartments, cottages and camping sites.

5.2 Vuokatti's landing page optimization

Homepage is one of the most mission critical pages of a website and most visitors would estimate the website content based on the information presented on the homepage (Scan Yours 2015). Therefore despite some disadvantages of using homepage as a landing page it was decided to choose Vuokatti's Russian language homepage for landing page optimization and A/B testing.

Attention Wizard analysis tool (Attention Wizard 2016) was used to simulate visitors' eye-gaze path of the upper part of Vuokatti's homepage including above the fold and small part of below the fold area. Eye-tracking heatmap helped to understand which elements of the page attracted most of visitors' attention and which ones were ignored. The result is presented in Figure 7.
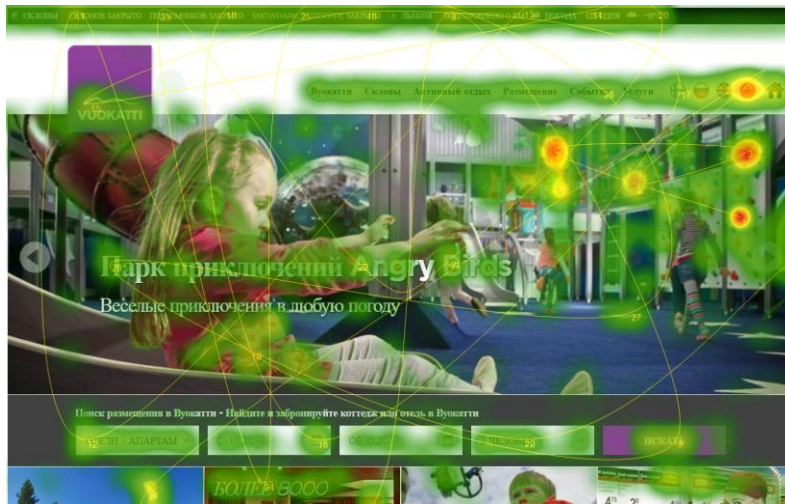
Figure 7. Eye-tracking prediction heatmap for Vuokatti's Russian Language homepage (Attention Wizard 2016)

There were many hotspots on the Heatmap which signified distracted visitor's attention and could cause low page conversion. For example, colorful banner parts and language menu attracted more attention than the main menu or booking button.

HotJar click-overlay heatmap service (HotJar 2016) was used to analyze what elements of the homepage were most often clicked. The result for the time period from 20th of September to 24th of October 2016 is presented in Figure 8 (for the full version see Appendix 4). Red spots show the most frequently clicked elements of the page, the yellow ones – less popular and the blue ones – rarely clicked spots. It can be seen from the heatmap that visitors' clicks were mostly concentrated on menu and booking section as well as the banner.
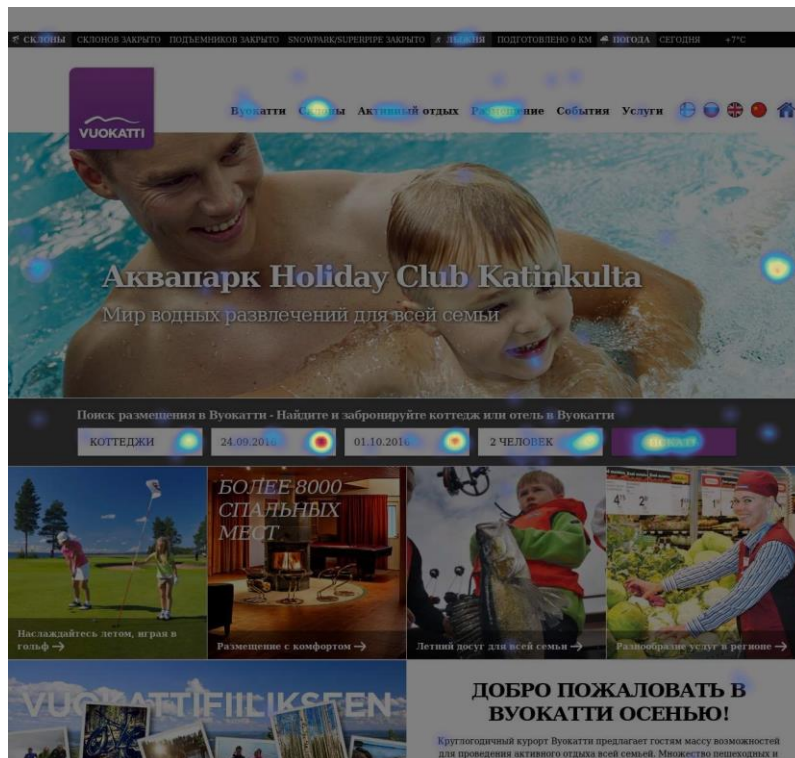
Figure 8. Click heatmap for Vuokatti's Russian Language homepage (HotJar 2016)

5.2.1 Evaluation of Vuokatti's landing page

1. **Above the fold area.** Booking and booking search button are located below the fold area.

2. **Heading and subheading.** There are some inscriptions that could be considered as headings. There is a large font text on the banners saying (translation from Russian): "Aquapark Holiday Club Katinkulta. Amusement water world for the whole family", "Angry Birds Adventure Park. Funny adventures for the whole family", "Silence of nature. Wide selection of cottages in Vuokatti." It represents Vuokatti's places of main interest but is not directly offering to book accommodation. There is also a text in accommodation search field saying: "Accommodation search in Vuokatti - Find and book cottage or hotel in Vuokatti". As the field is located below the fold area the inscription is not seen at once. Moreover, the grey background color, white color and small size of the font make the text imperceptible. Another heading located in below the fold area says: "Welcome to Vuokatti in autumn". The text is in capital letters and

represents the idea of website's homepage but does not call to reserve accommodation.

3. **Body text.** Body text is presented in under the fold area and describes some activities available in Vuokatti without concrete information about benefits to the customer.

4. **CTA.** CTA button on the page says "Search". The text sounds general and does not give a clear idea about what the visitor is expected to do on the page. Violet color of the button has some contrast with other elements of the page but is not well noticeable due to the grey background color of the accommodation search section.

5. **Hero shot.** There is a banner carousel with three banners located above the fold attracting much of visitor's attention. The first image shows parent with a child in the aquapark, the second - children in Angry Birds Adventure Park and the third - a cottage in the forest. The pictures have bright colors and are of a good quality. The idea of the banners is to demonstrate Vuokatti's main places of interest and redirect visitors to description pages.

6. **Trust elements.** There are no trust elements present on Vuokatti's homepage. TripAdvisor's logo is shown at the bottom of the page but there are no customer's feedbacks available. Neither the customer service telephone number is given.

7. **Attention focusing design.** The page looks cluttered. There is too much space above the main menu and not enough space between other sections of the page. Product cards are located too close to each other and booking section has too small indents. Images compete for visitor's attention. It is not clear which elements of the page are dominant and what the visitor is supposed to do first. Two menu levels and long texts on the product card icons create additional clutter and language flags on the right side on the menu distract visitor's attention. The image "Роскошное размещение для всей семьи" ("Luxury accommodation for the whole family") is too large, does not contain any new information or add any value but takes an incredible amount of space.

8. **Usability and cognitive fluency.** The page is overloaded with different blocks of information making information structure not very clear. Some

elements are located in unexpected places. For example, "Home" sign appears on the right side of the main menu. Accommodation search section with search button is located below the fold area. Page's menu as well as description text are shifted to the right which is not common for websites in European languages where text is read from the left to the right. There is no information search field present.

9. **Visual appeal, use of colors and fonts.** Inspite of some disadvantages described above, the design of the website looks quite professional, with attractive photos and appealing colors. The font on the banners is large and attracts much attention while fonts of the menu, accommodation booking section and body text are too small.

10. **Responsive web design and page load time.** The page load time on laptops, tablets and phones does not exceed 3 seconds. The main elements are present; however, there are some shortcomings in the way the material appears on mobile screen. For example, text on some banners goes beyond their borders; accommodation search section has grey color and white font making it much less noticeable than other page elements; to access accommodation search form, the user needs first to click on the entry "Open" in a drop down menu.

5.2.2 Proposed changes

Information from Eye-tracking heatmap and Click-overlay heatmap were used when creating a proposal for Vuokatti's homepage changes. Booking section with accommodation search button "Искать" ("Search") was considered as a major element of the homepage. Other important elements included main menu and banner headlines.

The main aim of the changes was to increase homepage's conversion – the amount of clicks to the accommodation search button "Искать" ("Search"). Other objectives of the proposed changes were: to remove clutter from the page, make the most important elements more visible and stand out from the rest (including moving them to the above the fold area), and make not so important elements less noticeable so that they would not compete for visitor's attention.

Due to the scope of the thesis recommendations for improvements concerned only desktop version and did not include mobile version of the website.

Proposed changes were the following (the most important ones are marked in bold):

1. Removing the upper menu with slope info (moving it to the slope page).
2. **Shifting the main menu to the left**
3. **Increasing main menu's font size 1.5 times**
4. Reducing the number of language flags to one (Russian) flag with a drop down menu
5. Deleting "Home" sign from the right side of the main menu
6. Reducing the empty space above the main menu
7. **Changing banners' texts:**

   <u>Banner 1</u>

   Headline 1: Забронируйте отдых в Вуокатти прямо сейчас! (Book accommodation in Vuokatti right now!")

   Headline 2: В Вуокатти расположен Holiday Club Katinkulta – один из крупнейших спа-отелей Финляндии (Holiday Club Katinkulta situated in Vuokatti is one of the biggest spa hotels in Finland)

   <u>Banner 2</u>

   Headline 1: Забронируйте отдых в Вуокатти прямо сейчас! (Book accommodation in Vuokatti right now!")

   Headline 2: У нас самый большой в Филяндии парк Angry Birds! (We have the biggest Angry Birds Park in Finland!)

   <u>Banner 3</u>

   Headline 1: Забронируйте отдых в Вуокатти прямо сейчас! (Book accommodation in Vuokatti right now!")

   Headline 2: Вуокатти – это более 8000 спальных мест! Коттеджи от 390 евро/нед. (Vuokatti – more than 8000 accommodation places! Cottages from 390 euro/week)
8. **Moving the accommodation search section to above the fold area** as shown in Figure 9.
9. **Deleting the text "Поиск размещения в Вуокатти"** ("Accommodation search in Vuokatti") **in accommodation search section**

10. **Changing booking section's background color to transparent white** (see Figure 9)

11. **Doubling the size of the booking button**

12. **Changing the color of the booking button to red**

13. **Changing the text of the booking button to "Подобрать размещение >>"** ("Search for accommodation >>").

Additional recommendations for changes included the following:

14. **Removing section "Роскошное размещение для всей семьи" ("Luxury accommodation for the whole family")**

15. Including information search field with button and placing it to the right from the main menu (see Figure 9)

16. Including sales service telephone number to the page in case people cannot find cottages' contact information (cottage booking button is not shown on some devices making it impossible to reach cottage's address and contact details)

17. Increasing the space between product cards so that the page could have "room to breathe"

18. Shortening the text on the product card icons to make it easier to read (see Figure 9)

19. Including information about Vuokatti's main sights and activities (listed in bullet points) to Vuokatti's description text

20. Moving Vuokatti description text to the left

21. Increasing description text's font size to 14 pt. for better readability

22. Creating visitor's feedback section to the page to add social proof (taking feedbacks from VKontakte group)

23. Removing the icon "Размещение с комфортом" ("Comfortable accom-modation") as the text in the picture together with icon's description make information hard to conceive; replacing it with another icon "Отели, коттеджи и шале" ("Hotels, cottages and chalets") since both icons lead to the same page

24. Removing "Golf" icon (golf is not popular in Russia)

25. Removing VK and YouTube icons and replacing them with well recog-nizable symbols of VK and YouTube placed at the bottom of the page

Illustration of the changes is shown in Figure 9.
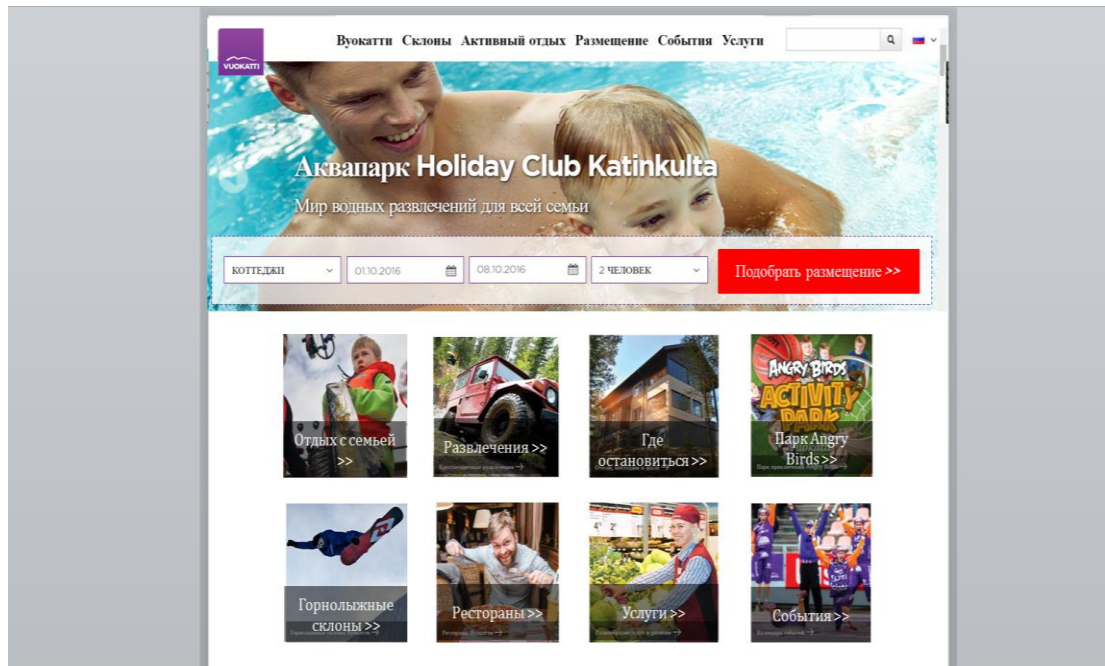
Figure 9. Possible view of Vuokatti's homepage after implemented changes

5.2.3 Choice of the changes and A/B testing

Vuokatti's management decided to implement one of the suggested changes and move the booking form with accommodation search button to the above the fold area (to the bottom of the banner). Vuokatti's homepage before and after the changes is presented in Figure 10.
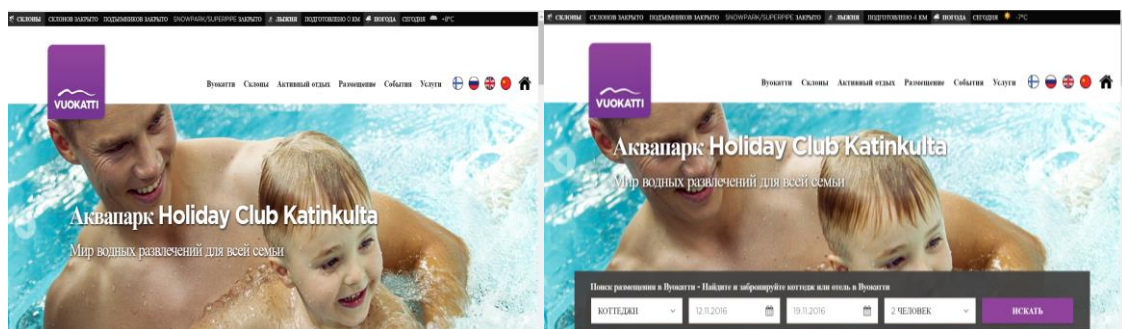
Figure 10. Vuokatti's homepage before (version A) and after the changes (version B).

A/B test was run for the time period 29th of September to 24th of November 2016. Conversion tracking code for Google Analytics was set to the accommodation booking button which allowed to see how many clicks (events) were received before and after the change.

Simultaneous A/B testing was not available for Vuokatti website. The only possibility was to carry out the test sequentially. The control period (A) before optimization was run between 29th of September and 2nd of November 2016. Change on the page was implemented on 3rd of November. Control period (B) after the change was carried out between 4th and 24th of November 2016. The results were tracked and monitored in Vuokatti's Google Analytics.

5.2.4 Results and analysis

The results of A/B testing are presented in **Error! Reference source not ound.**. The data shows a clear increase in number of visitors and events, and also 13% increase in the defined conversion action, calculated according to definition of Ash et al. (2012, p.13) defined in chapter 3.4.

	Days	Visitors		Unique visitors		Events		Conversion rate
		total	per day	total	per day	total	per day	
A	35	2414	69	1975	57	257	8	13 %
B	21	2292	110	1924	92	282	14	15 %
Change			+59 %		+61 %		+75 %	+13 %

Table 3. Results of the A/B testing. The A is the control period before optimization and B is the optimized landing page.

The average number of unique daily visitors for Vuokatti landing page before optimization was 57 with the average number of conversions per day equaling 8 and conversion rate 13%. After page optimization, during control period B the average amount of daily visitors for the landing page was 92 with average number of conversions per day equaling 14 and conversion rate 15%. Daily conversion percent before and after landing page optimization is presented in Figure 11.
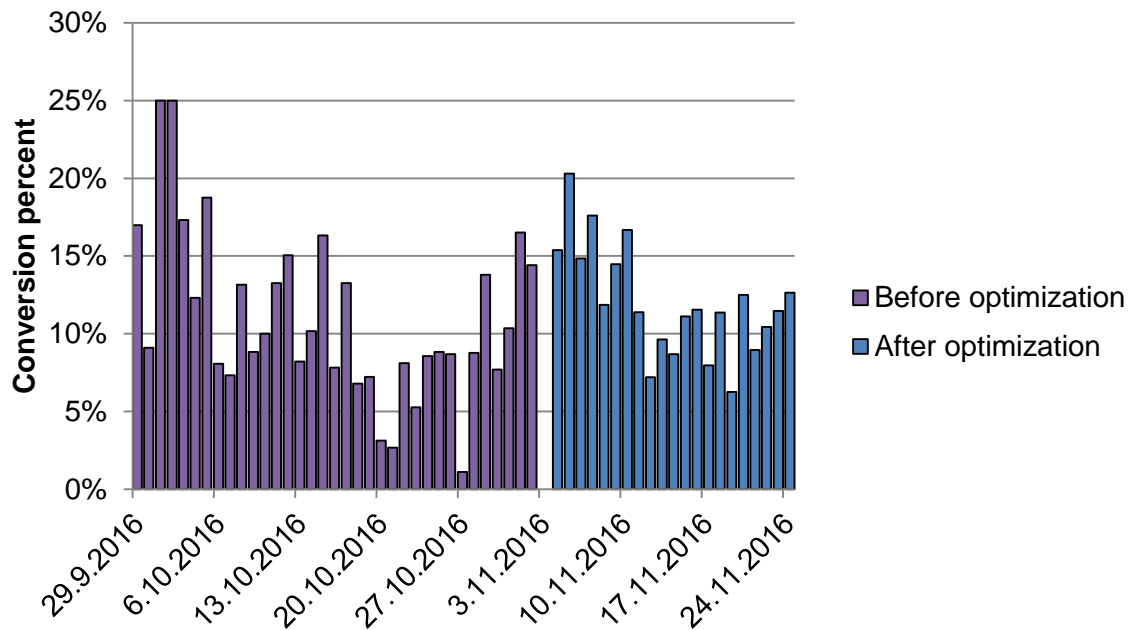
Figure 11. Conversion percent before and after LP optimization.

To determine whether this increase in conversion is significant between the A and B, the statistical method called the Z-test was performed on the data. According to the Z-testing, the change in conversion was found significant in 99% confidence level, indicating very high statistical significance. In light of this information, it can be concluded that the optimization performed on the page helped to achieve higher share in conversion and that the objective of the thesis was achieved.

However, as the test was carried out sequentially there is some possibility that seasonal variation, exchange rate between ruble and euro, holidays, weather or other undesirable variables could have affected the results as well. Difference in a number of visits during different test periods could be connected with the drop in euro exchange rate against rubble on 26th of October 2016, early and snowy winter and forthcoming New Year holidays causing increase in the demand for accommodation search.

The reason for increase in conversion percentage could be better visibility of accommodation search button due to its move to the above the fold area. Another reason for conversion increase could be the same as described above for the number of visits.

6 Summary

During the thesis process theory related to landing page optimization was studied and the most important elements of successful landing page were recognized. Three hotel websites were evaluated and compared based on the information obtained from the literature survey. Proposal for optimization of Russian language version of Vuokatti's landing page was made and one of the proposed changes was implemented to the page.

Proposal for landing page optimization was done according to service design concept which included principles of ergonomics, functionality and aesthetics as well as knowledge about human-computer interaction. Service design approach allowed creation of a customer-centric landing page that could meet customer expectations.

Landing page's heatmaps were utilized in getting the customer point of view on Vuokatti's landing page. Click-overlay heatmap showed most often clicked elements of the landing page. Eye-tracking heatmap helped to understand which elements of the page attracted most of visitors' attention and which ones were ignored. Heatmaps allowed illustration of the page's weaker points and helped in recommendations for improvements.

The objective of the optimization was to increase Vuokatti's homepage conversion – the number of clicks to accommodation search button by unique users. A/B testing was performed to test the effect of change on the conversion rate. The results of A/B testing indicated statistically significant change after the landing page optimization. The objective of the thesis was achieved as the conversion was increased by 13% after the landing page optimization was performed. Additionally, Vuokatti's management has decided to keep implemented changes on the landing page.

In future, other recommendations for improvements described in the proposal for Vuokatti could be applied and tested the same way as in this thesis. Theory described in literature survey chapter could be implemented by accommodation providing websites for improving their landing page performance.

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Appendix 1. Screenshot of Sokos Hotels' homepage in English

Appendix 2. Screenshot of Holiday Club Saimaa's homepage in English

Appendix 3. Screenshot of Omena Hotels' homepage in English

Appendix 4. HotJar heatmap for Vuokatti's homepage in Russian