

Joni Moisanen

Importance of customer service – Case study Verkkokauppa.com

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Joni Moisanen
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Oulu University of Applied Sciences

ABSTRACT

Oulu University of Applied Sciences
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Author: Joni Moisanen

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This research was written by Joni Moisanen with the topic: Importance of customer service. The research focuses heavily on the importance of customer service and analyzation of the survey created for Verkkokauppa.com. The customer survey was created in collaboration with the store manager of Oulu's Verkkokauppa.com store, and it consists of nine questions presented to two-hundred customers at the store's location.

This research achieved to compile an introduction to customer service and its importance in a retail store environment, focusing mostly on customer service, importance of good and bad feedback and the customers shopping experience. The research also includes a sizeable portion of data analyzation from the customer survey with descriptions and suggestion that could help Verkkokauppa.com to see which sections they should focus on from a customer's standpoint.

The main findings of the survey show a breakdown of customer information based on age, gender, distance to the store and other basic questions relating to customer service. The results show a wide gap between the number of male and female customers, different shopping methods between age groups, and a large amount of distance traveled to get to the store. According to the survey results most customers were regulars of the store and either happy or extremely happy with their visit and service.

Most of the information in this research is gathered from various sources and studies found online, accompanied with a survey filled by customers of Oulu's Verkkokauppa.com store. The sources of the information referred to within the work can be found at the end of the document.

Keywords: customer service, business, customer satisfaction, survey

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	5
2	IMPORTANCE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE.....	6
3	IMPORTANCE OF FEEDBACK.....	7
3.1	How to receive feedback	8
3.2	Splitting feedback channels.....	10
4	SHOPPING AND BUYING	11
4.1	Improving the shopping experience.....	11
4.2	Target advertising.....	12
5	CASE STUDY – VERKKOKAUPPA.COM	14
5.1	Customer survey	16
5.2	Data analysis.....	17
6	DISCUSSION	25
7	CONCLUSION.....	27
8	REFERENCES	29
	ANNEX 1	32

1 INTRODUCTION

This research consists of a theory part related to customer service, and a case study regarding a customer survey created and gathered for Verkkokauppa.com. Some of the main topics in the theory part of the research are related to receiving feedback and the importance of it, as well as advertising and its many different forms. The Case study consists of an introduction regarding Verkkokauppa.com and an in-depth analysis of the survey, complete with research methods, discussion and a conclusion consisting of all the key information regarding the survey responses.

The goal of the research was to find out the demographic Verkkokauppa.com's regulars consist of and to find points of improvements Verkkokauppa.com still has to work on, while also working as an introduction into the basics and principles of business and customer service in general.

The sources of information used in the research consist of multiple online papers, researches, journalists and business professionals who are well informed and have a strong background in the field of business and customer service. On top of the online sources, most of the information regarding the case study is based on the information provided by the customer survey created and gathered at Oulu's Verkkokauppa.com store.

2 IMPORTANCE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customer service has been around for as long as businesses have existed, but the introduction of internet and handheld devices allowing instant access to information has changed the interaction of businesses around the world. The flow of information allows the customer to have their voices heard with ease, in turn forcing businesses to react swiftly to complaints they receive. The way businesses choose to receive their feedback is also often decided by the business itself, as the business can pick the suitable channel to receive their feedback through, creating a filter to sort through the complaints and responses left to them.

The person working with customers has multiple roles inside a retail environment. The first priority for most stores working for profit is to make sure the customer who enters the store leaves having made a purchase. The salesperson who contacts the customer is ultimately trying to reinforce a purchase decision that the customer is about to make, and in essence customers pay a share of the products price to receive guidance and information during their shopping, making their own purchase decision more informed and faster (Chand 2014, cited 25.11.2018). When a customer enters a store to make a purchase they need, the employee serving the customer can generally guide them to make better and more informed purchase decisions by explaining in detail the features the product they are looking for have. An example of this can be seen below.

An elderly couple enters the electronics store looking to buy a laptop to pay their online bills with and possibly to read the daily news on their preferred website. The employee finds the couple looking at laptops that are used specifically for film editing or heavy use in general. The employee then describes what the laptop can generally be used for and asks if the couple actually has the need for an expensive laptop with film edition capabilities. After figuring out the needs of the customer the employee takes the couple to see a laptop half the price, perfectly suited for light use and basic web browsing, saving the couple money. At this point the employee can also answer additional questions or doubts the couple has, making sure they are happy with their purchase, enforcing the purchase decision.

3 IMPORTANCE OF FEEDBACK

The importance of negative feedback is often overlooked in the world of business, even though it plays a larger role than positive feedback. While positive feedback can improve the self-esteem and motivation levels of a company and its workers, negative feedback often carries the information a company still has to improve on in order to succeed. If given in a manner of constructive criticism negative feedback can also be used to voice many silent customers who share the same opinions but have not had the courage to voice them. According to Hulya Aksu, a publisher for Huffington post (Aksu 2013, cited 29.10.2018), a number as low as four percent of customers speak up concerning their negative experience, meaning for every voiced negative feedback 24 other customers left having a negative experience and without saying a word.

In business areas with high local or online competition a single negative experience can cause a chain reaction of negative feedback if given through wrong channels, or if the customer is not presented a viable and easy way to inform the business of their opinions. According to the study published on Huffington post by Hulya Aksu (Aksu 2013, cited 29.10.2018), on average a customer who has had their issue resolved in a positive manner tell five other people of their experience, while a negative experience results in more than twice the amount of feedback shared.

To summarize, positive feedback more often reaches the business, but the negative feedback is often directed to other possible customers instead of the company, making it difficult to adjust and to improve on the customer experience. Fortunately for businesses around the world, the wide access to internet and the continuous growth of social media make it easier to give and receive feedback than it has ever been.

Over time companies have grown larger and stores keep getting bigger, some as big as 260,000 square feet (Albany NY 2008, cited 23.11.2018) with many single retail stores employing dozens if not hundreds of employees under a single roof or a chain of stores. When a company or a business is small in size, it's easy for a single customer to give feedback straight to the store representative, but with continually growing store chains it can sometimes feel like the feedback a customer wants to submit might drown out among the masses and never reach the top of the company chain or their representatives. Fortunately for both the customers and companies the internet gives a unique channel to voice concerns and troubles through.

For some customers the anonymity of internet makes it easier to submit feedback, and for others the public channel for feedback online can gain the support of other customers who would otherwise stay silent and not give feedback themselves. According to an article on Inc.com (Yakowicz 2013, cited 25.11.2018), feedback given publicly allows the respondents to feel heard and acknowledged. Unfortunately, with public feedback and openly voiced feedback any business becomes vulnerable to a certain degree of mob mentality, where even a well thought out and neutrally sound feedback can be received in the wrong light by other customers. This chain of events can lead up to a public outrage where a small issue is blown out of its proportions. To control situations like this preemptively companies should put an effort to respond to user feedback swiftly and preferably publicly, if the received feedback was in public. As up to 92% of customers read online reviews (Vendasta Marketing 2018, cited 25.11.2018), future customers can see the responses and that the customers issues were resolved. In addition, companies should ensure there is always a channel through which customers can voice their concern through, or a person they can directly contact when issues arise.

3.1 How to receive feedback

Receiving feedback might seem quite self-explanatory however there are a few ways a business can ensure they get the most out of the feedback they receive, and that the feedback is acted upon if necessary, leveraging negative feedback to benefit the business (Lath 2018, cited 23.11.2018)

It is crucial for businesses to set up a network to move the information through regardless if the business is based offline or online, be it through contact forms, feedback surveys or just public emails and phone numbers (Ciotti 2018, cited 25.11.2018). In an offline environment the customer can simply walk up to an employee and inform them when problems arise, the employee can then lead the information through propel channels to where it belongs. For example, if there is a problem with a product or service they bought, the employee should be able to inform the person responsible for the service or product of the problem, ensuring it is acted upon swiftly.

Following the advice of a career development expert Lindsay N. (Lindsay 2018, cited 25.11.2018), when receiving direct feedback from a customer it is important not to challenge the customer and his views, and more importantly focus on absorbing the feedback, judging it later and acting upon

it if necessary. When receiving feedback face-to-face it is extremely important to first stop and calm yourself. Receiving feedback in a positive and calm manner, be it negative or positive ensures the customer feels they have been heard and ensures the matter won't escalate any further (Figure 1). By nature, receiving negative feedback can prove difficult as criticism received from someone you don't fully respect is marginally more difficult than listening to someone who you do respect, but it is a skill anyone working in customer service could and should learn. Another way of redirecting the feedback can be to split the channels the business receives it through.



Figure 1. Feedback (MS Visio illustration based on Lindsay N. Taking Criticism Like a Champ 2018)

3.2 Splitting feedback channels

Splitting the channels a business receives their feedback through is a smart way of distancing the business and its employees from a product or a service, making it harder to make negative associations between the two. This split can be seen most widely as product reviews online, where after purchasing a product the customer is asked to leave feedback of the shopping experience and the product.

Splitting the channels is effective due to two reasons, the first one being that in a case where a product malfunctions the customer can instantly leave feedback on an online platform for everyone to see and even though a product receives negative feedback, ultimately some of the negative feelings are not directed towards the company, but the product itself. As stated by a blog post on Woocommerce (Hazelton 2016, cited 25.11.2018), creating a channel for product reviews also convinces the customer of how good certain products are, ensuring the customer purchases what they need or what they were looking for.

Secondly some businesses allow and request to receive feedback directly after a purchase is made ensuring fast tracking of problems that might arise, enabling the company to react quickly to the customers review. Even if a customer receives a bad product, good service afterwards can ultimately lead to a better outcome in the customers eyes than before the product was first purchased, since on average happy customers who get their issues resolved tell four to six people of their experience (Shaw 2018, cited 25.11.2018).

4 SHOPPING AND BUYING

Buying and shopping are two different terms used in the business world to explain different purchasing methods used by customers. Buying revolves itself around the needs of an individual, essential products or services that the customers need, while shopping revolves around the shopping experience and non-essential needs of the customer. According to Ilua Pozin, the founder of Pluto TV (Pozin 2018, cited 29.10.2018) too many businesses focus around the buying experience, while they really should be focusing on the shopping experience.

When a customer has a need for something they will search for a business that offers the product or service they need and during the purchasing process of the said product or service, depending on the shopping experience, the business has the possibility of turning the one-time purchase into a repeat business with regular customers. The value a company can gain by turning a single purchase to repeat business is significantly higher than the original value of the first purchase. Additionally, according to Nethercott, R. (Nethercott 2017, cited 29.10.2018) there are multiple points to consider when figuring out just how important it is to turn a single shopping visit into a repeat customer. When comparing repeat customers to first time customers, repeat customers spend around 300 percent more and are 50 percent more likely to buy products being sold to them. In addition, up to 80 percent of future profits come from 20 percent of repeat customers (Nethercott 2017, cited 29.10.2018).

4.1 Improving the shopping experience

There are multiple ways of how to improve the shopping experience, with one of the main points being expanding on the needs of the customer to provide products that the customer also wants (Pozin 2018, cited 29.10.2018). The shopping experience is what makes businesses choose a target audience and possible categories to focus on. An electronics shop might focus on more similar electronics as the customers who come for purchases might also be interested in other electronics on sale, this is called finding your target market (Ferenzi 2018, cited 25.11.2018). As the interest to the selection is already confirmed by the original product that brought the customer to the store, creating additional sales becomes easier. It is a great deal more difficult to sell a product to a customer that has no interest in the product category, than it is to someone who is

already well informed and prefers the category. Turning some product customers want into a product they need is what marketing and target advertising aim to accomplish, turning a buying experience into a shopping experience.

4.2 Target advertising

Target advertising is a form of advertising that has become more and more popular during the increased use of online shopping and web browsing. According to Margaret Rouse (Rouse 2017, cited 23.11.2018), targeted advertisements are targeted at a certain demographic of people either through their online behavior, age group, gender or geographic location to name a few. The effectiveness of the advertising is based on the confirmed interest of the consumer to a certain product category or service through previous purchases and online behavior.

By tracking similar purchases made by a single consumer in a certain product category, websites and their search queries compile information that they can use to advertise similar products in the future. According to Margaret Rouse (Rouse 2017, cited 23.11.2018) this is called Contextual advertising and it is widely used among social media platforms where the site itself can track likes, dislikes and personal preferences of the consumer, while simultaneously gathering data such as age group and gender.

Contextual advertisements benefit greatly from retargeting, which is a method of following the user from a webpage to another through the use of cookies. Webopedia defines cookies being a websites way of gathering data about the consumers visit on the website (Webopedia 2018, cited 24.11.2018), often warranted by a pop-up notification on the website during the first visit on it. According to Retargeter.com (Retargeter 2018, cited 23.11.2018), cookies allow websites to gather data about the consumer and later on through retargeting allow the website to present an ad of themselves or their product to you on a completely different website. Cookies, retargeting and contextual advertising create a combination in which all the data you share on individual sites is gathered and shared through other websites, creating an extremely accurate profile of the consumer, their online activities and preferences.

Geotargeting is slightly less intrusive and personal way of target advertising, that only targets the consumer by his or her current location be it a town, city, country or a continent (Chamberlain 2016, cited 25.11.2018). Geotargeting can be used to target a niche market or to present the consumer with information of local events or offers that might be of interest to the consumer. Geotargeting alone is not seen as effective as contextual advertising, but when the two are combined the customer can be presented with extremely precise information and offers that cater to the consumer and their personal interests.

5 CASE STUDY – VERKKOKAUPPA.COM

Verkkokauppa.com is a Finnish online retailer selling over 65 000 product articles from 25 different main product groups with multiple sub-categories. Since the company's founding in 1992 Verkkokauppa.com mainly sold their products online with a few pick-up locations scattered around Finland. In 2004 Verkkokauppa.com opened their first retail store in Helsinki in an attempt to solidify their position as a major electronics retailer in Finland and has since expanded their business to four megastores employing up to 633 employees by the end of 2017 (Verkkokauppa.com vuosikertomus, 2018, cited 30.10). Verkkokauppa.com is also the most popular online retailer in Finland by a large margin according to Statista (Statista 2018, cited 22.11).

The four stores act as pick-up locations for online purchases, with most product categories well presented in the physical store locations. In addition, having several physical store locations attract customers who are not yet familiar with making online purchases, simplifying the purchase process and allowing customers to buy products they might need to replace on a short notice.

Due to the company's fast growth Verkkokauppa.com and its store in Oulu provide a great outlook on how a business can find its place among hard competition, which is one of the reasons I chose to perform a customer survey in the Oulu store.

Feedback

Verkkokauppa.com has multiple channels to voice the customers praises or complaints through, some can be submitted online through social media as Verkkokauppa.com has created accounts on six different popular sites, including: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and VK.com. They can also be reached by phone or email, with all of the information provided on their website (Verkkokauppa.com Yhteystiedot, 2018, cited 02.12). Verkkokauppa.com also provides a way for the customer to rate products they purchase on their website, allowing the comments and the rating to be seen by other customers. This transparency of products and their properties allows future customers to make better informed purchase decisions while also allowing Verkkokauppa.com to swiftly react to problems in their products or provide responses and guidance related to the product in question.

If a customer wants, they can also travel to one of the four business locations to voice their concerns or questions to an employee directly. The employee can then either attempt to resolve the situation themselves or they can make sure the information reaches the person who is responsible of handling the situation, ensuring every complaint is heard and processed properly.

In addition to the most common ways of contacting a business, Verkkokauppa.com also has an extensive frequently asked questions forum, also known as FAQ, on their website. This FAQ section called Asiakaspalvelu contains the answers to most common questions or problems a visitor of the store could face during their transaction or purchase process such as: availability of products, ordering, payment, delivery, return policies, returning of products, store information and business sales (Verkkokauppa.com Asiakaspalvelu, 2018, cited 02.12). You can also use the search function located on the page to search for your problem if none of the categories address your issue. Finally, if you cannot find a solution, you can contact the customer service through email or phone, both of which can be found on the website.

User experience

Verkkokauppa.com has multiple ways of turning a customer making a single purchase they need into a regular customer who makes planned shopping visits in the future. This is achieved by creating multiple product-related events around the year (Facebook 2018, cited 02.12.2018), creating seasonal areas in their stores, and finally having multiple products available to try out at the store locations.

The purpose of the demo products is to allow the customer to try out the products before they make their purchase. Depending on the category this could mean judging the overall look, the sturdiness and the basic feel of the product, creating a good summary for the customer to evaluate from when compared to just seeing the package of the product. This interaction between the customer and the product allows the customer to feel how it would be like to own the product and how to properly use it, reaffirming the purchase decision (Kokemuller N. 2017, cited 02.12.2018).

Due to Verkkokauppa.com's high number of different products for sale, the customer can try out the product in the store and decide if they want additional functions and features, or if they feel they don't need everything the product have to offer. This allows the customer to save money by not paying for features they don't necessarily need or use, or alternatively makes sure the customer doesn't buy something that doesn't have all the features they look for in a product.

5.1 Customer survey

Background and goals

After working for a year at Verkkokauppa.com in Oulu serving customers among other tasks, I wanted to know more about the customers side of the shopping experience and the theory behind customer service. What resulted was a survey containing nine basic questions presented to the customers of Verkkokauppa.com store located in Oulu.

The main goal of the survey is to find issues Verkkokauppa.com can improve on and to figure out who their current demographic of regular customers consists of. By using the information gathered with the survey Verkkokauppa.com can identify new business solutions and target their advertisements to new possible customers.

The survey was created in collaboration with the store manager in Oulu, and it contains basic questions related to the customer and their visit in the store.

Defining the population to be studied

All of the survey respondents were customers of the Oulu Verkkokauppa.com store.

Ethical valuation

The questionnaire was performed voluntarily, face-to-face with the author of this work, with only age and gender stored as personal information. No names or other contact information was gathered during the survey.

Tools

The survey responses were gathered on paper at the location, and later input by the author on Microsoft Office Excel, where all of the data was processed and gathered.

5.2 Data analysis

The total number of survey respondents is two-hundred, gathered over three different business days with an estimated one out of five customers replying to the survey during the gathering process. The numbers presented in the figures present the amount of responses a customer gave to each section out of the possible answers, which are presented on the left side of the table.

Gender

The first question seen below (Figure 2) is related to the genders of the customers visiting the store. Only 29,0% of the customers were female, 70,5% male and one respondent did not reply to the question.

Gender		
No response	1	0,5 %
Male	141	70,5 %
Female	58	29,0 %
	200	

Figure 2. Gender

Age

The second question shows slightly more varied responses among the ages of the customers with the largest group being people in the age group 21-40 (43,0%). There were six different age ranges the respondents could choose from. The ages were from 0-20 (9,5%), 21-30 (22,0%), 31-40 (21,0%), 41-50 (19,5%), 51-60 (13,0%) and over 60-year olds (15%). One respondent did not answer the question (0,5%).

Age		
No reply	1	0,5 %
<20	18	9,0 %
21-30	44	22,0 %
31-40	42	21,0 %
41-50	39	19,5 %
51-60	26	13,0 %
60<	30	15,0 %
	200	

Figure 3. Age

Distance to store

The third question was asked to see how far away from the store do customers come to Verkkokauppa.com to do their shopping. One respondent did not disclose their distance to the store (0,5%), 40 were from less than 5 km away (20,0%), 62 came from 5 to 10 km away (31,0%), 37 from 11 to 20 km (18,5%), 28 from 21 to 50 km (14,0%) and 32 respondents from over 50 km away (16,0%).

Some of the customers coming from over 21 km away were asked additional comments on why they ended up at Verkkokauppa.com to do their shopping, and the answers received highlighted the business method of Verkkokauppa.com's self-pick policy and the number of products available at the store at any given time. Verkkokauppa.com stores generally attempt to have products they have on display available instantly for the customer to pick up during their visit. Which allows a customer to come from a long distance, look at a product they want to buy and end up receiving the same product they saw on display without having to order the product in advance or at the place of business.

	Distance	
No reply	1	0,5 %
Below 5 km	40	20,0 %
5-10 km	62	31,0 %
11-20 km	37	18,5 %
21-50 km	28	14,0 %
Over 50 km	32	16,0 %
	200	

Figure 4. Distance

Employee interaction

The fourth question was presented as an open form question and later fitted in certain parameters presented below (Figure 5). SiS is an abbreviation of the term shop-in-shop, which are small areas dedicated to a certain manufacturer, such as Apple and Asus in these cases.

The most visited contact points in the store for the respondents were Customer service desk located at the middle of the store seen below (Figure 6), with 48 respondents (24,0%) and checkout with 54 (27,0%). Maintenance section, entrance of the store and between shopping aisles all had 14 respondents each (7,0%), totalling 21,0% of the respondents.

The high number of customers who had no contact with a salesperson during their visit can partly be explained by the self-pick policy of Verkkokauppa.com, where the store locations attempt to have all their products available for the customer to pick up themselves, without the need to contact an employee. In addition, the checkout points function as service points where customers can collect their online order from, significantly cutting down the duration of the shopping visit and possible chance of encountering employees. Another factor affecting the low interaction was the way the survey was gathered, as some respondents replied to the survey with another person who was accompanying them during their shopping, which meant a customer who received service might have arrived in a group, of which only one person spoke with an employee.

When comparing the age groups and first contact points the most notable difference between 21 to 30-year-old customers, and over 60-year olds could be seen. Only one respondent out of 30 (3,3%) in the age category of over 60-year olds did not talk to an employee during their visit, while respondents in the age category of 21 to 30-year olds the number was much higher with 7 out of 44 (15,9%) not talking to an employee during their visit.

First contact with employee

No contact	28	14,0 %
apple sis	1	0,5 %
Customer service	48	24,0 %
ASUS sis	2	1,0 %
returns/maintenance	14	7,0 %
Between shelves	14	7,0 %
Checkout	54	27,0 %
Main aisle	6	3,0 %
Phone section	11	5,5 %
Entrance	14	7,0 %
TV-section	8	4,0 %

Figure 5. First contact

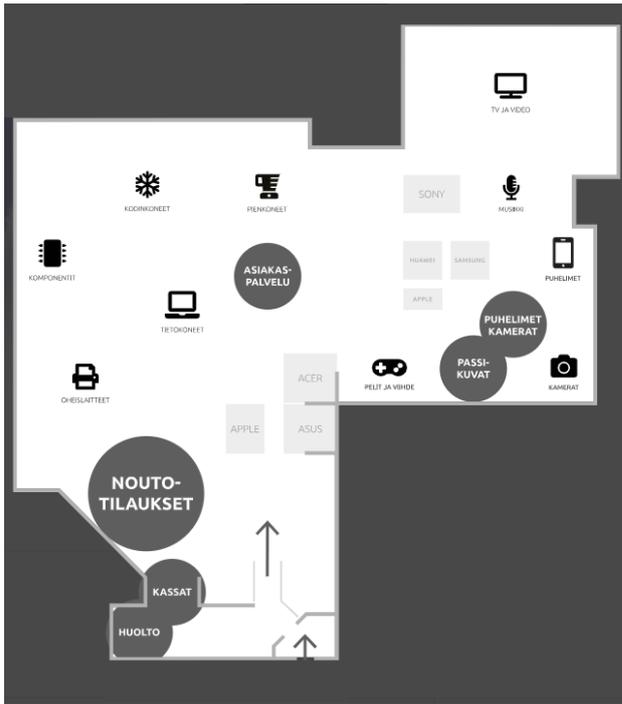


Figure 6. Map of the store (Verkkokauppa.com 2018, cited 21.11.2018)

Additional sales

The fifth question of the survey was to find out how many percent of customers buy products they don't expect to buy when they visit Verkkokauppa.com. If a customer came to the store expecting to purchase a product, buying any other additional product would count as additional sales.

Out of 200 respondents 64 (32,0%) purchased an additional product, while 123 (61,5%) only bought products they came to buy, or didn't buy anything at all. 13 (6,5%) of respondents did not reply, all of which were customers who only visited the maintenance/returns section of the store, where it is not possible to buy additional products.

	Unexpected purchase	
No answer	13	6,5 %
Made a purchase	64	32,0 %
Didn't purchase	123	61,5 %
	200	

Figure 7. Additional sales

Customer satisfaction regarding service

The sixth question of the survey was a basic evaluation of the quality of customer service received, with the responses ranging from one-to-five, one being very unsatisfied with service and five being very satisfied. A total of 171 out of 200 responses were either satisfied or very satisfied with their service, leading to an 85,5% satisfaction percentage, while only three respondents (1,5%) were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with the level of service they received.

Satisfaction with service		
No reply	4	2,0 %
Very unsatisfied	2	1,0 %
Unsatisfied	1	0,5 %
Average	22	11,0 %
Satisfied	69	34,5 %
Very satisfied	102	51,0 %
	200	

Figure 8. Satisfaction with service

Number of visits yearly

Question seven was presented to find out how many of the customers were regular customers visiting more than four times a year. Out of the two-hundred respondents 121 (60,5%) were regulars, and surprisingly only 4 (2,0%) out of the two-hundred were visiting for the first time. 74 (37,0%) had visited before and visited Verkkokauppa.com on average 1-4 times a year.

Number of yearly visits		
No reply	1	0,5 %
First time	4	2,0 %
1-4 Times	74	37,0 %
5-10 Times	58	29,0 %
Over 10 times	63	31,5 %
	200	

Figure 9. Yearly visits

Order of importance

The question number eight was slightly different when compared to the other questions as it involved ranking three different retail store properties in a personal order of importance of the customer. Ranking was from left to right, with the leftmost letter being of most value, while the third one was of least value. Explanations of the letters can be seen below (Figure 10).

Only 23 (11,5%) respondents chose A-C-B with the combination receiving 20 less responses when compared to B-A-C with 43 (21,5%). In total A was ranked the lowest with 58 (29,0%), B highest with 71 (35,5%) and finally C receiving 67 (33,5%).

Looking at the data from the perspective of least important ratings, C was generally rated the lowest with a total of 78 (39,0%) responses, B the highest with 50 (25,0%) and A in the middle with 68 (34,0%).

Overall B, the price of products was rated the most important for the majority of respondents.

Order of importance		
No reply	4	2,0 %
A-B-C	35	17,5 %
A-C-B	23	11,5 %
B-A-C	43	21,5 %
B-C-A	28	14,0 %
C-A-B	27	13,5 %
C-B-A	40	20,0 %
	200	

The following in order from most important to least important

A: Customer service

B: Price of products

C: Product selection

Figure 10. Order of importance

Example: A-B-C would mean the customer value service above others and price of products over product selection.

Overall opinion of visit

The last question was asked to figure out how the customer felt after their visit once they had finished shopping and were ready to leave the store. On their way out of the store 183 (91,5%) of customers felt good or excellent about their visit, with only 5 (2,5%) feeling bad or very bad, due to some reasons seen in the Open feedback section (Figure 12). These values align similarly to a happy-or-not device placed within the stores entrance, with slightly higher positive results collected during this survey.

Overall opinion of visit		
Very bad	2	1,0 %
Bad	3	1,5 %
Average	12	6,0 %
Good	81	40,5 %
Excellent	102	51,0 %
	200	

Figure 11. Overall opinion

Open feedback

After the nine questions respondents had the option to write down something about their visit, or verbally describing their experience, which was later written down. On the left side of the picture, the rating of the customers overall opinion of the visit can be seen, ranging from one-to-five, one being the lowest and five being the highest rating. Explanation and a breakdown of the ratings can be seen in the previous section. (Figure 11). The open feedback was all given in Finnish, but you can find all the responses translated to English after the Finnish section. Text italicized is a described comment, while non-italicized text is word-to-word what the respondent wrote down. All the comments given or written during the survey can be seen below (Figure 12). Open feedback comments were mostly given optionally by respondents with an overall opinion rating of 4 or 5, while respondents who gave a 1 or 2 were requested to comment more on the reason behind their given rating.

Mielipide	
5	<3
5	Erittäin hyvä palvelu. Pesukoneen palautus sujui erittäin hyvin ja helposti. Iso kiitos henkilökunnalle! :)
5	HYVÄ PALVELU!
4	Muuten hyvä kauppa, mutta kaapeli jota tuln hakemaan oli liian kallis

4	Myyjältä pyydetty kantoapua televisiota varten, mutta ei saatu koska palvelut toista asiakasta.
4	palvelu on hyvää
5	Puhelinpuolella Ville x2 hoiti homman erinomaisesti, periksi eivät antaneet. Kovia jätkiä! (etsivät "imei" koodia puhelimesta ja löysivät, teksti oli nuppineula kokoista tekstiä! :-)
3	sai jahdata käytävällä myyjää
5	Stay in school kids !!!
1	Takuu ei ole enää voimassa :(
5	yli 100km tultiin
5	yli 600km päästä
5	Ystävällinen palvelu, sujuvaa palvelua, halvat hinnat ja asiantuntevia työntekijöitä
2	<i>Ei löytänyt myyjää</i>
2	<i>Ei löytänyt myyjää. Ei kerkeä odottaa jonojen purkua, vain yksi myyjä myymälässä.</i>
1	<i>Löysi puhelindemon jonka halusin ostaa, mutta en myyjää. Viime viikolla sama juttu pesukoneen kanssa.</i>
5	<i>Perunut kaupat aikasemmin Gigantissa, sekä Powerissa huonon palvelun takia. Osti lopulta telkkarin verkkokaupasta, vaikka sama malli olikin kalliimpi.</i>

Opinion	
5	<3
5	Very good service. Return of my washing machine went very well and with ease. Big thanks to the staff! :)
5	GOOD SERVICE!
4	Otherwise a good store, but the cable I came to buy was too expensive
4	Asked an employee to help with carrying a television, but he was serving another customer.
4	Service is good
5	At the phone section Ville x2 handled my case brilliantly and didn't give up. Tough guys! (were looking for an "Imei" code from my phone and finally found it. Text was the size of a needle-head! :-)
3	had to chase down an employee
5	Stay in school kids !!!
1	Warranty had ran out :(
5	Came from over 100 km away
5	We came from over 600 km
5	Friendly service, good service, cheap prices and knowledgeable employees
2	<i>Couldn't find any employees</i>
2	<i>Couldn't find an employee. Don't have the time to wait in line for service, only one salesman in the store.</i>
1	<i>Customer had found a phone-demo he wanted to buy but couldn't find any employees. Last week had the same problem with a washing machine.</i>
5	<i>Had cancelled deals earlier at Gigantti and Power due to poor service. In the end bought a tv from Verkkokauppa.com, even though the same model was more expensive.</i>

Figure 12. Open feedback

6 DISCUSSION

The topic was chosen due to my personal interest in the subject and due to the fact that I work with customers daily at work. This lined up perfectly with my need to find a subject for my final thesis. Originally, I planned to write solely on the importance of customer service, but due to my interest in the customers I work with at Verkkokauppa.com I wanted to know more about their demographic and their experiences at the store.

Initially I planned to do a more extensive survey on the subject in the form of interviews but due to the large sample size I wanted to gather the process of gathering the data would have taken an enormous amount of time and effort to complete. Even though my survey consisted of questions that could be replied in under minute, it took on average three to four minutes to gather a single response due to the fact that most customers actively attempted to avoid eye-contact and rush through, which resulted in me gathering responses for over 11-hours over three different days.

The results of the survey aligned well with the expectations I had, apart from the Order of importance (Figure 10). My original assumption was that either options A: Customer service or B: Price of product, would be held more important than the option C: Selection of products. Some customers however expanded on the subject and described Verkkokauppa.com as a store where they would most likely find whatever they were looking for, thus ranking C higher than A or B. Verkkokauppa.com focuses on all three aspects well and in fact the options B and C can be found on their website as major focuses of the company (Verkkokauppa.com Asiakasluvaukset, 2018, cited 21.11.2018). Price of a product is a factor most consumers are attracted to in advertisements bringing the customer to the store, but customer service and product selections are traits businesses should also focus on in order to remain relevant to the customer after discount purchases are made.

The gender disparity came as a slight surprise, as I expected a slight difference in the gender of the customers, around 40-45% of customers being female, not the 29,1% it ended up being. According to statistics gathered by Ipsos MediaCT (Ipsos MediaCT 2012, cited 22.11.2018) videogames and gaming are more relevant among males, with 55% considering themselves gamers, people who play large amounts of videogames during their spare time, while the number for female respondents was significantly lower standing at 45%, meaning game related products

appeal more to the male customers. For example, multiple product categories at Verkkokauppa.com cater to gamers in general, such as gaming consoles, computer hardware, keyboards, displays and videogames to name a few. In addition to the wide selection of products related to gaming, Verkkokauppa.com has held multiple events related to videogames and gaming hardware, such as: NVIDIA GTX 660 TI gaming-event, Lenovo Legion PUBG-challenge, Raisio gaming-days and ROG + Blackstorm tour, to name a few of the many events held during the past few years. This could be one of the factors why the disparity between the two genders is so high. By focusing more on events and product advertisements that appeal more to female customers, Verkkokauppa.com could attempt to gain more overall visitors to reduce the gap among the gender of customers.

Finally, the satisfaction with service (Figure 8) and overall opinion (Figure 11) were extremely positive from the stores standpoint, unfortunately leaving me with very little negative points to come up with and suggest improvements on. Overall out of the five negative feedbacks received three were possibly related to staff shortage at the moment of survey collection, or simply not finding an employee from the store in time. One customer gave no comment on his rating, and the final negative feedback was mostly directed to the disappointment from finding out warranty had ended on the customers product. If Verkkokauppa.com was able to increase the number of employees to serve all the customers in time, the amount of negative responses that were gathered could be as low as 1%.

7 CONCLUSION

The main goal of the survey was to find issues Verkkokauppa.com could improve on and to figure out who their regular customers consists of, allowing Verkkokauppa.com to target customers that they haven't reached yet through marketing and other means of client outreach.

Out of the two hundred respondents over 60-percent were regular customers of Verkkokauppa.com with over five visits a year. However only four respondents were visiting for the first time, showing that Verkkokauppa.com bases most of their business towards regular customers and repeated visits in the stores. Unfortunately, as the number of new customers was extremely low it is nearly impossible to draw conclusions and comparisons between regular customers and new customers of the store.

When looking at the difference in amount of female and male customers the store had among the survey participants it is immediately apparent that something could be done to improve the numbers of female visitors of the store. Creating events or adding and focusing on product categories that appeal to the female customers could be a way to increase the number of female customers visiting the store. For every female customer visiting there were 2.4 male customers, with a split of 29,1% female and 70,9% male.

When adding up the customers who had no contact with an employee and the customers who first talked to an employee at checkout, the total of customers who had no contact with the salespersons available in the store reaches a total of 41%. This is mostly due to the self-picking possibility in Verkkokauppa.com stores, where products are not stored in the back storage of the store and are instead available for the customer to pick up themselves with no need to contact an employee or a salesperson. In addition, only one respondent out of 30 (3,3%) in the age category of over 60-year olds did not talk to an employee during their visit, while respondents in the age category of 21 to 30-year olds the number was much higher with 7 out of 44 (15,9%) not talking to an employee. This shows that younger customers either order more products online and only use the mail service at the store, or that the younger population is comfortable with the information they are able to gather themselves and don't feel the need to rely on employees to describe the products for them. If a study was made on a larger scale it could be interesting to see how much the age of the customers relates to the shopping methods and experiences of the shop visitors.

Most of Verkkokauppa.com customers arrive from further than five kilometres away, which means most of the customers passed stores that sell similar products, with customers who came over ten kilometres away (48,5%) passing multiple competitors business locations. Most common reason given by respondents for the distance was the wide product selection available at the store, ensuring a customer who arrived from far away would leave with either the product they wanted to buy, or a similar one in functions and price.

To Summarize everything, it is not a surprise Verkkokauppa.com has continued to grow rapidly and following previous growth patterns will keep up their pace of growth for many years from now. One of the most important factors for stores such as Verkkokauppa.com is finding their own base of regulars, which according to the high percentage of respondents who replied to the survey seems to already be there supporting future investments and growth. Those regulars are the people who made Verkkokauppa.com grow enormously over the years and allowed Verkkokauppa.com to become the most known and most visited online retailer in Finland.

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ANNEX 1

Verkkokauppa.com	
Sukupuoli	
<input type="checkbox"/> Mies <input type="checkbox"/> Nainen	
Ikä	
<input type="checkbox"/> <20 <input type="checkbox"/> 21-30 <input type="checkbox"/> 31-40 <input type="checkbox"/> 41-50 <input type="checkbox"/> 51-60 <input type="checkbox"/> 60<	
Kuinka kaukaa tulit Oulun myymälään	
<input type="checkbox"/> alle 5km <input type="checkbox"/> 5-10km <input type="checkbox"/> 11-20km <input type="checkbox"/> 21-50km <input type="checkbox"/> yli 50km	
Missä kohtasit työntekijän ensikertaa myymälässä?	
Ostitko tuotteen jota et odottanut ostavasi?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Kyllä <input type="checkbox"/> En	
Kuinka tyytyväinen olit palveluun	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	
Tyytymätön	Erittäin tyytyväinen
Kuinka usein käyt Verkkokauppa.comin myymälässä vuosittain	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensimmäinen kerta <input type="checkbox"/> 1-4 Kertaa <input type="checkbox"/> 5-10 Kertaa <input type="checkbox"/> 10+ Kertaa	
Järjestä seuraavat omaan tärkeysjärjestykseen	
a. Asiakaspalvelu b. Tuotteiden halpa hinta c. Tuotevalikoima	
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Yleinen mielipide käynnin jälkeen	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	
Huono	Hyvä
Risut & Ruusut kääntöpuolelle!	

Verkkokauppa.com	
Gender	
<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	
Age	
<input type="checkbox"/> <20 <input type="checkbox"/> 21-30 <input type="checkbox"/> 31-40 <input type="checkbox"/> 41-50 <input type="checkbox"/> 51-60 <input type="checkbox"/> 60<	
How far away did you come to the store from?	
<input type="checkbox"/> less than 5km <input type="checkbox"/> 5-10km <input type="checkbox"/> 11-20km <input type="checkbox"/> 21-50km <input type="checkbox"/> more than 50km	
Where did you talk to an employee for the first time?	
Did you purchase a product you didn't expect to?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
How satisfied were you with the service you received?	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	
Very unsatisfied	Very satisfied
How many times a year do you visit Verkkokauppa.com on average	
<input type="checkbox"/> First time visiting <input type="checkbox"/> 1-4 times <input type="checkbox"/> 5-10 times <input type="checkbox"/> 10+ times	
Arrange the following in an order of your preference	
a. Customer service b. Product price c. Selection of products	
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Overall opinion after visit	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	
Very bad	Excellent
Open feedback on the other side!	