



CUSTOMER SATISFACTION OF AN APARTMENT HOTEL

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ABSTRACT

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Customer satisfaction becomes the object of a research quite often, especially in business. If the company cares about its customers, it will put effort to know how satisfied they are with the services or products. Satisfied customers are loyal customers, who bring profit and other, new customers.

Apartment Hotel Tampere MN, a new and developing company, is interested in keeping its customers satisfied. To expand and improve the services it is important for the hotel to measure customer satisfaction level, which was the purpose of this survey.

The research method was quantitative. The study focused on the customers' opinion about the work of reception and aspects concerning apartments, parking places and Internet connection. The questionnaires were spread among the customers of Apartment Hotel Tampere MN.

The theoretical framework included theories concerning customer satisfaction and service quality. The received data were analyzed with the help of these theories.

The findings showed that the level of customer satisfaction of the company is quite high. The company is capable to meet customers' expectations. Some suggestions for improvement of services were made by the author of the thesis.

Key words: customer satisfaction, service quality, apartment hotel

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1 INTRODUCTION

One of the main tasks in business is satisfying customers' needs and requirements. If in the current economic situation, based on competition, a company fails to satisfy its customers' needs and requirements, it is going to disappear from the business. A company, whose products or services match or exceed customers' needs and requirements, has the best opportunities for growth and development. Dissatisfied customer is likely to inform friends and acquaintances about poor experiences and warn them. Thus, future loss in profit for the company is rather essential. A customer-oriented company is aware of that satisfied customers are the most valuable asset. In such a company customer satisfaction surveys are conducted regularly and they are an essential part of its functioning.

The aim of this survey was to measure the customer satisfaction level of Apartment Hotel Tampere MN, a young and developing company, which is interested in meeting its customers' expectations. Moreover, it is being planned to expand the business, so it was important to measure customer satisfaction level in order to improve the services. The main objectives were to discover what is the level of the customer satisfaction of the company, and if it is capable to meet customers' expectations.

The theoretical framework included theories concerning customer satisfaction and service quality. The received data were analyzed with the help of these theories. The research method was quantitative. Quantitative data were gathered by means of a survey. Customers of Apartment Hotel Tampere MN were asked to express their opinion about the work of reception and aspects concerning apartments, parking places and Internet connection.

Research questions were:

1. What are the opinions of the customers regarding the work of reception, apartments, parking places and Internet connection?
2. Do the provided services meet customers' expectations?

The findings showed that the level of customer satisfaction of the company is quite high. The company is capable to meet customers' expectations. Some suggestions for improvement of services were made by the author of the thesis.

2 CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Customer satisfaction

2.1.1 Definition of customer satisfaction

Satisfaction is a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing perceived performance or outcome in relation to his or her expectations (Kotler & Keller 2009, 868).

The level of customer satisfaction is determined through the balance between his or her expectations and the real quality of purchased product or service. The customer compares preliminary expectations and perceived qualities of the performance or the final result of using it (figure 1).



FIGURE 1. Customer satisfaction

If the performance and results turn to be lower than expectations, the customer experiences dissatisfaction. If the characteristics of the performance and the expectations are the same, the customer is satisfied. If the performance is higher than expectations, he or she is greatly satisfied or delighted. (Kotler & Keller 2009, 389.)

An important role in shaping expectations of customers play previous experiences, advice of friends and co-workers, information received from active market players and competitors and also their promises. If the information from companies that provide services, lead to higher expectations, it is possible that the customer can be disappoint-

ed. If the company sets too low level of expectations, it fails to attract sufficient number of buyers, even though the real quality will meet or exceed the expectations.

A big success for the company is to raise the level of buyer expectations and at the same time provide the customers with the appropriate performance. Customer satisfaction grows when the company decreases the price or increases the level of services that can lead to profit loss. Thus, the company should consider customer satisfaction accomplishment that will not divert funds and impair stakeholders. (Kotler & Keller 2007.)

2.1.2 Factors affecting customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a general impression about the supplier and his product or service, this is why the factors that influence customer satisfaction can be divided into two categories: supplier's behaviour and product or service performance. Supplier's behaviour is connected with managers and employees, who take care of customer response and complaint management. The better trained and skillful the staff is, the more productive the work and behaviour of the supplier is.

Product or service performance depends on their quality and the ability of the company to develop the product or service effectively and how skilled the employees are. If the product has problems with frequent maintenance, it can cause irritation of customers, but these problems can be handled by the company by working with complaints effectively. In this case dissatisfaction can be avoided.

It is almost impossible that a product or service does not have any negative features in the opinion of the customers. The customer feels delight or irritation, but the final opinion is always a sum of general experiences. The more positive features there are in this sum, the more likely it is for a customer to be satisfied. The supplier should enhance positive features of a product or a service by targeting a customer, as individual preferences differ from customer to customer.

High satisfaction level causes attachment of the customer to the brand and the company. If the company is aiming to build a strong customer-supplier bonding, it should pay attention to the factors affecting customer satisfaction (Managementstudyguide.com):

- Effective work of company departments
- Technological and engineering development
- Company's response to its customers
- Ability of the company to meet deadlines
- Effective work of customer service and complaint management
- Staff friendliness
- Cost and quality of the product
- Arrangement of free functions and operations.

2.1.3 Customer satisfaction measurement

Many companies arrange customer satisfaction measurements on regular basis for the reason that customer satisfaction is the foundation for keeping the customers. Satisfied customers stay loyal for a longer time, keep buying new products and they have a better opinion about the company, they do not pay attention on competitor companies and they are less sensitive to price. Moreover, they can offer new ideas concerning products or services and for the company these loyal customers cost less, as the transactions with them have a routine character.

However, there is no direct link between satisfaction and loyalty of the customer. When the customer estimates satisfaction on one of the company's performances, it should be noticed that customers' definition of a good performance can vary. Two different customers can be highly satisfied, but for different reasons. It is easy to satisfy one and difficult to satisfy the other. It is possible that in the case with the second one it was just a specific occasion. (Kotler & Keller 2007, 66-67.)

Customer satisfaction measurement helps companies to know how successful their business is, to clarify if the changes are needed, and where improvements can be done and to decide if these changes will lead to these improvements. Information about customers' requirements, their perception and expectations gives a company a vision if it can meet these requirements and thereby take better business decisions.

Before starting customer satisfaction measurement, it should be defined what exactly will be measured and why. Moreover, these six questions should arise: who (who will

measure?), what (what will be measured?), when (when the measurement should take place?), where (where exactly in the company measurement should be made?), how (how to measure?) and why. (Cengiz 2010, 84.)

2.2 Service quality

Companies are required to stay customer-oriented all the time and only those of them that improve the service quality have possibility to benefit from customer satisfaction (Grönroos 2001, 98).

According to Valarie Zeithaml, the service quality, as perceived by customers, can be defined as the extent of discrepancy between customers' expectations or desires and their perceptions (Zeithaml et al. 1990, 19).

Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry developed a model of service quality, in which the main requirements for expected service qualities were depicted. The model describes five gaps that can be a reason for customer dissatisfaction (figure 2).

These gaps are (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry 1990, 33):

1. The gap between customer expectations and perception of them by the company management. Service management does not always realize what customers want or how they estimate the components of services. Thus, hospital administration can suppose that patients judge by the quality of food, whereas patients care more about nurses' attentiveness.
2. The gap between management perception of customers' expectations and transformation of this perception in quality specifications. In a company, that provides with services, quality standards can be absent or requirements for them are indefinably formulated. Even when they are defined clearly, they can be unreal to fulfill and the management does not take actions to support the quality level.
3. The gap between service quality specifications and the quality of provided services. This gap can be connected with many factors, for instance, insufficient staff training, its overloading with work, its low morale. Customer service implies not only satisfaction, but also financial efficiency of provided services and

this can cause certain contradictions. Bank operations department requires quickness in working with customers, while marketing department wants friendliness and attentiveness towards every client.

4. The gap between provided services and external information. Customer expectations are influenced by promises and information widely spread about the company. If an advertisement brochure depicts a hotel with magnificent rooms and views and in reality they are ugly or average, the reason of customer dissatisfaction would be this gap between the brochure content and the reality.
5. The gap between customers' expectations and their perception of received services arise when one of the previously described gaps appears.

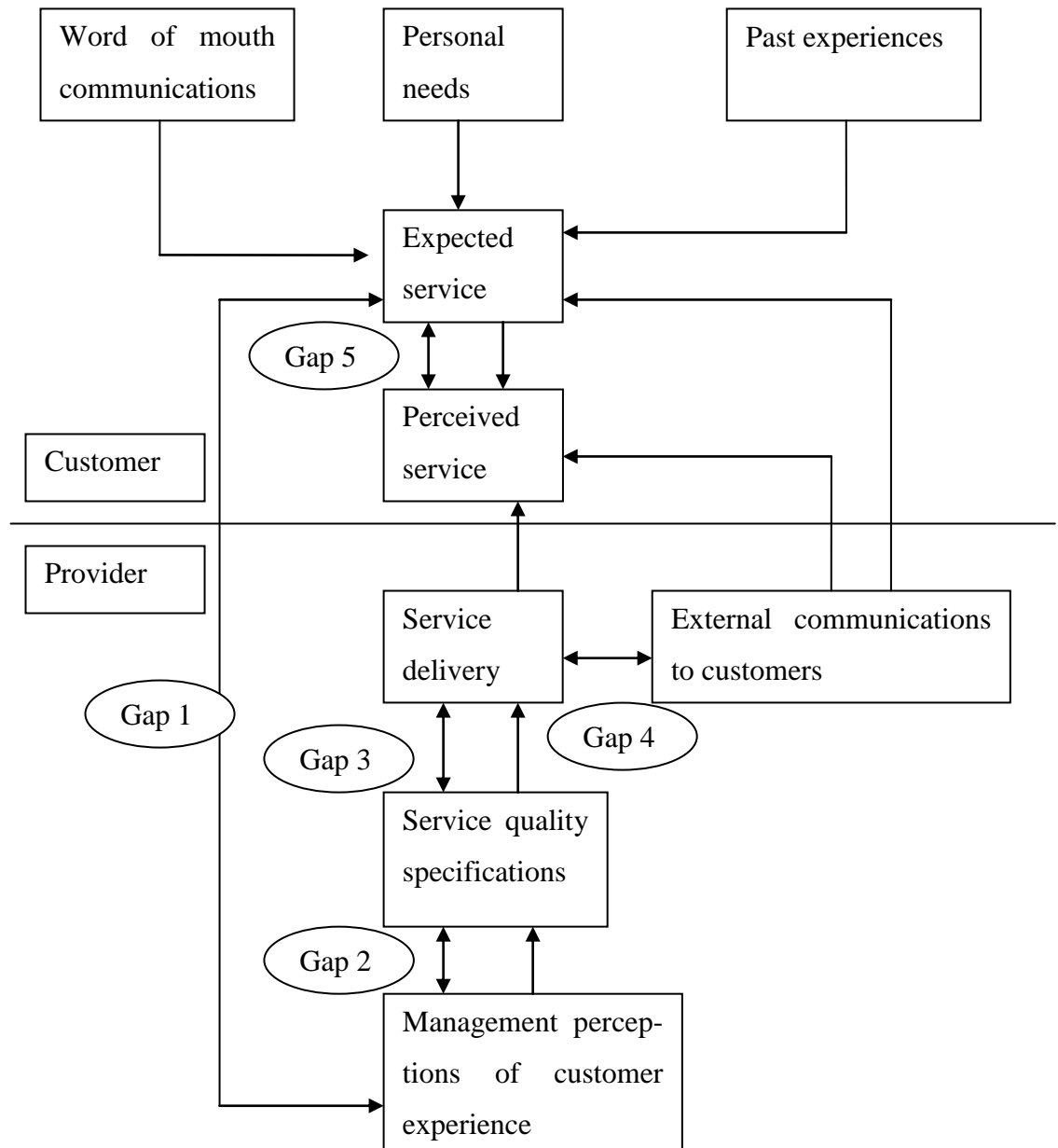


FIGURE 2. The model of service quality by Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry

3 APARTMENT HOTEL

3.1 Definition of an apartment hotel

According to Oxford Dictionaries online, an apartment hotel is a hotel with furnished suites of rooms including kitchen, available for long-term or short-term rental (Oxforddictionaries.com).

The term apartment hotel or aparthotel itself is very often replaced with the term serviced apartment and they are used as synonyms. Apartel, another name for it, is used rarely.

Apartment hotels are becoming nowadays more popular among tourists for many different reasons: having more private space than in a conventional hotel, having own kitchen that allows following own eating plan, cheaper price for long stays, sense of being at home. Nevertheless, very often people do not know what to expect from an apartment hotel before they check in, since this sector of tourism is quite fragmented and companies offer different services of different level. The concept of an apartment hotel still stays unclear.

The suppliers of the services can be operators, who own or lease their apartments and deal with guests, or they are agents, who only work with enquiries, booking and payment processes; or operator-agents, who combine features of both.

Apartment hotels start to appear on online booking systems as all other hotels and this makes the sector to expand despite of worldwide recession. With expanding, terminology can be confusing for different countries. When comparing European countries and Great Britain there are some differences: one bedroom apartment in Europe is the same as studio in Great Britain, or European kitchens are kitchenettes in Britain and British kitchens are better equipped. In Asia and US America rental markets are complicated because of difficulties to rent an apartment for a short period of time, usually apartments are offered only for 30 nights stay or more. (C.ymcdn.com 2013.)

3.2 Apartment Hotel Tampere MN

Apartment Hotel Tampere MN is a limited liability company that has existed for seven years. The Finnish name of the company is Tampereen Huoneistohotelli MN. The address of the company office is Kyttälänkatu 4, 33100 Tampere. The address of the office and apartment addresses are at different places, though some of the apartments are located in the same building as the office.

Apartment Hotel Tampere MN was opened and run by Marja Nurmisto. Except for her, there are two other persons working: a manager and a cleaner. In summer and during the times that require much work, there can be also temporary cleaners and repairmen.

The number of apartments is 20, they are situated at different places, but mostly in the city center of Tampere: Hämeenkatu, Aleksanterinkatu, Pellavatehtaankatu, Satamakatu, Hämeenpuisto and Voimakatu. The location can be negotiated with the customer by e-mail or by phone, as well as the parking place nearby, according to customer's needs.

All of the apartments include:

- Living area with 1 double or 2 single beds (including bed linen and towels) and dining table for four chairs.
- Kitchen equipment: dishwasher, microwave oven, oven and ceramic hob, fridge/freezer, coffee maker, toaster, kettle.
- Kitchen utensil and cutlery: dishes for four or more people depending on how big the apartment is, pots and pans, plates, forks, spoons, knives.
- Fully tiled bathroom.
- Washing machine.
- TV with cable channels.
- Wireless Internet.
- Iron and ironing board.
- Vacuum cleaner.
- Hair dryer.
- Child equipment on request, extra fee may be applied (bed, push trolley, high-chair, potty, car seat).

Normally, the price is for two persons, accommodation for more people is possible in large studios and one-bedroom apartments that have sofa and additional beds. In this case additional fee would be 20 eur/person/night.

Apartment Hotel Tampere MN works with booking.com and it is the most common way of reservation. Other ways are on phone, through the email or the booking request on site <http://www.tampereenhuoneistohotelli.fi>. There are special proposals and discounts offered on booking.com and to the customers that order accommodation for one week or more. Every apartment has the price for one night; the price of staying for one week, price for three weeks, five weeks or more. Besides, there are offers and discounts in low season and last hour reservation.

Apartment Hotel Tampere MN offers accommodation for everybody, who needs it, customers are people of different ages and purposes of travelling. This kind of a hotel is comfortable for families, especially with children. Living in the apartment, the family can arrange the time during the day according to the needs; have access to the kitchen with all its equipment and cutlery. Feeding chairs and babies' cots with bed linen are provided if there is a need.

It can also interest business travelers that stay and work in Finland for a long time. Apartment Hotel Tampere MN usually makes a good offer for these kinds of customers or to the companies they work for, as it is better for a hotel to have apartments booked for a long time and at the same time it is profitable for business travelers, who sometimes want to feel like home even when they live in a foreign country.

4 SURVEY RESULTS

The research was conducted between November 2014 and March 2015. Questionnaires were handed out to all the customers of Apartment Hotel Tampere MN and 43 filled questionnaires were received. Due to the low season there were not so many people travelling. Another significant limitation was the reluctance of people to take part in the research.

The survey contained 13 questions, questions about customers' background and the reasons for choosing exactly this apartment hotel and estimation questions. The questionnaire can be found in appendix 1.

Estimation questions had a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = terrible, 2 = poor, 3 = average, 4 = very good, 5 = excellent. The aspects to evaluate were combined in blocks: reception, apartments, parking place and Internet connection. One question was on defining the ability of the hotel to meet customers' needs and requirements. Two last questions were open-ended questions, where respondents could express their opinions why the hotel had not met their expectations, what was wrong and what could be done to improve services.

4.1 Background information of the respondents

All the respondents were supposed to have the experience of staying in Apartment Hotel Tampere MN. Among 43 respondents, there were 30 female and 13 male, which is 70% female and 30% male respondents (figure 3).

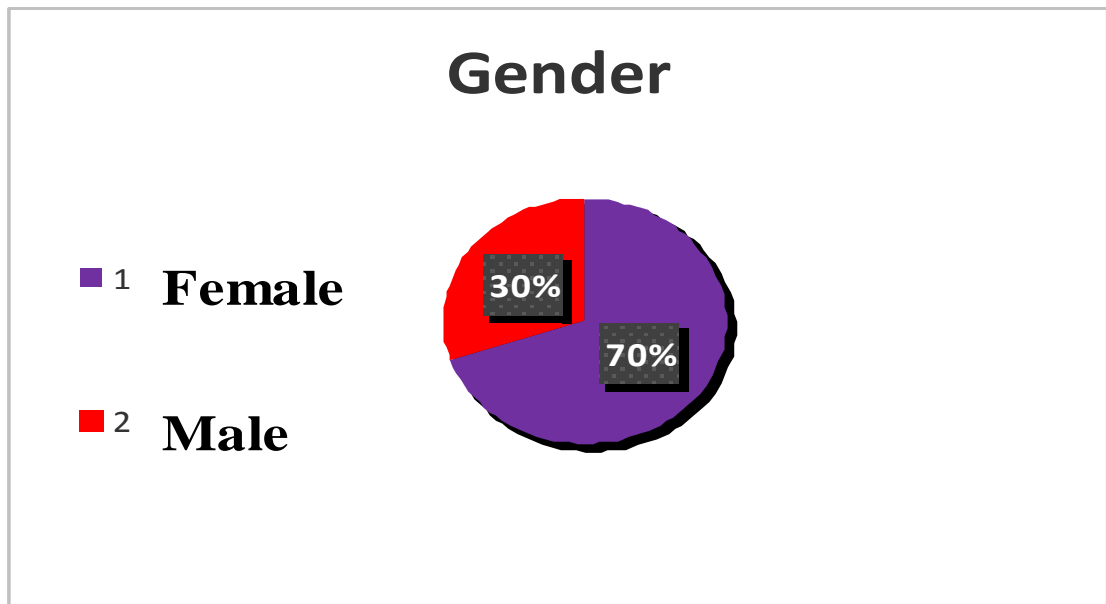


FIGURE 3. Gender of the respondents

Figure 4 illustrates the age of the respondents. The survey had five options to choose from: under 20, 20-34, 35-54, 55-64 and older than 64. As there were no respondents under 20, this variant was not included into the chart. 17 respondents or 47% referred to the group of 35-54 years old, which was the majority. 12 respondents or 33% were of age 20-34. 6 or 17% were of age 55-65 and only one person (3%) was older than 64.

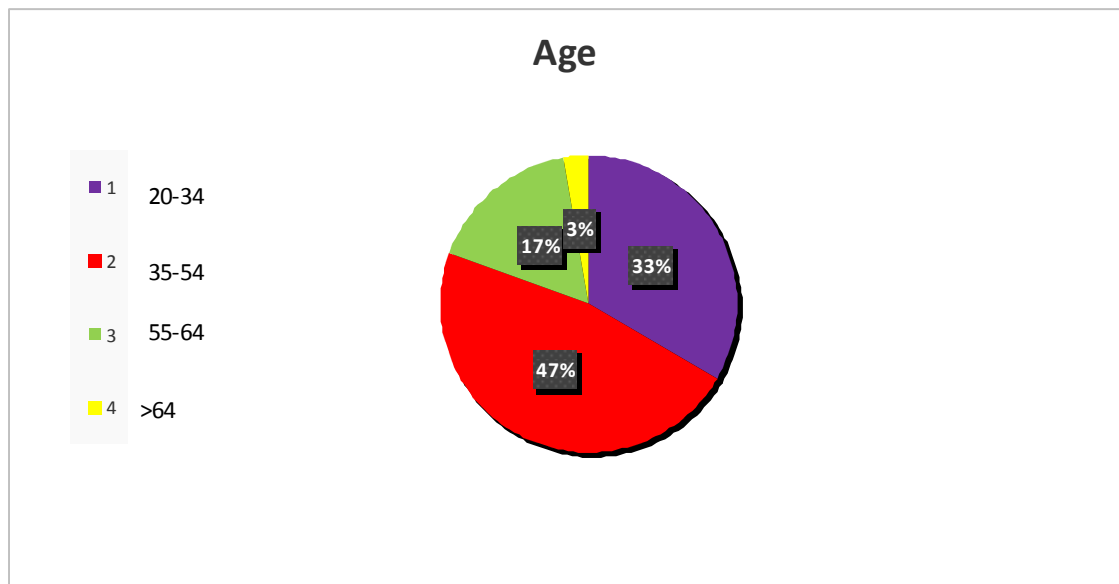


FIGURE 4. Age of the respondents

Figure 5 illustrates the countries of origin of the respondents. The majority, 23 respondents were from Finland, which can be explained with the fact that Apartment Hotel

Tampere MN is a Finnish company and located in Finland. The survey was conducted in wintertime or low season for tourism and not so many tourists come to Finland from other countries during this time.

It should be mentioned that Apartment Hotel Tampere MN is popular among Russian tourists, especially during Christmas time, but winter 2014-2015 was connected with catastrophic ruble fall towards Euro (expert.ru). This caused a great drop in Russian tourism activity in Finland and in Schengen zone in general. Thus, during the survey was being conducted, only two Russians took part in it.

On the second place by number of people coming from, was the country Czech Republic, five people mentioned it as their country of origin. Then, we can see that such countries like Italy, Germany and Iran are presented by two customers from each of them.

Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Slovakia, Vietnam, Korea and Japan were presented only by one person from each country. The graph does not show the percentage due to the reason of small number of respondents from many countries.

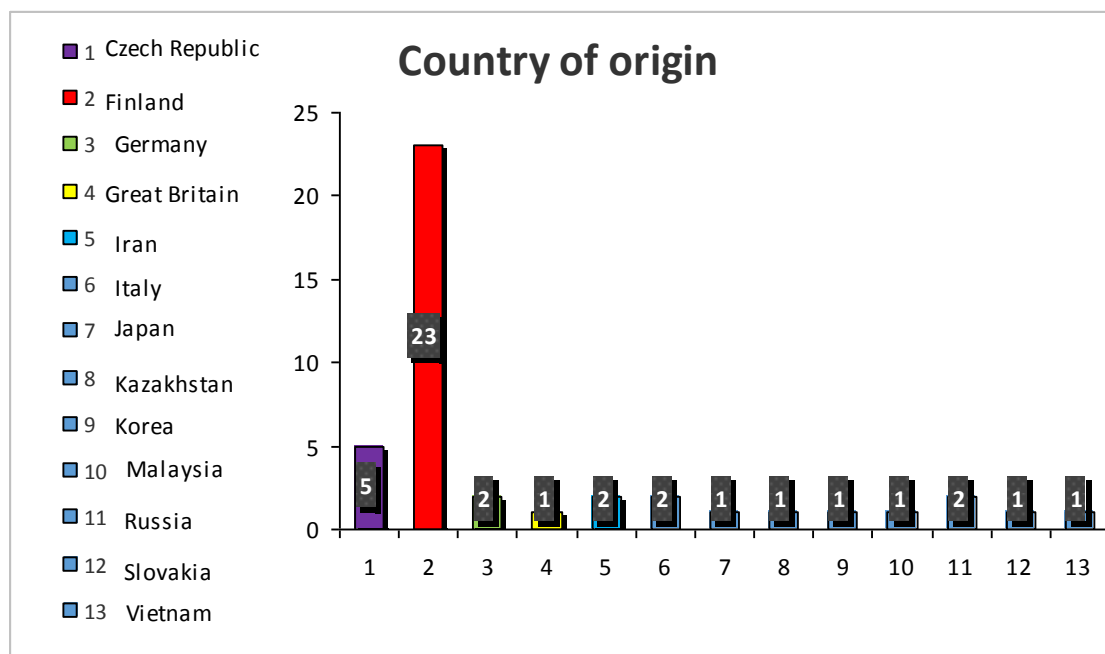


FIGURE 5. Respondents' countries of origin

Figure 6 shows customers' purpose of traveling. The survey had five options to choose from: business, holiday, shopping, visits of family or friends and others, where the respondent could name other purpose. 19 respondents or 45% had holiday as a purpose

for traveling. 10 people or 23% were traveling to visit their family or friends, 9 people, which is 21% of all had business purpose. 4 respondents (9%) chose other purpose and explained as “search of a new apartment”, “conference” and “traineeship”. One person (2%) chose shopping as purpose. Thus, the most common reason for traveling by the respondents was holiday.

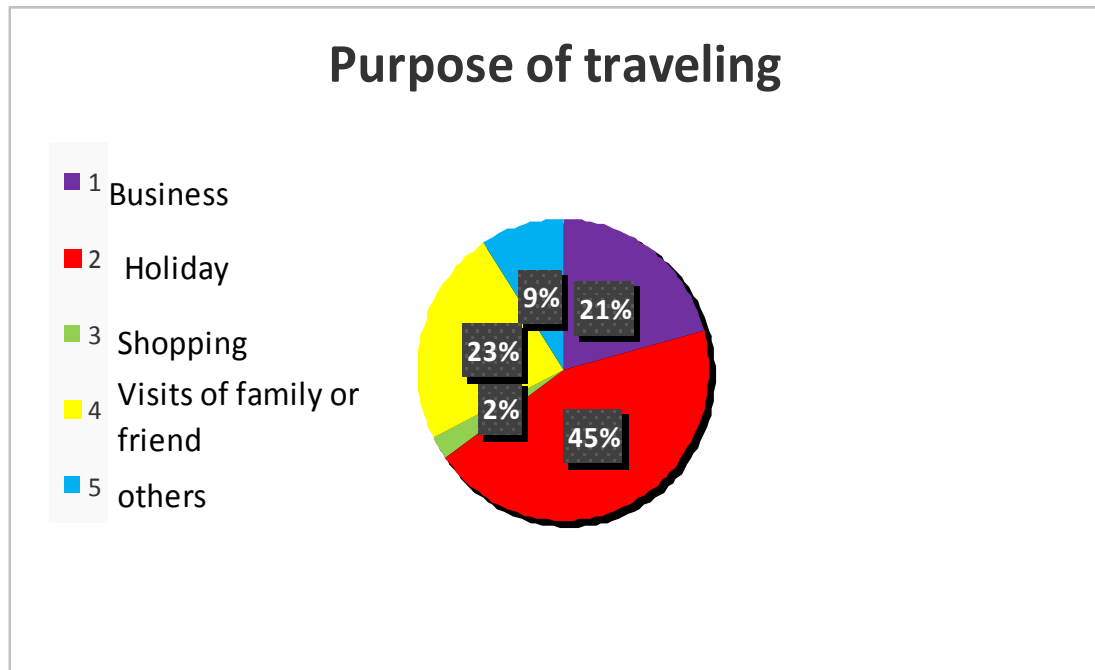


FIGURE 6. Purpose of travelling

Figure 7 illustrates travelling partners of the respondents. 16 of them or 36% did not have a travelling partner, 11 (26%) travelled as a couple, 9 (21%) had a business partner, 5 people (12%) travelled with their families and only one person chose the variant others (“my good friend”).

It was assumed before that Apartment Hotel Tampere MN can attract families travelling with children and people travelling for business, but the results of this survey showed that the majority of the respondents were travelling alone or as a couple. Of course the small number of received responses to the survey does not allow making any generalizations in this case; it only shows the situation of the respondents, who stayed in the hotel in a certain period of time and who returned the questionnaires.

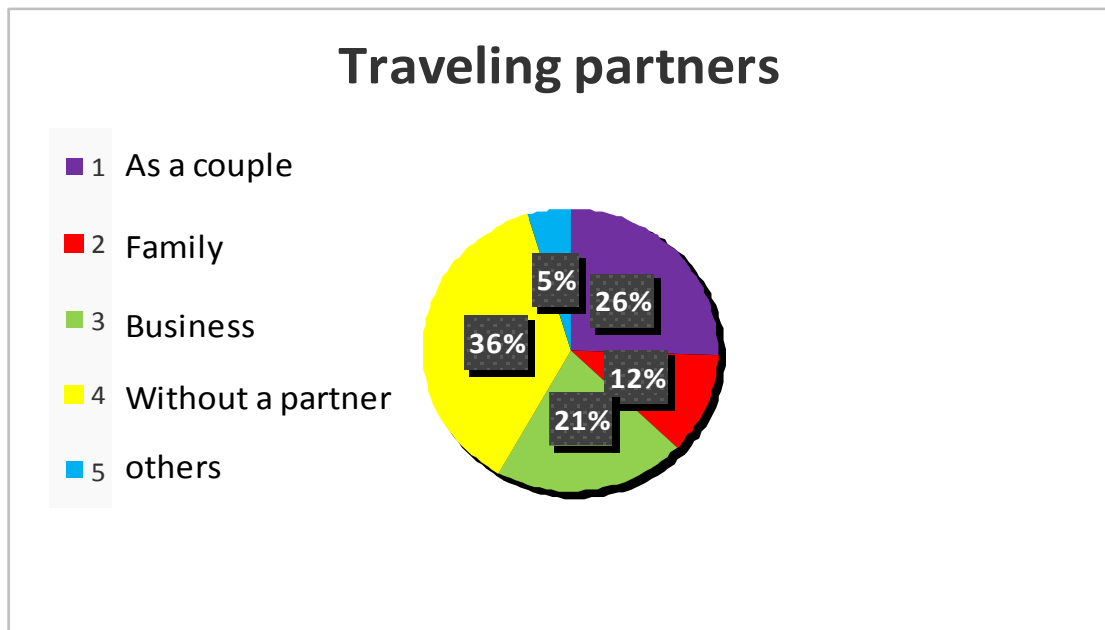


FIGURE 7. Travelling partners

4.2 Reasons for choosing Apartment Hotel Tampere MN

Figure 8 illustrates reason or reasons for choosing Apartment Hotel Tampere MN. The offered alternatives were: good previous experience, good location, price, recommendation or something else. Some respondents chose several reasons at the same time and this is why the number of answers to this question is bigger than the number of respondents who took part in the survey. Good location was chosen 31 times (41%) and it was the most popular reason to stay in Apartment Hotel Tampere MN. Most of the hotel's apartments are located in the city centre of Tampere, which makes the trips around the city easier; there are many shops and restaurants in the city centre and transportation connections.

On the second place was the price (30 times, 39%). Normally, people are sensitive to the price; they want to make sure that the price is corresponding to the service quality. Thus, the most important is not to find the cheapest price, but the price that matches the quality.

Good previous experience was chosen as an answer 11 times (14%), 4 times recommendation (5%), and one person chose the hotel also for something else ("sauna").



FIGURE 8. Reason/reasons for choosing Apartment Hotel Tampere MN

4.3 Reception work estimation

4.3.1 Reception work estimation by all respondents

Reception work was estimated with the scale from 1 to 5, where 1= terrible, 2 = poor, 3 = average, 4 = very good, 5 = excellent. From the table one it can be seen that the majority of the respondents was satisfied with the work of the reception. Staff friendliness, staff appearance, staff language skills, location of reception, easiness to reach the reception by phone and convenience of working hours were mostly given the score 5.

It was asked about the appearance of reception staff, for the reason that many hotels have their own special form. Apartment Hotel Tampere MN does not have it, but as it can be seen from the results of the survey, from the point of view of customers, it does not influence the opinions on the work of the reception in a negative way.

Location of the reception was estimated as excellent and very good. Location of the reception and the address of the apartment can be at different places and though there is information about this on the web page of the hotel, some customers experience inconvenience and disappointment to have a need of reaching two destinations, especially in an unknown city. However, the results of this survey showed that the customers were satisfied with this aspect in general.

TABLE 1. Estimation of reception

	Excellent	Very good	Average	Poor	Terrible
Staff friendliness	37	6	0	0	0
Staff appearance	28	15	0	0	0
Staff language skills	27	16	0	0	0
Location of reception	33	8	2	0	0
Easiness to reach reception by phone	35	8	0	0	0
Tidiness of reception	25	16	2	0	0
Convenience of working hours	28	9	5	1	0

The number of people who estimated the work of the reception as excellent and very good was in the majority, and this reveals that customers are satisfied and the quality of service is quite high.

4.3.2 Customers' gender and the estimation of the reception work

Figure 9 shows how 30 women, who filled the questionnaire, estimated staff friendliness, staff appearance, staff language skills, location of reception, easiness to reach reception by phone and convenience of working hours.

26 women or 86,6% estimated staff friendliness as excellent, 4 (13,3%) as very good. 20 (66%) found staff appearance as excellent and 10 (33%) very good. 19 (63,3%) and 11 (36,6) gave to staff language skills the score excellent and very good accordingly. 23 female customers (76,6,%) found the location of reception excellent, 6 (20%) very good and 1 (3,3%) average. 25 women (83,3%) chose the variant "excellent" on easiness of reaching reception by phone and 5 (16,6%) very good. Reception tidiness seemed excellent for 18 respondents (60%), very good for 11 (36%) and average for 1 (3,3%). Convenience of working hours was estimated as excellent by 19 women (63,37%), very good by 7 (23,3%) and average by 4 (13,3%).

Almost all aspects were given the scores 5 and 4. Only location, tidiness of reception and convenience of working hours were estimated also as average. Such variants as poor and terrible were not used at all by women and they are not shown in the figure.

Convenience of working hours of reception sometimes can cause dissatisfaction of customers. The reception is open on weekdays between 10.00 am and 16.00 pm, after that it is open only by agreement. When a customer has reservation, he or she is asked about arrival time, and there is always an employee in the office, even at night time. The customer is met, told about the hotel, address, even shown the apartment if there are any problems in finding it and given a key. And though there could be seen estimations of working hours as average more than other aspects of the reception work, still the most popular chosen variant was excellent, this proves that the respondents were satisfied.

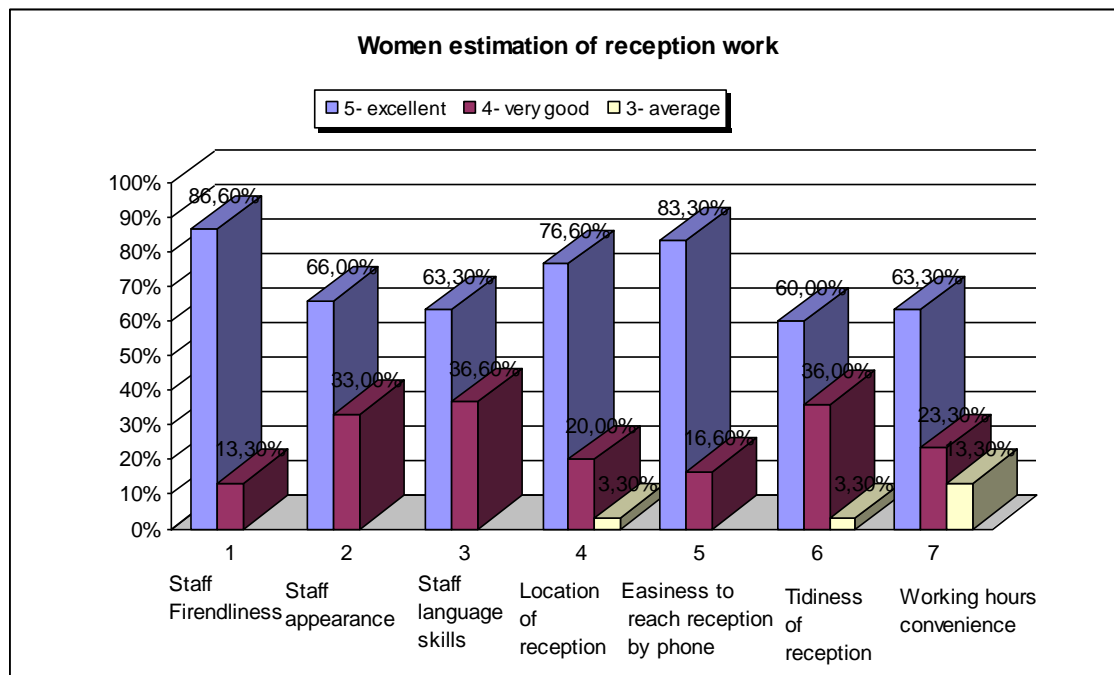


FIGURE 9. Estimation of reception work by women

It can be seen from figure 10 how 13 male respondents of Apartment Hotel Tampere MN estimated the work of reception. The picture is quite similar to women estimation. Only excellent and very good variants were used as a majority, minority was average. No one estimated the aspects of reception as poor or terrible.

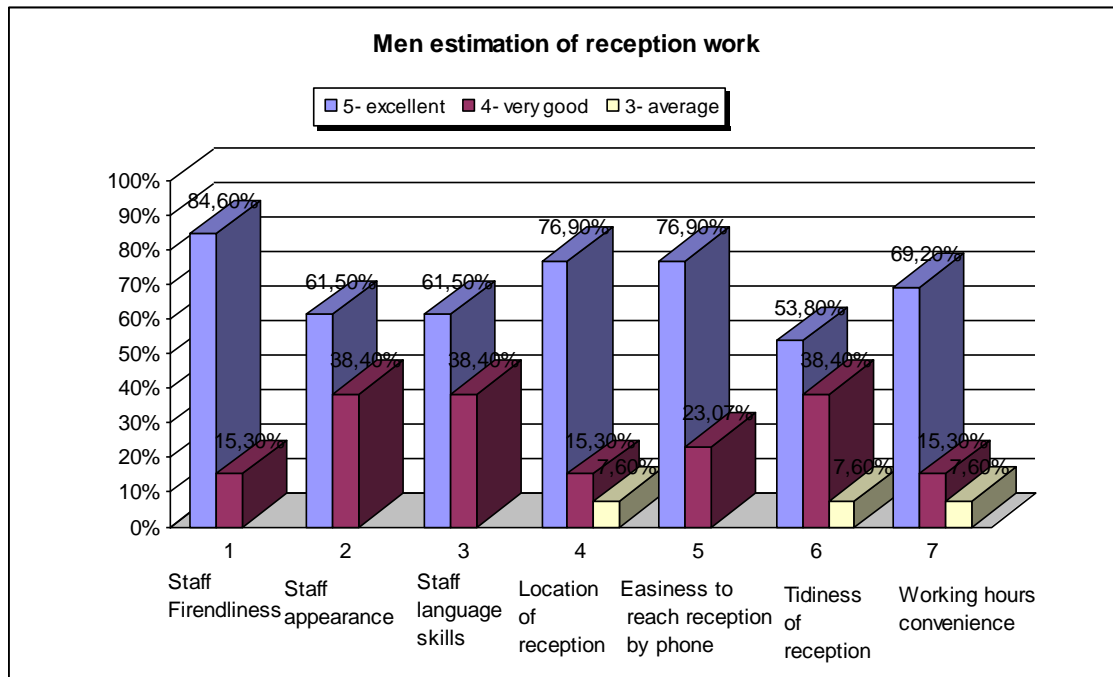


FIGURE 10. Estimation of reception work by men

4.4 Estimation of apartments

4.4.1 Estimation of apartments by all respondents

Table 2 shows the number of respondents, who estimated apartments. Interior was estimated as excellent by 23 people, very good by 13, average by 5. Location was estimated excellent by 35 respondents and as very good by 8. Equipment was estimated as excellent by 25 people, very good by 10, average by 6 and poor by 2. Sleep quality was estimated as excellent by 15 people, very good by 17, average by 10 and poor by 1. Bed linen cleanliness was estimated as excellent by 30 people, very good by 9, average by 3 and poor by 1. Bathroom cleanliness was found excellent by 27 respondents, very good by 13, and average by 3. Kitchen cleanliness seemed excellent to 30 people, very good to 12, average to nobody and poor to 1. Cleanliness of room or rooms, depending on how big the apartment was, was found excellent by 29 respondents, very good by 13, average by nobody and poor by 1. Cleanliness is important for the hotel and the majority of the respondents were satisfied with it, as well as with interior, location and equipment.

The biggest number of average or negative responses got sleep quality. It can be connected with the fact that apartments are located in the big living buildings in the city center, where it can be noisy and possible traffic can prevent from sleeping.

TABLE 2. Estimation of apartments

	Excel- lent	Very good	Average	Poor	Terrible
Interior	23	13	5	2	0
Location	35	8	0	0	0
Equipment	25	10	6	2	0
Sleep quality	15	17	10	1	0
Bed linen cleanliness	30	9	3	1	0
Bathroom cleanliness	27	13	3	0	0
Kitchen cleanliness	30	12	0	1	0
Cleanliness of room/rooms	29	13	0	1	0

4.4.2 Customers' gender and the estimation of the apartments

Figure 11 shows estimation of the apartments by the women. 15 of them (50%) estimated interior of apartments as excellent, 10 (33,3%) as very good, 3 (10%) as average and 2 (6,6%) as poor. 24 female customers (80%) estimated location of apartment as excellent and 6 (20%) as very good. 17 of them (56,6%) considered apartments' equipment as excellent, 7 (23,3%) as very good, 4 (13,3,3%) and 2 (6,6%) as poor. Sleep quality seemed excellent to 10 female customers (33,3%), very good to 15 (50%), average to 4 (13,3%) and poor to one (3,3%).

Bed linen cleanliness was estimated as excellent by 23 women (76,6%), very good by 5 (16,6%) and average by 2 (6,6%). Bathroom cleanliness was estimated as excellent by 21 women (70%), very good by 8 (26,6%) and average by 1 (3,3%). Kitchen cleanliness was estimated as excellent by 23 women (76,6%) and very good by 7 (23,3%). Cleanliness of room or rooms seemed excellent to 21 women (70%) and very good to 9 (30%). No one used the option terrible and it is not shown in the figure.

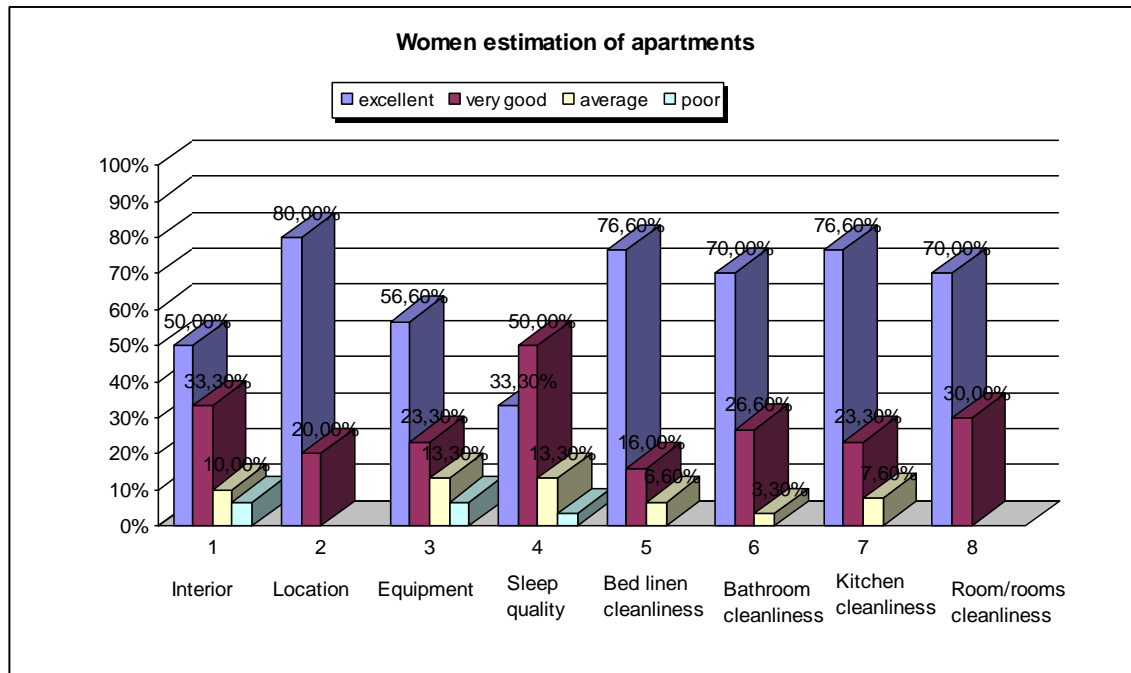


FIGURE 11. Estimation of apartments by women

Figure 12 shows estimation of the apartments by the men. 8 of them (61,5%) estimated interior of apartments as excellent, 3 (66%) as very good, and 2 (3,3%) as average. 11 male customers (84,6%) estimated location of apartment as excellent and 2 (15,3%) as very good. 8 respondents (61,5%) considered apartments' equipment as excellent, 3 (23,07%) as very good and 2 (15,3%) as average. Sleep quality seemed excellent to 5 male customers (38,4%), very good to 2 (15,3%) and average to 6 (46,15%).

Bed linen cleanliness was estimated as excellent by 7 men (53,8%), very good by 4 (30,7%), average by 1 (7,6%) and poor by 1 (7,6%). Bathroom cleanliness was estimated as excellent by 6 men (46,15%), very good by 5 men (38,4%) and the score average was given by 2 men (15,3%). Kitchen cleanliness was estimated as excellent by 7 men (53,8%), very good by 5 (38,4%), no one considered it as average, however one gave the score poor (7,6%). Cleanliness of room or rooms seemed excellent to 8 people (61,5%), very good to 4 (30,7%), average to nobody and poor to 1 (7,6%). No one used terrible as an answer and this variant was not shown in the figure.

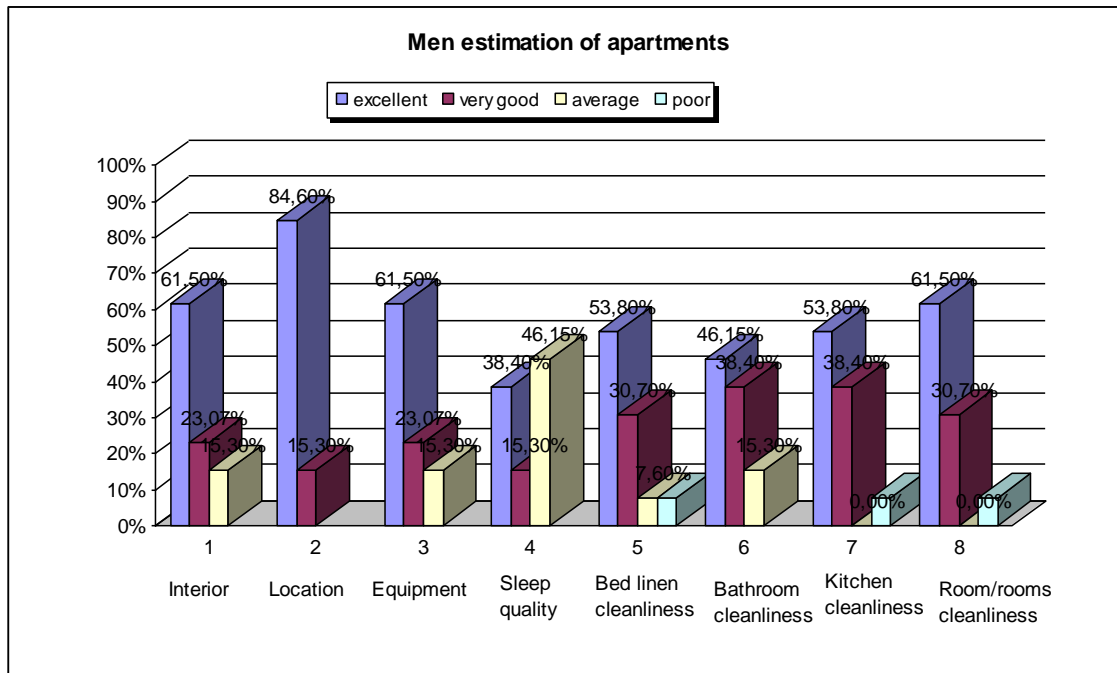


FIGURE 12. Estimation of apartments by men

Both men and women estimated the aspects of the apartments to be very high, except for the sleep quality.

4.5 Parking place estimation

The question about parking place was referred only to the respondents, who had used it. In general 18 respondents had used it. 12 people estimated parking place location as excellent (66,6%), 4 as very good (22,2%), 1 as average (5,5%) and 1 as poor (5,5%). It can be seen on figure 13.

11 people estimated parking place functionality as excellent (61,1%), 4 as very good (22,2%), 1 as average (5,5%), 1 as poor (5,5%) and 1 as terrible (5,5%). The question about the parking place was the first one where such an estimation as terrible appeared. There are two types of parking places in Apartment Hotel Tampere MN: near the building and underground parking inside of the buildings. The ones that are underground are difficult in exploitation, it requires to open several doors, there are many buttons and it can be confusing, especially for foreign customers. The parking area is not big, so it requires good driving and parking skills to drive among other persons' cars and to park accurately.

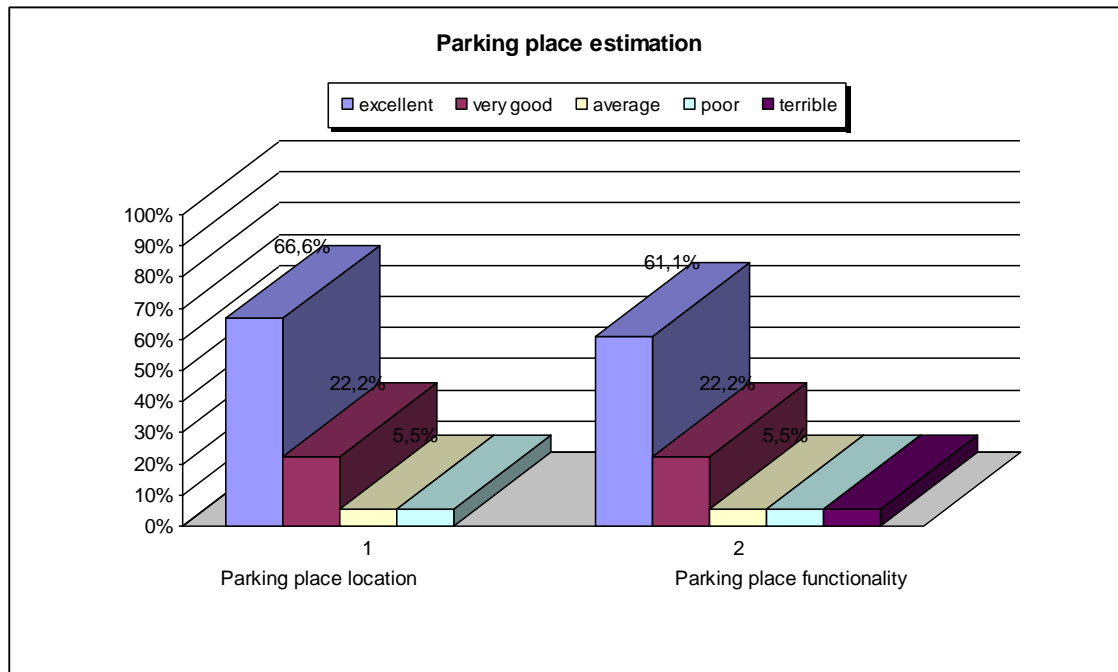


FIGURE 13. Estimation of parking place

4.6 Internet connection estimation

Internet connection was estimated by 37 people, 20 (54,05%) of them considered Internet accessibility as excellent, 10 (27,02%) found it as very good, 2 as average (5,4%), 1 as poor (2,7%) and 4 as terrible (10,8%).

Speed of the Internet connection was estimated as excellent by 12 people (32,4%), very good by 16 (43,2%), average by 4 (10,8%), poor by 4 (10,8%) and terrible by 1 respondent (2,7%).

Though, the majority of the answers were positive estimations, the appearance of “terrible” as an option for an answer gives a sign of certain dissatisfaction with this service. Technical problems are usually too difficult for people to solve by themselves and technical support of one Finnish famous company can be not easy to reach by phone. The problems with Internet connection arise quite often in apartments.

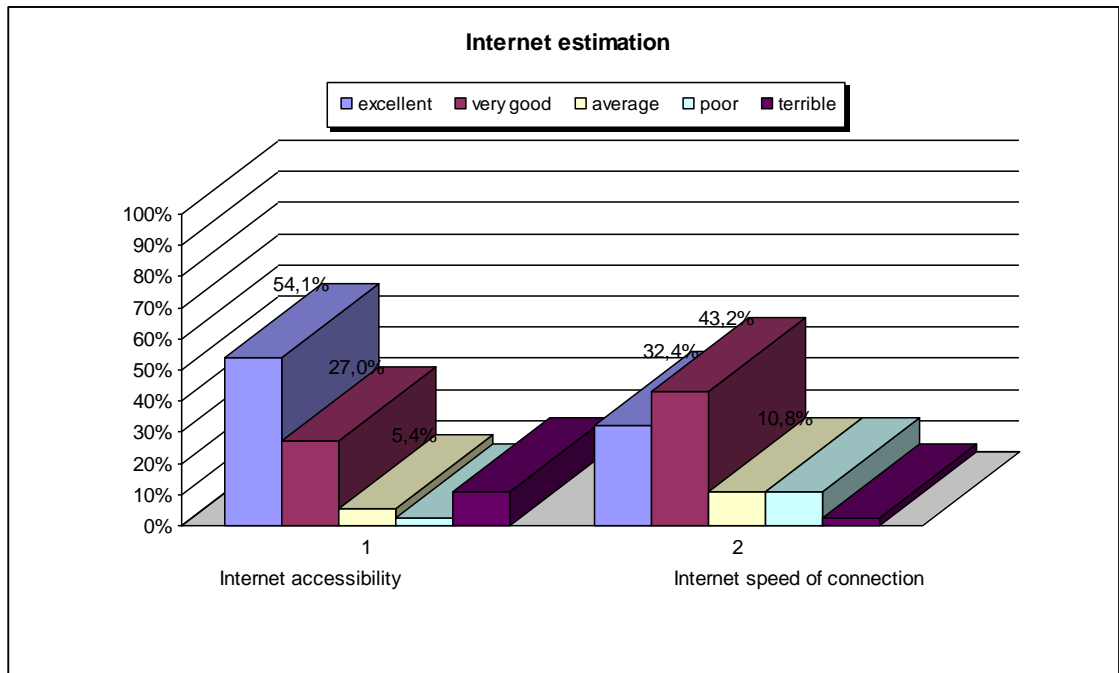


FIGURE 13. Estimation of Internet

4.7 Expectations

Of 43 respondents, who took part in the survey, 40 answered that their expectations were fulfilled, 3 answered that they were not. Figure 14 shows the percentage of answers; it is clear that the hotel is absolutely able to meet customers' expectations and there is no gap between customer expectations and service perception.



FIGURE 14. Meeting customers' expectations

4.8 Open-ended questions

The questionnaire had two open-ended questions to give the respondents a chance to leave their comments about why the hotel did not meet their expectations (if it did not) and what should be changed in order to improve the service.

What concerns the first question, dissatisfaction was caused by the poor work of the Internet and television. It was also mentioned that there are some mismatches in the apartment descriptions on the web page and in reality.

Among mentioned suggestions how to improve the services there were: there is a need to improve the work of the Internet, to provide a better lighting in the rooms, to offer more towels, bigger blankets, shampoo and shower gel. Some other reports of small shortcomings and breakages were mentioned, too.

5 CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING SERVICES

It is highly important for a company to measure and be aware of the level of customer satisfaction. High customer satisfaction level corresponds directly with the profit, as dissatisfied customers tend to prefer competitors.

The main objectives of this survey were to find out what the level of the customer satisfaction of Apartment Hotel Tampere MN was and if it is capable to meet customers' expectations.

The findings showed that the level of customer satisfaction of the company is quite high; the majority of the customers are satisfied with the services offered to them. Though there is a small amount of dissatisfying issues, it is important to take actions to improve them. The aspects like Internet connection in the apartments and parking place should be drawn attention to.

The second objective was to find out if the company is capable to meet customers' expectations. 93% of the respondents answered "yes" to the question if their expectations about the hotel were met. The percentage is quite high and it proves that Apartment Hotel Tampere MN meets customers' expectations.

The main suggestions for improvement of services to the hotel would be:

1. To improve the Internet connection
2. To simplify the use of parking place
3. To improve the equipment of the apartments
4. To work on sound isolation in some apartments in order to improve sleep quality

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Questionnaire

Dear Respondent!

My name is Margarita and I am a student of TAMK. Right now I am making a survey on customer satisfaction, case Apartment Hotel Tampere MN. It would be very kind of you to help with it by answering the following questions and leaving the questionnaire in the apartment. A summary of the responses will be made and no individual responses will be published.

The results of the survey will also be used by the hotel to improve the quality of the services.

Thank you!

1. Your gender

- Female
- Male

2. Your age

- Under 20
- 20 – 34
- 35 - 54
- 55 - 64
- Older than 64

3. Country of origin _____

4. Purpose of traveling

- Business
- Holiday
- Shopping
- Visits (of family or friends)
- Others, what? _____

5. Traveling partners:

- As a couple
- Business partner
- Family
- Solo traveler
- Others, what? _____

6. This hotel was chosen because of the

- Good previous experience
- Good location
- Price
- Recommendation
- Something else, what? _____

Please, choose one number from 1 to 5, where 1= terrible, 2= poor, 3=average, 4=very good, 5=excellent.

7. Reception

Staff friendliness	1	2	3	4	5
Staff appearance	1	2	3	4	5
Staff language skills	1	2	3	4	5
Location of reception	1	2	3	4	5
Easiness to reach reception by phone	1	2	3	4	5
Tidiness of the reception	1	2	3	4	5
Convenience of working hours	1	2	3	4	5

8. Apartments

Interior of the apartment	1	2	3	4	5
Location of the apartment	1	2	3	4	5
Equipment in the apartment	1	2	3	4	5
Sleep quality	1	2	3	4	5
Cleanliness of bed linen	1	2	3	4	5
Cleanliness of bathroom	1	2	3	4	5
Cleanliness of kitchen	1	2	3	4	5
Cleanliness of the room/rooms	1	2	3	4	5

9. Parking place (if used)

Parking place location	1	2	3	4	5
Parking place functionality	1	2	3	4	5

10. Internet connection

Accessibility	1	2	3	4	5
Speed of connection	1	2	3	4	5

11. Did the apartment hotel meet your expectations?

- Yes
- No

12. If not, why? _____

13. In your opinion, what should be changed in order to improve the service?

Appendix 2. Answers to the question 12 of the questionnaire.

1. Internet connection did not work (luckily I had my own). TV with Scart button opened up but had a square in the middle which prevented seeing.
2. Yllätti positiivisesti.
3. Booking.com -sivuston kautta tehty varaus. Sivulla ristiriitoja omien sivujen kanssa. Asuntojen kuvissa sauna, jota ei kuitenkaan ole. Asuntojen nimet poikkeavat omien sivujen nimestä.

Appendix 3. Answers to the question 13 of the questionnaire.

1. Service is OK
2. Nothing, everything is fine
3. Information about Tampere, e.g. opening hours, during Easter
4. Internet connection
5. A bigger/larger blanket would be nice! In the bathroom it's not easy to use the soap (Broken Nuzzle!)
6. Speed of Internet connection, 2 more towels
7. First of all, the lights in the apartment are too dim, I would prefer a brighter apartment (I only stay from 7 or 9 pm till 7 am so I would prefer brighter living space at night). Also, I could connect to the Wi-Fi, but I have no Internet connection.
8. Nothing.
9. Not only Wi Fi, but also wired connection should be used.
10. I think everything was fine and did not need to change.
11. see 12. (+ red lamp was not beautiful since it was not new). Kitchen lamp did not work. Room was clean and that is good!
 - you could provide shower gel and shampoo
 - and make sure the Wi-fi connection works properly
 - clarify that the apartment could be "far" from the office area
 - bad smell in the bathroom.
12. Mukavaa kokemus, loistava sijainti ja ystävällinen palvelu. Varustelusta huomautus siksi, että pesukone ei toiminut. Siisteydestä huomautus siksi, että sängyn alta löytyi rivi suklaata ja pesukoneen ja seinän välistä edellisten vieraiden pikkupyykkiä. Pikku juttuja, jotka eivät haitanneet, mutta täytyy silti mainita.
13. Huoneistoon kuuluu erittäin selkeästi ääniä sekä käytävästä että ulkoa. Voi häiritä herkempiunisia (meillä oli hyvät unen lahjat).
14. Pieniä puutteita: leikkuulauta, kyniä joilla täyttää lomake, nojatuolin ruuvien kiristys, irtonaiset johdot katossa (laiton/hengenvaarallinen t. rakennusinsinööri), muiden nettisivujen ristiriitaisuuksien korjaaminen. Pienistä puutteista huolimatta olemme erittäin tyytyväisiä. Tulemme varmasti uudelleen.
15. Sisustus

16. Lämpöä voisi vähän lisätä. Patterit täysillä, mutta silti kylmiä.