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The service experience of webinars: a case study of Opinahjo

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The service experience of webinars: a case study of Opinahjo

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Opinahjo is a recently established, small-sized Finnish company, which is based in Espoo and which offers educational services for business customers. The company published a new webinar service approximately a year ago that soon became the main service offered by the company. Webinar is a live online seminar that the participants follow through their computer, mobile smart phone or tablet PC without being physically present at the seminar. The aim of the thesis project was to study the service experience of webinars from the customer's point of view and to determine possible ways to improve the service experience.

The knowledge base of the thesis report focuses on the analysis of customer experience and customer satisfaction, and describes the webinar service. Customer experience research was conducted among potential customers who were offered an opportunity to participate in a webinar and in return asked to complete a questionnaire. The participants were contacted directly via e-mail and the questionnaire was filled in online. Quantitative research methods were utilized in the research. The results were analyzed by cross tabulating and chi-squaring the data to find out the dependence of the variables.

According to the results, the customer's age and the level of customer satisfaction are dependent on each other. Customers aged 21 to 32 years are most satisfied with webinar seminars. Educational webinar seminars have a great business potential, since the target customers' willingness to join educational seminars is higher than their current participation level. Customers prefer webinars over the traditional contact lectures due to the time and cost saving benefits of webinars. The subject matter of the webinar is an important aspect when the customer makes a decision to purchase the service. The preferred time to join webinars is in the morning or midday and the aspect that could be researched more thoroughly is the pricing model of the webinars.

Keywords customer experience, customer satisfaction, webinar, cross tabulation

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1 Introduction

The case company, Opinahjo, requested a business student to conduct a thesis research on their new service that they had been offering since June 2014. The new service of the education arranger company is a webinar seminar that takes advantage of the new technology and is therefore still relatively new product on the Finnish market with only few competitors. Opinahjo's business is to arrange education for business professionals working on the fields of human resources, controlling, accounting, payroll computation and personal ledger.

In webinar lecturing the attendances are following a live lecturing through their computer, mobile phone or tablet PCs without being physically present on the same space with the lecturer. Opinahjo was interested to know if the customers are satisfied with the webinar service and to find ways to improve the service to please a greater audience in the future.

1.1 Introduction and background of the thesis

The theory of the thesis is focused on customer experience on the service industry. The researched service product webinar is opened in order to understand the ideology and its difference to classroom lecturing. Customer's expectations and opinions on the new technology utilized in the educational service industry are researched to find out if there is growing potential on the field.

Ten years ago it was typical that companies purchased ready-made teaching syllabuses and expected that the employees would study them independently along with their daily working routines. This teaching method was called modules. However, the method's disadvantage is that finding a piece of information inside a larger information gathering is time-consuming, and it is typical that answers are required immediately. (Talouselämä 2005) Nowadays new more effective methods called virtual classrooms are in use. The greatest advantage in using virtual classrooms is that people do not need to travel anymore. E-learning manager of the Finnish engineering and service corporate Kone, Juha-Matti Arola, evaluates the savings being 20 000 € in one international training session arranged for ten person. Annual savings can be up to millions. (Talouselämä 2005)

Since the beginning of the last recession the popularity of webinars has increased significantly. Increased popularity is partly explained with technological improvements that have made webinars more user-friendly and improved the customer experience compared to ten years ago. Corporation's development departments have been forced to elaborate cost-effective processes and webinars have been in use from educational purposes to sales processes. (White 2010)

The key research term in this thesis is a customer experience. Customer experience can be defined being present in any direct or indirect contact with a company and it is composed in internal or subjective responses to the customer. The customer initiates a direct contact in purchasing situation, or in a use of a service or a product. A direct contact involves customer being in real contact with the service or product supplier. However, indirect contact involves spontaneous and unplanned encounters with the case company's products or services. It may occur in the form of advertising, news, reviews or word-to-mouth. (Mayer & Schwager 2007)

This thesis is focused on the form of direct contact in customer service. Due to the small size of the case company, young age of the company and therefore potential customer's constricted awareness of the company, the customer experience's indirect contact aspect was decided to leave out from the research.

1.2 Purpose of the thesis

Customer experience research aims primarily to improve the customer experience received. Customer's expectations towards webinar seminars are researched. The research is conducted among new customers who use Opinahjo's webinar service for the first time within the thesis research process. The idea was to contact new potential customers to test the webinar lecture for free and in return to gain feedback from the obtained direct customer experience. Most importantly, the areas that require improvement need to be found. Since the term customer experience is wide and includes several subtopics, the term was cut into pieces and specified to meet the requirements of this specific topic researched.

This research aims to reveal customer interests and expectations towards webinar lectures where the lecturer and the lecture participants are not physically present on the same space but instead the participants follow the lecture through laptop or other similar electrical device. Webinar lectures are new and different from the more traditional contact-lecturing model of teaching that we all have experienced at school. Since contact lecturing is expected to be familiar point of comparison for the participants, it is referred in the research to help identify the specialties of webinar lectures. One aspect in the perceived customer experience in webinars is that the lecturer does not see the participants and many times participants can not ask questions out loud during a webinar lecture, which differs from the traditional contact lecturing. However, questions may be asked by writing and the lecturer reads them and answers them out loud so that all participants may hear the answer. Another difference in webinar and contact lecturing is that the participants are not in contact with each other. The participants' opinions are researched on this experience.

Opinahjo's webinars are targeted to corporate professionals who are specialized on their own fields. The webinar topics play an important role in the attractiveness of the service. The lecture topics are intended to meet the customer needs as well as possible, and therefore the customer's preferences are researched. Due to the fast changes in corporate world, there are potential new interesting topics related to the changes in laws, for example. The customers are well aware of the lack of professional knowledge they are expected to know in their daily work. With this fact in mind, the customers themselves are the best source of information when planning new webinar schedule for the future.

Due to the technological manner how webinar lectures are arranged, there is not an exact maximum amount of participants per one lecture. This creates several pricing possibilities for the service since the fixed expenses per one participant varies, on the other hand making it more difficult to set a right price for the service. Opinahjo decided to change their pricing model from the beginning of the year 2015. The company offers two options of monthly packets with a firm monthly payment. It is not possible to purchase the seminars separately anymore unless in the case of tailored seminars. The change of the pricing method occurred recently, and therefore this aspect was decided to taken into account in the customer experience research.

It is expected that the user-friendliness of the webinar program used by the customer play's an important role in the webinar experience, since the most direct contact to the customer occurs through it. Opinahjo does not develop the webinar program in use, but the program is an important tool what the company utilizes in its service process, hence the functioning of it is important. The thesis research includes the customers experience on the webinar program in use, but does not go too deep with the issue, since the program is developed by another company.

The customers respond to the research based on one webinar lecture experienced. The lecturer of the webinar has a great impact on the overall experience of the service, especially in webinar seminar since the lecturer might be the only person who the customer sees and therefore the lecturer represents Opinahjo as a company. At the moment Opinahjo does not have own lecturers but instead all the teaching services are outsourced because of the variety of lecture topics offered. If one aspect in the customer experience is perceived extremely positively or conversely negatively, it may affect to the other areas of the experience as well. Therefore, the research is done on two webinars with different lecturers to reduce the risk of a variable factor, lecturer, to falsify the overall results. Each respondent got to choose one webinar from two offered webinar options. In addition, the customer's opinions of the lecturer is asked in the research, keeping in mind that the personalities of the lecturer and the customer affects to the perceived customer experience.

2 Case company Opinahjo

2.1 Background of the company

Opinahjo was founded in 2010 in Espoo, where the company currently operates. During the first years of its existence its service offering consisted educational contact lectures targeted for business clients. Most of the trainings were tailored depending on the wishes and needs of the customer. In 2014 the company decided to follow the new trends and invested to webinar seminars. At the moment, less than a year after the first webinar, up to 95% of the trainings are offered as webinars, and the popularity is growing explosively.

The company's turnover is approximately 500 000€ and it employs four people. Few months ago the staff number was half of the current number, thus the company is expanding its business and widening its service offering. Since the trainings have been arranged as webinars for less than a year, the company is still in a phase of branding itself towards e-learning company.

The company purchases the teaching services from professional lecturers who are each specialized to their own fields. Currently there are twenty lecturers.

2.2 Service description

Opinahjo offers tailored solutions for its corporate customers. The tailored training is developed in a workshop together with the customer's representative where the subject matter, participants' wishes and needs as well as the seminar method is selected. Opinahjo offers traditional classroom lecturing, webinars or online trainings. Classroom lecturing is place and time dependent, meaning that all the participants are present at the same place at the same time and the lecturing occurs as a traditional contact lecture. Webinar is time-dependent, but not place dependent since participants join from their own workspace. Last available option is online training which is not time nor place dependent, since earlier filmed video records are utilized and the participants complete chosen exercises based on the video records' subject matter. (Opinahjo Oy 2015)

The company co-operates with Finnish franchising union, Suomen Franchising -Yhdistys. Through this co-operation the company has had long-term customer relationships with few large franchising chains that train their franchising entrepreneurs in entrepreneur skills and managerial skills from the point of view of the franchising management. Tailored services and especially webinar trainings are extremely well applicable for companies who function geographically dispersed in small units. (Jokelin 2015)

One of Opinahjo's own developed learning innovation is a Monopoly-like Lego game where corporate professionals built premises from Lego bricks. The game is played in groups of 10 to 30 people. The aim of the game is to teach business control skills in an energetic environment and to place participants under pressure so that the roles may change from the traditional roles in the workplace. Before the actual game, there is a training where the real financial figures are went through and exercises are done. The game has excited people and helped to concentrate under a long training day, since the learning has been made fun. In addition, group working skills and manager's skills to divide the work are developed on the side of the game. Over 10 000 Lego bricks encourage in creative thinking, and the company now considers to develop new games in for the future. (Koho 2014)

Despite of the success in tailored contact lecture services, Opinahjo wants to be up to date and focus on webinars. As the the value of time has become more important for the customers, Opinahjo listened to its customers' wishes and developed its services more efficient and convenient. Traditional contact lecturing services are in sifting phase to webinar seminars, since it was shown that customers started to lose their interest to sacrifice many hours of their valuable working time to trainings. Long distances are one reason for this, and especially customers living further away from larger cities where the education is centered were in unequal position. Opinahjo decided to change this fault, since there is a solution for the problem, webinars. (Jokelin 2014)

The idea of arranging education online is not new, but people's attitudes towards it have been reserved earlier. Now the technology does not limit the training quality possibilities anymore since the quality of picture and voice transmitting has improved. Opinahjo has 67 different webinars available which each is arranged two to three times a year. Records of the webinars are available for the customers four months afterwards, reducing the obstacles to education. On average, each customer is expected to join nine to twelve webinars annually due to the change of employer having tax reduncancies from educating its employees. Opinahjo tests the qualification of the participators with tests, and by passing the test the person gets a certificate of the obtained new knowledge. Tax authorities require proofs from the trainings, and therefore Opinahjo has created the system to help its customers in required documentations. (Jokelin 2015)

In the beginning of this year Opinahjo changed their pricing model of the webinar seminars. Webinars used to be separately available for approximately 100€ price. Now the company offers two contract packet solutions to choose from, M-packet at a price of 59€/month and L-packet at a price of 79€/month. The price is per one person and the term of notice is one month. M-packet includes 40 webinars to choose from freely, and L-packet includes all webi-

nars. The extra webinars in L-packet include special topics such as internalization and generation change in a business, which do not interest all the customers. (Jokelin 2015)

2.3 Target customers

Opinahjo's customers are small and medium sized companies, especially financial management and payroll administration professionals who need constantly updating in their knowledge due to the changing environment. Accounting companies and franchising companies have been the main customers so far. Customers ask for trainings on marketing, sales, human resources and financial management fields, but also less changing topics such as managerial skills are popular. (Jokelin 2015)

Some customers ask for tailored passive web trainings as an example for introduction to their new employees. Recorded web training enables to arrange the same training several times. This is a cost reducing way to arrange trainings thus it works the best for topics that are not rapidly changing. (Jokelin 2014) Such trainings are called passive web trainings, since they do not occur live unlike webinars.

3 Knowledge base

This section includes the fact base of the research. The service product webinar is first defined and discussed to introduce the service being studied. Customer experience and service experience terms are discussed after that, and the research methods of them are reviewed.

3.1 Webinar

3.1.1 Definition

Webinar is a live online seminar where the participating viewers with Internet connection may ask questions and comment via a computer, tablet PC or a mobile phone. The word "webinar" drives from the words "web" and "seminar" and it was established in the late 90's. Webinars may be used for educational purposes such as presentations or workshops, but they work as great for business conferences. (Careless 2012)

Webinar is a live interaction between the participants, but the seminar can be recorded which enables it to be watched later if needed. Webinar includes the transmitting of a voice audio, PowerPoint presentation, written messages and multimedia between the participants. Best know webinar software systems at the moment are GoToMeeting, Cisco WebEx, Adobe Connect, GoToWebinar by Citrix and Microsoft Office Live Meeting. (Careless 2012)

The transmitted voice and video are in a centric role in webinars, and in contrast to media channels, webinar is closest to radio. In addition to these features, visual material such as PowerPoint presentation is commonly present too. In practice, the presenter's screen is shared to the participants in real time, so practically any piece of information that the presenter does on the main computer can be shown to the participants. (Julén 2014)

The most popular way to use webinars is a lecturing, where the lecturer's voice audio is shared one way to the participants. However, it is possible to interact with the other participants as well by using voice audio to ask questions through a microphone or to write the questions and comments in chat-window in an open conversation that the other participants may see and comment too. It is even possible to utilize social media services with chatting feature during the webinar, which allows the conversation to continue after the webinar itself has ended. (Huhmarkangas 2014).

Joining to the webinar happens through one's own computer or similar electrical device by clicking on a shared link that opens a new browser window to the device being used. The voice is transmitted from the loudspeakers, but headphones are better to be used for webinar. The questions asked by the webinar participants can be shared through the main computer used by the presenter. (Julén 2014)

3.1.2 Benefits

Webinars are in rapid growing stage at the moment, both in capability and in usage. Companies have realized that the education they provide to their employees in the globalized world saves enormously time and creates savings if it is done with the help of modern technology. Online technology creates an opportunity to join the seminars from anywhere on earth with an Internet connection, saving money in travel expenses. Travelling takes time, and time of an employer is money. (Newman 2013) Non-travelling is an ecological choice, which is in fashion at the moment. In addition, the step to join to an interesting lecture becomes lower, since one is able to join without leaving home or workplace. Moving from one place to another requires effort and possibly lowers the attendance rate, and in webinar lectures this problem does not occur. (Huhmarkangas 2014)

Due to the non-travelling, the event or lecture organizers do not need to worry about premises that hold the number of attendances nor the food and drinking services. These factors save money and organizing time, making it possible to organize events within a notably shorter notice time. (Julén 2014)

Secondly, a webinar premise is that there is not a maximum number of people what a one webinar may hold. The capability is from one to many, meaning that with the same time and effort it would take to train one person, it is possible to train any number of persons. One-to-many model requires fewer personnel and thus reduces the organizing expenses. (Newman 2013)

Thirdly, a content of a webinar can be modified easily (Newman 2013). In educational webinars the lecturer has typically created a PowerPoint presentation that the attendances can follow during the webinar. Ready-made notes of the topic discussed are provided for the participators in a written form, and if own notes are done, one may go back on the slide show later on to check the notes.

Fourthly, a recorded seminar may be re-watched later to revise the obtained information or to check something from the lecture. Watching the webinar regressive is also possible, but then obviously joining to the live conversations is not possible. However, the webinar organized decides how long the participants may re-watch the webinars, or if at all, but the technology enables these features. (Huhmarkangas 2014)

It has been studied, that the overall customer satisfaction level, which is extremely important for businesses providing services, has been very good when asking about the convenience of webinars in a way of joining an event or training. In addition of trainings, webinars are great selling channels and the marketing expenses of them are low. (Juslén 2014)

3.1.3 Challenges

The working of a webinar is dependent on the Internet connection and the software in use. If either one of them faces technical problems, the whole event might be ruined since the webinar is a live broadcast. Also, the dependence on the software in use brings risks to the webinar business, since the software supplier may increase the price or change supplying terms that might harm the business.

Another challenge that all information moving online face is the information security. Highly secret information should not be shared online or then the devices and software has to be well virus prevented and secured to prevent misuses. Thus webinar is one-to-many service, the provider has to monitor that only the paying customers are using the service. In case of a paid educational webinar, the price is set for one person, but the actual number of followers is difficult to be monitored since many people may follow the webinar through one link.

Technological smoothness does not guarantee a successful webinar, since the content of a good webinar is the key factor in delivering wanted value to the participants. The more effectively the webinar seminar uses given time and the better the content meets or exceeds the expectations of the participants, the more successful the webinar is. These criteria's are very similar to the traditional contact lecturing success criteria's.

Lastly, new innovations can be considered being a future challenge for webinars. Webinar technology is new at the moment, but when the time passes, new communication methods will be invented and there is a change that webinars once become old and outlived. Forecasts are impossible to be done if and when this happens, but corporations in webinar business should follow the new trends and keep on track with the changing environment.

3.1.4 Future

Digitalization is moving with a fast pace and individuals are connected to web at work, home and their free time. Because of tough financial situation due to the recession started on 2007 companies are looking for ways to save money on expenses, and webinar offers a great opportunity to cut costs in communication and marketing expenses. Working has to be more effective, meaning that the used time has to be used even more wisely. This increases pressures on the corporate world. Webinar is important new tool especially for globalized companies or for companies who aim to globalize in the future. (Julén 2014)

3.2 Customer experience

Customer experience is the sum of all encounters, images and feelings that a customer forms from a corporation's actions. Customers own interpretation is a key in forming the customer experience, and therefore it is not a decision but more like an experience that is affected by feelings and unconscious interpretations of the customer. Due to this, a corporation is not entirely able decide what type of customer experience it brings to the customer, but it may decide what type of customer experience it aims to create. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 11)

The benefits of customer experience management (CEM) are to maximize the value created to the customer and eventually to increase the profits. Customer satisfaction, quality and the profitability are closely connected, since customers are willing to pay more for high quality of service that creates high satisfaction. (Kotler & Keller 2009, 165) When corporations plan customer experience management, the benefits they desire to gain are; to increase customer satisfaction level, strengthen customer's loyalty to the company, make current customers to recommend the company to other potential customers, increase possibilities to create cross- and side sales, to extend the customer's lifetime value, to encourage customers give feed-

back and development ideas, to increase brand value, to engage personnel, to reduce customer defection rate, to reduce the amount of negative feedback and to reduce the expenses of acquiring new customers. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 13)

It is important to distinguish customer experience from a department called customer service. In customer-centric thinking all the departments of a company are forming the customer experience. Customer service department and sales department are in contact with the customer and it is typical that the other departments are working on the back to support the customer contacts. However, the back office teams have a huge responsibility in ensuring that the sales and customer service department are able to exceed customer's expectations and to deliver quality that the customers expect. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 14) The picture below represents the customer experience relationship in relation to a company's departments.

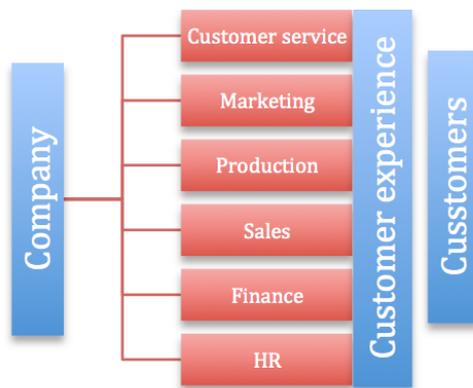


Figure 1: Customer experience versus customer service

The customers are the source of salary for every single employee, and the customers pay according to the delivered customer experience. Therefore, every single staff member should realize the importance of the customer experience. The extension and speed how customers share their' experiences has changed dramatically in the past years when social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, blogs, chats and forums have offered a direct way to deliver messages. In year 2011 Facebook alone had 500 million users and one user has on average 130 friends, and one user updates the profile approximately three times per day. Twitter has hundred million users and 55 million tweets are sent every day. If a customer receives a bad experience, the risk of it spreading fast and broad is high, and therefore the systematic management of customer experience is the only way to affect to the issue. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 16)

Customer experience management is an updated term from earlier used customer relationship management (CRM). The basic idea of CRM is to systematically collect and analyze cus-

customer data and to increase the value of one customer to the company. The basic tools in CRM are to recognize the customer needs, to tailor the services to meet the customer's wishes, to segment the customer base into smaller groups and to identify the most profitable customers. The development of information technology has enabled to collect the customer data, and now the term CRM is also used as a common noun for programs that gather a customer data. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 20)

Managing the customer experience differs from CRM in way that it begins from a target to provide meaningful experiences to the customer in every single contact with the company. This aims to maximize the value what the company brings to the customer. As discussed earlier, the customer experience is formed based on several touch points, and therefore CEM is a wider term than CRM. Customer experience management is a strategic way of thinking, and it is impossible to built it entirely around an information technology program, although customer experience surveys and programs that collect customer feedback are important tools in monitoring the customer's opinions. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 21)

3.2.1 Tools of evaluating customer experience

There are two different perspectives how customer experience can be measured. First of all, purely the customer's experiences can be measured and secondly, the effects of customer experience management may be monitored. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 187) Due to the characteristics of the case company, this research focuses on pure customer experience measure. A research on the effects of management decisions requires a longer time period and therefore the method is not used in this research.

Most importantly, the researched has to be focused on the right issues that help to make decisions on managerial level. Measurement techniques vary from passive spontaneous feedback given to active methods such as continuous feedback questionnaires on several customer touch points. Most relevant customer experience measurement techniques are introduced in the following paragraphs.

To begin, a spontaneous feedback is given by the customer from his own initiative, on the place, way and time he wants. Channels how such feedback may be given are oral feedback during the service experience, feedback e-mails, feedback phone calls or feedback forms on the company's website or on paper. Feedback received through these channels is direct and valuable, since it gives an opportunity to deeper dialog with the customer. However, spontaneous feedback is just one section of the overall customer feedback, and deeper analyses may not be made only based on it. All the feedback should be gathered and analyzed so that most essential issues are recognized. Unfortunately it is typical that both extremity ends are

emphasized and the middle level moderate feedback is received less. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 189)

Relatively new customer experience measurement channel, social media, has brought new broad tool for companies. Every company should at least follow what about it is discussed in the social media. Text analysis methods help to identify larger entities from single comments. Another similar analyzing channel is CRM where the employees working on customer level may write down the reasons why purchase did not occur or why a contract was revoked. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 191)

Annual or periodical direct customer surveys are probably the most used method how companies endeavor to be customer centric. A customer expects that a company who asks customer satisfaction will develop their services further. However, there is a danger that annual surveys repeat the same questions over and over again, producing the same answers every year. If such method is used, the questions have to be customer centric, including emotional aspects, and be short enough that the customers are willing to concentrate and answer to the questionnaire. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 193)

Another way to gather feedback is to conduct continuous feedback questionnaires from several touch points. Essential factors in the experience measure are the continuance and systematic measure since the overall customer experience is built from all the touch points that the customer has with the company. Short online questionnaires after a short period of time after the encounter or SMS questionnaires or point-of-sale questionnaires where the customer gives the feedback immediately after the encounter in the store are ways to collect continuous feedback. This type of questionnaires should be personified based on the present information about the customer so that the customer does not have to answer questions that company already knows. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 199)

The model of net promoter score by Fred Reicheld and Brain Company is a method developed to measure a customer satisfaction level from recommendation aspect. It simply asks the customer to scale their level of recommendation between numbers from zero to ten. The question is: How probably would you recommend the company to X to your friends and colleagues? Numbers from 0 to 6 represent demoters. Answers 7 and 8 are considered neutral and promoters are the ones who answer 9 or 10 as the Illustration 2 below represents. Net Promoter Score is calculated by subtracting the percentage amount of demoters from the percentage amount of promoters. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 202)

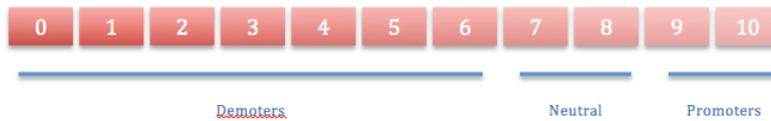


Figure 2: Net Promoter Score scale

$$\text{Net Promoter Score} = \text{Promoter \%} - \text{Demoter \%}$$

Net promoter scores differ a lot depending on the field of service being studied. Fields whose services are affected by a large amount of uncontrolled external factors where the company may not affect have lower net promoter scores than companies who are highly focusing on providing exceeding customer experiences such as high class hotels for example. High-class hotels may target up to 80-90% net promoter scores whereas companies with uncontrolled external factors such as weather conditions target to 0-20% net promoter scores. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 203)

3.3 Customer satisfaction

Satisfaction is a customer's personal judgments of perceived outcome in contrast to expectations. If the experience does not correspond to the expectations, the customer is dissatisfied. If the experience corresponds expectations, the customer is satisfied and when the experience exceeds expectations, the customer is delighted. (Kotler & Keller 2009, 54)

Customers set their expectations towards a service differently and therefore satisfaction levels may differ a lot among the same service experience. Expectations are set based on the loyalty relationship the customer has towards the brand, earlier experiences, and the price of the service. Colleague's advice and positive word of mouth marketing from trustworthy source naturally sets the expectations higher, as well as the service promises the company does in setting the deal. Customers often set higher expectations for services by high brand companies who they have favorable image before the service experience compared to services by lower brand image or unknown brand. To achieve satisfied customers, a company should set their customer's expectations in their marketing high enough to attract enough customers, but make sure not to promise too much so that customers would not be dissatisfied afterwards. (Kotler & Keller 2009, 164)

Even though service provider companies who most likely are highly customer-oriented aim to create high customer satisfaction level to their customers, they need to remember to satisfy the other stakeholders such as stockholders, employees and suppliers. Companies should find a golden midway to deliver high customer satisfaction level and to deliver enough of satisfac-

tion to the other stakeholders. Customer satisfaction may be improved for example by lowering the price and at the same time improving the services, which creates a cut in the profits and might not be acceptable from the stockholder's point of view. (Kotler & Keller 2009, 165)

3.3.1 Customer value

Customer satisfaction is linked to customer retention, and therefore it should be monitored regularly. A delighted customer has a high loyal bond to the company and he spreads the positive image to other potential customers. Typically a delight customer tries new services more easily than unsatisfied or a new customer, and pays less attention to competing companies. Sensitivity to price is also lower with satisfied customers, and they are willing to tell new ideas and suggest improvements for the company they have a loyal bond to.

However, customer loyalty and customer satisfaction are not directly proportional to each other. On scale one to five (one being dissatisfied and five being highly satisfied) the customers scaling their satisfaction being two to four are willing to change the service provider if there is a better offer. To gain truly loyal customers, the company should exceed the expectations and gain highly satisfied customers to make sure they stay their customers also in the future. (Kotler & Keller 2009, 166)

The importance of having loyal customers becomes visible in the analysis of cost per one customer. Attracting one new customer can cost five times more compared to keep the old customer satisfied and loyal to the company. The costs of attracting new customer come from the marketing expenses and the efforts the company has to do to induce a satisfied customer from competing firm where the customer might have a loyalty bond. (Kotler & Keller 2009, 178)

A company loses on average ten percent of its customers annually. Customers have differing values to the company; a common rule is that 20% of the customers bring 80% of the profits to a company. The value of a customer depends on the services or products the customer purchases, and their profits. A profitable customer submits acceptable greater revenue stream over time than his cost stream is. It must be noted, that the streams are lifetime values, not values of one transaction. A customer purchasing high profit products are worth of keeping, but on the other hand customers purchasing only non-profitable products should get rid of. Non-profitable products or services are typically supporting services for the main service, and they bring value to the customer, but do not necessarily are profitable services on their own. The profitable and non-profitable customers can be identified with a help of an accounting method, Customer Profitability Analysis. (Kotler & Keller 2009, 170)

With these facts in mind, it is estimated that by reducing 5% of the 10% defection rate, a company may increase its profits from $\frac{1}{4}$ up to $\frac{3}{4}$, depending on the industry where the company operates. The longer the current customers stay, the better profits they most probably bring in the future because of the increased purchases and relatively low service operating costs they require. (Kotler & Keller 2009, 178)

3.3.2 Value creating tools

In order to maintain customer relationships, the company should create value that the customer appreciates. The whole idea of customer experience management is to maximize the created value by providing meaningful customer experiences. As simply, the received value is the differentiation of gained benefits and made sacrifices. Benefits are provided experiences that satisfy some need or ease the customer's life whereas sacrifice is most commonly the paid price and nowadays also the value of lost time as a sacrifice. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 54)

There exist two dimensions that together form the customer value; utilitarian sources and hedonistic sources. Utilitarian sources are rational and are connected to features measuring the experience. These factors do not create the value themselves but instead work as a tool of achieving a certain target. On the other hand, hedonistic sources are subjective, emotional and irrational that all individuals feel differently. Hedonistic sources are benefits that create feelings and experiences, which then again create the value. Experiences including hedonistic elements make the customer feel more passionate and positive about the company compared to experiences including only utilitarian elements. Hedonistic elements affect on the level of recommendation, which is one of the utilized customer satisfaction level measurement techniques in this research. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 54)

The value is created in every contact situation to the customer, and in optimum situation the amount of created value increases as the contacts recur. Value is also created when the customer relationship is deepened and when the relationship has last for long, assuming that the customer expectations are met. Trust, which is created over longer period of time, is one important aspect that increases the value to the customer. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 56)

3.3.3 Customer satisfaction measurement techniques

Most used technique to measure customer satisfaction level is to conduct periodic customer surveys for the existing customers. Intention to repurchase or to recommend the service or product to others gives an image of the overall satisfaction level. (Kotler & Keller 2009, 166)

Secondly, Customer Loss Rate can be monitored and possibly interview the customers who have decided to leave the company. However, the customers who have left the company are relatively hard to be contacted afterwards and their willingness to respond to the survey might not be high, especially in a case of dissatisfied customer. (Kotler & Keller 2009, 166)

In addition, company may use mystery shoppers who use the services and test the company's own customer service in practice without the staff being aware of the customer being a fake one. By using this method it is possible to point out the possible lacks in the customer service process, which have affected to the dissatisfaction of the real customers. (Kotler & Keller 2009, 166)

Lastly, a company should be aware of the competitor's functions and level of performance (Kotler & Keller 2009, 166). Own customer satisfaction objectives should be set high enough in order to provide competitive customer satisfaction level and not lose to competitors, depending on the corporation strategy being followed.

3.3.4 Service quality

Customers evaluate their satisfaction level depending on the quality delivered by the service. Quality can be defined being the service's total ability to satisfy wanted needs and it includes all the characteristics and features of the service. A service has delivered quality when the customer feels that his needs have been satisfied or exceeded. Quality can be divided into two sub types, performance quality and conformance quality. Conformance quality is achieved when the customer feels satisfied and all the promised units have been delivered but performance quality is a grading that customer creates when comparing two or more competing services in relation of their characteristics and features. (Kotler & Keller 2009, 169)

4 Methods

4.1 Quantitative research method

A quantitative research is a data collection technique that generates or uses numerical data whereas qualitative research is a data collection technique that generates or uses non-numerical data received from interviews for example. A quantitative research method was selected to be used in this research in the form of questionnaire due to the analyzing methods familiar to the researcher and the required amount of respondents. (Saunders, Lewiss & Thornhill 2009, 151)

Approximately twenty-five respondents were expected to join to the research, and a deep interview conducted to every person would have taken enormously time. Also, the aim was to target potential customers to test the service for free and meanwhile to market the case company's services to the target group. Since the contacted target group was relatively large, approximately 250 people, and the research took place on challenging period of time in business world, in February when the members of the target group were expected to be busy in their work, quantitative research method was more convenient choice for the research.

4.1.1 Questionnaire

The data collection method utilized in this thesis was selected to be a questionnaire where the respondents answer to the same set of questions in predetermined order. Questionnaire offers an excellent opportunity to collect data from large sample groups, but most important benefit of it concerning this thesis research was that the answers could be analyzed using quantitative research methods. Because of relatively small sample size of this research, quantitative research methods developed for small sample sized are used to analyze the results.

A data received by a questionnaire is relatively easy to understand and to explain. The data form allows comparisons, and the formed results may be assumed to represent the whole researched population. Another benefit of quantitative data is that is can be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, which were also utilized in this research. In addition, numerical data can be used to create models of the relationships between variables and to suggest possible reasons for the relationships or the lack of relationships between variables. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 144)

Thus the respondents answer the questions once in this research, the design of the questionnaire and the setting of the questions determine largely the reliability of the results. It is important that the questions are understood similarly by all the respondents and that the questions ask the right issues related to the research question being studied. The aim of the questions is to describe and explain people's service experience. Asking separate questions with ready-made answer possibilities makes it possible to research the relationship between variables and possible cause-and-effect relationships which is useful information for marketing and development purposes. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 361)

The type of questionnaire used was selected to be self-administered questionnaire, which is filled in by the respondent. More specifically, Internet-mediated questionnaire was in use, since the respondents were contacted through e-mail and the webinar service experience took place online. (Saunders, Lewis & Thonrhill 2009, 363)

The questionnaire conducted included three types of questions aiming to reveal different types of variables that can be used in analyzing methods. Attribute variable revealing questions contain data about respondents' characteristics such as age and gender. Such factors are used to study how opinions and behavior differ between certain age groups for example. Attribute variable questions are important in the reliability analysis to check if the sample represents a certain population or may such generalizations be made. In other words, to check if the sample represents wide enough the population group being studied. (Saunders, Lewis & Thonrhill 2009, 368)

Second type of question aims to reveal opinion variables. Such questions record how the respondents feel or think on certain issues. Opinion variables may also reveal respondents' belief of right and wrong and their view of life. In contrast, behavior variable questions collect data about respondent's doings in the past, now and in the future. Such questions collect data about concrete experiences that tell about respondent's behavior. (Saunders, Lewis & Thonrhill 2009, 368)

The received data is analyzed in order to gain descriptive and explanatory information that the case company may take advantage in developing their business. It is assumed that the sample that the study was made represents all of the case company's customers, the whole population. With this assumption the received results can be said describing the opinions of all customers.

The questionnaire was divided into sections of attribute, experience, opinions and points of improvement. To fasten the answering time and to ease the data collection, simplest questions were force-choice questions where the respondent selected the answer from given options. List questions where all the possible answer options are given were used to make sure that the respondent considers all the possible answer options before selecting one best option. Option 'other' was added to such questions where the respondent might have an answer outside the given options. In addition, category questions were used in behavior measuring questions where the respondent was forced to select only one answer. (Saunders, Lewis & Thonrhill 2009, 374)

To measure the overall customer satisfaction level, rating questions were used with a numeric rating scale. The ends of the answer scales were named, and the respondents were asked to select a number best describing their opinion. In addition, open questions where the respondents were able to write themselves were included in the questionnaire to get in-depth information to be analyzed.

4.1.2 Data analyzing methods

There exist two methods to analyze quantitative data: parametric and non-parametric statistical significance tests. In this research the collected data from the questionnaire is non-numerical, and therefore non-parametric statistic was the method to be selected. The requirements of non-parametric statistic are that the data is normally distributed, which is the case in categorical data. The questionnaire answers were categorized into numbers to form a categorical data, which is then possible to be analyzed statistically with the help of statistical analyze programs. IBM SPSS statistics was utilized in this research to calculate the relationships and to make diagrams to represent the results.

The non-parametric analyzing method selected was cross-tabulation which is an excellent method when the research aims to do generalized conclusions between two variable's correlation or independence. Cross-tabulation significance test can be used for analyzing populations or groups that are independent from each other. In many cases, the frequency or percentage per one cell explains the relationship well enough, but in this research bar diagrams representing the percentage values were done in order to visualize the relationships better. (Metsämuuronen 2004, 133)

The bar diagrams alone do not explain if the variables correlate or not. The difference of the diagrams is used to conclude if the variables correlate or are independent. Cross-tabulation analyzing method chi-square test is used to explain if the correlation is statistically significant enough to conclude that there is a relationship between variables. A starting point for the research is called a null hypothesis, stating that there is no significant difference between the expected and observed results.

Chi-square is calculated with the following formula:

$$X^2 = \sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=1}^e \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}}$$

Where

O_{ij} represents a frequency in a specific cell of a row i and a column j

E_{ij} represents an expected frequency in the same cell

Next step in the process is to calculate the Degrees of freedom with the following equation:

$$df = (\text{number of cells on rows}) * (\text{number of cells on columns} - 1)$$

Based on the degrees of freedom, the p value is calculated. The value of p is the *probability* of the test result or one more extreme occurring by chance alone. (Metsämuuronen 2004, 135)

If the p -value is < 0.05 or lower, it can be stated that there is a statistically significant relationship. This means that the null hypothesis is rejected and the hypothesis of the relationship is accepted. As an example, if the result of p is 0.01, there is only 1% chance that the deviation is due to change alone.

Thus if $p > 0.05$ or higher, the relationship is not statistically significant and the null hypothesis is accepted. For example, if $p = 0.55$, there is 55% chance that any deviation from expected is due to change alone. However, there still might be a relationship between the variables, but the conclusion may not be done certainly. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 450)

Chi-square test gives only approximated statistics of the chi-square distribution, and the approximation gets worse when the frequencies become smaller. A common rule for the exactness of the test is that the expected frequency should be at least five. This fact needs to be taken into consideration when the conclusions are made, since the sample size of the research is only 22.

5 Results

5.1 Data presenting

The first question in the questionnaire asked about the name of the respondent in order to make sure that all the participants who joined the free webinar seminar also took part to the study, as the suggestion of the free webinar seminar provided required. The identification data was not used to do any further presumptions of the participators.

The second question asked the gender. Due to the small size of the sample and the uneven division of the genders (9.1% male and 90.9% female) this aspect was left out of the data analysis.

The third question asked about the respondents' age. The age groups were divided into groups of seven years and the groups were formed based on the general working-aged people age, starting from the age of 21 and ending to the age of 68. Due to the target group's position of being Human Resource professional or working in a managerial position, it was unlikely that there were participants younger than 21 years among the contacted professionals, and therefore the age interval started from 21.

A pie diagram below, Figure 3, represents the age division of the respondents. 18.2% of the respondents were between the ages of 21 to 26 years, 27.3% were between the ages of 27 to 32 years, 31.8% were between the ages of 33-38 years, 13.6% were between the ages of 39 to 44 years and 9.1% were between 45 to 50 years old. It seems that the age groups are well represented in this research, and the results may be said representing the whole population.

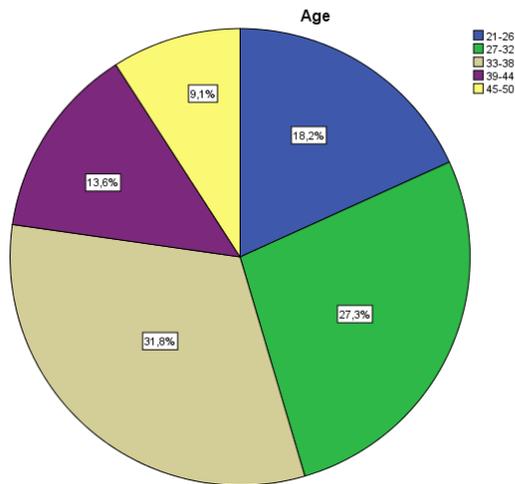


Figure 3: Age division of the respondents.

The respondents were asked about their earlier experiences of webinars in order to find out if the opinions of the studied webinar experience were connected to the earlier experiences or know-how of webinars. Possible earlier experiences of using webinar software and knowing the ideology how a webinar works might give more positive picture to the user, or in contrast negative earlier customer experiences might lower the customer's expectations towards the studied webinar experience. Further perceptions of these issues are discussed later in the data analysis part.

The Figure 4 below represents the respondents' earlier participations on webinars. The answer possibilities were 1) This was my first webinar ever, 2) I have joined one to three webinars earlier, 3) I have joined four to six webinars earlier, and 4) I have joined more than six webinars earlier. For 22.7% the webinar experience was the first time ever, 36.4% of the participants were joined one to three webinars earlier, 13.6% were joined four to six webinars earlier, and 27.3% were joined more than six webinars earlier.

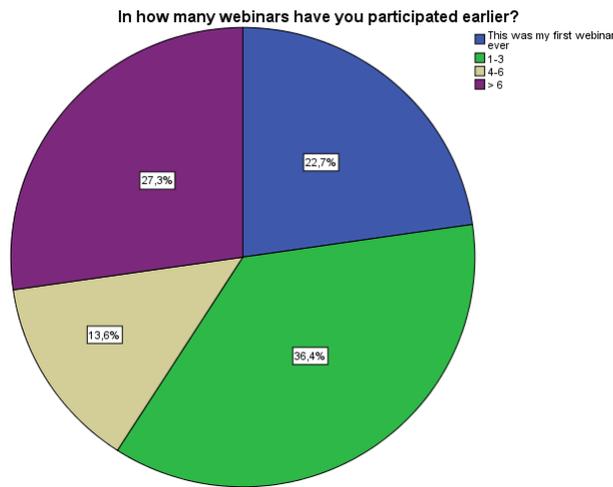


Figure 4: Respondent’s earlier participation to webinars.

Since the aim of the thesis study is to find out if webinars are in potential to grow and to study the customers’ preferred educational seminar method, a question seven on the questionnaire was developed. The question asked that if there were the same educational seminar available in your hometown as a contact lecture and as a webinar lecture, which one would you choose. The answer opinions were 1) Webinar, 2) Contact lecture, 3) Either one, or 4) I don’t know. 31.8% answered that they would rather choose a webinar seminar, 13.6% said that they would rather choose a contact lecture, 50% felt that either one of the options would be fine, and 4.5% did not know which one to choose rather.

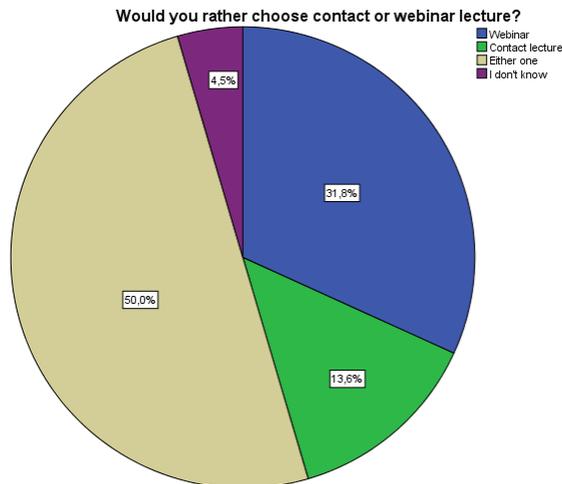


Figure 5: Respondent’s preferred seminar method.

Opinahjo recently changed their pricing method from single priced webinars into contract pricing where a customer makes a monthly paid deal with a term of notice of one month and is able to join several webinars arranged during the contract period. The customer’s opinions of a preferred pricing method were asked, and the answering options were 1) Yes, the pack-

et’s interest me, 2) If webinars could be bought separately, I would be interested of Opinahjo’s webinars, 3) I am interested, no matter what the pricing model is, 4) I am not interested, no matter what the pricing model is, or 5) I don’t know. A great majority of the respondents, 68.2%, felt that they would be interested of Opinahjo’s webinars if the webinars were possible to be bought separately. 4.5% felt that they are not interested at all, and 27.3% did not know if they were interested to purchase Opinahjo’s webinars or not. The result is alarming, since majority answered that they would be interested if the webinars could be burchased separately. Customers seem to feel negative about monthly paid contracts despite of the unlimited participation possibility on the offered webinars.

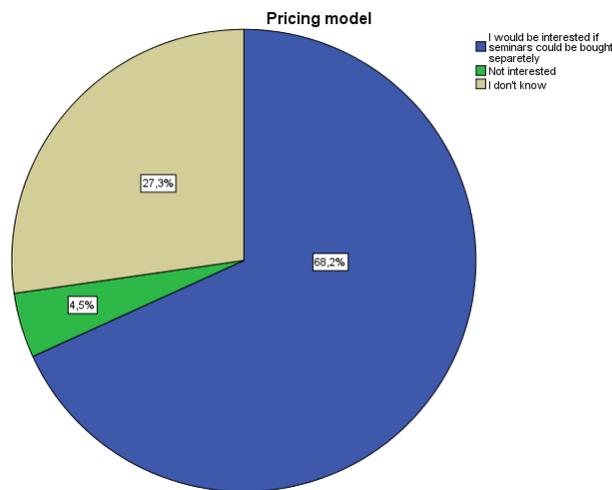


Figure 6: Respondent’s opinions of the pricing model in use.

The user-friendliness of the webinar program affects to the overall experience of the customers. The questionnaire included a question about webinar program’s features in logging in and commenting where the respondents evaluated the easiness of use. 90.9% of the respondents felt that the program in use was clear and easy to use. It seems that GoToWebinar works well and at the moment Opinahjo should not consider revising the webinar program offerer.

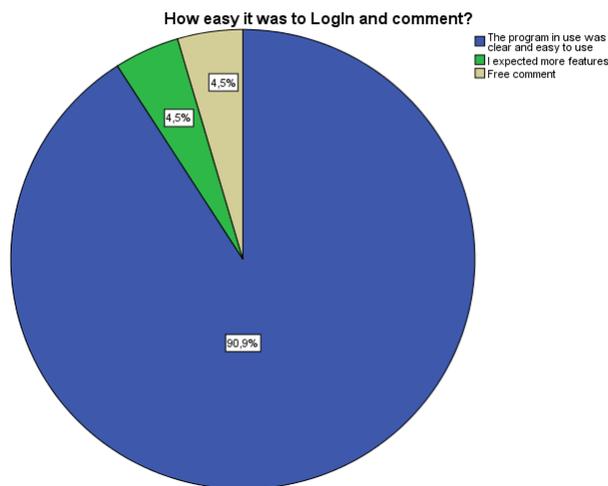


Figure 7: The user friendliness of the webinar software in use.

Opinahjo stated that many of webinar participants enroll late to the seminars. Therefore, the webinar timing is extremely important in order to meet the potential customers wishes and to find the optimal time when the customers are able to join the webinars. 50% of the respondents answered that the best time to arrange webinars is in the morning. 31.8% answered that midday is the best time, and 9.1% said afternoon is the most suitable time for them. Only 4.5% answered that the best time is after the office hours, and 4.5% said the time does not matter. Currently the webinars are arranged during the office hours, both in the mornings and in the afternoons. In the future, mornings and middays should be emphasized in the webinar schedule since customers seem to prefer these arranging times.

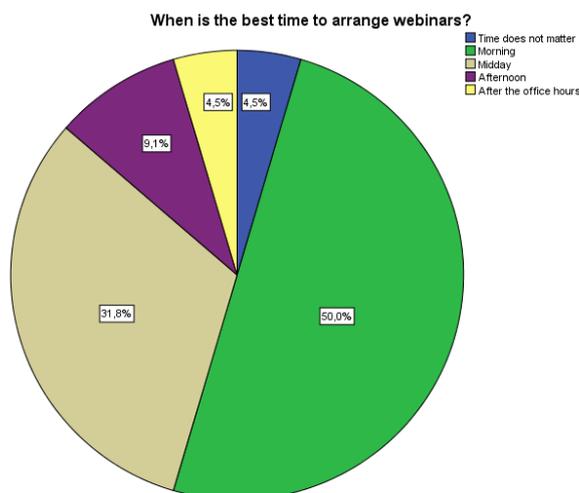


Figure 8: Preferred organizing time of webinars.

The respondents' participation to educational seminars over the last year was asked to find out the potential growing aspects in the educational webinars and the commonness of educa-

tional seminars. 54.5% of the respondents answered that they had joined one to four educational seminars over the last year. 36.4% answered they had joined five to eight educational seminars over the last year, and 9.1% said they had joined more than 8 seminars, as shown in the Figure 9 below. This information was utilized later in the data analyzing part.

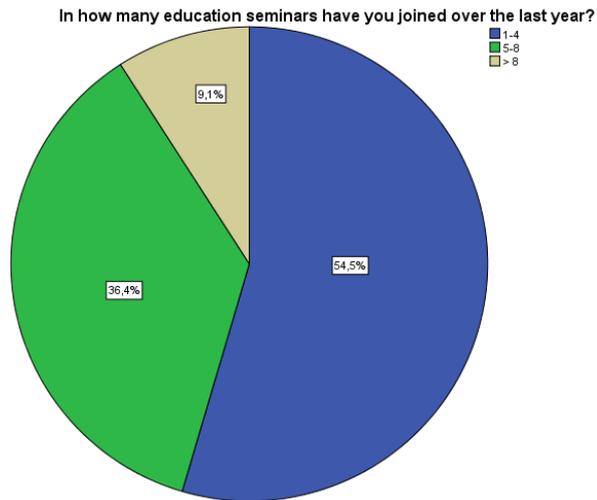


Figure 9: Respondents joining to educational seminars over the last year.

Then the respondents willingness to join into more educational seminars than currently was asked and 68.2% felt that the current amount is enough as represented in the Figure 10. 31.8% wished that there would be more educational seminars available for them. The question also included answering option of having less educational seminars and I don't know -option, but those were not selected.

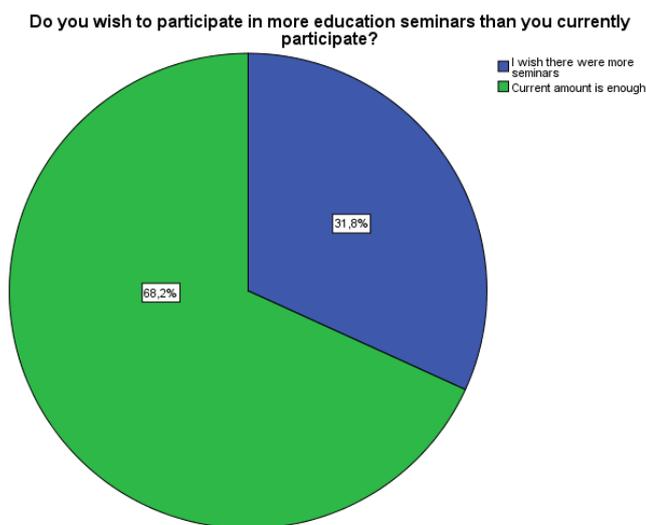


Figure 10: Respondents willingness to participate into more educational seminars than currently.

The reliability of the results has to be evaluated in the study, and therefore a question about the respondents' earlier relationship with the case company Opinahjo was asked in the questionnaire. 77.3% said that the e-mail invitation received concerning the thesis study was the first time they ever heard of the company. 13.6% said that they had heard of Opinahjo's services before, but they had never used the services. 4.5% said that they had used Opinahjo's services before, and 4.5% said they had co-operated with the company earlier and therefore Opinahjo was familiar to them as a company.

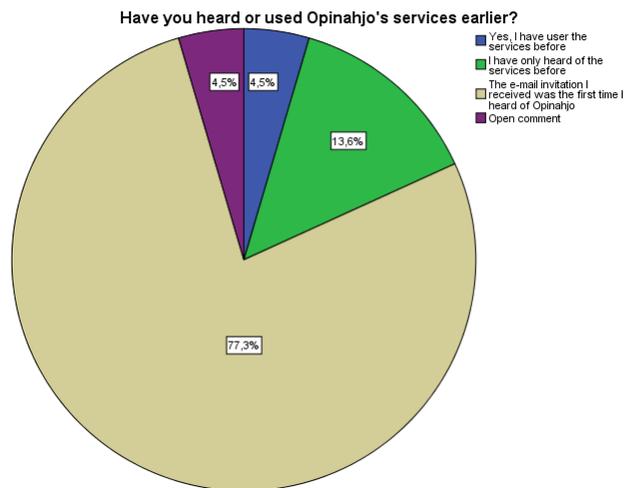


Figure 11: Respondents earlier relationship with Opinahjo.

The question number 14 in the questionnaire asked how well on a scale one to five the customer's expectations were met. Number one represents an answer where the expectations were met poorly, and number five represents an end where the expectations were exceeded. 18.2% of the respondents answered 5 and felt that their expectations were exceeded. 54.5% answered 4 and were happy with their experience. 13.6% answered 3, scaling their experience being neutral. 9.1% answered 2, being somehow disappointed to the experience, and 4.5% said their expectations were met poorly. Results are shown in the Figure 12 on the next page.

As explained in the theory part of the thesis, the customers who scale their satisfaction from two to four are willing to change the service provider if there appears a new one. Still, the customer seem to be relatively pleased with the service experience since up to 72.7% answered above average score.

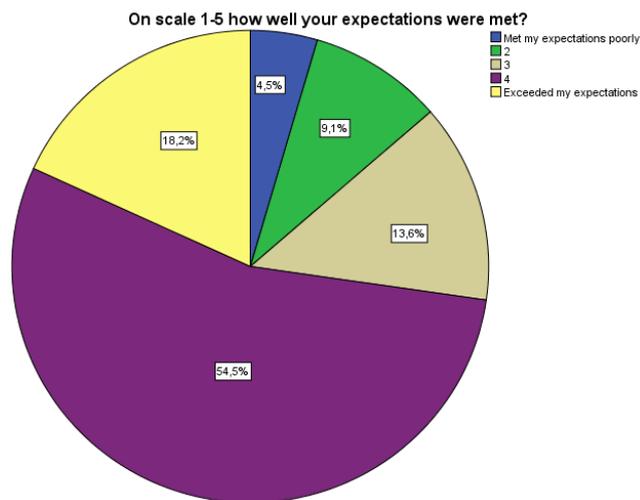


Figure 12: The level of exceeding respondents expectations.

The next question, question 15, asked the respondents to scale their willingness to recommend Opinahjo's webinars to their colleagues or friends. The scale is known as Net Promoter Score which is calculated by the difference between promoters and demoters. Answers 7 and 8 are considered neutral, and they do not affect to the result. (Löytänä & Kortesus 2011, 202) Number 10 represents high recommendation whereas number 1 represents low possibility of recommendation as explained earlier.

9.1% answered 10 and 18.2% answered 9. All together this makes 27.3%. On the other hand, 4.5% of respondents answered 2, 4.5% answered 3 and 13.6% answered 6 making all together 22.6%. The net promoter score is therefore $27.3\% - 22.6\% = 4.7\%$. This result is relatively low, even though the score depends on the field of the service.

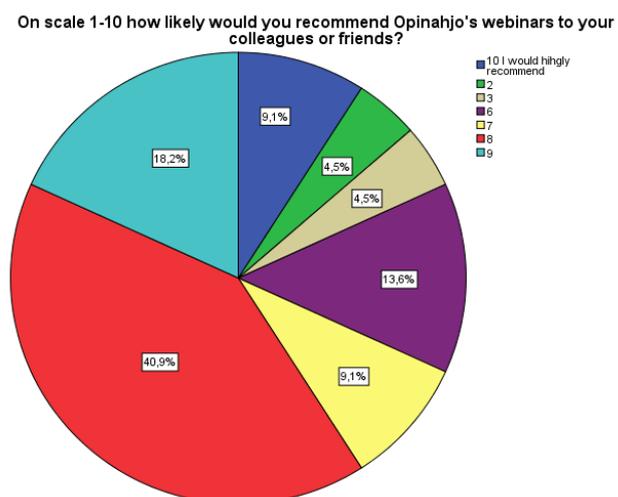


Figure 13: The level of recommendation.

In order to clarify the most significant competitive advantages of webinars compared to tradi-

tional classroom lecturing from customer's point of view the respondents were asked to compare traditional classroom lecturing to their experience on webinar lecturing. The maximum amount of answers was limited to three. The answers selected most frequently were 2) Seminar takes less time in total, 1) No need to travel and 7) You may watch a record of the seminar later on. The answers are represented in the Figure 14. The case company should focus on these aspects in their marketing, since the customers rate these factors being the greatest benefits of webinars over the competing classroom lectures.

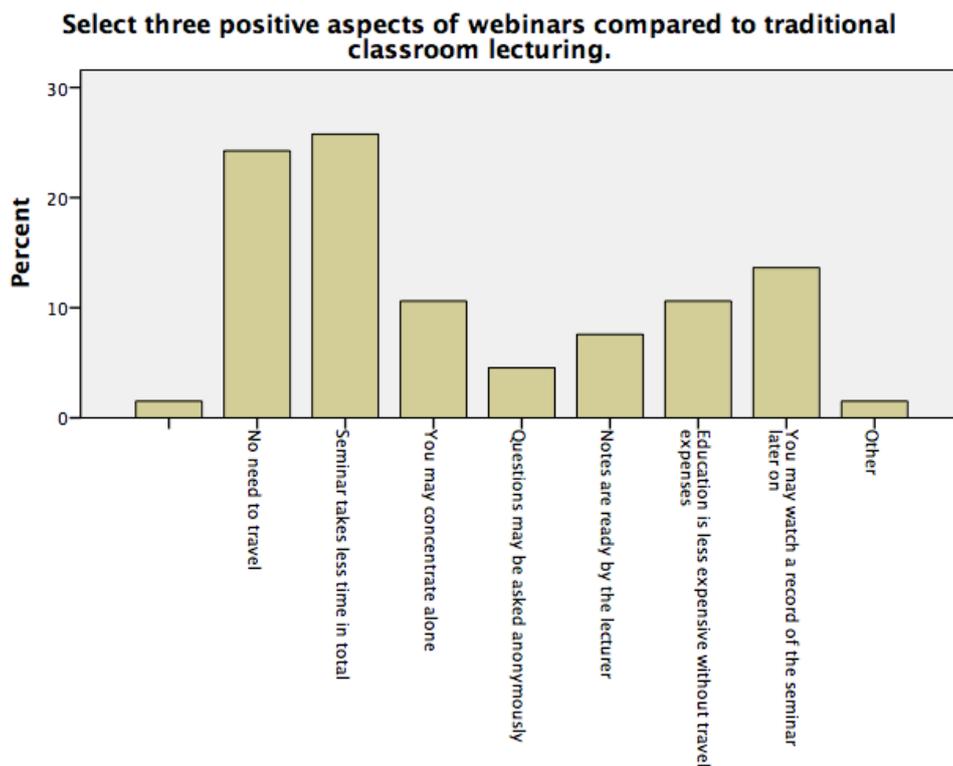


Figure 14: Three positive aspects of webinars compared to classroom lecturing.

To find out the aspects affecting to the overall experience, negative and positive aspects of the customer experience were asked. These questions were not set an answer limit, so the amount of answers on these two questions reveal a bit of the customer overall satisfaction level. If the respondents select on average more positive aspects in their experience and only few negative aspects, the overall satisfaction can be said being rather positive than negative and vice versa.

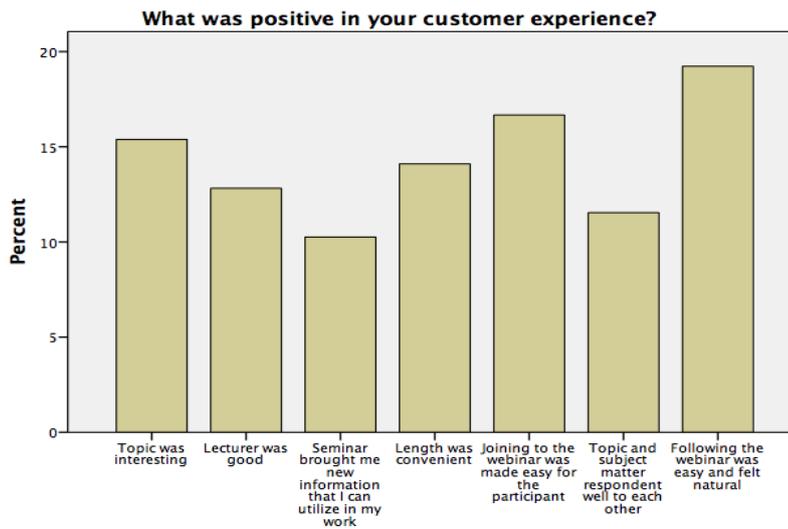


Figure 15: Positive in customer experience.

Respondents were asked to select positive matters they felt was present in their customer experience of the webinar joined, represented in Figure 15. Maximum amount of answers was not set, and the question included eight possible answers, one being open comment. All together 66 answers were given, counting three answers on average per respondent. Most popular answer was 7) Following the webinar was easy and felt natural. Second common answer was 5) Joining to the webinar was made easy for the participants, following with 1) Topic was interesting. There was not a great dispersion between the answers, however the amount of selected answers varied between the respondents. Some respondents selected all seven already dictated answers, but some selected only one.

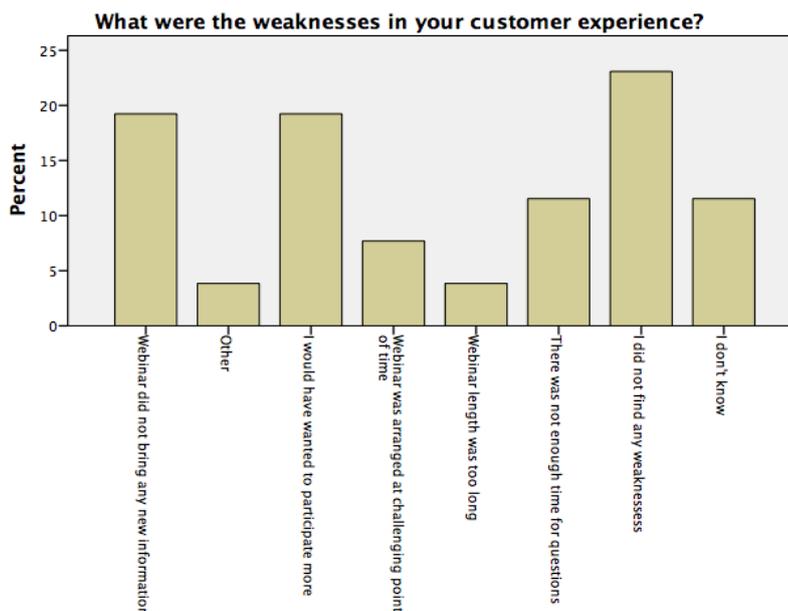


Figure 16: Weaknesses in the customer experience.

Similarly to the previous question about the positive aspects also negative aspects were asked without maximum amount of answers. It was remarkable that from seven dictated negative aspects the respondents selected two as maximum amount of answers. All together 26 answers out of 22 respondents were given, represented in Figure 16. However, differently to the previous positive aspects question, this question's answering possibilities were not all negative. In addition to the seven dictated answers, the question had answering possibilities 8) I did not find any weaknesses, 9) I don't know and 10) Other. 23.1% of the respondents answered that they did not find any weaknesses from their experience and 11.5% of the respondents answered that they don't know. Most popular negative aspects were 1) Webinar did not bring any new information to me, and 3) I would have wanted to participate more. The fact that webinar did not bring any new information has to do with the subject matter of the webinar, not the service product itself. This lack is easily corrected with a better design of the webinar or by informing better the customers what subjects the webinar seminar includes to avoid too high set expectations by the customer.

To count the average of given negative answers, the open comment must be know. Due to the negative tone of the answer given to open comment, it can be counted being a negative answer. Excluding the answers given to 8 and 9 ($6+3=9$), all together 17 negative aspects were answered, giving an average of 0.77 negative aspects per respondent. This is remarkably lower number than the amount of received positive aspects per customer, which was three.

5.2 Data analysis

In the data analyzing part two variables predicted to have a relationship are cross tabulated and the chi-square test is calculated of them with the help of IBM SPSS Statistics program. In order to represent the results clearly and logically, only 2X2 cross tabulation is used in the data analysis, meaning that there are only two variables at a time who's dependence is studied per cross tabulation. The causing factor is represented as the row variable on x-axis, clarifying the reading of the diagrams.

In the first case, the dependence of age was studied with the preferred lecture type. This relationship was studied, because the researcher assumed that the younger participants might be more enthusiastic to utilize new technology that they might have been more familiar with, assuming that the elder participants would prefer traditional contact lecturing. The question in the questionnaire was: If there were a lecture available in your hometown as a contact lecture and as a webinar lecture, which one would you prefer? The options were 1) Webinar, 2) Classroom contact lecture, 3) I could choose either one, and 4) I don't know. Age groups were ready divided into six separate groups where the participants' ages distributed into five of the groups. Figure 17 below represent the deviation.

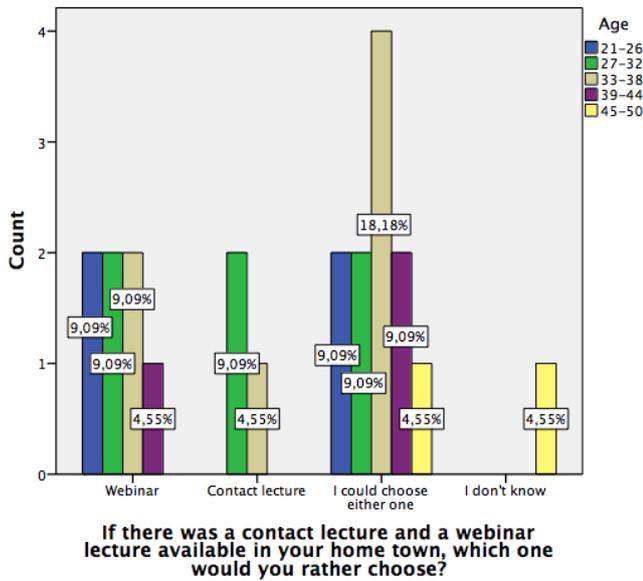


Figure 17: Cross tabulation with preferred lecture type and age.

When these answers were cross-tabulated and chi-squared, $X^2= 14.590$ which rarity in X^2 distribution with the degree of freedoms $df=12$ is $p=0.268$, as shown in the Table 1 below. This means, that there is 26.8% change that any deviation from expected is due to change alone. Since the limit for statistically significant difference was earlier stated to be $p < 0.05$, 5%, the null hypothesis is accepted and it can be stated that there does not exist a dependence between the age and the preferred lecture type. However, the probability ratio is relatively low compared to the other chi-square results, and we can assume that the variables might correlate despite of the set limit for statistically significant result. If the test would have been done for greater group of people, the difference could have been more obvious in terms of correlation.

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	14,590 ^a	12	,265
Likelihood Ratio	10,718	12	,553
N of Valid Cases	22		

a. 20 cells (100,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,09.

Table 1: Chi-Square Test of preferred lecture type and age.

The non-dependence of interest towards webinars with age is a positive result for the case company, since it seems that there is not a certain age group that would feel negative about webinars. The participants aged 21-26, represented as blue bar in the Figure 17, preferred a webinar lecture or could have chosen either one of the methods. None of them preferred a contact lecture, which tells that the younger generation seems to be a bit more positive

about webinars than the participants in general. On the other hand, this created future expanding possibilities on the webinar business when more professionals are entering the working life.

The age division of the participants already tell that webinar seminar interested despite of the age, however noting that there were no participants from a age group higher than 50 years old, and only 9.1% of the respondents were aged between 45 to 50. This might be because of the professionals working on the target group’s positions are on average younger than 50, or because educational seminars of any kind do not interest target group representatives aged 50 or higher.

Second variable relationship studied if there was a connection with respondents age and the willingness to join more educational seminars than they currently participate. The answer options were 1) I wish there were more educational seminars, 2) Current amount is enough, 3) I wish there were less educational seminars, or 4) I don’t know. This setting was tested, since it was assumed that the young managers with less experience on the field could be more willing to join and more interested of the trainings that the employer arranges. Figure 18 represents the relationship, and as shown, only two of the available answers in the x-axis were selected. All respondents said they wanted to participate more educational seminars than they currently do, or that the current amount is enough. None of the respondents felt that they were having too much educational seminars at the moment. This fact supports that the customers are interested of education at the side of their work and willing to arrange time for developing their skills. Customers are interested, and this research aims to find out if webinar seminars are the right channel to fill the educational demand.

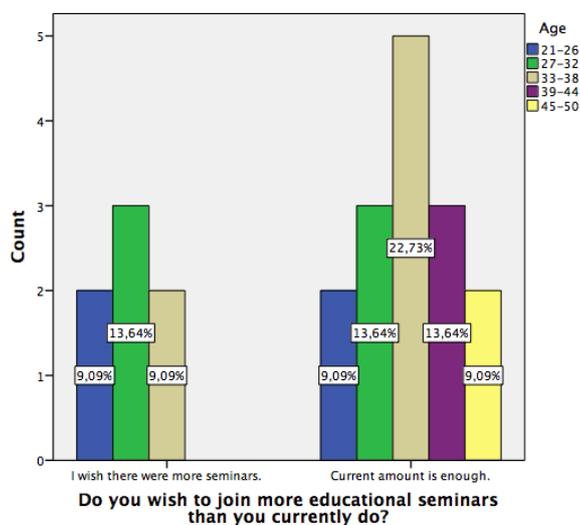


Figure 18: Cross tabulation with willingness to join more educational seminars and age.

As shown in the Table 2 below, $X^2=3.891$, giving rarity X^2 level of $p=0.421$ with $df=4$. In other words, there is 42.1% change that this division is due to change alone. Again, $p > 0.05$ and thus this difference is not statistically significant. Null hypothesis is accepted.

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3,891 ^a	4	,421
Likelihood Ratio	5,283	4	,259
N of Valid Cases	22		

a. 10 cells (100,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,64.

Table 2: Chi-Square Test of willingness to join more educational seminars and age.

When observing the Figure 18 more closely, it can be noted that the respondents aged 45 to 50 represented as the yellow bar and respondents aged 39 to 44 represented as purple bar do not feel that they would need more educational seminars. The lack of educational seminars seem to be the greatest among the ages of 21 to 38, consisting three age groups in this research. This is useful fact when designing the subject matter of the seminars and when considering the target group. Also, as earlier stated that the younger respondents preferred webinar lecturing more compared to contact lecturing, this result supports the idea of offering more webinar seminars for educational purposes in the future.

The observations about target customer's interest towards webinar seminars raise a question about the optimum amount of educational seminars, or the limit of satisfying the demand of seminars per one person. The questionnaire included a question about participants joining to educational seminars that develop their skills on their work over the last year. The answer possibilities were 1) I haven't joined any, 2) I have joined 1-4 educational seminars, 3) I have joined 5-8 educational seminars, 4) I have joined more than 8 seminars, and 5) I don't know. This question was cross tabulated with the question about the willingness to join more seminars than they currently do. The relationship is represented below in the Figure 19.

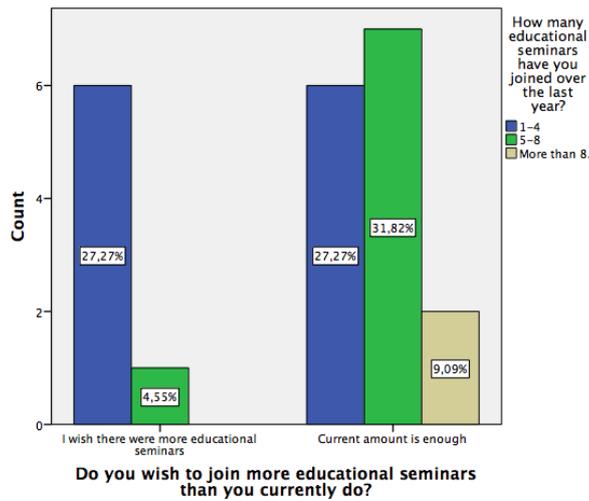


Figure 19: Cross tabulation with willingness to join more educational seminars with participation over the last year.

Chi-square test gives $X^2 = 4.138$, $df = 2$, the probability ratio is $p = 0.126$ as shown in the Table 3. There is 12.6% probability that this division is due to change alone. As the limit for the statistically significant result was 5%, the null hypothesis is accepted. However, compared to other chi-square test represented later on, this correlation's probability ratio stands out from the others having by far the greatest dependence. This result has the greatest probability of actually correlating, but based on the data gathered from this research, such conclusions may not be made for sure.

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4,138 ^a	2	,126
Likelihood Ratio	4,858	2	,088
N of Valid Cases	22		

a. 4 cells (66,7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,64.

Table 3: Chi-Square Test of willingness to join more educational seminars and participation over the last year.

When looking at the Figure 19 data, it is noted that all the respondents were participating at least one educational seminar over the last year, excluding this webinar experience. The respondents who joined more than 8 seminars over the last year, represented as the light brown bar, were not interested of joining more seminars. 54.5% of the respondents were participated one to four educational seminars, but their opinions of joining more seminars was divided equally between willingness of joining more and the ones who felt that the current amount is enough. This is represented as the blue bar in the Figure 19. Majority of the respondents who joined 5 to 8 seminars felt that the current amount was enough. Based on these observations, it seems that eight seminars per person is enough to satisfy the target group's demand to-

wards educational seminars. The topic of the seminar is perhaps the most critical factor whether the potential customers are interested of the seminar or not, but based on the results there is a market potential up to eight seminars per customer. The fact that persons who joined more than 8 seminars still did not feel that there were too much education available for them also supports this claim and leaves an opportunity to offer even more than eight seminars per person annyally.

The fourth variable relationship was between the levels of meeting expectations with age, represented on Figure 20. The question asked the respondents to scale their overall level of satisfaction from one to five, number 1 representing dissatisfaction, "Expectations were met poorly", while 5 represented satisfaction, "Expectations were exceeded". This cross-tabulation was conducted in order to find out if there is statistically significant differences in the customer's satisfaction levels depending on the age groups, assuming that some age groups might have higher expectations towards the service and therefore they might have set their expectations higher, resulting relatively lower level of satisfaction with the same experience. It must be remembered that the overall level of satisfaction is dependent on several factors, and if there exist dependence between the variables, the main factors causing the difference should be studied. In this study, the open questions where the respondents were able to write their opinions freely should be looked at.

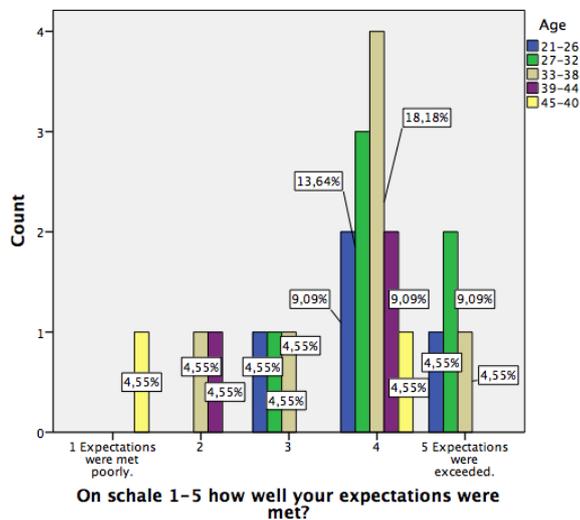


Figure 20: Cross tabulation with meeting expectations and age.

Table 4 represents the dependence results between satisfaction and age. $\chi^2=16.304$, and with *df* of 16, it gives $p=0.432$. The probability of the deviation to change alone is 43.2%, and the null hypothesis is accepted. There is not statistically significant difference between the overall level of satisfaction and age.

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16,304 ^a	16	,432
Likelihood Ratio	12,715	16	,693
N of Valid Cases	22		

a. 25 cells (100,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,09.

Table 4: Chi-Square Test of meeting expectations and age.

Blue and green bars in the Figure 20, representing the two youngest age groups, are settled between the numbers of 3 to 5 on the scale of overall satisfaction level. Number 3 on satisfaction level represents the median, meaning that the customer is not satisfied or dissatisfied. Based on this, we can conclude that the respondents aged 21 to 32 were all either satisfied or nearly satisfied with their webinar experience. 75% of the group of highly satisfied, selecting the option 5, "Expectations were exceeded", were respondents aged 21 to 32. The other end of the satisfaction scale, "Expectations were met poorly" consist only of respondents (in this case a respondent) who belonged to the age group of 45 to 50. Generally speaking, the younger participants were more satisfied with the webinar experience than the elder participants. This might be because the elder participants set their expectations higher than the younger participants, resulting lower level of satisfaction.

The fifth dependence relationship is the overall level of satisfaction with the earlier participation of webinars. Satisfaction question was the same as in the previous case. The question representing the variable on y-axis was the following: In how many webinars have you participated earlier, and the answer options were 1) This was my first webinar ever, 2) 1-3, 3) 4-6, and 4) More than 6. There was a fifth option "I don't know" available too, but no one selected it. It was assumed, that the more the respondent had experience on webinars, the higher they set their expectations towards them, and therefore the difficulty of exceeding their expectations gets higher. High expectations logically lower the overall level of satisfaction. The Figure 21 represents the deviation of the answers below.

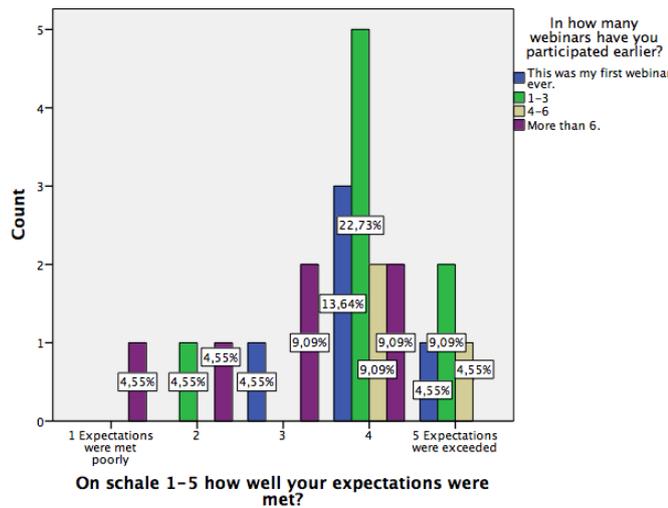


Figure 21: Cross tabulation with meeting expectations and earlier participation on webinars.

Cross-tabulation results are represented on Table 5. $\chi^2 = 9.610$, and the degree of freedom in this case is 12. The probability $p = 0.650$, stating that there is a change of 65% that this deviation would occur alone. Null hypothesis is accepted, it seems that there is not a relationship between the variables. This is the lowest level of dependence so far from all the studied cross-tabulations.

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9,610 ^a	12	,650
Likelihood Ratio	12,232	12	,427
N of Valid Cases	22		

a. 20 cells (100,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,14.

Table 5: Chi-Square Test of meeting expectations and earlier participation.

The low level of dependence is hard to be explained, but one explanation might be that the webinar joined satisfied the participants despite how high their expectations were set based on their earlier webinar experiences. This result can be supposed to be a positive piece of news for the case company, since they succeeded to produce a positive customer experience (scoring > 3 in meeting expectations) for most of the participants, up to 72.7% as represented in the Figure 12 on page 31, no matter how much earlier experience the participants had on webinars.

The sixth cross-tabulation studied the dependence of the earlier usage of Opinahjo’s services and the overall level of satisfaction, which is already a familiar scale from the previous cases. The answer possibilities in the question ”Have you heard or used Opinahjo’s services earli-

er?’’ were 1) I have used their services earlier, 2) I have only heard of their services earlier, 3) The e-mail invitation for this webinar was the first time I ever heard of Opinahjo, and 4) Other. The relationship of these variables is represented in Figure 22 below.

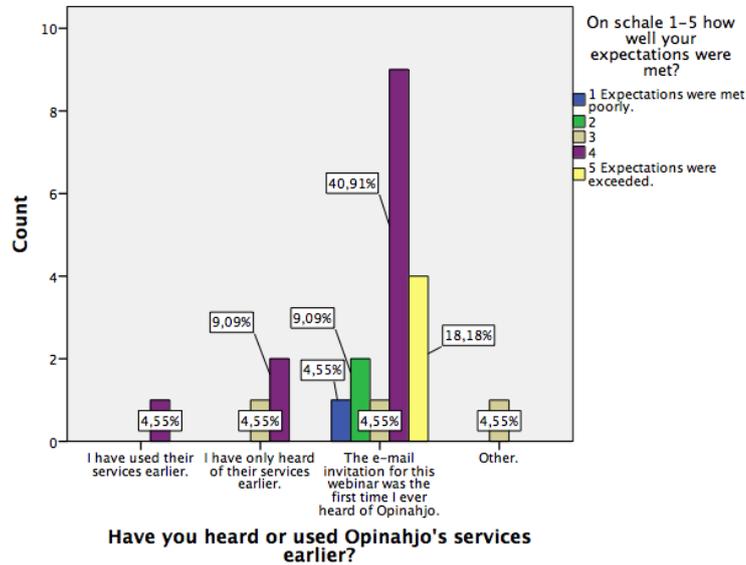


Figure 22: Cross tabulation with earlier usage of Opinahjo’s services and meeting expectations.

Chi-square test gives result of $X^2=10.281$, with $df=12$, resulting the probability $p=0.591$.

Again, null hypothesis is accepted since there is not statistically significant change that these variables would not occur alone. 59.1% is relatively high percentage of the changes to occur alone and it can be concluded that it is very unlikely that these variables would correlate.

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10,281 ^a	12	,591
Likelihood Ratio	9,178	12	,688
N of Valid Cases	22		

a. 19 cells (95,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,05.

Table 6: Chi-Square Test of earlier usage of Opinahjo’s services and meeting expectations.

When we look at the Figure 22 more closely, we can see that for most of the participants, the e-mail invitation was the first contact they ever had with the case company. Only one respondent was used Opinahjo’s services before. One respondent answering “Other” to this question stated that he/she had co-operated with Opinahjo, but this was the first time participating to their webinar. Therefore, the research aim of targeting new potential customers was met quite well despite of the few exceptions.

Also, it is noted that the yellow bar in Figure 22 that represents the group of respondents who were highly satisfied with the service experience of webinar, are all in the group who never had heard of Opinahjo before. The same goes with the other end, blue bar, representing respondents who answered that their expectations were met poorly also heard of Opinahjo the first time on the e-mail invitation. However, in this study the blue bar only consists one respondent.

To find out the reasons for the low level of exceeding expectations, the open question comments were looked at. The respondents who answered 1 or 2 to the overall satisfaction level were looked at. One open question was the following: "If you have participated to the other companies' organized webinars before, how Opinahjo's webinar differed from them?". One comment states, that it was a pity that there was not information about the availability of the material beforehand, and it was not told if the material was available afterwards. Therefore the participant was forced to take notes during the seminar and was therefore disappointed.

In another open question the participants were asked to give improvement proposals for the case company. One respondent suggested that the webinars should be rated based on the applicability of the subject matter. The respondent was dissatisfied, because he/she expected that the webinar would have handled more current trends in development discussion (topic of the first webinar) rather than the 'basics' of managerial work. The respondent stated that the subject matter was well fact based and thorough, but targeted for managers who had far less managerial experience than the respondent had.

The last open question was simply as "Other comments". One respondent of the studied dissatisfied group stated, that the lecturer was giving too detailed examples from his own experiences and clients that the respondent itself felt too personal, even though names were not mentioned. Still, the respondent felt that the limit of privacy was crossed.

5.3 Reliability of the results

The reliability of the answers depends on several factors. To begin, the respondent who answered to the questionnaires were supposed to meet certain requirements such as working in managerial position and/or in the field of HR. It is expected that the participants were the right type of people, since they were contacted directly to their personal e-mails and they received the web link to complete the questionnaire directly as well.

Second of all, the size of the sample sets limits to the reliability of the results. The sample size was 22 respondents, and therefore data analyzing methods developed for small samples

were utilized in the research. However, the results could have been more precise if the sample size would have been bigger. As explained in the data analyzing methods section, the chi-square analysis is not precise if the frequencies are lower than five. This research faced situations where the frequency per one variable against a second variable was lower than five, resulting inaccuracy to the results. The limit of probability was set to 0,05, which might have been too high dependence limit for this research, since dependence analysis was conducted based on the figures and despite of the set limit.

Another difficulty in the data analyzing part was that the questionnaire design program did not give an option of prioritize answers. This was a lack with the questions 6, 9 and 10 where respondents were able to select several answers. Priorizing option would have made it easier to interpret the precise factors that affected to the overall level of satisfaction on webinars. This information would have been helpful for the case company when they develop their webinar services further.

Also, the question setting is important so that all the respondents would understand the questions similarly and that all answer possibilities are covered. The questionnaire was tested and commented by outside researchers to make is as clear as possible, but there is a risk that someone understood a certain question differently than others.

The question about the respondents' earlier relationship with the case company was designed to test the reliability of the results. The aim was to target new customers who would not have any earlier experiences with the company and therefore no great differences with settled expectation levels. Earlier experiences might have falsified the results perhaps into more positive, since the participants wanted to take part to the research and therefore it can be predicted that their earlier contact with the case company was positive. Only few respondents had any earlier experience with the case company, and therefore the data gathered should be reliable enough to conclude the conclusions made.

6 Suggestions

Based on the research the target customers seem to feel positive about educational seminars and a webinar seminar as the method to arrange them. The study supports the idea of keep developing the webinars. Even a bit surprisingly, most popular answer in the question concerning the positive sides of webinar experience was that participating to the seminar was easy and felt natural. Customers seem to be comfortable joining to a seminar where the lecturer is not physically present. This was an issue that concerned the most about webinars, but the customers do not see this as a problem.

There is a potential of offering approximately eight seminars per a customer annually. Therefore, the webinar schedule should be designed that there are enough interesting topics for customers representing each targeted groups of professionals where to choose.

The new pricing method was not a success among the target group, and the study results suggest that it has to be reconsidered. Important note is that the respondents were not necessarily working on the positions of making decisions concerning the staff's education. The respondents could also have understood the question if they as an individual customers were interested of the offered packets, whereas the packets are targeted to corporations who educate their staff. Also, the prices of webinars have actually been lowered due to the new pricing model. As mentioned earlier, one webinar was priced to approximately 100€ and now the contract price per one month is 59€. If a customer wants to join to one webinar, the contract needs to be done, but the notice time is one month and the customer may end the contract after participating to the one webinar he wanted to join. With all this facts in mind, Opinahjo should at least study the customer's opinions about the offered pricing model more thoroughly before changing the pricing back to the old model.

The thesis study reveals that the case company should target especially customers aged 21 to 32 years old, since they felt that felt most satisfied with the webinar experience. Narrowing the target group might be difficult and unnecessary, but focusing on this group of customers should be considered.

Lastly, what was revealed from the content of the webinar is that it might be beneficial to rate the level for who' the webinar is targeted to. Rating would tell the customer if the seminar is suitable for a customer with a lot of earlier knowledge about the handled topic or for a customer with less knowledge. Professionals with a lot of earlier knowledge and experience seem to be more interested of the new trends and future prospects. The suggested webinar topics by the customers included human research management, employment law interpretation, developing managers and leaders, work community management, recruiting policies, supporting managerial work, developing organizations, HR laws, pricing, committing young professionals and change management. Opinahjo should consider offering these webinar topics, if they are not yet in the webinar program.

7 Conclusions

When the customer expectations towards webinars were studied, the customers seemed to feel positive about webinars. Factor of being in another space with the other participants and with the lecturer was not an issue to the customers, since they valued higher the benefits of webinar such as the easiness of taking part to the webinar and the time saving due to the un-

necessity of travelling. Webinars are getting more popular and there is a great business potential of utilizing the unique benefits of them in the service industry.

Arranging educational seminars through webinars for business customers is new and innovative business, which should be developed further since the study revealed that there is a growing potential in educational seminars as well. Customer's demand for educational seminars is not yet satisfied, which means that there is not so great competition on the field yet either. In order provide the best value to the customers, the webinar timing, subject matter and target audience must be considered carefully. Young adults aged 21 to 32 seem to be most satisfied with webinars, and the same trend is expected to continue when new professionals graduate and enter to the working life.

7.1 Further research possibilities

As stated in the beginning of the data presenting section the differences between genders were not included in the research due to the high deviation difference. If similar research is done in the future, this variable is worth of researching.

Secondly, it would have been interesting to study if there is a correlation between three variables: age, interest to join more educational seminars and current amount of participating educational seminars. Studying this would have required higher level of statistical analyzing, and therefore it was left out from the research this time.

In order to make any detailed claims about the correlation of age and the interest towards webinars, the statistics of the target group should be studied thoroughly. Most likely the participants of this research showed their interest towards webinars by taking part to the study, and the age division of the target group was clearly shown in the data. However, the statistics of the researched population should be compared to the statistics of the respondents so that the real correlation could be seen.

Lastly, for deeper analysis an interview would be recommended. The results of this research could be used as a basis for constructing a structure for the research. The interviewed persons should represent highly satisfied customers and highly dissatisfied customers so that the points of improvement and the points of success could be discovered.

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Appendixes

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Appendix 1 Questionnaire



Webinaarikoulutus

*Pakollinen

Nimi: *

Sukupuoli: *

- Nainen
 Mies

Ikä: *

- 21-26
 27-32
 33-38
 39-44
 45-50
 51-56
 57-62
 63-68 v.

Kuinka moneen webinaariin olet aiemmin osallistunut? *

- Tämä oli minun ensimmäinen webinaarini ikinä.
 1-3
 4-6
 yli kuuteen.

Miten tekniikka mielestäsi toimi webinaarin aikana? *

- Hienosti. Ei mitään teknisiä ongelmia.
 Kuva ja/tai ääni pätki hieman.
 Oman nettiyhteyteni takia yhteys pätki.
 Muu:

Mitkä ovat mielestäsi kolme suurinta positiivisesti eroavaa asiaa webinaarissa verrattuna luokkamuotoiseen lähiopetukseen? *

- Koulutukseen menee kokonaisuudessaan vähemmän aikaa.
- Koulutus on edullisempaa ilman matkakuluja.
- Tallenteen luennosta voi katsoa jälkikäteen.
- Muistiinpanot ovat valmiina opintomateriaaleissa, joita voi katsoa jälkikäteen.
- Ei tarvitse matkustaa.
- Kysymykset voi esittää anonyymisti.
- Saa keskittyä rauhassa ilman toisten osallistujien aiheuttamaa melua.
- Luennoitsijan äänenvoimakkuutta voi itse säädellä.
- Muu:

Jos sinua kiinnostava koulutus olisi tarjolla kotipaikkakunnallasi sekä kontakti-, että webinaarikoulutuksena, kumman mieluummin valitsisit? *

- Webinaarin.
- Luokkamuotoisen kontaktiopetuksen.
- Ei väliä, voisin valita kumman vain.
- En osaa sanoa.

Opinahojo tarjoaa webinaareja ainoastaan kuukausivelotteisina paketteina. Tarjolla on kahta erikokoista pakettia, M-paketti (59€/hlö/kk, sis. mahdollisuuden osallistua 30:een valikoituun koulutukseen ja tallenteiden käyttöajan 1kk) ja L-paketti (79€/hlö/kk, sis. mahdollisuuden osallistua kaikkiin 50:een tarjolla olevaan koulutukseen ja tallenteiden käyttöajan 3kk). Koulutusten aiheet liittyvät mm. reskontraan, kirjanpitoon, palkanlaskentaan ja henkilöstöhallintaan. Irtisanomisaika sopimuksilla on 1kk. Olisitko kokemuksesi perusteella kiinnostunut koulutuspaketeista? *

- Kyllä. Paketit kiinnostavat minua, sillä useaan koulutukseen osallistuminen tulee huomattavasti halvemmaksi kuukausiveloituksella kuin ennen käytössä olleella webinaarikohtaisella veloituksella.
- Jos koulutuksia voisi ostaa yksitellen, olisin kiinnostunut Opinahjon webinaarikoulutuksista.
- Olen kiinnostunut, oli veloitusmalli mikä tahansa.
- En ole kiinnostunut, oli veloitusmalli mikä tahansa.
- En osaa sanoa.

Mikä asiakaskokemuksessasi oli positiivista? *

- Aihe oli mielenkiintoinen.
- Luennoitsija oli hyvä.
- Koulutus toi minulle uutta tietoa jota voin hyödyntää työssäni.
- Koulutuksen pituus oli sopiva.
- Koulutukseen osallistuminen oli tehty asiakkaalle helpoksi.
- Luennon aihe ja asiasisältö vastasivat hyvin toisiaan.
- Webinaarin seuraaminen oli helppoa ja tuntui luonnolliselta.
- Muu:

Moneenko työtäsi ja osaamistasi kehittävään koulutukseen olet osallistunut viimeisen vuoden aikana?

- En yhteenkään.
- 1-4
- 5-8
- Yli kahdeksaan.
- En osaa sanoa.

Toivotko saavasi osallistua useampaan työtäsi ja osaamistasi kehittävään koulutukseen kun mihin nykytilanteessasi osallistut?

- Toivoisin lisää koulutuksia.
- Nykyinen määrä on sopiva.
- Toivoisin vähemmän koulutuksia.
- En osaa sanoa.

Jos olet osallistunut muiden yritysten järjestämiin webinaarikoulutuksiin aiemmin, millä tavoin Opinahjon webinaari poikkesi kokemuksestasi/kokemuksistasi?

Oletko aiemmin kuullut tai käyttänyt Opinahjon tarjoamia palveluita? *

- Olen käyttänyt Opinahjon palveluita aiemminkin.
- Olen ainoastaan kuullut Opinahjon tarjoamista palveluista.
- Saamani sähköpostikutsu oli ensimmäinen kerta kun kuulin Opinahjosta tai heidän tarjoamista palveluista.
- Muu:

Mitä kehitysehdotuksia sinulla on webinaarikoulutuksiin tai Opinahjolle?

Minua saa haastatella lyhyesti puhelimitse palvelukokemuksestani. *

- Kyllä
- Ei

Muuta kommentoitavaa:

Lähetä

Älä koskaan lähetä salasanaa Google Formsin kautta.



100 %. Sait sen valmiiksi.