

**Customer purchase behaviour affecting to the development of tour operators travel product portfolio
– Case Apollomatkat**

Sara Sepponen

Bachelor's thesis
20 November 2015



Author(s) Sara Sepponen	
Degree programme Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management	
Report/thesis title Customer purchase behaviour affecting to the development of tour operators travel product portfolio – case Apollomatkat	Number of pages and appendix pages 40 + 10
<p>The aim of this thesis is to research the customer purchase behaviour of city and weekend holidays of a Finnish tour operator, Apollomatkat. The issues of how customer purchase behaviour in travel agencies has changed and the factors behind it are being discussed. After clarifying the development in customer purchase behaviour, the travel product in question is studied closer in the form of an online survey.</p> <p>The theoretical framework takes the reader through the evolved situation of tour operators and travel agencies. It follows through the customer behavior from the perspective of traveling and online. The marketing of tourism products as well as the aspect of social media in tourism are being discussed. In addition to these, the meaning and importance of online environment from business and customer perspective is explained.</p> <p>The customer decision making process and the process of purchasing a holiday are introduced and explained. The aim of the theoretical framework is to put the research of city and weekend holidays into a correct context. The research was conducted in Finnish from the request of the commissioner company, with the goal of gaining new information about their customers behavior before traveling. The research conducted followed quantitative research method that produced numerical results.</p> <p>The analysis of the research resulted the importance of online environment when booking and doing the information search of city and weekend holidays. Also, the results showed customers motives behind traveling and what they value in a city and weekend holiday. In addition, the outcome showed factors affecting the purchase decision such as the importance of price and time of traveling, as well as the booking habits of the customers which relied heavily on internet and computers.</p> <p>Based on the analysis there were some suggestions given to the company, including of utilization of mobile and smartphones, activeness in social media and a holiday search based on price. The process of writing this thesis started in the spring of 2015 and was completed in autumn of the same year.</p>	
Keywords Purchase behaviour, dynamic packaging, online, customer behaviour, research	

Table of contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Thesis objective and questions	2
1.2	Thesis structure	2
2	Theoretical framework.....	4
2.1	Tour operators and travel agencies.....	4
2.2	Customer behaviour.....	6
2.3	Marketing and social media.....	8
2.4	Online	9
2.5	Customer decision making and booking.....	10
2.5.1	Traditional customer purchase cycle	12
2.5.2	New customer purchase cycle.....	13
3	The commissioner party	16
3.1	Dynamic packaging product.....	17
4	Research implementation.....	19
4.1	Research method and objectives	19
4.2	The target group	20
4.3	Research process	20
4.4	The analysis method.....	21
5	Research results	22
5.1	Apollomatkat, why and how?.....	23
5.2	Motives behind the selection of DP	24
5.3	Value factors.....	26
5.4	Customers booking habits.....	28
5.5	Summary of the results	30
5.6	Suggestions for the commissioner company	32
6	Conclusions and evaluation.....	34
6.1	Validity and reliability.....	34
6.2	Evaluation of the thesis process and self-evaluation	36
	References	38
	Appendices.....	42
	Appendix 1. Newsletter	42
	Appendix 2. Online Survey	43

1 Introduction

With an increase of 4.4% in the number of tourists traveling internationally in 2014 compared to 2013, and with over 1.1 million international trips annually tourism has proven to be a continuously growing economic force (Rifai 2014, 2). Tourism has experienced expansion and diversification over the past decades, resulting in increasing number of destinations worldwide (UNTWO 2015, 2). This growth of demand has resulted today's changing business that is driven by customers, trends and the growing impact of technology.

Internet and the expansion of new technologies has transformed the tourism industry affecting to customer behavior in multiple ways. Online information has become one of the most important factors influencing travelers' decisions and decision making process (De Wilde & Rifai 2014). This thesis goes through the development of customer behavior and purchase behavior from the perspective of planning and booking a holiday.

There are three stages in each holiday and travel planning process. The three stages of the process are pre-holiday, during holiday and post-holiday. In this thesis the focus is on the 1st step of the travel planning process, before holiday. The before holiday -step includes the phases of dreaming, planning and booking (Tourism Australia, 2013, 7). The author will look into the pre-holiday motivations of selecting a city and weekend holiday.

The world's cities are some of the greatest tourism destinations. Tourists are drawn in to cities in growing numbers whether for leisure, business or to meet friends and family (Rifai 2012, 4). Perhaps the attractiveness of cities as a destination comes from the fact they are constantly changing; they are built, transformed and continuously growing (UNWTO 2012, 6). Also, the way cities are populated with different kind of people make them exciting and intriguing destinations.

The research of the thesis focuses on city and weekend holidays of a Finnish tour operator, Apollomatkat. The company was selected due to the fact the author has been employed by the company and wanted to write a thesis to a company in the travel and tourism industry. The theme of city and weekend holidays was selected from the request of the commissioner party.

1.1 Thesis objective and questions

In this thesis the aim is to understand how customer purchase behaviour in travel agencies has changed and the factors behind it. After clarifying the development in customer purchase behaviour the author studies closer to the product that has been one of the results of this development in customer behaviour. The product is the city and weekend holidays that has been introduced to the customers in 2014.

The objective is to collect beneficial information for the commissioner company and gather data about their customers' behaviour in the pre-holiday –phase of city and weekend holidays. The results are desired to be useful for the company.

The author studies the reasons why customers are selecting a city/weekend holiday from Apollomatkat, as well as their values towards a city holiday. Also, one of the aims is to figure out customers motives behind travelling to a city/weekend holiday. In addition to these the booking habits of the existing customers are studied.

The main research questions of this thesis are following:

- What motives are there behind the selection of a city/weekend holiday from Apollomatkat?
- Which factors are emphasized when doing the purchase and traveling decision?
- What is it that the customer values in a city/weekend holiday?
- What kind of booking habits the customers have?

1.2 Thesis structure

This thesis is structured in a traditional way. It consists of five main chapters, them being: Introduction, Theoretical framework, The commissioner party, Research implementation, Research results and Conclusions and evaluation.

This thesis starts from introduction, where the topic and main research questions are introduced. Introduction is followed by theoretical framework, where the theoretical background of tour operators, online environment, customer behaviour and purchase behaviour are discussed. Theory is followed by representing the commissioner party and the product that is studied in this thesis. Then, the research implementation is discussed, which includes the research type of quantitative research and objectives, target group, the online survey and description of the research process. After this, the results of the re-

search are discussed and analysed by using graphs. Suggestions for the commissioner company are also given.

In the last conclusion and evaluation -section of this thesis the results of the research findings are summarized along with development suggestions. The validity and reliability of the research are discussed. Lastly, the author gives a self-evaluation of the thesis and research process.

2 Theoretical framework

This chapter includes the theoretical framework of the thesis. In the chapter the definitions related to the work are introduced as well as the operations of tour operators and travel agencies. The history behind the change of travel products will be discussed, as well as customer behaviour. The roles of marketing and online environment are presented.

Theory of customer decision making is introduced in addition to how the online environment influences the purchase behaviour and the operations of tour operators. The change from the traditional to modern customer purchase cycle will be also discussed.

2.1 Tour operators and travel agencies

According to Holloway & Humphreys tour operator is a bridge between suppliers and customers. A tour operator traditionally purchase separately the modes of transportation, accommodation and other services and combine them into a package which is sold direct or through travel agencies to customers. A tour operators also sells individual flight seats as well as offer other elements of their holiday packages separately. (2012, 557)

Package tours and self-retailed tours are the most common type of tours. Package tours are a combination of different travel services, which are sold together as a package and retailed by a tour operator or a travel agency. (KKV 2014) These type of tours usually include hotel and flight in addition to different type of activities at the destination. The package tours can also be retailed according to customers' wishes.

"In the case of a package tour, the traveller is protected by general package tour terms and conditions from the moment of purchase until the end of the journey. The tour operator is responsible for services included in the trip, such as transportation and accommodation." (KKV 2014) A package tour is an easy and convenient way of traveling, and the customer is protected by the package travel act in case of e.g. cancellations and delays. Also, very often there is personnel of the tour operator in the destination to provide help and activities if needed.

In self-retailed tours, on the other hand, all the traveling arrangements are done by the customer. "Independent travellers' book transportation, accommodation and possible activities from several sources and combine them together." (Kuusela 2010, 28, Kuluttajavirasto 2006) In these cases the customer is responsible of all the arrangements of the holiday, which means there are no acts to protect the customer, although the online travel

agencies offer several additional insurances. The trendiness and popularity of this type of independent self-made tours has increased in the past years.

There are several online travel agencies (OTA's) which are websites offering comprehensive travel shopping and reservations solutions to customers (Travelclick.com 2015). eBookers, Momondo and Expedia are examples of OTA's, which are specialized in selling flights, hotels and other services such as car rental for customers creating their own tours. Many times self-retailed tours can be more affordable compared to package tours, which can be explained by the broad selection of flight and hotels, price comparison websites and dynamic pricing.

The term dynamic pricing refers to prices changing according to supply and customer demand as well as weather, the perception of how much customer is willing to pay which is based on their browsing and purchase history, device, location and competitors offers (Pekkala 2014). Dynamic pricing started from the aviation business and it has spread to other industries, including tourism.

Traditional travel agencies, or retailers, are an intermediary between the customer and the supplier. Travel retailers sell the tours and packages of different tour operators without having their own stock. This kind of agencies sell packages and travel services according to their customer demand. OTA's are a significant threat to traditional travel retailers which are now facing the struggle of keeping up with the business. (Holloway & Humphreys 2012, 186)

The change from traditional travel agencies business model to online travel agencies can be explained by affordability of computers and the accessibility to Internet, which enabled customers to seek information about travel destinations and services. They could now compare different travel companies and products, read customer reviews and do their travel arrangements and reservations online. The growth of online bookings can be partially explained by the low cost airlines, which offer cheaper flight rates online, but also by the fact that customers found information search and booking online more convenient. (Holloway & Humphreys 2012, 63)

The amount of people booking their travels online can be seen as a threat to traditional travel agencies. The affects of online bookings have enabled online travel agencies to prosper when traditional businesses have declined. Online bookings have forced the traditional tour operators to move their business model and products online and transform into online travel agencies. (Holloway & Humphreys 2012, 63)

The competition between traditional tour operators and online travel agencies has created the demand for tour operators to develop their products to be more flexible in terms of tailoring and duration of the trip. Also, the product selection has faced the need to be diversified. This development can be seen in the case of the commissioner party, as their business model is focusing more and more online.

2.2 Customer behaviour

“Consumer behaviour is a complex, multidimensional process. It is the study of individuals, groups, or organizations and the processes they use to select, secure, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society.” (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2013, 6)
A consumers’ buying behaviour is influenced by cultural, social and personal factors (Keller & Kotler 2009, 190).

Culture is the fundamental determinant of a persons’ wants and behaviour. Through family and other key factors a person develops his own cultural values. Subcultures define more specific identification for their members such as religion, geographic regions, racial groups etc. Social classes on the other hand form division of a society, whose members share similar values, interests and behaviour. (Keller & Kotler 2009, 190)

In addition to cultural factors, social factors such as reference groups, family and social roles and statuses affect our buying behaviour. Personal characteristics are also an important influence. These include e.g. the customers’ age and stage in the life cycle, occupation, economic circumstances as well as personality and self-concept with its lifestyle and values. (Keller & Kotler 2009, 194)

The demand for tourism in the individual level of customers can be treated as a consumption process, which is influenced by different factors. These factors can be combinations of wants and needs, free time and money, or images, perceptions and attitudes. Customer behaviour is hard to define, since there are no individual alike. The differences in attitudes, perceptions, images and motivations have an important influence in the decision to travel. (Cooper & Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert, Wanhill 2008, 43)

According to Swarbrooke & Horner (2007, 54-55) tourists are likely to be influenced a number of motivators and each individual is motivated by different factors. These motives behind traveling can be divided into six different categories:

- Physical: relaxation, suntan, health
 - Emotional: nostalgia, adventure, escapism
 - Personal: visiting friends and relatives, new friends
 - Personal development: increasing knowledge, learning a new skill
 - Status: exclusivity, fashionability
 - Cultural: sightseeing, experiencing new cultures
- (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 54-55)

As the world economy and wealth of people grow, the more they can afford to travel and so, the sector of tourism has grown. By traveling, people have enabled tourism to become one of the major players in international commerce and the growth goes hand in hand with increasing diversification and competition of destinations (UNWTO 2015). Yet, the difficult economic situation of past years has made the tough competition in the travel sector even tougher. Intense competition combined to a weak economic outlook resulted in those operators that had the resources to utilise price-based promotions in order to not lose sales (Euromonitor International 2014).

This being said, one of the current trends is in favouring low cost fares when traveling. Low cost airlines, or low cost carriers, offer low fares to customers by e.g. cutting down operational costs, having high seat turnover, high aircraft use and using second-tier airports. Examples of this kind of no-frills airlines operating in Finland are AirBaltic, Ryanair and Norwegian. Low cost airlines (LCCs) have radically altered the nature of competition within the airline industry, especially on short-haul routes (Pearce & Smyth 2006, 5). Low cost carriers had 32% of market share in Europe in 2013 (Israel 2014).

Low cost carriers have enabled customers to fly cheaper and so, travel more often. As mentioned above, these companies operate actively in short-haul routes which has affected traveling inside Europe. More people can afford to take holidays and short breaks from every-day life, which has partly affected the popularity of city and weekend holidays. Another factor is curiousness, which has led customers to travel to new and exciting destinations away from the direction of the mass tourism destinations. As an example of this development curve, budget airlines have expanded to newly popular destinations around the globe by offering cheap fares and developing new provincial hubs (Holloway & Humphreys 2012, 204).

The popularity of self-retailed trips is explained with the fact of tourists preferring more independent ways of travel. In addition to the liberty of choosing timetables, destinations,

accommodations, means of travel and the prices customers are searching for more active and rich travel experiences. The braveness of today's travellers can be seen as experimental tourism which is in contrast to the passive travel experience that organized mass tourism patterns offer. Traveling for many is an opportunity for self-development and connecting with the locals (Efthimia & Georgia, Paris 2015).

When thinking about the aspect of safety and security while traveling and booking, there were several reasons to affect customers favouring package tours instead of booking holidays themselves. "The failure of several airlines and tour operators, coupled with events like the Icelandic ash cloud and political unrest in holiday destinations such as Egypt and Greece, led to concerns over financial protection and personal safety" (Holloway & Humphreys 2012, 624). The value of tour operators' package travel act in the world of self-retailing came to be a serious selling point.

2.3 Marketing and social media

Marketing offers incentives for customers and for its part has a big effect on the customer buying decision. Kotler (2014, 9) defines marketing as a process where companies create value for customers and build customer relationships which capture value from the customers in return. Kotler also states, that if marketing professionals do a good job of identifying customers' needs, developing a good product, pricing and distributing it right, and promoting it effectively the result is an attractive product and satisfied customers (2014, 11).

In addition to the traditional media and marketing, marketing has reached new channels and means of promotion through internet, and so, marketing is very visible and present in the daily life of people. Customer targeting and profiling, which is essential in order to sell the right product to the right crowd is also easier with modern customer relationship management programs. CRM (customer relationship management) can be defined as customer data management activity that involves detailed customer information and the touch points, when customer is in contact with the company and the products in order to maximize customer loyalty. (Kotler 2014, 21)

Digital marketing, which means marketing communications that involve digital technologies e.g. web, mobile and e-mail has a big influence on customers (Morrison 2010, 751). Digital marketing includes also display advertising, search engine advertising, keyword advertising, social media advertising and affiliate marketing (KWD.com 2015). Digital marketing is highly targeted, goal-oriented marketing which results are easily measurable

(Superanalytics.com 2014). This type of digital marketing is about right people meeting the right product and being present online and different social medias.

Social media has an important role in the tourism business, since communication among customers has a big impact on the way consumers make their decisions (Yazdanifard & Yee 2014). Travel and tourism rely on word-of-mouth, opinions and recommendations shared on social platforms such as Facebook, twitter and Instagram, and these tips and suggestions are incredibly valuable when positive (Bennett 2012). There are also platforms made just for the reason to serve tourism such as Tripadvisor, which is highly valued among travelers.

The very essence of social media is the broadness of the networks, constant interaction with people around the world and the ability to share different types of multimedia and experiences. Businesswise, social media has allowed businesses to connect with their customers in a quick and efficient way. This type of social networking is a good way of spreading information but also, it is a good way to promote a business and built brand image. (Yazdanifard & Yee 2014) Social media can also be considered as modern day customer relationship management, and high engaging social media campaigns and activities are likely to generate commitment on the behalf of the customer. When social media is managed right it reinforces the loyalty to the brand as well as increases the support of the brand in the future. (Fodor & Hoffman 2010, 46)

2.4 Online

The internet has affected the business of tourism tremendously. Also, the way people travel and book their holidays has changed with internet and social media.

Tourism and the internet are ideal partners. For consumers, when they are planning a trip to a new destination, they face the problem of making a costly purchase without being able to see the product. The internet provides them with the means to gain immediate access to relevant information of greater variety and depth than has been available previously, about destinations throughout the world; and to book quick and easily. (WTOBC, 2001, 1)

Traveling and booking leisure holidays has become more independent from the customer point of view. Internet has allowed customers to book their travel arrangements, making it easier for them to compare prices and assemble the component parts of the package themselves (Bray & Raitz 2001, 222). Internet has enabled information search, price comparison and experience sharing to everyone, which inevitably increases the competition among traditional and online travel agencies.

The user rate of internet in Finland is really high, since 81% of individuals accessed the internet daily or more frequently in 2014 (Statista.com 2015). The fact that the user rate of internet in Finland is so high enables OTA's and traditional tour operators operating online to get a lot of potential customers on a daily basis. E-business is growing steadily, since in 2015 business to customer e-commerce sales in Finland grew by 3,2 percent compared to 2014, and it is forecasted that in 2016 the growth percent will be 2,7 (Statista.com 2015).

With these statistics it is reasonable to say that internet is growing its share on the industry moderately, yet the online environment will get a stronger position in the future. Future markets will be reached more and more through social media and mobile messaging rather than only traditional or online media (Close 2012, 211). Association of Finnish Travel Agents, (AFTA 2015) states that travel products have the biggest market share online, and that in 2014 about 70% of package-tours were sold online when the rest of the sales were traditional offline -sales.

2.5 Customer decision making and booking

According to Keller & Kotler marketing scholars have developed a five stage model of buying-decision process. The customer goes through five different stages: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post purchase behaviour. The buying process starts long before the purchase and has consequences long after the purchase and also, customers don't always pass through all of these five stages of the purchase process. (2009, 207)

Keller & Kotler (2009, 208-214) have explained the phases of the buying-decision process in the following way:

Problem recognition

The process starts when the customer recognizes a problem or a need either from external or internal stimuli.

Information search

In this stage, the customer is finding a solution to the recognized want or need. There are different information sources the customer will turn to, them being: personal (e.g. friends and family), commercial (e.g. websites, advertising), public (e.g.mass media) and lastly, experimental (e.g. examining and using the product/service).

Evaluation of alternatives

At this point the customer knows the alternatives available. The features of the product/service or brand are evaluated by beliefs, attitudes and own perception.

Purchase decision

Here the customer processes the information gathered and alternatives to make a decision on the product/service. Customer decides whether to proceed with the purchase or not. The initial problem or need is solved.

Post purchase behaviour

At the last stage of the process, customer decides whether the expectations were met and if the outcome of the purchase was satisfactory. If the customer is satisfied, she is more likely to repurchase and give good feedback/ratings.

(Keller & Kotler 2009, 208-214)

There are various aspects that affect the decision making, e.g. the image of the product/service, attitudes (self and others) towards the product/service and the risks involved with the product/service. The process of sorting through various options of products/services on offer and deciding which would be the best for you is complex. Individual personality traits and own perception will determine how the eventual decision is made. (Holloway & Humphreys 2012, 85) In addition, the ever increasing range of different factors, platforms and channels influence the customer decision making process (Elgin-Nijhuis, Maurer & Jon Munro 2014, 4).

The five stages of customer decision making lead in the best case to a satisfied purchase, or in this context, booking. There are also other factors to affect making the decision of booking, for instance last minute holidays and booking close to the travel date. Some travellers wait until the last minute to make their decision in the hope of getting the best deal. This type of market is not new, but it keeps attracting attention. (Holloway & Humphreys 2012, 79)

Another fact affecting to booking is the popularity of low cost carriers; with low prices it is easier to make the decision of traveling. Low flight rates enables customers to choose a better hotel, yet the popularity of choosing quality hotels among Finnish people can also

be explained with longing for luxury to everyday life (Rantapallo 2013). Booking by computer has also an effect to the decision making. Close (2012, 240) states that the more time consumers spend online, the greater the likelihood of their making a purchase decision.

To conclude, travellers will still have the same human needs they have had when traveling, it is their purchase behaviour that will vary (Lundy 2015, 16). Online information has become one of the most important factors influencing travelers' decisions and decision making process (De Wilde & Rifai 2014). The customer purchase cycle and the changes in it are discussed better through the perspective of a holiday below.

2.5.1 Traditional customer purchase cycle

Customer purchase cycle describes all the phases in the process of buying a holiday. The phases of purchase cycle are dreaming, planning, booking, destination and post-holiday sharing (Tourism Australia 2013, 7). The traditional purchase cycle is best described in figure 1 below, which represents the old way of buying a leisure holiday. In figure 1 the touch points are being described throughout the purchase phases.

For this research it is important to understand the starting point, how customers have behaved when planning and booking their holidays in order to comprehend the changes in the pattern. In the traditional purchase cycle the importance of physical human contact is present at all stages and the emphasis in every touch point is in the tour operator. Also, word of mouth has an important role in the customer path.

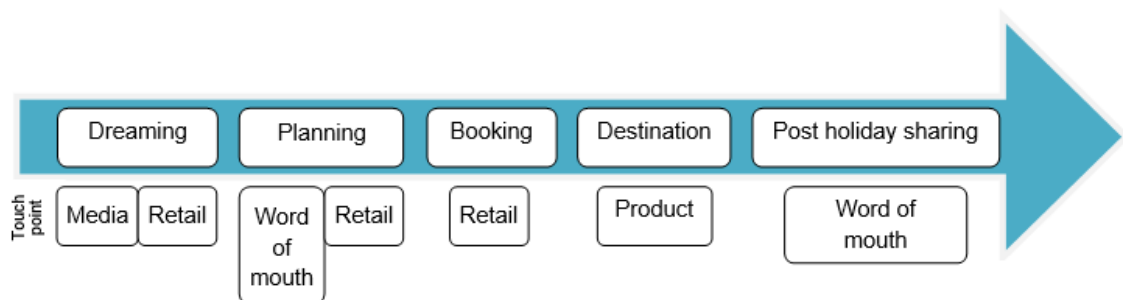


Figure 1. Traditional purchase cycle. (Adopted. Tourism Australia 2013, 7.)

The traditional purchase cycle represents the traditional package holiday including accommodation, charter flights, transportation and other activities during the holiday. These package holidays are the core products of traditional tour operators. The customers of tour operators have followed the traditional purchase cycle pretty much from the start of

leisure holiday business until the breakthrough of internet, as well as the increased market share of low cost airlines which changed the travel purchase behavior. As Bray and Raitz mentioned: “low cost airlines offering rock-bottom fares to European destinations are beginning to erode financial rationale for buying a package” (2001, 222).

Nevertheless, the older generation still follows the traditional purchase cycle, especially in the case of package tours, and adopts the new technological aspects slowly to their booking and traveling habits. As it can be seen in the figure, the cycle and its phases are rather easy and simple and rely heavily on retail. With the development it was only a matter of time when customers started to be more self-imposed about the information search and take action considering their holidays.

2.5.2 New customer purchase cycle

The new purchase cycle describes how the customer purchase behavior has changed compared to the traditional purchase cycle. In the past it was more difficult for the customers to search information and discover alternatives. As pictured above, the primary sources were marketing and sales departments whereas now internet enables customers to easily research for alternatives, reviews and ratings (Elgin-Nijhuis & al. 2014, 4). Figure 2 presents the new customer purchase cycle below. In the figure it can be seen how the emphasis has changed from the tour operator into online, and how online as a touch point follows in every step of the customer purchase path.

In addition to the online environment, the media –factor has changed to traditional media and social media has risen to an important role. Social media has taken the place of word of mouth and also, the usage of social media is present throughout the purchase cycle. The new customer path can represent the traditional package holidays as well as the new dynamic options, which include the flights and accommodation or only one or the other.

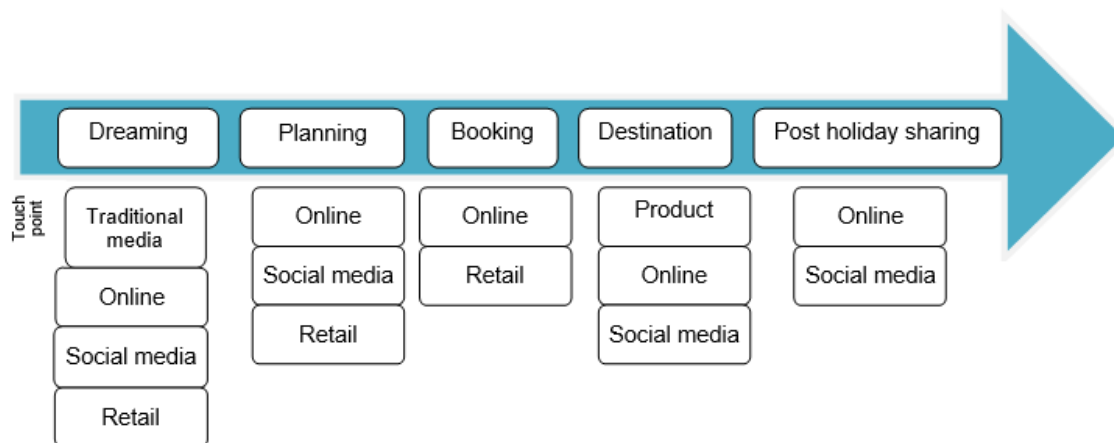


Figure 2. New purchase cycle. (Adopted. Tourism Australia 2013, 8.)

The new purchase cycle demonstrates the change to online environment, which means that tour operators have to develop their business model and transform along the customers. PC is moving to the usage of smartphones and from web to apps. Nevertheless, the customer path will not change fundamentally because of technology, technology and online environment can more likely work as a stimulus on customer behavior. (Lundy 2015, 10, 14)

The biggest change to the traditional purchase cycle must be sharing during and post-holiday. Using social media at the destination and after the holiday is a great influence that can evoke the desire to travel for other people, and so, launch the dreaming phase and start the process of traveling. Sharing works as an incentive for other people to travel, which is important for the tour operators to see and engage their customers, since it is an easy marketing tool for the businesses.

With the inevitable development to online based travel planning and booking, the internet has changed the way travel products are distributed to customer. As a proof of the popularity of online bookings, in 2014 the share of foreign leisure trip transportation (airplane) bookings made online in Finland was 91% (Statista 2015). Also as an example of concrete changes in many tour operators' functions, the brochures have changed into apps, retail tour operators are changing more into the direction of online travel agencies and as mentioned above, traditional media has lost its power to social media.

This being said, the old purchase cycle of holidays is the very core of holiday purchasing, which has evolved and has become broader in the sense that the customers have started to implement technology in their life. Also, the customers' changes in attitudes, braveness and desire to experience something new has modified their traveling and booking habits,

which have made the current purchase cycle more diverse with the emphasis on the customers themselves rather than retail.

3 The commissioner party

The commissioner party in this thesis is a tour operator called Apollomatkat. Apollomatkat is a part of Apollo Travel Group AB. Apollomatkat gives a formal company introduction in the following way: Apollo is one of the largest tour operators in the Nordic countries. Apollo in Sweden, Norway and Denmark is under Apollo Travel Group AB as well as Apollomatkat in Finland, the airline Novair, Golf Plaisir, Lime Travel and training resort Playitas. Apollomatkat in Finland had 70 000 passengers and turnover of 50 M€ in 2014 (Linked.in, 2015).

Apollo was founded in 1985. Apollomatkat started operating in Finland in 2010, and as a part of Apollo Travel Group they also market golf holidays under the name of Golf Plaisir in Finland (Apollomatkat 2015). Currently Apollomatkat is the fourth biggest tour operator in Finland (AFTA 2014). The company has 11 employees excluding the extra workers. The office consists of the sales, finance, marketing and management departments.

The business' distribution channels are concentrated mainly online, and the web page is a key factor. The online travel agency operates in www.apollomatkat.fi. Apollomatkat office is located in Kaivokatu 10 C, Helsinki and the holiday store for customers in Kaivopiha. There are also several agents and agencies that sell Apollomatkat holidays all over the country.

The company's target group can be defined to be middle aged women living in the great metropolitan area. This surely varies according to the product in question, since families with children and older couples are also big customer groups. In addition, there are specific products to target specific customers in the company's selection, e.g. football trips, sailing trips and cruises.

The company's product portfolio includes package holidays, the main core-product is the readymade holiday package to different destinations in Europe, Asia and Central America, from which Greece is the most popular one. There are also round trips, cruises, combination holidays, group and conference trips as well as active holidays in their holiday selection. Also, Apollomatkat sells flights and hotels individually to their destinations.

Apollomatkat has focused a lot of their marketing operations and distribution channels online. The web pages have an important role in their business. The company is also on various social medias such as Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest for customers to follow

and interact with them. The traditional destination information is available online and there is also Apollo App, which has taken the place of the traditional holiday brochures.

In addition to their package holiday selection, Apollomatkat has also had the need to introduce a dynamic product with flexible length of stay to destinations all over the world. This is due the competition between the traditional tour operators and online travel agencies. As a result Apollomatkat have launched the Dynamic packaging product, which is introduced below.

3.1 Dynamic packaging product

The latest addition to the travel product selection is a Dynamic packaging product, which in this thesis will here on be referred as DP. The product can be described as flight and hotel –packages with flexible travelling times to anywhere in the world. Dynamic packaging is the process by which of which travel agents, or other retailers of travel, themselves put together flights, accommodation and other elements of travel and sell the resulting package of components to consumers (Holloway & Humphreys 2012, 10).

The DP product combines the good sides of both traditional package holidays by having the protection of the package travel act as well as the liberty of self-retailed tours, which enables customers to freely design their holiday. For customers this product is branded under the name of city breaks or flight + hotel –packages. DP answers the current e-markets and competition with OTA's as well as other tour operators, who have recognized the same demand and created products similar to DP.

With DP customers can customise a holiday of their own liking or choose from the already retailed packages by the tour operator. There are flights with over 400 airlines and over 100 000 hotels in the selection, which rated from 3 to 5 stars (Apollomatkat, 2015). This enables Apollomatkat to grow the variety of destinations in their repertoire and the opportunity to get new customers outside of their target group.

The DP product is under package travel act which protects the customer and the operator provides help if needed. Being under package travel act is a valid selling point to customers who value security when traveling. DP is mostly marketed as city and weekend holidays, but also as holidays to long haul destinations with flexible length of stay. Apollomatkat launched the DP product on 12th of June 2014.

Since the launch last year the sales of the city and weekend holidays have been increasing, yet the percent share of the overall turnover of the holidays is marginal, in April 2015 the revenue was 4 % of all sales that month. Despite the slow sales start the product gets a lot of attention in the company, and due to its dynamic nature DP is considered as the future of the business. This being said, the company aims to increase sales of the dynamic packaging -products.

The theoretical framework is done to clarify the background and place the research into correct context. The framework is to offer a broader understanding of the current direction of the tour operators operations and the customers as well as to clarify the motivations behind conducting the research. The DP product was to be researched due to its newness, even though the commissioner company had collected data of the product and its users, there were no deeper research done on the subject before.

4 Research implementation

In this chapter the process of conducting the research for the thesis is explained, as well as the research method and objectives. The target group for the research and the main research questions are presented in addition to the analysis of the online survey. The analysis method for the survey is also discussed.

Idea for this research came from the fact, that there were no previous researches done of the DP holidays. The commissioner party has collected data about the customers but they were interested in knowing their customers attitudes towards the product as well as finding out more of their motives behind the purchase. DP as a product differs from their core holiday selection, the traditional package holidays, so additional information about the product and customer insights was considered helpful and beneficial.

4.1 Research method and objectives

The research method used in this thesis is survey research which is another form for quantitative research (Creswell 2005, 52). Quantitative research is explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that is analyzed by using mathematically based methods (Muijs 2004, 1). In this type of survey research you administer a survey or questionnaire to a small group of people (called the sample) in order to identify trends in attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of a large group of people (Creswell 2005, 52).

This survey was conducted online. An online survey can be defined as a self-administered questionnaire which is posted on a web site and completed interactively (Sirakaya-Turk & Uysal 2011, 105). This research method was selected due to the fact it was the easiest way to reach the desired target group. The commissioner party recommended an online survey since the DP product is marketed and sold online, and the company already had an existing email-list of recipients. The online survey was also the best option, due to the fact the company has done previous research by using online questionnaires and the author has conducted online surveys to the commissioner party before.

The requested research came out to be broad, since there were many issues to be answered. The main objectives for the research were to find out the motives behind selecting a city holiday from Apollomatkat. The research was to give an understanding of what kind of factors affected the traveling and booking of DP holidays. The aim was also to study the importance of these different factors and what is it that the customer values in a city holiday. In addition to these, the booking habits of the DP customers were studied.

The research problem came out to be the motivations for doing the research and answering the research questions. Since there were no previous research done on the matter, the possibility of comparison or basing arguments on previous knowledge had to be ruled out, which caused the subject to be treated as new.

4.2 The target group

The target group was easy to determine, since the theme (DP holidays) was highly specified in this research. The target group for the research was decided to be all the former and current customers, who had booked a DP holiday since the launch in June 2014. The time of the holiday or the destination were not a criteria, and the customers could have already had the holiday or were to travel in the near future.

This being said, the sample consisted of all of the customers who had booked the holiday and given their e-mail address in the booking phase. The amount of those customers was not too broad and the company wanted to have opinions from all the DP customers, hence the target group was not to be divided in any way. This sample got to represent a larger group, or population, which are the current and possible DP customers.

4.3 Research process

The questionnaire was planned and executed with the company, mostly with the former marketing manager Tessaliina Ilmelä and Laura Ruotsalainen, online merchandiser, who is specialized in the DP product. There were several versions done of the survey and before the send-off to customers it was sent to the marketing team of Apollomatkat for final evaluation. The final version of the survey was sent to the customers on 27th of March. The survey was sent in a newsletter (see attachment 1.) to the recipients and there was a reward raffled among the participants, which worked also as an incentive.

The online survey was conducted by using 1, 2, 3 Contact Form, which Apollomatkat uses in their operations. The survey was conducted in Finnish. The survey itself was broad since the company wanted to gain as much information about the DP product as possible. It included multiple and single choice –questions, rating scales as well as a couple of comment box questions. All the survey questions were made mandatory to answer in order to get fully completed questionnaires and so, more valid answers.

In total there were 1153 recipients for the survey. The aim was to get 100 answers, yet the final number of the valid answers was 65. The survey was sent twice to the customers in order to get more answers. However, Apollomatkat and the author considered 65 answers

as a good and valid result. Few weeks after conducting the survey the results were gathered and analysed.

4.4 The analysis method

Quantitative research analysis is based on visualizing the results and interpreting them with statistics and numbers. The aim is to understand the cause and effect relations of different phenomena, relations between the phenomena as well as the prevalence and frequency of the phenomena with the gathered numbers and statistics. The aim of the research is to create a statistical descriptive analysis. (Jyväskylän yliopisto)

After collecting the data it needs to be organized and summarized in order to create a few meaningful measures that describe the entire data set. There are two common ways of summarizing the data collected, presenting it in a graph or computing a numerical measure (Baloglu & Usakli 2011, 190). In this thesis, the data is analysed with graphs.

In this research gathering the results was done by exporting the results from 1, 2, 3 Contact Form to a DSV file, and transferring the data into excel. The results were converted into frequency and percent distributions. Frequency distribution, which shows the number of occurrence, makes the data more manageable and percentages enables the comparison across similar surveys (Baloglu & Usakli 2011, 192).

The numbers were visualized by creating different type of charts in Excel. The charts are used to get a comprehensive picture of what the data looks like and to make the results as clear and understandable as possible (The Pell Institute). All of the questions and results were also translated into English.

5 Research results

In this chapter the final results of the online survey are presented and analysed. Due to the broadness of the survey the author will raise the most important questions and answers concerning the topic of this research. The results are analysed accordingly on the basis of the theory. At the end, suggestions based on this research are given to the commissioner company.

The results were selected and analysed so that they would give answers to the main research questions, which are:

- Motives behind the selection of a city/weekend holiday from Apollomatkat?
- Which factors are emphasized when doing the purchase and traveling decision?
- What is it that the customer values in a city/weekend holiday?
- What kind of booking habits the customers have?

The survey and its questions were done by request of the commissioner company, yet based on the questions in focus the author has had to eliminate some parts of the survey. There were questions that were open ended and considered future and past travels. The following questions are examples what was left out from the results of the online survey (see appendix 2.): Have you booked your next holiday? Why haven't you booked yet? In which destinations have you been to during the past year? To which destination are you planning to travel next? These questions were not considered important when thinking about the main research questions and therefore not elaborated.

The questions were multiple choice questions, which means the respondents can select several important factors. There were in total 65 valid answers to the online survey, meaning that the respondents had answered to all of the mandatory questions. Out of those 65 people 38% were male and 62% were female, which means that there are more female bookers of DP holidays. The majority of the respondents were middle aged, since 28% were 45-54 years old and 37% 55-64 years old. Nevertheless, there were respondents from every age group.

It is interesting to know also from where the customers come from. 46% of the respondents are from the Metropolitan area and 34% come from cities with a population over 20 000. The minority, 20% of the respondents come from cities which have a population under 20 000. This means that the majority of customers come from bigger cities. The results indicate that the majority of these DP customers represent in fact the same target

group, women from the Metropolitan area, as the company's core products' target group does.

5.1 Apollomatkat, why and how?

The fact of how these customers had found DP holidays is important, due to its direct link to the marketing of the product. Also, the product must be visible to the crowd in order to be sold. The customer behaviour can be seen in the results, since today it is convenient for the customer to do the information research online as discussed previously in the theory section of this thesis.

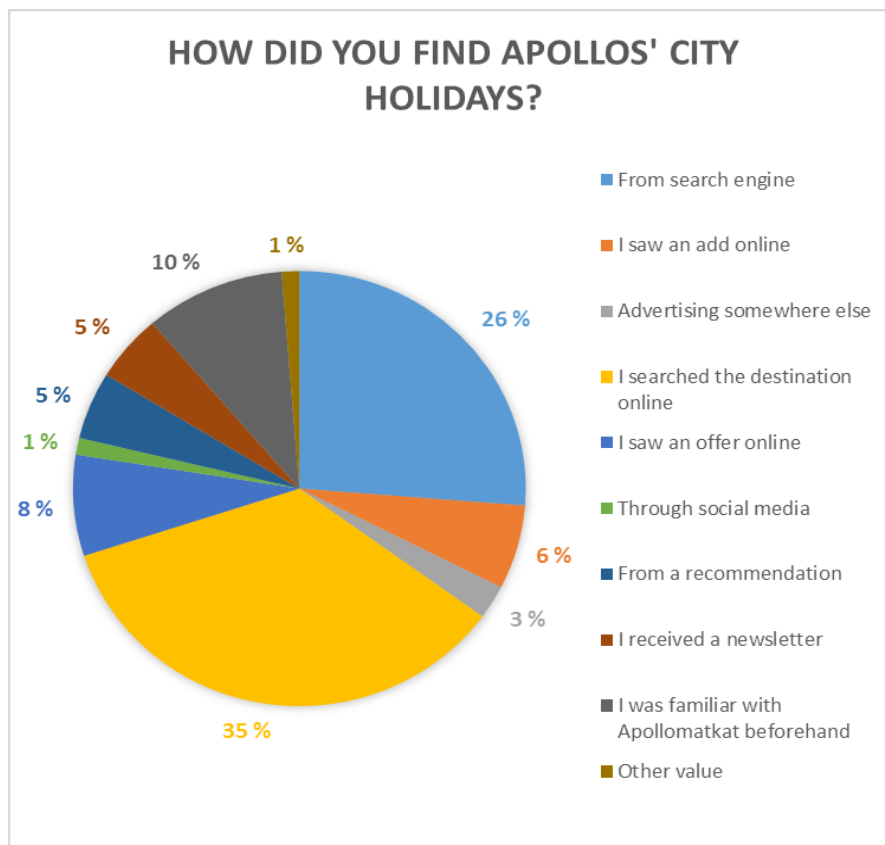


Figure 1. Finding the tour operators' travel product.

That online customer behaviour reflects in the results, due to the fact the majority of the answers were "I searched the destination online" (35%) and "from the search engine" (26%). This means the customers already had a destination on mind and with the digital marketing efforts they got directed to Apollomatkat city and weekend holiday -pages. Other respondents told to be previously familiar with Apollomatkat (10%) and seeing an offer online (8%).

95% of the responders told that they did compare prices and destinations of other tour operators and OTAs. This also tells us that the customers spend time browsing, doing

information search and price comparison online. The reasons why they chose Apollomatkat divided in the following way:

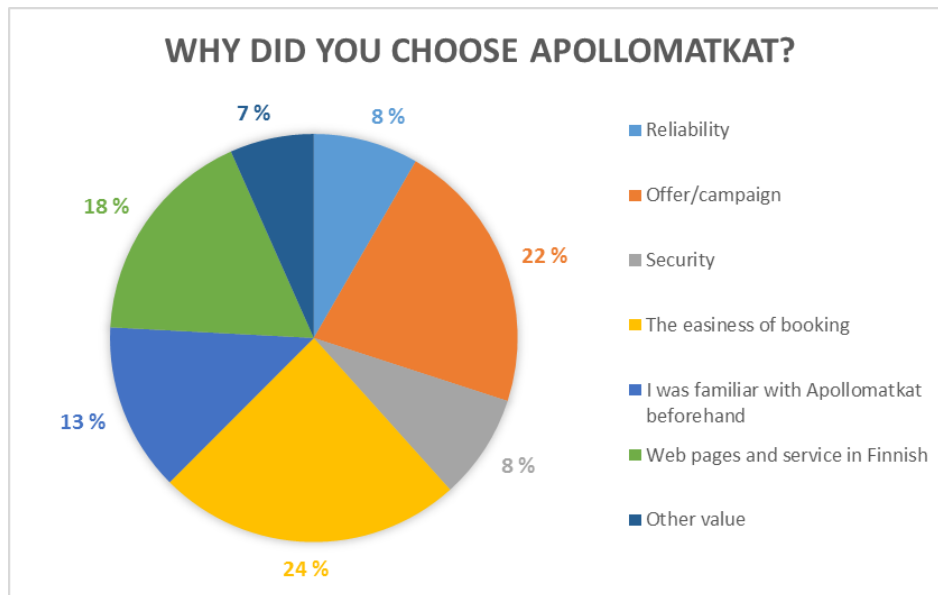


Figure 2. Motives behind the selection of the tour operator.

As it can be seen, the results got divided rather evenly, yet the main reasons were the easiness of booking (24%), a good offer/campaign (22%) and that the service and web pages are in Finnish (18%). User friendliness is definitely an asset when it comes to booking a holiday. Here, the age of the bookers can be also an explanation to these results, many of the middle aged people value service with their own mother tongue and rely on a safe tour operator.

One clear competitive asset for Apollomatkat was definitely a good price or offer, which led the customers to choose them instead of other tour operators or OTA's. Other value included e.g. good supply of the holidays and best price at the time, which also enhances the competitiveness of the DP product.

5.2 Motives behind the selection of DP

When finding out the main reasons for a DP holiday, it's important to know the initial reasons to travel (figure 3.). The results to the reasons of the trip was that customers had a holiday (68%) or a free weekend (16%). Visiting friends or family abroad was also a reason to travel for 9% of the respondents. The excess time gives people the chance to travel, see an interesting destination and experience something new. As other value, some respondents selected a DP holiday to celebrate a special day.

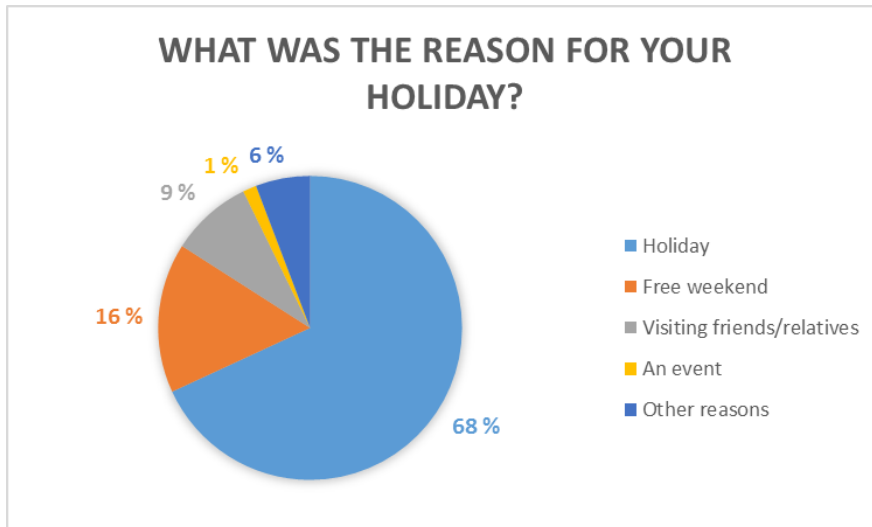


Figure 3. Reasons for a DP holiday.

The respondents were asked to rate how important different issues were when considering the factors that evoked the desire to travel on a DP holiday. The most important factors were (figure 4.) gaining new experiences, having time off from everyday life and an interesting city/destination. A good price was also rated to be an important incentive. These results show that DP customers value free time and want to spend it in an exciting and interesting location. Self-development and experiencing something new is also highly valued when traveling.

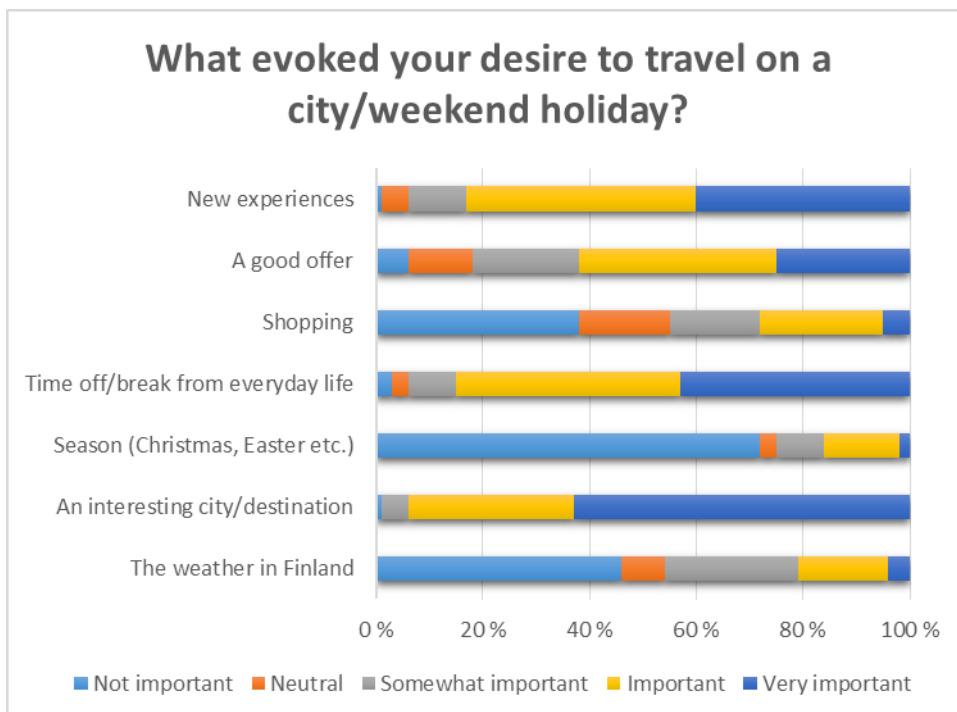


Figure 4. Traveling incentives.

The reason behind selecting a DP holiday came out to be mainly due to the destination, which got 37% off all the answers. Also, the having free time/days off (23%) and will to experience something new (20%) led the customers to go on a DP holiday. Surprisingly, the price didn't matter so much, since only 15% of the respondents told their reason to travel was a good offer. This again could be explained with the age and life situation, when middle aged people have more disposable income and assets than younger people on average. Yet, price as a competitive advantage in the selection of the tour operator in question shows that the price still matters.

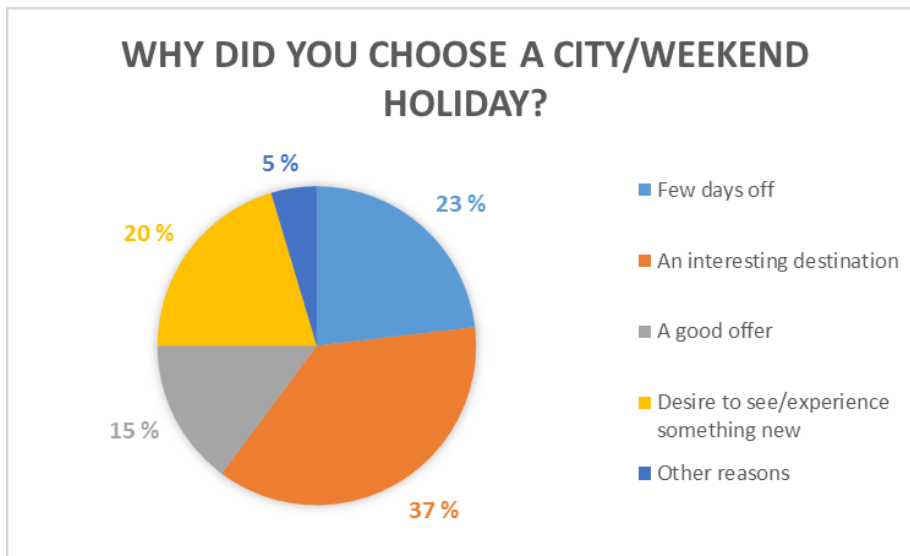


Figure 5. Motives behind selection of a DP holiday.

5.3 Value factors

When asked about how important different factors are when going a holiday to a certain destination (figure 6.) the results came to be as follows: culture and sights at the destination as well as the safety aspect and weather of the destination became to be the most important factors for the respondents. With DP holidays the customer can decide the length of stay, yet when talking about short weekend holidays it is understandable the respondents prefer short flying times to longer flights. Surprisingly, the trendiness of the destination and recommendation of friend were the least important factors. These answers can reflect the attitudes of our target group, they do not mind about what other people say or think and are open to experience the destination themselves.

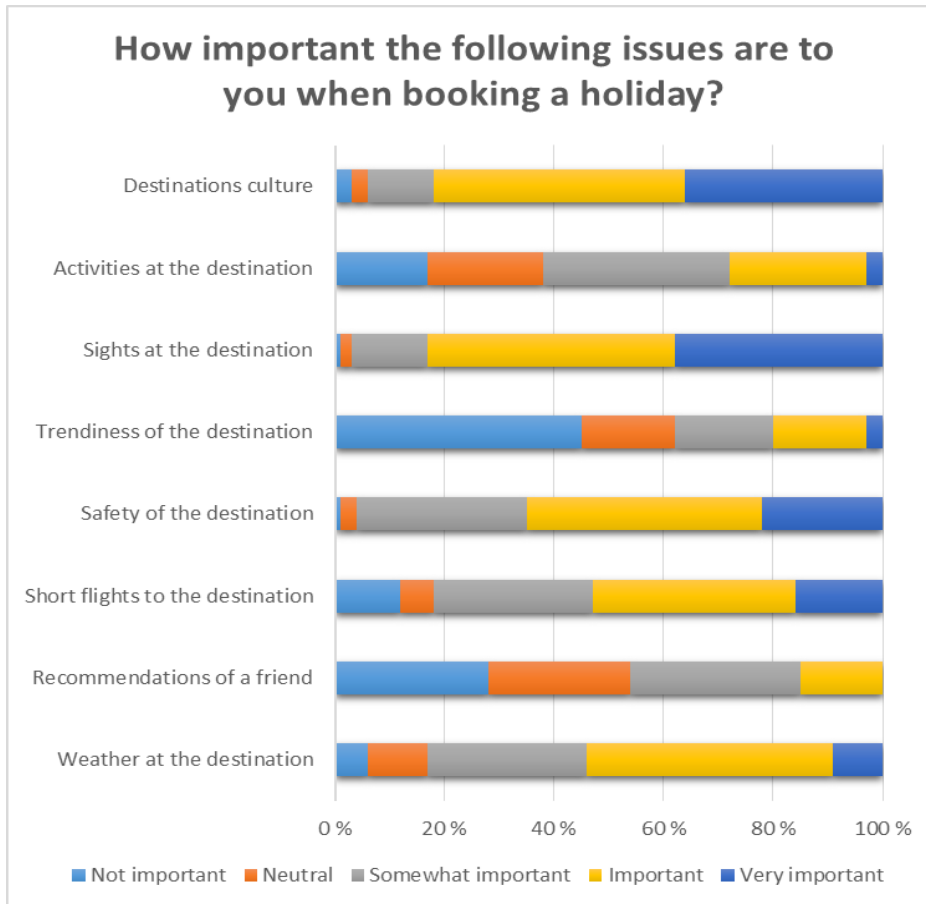


Figure 6. Factors of importance of the destination.

The flights and hotel(s) form the very core of a DP product. When researching what the customers' value in a city and weekend holiday, it is important to know how customers perceive the services the tour operator sells. This means what the customers values flight and hotel wise.

In the case of flights (figure 7.), the most important factors customers value are the fact that the flights are direct, they are priced well and that the flying times are good. Price in this context can mean, that customers are willing to save in the flights and spend the money at the destination or on the contrary, spend on the flights in order to get direct flights with good traveling times. The airline came out to be the least important factor for the customers.

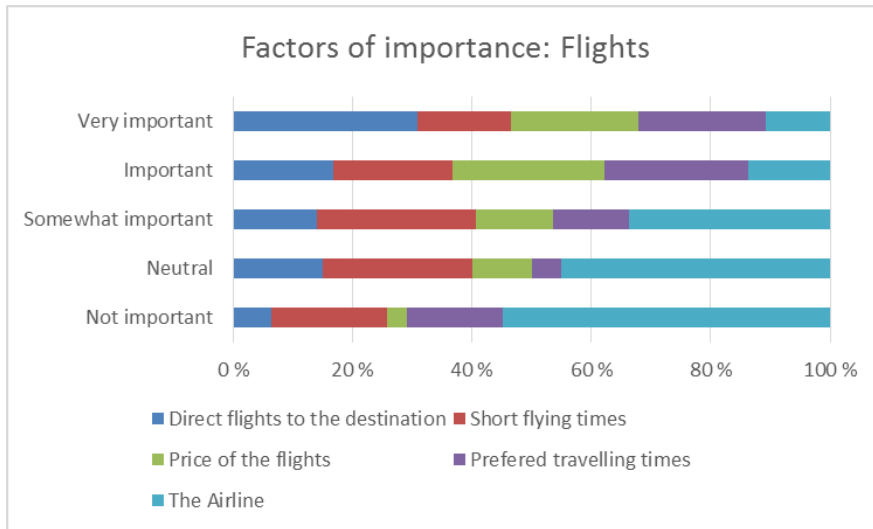


Figure 7. Flights.

When considering hotels at the destination, it came to be clear that hotel's services are the single most important factor according to the customers. Location was the second most important factor when hotel's rating/quality was the last, yet it was also a valuable asset. Since the DP hotel selection varies from 3-5 stars it could be expected that these three factors are highly valued.

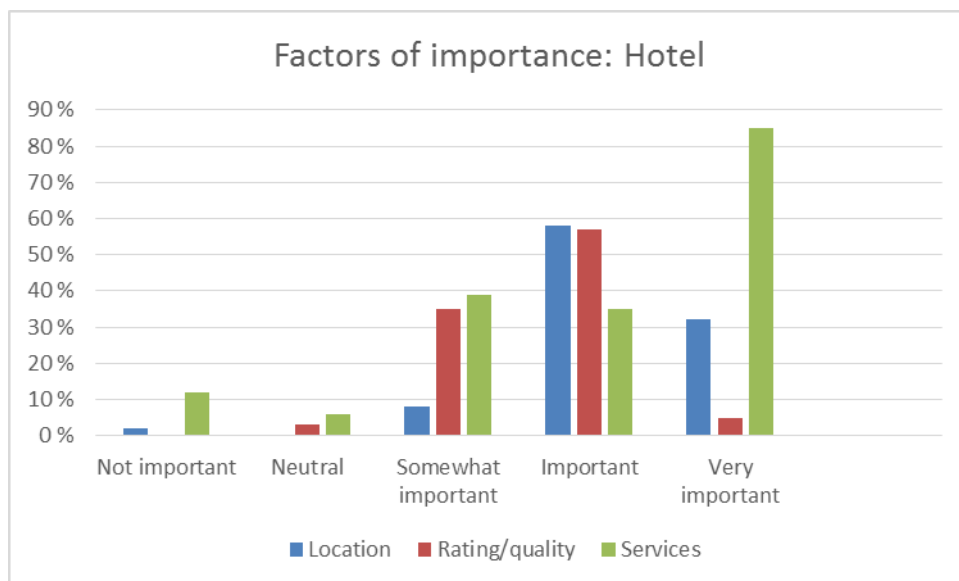


Figure 8. Hotel.

5.4 Customers booking habits

When asked about the main reasons to affect the purchase decision, it came to be a surprise that timing was the answer of nearly half (48%) of the respondents. Time in this context is defined as the time of the DP holiday. Price was the second most important factor with 22% of answers. The selection of hotels and flights got third largest share, 18% of the

answers, which tells us how the customers value quality and the ability to choose an option just for their needs.

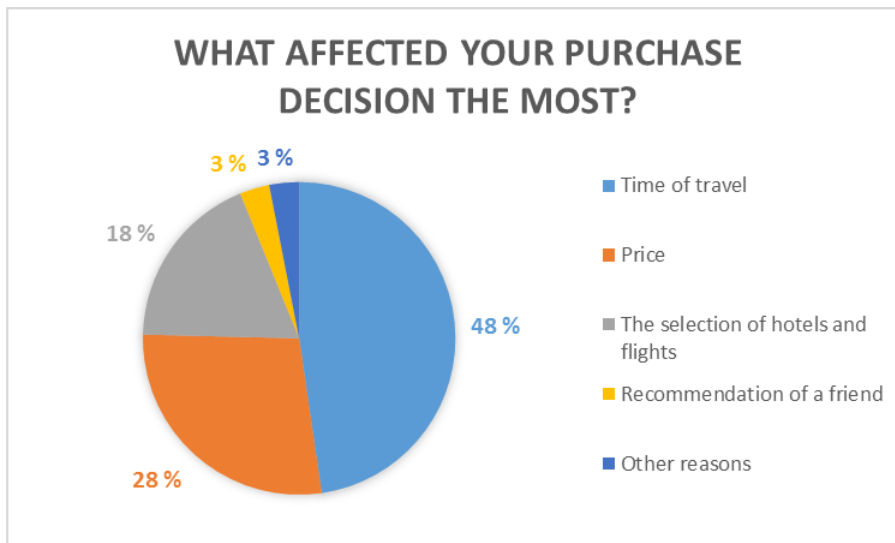


Figure 9. Factors affecting the purchase decision.

When researching the booking habits of the DP customers, it is important to know marketing wise when they are booking (figure 10.). The past years' trend of booking package holidays very close to the traveling date does not apply as strongly as assumed to DP. In figure 10, 40% of the respondents told that they had booked few months before traveling and 31% a month before. City and weekend holidays do not attract the crowd favouring last minute holidays as much, since only 6% of the customers booked about a week before. This can indicate that city and weekend holidays are well planned beforehand.

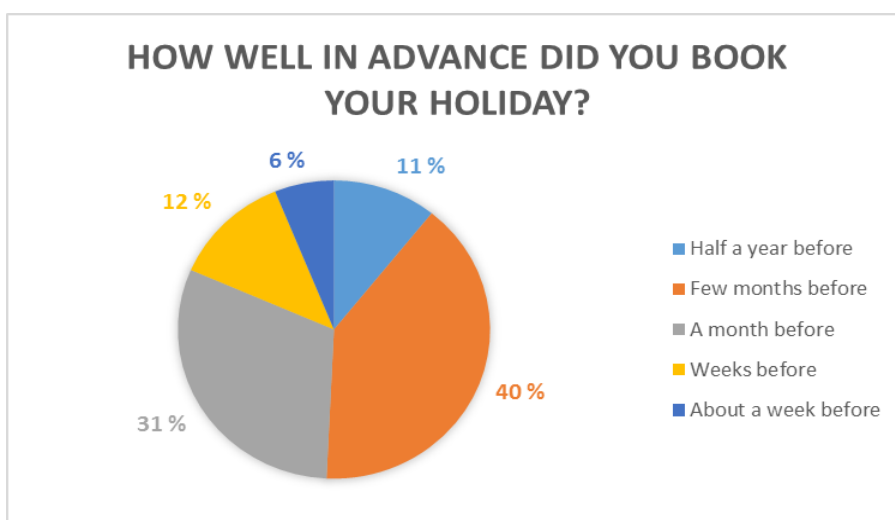


Figure 10. Time of booking.

Another interesting fact to find out is how the customers book DP holidays (figure 11.). Since marketing of the DP product is focused online it was an assumption that most of the bookings are done by computer. As a result 86% of the customers had booked their holiday online with a computer. Rest of the options, tablet, holiday shop and booking by calling had a smaller share, from which the tablet got 6% of answers. Here, the easiness of booking, which also was a reason to choose Apollomatkat, plays an important role as a service, since customers do most of the bookings themselves.

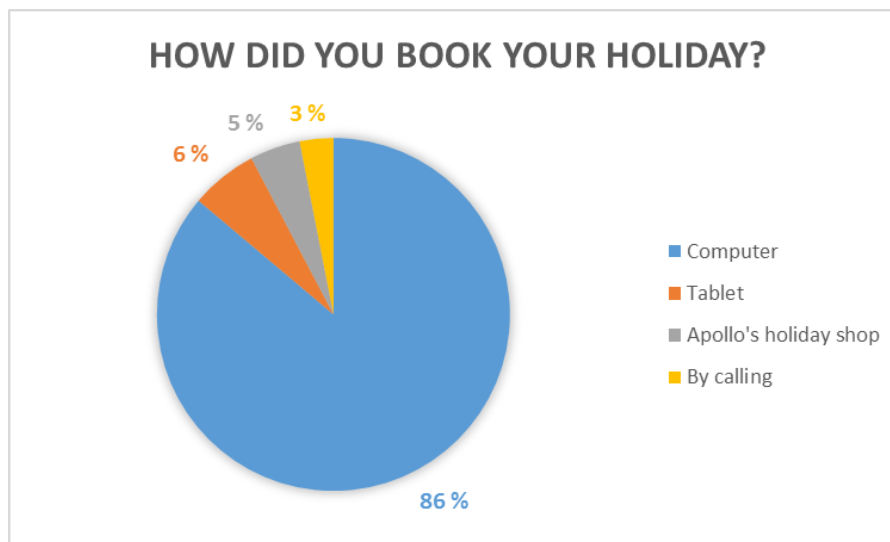


Figure 11. Booking method.

5.5 Summary of the results

To conclude the results of this research it can be said that the main research questions were answered. Also, the fact of not having previous information of DP customers' behaviour was resolved. The results were easy to analyse due to the fact the questions in this thesis were multiple selection questions. There were some results that surprised the author and several results that were coherent with the theoretical framework.

The results give an idea what the customers of Apollomatkat think and how their behaviour is before the holiday. The results are summarized based on the four main questions of this thesis.

When summarizing the results to the first question, what motives there were behind choosing a DP holiday from Apollomatkat, the respondents told the main reasons to be that they had time off or a holiday and the desire to experience something new. What comes to the reasons of choosing the tour operator in question, the respondents valued a good offer and the easiness of booking. The target group also appreciated the service and

web pages in Finnish. This can tell us that the customers find this familiar tour operator safer than any other OTA, and also the fact that the service and webpages are in their native language makes the booking easier for them.

Results for the second question, which factors are emphasized when doing the purchase and traveling decision, tells that the timing of the holiday was the most meaningful issue. This again is caused by the reasons for the holiday, and there, one of the most important factors was that the customers had a holiday or days off. The respondents wanted to have a break from everyday life and see an interesting destination. Here, the factor of gaining new experiences was valued again. When considering the purchase decision the price was a factor of importance as well, yet not the most important one. This can be explained with the age of the customers, assuming they have more disposable income than people from other age groups.

To the third question, what is it that the customers' value in a city/weekend holiday, the respondents told to value the different aspects of the destination itself in the following way: the culture, sights and security of the destination were the most valued features according to the respondents. Weather at the destination and short flights to the destination were also considered important in a city/weekend holiday. When thinking about the short flying times as a preference it can indicate the popularity of Europe as a destination. When asked about the flights, direct flights to the destination was the most important factor followed by the price of the flights and preferred flying times. This can tell us about the customers travel habits and how they are comfort seeking. Hotel wise, the services of the hotel were valued higher than the actual location of the hotel or the star rating/quality of the hotel.

Finally, to sum up the fourth question of the booking methods of the DP customers, it became clear that the majority of the bookings are done online by computer. Also, the results indicated that the DP holiday was well planned in advance, since the majority of the booking were done months before traveling instead of with a short notice. Another explanation to this could be the fact these customers have given holidays or days off from work so that they know the possible travel dates and want to book their holidays early. It is also possible that the early bird –offers marketed by the company have been the motivator to book well in advance. To this question, the lack of the option of a smartphone was considered faulty by the author.

5.6 Suggestions for the commissioner company

Since the focus point of this research was in the before trip –phase of DP holidays, the future researches could look deeper into the other phases of the vacation. It would be interesting and useful for the commissioner company to know their customers behaviour during and after their holiday. This would give the company a thorough picture of their customers travel cycle and help them in developing their operations and create new ideas. Also, researching the different phases of the vacation would be a logical continuum for this study.

The fact Apollo operates in several different countries brought up a suggestion that the other countries could conduct this or a similar research about city and weekends holidays for their customers. This way they would learn more about the national differences between the countries and as a result, target their operations accordingly in each country instead of using one business plan in all of the countries.

Customer behaviour can be studied from different perspectives, one of them is related to the mobilization of the vacation and booking. This theme would definitely be up to date and worth deeper research. The results could offer valuable information for the company in order to develop their actions and understand the value of mobile -aspect throughout the holiday. Another suggestion is to pick one specific and beneficial theme from the research and take a deeper look in it.

Even though the commissioner company is doing really well with marketing of the DP product with the resources given, there is always room for suggestions in order to improve. As a suggestion based on this research would be to take a deeper look into the smartphone and mobile aspect. The homepage for city and weekend holidays as well as the booking motor work with a smartphone, but the questions is how to create added value and effortless when browsing and booking with a phone/tablet. As Elgin-Nijhuis & al. (2014, 6) stated, offering customers high quality content and other services at each stage of the customer journey leads to successful results.

Customers' responses indicated that the online environment is vital in the travel business nowadays. One suggestion related to this is to increase the activeness in social media and interacting more with the customers in order to engage them as loyal customers and reach new potential customers. Also, encouraging the customers to share their experiences during and after the holiday can work as an influence for other people to travel with the company, such as people who are not the actual target group of Apollomatkat. As dis-

cussed in the theoretical framework the importance of social media especially in the field of tourism is very important.

Another issue to think about considering the DP product is giving the option of searching holidays based on price instead of destination, since price was showed in the results to be a competitive advantage for the company. This type of a search motor could bring added value and make the booking process even more easy and convenient. Since the destination was the most important factor when planning and booking, categorizing the destinations according to customers' interests could also make the product to seem more appealing and the decision process easier for the customer. The destinations could be categorized e.g. whether they are beach, nature, culture or large city destinations in order to inspire the customers.

6 Conclusions and evaluation

In this chapter of the thesis the final conclusions of the thesis and survey are discussed. As a continuum to the results, development ideas for the process are introduced as well as further suggestions for future research on the topic. The author will evaluate the thesis process and give a self-evaluation.

In addition to these, the topics such as planning and implementing the thesis are discussed. Although the author is pleased with the research there is room for improvements, which are discussed below. The validity and reliability of a research are also explained.

Based on the theoretical framework it is safe to say customers are changing their purchase behaviour as well as moving and relying more and more online. The reduced need of retail contact when booking and planning a holiday can be seen as the development where businesses have to rely more online. This has caused tour operators to move their operations online in order to respond to the competition with online travel agencies.

City and weekend holidays were the commissioner company's response to the current development move and customer behaviour. By introducing the DP product the company adapted to the situation where the customers are more independent, open minded and looking for new experiences.

This paper took a deeper look into the pre-holiday –phase of traveling, and from that point of view researched customer purchase behaviour, their motives behind traveling and value factors on a holiday. Based on this research the author has given some suggestions for the company, which were introduced above.

6.1 Validity and reliability

Creswell defines validity of a research so, that the researchers can make meaningful and justifiable conclusions from scores about a sample or a population. Reliability is defined by Creswell so, that the individual scores of a research should be nearly the same or stable when repeated and that the results should be consistent and free from measurement errors (2005, 597; 600). Reliability is concerned with stability and consistency of the measurement, validity is concerned with success of the measuring (Enicki 2011, 67-68).

To put it simple, reliability is synonymous with consistency and validity is synonymous with accuracy (Aybar-Damali & Hammit, McGuire 2011, 33). These factors, consistency and accuracy are measurements of trustworthiness of this research. The author must be accurate throughout the research process, yet the validity of the answers is not up to the researcher but respondents' honesty. Nevertheless, it is the responsibility of the researcher to place the questions in an understandable form in order to the answers to be valid.

A valid research measures exactly what it was supposed to measure. The validity is hard to define afterwards, yet it can be ensured with good preparations and planning of the questionnaire or survey. Defining the sample precisely and getting enough answers also support a valid research, since the results will be coincidental if the sample size is very small. (Heikkilä 1998, 30)

When considering the reliability of the work, it is important that the researcher interprets the results of the research correctly and uses only those analysis methods he knows well. When repeated, a reliable research has similar results, although due to the diversity and variability of the society the results might not be the same at another point of time or in another society. (Heikkilä 1998, 30)

There are several options how this research could be modified and implemented in the future. First of all, getting a higher answer percentage would definitely increase the reliability of this research. Even though the sample size was sufficient the number of answers could have been higher, there was enough answers to make the research reliable. It is also desirable that this research would be repeated in order to really test the reliability of the work and see whether the results would be similar. Also, with time the sample size will most probably be bigger.

One development idea is to write down the theoretical framework before conducting the online survey. Even though the survey did help to tight up the theoretical framework and helped the author to structure the thesis, it is recommended by the Haaga-Helia thesis guidelines to do the process in a reverse order.

Although the author considers the research to be repeatable and relatively easy to conduct again, the online survey can always be improved. As an example of this, the answers to the question "How did you book your holiday?" does not include the option of a smartphone. Since the usage is moving fast from computers to smartphones the fact of using mobile as a new channel of booking would have been an important fact to research

(Lundy 2015,14). Also, the other phases of the holiday process would be interesting to research as discussed in the previous chapter.

6.2 Evaluation of the thesis process and self-evaluation

The process of writing this thesis and conducting the research was more time consuming than expected. The amount of work that has to be put into a study this large came as a surprise. The topic of the thesis, city and weekend holidays, was interesting and there was a lot to learn from, also the deeper understanding of customer behaviour came to be an interesting topic when thinking about the authors' learning process.

The process of conducting the research started in the early spring of 2015 with the conduction of the online survey. The research method was selected to be quantitative, due to the fact it was the most reasonable and efficient method. The online survey was the result of discussions with the commissioner party, who gave the author the initial idea of doing a research about DP holidays. Since conducting the online survey, the author gathered the answers and collected them into graphs.

Writing the theoretical framework was done after conducting the online survey, however there were months in between doing the survey and writing the theoretical framework. The actual writing process was undeniably the most time consuming part of the process. Table of content was a good way of constructing the idea of the thesis and so, it was easier to write it down. After starting the writing process in April 2015 there were many time periods during the summer when nothing was done for the thesis. Later on, with setting deadlines the process of writing the theoretical framework was easier to complete.

After finalizing the theoretical framework the rest of the thesis wasn't too challenging to write. Analysing the results was rather easy, since the theoretical framework was written just before analysing the results. Having a constant pace of writing and setting deadlines helped to advance the process to the end.

As a self-evaluation, the process could have been accomplished with a tighter schedule, even though the thesis was completed well on time. The author required guidance from the thesis supervisor several times during the writing process, which helped and also worked as a writing motivator. The biggest benefit gained from the process is the understanding of the efforts needed to complete a task this large, how to properly conduct researches and work with scientific publications. In addition to these, the author learned a great deal about accuracy and efficiency. The authors' previously gained experience in

the company was helpful when doing the research and survey, but the knowledge gained from the process can be considered significant.

Writing the thesis was a time consuming learning process which the interesting topic made easier to work with. No matter of personal setbacks the thesis was completed in time in October 2015. The author has succeeded in combining previous experience to the work and to produce a research oriented thesis in order to complete a bachelor's degree. The completion of this thesis gives a sense of relief for achieving a big milestone that leads to graduation.

References

Apollomatkat 2015. Kuoni Nordic. URL: <http://www.apollomatkat.fi/apollosta/kuoni-nordic>. Accessed: 28 May 2015.

Apollomatkat 2015. Kaupunkilomat. URL: <http://kaupunkilomat.apollomatkat.fi/valmismatka/>. Accessed: 1 June 2015.

Association of Finnish Travel Agents– AFTA 2015. Matkailupalveluiden hintojen lasku pudotti matkatoimistoalan myynnin pakkaselle vuonna 2014. URL: <http://www.smal.fi/loader.aspx?id=5066fbf3-8df8-4011-aea7-d2c4b739ef01>. Accessed: 23 August 2015

Association of Finnish Travel Agents– AFTA 2015. Matkailupalveluiden hintojen lasku pudotti matkatoimistoalan myynnin pakkaselle vuonna 2014. URL: <http://www.smal.fi/loader.aspx?id=5066fbf3-8df8-4011-aea7-d2c4b739ef01>. Accessed: 23 August 2015 – AFTA 2014. Lentäen tehdyt vapaa-ajan valmismatkat ja markkinaosuudet 2014. URL: <http://www.smal.fi/loader.aspx?id=13106039-570c-49e1-b58b-a3d2abbe03a2>. Accessed: 8 July 2015

Aybar-Damali B. & Hammit W., McGuire F. 2011. Research Design. In Hammit W. & Sirakaya-Turk E., Uysal M., Vaske J. 2011. Research Methods for Leisure, Recreation and Tourism. 1st ed. CABI. Oxfordshire.

Baloglu S. & Usakli A. 2011. Summarizing Data. In Hammit W. & Sirakaya-Turk E., Uysal M., Vaske J. 2011. Research Methods for Leisure, Recreation and Tourism. 1st ed. CABI. Oxfordshire.

Bennett S. 2012. The Impact Of Social Media On Travel And Tourism. URL: <http://www.adweek.com/socialtimes/social-media-travel-hospitality/466163>. Accessed: 9 September 2015

Bray, R. & Raitz, V. 2001. Flight to the Sun. The story of the Holiday Revolution. 1st ed. Continuum. London, New York.

Close, A. G. 2012. Online Consumer Behavior. Theory and Research in Social media, Advertising and E-Tail. 1st ed. Taylor & Francis Group. New York.

Cooper C. & Fletcher J., Fyall A., Gilbert D., Wanhill S. 2008. Tourism Principles and Practices. 4th ed. Pearson Education Limited. Essex.

Creswell, J.W. 2005. Educational Research. Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research. 2nd ed. Pearson Education. New Jersey.

De Wilde P. & Rifai T. 2014. Handbook on E-marketing for Tourism Destinations. URL: https://pub.unwto.org/WebRoot/Store/Shops/Infoshop/5323/314F/33B5/583E/5D8B/C0A8/0164/03AC/140310_e-marketing_2nd_ed_excerpt.pdf. Accessed: 19 October 2015

Efthimia S. & Georgia D., Paris T. 2015. New Trends for Tourism Products: The Issue of Tourism Resources. URL: <http://jotr.eu/index.php/tourism-management/131-tourism-resources>. Accessed: 29 August 2015

- Elgin-Nijhuis K., Maurer C. & Jon Munro J. 2014. Handbook on E-marketing for Tourism Destinations. URL:
https://pub.unwto.org/WebRoot/Store/Shops/Infoshop/5323/314F/33B5/583E/5D8B/C0A8/0164/03AC/140310_e-marketing_2nd_ed_excerpt.pdf. Accessed: 17 October 2015
- Enicki Y. 2011. Measurement of Variables. In Hammit W. & Sirakaya-Turk E., Uysal M., Vaske J. 2011. Research Methods for Leisure, Recreation and Tourism. 1st ed. CABI. Oxfordshire.
- Euromonitor International 2014. Travel and Tourism in Finland, Country Report. URL:
<http://www.euromonitor.com/travel-and-tourism-in-finland/report>. Accessed 27 August 2015
- Fodor M. & Hoffman D. 2010. Can You Measure the ROI of Your Social Media Marketing? URL:
http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Donna_Hoffman2/publication/228237594_Can_You_Measure_the_ROI_of_Your_Social_Media_Marketing/links/552c11f50cf29b22c9c41cc1.pdf. Accessed: 13 October 2015
- Hawkins D. & Mothersbaugh D. 2013. Consumer Behavior – Building Marketing Strategy. 12th ed. McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. New York.
- Heikkilä T. 1998. Tilastollinen tutkimus. 7th ed. Edita Publishing Oy. Helsinki.
- Hietala M. 2013. Näin suomalaiset matkustavat – tässä ovat talven kaukomatkailun trendit. URL: <http://www.rantapallo.fi/matkavinkit/nama-ovat-talven-kaukomatkailun-trendit/>. Accessed: 28 August 2015
- Holloway J. & Humphreys C. 2012. The Business of Tourism. 9th ed. Pearson Education Limited. Essex.
- Israel M. 2014. International Low-Cost Airline Market Research. URL:
<http://www.airlineprofiler.eu/2014/07/international-low-cost-airline-market-research/>. Accessed: 28 August 2015
- Jyväskylän Yliopisto. Määrällinen analyysi. URL:
https://koppa.jyu.fi/avoimet/hum/menetelmapolkuja/menetelmapolku/aineiston-analyysimenetelmat/maarallinen-analyysi?set_language=en&cl=en. Accessed: 31 August 2015
- Keller K. & Kotler P. 2009. Marketing Management. 13th ed. Pearson Education, Inc. New Jersey.
- KKV, Finnish Competition and Consumer Authority 2014. Package tour. URL:
<http://www.kkv.fi/en/facts-and-advice/travelling-and-travel-agencies/travelling-and-transport/package-tour/>. Accessed: 12 August 2015
- Kotler P. 2014. In Bowen & Kotler, Makens 2014. Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism. 6th ed. Pearson Education Limited. Essex.
- Kuusela, K 2010. Travel Behaviour of Different Ages. Bachelor's Thesis. Vaasan Ammattikorkeakoulu. URL:
<http://publications.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/16518/Oppari.pdf?sequence=1>. Accessed: 28 August 2015

- KWD.com 2015. Digitaalinen markkinointi. URL: <http://www.kwd.fi/palvelut/digitaalinen-markkinointi>. Accessed: 9 September 2015
- Linked.in 2015. Apollomatkat. URL: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/apollomatkat>. Accessed: 27 October 2015.
- Lundy L. 2015. Future Traveller Tribes 2030. URL: <http://www.amadeus.com/documents/future-traveller-tribes-2030/amadeus-traveller-tribes-2030-airline-it.pdf>. Accessed: 23 September 2015
- Muijs D. 2004. Doing Quantitative Research in Education with SPSS. 1st ed. SAGE Publications. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi.
- Pearce B. & Smyth M. 2006. IATA Economics Briefing No 5: Airline Cost Performance. URL: http://www.iata.org/whatwedo/Documents/economics/airline_cost_performance.pdf. Accessed: 28 August 2015
- Pekkala P. 2014. Miksi lennon hinta nousee? – hintojen vaihtelu hämmentää asiakasta URL: <http://www.hs.fi/kuluttaja/a1405916992578>. Accessed: 13 September 2014
- Rifai T. 2012 Global Report on City Tourism. URL: http://dtxqtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/am6_city_platma.pdf. Accessed: 17 October 2015
- Rifai T. 2014 UNTWO Annual Report. URL: http://dtxqtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/unwto_annual_report_2014.pdf. Accessed: 19 October 2015
- Sirakaya-Turk E. & Uysal M. 2011. Survey Research. In Hammit W. & Sirakaya-Turk E., Uysal M., Vaske J. 2011. Research Methods for Leisure, Recreation and Tourism. 1st ed. CABI. Oxfordshire.
- Superanalytics.com 2014. Digital Marketing. URL: <http://www.superanalytics.com/digital-marketing/>. Accessed: 9 September 2015
- Statista.com, The Statistic Portal 2015. Share of foreign leisure trip transportation bookings made online in Finland in 2014, by transportation type. URL: <http://www.statista.com/statistics/426476/foreign-leisure-trip-transportation-bookings-made-online-in-finland/>. Accessed: 12 July 2015.
- Statista.com, The Statistic Portal 2015. Internet usage frequency among individuals in Finland in 2014. URL: <http://www.statista.com/statistics/379169/internet-usage-at-home-finland/>. Accessed: 18 August 2015
- Statista.com, The Statistic Portal 2015. Annual B2C e-commerce sales growth in Finland from 2012 to 2017. URL: <http://www.statista.com/statistics/261458/b2c-e-commerce-sales-growth-in-finland/>. Accessed: 18 August 2015
- Swarbrooke J. & Horner S. 2007. Consumer Behaviour in Tourism. 2nd ed. Elsevier. Oxford.
- The Pell Institute. Evaluation Toolkit: Analyze Quantitative Data. URL: <http://toolkit.pellinstitute.org/evaluation-guide/analyze/analyze-quantitative-data/>. Accessed: 2 September 2015

Tourism Australia 2013. Distribution in Australia's international markets: Situational Analysis. Final Report. URL: http://www.tourism.australia.com/documents/corporate/Distribution_Final_Fullreport.pdf. Accessed: 29 June 2015.

Travelclick 2015. Glossary. URL: <http://www.travelclick.com/industry-insights/glossary/O>. Accessed: 15 August 2015

World Tourism Organization Business Council (WTOBC) 2001. E-Business for Tourism. 1st ed. WTO Business Council.

World Tourism Organization UNWTO 2012. Global Report on City Tourism. URL: http://dtxqtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/am6_city_platma.pdf. Accessed: 17 October 2015

World Tourism Organization UNWTO 2015. Why Tourism? URL: <http://www2.unwto.org/content/why-tourism>. Accessed: 27 August 2015

World Tourism Organization UNWTO 2015. Tourism Highlights. URL: <http://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284416899>. Accessed: 19 October 2015

Yazdanifard R. & Yee L. 2014. Impact of Social Networking Sites on Hospitality and Tourism Industries Impact of Social Networking Sites on Hospitality and Tourism Industries. URL: http://www.researchgate.net/publication/270393508_Impact_of_Social_Networking_Sites_on_Hospitality_and_Tourism_Industries_Impact_of_Social_Networking_Sites_on_Hospitality_and_Tourism_Industries. Accessed: 9 September 2015

Appendices

Appendix 1. Newsletter



Kaupunkilomatutkimus

Me haluamme kuulla mielipiteesi ja kokemuksiasi viikonloppu- ja kaupunkilomistamme. Kyselyn vastaukset käsitellään nimettömänä ja tuloksia käytetään myös osana Haaga-Helian matkailualan opiskelijan opinnäytetyötä.

Kyselyn pääset täyttämään klikkaamalla alla olevaa linkkiä. Vastaaminen vie noin 5 minuuttia.

[Apollomatkojen kaupunkilomatutkimukseen tästä >>](#)

Kiitos vastauksistasi! Kaikkien vastanneiden kesken arvomme Scandicin lahjakortteja.

Appendix 2. Online Survey

Kaupunkilomatutkimus

0%

Sukupuolesi? *

- Nainen
- Mies

Ikäsi? *

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 tai vanhempi

Kotipaikkasi? *

- Pääkaupunkiseutu
- Yli 20 000 asukkaan kaupunki
- Alle 20 000 asukkaan kaupunki

Kaupunkilomatutkimus

14%

Miten löysit Apollomatkojen kaupunkilomat? *

Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon.

- Hakukoneen kautta
- Näin mainoksen netissä
- Mainonta muualla
- Hain matkakohdetta netissä
- Näin tarjouksen netissä
- Sosiaalisen median kautta
- Tuttava suositteli
- Uutiskirjeen kautta
- Apollomatkat on tuttu entuudestaan
- Muu:

Missä olet kuullut/nähnyt Apollomatkojen mainontaa? *

Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon.

- Radiossa
- Televisiossa
- Internetissä
- Uutiskirjeessä
- Muu uutisointi
- lehtimainonta
- Sosiaalisessa mediassa
- Muu:

Miksi valitsit Apollomatkat? *

Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon.

- Luotettavuus
- Tarjous/kampanja
- Turvallisuus
- Varauksen helppous
- Apollomatkat on tuttu entuudestaan
- Suomenkielinen palvelu ja sivusto
- Muu:

Kaupunkilomatutkimus

29%

Mikä oli matkasi syy? *

Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon.

- Loma
- Vapaa viikonloppu
- Ystävien/sukulaisten luona vierailu
- Tapahtuma
- Muu:

Mikä herätti sinussa halun lähteä kaupunki/viikonloppumatkalle? Valitse, kuinka tärkeitä seuraavat asiat olivat.

	Erittäin tärkeä	Tärkeä	En osaa sanoa	Melko tärkeä	Ei lainkaan tärkeä
Sesonki-aika (joulu, pääsiäinen yms.) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sää Suomessa *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mielenkiintoinen kaupunkikohde *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tauko arjesta/vapaapäivät *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shoppailu *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Edullinen tarjous *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uuden					

kokeminen *

**Miksi valitsit kaupunki/viikonloppuloman? ***

Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon.

- Vain muutama päivä vapaata
- Mielenkiintoinen kohde
- Edullinen tarjous
- Halu kokea/nähdä jotain uutta
- Muu:

Kaupunkilomatutkimus

43%

Kuinka tärkeäksi koet seuraavat asiat matkaa suunnitellessa?

Kohde

	Erittäin tärkeä	Tärkeä	En osaa sanoa	Melko tärkeä	Ei lainkaan tärkeä
Kohteen sää *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tuttavan suositus/kokemus kohteesta *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lyhyet lentoajat kohteeseen *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kohteen turvallisuus *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kohteen nähtävyydet *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kohteen trendikkyys *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aktiviteetit kohteessa *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kohteen kulttuuritarjonta (mm. ruoka, historia) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Lennot

	Erittäin tärkeä	Tärkeä	En osaa sanoa	Melko tärkeä	Ei lainkaan tärkeä
Suorat lennot *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Lyhyet
lentoajat *

Lentojen hinta *

Sopivat
lentoajat *

Lentoyhtiö *

Hotelli

Erittäin tärkeä **Tärkeä** **En osaa sanoa** **Melko tärkeä** **Ei lainkaan tärkeä**

Hotellin sijainti *

Hotellin
taso/luokitus *

Hotellin
palvelut *

Hinta

Erittäin tärkeä **Tärkeä** **En osaa sanoa** **Melko tärkeä** **Ei lainkaan tärkeä**

Matkan
edullisuus /
hyvä tarjous *

Matkan hinta-
laatusuhde *

Kaupunkilomatutkimus

57%

Vertailitko eri matkanjärjestäjiä/vaihtoehtoja? *

- Kyllä
- En

Kuinka kauan ennen lähtöä varasit matkasi? *

- Vuotta aiemmin tai kauemmin
- Puoli vuotta aiemmin
- Muutamaa kuukautta aiemmin
- Kuukausi aiemmin
- Viikkoja aiemmin
- Noin viikkoa ennen
- Muu:

Mikä vaikutti ostopäätökseesi eniten? *

- Mainonta
- Hinta
- Ajankohta
- Tuttavan suositus/kokemus
- Matkanjärjestäjä
- Hotellien ja lentojen valikoima
- Muu:

Kaupunkilomatutkimus

71%

Kenen kanssa matkustit? *

- Yksin
- Ystävän/ystävien kanssa
- Avio/avopuolison kanssa
- Alle/yli 12-vuotiaiden lasten kanssa
- Muiden sukulaisten kanssa
- Muu:

Miten varasit matkasi? *

- Tietokoneella
- Tabletilla
- Älypuhelimella
- Soittamalla myyntipalveluun
- Lomamyymälästä
- Muu:

Millaiselle matkalle haluaisit lähteä seuraavaksi? *

- Rantalomalle
- Kaupunkilomalle
- Kaukomatkalle
- Risteilylle
- Golf-matkalle
- Kiertomatkalle
- Muu:

Kaupunkilomatutkimus

86%

Oletko ollut matkoilla viimeisen vuoden aikana Apollomatkojen kaupunkiloman lisäksi? *

- Kyllä
 En

Millaisella matkalla olet ollut viimeisen vuoden aikana? *

Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon.

- Risteilyllä
 Rantalomalla
 Kaukomatkalla
 Kiertomatkalla
 Golf-matkalla
 Kaupunkilomalla
 Yhdistelmämatkalla
 Muu:

Missä kohteessa/kohteissa olet käynyt viimeisen vuoden aikana? *

Mihin kohteeseen aiot matkustaa seuraavaksi?

Oletko jo varannut seuraavan loman? *

- Kyllä
 En

Miksi et ole varannut vielä lomaa? *

[← Takaisin](#) [Lähetä](#)