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Customer Satisfaction at the Hospitality Industry: Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport

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The intention of this Bachelor's Degree thesis was to examine and observe the customer service and especially customer satisfaction in a hotel industry, and Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport was selected to be an example for this survey. This survey and thesis is carried out by the author in collaboration with Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport, which was the commissioner of this Bachelor's Degree thesis. This hotel was chosen since the author of this thesis did her second internship there while working at the reception, and therefore these circumstances were the best possible to get to know the company, its customers and customer service well enough.

This thesis consists of a theoretical part of customer service, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, emotional labor of the employees and the hospitality industry in Finland. The survey, the results of the survey and the analysis are in the latter part of the thesis.

To have further information about the current customer satisfaction at the hotel, a customer satisfaction survey was conducted in order to get the best possible results. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect the answers from the customers. The aim of the survey and thesis is to give to the hotel the current situation when it comes to customers and their thoughts on the hotel and its services. The survey was conducted from April to June in 2015 in Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport and the thesis was written between May 2015 and November 2015.

The results showed that the loyal customers of Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport are very satisfied, even though the global average was slightly higher than in this specific hotel. The survey can help the hotel to make further researches on this specific topic and possibly to help them to make some changes in their services if needed.

Keywords: hotel, customer service, emotional labor, customer satisfaction, hospitality industry, customer loyalty

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Asiakastyytyväisyys palvelualalla: Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport

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Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoitus oli tutkia ja tarkkailla asiakaspalvelua ja asiakastyytyväisyyttä hotellialalla, ja Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport valikoitui esimerkkitapaukseksi tähän tutkimukseen. Tämä tutkimus ja opinnäytetyö toteutettiin pienessä yhteistyössä Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airportin kanssa, joka toimi tämän opinnäytetyön tutkimuksen aiheen edustajana. Kyseinen hotelli valittiin tutkimuksen kohteeksi, sillä tämän opinnäytetyön kirjoittaja teki toisen työharjoittelunsa kyseisen hotellin vastaanotossa, ja täten nämä olosuhteet olivat parhaat mahdolliset jotta yritys, sen asiakkaat ja asiakaspalvelutoiminta tulisivat tarpeeksi tutuiksi.

Tämän opinnäytetyö koostuu asiakaspalvelun, -tyytyväisyyden, -uskollisuuden, -palvelualan ja tunneälän teoriasta, jotka koostuvat pääosin kirjallisuudesta ja Internet lähteistä. Tutkimus, tutkimustulokset ja analysointi löytyvät opinnäytetyön loppupäästä.

Laajemman ja tarkemman tiedon saamiseksi tämänhetkisestä asiakastyytyväisyystilanteesta, asiakastyytyväisyyskysely suoritettiin hotelliasiakkaiden keskuudessa. Tutkimuksen ja opinnäytetyön päätavoitteena oli antaa hotellille tämänhetkinen tyytyväisyystilanne heidän kanta-asiakkaistaan ja asiakkaiden ajatuksista hotellia ja sen palveluita kohtaan. Tutkimusmenetelminä käytettiin molempia sekä määrällistä että laadullista menetelmää, jotta tuloksista saataisiin mahdollisimman monipuolisia, luotettavia ja kattavia. Määrällisenä tutkimusmenetelmänä käytettiin InterContinental Hotelsin lähettämää asiakastyytyväisyyskyselyä, johon asiakkaat vastasivat vierailunsa jälkeen. Laadullisena menetelmänä käytettiin havainnointia. Tutkimus toteutettiin huhti-kesäkuussa 2015 Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport hotellissa ja koko opinnäytetyö kirjoitettiin touko- ja lokakuun 2015 välisenä aikana.

Tulokset osoittivat, että keskimäärin Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airportin kanta-asiakkaat ovat erittäin tyytyväisiä, vaikka maailmanlaajuinen kesiarvo oli hieman korkeampi verrattuna tähän hotelliin. Tutkimus antaa tulevaisuudessa mahdollisuuden hotellille tehdä laajempia selvityksiä tähän aihepiiriin ja mahdollisesti auttaa heitä tekemään joitakin muutoksia heidän palveluille.

Avainsanat: hotelli, asiakaspalvelu, tunneäly, asiakastyytyväisyys, asiakaspalveluala, asiakasuskollisuus

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1 Introduction

This thesis focuses on the customer service in the hospitality industry and especially in the tourism and hotel industry. It includes the theoretical part on customer service, customer interaction, the employee's point of view and in the end there are the results and analysis of the survey in Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport, where the author conducted the customer satisfaction questionnaire in order to give the present situation of the customer satisfaction at the hotel. The survey was conducted in this hotel, since this way the author had the chance to see how things are working in this hotel and to see the customers taking the survey.

The theoretical part focuses on the basic elements of customer service, but also takes a deeper look at the employee's point of view in terms of emotional labor and how it has an affect on the employee and the customer. Also the socio-cultural influences are considered when giving customer service and the importance of understanding both the employee and the customer. At the end of this thesis the survey results are analyzed and the author considers why these specific questions are important in order to reach the customer's satisfaction.

Nowadays customers are not satisfied only with their room, bathroom, restaurant or gym services, but they demand a high-quality customer service. This requires a lot from the hotel and their staff in each of the hotel's departments, such as the reception, housekeeping and restaurant services. If the customers are satisfied with all of these services, he or she is most likely to return to the same hotel again. This thesis and survey at the end focuses on the loyal customers at Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport and to see how well this specific hotel is doing among the InterContinental Hotels Group hotels around the world.

2 Customer Service

Customer service is the situation when the customer buys a product or a service and when he or she gets service with it. The hospitality industry is made of good customer service; if the customer feels that the service he or she gets is not good enough, most likely they will not return to the company. The customers of today are not only satisfied with or interested in the service or product they buy, but the customer service they personally get. This is what fulfills and completes the product or the service. Often customer service can be mixed with the terms customer satisfaction or customer loyalty, but they are all with a different meaning, even though they are closely linked to each other. A good customer service creates satisfied customers, which brings in loyal customers. In order to reach these two important factors, the customers need to feel welcome to the company and the needs must meet with expecta-

tions. The idea is to create good relationships between the customers and the employees. If these situations are done well enough, the customers are likely to come back. (E-How - Customer Service Theory, 2015.)

2.1 Customer Service Experience

Customers' service experience is an important factor for the company to see how their customers are experiencing the services and products they get, and what they think about them. Customers are becoming more demanding nowadays and satisfying them can be difficult at times, which is why the 'faces' of the company, for example the hotel receptionists, air hosts and hostesses, are the middle function between the company and the customer, and it is their role to give the customer the experience they wish for. A pretty smile is not always enough when a customer is complaining, but handling the situation professionally and by giving the customer the feeling that each of them is a unique customer and should be treated like one. Customers' experiences are all about the uniqueness, and it shows how the employees are dealing with the customers. (Rautiainen & Siikonen 2007, 89.) Being flexible and understanding in different and difficult situations in order to bring the customer a unique experience can often be challenging and cost a bit more for the company. This is why the employees of the company have strict orders and guidelines from their employers, so that the situations would not get out of control.

In order to get a positive feedback from the customers, the staff needs to create a positive impact and atmosphere, and the first minute is always the crucial factor that matters the most; if the first impact of the customers is negative, that feeling is nearly impossible to change the other way around (Asunta, Brännare-Sorsa, Kairamo & Matero 2003, 138). This is why the hotel lobby and reception are urgent places to keep tidy, since this is the first place that the customers see. The check-in also needs to be as quick and easy as possible, but still the customers should get the feeling of being unique and important for the hotel.

2.2 Giving Good Customer Experiences in the Future

As the demand grows, the burden of the employees and employers grows with it. During the high seasons the service work can be hectic at times and the working hours, strict schedules and pretended feelings can bring a lot of stress for the employee. Some of the customers may not see or realize how things are working behind-the-scenes and often give a hard time for the workers behind the desk. (Tarssanen, 2007, 34-35.) For the companies to improve their customer service in the future, it is essential to know how things are at that moment. If things are not well, the problems should be recognized and avoided. The customers are demanding nowadays and probably even more in the near future. This is where the company

needs to make sure their customers are seen as individuals rather than as persons who are buying the company's services or products. Companies should put effort on the education of the employees, both old and new ones. The employer needs to pay attention to the employees and how they are handling their work and pay attention to the customers and how they feel they are treated as the company's clients. (Rowson 2009, 186.) A good customer service does not only happen inside the company. A customer is still a customer after their visit in the company, and they appreciate when the company is in contact with them even after their visit. This is what the companies should be aiming at in the future.

2.3 Customer Satisfaction

The big chain hotels consider it important to have loyal customers, since it brings visibility to the hotels. The bigger the hotel is, the more the customers demand from it. This creates a lot of pressure and complaints, and the customers want to have a first class customer service quality. This however brings challenges for the hotel; how to keep their customers satisfied without economic loss. For the hotel to be up to date of the current customer satisfaction, it is essential to get feedback from them regularly. It can be conducted for example via email, complaint or feedback form, reports or ghost clients, those who are told to buy a product or a service from a specific company in order to see how they are handling their customers. (Asunta & al 2003, 178.)

The feedback gives a chance for the hotel to see what should be improved and if there is something that is working really well. However this demands time, know-how and money from the hotel. The questions should be clearly asked and aimed for the important situations. It may be difficult to attract customers to answer these kind of surveys, but giving them small prices, for example sweets or snack coupons, could motivate them answering the feedback. It is crucial to collect these feedbacks regularly; this shows that the hotel truly cares about its customers and can see that they can affect on certain things. (Asunta & al 2003, 176-177.) All the feedback is essential, whether it is positive or negative. Then again surveys and feedbacks may not always be correct; some customers tend to complain about every single detail and then some customers do not complain about anything, even if there is a reason for that. Some of them accept the apologies, but the demanding guests are not satisfied with only that.

2.4 Multiple Service Interactions

The hotel industry is a good example of how everything affects on everything. The customer's hotel experience is not only about the service they get in the reception or how good or bad their guest room is, but also all the other small things. The restaurant services, the house-

keeping, the Internet connection and the overall cleanliness are some of the factors that have an effect on everything. If the service the customers get at the reception is great, but the service they get in the restaurant when they have breakfast is not great, the customer does not have the best experience in the hotel they are staying in. This is why all the departments in the hotel need to interact with each other and need to keep on track on customers needs. This results to that the service interactions can not be predicted and the reason might have to do with the customer's attitude, the employee's attitude or some other unpredicted unfortunate event. (Williams 2002, 35.)

The service interactions continue even after the customer has left the hotel. Nowadays it is very common for the customer to be able to communicate either online or offline with the company. The company's call centers, sale centers or face-to-face interactions with the company's representative is one way to have communication offline, but in the past years social media has become one major factor for the company to communicate with the customers, and this way seems to be the easiest and the fastest. These channels make it easier for the customers, but as the number of the channels keeps on growing, it creates challenges for the company. (Ewart, M. 2013, p 8.)

2.5 Socio-Cultural Influences on Hospitality Consumers

The hospitality industry is a multicultural environment, for example in a hotel and airline industry. The word 'culture' is one the most often used word in our language and can be used to describe a variety of things. There is not just one clear definition for it, but what is needed to know is that it affects on the individual, for example by the way they dress, behave, their values and beliefs, time consciousness, language, learning and the way of living. Also these are some of the factors that influence on their consumption and them as hospitality consumers. (Williams 2002, 95.) People come from different cultures and therefore many kinds of hospitality consumers exist. For the hospitality employees it is necessary to understand different cultures and to be able to work with them.

The difficulties and challenges may be encountered when there is a language boundary between the employee and the customer. These are the situations that bring the most troubles; often either the customer understands something wrong, or vice versa. The more travelled the customers are, they demand high-quality from the hotel; they have seen and experienced a lot and know what to expect from the hotel. In order to handle these conflicts well, the employee needs to have patience, understanding and know-how. Facing new cultures can be difficult at times, which is why it is important to understand the meaning of it. When a person is culturally educated, they understand that each person sees and experiences things dif-

ferently and are capable of understanding them no matter what the situation is. (Asunta & al 2003, 266.)

Facing new cultures might be difficult for some people, but for a tourism hospitality employee facing new cultures is daily life. In order to handle these situations, the employee needs to have a positive attitude towards cultures, empathy and respect towards the other person. An individual always presents its culture, but in the tourism industry the categories are different than nationalities, for example the leisure travellers are behaving a bit more differently than business travellers. Culture is in constant area of changes by renewing all the time and adapting changes. In this world it is impossible to avoid cultures, and the culture that is not able to adapt changes, will be extinct.

3 Improving and Managing Customer Loyalty

Being a loyal customer means that a person is willing to continue doing business with the same company and spending more money on them. Loyalty can be divided into four different categories: psychological, economic, functional and contractual. In psychological loyalty, the customer can develop a loyal relationship to a certain person; such as making regular doctor appointments with the same doctor is a good example of this. There can also be economic loyalty; especially in business-to-business markets, and sometimes loyalty can purely be based on economic grounds. If the company makes good money, there is no reason for the customer to change to another company. Functional loyalty happens when a company has the same supplier for its products, and changing the supplier could cause technical troubles. The fourth category, contractual loyalty, is based on a certain period of time. Numerous gyms offer these kinds of contracts and the customers often take these offers, since this way they do not have to stick to one company for good. What is common in all these four categories is that the customers are looking for easiness and trying to find their own comfort zone. After finding their comfort zone, they are willing to stick to the same company when they find out that this is the best service they can get. (Financial Times 2015).

Having loyal customers demands a lot of work, and trying to get new ones could end up being even harder. Companies tend to lose customers constantly; whether an airline company has constant delays or loses passengers' luggage, or when customers get a bad service in a store or if a plumber does not understand what an urgent case means; usually the customers' punishment is that they will no longer be buying products or services from that company. Customers do not demand a lot, they just want to have their service as easily and quick as possible. If this is not the case, they will walk away from the company and look for new service providers. (Harvard Business Review 2011, 2.)

Improving customer loyalty can be difficult, but the companies need to make sure they are concentrating on the right issues. A good question in a customer satisfaction survey could be a simple question: would you recommend this service or a product to a friend, if not tell us why? This gives a clear way into what customers think and what should be changed and how. The problem with some of the companies is that they spend a lot of time and money on complex tools to assure customer satisfaction, but they have no clue on what is the real problem of the whole situation. A simple customer satisfaction survey is an easy way for the company and also for the customer to see what is wrong and what is going well. (Harvard Business Review 2011, 41.) It is important to make sure that also the employees are satisfied with their work; if the employees are not satisfied, they are not willing to do their work as hard as they should be doing, and this reflects on the customer service quality. Loyal customer spends more money than regular ones, they make profit for the company, they cost less to serve and they market the company often by word-of-mouth to their friends and relatives.

Managing and understanding customer loyalty is necessary for the company and the employer needs to understand the idea of marketing; internal, customer relations and the data. By getting the facts and theoretical part correctly, the practical matter comes next. (Rope & Pöllänen 1994, 23.) For the companies to make their current customers loyal depends on whether they can manage the customer relationships well. Nowadays the customers are more conscious when making purchases. Customer relationship management is an essential way to form long-term customer relationships in order to increase the profitability of the company. Customer relationship management is based on the idea of creating a new learning relationship with every customer. As a result of these new relationships, the company may learn needs of the customers easily and meet the expectations in time. (International Journal of Business and Social Science 2012, 285) Managers should understand that having satisfied customers is not good enough, but they need to have extremely satisfied customers (International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management 2001, 213).

3.1 Understanding the Hospitality Consumer

Hospitality consumer, in other words a customer or a guest, is the person who uses the services provided for his or her personal use. In order to give good customer service, it is necessary for the employee to understand the customer and how they want to be treated as customers and the ability to feel empathy. The employee needs to be able to understand how he or she would want to be treated for example if there has been a misunderstanding. As rude as it may sound, the customer only cares about that moment and how they are treated in that situation as customers. Every organization has different rules when handling the possible is-

sues, but a good professional knows how to act in these situations. (Puustinen & Rouhiainen 2007, 172-178.)

Some of the customers' minds can be seen as icebergs; there is more needed to be known below the surface. Customers may seem that they experience a certain thing in a certain way, but that may not be the case. (Zaltman, 2003, 130.) Employees evaluate the customers by observing them, but when they interact with them face-to-face or voice-to-voice they realize that they had a wrong first impression of the customer. This is why it is important to have a constant interaction with all of the customers, to see what they really think deep inside.

3.2 Understanding the Hospitality Employee and Emotional Labour

Working in a big hotel chain brings a lot of opportunities for the employee; most often new work places are offered inside the company, which gives the old employees a chance for a better job, or even a promotion. Also it is common to work in the hotel chains' other hotels, which increases the know-how skills of the employee. Being a tourism professional it demands a good know-how, flexibility, sophistication, independency, stress management and organisation skills. The employee needs to combine customer satisfaction, safety issues and productive company profile. It also requires getting to know new cultures and continuing to learn from them, but more importantly it is essential to know one's own culture; this is the image what the customer will get from the employee's culture. (Rautiainen & Siiskonen 2007, 101.)

In order to create a good atmosphere and situation for the customers, it has to be sure that also the employees are feeling well. In some service encounters between the customer and the employee, at times the employee has to hide his or her real emotions and act instead. These situations are also known as the term emotional labor, which means organization's demand of the employees to control and act their real emotions and attitudes to satisfy the customers' needs and to make the organization look good; the employees do not only need to dress correctly according to the organization's rules but also behave professionally. Most of the organizations do not have written rules of emotional labor, but for them is common sense of how to act in front of the customers. (Hochschild 2003, 10.)

Organizations have certain rules for the employees when they have face-to-face or voice-to-voice encounters with the customers. To satisfy the customers' needs, the employees of the organization will have to show positive feelings and attitudes towards the customers when they are serving them. If the emotions they feel are not real, the employees will have to change the way they feel by using emotional labor, in other words acting. Stress is also linked

to this: if the employee is not really feeling that the service encounter is genuine and real, they will be stressed and this shows to the customer as well. (Bolton 2005, 27.)

Hotel receptionist work is a one good example of emotional labor. The receptionists are the faces of the company, and everything they say or do reflects to the company. If the customer gets bad customer service, they will automatically get a negative image of the whole company. This again gains an extra pressure on the employee; customers have to be satisfied at all times. Even though emotional labor technically seems to be easy, it still remains as a difficult subject and it is constantly being researched. Tourism industry is growing constantly and is one of the biggest industries in the world and the competition inside the industry is increasing all the time.

As the competition grows, the organizations have difficulties to keep their regular customers for themselves. This is where the frontline employees are playing a crucial role; if the customers are not happy with the service, they will tell their experience to their other friends, which gives bad advertise for the company, and if the service they get is good, the customer will most likely come back. For managers it might seem hard to control their employees' emotions, since the manager can not tell them what and how to feel. It is difficult to show to the employees how to use emotional labor in the right way, but the skills will develop through time. Employers need to trust that their employees will carry out the emotional labor properly without keeping an eye on them constantly. (Hochschild 2003, 103.)

4 Hotel Industry in Finland

The first hotels in Finland were based on Turku area in the 18th century, because this is where the sophisticated people lived and gathered together. The first hotels in Helsinki area were built on the 19th century, for example the luxury hotel Kämp was built in 1887. In the 20th century the numbers of tourists and travellers increased and so did the number of the hotels, and the biggest clientele were the businessmen, since not everyone could afford staying at the hotels. After the Second World War in 1952 when the first Olympic Games in Helsinki were held, new hotels were built again. The number of visitors grew, and in 1960's the domestic travelling grew because of the raise of the economic situation. 1970's is considered to be the turning point of the hotel industry in Finland and tourism was thought to be one of the biggest industries in Finland. Between 1970's and 1980's the customers demanded experiences and were not only satisfied with spending a night in their hotel room. In the recession in the 1990's tourism and the hotel industry were suffering, but after that these industries became one of the biggest yet again. (Rautiainen & Siiskonen 2007, 14-20.)

4.1 Hotels and Hotel Chains in Helsinki Metropolitan Area

The biggest hotel chains in the Finnish tourism industry are Restel Ltd hotels, Sokos hotels and Scandic, and all these are the leading hotel brands at the moment in Helsinki metropolitan area. The other hotels are for example Best Western hotels, Finlandia hotels, Fontana hotels, Apple hotels and Radisson SAS hotels. (Asunta & al 2003, 18.)

4.2 Holiday Inn

The first Holiday Inn was founded in 1952 by Kemmons Wilson who wanted to launch a hotel that offered services that were not there before; own telephone, television and a free stay for the kids. These are the things that are common in every hotel nowadays, but not 60 years ago. Today there are more than 1,2000 Holiday Inns in approximately 70 countries. High-class and modern Holiday Inns are suitable for everyone; whether the guests are travelling for business or for pleasure, or alone or with someone. According to international surveys, Holiday Inn is one of the most recognized hotels around the world. The Holiday Inn brand includes Holiday Inn, Holiday Inn Club Vacations, Holiday Inn Express and Holiday Inn Resort, and it is the biggest hotel brand in InterContinental Hotels Group family. (InterContinental Hotels Group 2015.)

Holiday Inn is meant for a traveller who is looking for a comfortable stay in a relaxing hotel environment. Holiday Inn wants to be the first choice for the guests, while providing them with friendly and efficient customer service, comfortable rooms, coziness, convenience and reliability when it comes to staying in Holiday Inn hotels. Holiday Inn continues to evolve and expand. In London Olympics in 2012 it was one of the main sponsors of the event and at the same time it opened another Holiday Inn in London. Also in the same year it celebrated its 60th anniversary and the biggest Holiday Inn was opened in China In Macao with 1,224 rooms. This shows that Holiday Inn is a wanted brand for the guests, owners and stakeholders and its success continues to grow globally. (Holiday Inn 2015.)

Holiday Inn can be found everywhere - near the airports, in the hearts of the big cities, along the quiet roads or in small towns, so there is an option for every guest (Holiday Inn, 2015). Most of the big hotels offer restaurants, swimming pools, conference rooms, bars, lounges, gyms and business centers, so that the guests would have everything they need from their stay.

4.3 Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport

Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport is located only a ten-minute bus drive away from the airport and next to motorway Ring 3. It is easy to reach whether the guests are coming there by a car or by a public transportation. The hotel provides the guests a free shuttle bus ride to the hotel and back to the airport. Even though it is not a conference hotel, it offers seven small meeting rooms for the business guests. The breakfast is served already from 5 in the morning so that even the customers who need to catch an early flight can have breakfast. This hotel is also ideal for the families; shopping center Jumbo is only a ten-minute walk away from the hotel and next to Jumbo is situated an entertainment center Flamingo which offers a movie theatre, restaurants, swimming park and a kids' playing center. The hotel also offers fun packages that includes the hotel room, and tickets to minigolf and swimming park. (Holiday Inn Finland 2015.)

The standard hotel rooms include air conditioning, water boiler, coffee and tea facilities and television. Some of the rooms also offer minibars. The hotel has a restaurant called Bistro Fiore and it has international and local dishes. After a long flight the bar Fiore is a good place for drinks and small snacks while relaxing or spending time with friends while enjoying a cozy atmosphere. The hotel has 281 rooms and all the rooms are non-smoking; 200 single rooms and 81 double rooms 21 executive rooms and one junior suite. (Holiday Inn Finland 2015.) As it is an airport hotel, the biggest clientele are either the business travellers or the airlines layover customers. Sometimes the flight are cancelled or delayed, so the airline offers the customers that have missed flight a free stay and dinner at Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport.

4.4 Restel Oy

In Finland Holiday Inns are operated by Restel Ltd which is the leading operator for the hotels and restaurants in Finland. It has 49 hotels, over 8,000 rooms and 260 restaurants to operate with. There are five Holiday Inns in Finland; Tampere, Helsinki - Messukeskus, Helsinki-Vantaa Airport, Helsinki City Centre and Helsinki West - Ruoholahti. (Restel - Hotellit ja ravintolat Suomessa 2015)

It includes the parent company Restel Ltd and its daughter companies Restel Restaurants Ltd, Cumulus Ltd, Rantasipi Ltfd, Restel Liikenneasemat Ltd, Restel Spa Hotels Ltd, International Restel Hotels Ltd, Rax Restaurants Ltd, Ikaalisten Spa Ltd and Restel Fast Food Ltd. The year 2014 was not a successful year in terms of their annual income, and partially the economic situation in the Finnish market is to blame. Restel's revenue was decreased by 2,3 percent, in other words by 9,1 million euros compared to the previous year. This was due to business

closedowns and the poor consumption by the consumers in the hotels and restaurants. Due to the economic situation, consumers start cut their expenses and companies are even more careful about their possible investments and are not willing to take any risks. (Restel - Hotellit ja ravintolat Suomessa 2015).

The future is believed to be a bit better since Restel Ltd has a good knowledge in the field, quality products, great services and a stable position in the Finnish industry. In order to keep their position stable in the future, Restel Ltd has to cut its expenses by shutting down non-profitable businesses and focusing on new potential businesses. New businesses that are opened, for example Burger King, are hoped to bring the positive impact on Restel's revenue. The poor market situation can also be explained by the poor visits of the Russians, since the foreign visitors often are Russians, and their economy is facing difficult times as well. The visits by European citizens have also decreased, and the weak performances by the Finnish consumers are explained by the big amount of visits to foreign countries. The raise of the alcohol taxes have a major effect on the revenue of the Restel's restaurants. (Restel Vuosikertomus 2014.)

One factor that Restel wants to put most effort on is the staff members. The staff is said to be the heart and soul of the service industry and the faces of the company by interacting with the customers. That is why Restel Ltd wants to make sure their staff is wellbeing, enthusiastic, motivated and hard working. This requires a lot, but will be a positive mark on Restel papers. (Restel Vuosikertomus 2014.)

4.5 InterContinental Hotels Group

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) is a brand that is known for owning the biggest hotel chains around the world in almost 100 countries. In 1946 it was established by Pan American World Airways to give the customers luxury, quality, service and responsibility. Nowadays it is a British owned company and in 2014 its' annual revenue was 1,858 million US dollars. It has nine brands and approximately 4,700 hotels, and the number keeps on growing; Holiday Inn Hotels & Resorts, Holiday Inn Express, Candlewood Suites, Crowne Plaza, Even Hotel, Hualuxe, Hotel Indigo, Intercontinental and Staybridge Suites. (InterContinental Hotels Group Annual Report 2014.)

IHG has hotels that the customers love and recognize all over the world. Over the last years it has done resistant work to give only the best service for its loyal customers. IHG's aim is to be the first choice both for the customers and the owners. Its' aim is to deliver the best high quality for the customers and it is bringing constantly new ideas for the business in order to keep everything modern and up to date. One of the biggest strategies IHG has, is their focus

on sustainability and they market themselves as a sustainable investment. It is a responsible business and it wants to be like its customers; they care about the local communities, environment and business. This way they are aiming to be global leading brand and to make a positive impact on their old and new customers. (InterContinental Hotels Group 2015.)

IHG is proven to be successful. According to Oxford Economics analysis for them, every dollar spent in the IHG hotels is multiplied even to seven times in the local economy. This proves that sustainable economic development is a part of IHG's business and that it creates stable incomes and provides local employment. IHG's economic development encourages others to cooperate with them and attracts new stakeholders and owners. (InterContinental Hotels Group Annual Report 2014.) IHG aims to be the first choice for its customers and wants to make sure they have an excellent stay to keep encouraging the customers to visit again in the future.

4.5.1 InterContinental Hotels Group Rewards Club

InterContinental Hotels Group has its own rewards club, which is the most known loyalty programme in the hotel industry. By joining the club, members get loyalty points and are able to use these instead of paying when staying at the hotel, and are also able to use the points with certain airlines. Hotels also offer different benefits for their members. In 2014 there were nearly 86 million members globally and in 2015, by June, there were already almost two million new members. Most of the members are either airline crew members or business travellers. (InterContinental Hotels Group 2015.)

There are four different levels of memberships; club, gold elite, platinum elite and the newest one called Spire Elite. All the membership levels will give points for the member and basic benefits, but the higher the level is the better the benefits are; the basic level is club and the highest level is Spire Elite. The level will be promoted as the nights spent by the member in the hotel grows. The regular customers of the hotels want to have a unique stay in the hotel, and this way InterContinental Hotels Group Rewards Club maintains the customer satisfaction. (InterContinental Hotels Group 2015.)

4.5.2 The IHG Green Engage System

InterContinental Hotels Group has created an IHG Green Engage system for their hotels, and the system shows the hotel what they can do to reduce their impact on the environment, for example saving water and energy, reducing waste use. This helps the hotel to be more green and sustainable and also saving in its costs, and the guests can see that also the hotels cares and shares the same values as them. The IHG Green Engage system is a good tool for the hotel

to keep a track on its environmental consumption and carbon footprint. (InterContinental Hotels Group 2015.)

The main ideas of the Green Engage system are to measure energy and waste, recommend better solutions for the hotel, to support the hotels environmental plans, to make the hotel more cost effective and to help them save money. InterContinental Hotels Group demands from its hotels to complete level 1 certification by the end of the year 2015. This way all the hotels are standing in the same line and must obey the common rules when it comes to being sustainable and the system will keep on evolving towards better decisions and solutions in the future. (InterContinental Hotels Group 2015.) IHG is aware of the tourism's role in the global industry and wants to make sure that everything they do will do as little harm as possible for the environment.

4.5.3 The IHG Academy

The brand has provided its own academy program called IHG Academy Program, where they cooperate with educational providers and businesses locally and globally. This helps the participants of the program to develop their skills in the way it is demanded in the hospitality industry and to help them to get a permanent job after finishing their studies in the academy. A big part of the graduates have gotten a workplace one of the IHG hotels, and IHG aims to create more jobs for the local people in order to develop the economy in the local communities. (InterContinental Hotels Group 2015.)

The first IHG Academy Program was founded in 2006 in China. As IHG is known for its talented business, it is demanded that it will provide new talented employees. Each of the academies is unique and meets the needs of the local communities and each of the academy is cooperating with the local businesses and educational providers. This way the participants of the program will get the real life experience while educating themselves to be better professionals. At the moment there are 626 academy programs globally and approximately 6,500 participated in the IHG Academy Program in 2014 worldwide. (InterContinental Hotels Group 2015.) This shows how much the brand is appreciated, not only on business purposes but also on educational purposes.

5 Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods

If a quantitative research method is being used, then the questions used are for example what, where, how much and how often. This research method has more to do with numbers and statistics. The results are often generalized and the reasons for certain situations can not

be fully explained and surveys for this method are usually questions with ready-made answers, and to get the best possible results, a big number of people need to take the survey. For example trying to figure out customer satisfaction, opinions or habits. (Heikkilä 2008, 16-17.)

A good quantitative research has both validity and reliability. If the researcher does not know what kind of answers and results to look for, then he or she is researching for the wrong answers. Validity basically means that the research is well planned and has a good knowledge of the things needed in the research. Also a good number of people answering, specifying the people who will take part in the survey and the right kind of questions are important in order to reach validity. If the validity is reached, it means that the measurements and results of the survey were right. Validity is hard to look at after the research, which is why all the focus needs to be on the research before completing it. Reliability means how accurate the results are. Mostly the reliability shows when the same research is done again; if the results are the same, then the research has been reliable. To get reliable results it has to be sure that the sample represents everyone taking the survey. Reliability is independent from validity; if the validity is good it does not mean that reliability is good as well and vice versa. (Heikkilä 2008, 29-31.)

The best situations to use qualitative methods are where the questions are for example why and how. The qualitative research situations are harder to measure and mostly are looking for a meaning and a purpose for something. It is also individually focused rather than group focused, and is not looking for a generalization. Qualitative research method tries to understand what it is beneath the surface and tries to seek for a deeper meaning. Also the results are not measured in statistic or numbers, but as thoughts and opinions. (Keegan 2009, 11.)

A good qualitative research process consists of both theory and practice. To begin with it is important to have knowledge of all the theory needed in order to start the research and also to know why and how something is being researched. After this the researcher will be doing the questionnaire/interview etc. and makes the questions for the right people to answer. Depending on the situation the questions may vary a lot from each other. (Keegan 2009, 21.) Timing and costs are good to have in mind when starting the research. After collecting the answers, the analyzing of the results has to be thorough and critical in order to get the best possible and reliable results.

5.1 Research Methods

Three research methods were used to get the best possible results on what customers think about Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport. These methods were chosen since they give variety; observing people and see what their body language says about them, customer feedback

on TripAdvisor, because often people go online to give the honest feedback, and a questionnaire to see what the customers at the moment think about this specific hotel. The questionnaire on TripAdvisor is not necessarily the best option for an academic reference in a Bachelor's Thesis, but as the world continues evolving, the social media of today has become a major tool of communication between the companies and the customers, and is the fastest way to give an honest feedback. This is why the author chose this method as one, to give another insight of what the customers think, as when the questions are not answered face-to-face, and are bit of informal, customers tend to be more honest and give harsh feedback.

5.2 Qualitative Approach

While conducting her internship at Holiday Inn, the writer had the chance to observe both the customers and employees while having customer service interaction. This was the best way to see how customers think when the service they get is good, and if not, what kind of demands they want from the hotel. One thing the employees are taught is to ask the customer what they thought about the hotel while they are checking out. Often the answer was 'it was good' or 'it was okay, no complains', but if the feedback the customer gave was not good, or something was wrong in their room and they were clearly not happy about the situation, then the person working at the reception gave them something to make it up for them, for example a chocolate bar or extra InterContinental Hotels Group Club Rewards points. This is the way the customer was kept happy, and also that the hotel got a reminder something was wrong, for example a leaking shower, a broken air conditioning and so on. After these complaints everything was written down on a Word document for the maintenance to see what was needed to be repaired.

Even though observing was used as one of the research methods, and was the only one as a qualitative approach, the author could not get any proper results from it since she had to focus on her work and learning at the reception. The InterContinental Hotels Group members were used as the focus group, and often those customers were the ones who had very little complaints about the hotel, so the survey results can be seen somehow reliable.

5.3 Quantitative Approach

Another quantitative research method used was TripAdvisor, which is the biggest online travel website in the world, where people can give feedback and review their stay in the destinations, hotels and restaurants or send pictures of their holidays. In most hotels, some of the staff members answer the reviews and try to keep their customers happy no matter what the situation was. It offers a variety of information from millions of travellers, and it shows you prices of the hotels and restaurants. TripAdvisor was created in 2000, and it has grown rapidly

since then. In 2015 its users had made approximately 225 millions reviews around the world, and every month it has 340 million visitors to read all the reviews. It is used in 45 different countries.

(TripAdvisor, 2015).

In this occasion in Table 1, single travellers are the ones who are travelling by themselves and business travellers those who are travelling because of their business, therefore business travellers and single travellers are not the same segment in this table. As seen in the Table 1, the biggest client segment for this hotel is business travellers while being half of the clients at the hotel.



Table 1: TripAdvisor visitors in Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport

As seen in the Table 1 of TripAdvisor, the biggest group of hotel customers in Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport is the business travellers. It was decided to focus on this specific group in order to see how satisfied the already existing loyal customers are with this hotel. This survey was conducted via IHG Club Rewards website. The questionnaire is automatically sent to the members after their stay in the hotel that is a part of InterContinental Hotels Group. The hotels that are cooperating with them can see the results every month and are able to see how many members took the survey and the average answers of them. In this list it is also seen the average answer of all the 4,700 hotels around the world, and each hotel should aim to have the same results as the average is. In the questionnaire every single detail is focused on, but in this thesis the author in small cooperation with Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport decided to focus on the main areas of the questionnaire sent, such as overall experience, satisfaction and quality of the room, food and facilities, hotel staff and other areas which are im-

portant for the business travellers, for example the shuttle bus, hotel's business center and the Internet. (TripAdvisor, 2015)

The second Table of TripAdvisor shows the reviews of the TripAdvisor users who have been staying in Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport. According to this table, the customers are very satisfied with their stay and there happens to be only few complains.



Table 2: Reviews on TripAdvisor of Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport

The other quantitative method used for this survey was a ready-made questionnaire that was sent to the InterContinental Hotel's Group members. This questionnaire and its results are analyzed at the end of this thesis.

6 Case: Customer Satisfaction at Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport

The author chose this hotel for the case topic, since she had her second internship there. To work at the hotel and to have a thesis topic related to the internship gave a lot of ideas for the author. Even though this hotel knows its customers well enough and knows how to keep them satisfied and happy, it is always essential to take a deeper look at the situation at the moment and to see if there is something wrong or if everything is working well. For this case it was decided together with the management of Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport to focus on the InterContinental Hotels Group members, and to see how satisfied the loyal customers are. Most of them are travelling for business regularly and they know what to demand from their stay at the hotel. Using their results was the best way to see where Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport is going and should there be some improvement.

7 The Results and Analysis of the Customer Satisfaction Survey

This survey is created by IHG system, and the questions are automatically sent to the customers who have been staying in their hotels. The author did not come up with these questions by herself but decided to focus on the questions that IHG had asked already. The survey results are collected from three months; April, May and June. These three months represents the satisfaction level in this hotel, and the global section represents the satisfaction percent all around the world during these three months in the InterContinental Hotels. Each month 83 members answered the survey, in total 249 members, and globally approximately 51,000 members took the survey. In these survey questions the author focuses on the room satisfaction, the customer service quality, restaurant services, Internet, safety, the hotel shuttle bus and overall experience. The survey that was send to the customers is very specific and in-depth of details. The author chose these questions out of all the questions, since she thought these are the most important ones among the loyal IHG members, and often these factors are the ones that define if the hotel stay was worth it or not. To make it easier to focus on the results and to analyze them, it is recommended to focus on the global section to see the bigger picture of the present situation among IHG hotels. Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa aims to have the same percentage as the global market, or even higher, but as the low season in the hotel and tourism industry in Finland is often during the summer time, the average percentage of these three months is below the global percentage.

7.1 Likelihood To Recommend And To Return

All the hotels are hoping for the guests to come back again, but this requires a lot of work depending on the guest clientele. Normally the businessmen and women tend to stay in the same hotel because of their work, and in this case as the Holiday Inn is an airport hotel, this is a popular hotel because of its location. It is also a popular place to stay among the guests who are either going on a vacation abroad or coming back from their vacation and also a lot of pilots and air hosts and hostesses choose this hotel for their stay. This is why it is hard to say why the guests would not be willing to come back, even though there are not many complaints among these clients. Mostly the company is paying for their stay, and if they are not, then there is usually a negotiated price for the company's guests, which is why the guests have to choose the specific hotel.

This Table 3 shows the percentage of recommending and returning of the guests. Compared to the global results, April and May were above the global percentage. In April 82,77% of the customers would recommend this hotel and in May 81,33% of the guests would recommend

this hotel, where as the global percentage was 80,42%. The average percentage of these three months was 79,80%, since June had a lower percentage compared to these first two months; only 75,30%. In April and May there were more business travellers than in June when there were more leisure travellers.

It can be seen that 'Likely to return' is a bit higher than 'Likely to recommend'. In April this percentage was 83,25%, in May 82,29%, in June 76,87% and the overall global average was 81,36%. From Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport the average percentage from these three months was 80,80%, and again because of the low season in June explains this. For Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport the loyal IHG Rewards Club members are important, and making sure the customers want to stay with them again is essential and even during the summer months it is crucial to make a good impact on them even though the low season is on.

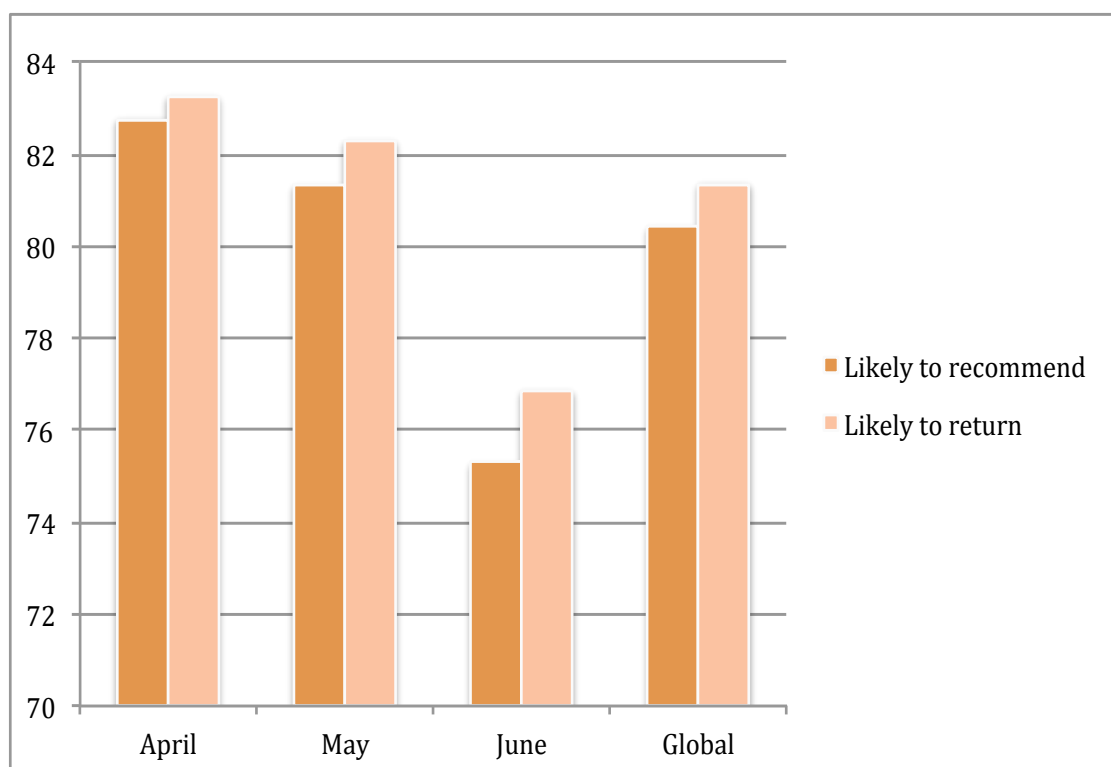


Table 3: Likelihood to Recommend and to Return

7.2 The Hotel Staff

Hotel staff is always the face of the company, and this is where Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport also wants to put effort on. Making sure their staff is well educated and informed gives a good image for the guests to see how professionally functioning this hotel is, and that the customers are taken care of. If the staff is not handling the situations well, for example in the reception or in the restaurant, the whole visit in the hotel gets a different meaning. In

this section the author wanted to focus on the attitude of the staff, staff being responsive for guests' needs and if the staff were friendly according to the guests. This section was chosen since the guests make their first impression of the hotel by the way the staff is behaving and handling the guests.

The 'Genuine attitude of the staff' percentage was in April 86,94%, in May 87,27% and in June 83,08%. In average these three months were altogether 85,77% where as the global percent was 86,02%, and the average from Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport was just a bit lower than the global number. The measurement for this section depends a lot about the customer's own attitude and whether he or she is having a bad day. The 'lines' the receptionists say are said many times a day, and for some people this may seem to be robotic and not customer friendly.

'Staff being responsive to my needs' in April was 90%, in May 87,40% and in June 84,22%. The global percentage was 85,98% and the average percent of these three months was 87,15, which was higher than the global amount. Staff being responsive depends a lot on the situation, and it is hard to measure. Sometimes, for example in the reception, if there is more than one worker in one shift, it is easier to give a unique service experience for the guest. Then again if there is only one person in the shift at once, it may be difficult to give unique service for the customer. If there is a big queue in the check-in, the first thing for the receptionist is to be as quick as possible in order to keep all the customers happy.

It is required from every staff member to be polite and friendly towards the hotel guests, and this is related to emotional labor that has been mentioned previously in this thesis. Even if the staff member is not having a great day, he/she has to pretend to be having one. This can end up being really stressful and eventually shows to the hotel guests. In 'Friendly staff' the percentage in April was 90,20%, in May 90,75% and in June 89,04%. Combined all these three months the overall percentage was 90%, and as the global percentage was 89,46%, Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport managed to reach to better than the global percentage.

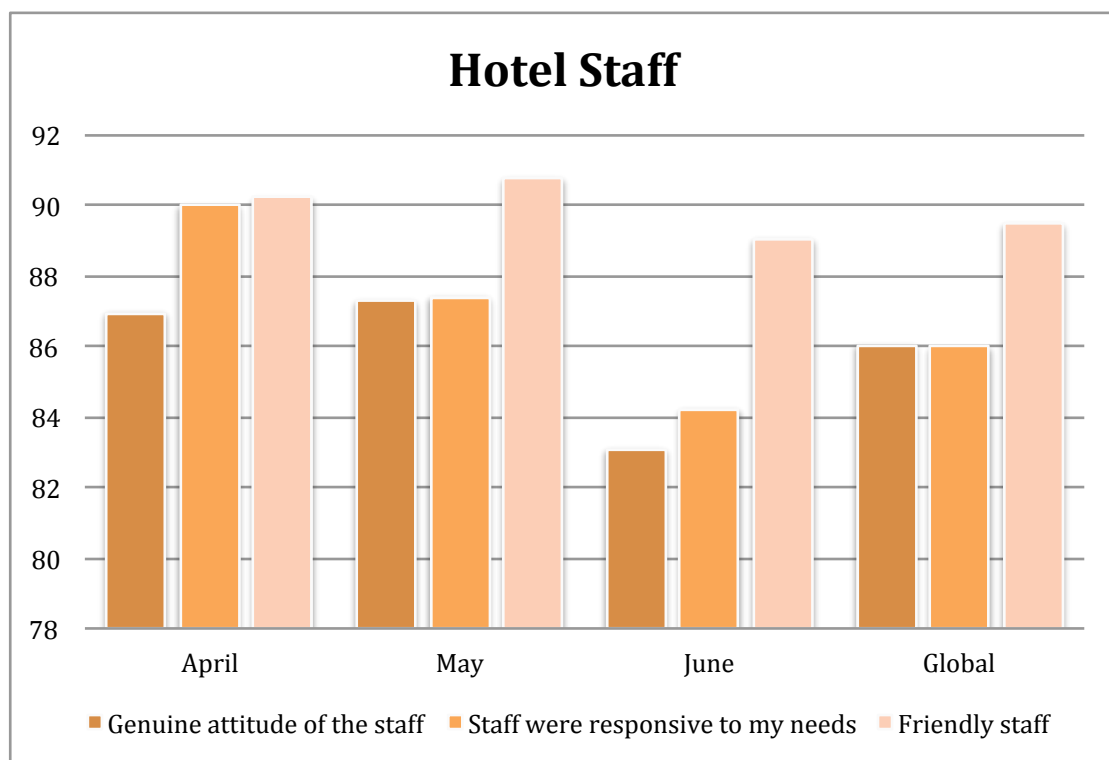


Table 4: Hotel Staff

7.3 Check-in And Check-out

Often the guests make their first impression of the hotel according to the check-in and how conveniently that is done. If the check-in seems to be a bit slow, the customer becomes anxious and this first impression could last the entire time. Of course some customers might give a hard time and demand a lot, especially the experienced club members since they need an extra attention, and this is when the receptionist's professional experience becomes important.

The efficiency of check-in in April was 87,76%, in May 90,18% and in June 82,69%. The total of these three months was 86,92% and the global number was 87,98% and the global percentage was better than in Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport. Again as June was quieter when it comes to hotel guests, this lowers the average percentage, even though April and May were higher in percentage compared to the global number. As there were two new interns in this hotel during the Summer time, and they had just started their internships, this might have a small impact on the efficiency. That is why it is always important from the reception-ist point of view to ask from the customer if it would be suitable to train an intern while doing the check-in. Acting like this shows that receptionist cares about the guest and wants to make everything to make their stay comfortable and check-in fluent.

When checking-out from the hotel, most of the time the customers have paid for their stay either in advance or already in the check-in and are able to just leave their room keys in the reception without any trouble. Then again approximately half of the customers leave the payment after finishing their stay, since most of them want to have a quick check-in without any hassle. The efficiency of checking-out in April was 90,21%, in May 91,64% and in June 88,63% and the average was 90,19%, which was higher compared to the global number 88,66%. Checking-out from the hotel is not as important as checking-in, since the guests are already leaving and already know what they thought of the hotel. Of course it is always necessary to ask how the guests' stay was, and to see if there were some inconveniences and what needed to be done better. There isn't a clear difference between these three months, which is good even though the visits in June were lower than in other months.

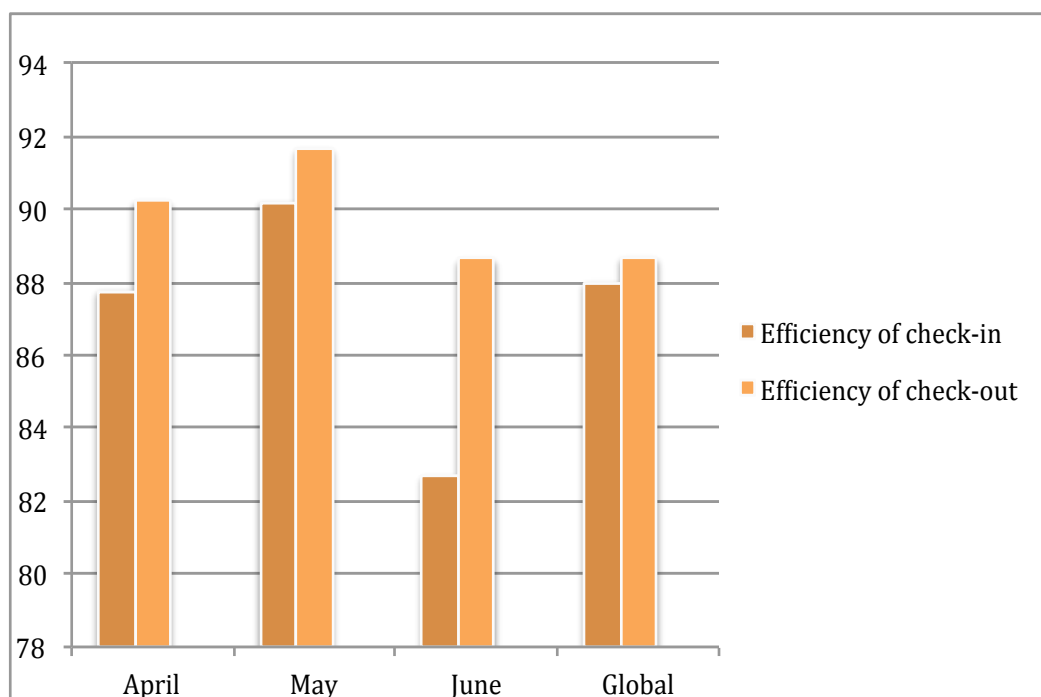


Table 5: The Efficiency of Check-in and Check-out

7.4 Room Satisfaction

As said before, the first impression of the hotel is done in the first minutes and seconds, and after that the opinion is really difficult to change. In Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport the lounge and reception are the most critical places and those areas are the most important ones to take care of that they are tidy and cozy for the guests. 'The first impression of the hotel' in April was 83,67%, in May 83,45, in June 75,69% and the overall percentage was 80,97%. The global number was 82,56% which ends up being higher than the average number from April, May and June. Again June is the month that lowers the average percentage where as April and May were higher than the global number.

The guests pay most attention to their rooms, since this is the place where they spend their most time in. The business travellers, pilots and flight attendants want their room to be quiet and calm in order to get a good night sleep and a rest to get ready for their next day at work. The most demanding guests are those who have been travelling a lot around the world, and know what kind of a good quality room is. 'The overall guest room experience' in April was 78,9%, in May 75,31 and in June 71,11%, as the average percentage from these three months was 75,12%, which was clearly lower compared to the global number 78,43%. The low satisfaction of this table is surprising, also the global number, since the Holiday Inns around the world are well-known with a lot of quality, so it is hard to say what the customers want from their room. In Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport often the customers complained how small the rooms were, but as this is an airport hotel, the biggest clientele are either the business travellers or lay over customers, and they are only looking for a good night sleep and do not want anything special from their rooms.

What the guests want from their room, is that it is as clean as possible. Nothing wins the feeling of getting to sleep in fresh, clean sheets, and after showering the feeling of the clean towels makes the guests feel relaxed and satisfied. In April the satisfaction percentage was 86,04%, in May 85,64%, in June 79,8%, as the average percentage was 83,83%. The global number in this case was 86,55% which was higher than these specific three months altogether. The low number in June can be explained by the vacations of the hotel staff and house-keeping, since the rooms were cleaned by low amount of staff, and this may have caused some carelessness among the rooms. Nonetheless it is always essential to have a 100% tidy rooms no matter what, since sometimes the room can be given to a very demanding guest and this could lower the satisfaction number.

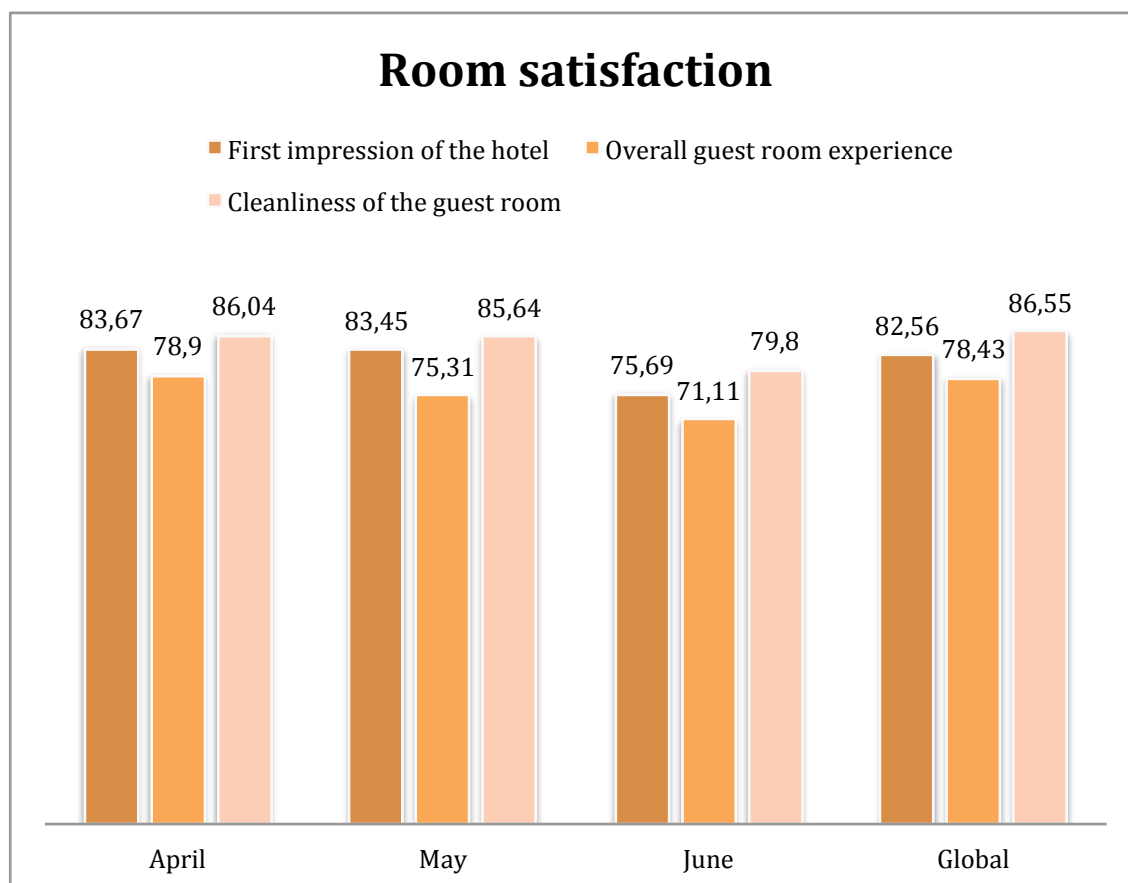


Table 6: Room Satisfaction

7.5 The Feeling of Safety

Comparing Finland and the hotels in Finland, it is clear that the feeling of safety is higher than in other big European cities. The term safety related to hotels could mean that the hotel can guarantee that the guests can leave their luggage unattended in a luggage room, or that the hotel provides a safety box in the guest rooms. The safety percentage in April was 88,96%, in May 89,27% and in June 84,90%. The average percentage was 87,73% which does not quite reach the same level as the global amount 87,92%. In this occasion the feeling of safety relates to the guests' luggage and personal belongings in the hotel.

One thing that Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport should do is to provide more safety boxes in the guest rooms, since now there are only safety boxes in the executive rooms. Of course the hotel reception has another safety box where the guests can leave their personal stuff, but not all the guest feel safe leaving their personal belongings somewhere else than their hotel room. Also the luggage room seems to be a problem in this hotel according to customers; the luggage room is rather small and there is no one to guard it. If a staying guest wants to leave their luggage in the luggage room, and later on asks the reception to open it, no one in the reception ever asks to see the luggage, and there is a chance that some of the luggage

may be stolen. This is where the hotel should put effort on to be trustworthy and to make the guests feel safer.

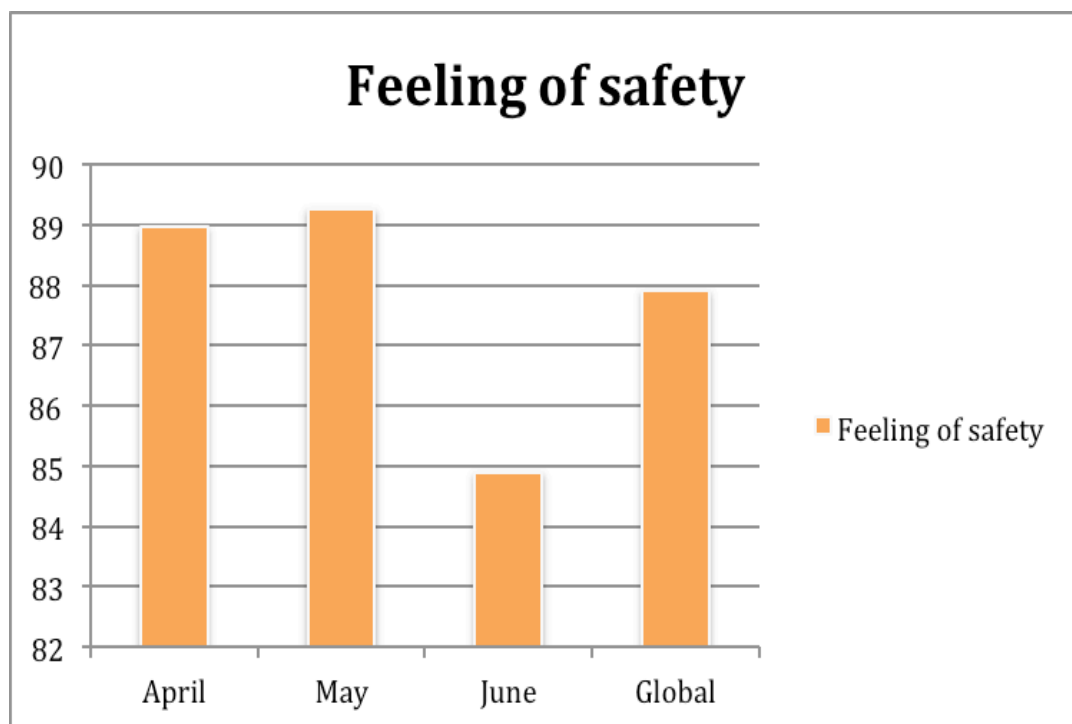


Table 7: Feeling of Safety

7.6 Restaurant

As many other Holiday Inns globally, also Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport provides breakfast, lunch and dinner in its own restaurant. Also in the lounge there is a bar for the guests to have a small snack or a drink to relax. In this hotel there is a buffet breakfast served from 5 am until 10 am, and even if the guests need to have an earlier breakfast, the hotel provides them a take away breakfast with the price of ten euros. This package includes coffee or tea, juice, a fruit, a sandwich and a yoghurt and the package can be collected at anytime. The price for the buffet breakfast is 16,80 euros and kids under 13 years it is free of charge. Most often the guests want to have the buffet breakfast, especially the business travellers and pilots if they are spending one or two nights, but the tourists who want to discover Helsinki they often skip the breakfast at the hotel. In April the satisfaction percent with the breakfast was 81,67%, in May 78,95% and in June 75,26%. These three months altogether were in total of 78,68% and the global percentage was 78,35% which is a bit lower compared to Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport. There were not that many complaints about the breakfast and most of the guests only had a positive image about the breakfast.

The lunch is served from 11 am until 2 pm, but in the summer time the restaurant is closed for lunch because of the low season, which can be seen in the low satisfaction percentage in June. Of course as the breakfast is served until 10 am, some of the guests are not hungry after that for a couple of hours and that is why the lunch is not always that busy as breakfast and dinner. The percentage for lunch satisfaction in April was 70%, in May 83,75% and in June 50%. The percentage from June lowers the total amount to 75,63%, and the global amount is not that much higher after all, with the percentage of 76,87%.

The dinner in this hotel is served from Monday to Friday from 6 pm until 11.30 pm, and from Saturday to Sunday from 6 pm until 11 pm. Often the busiest times are after 8 pm when the guests are coming back from town or from work. The dinner is a la carte, but if there happens to be a lot of lay over customers from airlines, then the restaurant staff makes a buffet for them in order to give the paying customers a good service as well. The satisfaction for 'Dinner' in April was 77,50%, in May 77,19% and in June 66,18%. The average was 73,63% and the global number was 74,15%, which happens to be a bit higher again compared to Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport.

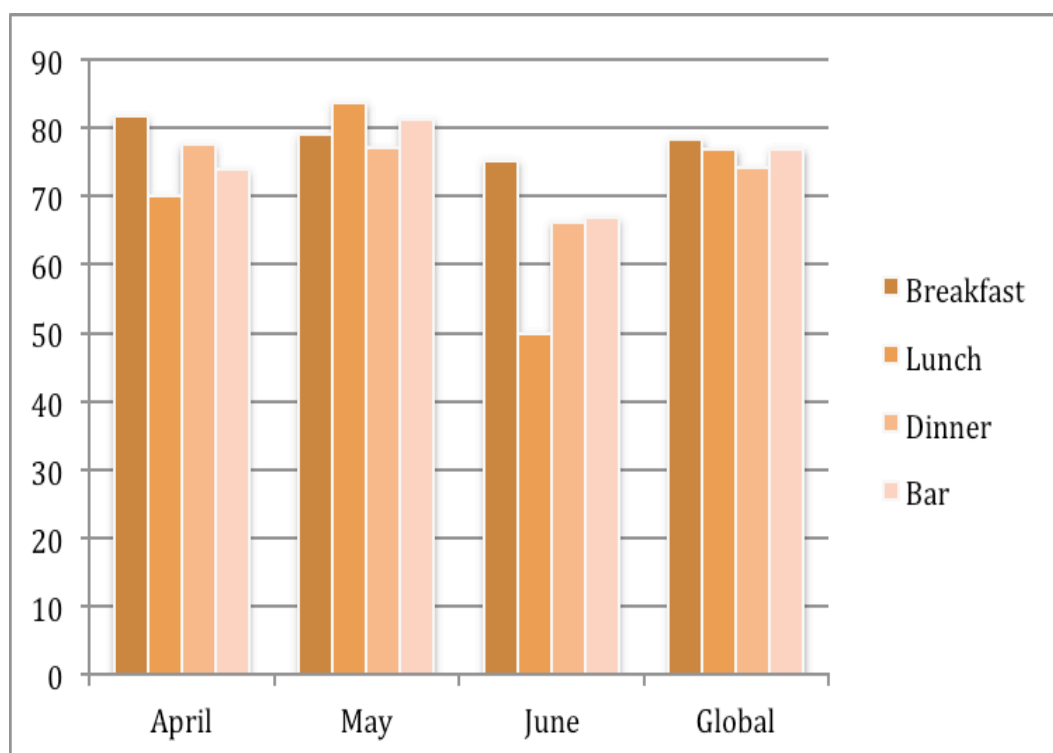


Table 8: Restaurant and Bar Services

7.7 The Internet

The Internet plays a crucial role, especially for businessmen, when deciding in which hotel to stay in. The commissioner of this thesis offers a free wireless Internet for all the guests of the hotel, which works in every part of the hotel. For the IHG gold and platinum members the hotel offers a bit faster Wi-Fi free of charge to give them the feeling of being important for the hotel. In this survey the feedback concerned the free Wi-Fi, but also some of the guests were using the computer in the hotel's Business Center, which offers free printing and computer use for the guests.

Finland is known for its fast Internet connections, and this hotel does not make an exception to the rule. There were very few complaints about the Internet, and if there were some troubles, the problem often was due to the guest's own smartphones or tablets. The satisfaction percentage with the Internet in April was 81,30%, in May 83,87% and in June 80%. The global percent was only 73,24% as the overall average from these three months in this hotel was 81,79%. As the hotel offers a free Wi-Fi, it is assumed that nearly everyone is using it. As the global percentage is clearly lower than the average percentage of these three months can be explained that not all the hotels around the world offer free Wi-Fi. Some of the hotels Internet costs something, and still it can be slower or may not work properly all the time. This is where Finland has an advantage, since the free Internet is a common thing in public places.

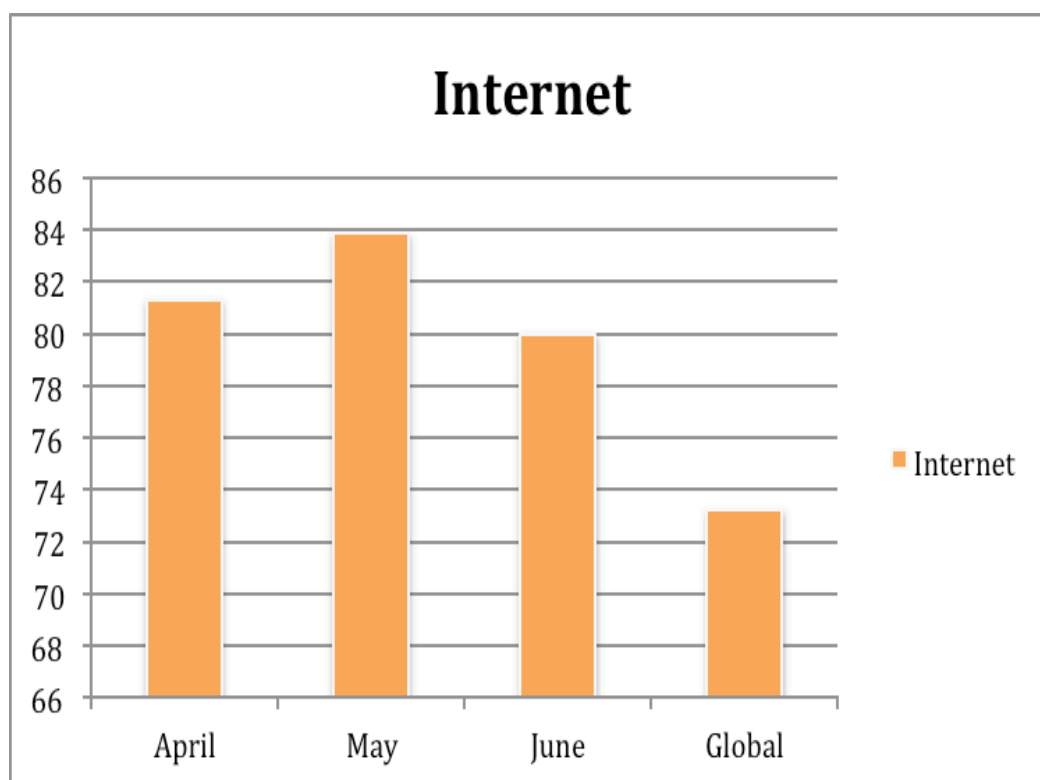


Table 9: The Internet

7.8 The Shuttle Bus

The hotel offers a free shuttle bus drive from the airport to the hotel and back and it runs every day of the week regularly during the day. It operates between Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport, Cumulus Airport, Rantasipi Airport Helsinki-Vantaa and Helsinki-Vantaa airport. The free shuttle bus has gotten a lot of good feedback from the customers, since the taxi rides in the Helsinki metropolitan area tend to be very expensive and the local transportation may not be clear for the hotel guests.

Even if the feedback the hotel has gotten is good, the percentages between April, May and June are slightly different. In April the satisfaction was 88,57%, in May 86,83% and in June 83,33%, as the average was 86,25% and the global percentage was 85,35%. As seen in the table, the percentage of June is again lower than the other months. This can be explained by the new bus drivers during the summer months, since they did not have any clue about the bus schedule, and were either late or leaving too early continuously. Customers gave feedback about this, and even though the hotel reception called the bus company and told them the situation, the problems were still continuing. Also one problem with the shuttle bus was that it was only running between 4 am and 1 am, and some of the guests were not happy since their flights were between 1 am and 4 am. Because of this they needed pay for the taxi from or to the airport, which ended up costing approximately 20 euros.

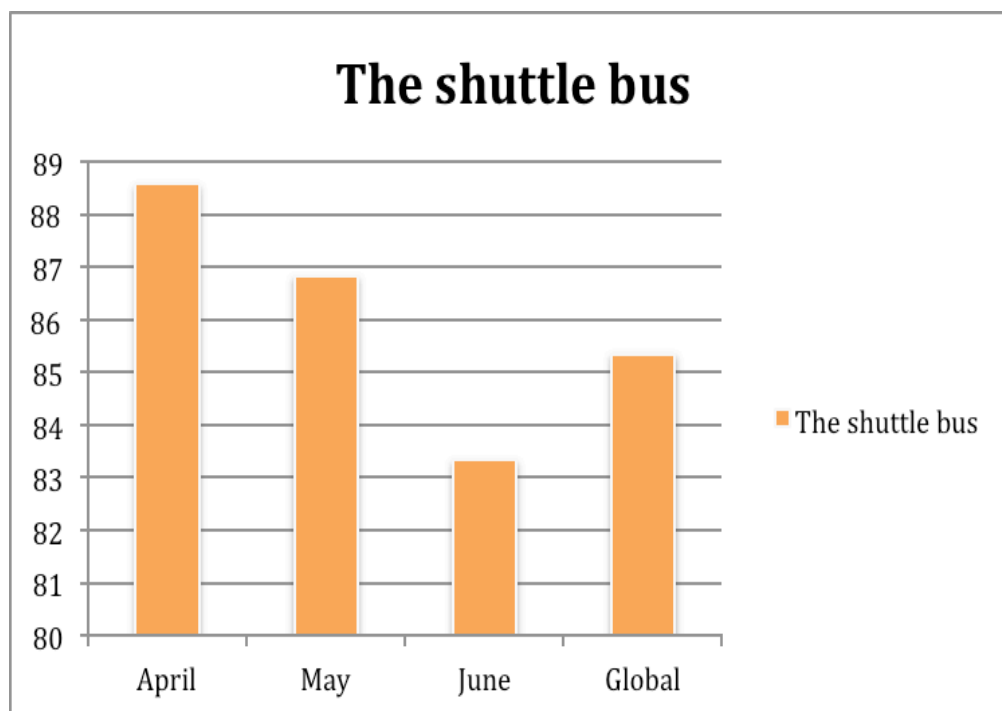


Table 10: The Shuttle Bus

8 Conclusion

The hotel industry continues growing on constantly; the big hotels and hotel chains are now facing challenges with small budget hotels and hostels. Making the customers feel satisfied is the most important thing, since they determine if the hotel is worth staying in or not. The big hotel chains are slightly more expensive compared to smaller hotels, and often the smaller hotels offer more personal customer service than the bigger hotels, since the smaller hotels tend to have fewer customers due to the low amount of hotel rooms. For the hotels to keep on track with their customers and their satisfaction it is necessary to have regular surveys or questionnaires made for the customers. This is one factor that can be helpful when wanting to make the customers feel important and the fact that they can make a difference.

The importance of word-of-mouth can never be exaggerated in the hotel industry, since often the customers prefer personal sources than traditional marketing sources. If the hotel gets positive word-of-mouth marketing, it will increase the hotel's profitability and reliability. Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport should also put effort on personal customer service in order to create positive atmosphere among the customers, so that they will promote this hotel to their friends and relatives.

One factor that does not give the ideal percentage of satisfaction is the fact that the summer months, from June until August, are the low season for the airport hotels. This is the time when the business travellers are not working, and the Finnish travellers tend to spend their summers either in their summer cottages or want to go abroad during their summer holidays.

As can be seen on the 'Overall experience' Table 11, the guests staying in Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport were satisfied during their stay there. In April the overall satisfaction was 82,17%, in May 80,43% and in June 74,46%, when the overall average during these three months was 79,04% and the global average in IHG hotels was 80,14. Needless to say, the hotel is nearly in the same level as other IHG hotels globally, but small changes need to be done if the hotel wants to aim to be better than the average of the hotels globally.

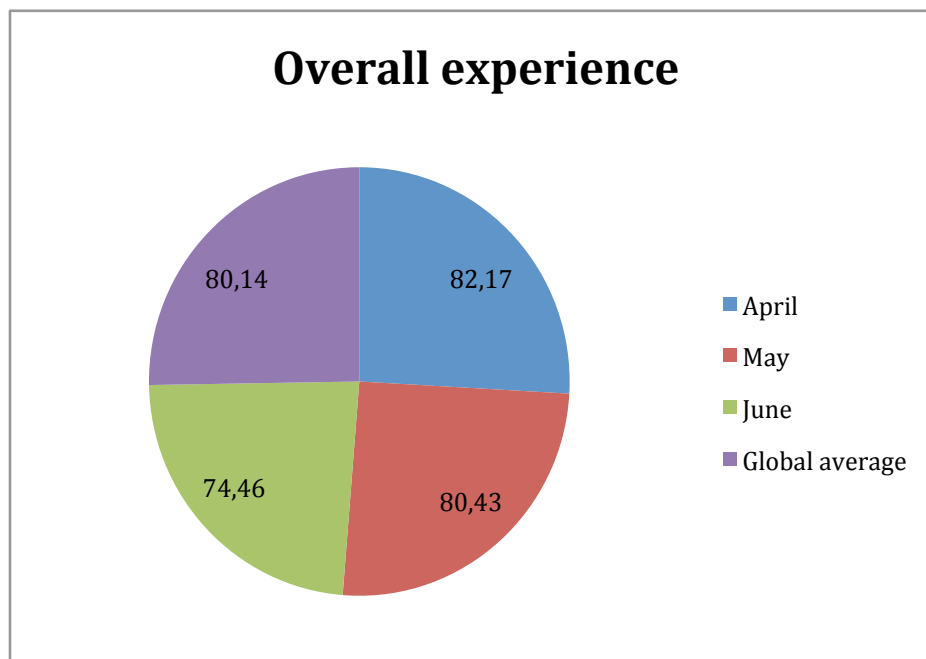


Table 11: Overall satisfaction

While this survey was conducted, the author was working part-time and at the same time she was working on her internship. If she had had more time, she would have been able to do another survey for the employees to see how satisfied they are in their own work, since as mentioned in this thesis before, the customer satisfaction is closely linked to the employee satisfaction.

To make this survey more reliable, another survey could have been made for the non-members of IHG, in order to see if there are different opinions about this hotel's satisfaction among the customers. Some of the members are treated a bit more differently compared to the other hotel guests, and this may have a positive impact on the results and not give the most realistic view on the satisfaction. Also another interesting subject previously mentioned in the text, is emotional labour. The emotional labour seems to be a subject that not everyone is familiar with, and the writer thinks that this subject could be a potential one to have further studies.

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Medallia, Inc.

Scorecard Table

Time Period: Rolling 3 Months (Jun)

Benchmark: My Region/Brand - Calculation: Average

	APR	MAY	JUN	TOTAL ROLLING 3 MONTHS (JUN)	BENCHMARK MY REGION/ BRAND	
<i>Sample Size (Red = less than 10)</i>	83	83	83	249	51K	
GUEST LOYALTY & BEHAVIOR						
Overall Experience	82.17	80.48	74.46	79.04	80.14	-1.10
Likely to Recommend	82.77	81.33	75.30	79.80	80.42	-0.62
Likely to Return to Hotel	83.25	82.29	76.87	80.80	81.36	-0.55
Likely to Return to Brand	79.16	80.60	73.98	77.91	81.08	-3.17
Value Relative to Price Paid	79.04	75.66	72.05	75.58	75.87	-0.28
Brand Met Expectations	80.00	77.71	72.41	76.71	76.21	+0.49
OVERALL IHG REWARDS CLUB						
Overall satisfaction with IHG Rewards Club	78.06	77.92	75.49	77.07	80.77	-3.70
OVERALL IMPRESSION						
Overall Service	88.47	87.34	83.65	86.46	86.00	+0.46
Staff were responsive to my needs	90.00	87.40	84.22	87.15	85.98	+1.17
Genuine, caring attitude of hotel staff	86.94	87.27	83.08	85.77	86.02	-0.25
Overall Physical	80.59	79.88	73.12	77.84	81.57	-3.72
Fresh, up to date appearance of the guest room	80.21	75.56	67.31	74.22	79.52	-5.30
Overall appearance of the lobby and reception areas	83.96	84.26	78.04	82.09	84.70	-2.61
Appearance of hotel exterior and grounds	77.61	79.82	74.00	77.22	80.49	-3.27
Overall F & B	78.36	79.62	70.50	76.39	76.99	-0.60
Overall F & B excluding breakfast	76.05	80.14	66.19	74.59	76.07	-1.47
STAY & SERVICE EXPERIENCE						
Efficiency of check-in	87.76	90.18	82.69	86.92	87.98	-1.06
Efficiency of check-out	90.21	91.64	88.63	90.19	88.66	+1.54
Front desk staff were friendly	90.20	90.75	89.04	90.00	89.46	+0.54
Courtesy of staff	89.18	90.57	88.65	89.48	88.68	+0.80
Overall experience with service by staff	86.54	85.68	81.71	84.63	83.90	+0.73
Service provided by valet/parking attendants, if available	92.67	87.00	86.25	89.39	84.65	+4.74
Service provided by hotel shuttle service, if available	88.57	86.83	83.33	86.25	85.35	+0.90
My first impression of the hotel upon arriving	83.67	83.45	75.69	80.97	82.56	-1.59
Ease of booking	90.00	87.40	84.76	87.41	89.32	-1.92
GUEST ROOM EXPERIENCE						
Overall guest room experience	78.90	75.31	71.11	75.12	78.43	-3.30
GUEST ROOM EXPERIENCE: COMFORT						
Comfort of the mattress	82.55	80.73	75.38	79.48	83.86	-4.38
Comfort of the pillows	82.92	83.09	75.58	80.52	83.97	-3.45
Noise level outside the room	82.55	77.82	82.94	80.98	80.00	+0.98
Overall quality of sleep	77.71	80.55	73.27	77.23	80.74	-3.52
Temperature of the room was comfortable	80.64	81.45	79.22	80.46	79.89	+0.57
The room was sufficiently dark for sleep	88.13	86.67	81.37	85.36	87.89	-2.53
GUEST ROOM EXPERIENCE: CLEANLINESS						
Cleanliness of the guest room	86.04	85.64	79.80	83.83	86.55	-2.72
Cleanliness of bathroom	83.96	83.09	75.10	80.71	86.32	-5.61
GUEST ROOM EXPERIENCE: QUALITY						
Condition of furniture	82.92	79.27	70.98	77.66	81.66	-4.00
Condition of guest room bathroom	79.58	75.27	66.86	73.83	82.19	-8.36
Quality of towels provided	83.33	80.19	76.15	79.81	84.52	-4.71
Quality of the bathroom supplies and amenities provided	74.89	76.86	72.75	74.83	79.84	-5.01
Having adequate bathroom lighting	82.08	79.09	79.04	80.00	85.60	-5.60
GUEST ROOM EXPERIENCE: WORKSPACE						
Ease of finding and accessing electrical outlets	82.50	80.93	76.20	79.87	81.99	-2.13

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Overall Internet experience	81.30	83.87	80.00	81.79	73.24	+8.56	
Wireless Internet experience	77.63	83.75	82.20	81.42	75.26	+6.15	
Speed of Internet	76.84	78.30	80.00	78.41	71.29	+7.12	
Television channel and movie selection	70.23	67.33	68.86	68.78	75.45	-6.67	
HOTEL CONDITION EXPERIENCE							
Cleanliness of common areas	85.83	86.55	80.58	84.32	86.59	-2.27	
Cleanliness of dining/restaurant areas	86.81	86.60	83.83	85.76	86.79	-1.03	
Feeling of safety and security inside the hotel	88.96	89.27	84.90	87.73	87.92	-0.19	
BREAKFAST							
Overall Breakfast	81.67	78.95	75.26	78.68	78.35	+0.33	
%Breakfast Use	75.00	70.37	68.67	71.31	75.62	-4.31	
Quality of the food	81.43	78.64	75.42	78.36	80.08	-1.72	
Design and ambiance of the restaurant	73.33	78.57	67.08	72.73	78.64	-5.91	
Attentiveness of our service staff	82.86	79.50	75.00	79.18	81.84	-2.66	
Timeliness of service	84.44	84.00	75.50	81.21	82.57	-1.37	
Value for money	76.32	70.50	68.57	71.67	76.54	-4.87	
LUNCH							
Overall Lunch	70.00	83.75	50.00	75.63	76.87	-1.25	
%Lunch Use	8.86	9.88	1.22	6.61	9.35	-2.74	
Quality of the food	78.00	80.00	-	78.57	80.35	-1.78	
Variety of food on the menu	76.00	70.00	-	74.29	76.35	-2.06	
Design and ambiance of the restaurant	78.00	90.00	-	81.43	80.27	+1.15	
Attentiveness of our service staff	74.00	90.00	-	78.57	83.69	-5.12	
Timeliness of service	78.00	95.00	-	82.86	83.00	-0.15	
DINNER							
Overall Dinner	77.50	77.19	66.18	73.63	74.15	-0.53	
%Dinner Use	45.57	40.00	40.96	42.15	38.24	+3.91	
Quality of the food	72.22	79.29	71.00	74.85	77.97	-3.13	
Variety of food on the menu	71.11	67.14	68.00	68.48	73.45	-4.97	
Design and ambiance of the restaurant	66.67	75.71	73.00	72.42	76.42	-3.99	
Attentiveness of our service staff	70.00	78.57	69.00	73.44	82.30	-8.86	
Timeliness of service	75.56	75.00	71.00	73.94	80.48	-6.55	
BAR LOUNGE							
Overall Bar/Lounge	73.89	81.29	66.79	74.21	76.99	-2.78	
%Bar Use	45.57	37.80	33.73	38.93	52.69	-13.76	
Quality of the food	80.00	85.00	83.75	83.33	79.36	+3.97	
Value for money	53.33	58.00	62.22	59.41	71.49	-12.08	
Variety of food on the menu	80.00	80.00	77.14	78.00	74.07	+3.93	
Variety of beverages	80.00	75.00	82.22	80.00	77.74	+2.26	
Design and ambiance of the bar/lounge	70.00	76.67	81.11	77.37	76.66	+0.71	
Attentiveness of our bar/lounge staff	80.00	83.33	88.89	85.56	81.33	+4.22	
Timeliness of service	76.67	83.33	90.00	85.56	80.66	+4.89	
ROOM SERVICE IN-ROOM DINING							
Overall Room Service/In-Room Dining	85.71	95.00	-	87.78	77.34	+10.44	
%Room Service Use	8.86	2.50	-	3.72	13.25	-9.53	
Quality of the food	70.00	90.00	-	76.67	76.33	+0.33	
Value for money	65.00	90.00	-	73.33	70.24	+3.10	
Variety of food on the menu	50.00	90.00	-	63.33	70.71	-7.38	
Timeliness of service	95.00	90.00	-	93.33	80.79	+12.54	
Accuracy of in-room dining order	95.00	90.00	-	93.33	83.26	+10.08	
CONCIERGE							
Overall Concierge Services	90.00	85.71	55.00	83.46	81.74	+1.72	
%Concierge Use	18.99	8.86	5.00	10.92	16.05	-5.12	
Concierge comparison	84.00	85.00	45.00	75.56	82.86	-7.30	
Local knowledge of Concierge team	80.00	90.00	90.00	82.86	86.26	-3.40	
Attitude of Concierge team	86.67	85.00	90.00	86.67	87.20	-0.54	

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ADDITIONAL FACILITIES/AMENITIES						
Business Centre	86.67	75.00	69.29	76.50	77.67	-1.17
%Business Center Use	15.38	17.28	17.07	16.60	17.64	-1.05
Swimming Pool	60.00	90.00	10.00	56.00	75.33	-19.33
%Swimming Pool Use	3.95	1.25	1.23	2.11	14.20	-12.09
Fitness Centre	55.83	38.00	52.00	50.91	70.34	-19.43
%Fitness Centre Use	15.19	6.25	6.17	9.17	11.53	-2.37
Overall Laundry / Dry Cleaning	92.00	90.00	65.00	82.50	79.04	+3.46
%Laundry/Dry Cleaning Use	6.33	3.75	4.88	4.98	3.59	+1.39
SERVICE RECOVERY						
Problem handling	80.00	45.00	60.00	66.92	54.60	+12.32

Appendixes

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