MARKET RESEARCH OF THE FINNISH CONSUMER MARKET

Potential customer segment for an import company

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ABSTRACT

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The consumer market is changing constantly due to new technological innovations and globalization. It is important for companies to keep up with their customers and know what they think about their products and how can they improve their own operations. Market research is key in finding out this information.

This thesis conducts a market research on the Finnish consumer market for an import/wholesale company called J.A. Tenhunen Oy. The company has had their own online store that sells directly to consumers for a couple of years now. The marketing actions for consumers has been minimal due to the lack of data on them and this is why they need a market research to fully understand their customers and target segment.

This thesis introduces the theoretical and practical sections as well as the results. The data is gathered via a survey and secondary data sources such as books, articles and google analytics database. The thesis also includes correlation coefficient results to see how the different topics vary with each other.

The author gives his conclusion at the end by defining the potential customer segment for J.A. Tenhunen Oy and gives a few recommendations.

Key words: market research, survey, mixed methods
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1 INTRODUCTION

The consumer market in Finland has changed during the past decade and will be changing throughout the near future. The globalisation and digitalization have been two major reasons for this. More and more of products are bought online and more services are coming up to make the lives of the consumers easier. People buy products from abroad and do not have to worry about customs fees nor the logistical side of the process. No one really knows what the future will bring and what the next big thing within the consumer market is. Companies are constantly trying to understand how consumers think and how they act. They are also trying to create a better buying experience and improve their customer engagement, so that they can keep their old customers. This is why research is crucial in keeping up with the customers.

This thesis is made to find out information about the Finnish consumer market and especially about the consumers’ thoughts towards shoe and foot care products. The method to find out this information is going to be a market research. The data will be gathered via a survey and secondary sources such as books, articles and google analytics database. The thesis process took place during the autumn of 2018.

This thesis consists of three different sections. The first part introduces the topic of the research, which discusses the background for the research and what it is about. This part also includes the research question, the objective and purpose for the research. The second part covers the theoretical framework and research methodology. The third part includes the research results, discussion and conclusion. In the theoretical part, the author first explains about market research theory. It defines what it is, how it differs from marketing research and how the process goes. The research methodology moves on to define some key concepts to help the reading and understanding of the thesis. The research methodology part also uses a research tool called the research onion to help build a clear structure for the methodology. This gives also the plan for the research. The research schedule gives a timeline for the process. This section also introduces what the survey included and how it was structured. In addition, the implementation plan shows how the research was conducted. The research results looks at the background questions, research questions, the correlation coefficient and the google analytics database. This section shows the results as they are. After the results, discussion and the conclusion is given. This part
also discusses for example, what could have been done differently, alternative results and limitations.

The commissioner, J.A. Tenhunen Oy is a Finnish, family owned company. The company was founded in the year 1915. They are a wholesaler selling shoe care and foot care products. They are also in the business of importing goods. J.A. Tenhunen Oy imports goods mostly from Germany and Sweden. Other countries are Spain and Italy. Their product portfolio consist of, for example, shoe care products and accessories, shoelaces, support and comfort insoles and many other foot care products. Their main source of revenue comes from selling products to retailers but they have recently started to sell directly to consumers via an online store.

1.1 The topic

This thesis focuses on researching the consumer market in Finland. This means that the studied participants have to have a consumer status. They cannot be answering in the role of, for example, company representatives. J.A. Tenhunen Oy commissions the research and the author is currently employed at the commissioning company. The title for the thesis explains a great deal of the topic: “Market research of the Finnish consumer market: Potential customer segment for an import company”

The background for this is that J.A. Tenhunen Oy have launched their own online store a few years ago. They have not yet contributed towards marketing the online platform but have a vision for it. The company has not done marketing towards consumers due to lack of knowledge of the right customer segment. The market research is the first step in the process of conducting an effective marketing plan.

1.2 Research question

J.A. Tenhunen Oy has a long history of being wholesaler. However, selling directly to consumers is a relatively new business for them and this is why the research question for the research is:
“What is the most potential consumer customer segment for J.A. Tenhunen Oy?”

The hypothesis in this phase is that they are 30-50 years old, working people that have an interest in shoe care or have issues with their feet and they are trying to fix issues such as painful hips. This hypothesis is based on the knowledge that the author has gathered by observations from the customers’ orders while working at J.A. Tenhunen Oy.

1.3 Objective

The main objective is to gather information of the consumer market in Finland. This includes some sub-objectives such as understanding the consumers’ buying habits, who they are demographically and combining these two. In order to understand the buying habits the research needs to collect data on for example, what people buy or are interested in and how they buy foot and shoe care products etc. To define who are the people most likely to make a purchase, information such as age, gender and location is needed.

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to conclude a customer segment within the consumers and then use this information in marketing directly to the consumers most likely via social media. This information can also be used for marketing to the retailers. In addition, there is a potential to use this information in co-operation with the product manufactures when planning product development and new products.
2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theories help to understand and clarify different phenomena. The theoretical framework is essential for giving a structure to the used theories. The theoretical framework requires conceptualization to explain some important concepts that will be used throughout the research process. This framework explains market research and the theory behind it. It also goes through the research methodology. The methodology part explains for example the approaches and strategies used in this research.

The theoretical framework, conceptualization and methodology are formed by researching secondary data sources such as books, articles and online sources. These secondary sources are meant to support the conceptualization, validity and reliability of the research.

2.1 Market research

As simplified, market research studies the current market situation. The author argues that companies should always start their business or a new product launch by doing market research. There are many different kinds of market research but they usually try to find the same thing, as in, whether there is demand for a product or service and who are the people creating the demand. A company can use either primary or secondary sources to conduct a market research (Entrepreneur Europe 2018). Primary sources can be surveys or interviews and secondary sources include government reports, university studies etc.

According to Investopedia (2018), market research is a process where a company tries to determine whether or not a new product or service has a need within the consumers. This requires a research that has been conducted with the consumers. It is stated that market research also helps the company recognize a market segment to whom marketing actions can be targeted. There are three ways to conduct a market research: a survey, product testing and via a focus group (Investopedia 2018).
2.1.1 Market research vs. Marketing research

When discussed about market research, it can be often mixed with marketing research. Some professional say that they mean the same thing whereas some say that they are different. According to Claessens (2018), market research investigates markets as in customers or distribution whereas marketing research studies the marketing processes such as marketing or salesforce effectiveness.

The formerly know European Society for Opinion and Market Research or ESOMAR (2018) defines market research as all forms of market, social and opinion research that focuses on individuals and organizations. They do not speak about the marketing processes and thus, this thesis is market research.

2.1.2 Market research process

The first thing to do when thinking about market research is to define the problem (Mooi, Sarstedt & Mooi-Reci 2018). This means that a company needs to define what they want an answer for. The problem might be for example, an increase in complaints or the inability to increase sales. The next step in market research is to plan the process or determining the research design (Mooi et al. 2018). This gives the research guidelines and makes the process sufficient. As figure 1 by Mooi et al. (2018, 12) shows, the next steps in the process include designing the data collection methods, data collecting, data analysis, discussion and follow up.
The thesis follows a similar process where the commissioning company and the author first discussed the problem that needed to be solved. This problem is can be also seen as the research question for this thesis. The problem was then followed by planning, data collection and analysis with discussion and conclusion in the end. The only part this thesis does not include is the follow-up. The follow-up is usually done after a certain period of time where the findings can be included in another research to see how the market has changed (Mooi et al. 2018, 23-24).
3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Concepts

In this part, some key concepts of market research are defined. These concepts are explained to get a sense of how these concepts relate to the topic. The thesis applies different concepts in order to make the reading more fluent. Market research has a various amount of different concepts within but this part will introduce only the most used ones that are in the thesis.

3.1.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is a type of research that uses open-ended questions in the process of answering a research problem. Creswell (2014) defines it to be a method to understand and examine individuals or groups that are related to a social problem. The data collected in qualitative research can be defined as non-numerical or as data that has not been quantified (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009).

3.1.2 Quantitative research

Quantitative research is rather the opposite of qualitative. Where qualitative research can use open-ended questions, quantitative research gives premade answers to the respondent to choose from. This gives numeric data that can be analysed statistically. According to Creswell (2014) quantitative research is used to test out theories by observing the relations between the variables. The numbered data is usually analysed by statistics (Creswell 2014).
3.1.3 Mixed methods

Mixed methods can be seen as the mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. However, there are different types of mixed methods and this will be explained in more detail later on the thesis in the methods section.

3.1.4 Correlation coefficient

Correlation coefficient is used to determine how strong the linear correlation between two variables is (Social Science Statistics 2018). The values vary between \( r = -1 \), meaning that the correlation is perfectly negative, and \( r = 1 \) what means that the correlation is perfectly positive. This thesis will use Excel’s auto-formulas to calculate this. The following formula (figure 2) shows the calculations excel counts.

\[
r = \frac{\sum (x_i - \overline{x})(y_i - \overline{y})}{\sqrt{\sum (x_i - \overline{x})^2} \sqrt{\sum (y_i - \overline{y})^2}}
\]

FIGURE 2. Pearson’s correlation coefficient

3.2 Research onion

The methodology for the research is going to be formed by utilizing a research tool called the “research onion”. The research onion provides a structure for the methodology. This structure can be followed from layer to layer in order to form the theoretical aspects of the methods. The reason for the use of the research onion is to make the theoretical part clearer for the reader to follow.

The research onion consists of several layers. Saunders et al. (2009, 106) argue that when conducting a research the research onion has to be peeled layer by layer before determining the data collection methods and data analysis (figure 3). The framework is going to be explained in the same order as the layers in the research tool go.
FIGURE 3. Research onion

3.2.1 Philosophy

Starting out the first layer, philosophy, the author will choose pragmatism as a research philosophy to follow. Pragmatism does not follow any certain philosophy or method and it gives the researcher a more free starting point towards the research (Creswell 2014, 39). This is important when looking at the research problem of this thesis. In market research, there is no absolute truth because it can be seen as point of views at an individual level. Pragmatism allows the research to use mixed methods and it does not focus on the data collection methods but the research problem itself (Creswell 2014, 39). The use of mixed methods is crucial for finding out the answer to the research question. The research explores the Finnish consumer market so it should be viewed from multiple sources. The results should be formed with information that can only be gathered with different types of methods.

3.2.2 Approach

This research takes an inductive approach due to the nature of the research. The research tries to study the human buying behaviour connecting it to the demography and the location of the consumers. This kind of a research applies to social sciences and has a need for new data to be gathered making an inductive approach more suitable. It is more convenient to work inductively by collecting data and analysing it when the topic is new
(Saunders et al. 2009, 127). It may seem that the research does not entirely follow induction due to the pragmatic philosophy and the use of mixed methods but more as a mix of deductive and inductive approaches. However, an inductive approach is more appropriate because the research intends to create a theory, not test one.

3.2.3 Strategy

The strategy for the research is going to be a case study. This research forms a case study due to the purpose of the research. The results will be used towards marketing actions in the near future. A case study also allows using different sources rather than just focusing on one. Even though the strategy is initially determined as a case study, it will also use a survey to collect data. According to Saunders et al. (2009, 141) the strategies should not be treated as separate or different from each other and that it is not uncommon to use a survey as part of a case study.

The survey is going to consist of both qualitative and quantitative questions. Quantitative questions are needed to determine for example the age, gender and location of the respondent. Qualitative questions are needed to see how the respondent think about the products J.A. Tenhunen Oy sells and also to get a sense of their buying habits.

3.2.4 Choice of methods

As mentioned earlier this research is going to use mixed methods to collect data. This means that both qualitative and quantitative data can be used, as can any other sources. Mixed methods differ from multi-method by allowing qualitative and quantitative methods to be mixed, whereas multi-method focuses on either qualitative or quantitative methods (Saunders et al. 2009, 152). Mixed methods can be divided in to two subsections, “mixed method research” and “mixed model research”. This research is going to use a mixed model research because it allows the different data to be combined whereas the mixed method research does not. This research requires both qualitative and quantitative data to be combined in order to answer the research question.
The methodology is visualized in figure 4 to give a better understanding of how the division of methods form (Saunders et al. 2009, 152).

![Research choices](image)

**FIGURE 4. Research choices**

### 3.2.5 Time horizon

For the time being rather limited and because of the nature of the research question it would not be feasible to have a longitudinal time horizon. This is why a cross-sectional time horizon is implemented. Cross-sectional researches usually work with surveys and are looking to find out a phenomena or the situation of an issue at a certain point of time (Saunders et al. 2009, 155). The consumer market changes with the global and technological development. Therefore, in this research it is more valid to look at the existing situation rather than the opinions of consumers within a longer period.

### 3.2.6 Techniques and procedures

The data collection will be done using primary and secondary sources. The survey acting as a primary source will be the main source in finding out the answer to the research question. Secondary sources are going to be in the form of literature reviews. The literature consist of books, online sources, other theses and a database from Google analytics. The results of the survey will be compared with the analytics provided by the company’s google analytics database. This database has been linked to the company’s feetlet.fi web page. This will provide information of the past situation, for example, who has been purchasing products and where were they located. The comparison will give an insight on
the existing customers compared to what does the results of the survey suggest. This information is useful because it tells the company whether they need to focus on a specific segment or are the people who already buy the products the potential segment.

Most of the quantitative data analysis will be done via charts and graphs. This will give a clear picture of such aspects as the demography, sex and location. The qualitative data has to go through a different kind of process.

As seen on figure 5, the process for qualitative data analysis is linear where there are steps to follow. However, these steps should not be set in stone but be combined and to be visited again throughout the process (Creswell 2014, 247).

FIGURE 5. Data analysis in qualitative research
3.3 Research Schedule

The thesis process will be carried out during the autumn of 2018. This process includes the research itself. The market research will be conducted as follows:

- Week 42, research planning.
- Week 43, research planning and questionnaire planning.
- Week 44, research planning, setting up the questionnaire and thesis writing. In addition, launch of the questionnaire.
- Week 45, data collection, analysing and thesis writing.
- Week 46, data collection, analysing and thesis writing. Sample size should be ready for final analysis.
- Week 47, thesis writing.

This schedule is the plan the author used for conducting the thesis process. The schedule shows the time used for the process but it also gives a structure to the process. The structure offers a bigger picture of what the process required and in what order different stages were carried out.

3.4 Survey & implementation plan

The questionnaire for the market research was formed by using a website called zef.fi. The reason for the selection of zef.fi is that it is free of charge and it does not limit the amount of responses. Zef.fi is a website that the commissioning company is familiar with and has a history of using it in previous researches. It also automatically forms graphs from the data collected, which will reduce the amount of time needed for analysing. Zef.fi also offers to collect contacts, which was a preferred feature to the company.

The survey was titled as “consumer research – foot and shoe care products” and it consisted of 17 questions (appendix 1). The author introduced the respondents of what the survey was about and how the data would be handled. The first seven questions were called background questions needed to determine the person answering the survey. The latter ten questions were called the research questions. The survey studied the Finnish
consumer market and therefore the language used in the survey was Finnish. Most of the questions were quantitative and there was only one specifically qualitative question. Some of the quantitative question included an “other” option where the respondent could use their own words in describing a suitable answer that was not premade by the author.

The background questions determined the age, gender, place of residence, current occupation, interests, hobbies and online buying habits of the respondent. The research question were needed to determine what products related to the field of business have the respondents bought. Where have they bought the products and why. How did the buying process feel in the sense of if it was easy or hard. What kind of service would they like towards the foot and shoe care products. Reasons for not buying these products. How much a good support insole can cost in their opinion and if they had heard of feetlet.fi e-commerce.

The questions used were formed in cooperation with the commissioner. The author and the commissioner discussed what would be important to know and how the questions would relate to the topic. The survey was conclusively formed in three different phases. In the first phase, the author created a rough draft of the survey including different types of general questions. The second phase was the discussion with the commissioner where the questions were edited into more detail. The last phase had a test run. The survey was sent to some close friends and colleagues to give feedback. This test run was used mainly to detect any visual and grammar errors. The feedback from the test run did not change the initial idea of any of the questions.

The survey was distributed via social media and the used platform was Facebook. The author and the employees of the commissioning company were the main distributors. Sharing from other respondents was also expected to make the survey reach a larger audience. There was also be reward that was raffled between the respondents. The reward was a 200 € gift card to the company’s feetlet.fi e-commerce. The survey also offered a discount code to the e-commerce for all the respondents who wanted to leave their contact information. These rewards were used to increase the motivation to respond to the survey.
4 RESULTS

The survey was online for one week. During this data collection period, it got a total of 162 responses. Some of the respondents did not answer all of the questions because the service used did not allow editing the questions so that it would be mandatory to answer in order to move onto the next question. This might have been a good feature so that if a respondent did not want to answer to a certain question they could move on to answer the rest of the questions. However, this showed in the results, as not all the questions had the same amount of answers. The differences vary within the range of 159-162 responses with an exception at the open-ended question, which got 61 responses.

4.1 Background questions

The first question asking the age of the respondent got 161 answers. This question was split into age groups which were 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64 and 65+. The second question was asking the gender of the respondent. The answer options for this were male, female and other. The division of the respondents concerning these two categories can be seen from figure 6.

![Age & Sex comparison](image)

FIGURE 6. Respondents age and sex comparison
As figure 6 shows, the largest group of respondents, with 47 people, were 35-44 years old. There were almost the same amount of male and female respondents in this age group. The next biggest age group was 18-24 year olds with 38 answers. This group had slightly more male respondents. The two biggest groups also marginally included responses as other. The third biggest age group was 25-34 year olds with 28 responses. This group also introduced a fairly good division between female and male respondents. People aged between 45-54 had 21 responses but the division between male and female was not even with 86% of the respondents being female. A similar kind of phenomena can be seen with the age group of 45-54 year olds. This group had 19 responses and 84% of the respondents were female. The survey also had 8 respondents over 65 years of age and the division in this group was fairly good.

Looking at the overall picture of figure 6 it gives a great variety of people from all age groups and has both female and male respondents in each of them. This gives a great start to the results where the variety is going to give different perspectives but also has a decent amount of responses in every group.

The next question asked what kind of city does the respondent live in. As seen from figure 7 the majority of respondents were from Tampere.

![Place of residence]

FIGURE 7. Place of residence

The survey also got a decent amount of responses from other cities over and under 50 000 inhabitants and rural municipalities. However, there were only a few responses from other
big cities like Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Turku. This is not an ideal situation but due to Finland being a rather small country the author argues that the cultural differences between cities do not vary that much to affect mindset towards the products in question. However, due to the paucity of responses in some big cities, the results cannot specify buying behaviour between cities regarding for example, financial aspects.

This question was formed asking only the type of city of the respondent’s residence and not the geographical location because the prices of the products J.A. Tenhunen Oy sells do not vary between different locations in Finland. In addition, the delivery costs do not vary so it thought not to give any crucial information towards specifying the target market.

The fifth question asked about the respondent’s interests. This question had premade answers and one “other” option to give an answer that was not on the list. Figure 8. shows that most respondents were interested in exercising and well-being. There were a total of 160 responses to it. This question allowed multiple answers, which shows in the answers.

![FIGURE 8. Interests](image)

This question was asked to see the interests the respondents have. This information is useful when targeting social media marketing towards people. These interests can also be related to any other question later on.

The survey moves on to focus on more in detail of what kind of sports do the respondents practise. Shoes and feet in general play a great role in every sport there is. This is why the
survey had a question specifically on sports. The results show, as seen on figure 9 that the two major hobbies within the respondents were walking and gym exercising. The other options got relatively similar amounts of answers. In addition, the “something else?” option got a quite many answers but with a variety of different sports. However, to mention some the top three sports were group training, cycling and swimming. None of these got enough of answers to be considered a significant sport.

FIGURE 9. Hobbies

The reason for this question is similar as for the interests question before this. However, as the results indicate that exercising is a major interest this gives a better insight on what kind of exercise the respondents are interested in. The results from this question indicate it would be sensible to focus on people that like to go for walks and to the gym because they are the most popular exercising activities. Nevertheless, this might need more cross-referencing to be done.

The last background question was made to get a sense of how often people buy from the internet. It can be seen from figure 10 that most people buy every couple of months. There are also people buying couple of times per month and a couple of times per year. This indicates that the traffic within online shopping is on a good level. Online shopping has increased over the past few years and it will continue to grow. The online purchasing volume in Finland grew 36% in year 2015 and in 2016, it grew 40% (Saari 2017).
4.2 Research questions

The first research question asked: “have you bought any of these insoles?” The premade answer option included several different insoles and an “other” option. The other option got three answers leaving it insignificant. The three answers could have been included to the premade answers nevertheless this is subjective. With this question, it was important to relate it to age groups and genders. The results were defined as “no purchase”, “one product”, “two products” and “more than two products”.

Men aged 18-24 (see appendix 2.) resulted with 36% having never purchased these products with it being the most prevalent answer. The same trend appeared with women in the same age group. For men aged 25-34 (see appendix 2.) the majority, 55%, answered “no purchase”. For women aged 25-34 the most common answer was “two products” with 35% of the answers. The next age group from 35-44 years old, men’s most common answer was “one product” with 57%. Women in the same age group had 46% answering “two products”. A notable mention in this age group with women was that only 15% had
not bought any of these products (see appendix 2.). There were only three men respondents in the next age group form 45-54 years old. However, every respondent had bought at least one product from this category. One-third (33%) of women in the same age group had bought two products with it being the most common answer (see appendix 2.). With men aged 55-64, again it got only three responses but everyone in that group had bought at least one product. Thirty-one percent of women in this age group had bought one product with it being the most common answer (see appendix 2.). In the last age group there were seven respondents including both men and women. Every answer option had been answered but from a statistical point of view, there are not any valid results.

The next question was similar to the previous one. Only this time it asked about shoe care products such as shoe polish, shoe deodorants, cleansers etc. The results were viewed similarly as they were in the first question. The charts for these answers can also be found from appendix 2.

For the first age group (18-24 years), men’s most common answer was “more than two products with 32% of the answers. Thirty-eight percent of women had bought none of these products, it being the most common answer. The second age group (25-34 years) majority of men (55%) had bought more than two products. With women, 47% had bought two products. In the third age group (35-44 years) majority of the respondents had purchased more than two products with 57% of men and 54% of women answering this. None answered “no purchase” in this group. With three men, aged 45-54 answering it will be noted that all respondents had bought products within this product category. Fifty percent of women respondent to have bought two products. The next age group (55-64 years) there were three male respondents and all of them had bought at least one product. Thirty one percent of women in this age group responded to have bought two products, with it being the most common option. The last age group (65+ years) had seven respondents both men and women and everyone had bought at least one products from this product category.

The survey had a third similar question to the ones before. This time the product category focused on shoe accessories such as shoehorns, shoelaces, shoe brushes etc. The same trend with analysing the results continues in this question. The full charts for this question can be found from appendix 2.
Men’s, aged 18-24, most common answer was “two products” with 32% of the responses. The majority of women (62%) in this age group responded to buying two products in this product category. In the next age group (25-34 years) 45% of men responded that they had bought one product with it being the most common answer. The majority of women (59%) in the same age group had bought two products. Men aged 35-44 had 33% of the responses in both “two products” and “more than two products”. Thirty eight percent of women in the same age group answered “more than two products”. In the next age group (45-54 years), three male respondents had bought at least one product. Women’s most common answer in the same age group was “two products” with 44% of the responses. The next age group (55-64 years) had three male respondents and all of them had bought at least one product. The most common answer amongst women was “one product” with 31% of the responses. The last age group (65+ years) had seven respondents with all having purchased at least one product.

The next question asked “Where have you bought these products?” This question allowed multiple answers. As seen from figure 11 the most common answer was from a general store.

![Figure 11](image_url)  
FIGURE 11. Where have you bought these products?

With almost as many answer as general store, the shoe shop option got the second most answers. Other notable places of purchase were department store and sports store. People answering somewhere else, included places such as special shops, gift shops and as used from other people.
Question number 12 asked about the reasons for why had the respondents bought these products. This question allowed multiple answers however, as figure 12 shows the majority of the respondents answered that they simply needed the product.

**FIGURE 12. Why did you buy these products?**

“Salesperson recommended” got the second most answers. In addition, recommendations from acquaintances and medical personnel got a notable amount of responses compared to the other options.

The next question went on to ask about how the respondents had felt about the buying process. Whether it was easy or not. This question was asked to see the overall picture of how people feel about buying foot and shoe care products and if the advertising would need detailed instructions. Figure 13. shows that most people find the buying process easy or somewhat easy.

**FIGURE 13. Buying process**
Next, the survey had an open-ended question asking what kind of service the respondents would want towards buying foot and shoe care products. The reasons for this question were similar as they were in the previous one. The results were analysed using a word cloud application that showed the most used describing words. The most used word was “expert”. The word was used as in the respondents wanting expert advice when buying the products. Other words big words were “information” and “salesperson”. When looking at the full responses these words also relate to people wanting information from expert salespersons and detailed information online.

The 15th question was formed to specify the reasons people do not buy these products in the case where they were about to purchase. The question was titled as “I have sometimes not bought these products because…” It was followed with multiple answer options and the question allowed multiple answers. As seen from figure 14 the most common reason for not buying these products was “difficulties assessing the right size”.

![Reasons for not purchasing the products](image)

**FIGURE 14. Reasons for not purchasing the products**

“None of the above” got 45 responses however, the reasons in that option vary and therefore difficulties assessing the right size was the most common reason for not purchasing. “Didn’t know how/with what to handle my shoes/purse” got the second most responses. In addition, a notable amount of people thought that there were too few options to choose from.

The next question asked what the respondents thought of how much a good support insole can cost. This question was mainly formed to see the knowledge what people have on support insoles. The question used a sliding line (see appendix 1.) where the respondent
could set the price between 5 € and 300 €. The result was an average of 53,6 € with a standard deviation of 44,9.

The last question asked if the respondents had heard of the commissioner’s website “feetlet.fi”. This question was formed to see how known the website is amongst the respondents. The answer options were “yes” and “no” with 68% not having heard of the website and 32% of knowing it. The results can however, only be viewed as directional due to the survey being distributed via Facebook and some of the respondents might therefore be acquaintances of the distributers.

4.3 Correlation coefficient

The correlation coefficient between certain options or subjects were calculated to see if and how there is correlation. This information can help defining the potential customer for J.A. Tenhunen Oy. The author used several different factors in the correlation coefficient scale such as age, gender, occupation, interests, hobbies and place of purchase. The correlation coefficient was calculated first by reforming the data into a matrix and then using Excel’s data analysis application. The correlation formula from the application was used. Due to usage of excel and multiple correlations the author could not conduct a significance test to see whether or not the correlation coefficient were statistically significant. This means that the values can be only viewed towards the research sample.

The results (see appendix 3.) show that there are not any strong correlation coefficient values. All of the important correlation coefficients for example, age/bought products, gender/bought products, interests/bought products etc. are under the value of 0,5. However, the results indicate a direction with small values that can be analysed to create a modest trend within the respondents. For example, the correlations between students and products bought all have negative values. This can be compared to working people were the correlation values are positive. In addition, when comparing men and women, the results show that men have negative values in two different products categories, where the same correlations for women are positive. Such areas of interest as wellbeing, sports and cooking all have positive correlation values of $>0,1$ when looking at all the product categories. Most of the interest areas have positive values but the three mentioned have
the highest indicating the potential interest areas even though the values are small. The highest values for hobbies/purchasing were with running and hiking.

4.4 Google analytics results

The website feetlet.fi has been linked to google analytics, which collects data from the users that have visited the webpage. Google analytics cannot collect data from all users but it gives good insight of the users. This section will cover the city, age, gender, interests of the users buying from feetlet.fi. The data used to analyse this was from the last three months.

Almost half of the users are from Helsinki. The next biggest places of residence of the users are Tampere, Turku, Espoo and Vantaa. 65% of the user are female and 35% are male. People aged 25-34 years are the most common users. People in the age group of 35-44 years come next. The areas of interest with most users are food & dining, news & politics, media & entertainment, shoppers and lifestyles & hobbies.
5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This thesis conducted a market research on the Finnish consumer market. The research tried to find out an answer to what is the potential consumer customer segment for J.A. Tenhunen Oy for marketing purposes. The results indicate that the potential customer is a 25-44 year old working female who lives in a bigger city such as Helsinki or Tampere. She is interested in food/cooking, wellbeing and sports. In addition, her hobbies include running or hiking. This result was found out by comparing the results from the survey, correlation values and Google Analytics data.

The given conclusion of the potential customer means that J.A. Tenhunen Oy now has a specific customer segment. As stated in the topic section, the company has had an e-commerce platform for a few years now but has not done any marketing towards the consumers and this knowledge helps them to plan marketing and target it to the right people. This thesis could not include a follow-up section due to the lack of any previous researches. Therefore the result is important for the company because it has now given them a starting point meaning that they can cross-reference it with future researches and see how the market has changed. The follow-up of the results is not limited only to the potential customer but it allows the cross-referencing with all results.

The survey used in the research gathered a sample size of 162 responses. The survey questions gathered great diversity of answers from background to buying behaviour. Not all of them can be included to defining the potential customer segment but they give great insight on how and what to improve to make feetlet.fi an even better e-commerce platform. The service used to create the survey did not allow the option to choose mandatory questions and therefore some questions had different amounts of responses. However, the amounts did not vary significantly to affect the overall results. Most of the respondents were from Tampere what excluded the comparing of cities to other subjects. Other subjects got a large enough of range of different answers to make the comparison reasonable.

The survey was distributed through social media and the distributors included the author and his work colleagues. This might have falsified the results in a way that the respondents could have been close people to the distributors allowing them to know more about the business. This means that the given potential customer might be false and that the
right segment might be something different. An alternative customer segment could be a person with similar interest but the person might be a male. The results had some peaks with men. For example, the fact that 55% of 25-34 year old men had bought more than two products in the insoles category, could suggest that men buy more. In addition, there were fewer male respondents in almost every age group. The author suggests that future researches and especially surveys would be distributed via various channels. It could be also worth considering using a third party to distribute the survey.

Overall, the results of the survey are quite similar to what the google analytics database proposes. This is great information because the commissioner can adjust their marketing based on the google analytics data and they do not necessarily have to conduct new market researches.

This thesis did not include any previous studies or similar studies because the topic in question is such a niche segment that the author nor the commissioning company did not know or find any. To future researches the author advices that they would include similar studies from for example the shoe industry. The author argues that the shoe industry is similar enough to be acceptable for discussion.

Investopedia (2018) suggested that there were three ways to conduct a market research. In this thesis, a survey was used but for future researches, it could be feasible to use a focus group. The focus groups could be for example, men and women from an age group and gather data from them. This could be a smaller study that would not take as much time as researching everyone over 18 years. The company could also conduct a research by the product testing option. Giving consumers new products and getting feedback could help make the decision of launching the product in question.

This thesis took an inductive approach towards the research. It was a bit questionable approach because pragmatism was chosen as the philosophy. However, the future researches J.A. Tenhunen Oy does regarding market research, they can take a deductive approach now that they can form a hypotheses based on this thesis.

Even though the strategy for the research was a case study, it used a survey as a part of it. For future researches, the survey alone could be used as a strategy to keep the research more focused and simple.
The survey used gathered a large variety of different type of information. It used both quantitative and qualitative questions but the needed data could have been gathered with only quantitative questions. The use of mixed methods was relevant so that the data collection was not limited to only the use of a survey but also the secondary sources. The survey itself could have been formed to a more simple form. There could have been less questions and the answer options could have been different. Some of the data was not used in answering the research question. The data the survey produced was a bit time consuming so the use of quantitative questions and reforming the answer options so that it would produce only numeric data can speed up future researches.

A notable limitation that this thesis had is that it was conducted in a small amount of time. For future researches, the author suggests that there would be more time used towards the preliminary research.

5.1 Marketing recommendations

The company had planned to use social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram as a start for marketing towards consumers. These platforms seem appropriate because the customer segment is relatively young. The author argues that a majority of the people in the concluded age group have either a Facebook or Instagram account based on his empiric observations. In addition, the survey was distributed via Facebook meaning that most likely every respondent had a Facebook account.

Looking at the concluded potential customer it could also be worth to try to campaign J.A. Tenhunen Oy products and feetlet.fi in such events as “Helsinki half marathon” and “Likkojen Lenkki” at Tampere. These events are publicly known running events, which gather a large amount of people. The people who go the Helsinki half marathon-event are at least interested in running and people going to Likkojen Lenkki-event are most likely interested in running and well-being.
Other groups to grow the customer segment could be men in the same age group because there is some purchasing within the group but they might not see the products as valuable as women do. Young working adults aged 18-24 can be also targeted because there are a lot of the same interests but they do not have the same financial resources as older people. The products for them could be cheaper to make this group interested.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Survey

Kuluttajatutkimus - kenkien ja jalkojen hyvinvointituotteet

Tällä kyselyllä kartoitetaan ihmisten kokemuksia jalkojen ja kenkien hyvinvointin liittyen tuotteen ostamisesta. Vastaukset lisätävät luottamuksellisesti siten, että yksittäistä vastaajaa ei pysty tunnistamaan vastaukset perusteella.

Seuraa fi-yleiseksi arvoksi kaikkien tuotteen vastauksien lisäksi.

Ikä

Valitse 1

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44

Sukupuoli

Valitse 1

- Mies
- Nainen
- Muu

Asuinpaikkakuntani on...

Valitse 1

- Helsinki
- Espoo, Vantaa
- Tampere
Olen...

Valitse 1
- Opiskelija
- Työelämässä
- Tytön

TAKAISIN SEURAAVA

Olen kiinnostunut...

Valintojen määrää ei rajoitettu
- Kulttuurista
- Liikunnasta
- Yhteiskunnasta

TAKAISIN SEURAAVA

Harrastan seuraavia liikuntalajeja:

Valintojen määrää ei rajoitettu
- Kävely
- Juoksu
- Pallolaita (jalkapallo, lentopallo, koripallo...)

TAKAISIN SEURAAVA

Ostan tuotteita/palveluita verkosta...

Valitse 1
- viikkotain
- muutaman kerran kuukaudessa
- parin kuukauden välein

TAKAISIN SEURAAVA
Oletko ostannut jotain näistä pohjallisista? (Verkko- tai kivijalkakaupasta)

- Peruspohjallista
- Tukipohjallista

Oletko ostannut jotain näistä kenkiinhoitotuotteista? (Verkko- tai kivijalkakaupasta)

- Suousuhalkevylleiskyläiste
- Pulolstusaine

Oletko ostannut jotain näistä kenkätervikkeista? (Verkko- tai kivijalkakaupasta)

- Kenkäritisika
- Kengätänuhat

Mistä ostit näitä tuotteita?

- Marketista
- Kenkäkaupasta
- Sutariita
Hyvä tukipchjallinen voi mielestäni maksaa:

5 € 300 €

Oletko kuullut feetlet.fi verkkokaupasta?

Valitse 1
- Kyllä
- En

TAKAISIN SEURAAVA
Appendix 2. Research question charts

Men aged 18-24 - Insoles

- No purchase: 18%
- 1 product: 36%
- 2 products: 23%
- More than 2 products: 23%

Women aged 18-24 - Insoles

- No purchase: 8%
- 1 product: 38%
- 2 products: 31%
- More than 2 products: 23%

Men aged 25-34 - Insoles

- No purchase: 18%
- One product: 55%
- Two products: 18%
- More than 2 products: 15%

Women aged 25-34 - Insoles

- No purchase: 18%
- One product: 46%
- Two products: 24%
- More than 2 products: 23%

Men aged 35-44 - Insoles

- No purchase: 0%
- One product: 24%
- Two products: 46%
- More than 2 products: 15%

Women aged 35-44 - Insoles

- No purchase: 15%
- One product: 23%
- Two products: 46%
- More than 2 products: 15%

Women aged 45-54 - Insoles

- No purchase: 28%
- One product: 22%
- Two products: 33%
- More than 2 products: 17%

Women aged 55-64 - Insoles

- No purchase: 19%
- One product: 25%
- Two products: 31%
- More than 2 products: 25%
## Appendix 3. Correlation coefficient chart

Please note that some of these values are not relevant for example age/male, female/student, student/working etc. Also values >0.1 are marked with yellow and >0.3 with red.

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<tr>
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Please note that some of these values are not relevant for example age/male, female/student, student/working etc. Also values >0.1 are marked with yellow and >0.3 with red.