



# Customer Journey Mapping

Skateboard hardware purchases

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This Bachelor thesis is research into skateboard consumers, buying patterns and how such customer intelligence could be used in creating more profits. It starts off by introducing the commissioner for the project and explaining the main theoretical frameworks regarding this topic. As many business-to-consumer markets, the skateboarding industry needs to adapt to the new buying behavior patterns and is in desperate need of an accurate academic research on how the consumers buy their products and how the companies should make their marketing actions more efficient.

The theoretical frameworks focus on Buyer decision process, customer journey mapping, and touchpoints. The literature used in the framework is best-selling authors from the field of marketing. Other sources are found online and approved to be trustworthy judging by the publisher's reputation. The theories needed to be studied thoroughly before collecting the primary data and applying it to the theory.

In chapters 4 & 5 the customer journey map is drawn and the most important touchpoints on it. The thesis provides recommendations for the commissioner on how to improve the customer experience. The conclusions offer a summary of the key points of the whole thesis.

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Key words: market research, customer journey mapping, touchpoints

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The reason to research such matter as Customer Journey Mapping and Touchpoints is the author's personal desire to learn more about the topic, collect primary data about the topic and apply the theories into the data. The topic is very relevant, as no such academic research has been carried out before in a nice market like skateboarding. Digital Marketing and online shopping have been growing the past years and the companies in the skateboarding industry have a chance at profiting from this shift.

The thesis aims to introduce skateboarding as a sport and the main theories on the topic. The purpose is to provide the commissioner Cartel Store with valuable Customer Intelligence. The objective is to create a Customer Journey Map and find the most important touchpoints on it.

The thesis is written for peers of the author alike, students, other skateboarders and skateboard companies to see a snapshot of the skateboard buying behavior in Finland. As being first of its kind, it also sets the ground for future research on the sport and can be used as an academic reference.

## 2 RESEARCH PLAN

### 2.1 Thesis topic and justification

The thesis topic is *The Customer Journey in the Skateboard Industry: Drawing a map of hardware purchases in Finland by non-sponsored skateboarders*. There is a concise need for the thesis, as skateboarding or anything related to the industry marketing-wise has never been academically researched. Many other industries have undergone a big change of buying behavior, as Aldo Cundari, an award-winning independent marketing agency owner states that there is a shift from old linear marketing funnels, where the path from attraction stage to purchase and post-purchase was all in the hands of the marketer, to a non-linear path that is now dominated by the customer (Cundari 2015, 46). This shift could also affect the skateboarding industry. However, since there is no prior academic research on skateboarding, it cannot be assumed that there is a change in buying behavior for skateboard hardware.

These findings create the need for the thesis - to set the ground for future research. According to the father of modern marketing Philip Kotler and his co-writers Armstrong, Harris, and Piercy (2013), in order to create marketing plans, the marketer first must understand the environment in which the marketing happens. Usually, in a broad perspective, this environment is explained through the major environmental forces: economic, demographic, technological, natural, political and cultural. (Kotler et al. 2013, 70)

To narrow the scope of the thesis, one element of this said environment is the Customer Journey Map. Increasing Customer Intelligence within the company is crucial in contemporary marketing activities and this thesis aims to provide a snapshot of the customer journey for the commissioner, Cartel Store. The commissioner is a skateboard hardware and fashion store located in Tampere, Finland. Skateboard hardware purchases differ from skateboard fashion purchases, even though the commissioner sells both in their online and offline stores. They are two different segments of the company's products.

### 2.1.1 Purpose of the thesis

The thesis has objectives and purposes and they need to be defined to maintain the focus on the thesis topic throughout the thesis writing process. The purpose – the reason for which this thesis is done - is to provide the commissioner with valuable Customer Intelligence. As stated before, the effects of digitalization, in this case, cannot be measured, so the purpose is to draw a map of the contemporary status quo. When the map is illustrated, it can be implemented into digital marketing plans to make them more cost-effective for small and medium-sized businesses like Cartel. The thesis also fills a desirable information gap for the author. The purpose is also to acquire more knowledge about the author's personal interest, skateboarding, and how the business around it is run.

The objective of the thesis – or goal - is to provide the commissioner with Customer Intelligence in the form of a Customer Journey Map and defining the touchpoints along that journey. At those touchpoints Cartel has a chance to communicate to or with the potential customer, depending on the type of the touchpoint. Some of them are only able to facilitate one-way communication whereas in others there is a chance for two-way communication.

### 2.1.2 Research question

The research questions for the thesis are:

*What is the Customer Journey Map of buying skateboard hardware?*

*What are the most important touchpoints along the journey?*

The question defines the need for the thesis: The Customer Journey is not yet illustrated. It defines the scope of the research geographically and demographically: non-sponsored skateboarders in Finland. It defines the product segment for the commissioner: skateboard hardware. The answer is then the goal of the thesis: A Customer Journey Map with illustrated, well-defined touchpoints where there is a communication channel with the customer.

### 2.1.3 Research objectives

A thesis writing process consists of a set of objectives. These objectives act like milestones along the process. These objectives are:

1. Summarizing literature from the chosen theoretical frameworks
2. Collecting primary data that can be applied to the theories
3. Analyzing the data
4. To give recommendations for thesis commissioner

The success of meeting the objectives will be then analyzed in Chapter 5.

## 2.2 Research methods

Research methods are carefully chosen to serve the future academic researches on skateboarding the best. “How to set the best possible base for others?” is the question the research methods answer.

To form a basic understanding of research methods, the author has studied the subject in two countries: Finland and Ireland. In Finland, the course was called *Customer Intelligence, Research and Project Management*. The course focused on conducting research for a client company, analyzing the research and providing the client with recommendations. It included theoretical studies on research methodology, which proved to be extremely useful in the thesis writing process.

In Ireland, the author participated on a study module called Business Decision Making / Economic Data Analysis, which also focused on research methodology on a theoretical manner, but also offered a toolkit for converting the data into informative visual data that can help the company to make better, informed business decisions. The course that took place in Ireland will be used as a reference in the primary data collection and analysis.



### 2.2.1 Conducting an online survey

In order to draw informed conclusions for the commissioner, there needed to be validated raw data gathered from the skateboarders (Xiong, 2018). After the raw data was collected, it was then thoroughly analyzed with different methods. An online survey was created to collect the primary data for this research. The data collected was a combination of qualitative and quantitative data by closed and open-ended questions on the survey.

The online survey was using the free Google Forms platform and it was publicly available and open from 4<sup>th</sup> of March to 18<sup>th</sup> of March. Sending out the online survey was organized in collaboration with a Finnish skateboarding media company called Hangup and the commissioner on their respective Facebook pages. Hangup has the biggest follower base of Finnish skateboarders on Facebook. Therefore, the survey was most effectively sent out through them.

An alternative for the online survey was to collect feedback from the customers after they have made a purchase from the Cartel online store. This method would have provided very unbiased and reliable data, but it would have taken a very long time to implement the feedback platform to the online purchase. Also, the response rate would have been a high risk: had it been low, the answers would not have been enough to draw reliable conclusions (Xiong, 2018), and the primary data collection would have had to be done again. Other alternatives were focus groups and telephone surveys, but considering the timeframe of the thesis project, they were ruled out as time-consuming approaches.

The population of the data collection was Hangup's and Cartel's followers on Facebook, but the population sample remained the same. The sampling frame was the list of followers. Sampling fraction was the sample size, which is the number of Hangup's 10000 and Cartel's 3000 followers on Facebook combined: 13000.

As a starting point, the sampling method in this data collection was probability sampling, where each member of the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample (Xiong, 2018). By using a public online survey for data collection, there are also risks involved. The main disadvantages and risks were:

- Facebook newsfeed algorithms and user-specific settings interfere communicating with Hangup's followers equally: the visibility of the Social Media Post for each follower varies (Mosseri, 2018)
- The survey invitation link can be shared outside the sample and cause false data from non-welcome respondents (Facebook, 2019)
- Low response rate compared to other data collection methods like telephone interviews (Xiong, 2018)
- Validating the raw data takes time (Xiong, 2018)

Therefore, after analyzing the risks and disadvantages, the sampling method was eventually non-probability volunteer sampling, where anybody who wanted to participate in the survey, was accepted (Xiong, 2018). Using non-probability sampling usually causes significant bias, but the benefits of using this survey method outweighed the possible bias. (Xiong, 2018) The main benefits were:

- Cost-efficiency: hosting the survey on a free platform
- Time-efficiency: collecting data from multiple responses at the same time
- A high number of responses
- With one message, most of the population sample can be reached
- With Business Intelligence software, the data analysis is easy

After collecting the data, it was then categorized into quantitative and qualitative data. Furthermore, the data can also be categorized by data classification into categorical, ordinal or interval data (Xiong, 2018). Then the data was thoroughly analyzed and validated with Human Intelligence and Business intelligence data analysis methods.

Before launching it online for responses, the online survey was tested on a small group of three people to make sure the survey works on different devices, operating systems, and platforms. One was using an Android smartphone with Google Chrome browser, another was using an iPhone with the Safari browser and the third on a Microsoft Windows personal computer. The results of the test told that the platform uses interface and content of the survey worked fine on all platforms and the data was successfully collected and saved on a worksheet on Google

Sheets. The duration of filling the survey was also clocked and based on the content feedback, some questions were deleted to reduce the frustration caused by nearly duplicate questions.

### **2.3 The commissioner Kartelli Sport Oy**

The company was first established in 1996 and it is using the brand name Cartel. Kartelli Sport Oy is the official name of the company that is a limited liability company. Its registered business sector is the retail sale of sports equipment and bicycles. The company is a street fashion, skateboarding, and snowboarding store. They are the pioneers of their sector and many brands that are now rather popular, have been supplied to consumers in Finland first by Cartel. Excellent customer service at the shop is a key part of their business: helping the customer throughout the visit with genuine care and support. Cartel seeks to provide its customer with the same great experience also when they are shopping online. Since 2004, the Cartel online store has been running non-stop and it is ever-growing. Cartel is a 100 % Finnish company and it is one of the key values they provide.

The commissioner's interests in the thesis are in gaining valuable Customer Intelligence about their market. Illustrating the Customer Journey Map aims to provide them with tools and insights on more efficient online marketing, understanding the customers' needs and eventually to create more sales.

### **2.4 Skateboarding as a sport**

Skateboarding or skating, in short, was invented in California, the United of States of America in the 1960s as a substitute to surfing on windless days and through the early years of the sport it was nothing more than that: a substitute to another sport. In the late 1970s, the sport had a breakthrough and at that time, outdoor facilities were made for skateboarding specifically. (Suomen Rullalautaliitto, 2018)

The essentials of skateboarding are to move around with the board and to do tricks with it. The tricks vary from flipping the board on flat ground to doing a stunt-like full flip with the board on a quarter-pipe. The popularity of skateboarding lies in its lack of rules and freedom of the environment to conduct the sport. Skateboarding is a fun and both physically and mentally demanding sport. One can get hurt, as in any other action sport, if not having a cautious approach to building up personal skills. It may seem chaotic and dangerous, but it is quite safe compared to many other sports. Injuries do not occur more often than in other forms of leisure time activities. (Suomen Rullalautaliitto, 2018)

In Finland skateboarding was a very small sport until the late 1980s when it became popular among young people. In the 1990s the growth was hindered by non-skateboarders: the sport was vandalism and because of the rather young age of the skateboarders at the time, their voice could not be heard in the society. Another barrier to the growth was the weather conditions in Finland compared to California. At the time, indoor skateparks were scarce and many skateboarders quit during the cold winter months. Despite these setbacks, the Finnish National Skateboarding Championships have been held annually since the late 1980s. By the 21st century, the active and competitive scene of skateboarders were in their 30s and began to establish associations and to demand better indoor facilities. Now skateparks are among the most requested sports facilities by citizens and its popularity is growing rapidly. Simultaneously the appreciation of the sport has increased, although it is not seen as “sporty” as the traditional ones. (Suomen Rullalautaliitto, 2018)

A skateboard is a product that consists of many different parts. Each part of the board is made of different raw materials and must endure different amounts and numbers of impacts. Therefore, buying a completely new board at once is very rare for skateboarders. (Suomen Rullalautaliitto, 2018)

## **2.5 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis project began while the student was on a study exchange in a TAMK partner university Cork Institute of Technology in Cork, Ireland. The preliminary

online course on the thesis was completed in December 2018. The thesis topic was created during the exchange on a Marketing course where each student was to create an imaginary company to do marketing with. The author realized that no academic research had been previously conducted on the skateboard hardware business and it would be motivating to write a thesis on a topic that fits the studies and personal interests.

The thesis commissioner was chosen in February when the author contacted Kartelli Sport Oy with an offer. The thesis contract was signed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February at the company's store premises in Koskikeskus mall in Tampere. Simultaneously, it was agreed with Hangup that they would help with the primary data collection by sharing it on social media.

The primary data was collected during a 14-day period from Monday, March 18<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, March 31<sup>st</sup>. Before the official launch on March 18<sup>th</sup>, the primary data collection method was tested on a focus group to finetune the user interface and the effectiveness of the survey. Creating the survey also included creating visuals with Adobe Photoshop and copywriting the survey.

After the data collection, the results were converted into graphs and descriptive data and analyzed with both Human Intelligence and Business Intelligence.

The thesis writing, mainly chapters 2 and 3, began in January 2019 and continued until late April.

The biggest challenge throughout the thesis writing process was not to let major personal interest on the topic cause biased writing or interpretation of data. On the other hand, personal interest kept the author motivated to the project and the focus was not distracted from the core: the research question.

### **3 LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1 Literature**

The literature chosen for the research is world-known marketing books by authors, who all have set the foundations for both basic and contemporary theories, principles and approaches to marketing. All these books represent the foundations of marketing theories and definitions. They have also been used as sources to further develop other contemporary theories related to marketing. These books provide the framework for the Buyer Decision Process. Explaining the Customer Journey Map theoretically requires online sources, as there is not any literature about the most recent, efficient and accurate ways to illustrate the journey. These sources are proven to be trustworthy judging by their publisher's reputation.

#### **3.2 Theories and concepts**

The selected theories are related to Customer Experience, Market Research, and Digital Marketing Planning. After evaluating the alternatives, the final theories that will be further investigated are:

- The Buyer Decision Process
- Customer Journey Map
- Touchpoints on the Map

These theories provide a framework for reaching the goal of the thesis and academically validate the use of primary data collection. Their purpose is to narrow down the scope of the thesis: the purpose of which is not to create a holistic marketing plan, but a validated part of it. These frameworks have been academically used before in related topics. The goal of using a framework is to not get side-tracked with the research – focusing only on research matters that provide real value for the author and the commissioner.

### 3.3 Theoretical framework

According to Kotler et al. (2013), in the contemporary business world, marketing actions are based on something specific, tangible or non-tangible: a company does not have marketing actions just for the sake of marketing. Marketing always has a goal, whether it is to increase awareness or to create more sales. Understanding the customer is crucial for the company in providing superior value to attract new customers and to keep the current ones. (Kotler et.al. 2013, 4-5)

#### 3.3.1 The buyer decision process in general

The initial purchase, whether it happens online or offline, is not the starting point of the Customer Journey. The whole process starts long before the purchase decision and it goes on well after it. It all starts when there is a need recognized: internal stimuli like being thirsty, or external stimuli like an online advertisement can trigger a specific need. The need can drive the buyer to search for more information, but if the need is strong enough, the buyer might skip this stage of the process. In many cases, the need is then stored into memory. At this stage, the buyer might pay more attention to things related to the need – like looking at advertisements or discussing with friends about it. The third stage that follows is the evaluation of alternatives, where the buyer has narrowed down the options to choose from. At this stage, there are multiple evaluation processes the buyer uses. When the purchase decision is made from those alternatives, the final decision can still vary and turn into a purchase intention. Two factors can still shift the purchase decision: the attitudes of others and unexpected situational factors. The latter refers to an external factor affecting the buyer in between the intention and initial purchase, like a mobile advertisement from one of the alternatives promoting a discount. This will lead to the initial purchase, and what follows, is the post-purchase behavior. At this stage, the buyer is either satisfied or non-satisfied with what (s)he has bought. Whatever is the case, a marketer must capture that behavior to better understand the buyer's expectations. From there, the marketer can adjust the value proposition for the buyer. In all these stages of the buyer decision process, the marketer has a big role in providing value *for* the customer and in return, capturing value *from* the customer. (Kotler et al. 2013, 161-162)

Brian Signorelli (2018) also writes about the Buyer Decision Process and the shift in it after the global spread of Internet access. He states that before the internet-era, the buyer was obliged to talk with a salesman to make a purchase. Before the purchase decision, the salesman was the one to provide the information to the buyer. The salesman could even abuse the situation: providing the customer with false information to engage with them and convert the purchase intention to a purchase decision. (Signorelli 2018, 21)

Nowadays, the Internet has shifted the power from the salesperson to the buyer: it enables the buyer to read, compare and form an understanding of the costs and value of the product or service. The Internet is also seen as a more trustworthy source of information by the buyer than what the salesperson has to offer. Subsequently, the salesperson can no longer get away with providing false information. In the past, only a fraction of the suspect and prospect customers would hear about one's bad customer experience with a salesman, but nowadays they will hear about it instantly or within a few minutes. (Signorelli 2018, 22-23)

The Buyer Decision Process, according to Signorelli, is nowadays supported by Inbound Sales, where a successful company understands the context of the buyer: his or her challenges and doubts in understanding the value in the product and framing them. The company then educates the buyer in the stages of the buying decision in a personalized manner. (Signorelli 2018, 23).

This same theory applies to draw Customer Journey Maps, that are product- or service-specific illustrations of this process with touchpoints.

### **3.3.2 Customer journey mapping**

Customer Journey Mapping (CJM) is a widely used method by companies to better understand their customers' buying decision process. It is derived from the previously mentioned marketing planning foundations: The Buyer Decision Process framework.



Adele Revella (2015) states that the Buyer's Journey is an opportunity for a company to focus on the assets that affect the buyer the most on each stage of the journey, from the initial trigger event to approving the decision. Instead of pure guessing which assets affect the buyer the most, it enables the company's marketers to reduce the number of assets to the most critical ones. As the journey varies a lot depending on the context, there is no simple solution to drawing a Customer Journey Map. The best way to draw the map is to ask the current customers to tell their story (collecting primary data) and analyzing it (using data analysis methods). (Revella 2015, 156)

She also states that several companies underestimate the importance of the Buyer's Journey: the salespeople have very little to no information about the buyers' earlier stages of the journey and the barriers they might have faced. These barriers, however, are the part of the journey where marketing should influence the most. (Revella 2015, 43)

Revella does provide a framework for Customer Journey Mapping; the questions to the customers that find out these crucial barriers, but it focuses on Business-to-Business sales, where the final approval of buying decision often involves many individuals' approval. In Business-to-Consumer sales, the number of approvals is only one and that is the buyers. Therefore, in the case of the thesis commissioner, there needs to be a framework that better suits in finding the barriers of individual skateboard hardware buyers.

The framework chosen is Adam Richardson's, a Harvard Business Review article writer's, approach. This framework was published on the Harvard Business Review as an online article. The same article is used as a reference for multiple other online articles. The whole framework is divided into three sections: Understanding Customer Experience (Richardson, 2010a), Using Customer Journey Maps to Improve Customer Experience (Richardson, 2010b) and Touchpoints Bring the Customer Experience to Life (Richardson, 2010c).

According to Richardson, the definitions of Customer Experience vary a lot, depending on the field of business it is being looked from: in online, the definition is

the digital experience on a smart device for example. On the other hand, Customer Experience is often related to customer service at retail or the case handling speeds at call centers. These individual definitions, however, are not enough for a company to thrive in today's business. Instead, the Customer Experience is a sum of these previously mentioned definitions that are linked to one another. (Richardson, 2010a)

CJM is very simple in theory: it visualizes the stages and path a customer goes through in engaging with a company (Richardson, 2010b). In some cases, the journey can be illustrated in a very simple manner, as seen in Table 3.1 below.

Engage	Buy	Use	Share	Complete
A customer sees an advertisement or visits a store	Purchasing online or at the store	Using the product or service	Sharing the experience with others	A new journey by buying again or switching to a competitor

Table 3.1 A simple Customer Journey Map. Richardson, 2010b.

In more complex journeys, the map is also more complex, as seen in Table 3.2. In this map, the main concept from the map in Table 3.1 is taken a step further, thoroughly analyzing the interactions between the customer and the company.

	STAGES OF THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY					
	Aware-ness	Re-search	Pur-chase	Out-Of-Box-Experience	Using	Sharing
Actions	What is the customer doing at each stage? What actions are they taking to proceed to the next stage?					
Motivations	Why is the customer motivated to proceed to the next stage? Any emotions? Why do they care?					
Questions	What are the uncertainties or other issues preventing from proceeding?					
Barriers	What structural, cost, process, implementation, or other barriers are there in the way of proceeding?					

TABLE 3.2 Customer Journey Mapping framework. Richardson, 2010b

The best practice of finding the answers to these questions lie in customer research, preferably in interviews with current customers where the company has a better chance of capturing more rich data than in surveys or focus groups (Richardson, 2010b). Before collecting the primary data with an online survey for this thesis, the author used himself as an interviewee to apply Richardson's theory in Table 3.2.

	Awareness	Research	Purchase	Oobe
Ac-tions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Sees someone else using it, online or in a magazine</li> <li>-Hears about it from friends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ask friends for advice</li> <li>-Visit stores and ask employees</li> <li>-Read websites, social media and magazines for reviews and to gain an understanding of the domain</li> <li>-Understand how it fits other parts of the board</li> <li>-Learn industry standards</li> <li>-Look for sales discounts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Go to the skate shop</li> <li>-Talk to the skate shop owner</li> <li>-Compare side by side</li> <li>-Compare weight</li> <li>-Consider installation service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Open packaging</li> <li>-Look for stickers</li> <li>-Confirm all parts are there</li> <li>-Set up board</li> </ul>
Moti-va-tions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The old one is broken</li> <li>-An event is coming</li> <li>-Buying as a gift</li> <li>-A cool friend has one</li> <li>-Technology advances, Research, and development breakthrough</li> <li>-Fear of missing out</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Make the best choice / not a bad choice</li> <li>-Get the best deal</li> <li>-Satisfy my needs</li> <li>-Showoff to friends</li> <li>-The latest product</li> <li>-Know enough to not get fooled by skate shop owner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-See different model on sale</li> <li>-Get out quickly</li> <li>-Sale going on</li> <li>-Competitions coming up</li> <li>-New hot model released</li> <li>-Salesperson recommended</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Get finished fast (excited to see it work)</li> <li>-Avoid frustration</li> <li>-Don't hurt yourself (sharp edges)</li> <li>-Check out the performance</li> <li>-Brag to friends</li> </ul>
Ques-tions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-How much is it?</li> <li>-Can I afford it?</li> <li>-Is it an improvement?</li> <li>-Is it cool?</li> <li>-What will my friends think?</li> <li>-Do I need a separate cruiser board?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What is the best?</li> <li>-What can I get for my budget?</li> <li>-Is it future-proof? Endurance?</li> <li>-Will it fit my board?</li> <li>-Are there hidden things I need to buy?</li> <li>-Are there any big sales soon?</li> <li>-What's important?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Do I want it?</li> <li>-How do I get it home?</li> <li>-Is it in stock / on sale?</li> <li>-Do I need this?</li> <li>-Should I buy this?</li> <li>-Tax included? Shipping fees? Handling fees?</li> <li>-Does my old hardware fit this?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Is it damaged? (inspect the packaging and the product)</li> <li>-Do I need help setting it up?</li> <li>-Do I have every tool I need?</li> <li>-How do I adjust the trucks?</li> <li>-What do I do with the old part(s)?</li> </ul>
Barri-ers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Status quo: Current hardware is good enough</li> <li>-Not aware or interested (when buying for someone else or as a gift)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Honest unbiased reviews online</li> <li>-Too much to learn</li> <li>-No time to do the necessary research</li> <li>-Too many options to choose from</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Desired item out of stock</li> <li>-Different measures (trucks especially)</li> <li>-Bad customer service</li> <li>-Remorse: reverting to the last stage</li> <li>-Not enough knowledge of all jargon to form a decision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What to do with the old part(s)</li> <li>-Store the used part and trying to sell it</li> <li>-Having to assemble the complete</li> </ul>

TABLE 3.3 Customer Journey Map of the thesis author's purchases.

Obviously, this map, as seen in table 3.3, was not enough to draw reliable, informative conclusions for the commissioner and it needed to be validated by conducting an online survey.

### 3.3.3 Touchpoints

Richardson (2010) states that there are six stages on the journey, as seen in Table 3.2:

- Awareness
- Research
- Purchase
- Out-Of-Box-Experience
- Using
- Sharing

After this cycle, the customer starts again from the beginning when there is a new purchasing need. For this thesis, the focus is on the first four stages from Awareness to Out-Of-Box-Experience.

Kotler et al. (2013) state that along the Customer Journey there are certain points where there is contact between the customer and the company. These points are called touch points. Smart companies use every one of them to capture valuable information from the customers. (Kotler et al 2013, 128)

This definition is clearly defining the touch points to two-way communication points only, where the company can capture information from the customer. Another definition of touch points also takes one-way communication and context into account. According to Richardson (2010), there are four different types of touch points on the CJM and each of them has extinguishing characteristics. For the purposes of this thesis, we will use Richardson's model for defining the touchpoints. (Richardson, 2010c)

*Product* is a rather wide term to be used for a touch point, but it means the actual product or service and, in many cases, the company's website. Many companies use their website to directly increase and drive sales in forms of online stores, discounts and other customer-valued features like price comparisons. For those that use their website as a Marketing tool, the website falls into a different category of touch points. (Richardson, 2010c)

The second category is *Interactions*, which are two-way communications with the customer. These include face-to-face communication in-store, phone calls and virtual communication in social media or online in general. (Richardson, 2010c)

The third category is *Messages*, which means one-way communication from the company to the customer. The *Messages* can be in the form of advertising, packaging, user manuals and alike. (Richardson, 2010c)

The fourth category is *Settings*: the place or context where the product is seen or used. This can be at the store, at friends' home or in product placements. Nowadays, especially in retail sales, the company has less control over how their product is presented at the retailers' store. (Richardson, 2010)

Even though the two authors have different views on the definition of touch points, they do agree that whatever the touch point is, there needs to be consistency in the touch points when the customer proceeds from one stage to another or takes a step back. The touchpoints need to be seen as a whole (Richardson 2010) and like any marketing plan, they need to be strategically melded together to deliver superior value (Kotler & Keller 2012, 44). This coherent theme is visualized in Table 3.4.

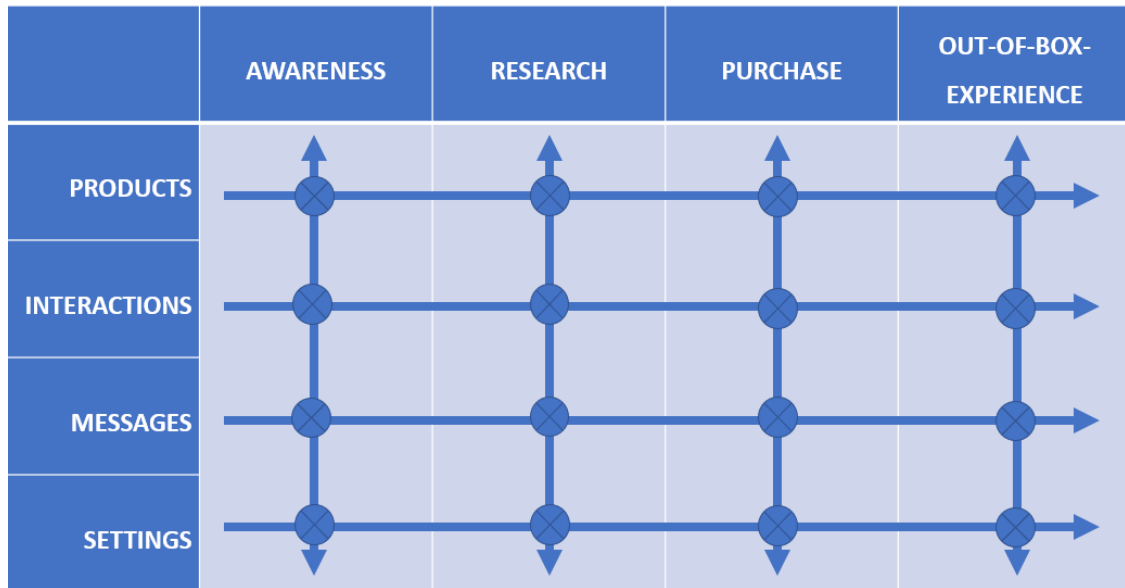


TABLE 3.4 Different types of touchpoints on the CJM. Richardson, 2010c

In this map, the arrows resemble the consistent theme that needs to exist vertically on all touchpoints and horizontally on each stage of the journey. However, Richardson (2010c) states that each touchpoint is however unique and in order to provide superior customer experience, the company must be fully aware of what specific it does on every one of them. The touchpoints need to take the customers' concerns, motivations, and questions into consideration. As mentioned before, the tone of voice needs to remain the same in each touchpoint. In some larger companies, different touchpoints are managed by different departments within the company, who might have differentiating opinions on what is the highest priority for the company. (Richardson, 2010c)

## 4 ANALYSING PRIMARY DATA

### 4.1 Survey structure

The online survey was split into three sections that follow the Customer Journey Map stages of awareness, research, purchase, and out-of-box-experience in chronological order. The approach to the survey creation was that first, it needed to cover every question there was about the journey: the questions were formed by applying Richardson's (2010) theory to skateboard hardware purchases. It was then tested on a small focus group of twenty ideal respondents that gave feedback on how long it took to fill the survey and if there were anything they would improve. After two feedback rounds on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> of February and Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> of February, the survey came to its final form.

The survey consisted of 13 qualitative and 4 quantitative questions. On 11 questions there were options to choose from and 6 questions were open-ended questions. The 17 questions were divided into three sections with section breaks to make the survey look easy to fill; scrolling through 17 questions on one page might have caused respondents to skip filling the survey because it would take a long amount of time to fill.

Every question was required to answer, except for one follow-up question. After successfully submitting the survey, the respondent was given an opportunity to fill the survey again with a different buying experience. However, there was not a possibility to change the answers after submission.

In collaboration with Finland's biggest skateboarding media Hangup, the survey was opened and launched on Facebook (Picture 4.1) on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and closed on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019. The caption was carefully copywritten for skateboarders, as there were no awards given to the respondents. There needed to be something else that would catch the attention of the viewer and make them click through to the survey. This was made by adding the emojis in the text as young people do and by using capital letters on the title to draw an urge to answer, or "fear of missing out". The caption needed to be compact, short and easy



to read. The middle sentence translates into English as “A skateboarder from Tampere is the first one to research the (skateboarding) business:” followed by the survey internet link, which opens in a browser seamlessly on all platforms and devices. By adding the dates, the post almost felt like an invitation to have an impact on the skateboarding business. Also, it was crucial that the survey’s title was visible on the post since it states that it takes only six minutes to fill.



Picture 4.1 Screenshot of the Hangup’s post on Facebook

Also, the thesis commissioner posted a similar post at the same time on their Facebook page, but added a post on Instagram, as seen in Picture 4.2



Picture 4.2 Screenshot of the Cartel Store's post on Instagram

On Monday 25<sup>th</sup> of March, the survey was posted again (Picture 4.3) in social media to increase the reach and number of responses.



Picture 4.3 Screenshot of the Hangup's second post on Facebook

The first social media post (Picture 4.1) had good key performance indicators, which are very useful for companies in measuring their social media presence. The post had reached 3376 people, of which 503 opened the full post on Facebook and 300 clicked the link to the Google Forms survey.

## 4.2 Survey questions

The questions on the survey were designed to answer the questions that were presented in Table 3.2. The corresponding questions are visualized in Table 4.1 below.

	STAGES OF THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY				
	Awareness	Re-search	Pur-chase	Out-Of-Box-Experience	The corresponding question in the survey
Actions	What is the customer doing at each stage? What actions are they taking to proceed to the next stage?				7, 9, 12, 14
Motivations	Why is the customer motivated to proceed to the next stage? Any emotions? Why do they care?				8, 13, 17
Questions	What are the uncertainties or other issues preventing from proceeding?				10, 15
Barriers	What structural, cost, process, implementation, or other barriers are there in the way of proceeding?				11, 15.5, 16

TABLE 4.1 Customer Journey Mapping framework with the corresponding question in the survey

Questions 1-6 were background questions that defined the respondent's age, home county, how long the respondent has been skateboarding, which skateboard part had the respondent previously or most recently bought, did the respondent make the purchase online or at the store and which brand is the product.

These background questions were chosen so that the focus of the research would not be distracted with irrelevant background information. Drawing the Customer Journey Maps for skateboard hardware purchase does not require information on gender or specific home towns, as one might see in other surveys. The questions 1-6 (see Appendix 1) were carefully chosen to define the Customer Journey Map the most effectively.

This section's most important question was Question 5 that asked where the respondent had made the purchase in question. Not only was it important for the purposes of drawing the big picture, but also to narrow down the scope of the thesis. Online and offline purchases have different Customer Journeys, and for the purposes of this thesis, the online purchases were analyzed more thoroughly. The offline purchases were also analyzed, but only in a descriptive statistics manner and were not used to draw conclusions for the thesis commissioner. Question 6 asked of which brand the skateboard part was. The answers to this question were not used in data analysis, but it was a crucial part of data validation: when the respondent reached this question, it was made sure that he or she answers to one specific skateboard part purchase only, if he or she had skipped the survey filling instructions at the beginning of the survey.

Questions 7-13 were focusing on the first two stages of the journey: Awareness and Research. In this section, the key question was Question 11. It asked the "*whys*", the *motives* behind choosing a specific brand over others.

Questions 14-17 on Section 3 focused on the Purchase and Out-Of-Box-Experience stages. Like questions 7-13, these were formed by researching online articles.

Question 15 and the follow-up question 15.5 were the most important questions in the section: if the buyer had any doubts about the purchase decision at the purchase stage (Question 15), the follow-up question (Question 15.5) was created for the respondent to think why he or she had hesitated. This bit of information was crucial in determining the final recommendations of the thesis.

### **4.3 Data analysis methods**

Human Intelligence (HI), the human ability to draw conclusions from data (Xiong, 2018) was used to remove false responses. Determining which answer was not of good enough quality to be included in the final data was up to the author. If the respondent had answered to an open question with only one special character (!"#%&) or in another insufficient manner, the whole response was excluded from the final data, not just a single answer. This was done to reduce bias in the data collection and to data provide the commissioner with reliable recommendations at the end.

The data was analyzed by using Business Intelligence (BI), computer-based data analysis software (Xiong, 2018), to reduce human errors in the data analysis, such as calculation errors and false interpretation of data. The BI software chosen were Google Forms' own data analysis tool and Microsoft Excel.

Google Forms' own tool quickly showed each question's answers in a pie chart form, which was a very time-saving way of seeing the big picture of the data instead of Microsoft Excel. After seeing the big picture and visually determining some sort of dependence between variables (survey questions), Microsoft Excel was used to concluding descriptive statistics of the responses. All the visual graphics for the purposes of this thesis were also created with Microsoft Excel's chart drawing tools.

### **4.4 Descriptive statistics**

The total number of responses was 418 and of those, 140 were responses of online purchases, 229 were in-store purchases and 49 were responses where the skateboard hardware had been bought somewhere else, for example, second-hand parts from private sellers. For the purposes of this thesis, the focus was on the online purchases and the two other types of purchases were left out for the rest of the data analysis, except for the data from questions 7, 8 and 10.

#### **4.5 Responses geographically and the most purchased parts**

As seen in the result graphs in Appendix 1, most of the survey participants were between 18 to 24-year-olds (34,3 %). Geographically, most of the participants lived in the southern parts of Finland, especially in Uusimaa (28,6 %). Most of the respondents, 53 out of 140 (37,9 %), have been skating between 10 to 20 years. A skateboard deck seems to be most often occurring purchase of all the skateboard parts, as 102 (72,9 %) of the responses were skateboard deck purchases. Out of the 140 responses, 102 (72,9 %) purchases were made in Finnish online skateboard shops and the rest (27,1 %) in online shops worldwide.

#### **4.6 Research stage**

In question 9 the participants were asked how they search for information about the parts or how to purchase them. Most of the participants, 43,3 %, told that they browse websites and online skateboarding shops in search of information. Roughly a quarter of the participants answered that the purchase intent was so strong that they skipped the researching information stage. (Appendix 1)

In question 12 the participants were asked where the brand they had purchased was visible the most: in online marketing, in discussions with friends or in advertisements at the skateboard shops. According to the participants, online marketing is the main platform for skateboard marketing, but in discussions with friends, the brands appear more often than what they are seen in skateboard shops.

#### **4.7 The impressions on the purchased brand and shop**

In question 13 the participants were asked if they would buy the same brand's parts again next time and had four options to choose from. This was question designed to validate qualitative data from the open-ended questions. Majority of the participants (67,1 %) answered option 3, which meant that they would buy the same brand again, if the price is right, meaning that they are happy with

the value they received. Option four was chosen by 29,3 % of the participants, which meant that they would even pay a little higher price just to get the brand. Options one and two were chosen by a small minority of the participants. These options meant that the participant was disappointed with the value they had received for their money. (Appendix 1)

In question 17 the participants were asked how likely on a scale from 1-5 they will end up buying the same part from the same store again. This data measures the overall customer experience of the stores. The average for the responses was 3,62. Scores 3-5 received 88,6 % of the total scores. Consequently, the participants were happy on average about the customer service, but there seems to exist real competition between skateboard shops because most of the respondents feel like they were not sure they would end up buying the part from the same store next time. (Appendix 1)

#### 4.8 Purchase frequency of different parts and the reasons for renewal

On question 7 the participants were asked how often they purchase the part. Therefore, the data gathered from question 7 alone is meaningless and needs to be connected to question 4, as seen in Table 4.2 below.

DEKKI		GRIPPI		LAAKERIT		TRUKIT		RENKAAT		OHEISTARVIKKEET	
Kahden viikon välein	3	Kahden viikon välein	0	Kahden viikon välein	0	Kahden viikon välein	0	Kahden viikon välein	0	Kahden viikon välein	0
Kerran kuussa	35	Kerran kuussa	1	Kerran kuussa	0	Kerran kuussa	0	Kerran kuussa	0	Kerran kuussa	0
Kolmen kuukauden välein	112	Kolmen kuukauden välein	3	Kolmen kuukauden välein	1	Kolmen kuukauden välein	0	Kolmen kuukauden välein	3	Kolmen kuukauden välein	0
Puolen vuoden välein	62	Puolen vuoden välein	2	Puolen vuoden välein	3	Puolen vuoden välein	2	Puolen vuoden välein	8	Puolen vuoden välein	2
Kerran vuodessa	61	Kerran vuodessa	1	Kerran vuodessa	9	Kerran vuodessa	6	Kerran vuodessa	12	Kerran vuodessa	2
Harvemmin kuin kerran vuodessa	26	Harvemmin kuin kerran vuodessa	0	Harvemmin kuin kerran vuodessa	12	Harvemmin kuin kerran vuodessa	27	Harvemmin kuin kerran vuodessa	14	Harvemmin kuin kerran vuodessa	11

TABLE 4.2 Data from question 7 allocated to different skateboard parts from question 4

In table 4.2, all 418 responses were included in the analysis. The endurance of the skateboard part or product lifecycle in business terms, which is question 7's second meaning, is the same whether it is bought online or in-store. As it turns

out, the wooden part of the skateboard, the deck, is the most often replaced part of the board. This conclusion comes from both the facts that

- a. The deck was answered by far the most to question 4 (see Appendix 1)
- b. The majority of those (112 responses) answered that they replace the part every three months “Kolmen kuukauden välein”, in Table 4.2

According to the author of the thesis, a grip tape, “Grippi” in Table 4.2, that is attached on top of the deck, usually is given for free or costs a few euros when one buys a new deck from a skateboard shop, hence causing the low amount of responses for the part.

The bearings, “Laakerit” in Table 4.2, that is put inside the wheels, “Renkaat” in Table 4.1, are replaced once a year or less often by the participants.

The trucks, “Trukit” in Table 4.2, are made of stainless steel and are considered the most durable part of the board by the participants, as 27 of those 35 (77,1 %) who bought new trucks, answered that they replace the part less frequently than once per year.

According to the survey, the wheels are replaced with the same occurrence than the bearings – once per year or less often.

The bolts, screws, nuts and other attachments and minor parts, “Oheistarvikkeet” in Table 4.2, are also replaced less frequently than once per year. This category of skateboard parts consists of parts that cost less than 15 euros on average and some of them are given for free when buying, for example, a pair of trucks, one gets 4 axle nuts.

The same data analysis method applied for question 8, as it did for question 7, which asked why the respondent purchased the part and he or she had four different options to choose from or to tell with his or her own words. The allocated data from question 8 can be seen in Table 4.3 below.



DEKKI		GRIPPI		LAAKERIT		TRUKIT		RENKAAT		OHEISTARVIKKEET	
Vanha osa oli kulunut, mutta edelleen käytettävissä	122	Vanha osa oli kulunut, mutta edelleen käytettävissä	5	Vanha osa oli käyttökelvoton	13	Vanha osa oli käyttökelvoton	12	Vanha osa oli kulunut, mutta edelleen käytettävissä	23	Vanha osa oli käyttökelvoton	4
Vanha osa oli käyttökelvoton	115	Ostin varaosaksi valmiiksi	1	Vanha osa oli kulunut, mutta edelleen käytettävissä	7	Vanha osa oli kulunut, mutta edelleen käytettävissä	6	Vanha osa oli käyttökelvoton	7	Vanha osa oli kulunut, mutta edelleen käytettävissä	4
Ostin varaosaksi valmiiksi	40			Halusin vaihtaa aiemmin käyttämäni tuotemerkkiä	2	Halusin vaihtaa aiemmin käyttämäni tuotemerkkiä	5	Ostin varaosaksi valmiiksi	2	Ostin varaosaksi valmiiksi	2
Halusin vaihtaa aiemmin käyttämäni tuotemerkkiä	3			Ostin varaosaksi valmiiksi	1	Ostin varaosaksi valmiiksi	2			Halusin vaihtaa aiemmin käyttämäni tuotemerkkiä	1

TABLE 4.3 Data from question 8 allocated to different skateboard parts from question 4

As seen in Table 4.3, the different parts clearly have a different reason for replacing it. Since the deck is the most often replaced part as found out earlier, it is also being bought as a spare part the most often (40 answers). Also, by being the most fragile part of the board, it is also bought almost as often when the old part is completely broken (115 answers) as it is been bought when the old part is still usable, but in bad condition (122 answers). The most remarkable fact is that only 3 respondents said that the main reason for replacing the old part was mainly because they wanted to change the brand they were previously using. This means that the deck is usually used until it is in unusable or bad condition.

The grip tape, when bought individually, is replaced when the old part gets in bad condition.

The reason for buying a new set of bearings, according to the survey, is because the old part was in unusable condition (13 answers). There are 8 bearings in a complete skateboard and they hardly ever break all at the same time, but they are also sold in sets of 8 bearings. This means that when the skateboarder runs out of spare bearings, he or she buys a new set of 8; not because a single bearing breaks down.

According to the data, the trucks are replaced when the old part gets in unusable condition (12 answers). Since the part is made of hard, stainless steel, that has a few cheap replaceable parts, the truck itself does not have a barely usable condition: it is caused by those cheaper parts that are easily replaceable.

The wheels are most frequently bought when the old part gets in bad condition (23 answers). A complete skateboard has four wheels and they wear down simultaneously. Furthermore, they are sold in sets of four and replaced all at the same time.

According to the survey, the bolts, screws, nuts and other minor attachment parts are replaced equally when they wear down, become unusable or for spare parts.

#### 4.9 The three main features of the parts

In question 10 the participants were asked what the 3 main properties of the part are they had previously purchased. As the data from questions 7 and 8, the data from the question is also connected to specific skateboard parts and hence must be allocated by the answers to question 4, as seen in Table 4.4 below.

DEKKI		GRIPPI		LAAKERIT		TRUKIT		RENKAAT		OHEISTARVIKKEET	
*Koko*	202	*Laatu*	4	*Laatu*	23	*Laatu*	31	*Laatu*	33	*Kestävyy*	12
*Muodot*	184	*Kestävyy*	4	*Kestävyy*	23	*Kestävyy*	26	*Koko*	20	*Laatu*	10
*Laatu*	166	*Halpahinta*	2	*Halpahinta*	12	*Koko*	20	*Kestävyy*	18	*Halpahinta*	5
*Halpahinta*	98	*Ulkonäkö*	2	*Tuotemerkinuskottavuus*	10	*Tuotemerkinuskottavuus*	13	*Muodot*	12	*Tuotemerkinuskottavuus*	5
*Ulkonäkö*	84	*Koko*	1	*Kotimaisuus*	2	*Muodot*	6	*Halpahinta*	6	*Koko*	2
*Kestävyy*	76	*Tuotemerkinuskottavuus*	1	*Koko*	1	*Halpahinta*	2	*Tuotemerkinuskottavuus*	5	*Ulkonäkö*	1
*Tuotemerkinuskottavuus*	68	*Muodot*	0	*Muodot*	0	*Ulkonäkö*	2	*Ulkonäkö*	4	*Kotimaisuus*	1
*Kotimaisuus*	54	*Kotimaisuus*	0	*Ulkonäkö*	0	*Kotimaisuus*	0	*Kotimaisuus*	1	*Muodot*	0

TABLE 4.4 Data from question 8 allocated to different skateboard parts from question 4

The three main features for each part vary to some degree, as seen in Table 4.4. The overall quality, “Laatu” in Table 4.4, is among the top three features for all parts and highly valued by the participants. Visual appearance and a Finnish brand were not among the top three of any parts.

For the skateboard decks, the participants need the product of the right size, “Koko” in Table 4.4. According to the author, this is because of personal preferences and foot size; a larger foot needs a wider deck and vice versa. There is also a variety of different shapes available, “Muodot” in Table 4.4, that the participants value very much to fit their personal preference. Most of the parts need to have good durability, “Kestävyys” in Table 4.4, but the participants did not feel that way for the deck. Instead, the visual appearance, “Ulkonäkö” in Table 4.4, was a more valued feature.

The data for the grip tape is not enough to draw conclusions for its best features.

The bearings’ top three features that the participants’ value are quality, durability and low price, “Halpa hinta” in Table 4.4. Interestingly, the brand, “Tuotemerkin uskottavuus”

in Table 4.4, is almost as important for the buyers as the low price – even though the part is barely visible on a skateboard and none of the participants valued the visual appearance among their top three features.

According to the participants, the main features of a truck are overall quality, durability, and size. The fourth most valued feature is the brand, but a cheap price is valued by only two participants in their top three features, hence implicating that the trucks are more of an investment where the buyer really prefers quality to price.

For the wheels, according to the participants, the top three features are overall quality, size, and durability. Furthermore, the shape of the wheel was also valued among the participants. These features overrule the low-price feature, implicating that the participants look for products that are known for their quality.

The bolts, screws, nuts and other minor attachments are a group of products, hence causing the data for these parts not to be analyzable.

#### **4.10 Main findings of open-ended questions 11, 14, 15.5 and 16**

In this chapter, the answers of questions 11, 14, 15.5 and 16 are analyzed by Human Intelligence method. The method for questions 11 and 14 was to categorize the answers to one specific category based on which one of them it resembled the most. In the answers for question 15.5, the method was to analyze what type of things were mentioned the most. As for this question, as the number of responses was only 47, it was decided that analyzing them more thoroughly by labeling or categorizing would not create reliable data. For the answers of question 16, the method was to label the matters that the participants mentioned in each question, hence causing multiple labels on a single answer.

##### **4.10.1 The reasons for choosing between different brands**

In Question 11, respondents were asked why they had ended up buying that specific brand's product. The answers were categorized into seven different categories by determining what the answer resembled the most:

- Low price
- Quality
- Shape and special features
- Brand loyalty
- Reviews and recommendations
- Visuals
- None of the above

The most answers, 42 out of 140 answers (30,0 %), were categorized into the Brand loyalty category: the respondents answered a specific brand or that they had bought the same brand for years. A low price or discount was highlighted in 40 answers (28,6 %). The part's shape, size or product-specific features were

mentioned in 28 answers (20,0 %). The overall quality and endurance related answers counted for 15 answers (10,7 %).

#### **4.10.2 The reasons for choosing the online store**

In Question 14, respondents were asked why they had bought the product from that specific store. The answers were then categorized first into two categories, whether the store itself influenced the purchase or not. If yes, the answer was then categorized into one of five categories:

- Yes, brand loyalty
- Yes, the only option
- Yes, low prices or free shipping
- Yes, fast shipping
- Yes, selection

If the answer clearly stated that the store itself did not influence the purchase, it was then categorized as a non-store related purchase.

In 123 answers (87,9 %) the store itself influenced the purchase. In 53 (37,9 %) of these answers, the price of the product determined the destination of purchase. In 35 (25,0 %) answers the respondents chose the store because of its brand; trustworthiness or by supporting local. In 20 of the cases (14,3 %) the store was the only online store that had the product in stock. In 13 responses (9,3 %) the store had the best selection of products and in 4 of the cases (2,9 %), the fastest shipping determined the store of purchase. In 17 (12,1 %) of the total cases, the store had no effect on the purchase decision.

#### **4.10.3 The barriers at the purchase stage**

In Question 15 the respondent was asked whether he or she had considered other brands in the store. While the majority, 83 out of 140 (59,3 %), answered “No”, still a third of the participants, 57 out of 140 (40,7 %) answered “Yes”. The

follow-up question 15.5 was not required to answer, but everyone answered. In most of the answers, the price was mentioned as the key factor in holding back the purchase intent from turning into a purchase decision, causing them to consider other products. Also, many were comparing the products on how they look, what graphics there are, whether the product is a good value for money or not and if it was worth risking and trying something new.

#### **4.10.4 The most important assets of an online store**

In Question 16 the participants were asked to name the best thing(s) about shopping at the store where the purchase happened. As most of the answers had only one thing written down, there were a total of 159 label hits in 140 answers. The labels were:

- Low prices
- Fast shipping
- The store's brand
- Ease of ordering (User interface or by comparing online to in-store shopping)
- Customer service or special website features
- Selection

The ease of ordering, whether it is because of a good user interface or by comparing online shopping to in-store purchase, was mentioned in 55 answers (39,3 %) of the total 140 answers. Fast shipping was mentioned in 29 out of 140 answers (20,7 %), customer service or special website features in 24 out of 140 answers (17,1 %), selection in 22 out of 140 answers (15,7 %), low prices in 17 out of 140 answers (12,1 %) and the store's brand-related answers were 12 out of 140 answers (8,6 %).

#### **4.11 Summary for the important touchpoints and actions, motivations, questions and barriers for stages of the customer journey map**

In the following chapters, the actions, motivations, questions, and barriers of the participants are being summarized for each stage of the customer journey.

#### **4.11.1 Awareness**

The actions in the awareness stage are seeing online marketing and discussing with friends. To proceed to the next stage, the skateboarder reacts to a current part's complete breakage or bad condition caused by damage.

The motivation is to replace an old part, but for skateboard decks, the motivation is also to buy one to keep it ready for the future. Another motivation is to have a good customer experience again.

At this stage, the questions are:

- How much does the part cost?
- Which brand has good quality?

The barriers at this stage holding back from proceeding to the Research stage are brand loyalty; switching to a competitor is rare.

#### **4.11.2 Research**

Roughly a quarter of the participants skipped this stage because their purchase intent was so strong that they did not need to research for the best part for their needs.

The actions in this stage are browsing websites and looking for discounts on high-quality parts.

The motivations are to find a part that has the most quality for money but also to find the specific brand he or she has been using in the past.

The questions at this stage that need an answer to are:

- Is it the right size?
- Is it durable?
- Is it of good value for money?
- How fast is the shipping?

The barriers are a bad online store user interface, lack of customer service and a limited amount of selection at the store.

#### **4.11.3 Purchase**

The actions are browsing online stores for the best price for the product chosen in the Research stage.

The motivation is to receive the part fast and to avoid extra costs in terms of shipping or customs control. Another motivation is to enjoy the ease of online shopping.

The questions at this stage are:

- Does the store have it in stock?
- How fast will the part arrive?
- Are there hidden or extra costs?

The barriers at this stage are bad customer service, lack of selection, desired size being out of stock and reverting to the last stage because of bad online store functionality or user interface.

#### **4.11.4 Out-of-box-experience**

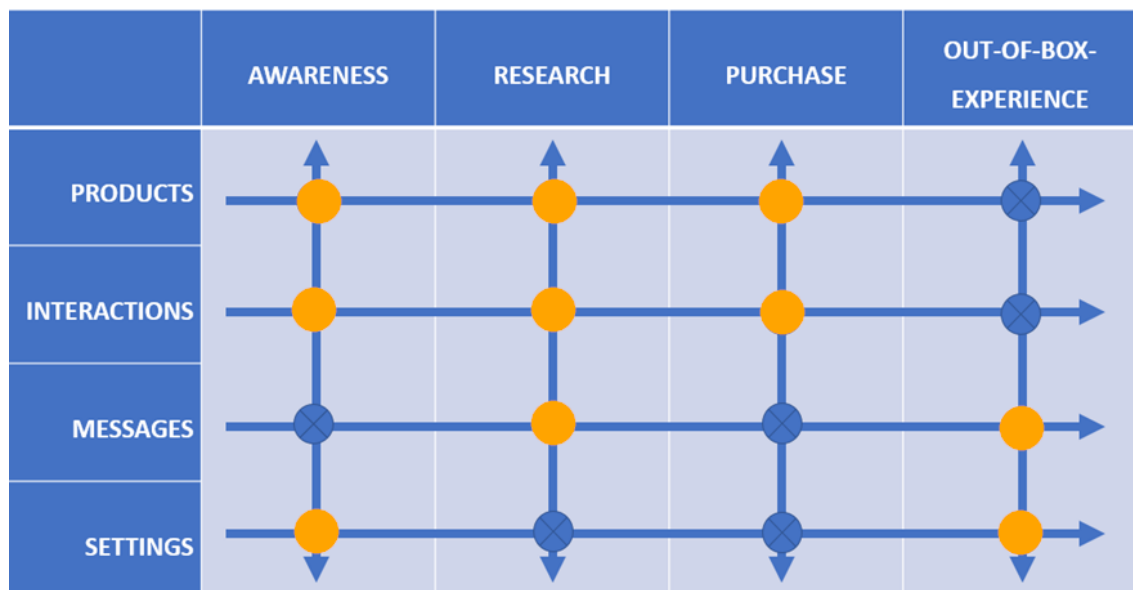
The Out-Of-Box-Experience was not covered enough in the data to draw conclusions for this stage. It was neither mentioned in the open-ended questions. This



implicates that the participants know what they are getting, and they might be very accustomed to the packaging of skateboard parts. On the other hand, the addition of Out-Of-Box-Experience in the Customer Journey Map is rather new, and the market might not be ready for it yet.

#### 4.11.5 Touchpoints

The touchpoints that were discovered from the data focus on Interactions and Products and the element of surprise in Messages. As discussed in earlier chapters, it is very important for a company to have a consistent theme in each of the touchpoints horizontally through the stages and vertically on different types of platforms: for example, on the awareness stage, the tone of voice and core message should be the same for each type of touchpoint: products, interactions, messages, and settings. The most important touchpoints for the commissioner are highlighted in Picture 4.4 below in orange.



PICTURE 4.4 The most important touchpoints for the commissioner

In the Awareness stage, the brand image the customer has in his or her head about the company makes the biggest difference. This can be enhanced by Products: a branded website or selling private label products, as the commissioner currently does. In interactions, this can be enhanced by being where the skateboarders are: social events and in-store helping customers. The brand image can

be enhanced by the Settings: having well-thought product placements in-store. By providing an excellent customer experience once, the customer will come back for more when there is a proactive or reactive motive for the customer to proceed to the next stage. In this and all other stages of the journey, the easiest way to turn a potential customer into a sale is by addressing their questions and barriers on each stage. It builds a relationship, that is profitable for both parties: the customer expects to receive an excellent experience and the company profits. In the Research stage, the most likely shop that converts the potential customer to a sale supports the customer's progress to purchase. It can be done in simple Interactions or Messages on social media, like in the comment section of a Facebook post: "We got what you need! We don't have what you need? Tell us what it is, and we try to get it for you the next time." Supporting and guiding the customer in this stage is by far the most important stage.

In the Purchase stage, it is important not to provide any kind of false information about the products. This can be a false stock status, inappropriately written product information, wrong sizes and so on. A large selection of close-to-premium-end products is what the buyer is looking for. Additionally, customers really do appreciate if an online shop has its own section for discounted products. Selling a special treat for a very low price occasionally keeps the customers coming back to see more proactively.

In the Out-Of-Box-Experience stage, the focus is on the Messages and Settings touchpoints. By utilizing the Messages, pushing one-way communication to the customer in the form of packaging that is beyond expectations and arouses emotions, creates memories that will be remembered the next time the customer thinks about shopping online and receiving a parcel.

## **5 DISCUSSION**

The objectives in Chapter 2.1.3 were set as milestones for the thesis writing process. They were successfully met, apart from drawing conclusions for the Out-Of-Box-Experience stage of the Customer Journey Map. The literature for the main theories of the topic was of reliable sources and up to date to the ever-changing world of marketing. In the following chapters, the success of the objectives is analyzed more thoroughly.

### **5.1 Primary data collection**

The data that was collected with the online survey fitted the theoretical frameworks well. The online survey, of all the possible methods, was the right one for the population: the number of responses skyrocketed. This was mainly achieved because of:

- well-managed survey planning
- author's studies and personal skills in creating the visuals and copywriting for the social media posts
- having Hangup Media as a partner spreading the survey improved the survey's brand

Google Forms turned out to be the right choice for the data collection platform: it worked on all devices without any bugs and the cumulative number of responses was easy to follow during the data collection.

### **5.2 Analyzing the data**

The data analysis methods were Human and Business Intelligence. Human Intelligence was used to ruling out false data and limiting the primary data to online purchases only. By doing so, the scope of the thesis remained in a logical topic,

preventing the thesis from side-tracking outside the chosen theoretical frameworks. By focusing only on online purchases in skateboard shopping, the author could also provide the commissioner with recommendations that better suit his skill set acquired in Marketing studies.

### **5.2.1 The buyer decision process in general**

The triggering event for the buyer's process to start is either an internal stimulus: part becoming unusable or soon to become one. In this case, the need for buying the replacement part is not stored in the memory for very long. The part usually needs a quick replacement, as the broken part prevents the buyer from skateboarding. Also, the triggering event can be an external stimulus: seeing a discount on a part that the buyer would buy in the future anyway, as the skateboard parts tend to need replacement anyway. In this case, the purchase intent is so strong that the buyer usually skips the research part and buys the part, because the barriers are too low to hinder the purchase intent: either the desired features of the parts are sold for less money than usual or the buyer buys the same brand as before, if the relationship with the brand or store is strong.

The following stage of evaluating alternatives is usually short. The evaluation processes on this stage are finding the part with the most quality for the money (discounts on premium-end brands) and finding the chosen brand for the lowest price. The purchase decision can, however, still revert to a purchase intent because of an unexpected situational factor, if the shipping time is long, the desired item is currently out of stock or the online store's user interface is not easy to use.

Because the buyers mainly purchase skateboard parts from an online store that has the lowest price on the desired item, the post-purchase behavior is hard to capture. That, however, does not implicate that the customer experience with the store does not matter. To some extent, the buyer searches for the item from an online store he or she has had a good customer experience with.

## 5.2.2 Customer journey map

The results of the primary data and the Customer Journey Map drawn from that is visualized below in Table 5.1

CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAP FOR SKATEBOARD PART PURCHASES				
	Awareness	Research	Purchase	Out-Of-Box-Experience
<b>Actions</b>	-Seeing online marketing -Discussing with friends -When a part breaks down, proceeds to next stage	-Browsing online stores -Looking for discounts on high-quality products	-Searching for the online store with the cheapest price for the item chosen in the Research stage	?
<b>Motivations</b>	-Replacing a damaged or broken part -Buying one for the future -Proceeds to have a good customer experience again	-Finding the part with the most quality for money -Finding a store that has the desired brand in stock	-Receiving the part fast -Avoiding extra costs in terms of shipping or customs control -Enjoying the ease of online shopping	?
<b>Questions</b>	-How much does a new part cost? -Which brand has good quality?	-Is it the right size? -Is it durable? -Is it of good value for money? -How fast is the shipping?	-Does the store have it in stock? -How fast will the part arrive? Are there hidden or extra costs?	?
<b>Barriers</b>	-Brand loyalty: switching to a competitor is rare	-Bad online shop user interface -Lack of customer service -Limited amount of selection	-Bad customer service -Lack of selection -Desired size out of stock -Reverting to the last stage because of bad online store functionality or user interface	?

TABLE 5.1 The Customer Journey Map based on the primary data

The Customer Journey Map created gives structure to future Marketing planning for the commissioner. By addressing the actions, motivations, questions, and barriers along the customer's journey, the commissioner can create a customer experience that stands out above competitors. The Out-Of-Box-Experience was left uncovered in this thesis, but it does not mean that there are no actions to be done

for addressing the customers actions, motivations, questions or barriers: to one of the open-ended questions, one participant answered

*“I was so surprised when I opened the parcel and saw a small hand-written letter from the store, congratulating me for my purchase decision. It made the ever-so-distant online shopping much more emotional and warmed my heart here in the middle of nowhere, where the closest skate store is miles away”*

Maybe the element of surprise lies in the out-of-box-experience? According to the author, the skateboard market is somewhat saturated in Finland: many companies have the same offerings, the brand is built on staying true to the sport and since the market is so niche, no-one is willing to take a risk of losing their income by failing to increase sales by doing something new marketing-wise. By going beyond the customers' current expectations could enhance the customer experience and eventually increase sales by returning customers.

### **5.2.3 Touchpoints on the map**

The most critical touchpoints along the Customer Journey Map were found from the data and they connect to the theoretical framework. These touchpoints enable the commissioner to focus on the assets that most affect the buyers and support them in their personal barriers and doubts. The content to be pushed or pulled at the touchpoints is crucial, yet the thesis does not offer it, but now the commissioner knows the assets to focus and can use the insights to create their own content in the future – instead of pure guessing.

### **5.3 Improvement suggestions**

One point of improvement for the thesis is still narrowing down the scope of the research. Even though the scope was narrowed down multiple times in discussions with the thesis coach, the feeling of the scope exceeding what is expected from a bachelor's thesis occurred multiple times. The market had not been researched before, so by doing the foundation well, future research is also enabled.

#### **5.4 Critical evaluation of the research design and implementation**

The primary data for drawing the final conclusions are validated by five methods:

1. The author's expertise in Customer Intelligence
2. By studying the theoretical framework well before designing the survey to collect data that helps to form informed, reliable conclusions
3. Using Human Intelligence
4. Using Business Intelligence
5. By analyzing the dependencies within the data

The author's personal interest in skateboarding may have caused slight bias in analyzing the open-ended questions, but it is always the case with qualitative data: how to measure it? The author did his best in reducing bias: using the theoretical framework as a standalone solution in analyzing the data.

Another data collection method might have been better for providing the commissioner with a more narrow scope of research: implementing the online survey to their website after an online purchase. By doing so, the data would have been a lot more accurate for their use. But then again, this was the first academic research on the sport, so by researching it on a more general level could be beneficial in the future for other researchers.

#### **5.5 Future research topics**

As this thesis is the first of its kind – academically researching the skateboard market – it also sets the ground for future research. Some of the suggestions for future research are the rest of the customer journey – what do skateboarders do in the Sharing stage of the journey? How to benefit from long-lasting customer relationships by returning customers? Another characteristic of researching an

unexplored and niche market like skateboarding is that there is nothing to compare the results to. However, the theoretical framework for the thesis was created by business geniuses that are being referenced to for many more years to come.

Another interesting aspect to skateboarding is the 2020 Summer Olympics, where skateboarding will become an Olympic sport for the first time. How will it impact the sport? According to the author, skateboarding has always been a sport where competitions cater only to a minor part of the skateboarder community.



## 6 CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis was to provide the commissioner with valuable Customer Intelligence and to set the ground for future research in the skateboard market. This purpose was kept in mind throughout the process from studying the theoretical framework, writing the Chapter 2 & 3, while designing the online survey, when analyzing the data and finally as the author was drawing the final conclusions. Another purpose of the thesis was to fill an information gap for the author: how the market around his favorite sport works.

The objective was to provide the commissioner with a Customer Journey Map of online skateboard hardware purchases in Finland. The Map was drawn after applying the Customer Journey Mapping theory by Adam Richardson, that considered the contemporary shift in the buying patterns. As a foundation for this theory was the Philip Kotler, Gary Armstrong, Lloyd C. Harris and Nigel Piercy's theory on the Buyer Decision Process. By combining these two theories, the data became more reliable and validating it was not as necessary. The most important touchpoints were also discovered from the customer journey for online shopping.

The research questions were answered in full in this thesis. The Buyer Decision Process in general, the Customer Journey and the most important touchpoints on it were discovered and the commissioner can take full advantage of them by addressing them in their online marketing in the future.

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## APPENDICES

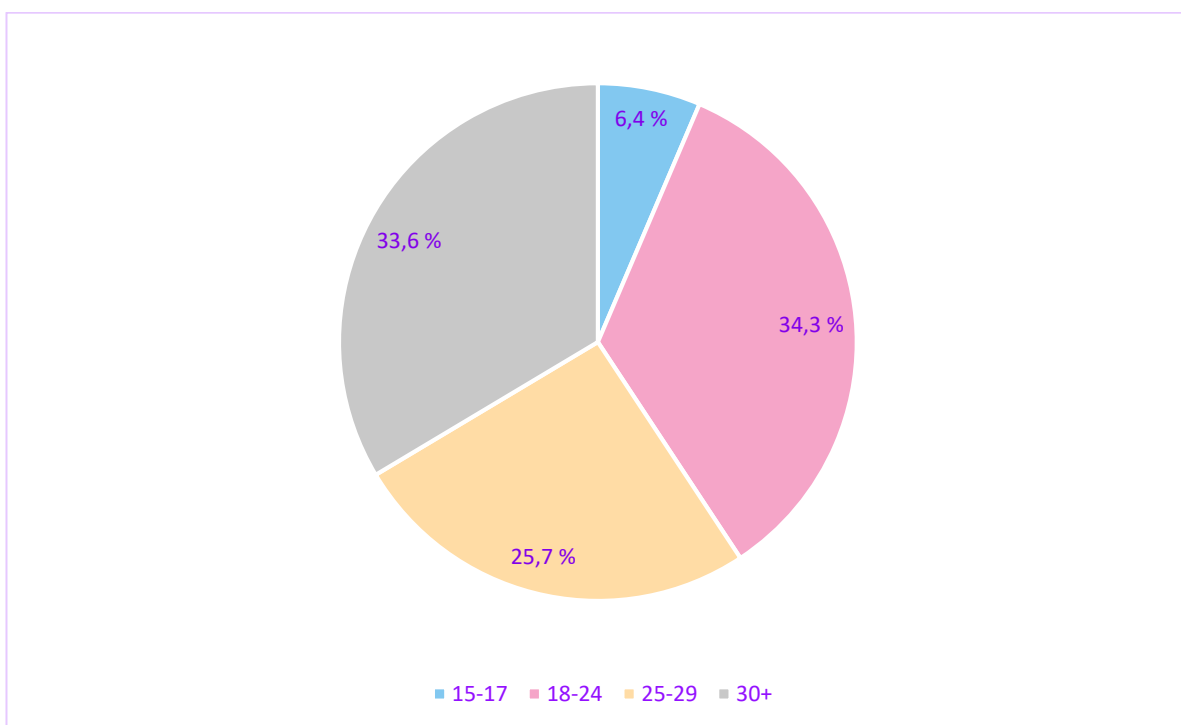
### Appendix 1. The online survey and answers

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#### PART 1/3 – Background questions

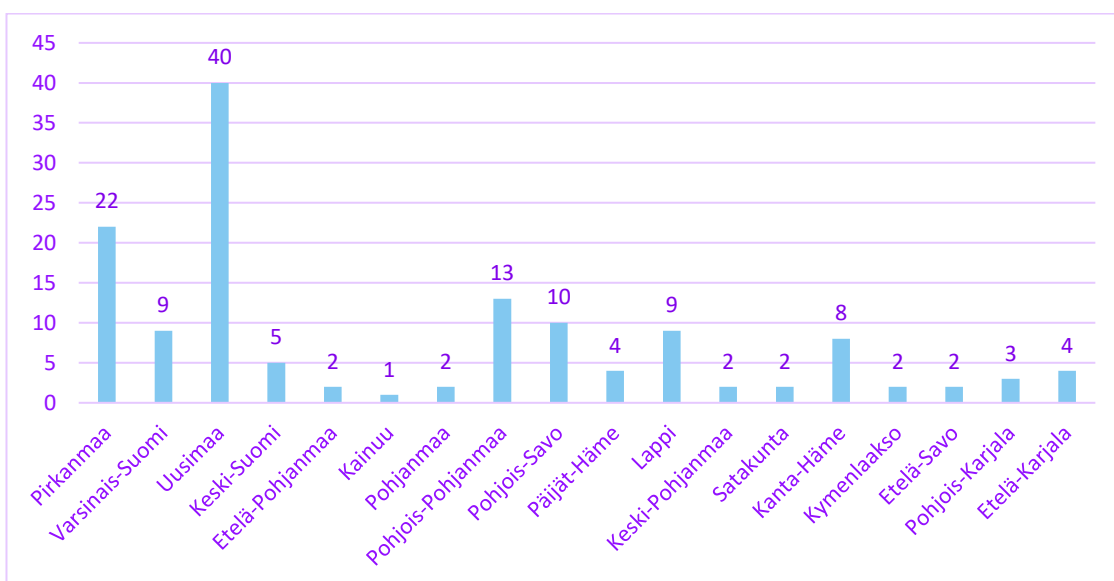
K1 Minkä ikäinen olet? \*

1. Alle 14
2. 15-17
3. 18-24
4. 25-29
5. 30+



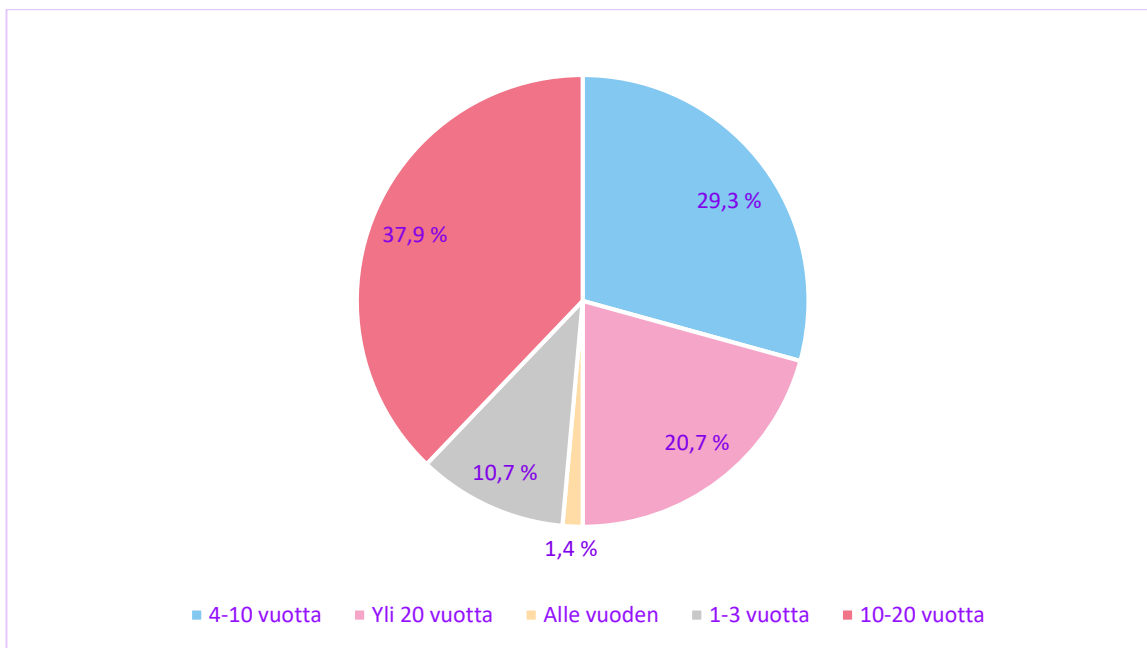
## K2 Missä maakunnassa asut? \*

1. Ahvenanmaa
2. Etelä-Karjala
3. Etelä-Pohjanmaa
4. Etelä-Savo
5. Kainuu
6. Kanta-Häme
7. Keski-Pohjanmaa
8. Keski-Suomi
9. Kymenlaakso
10. Lappi
11. Pirkanmaa
12. Pohjanmaa
13. Pohjois-Karjala
14. Pohjois-Pohjanmaa
15. Pohjois-Savo
16. Päijät-Häme
17. Satakunta
18. Uusimaa
19. Varsinais-Suomi

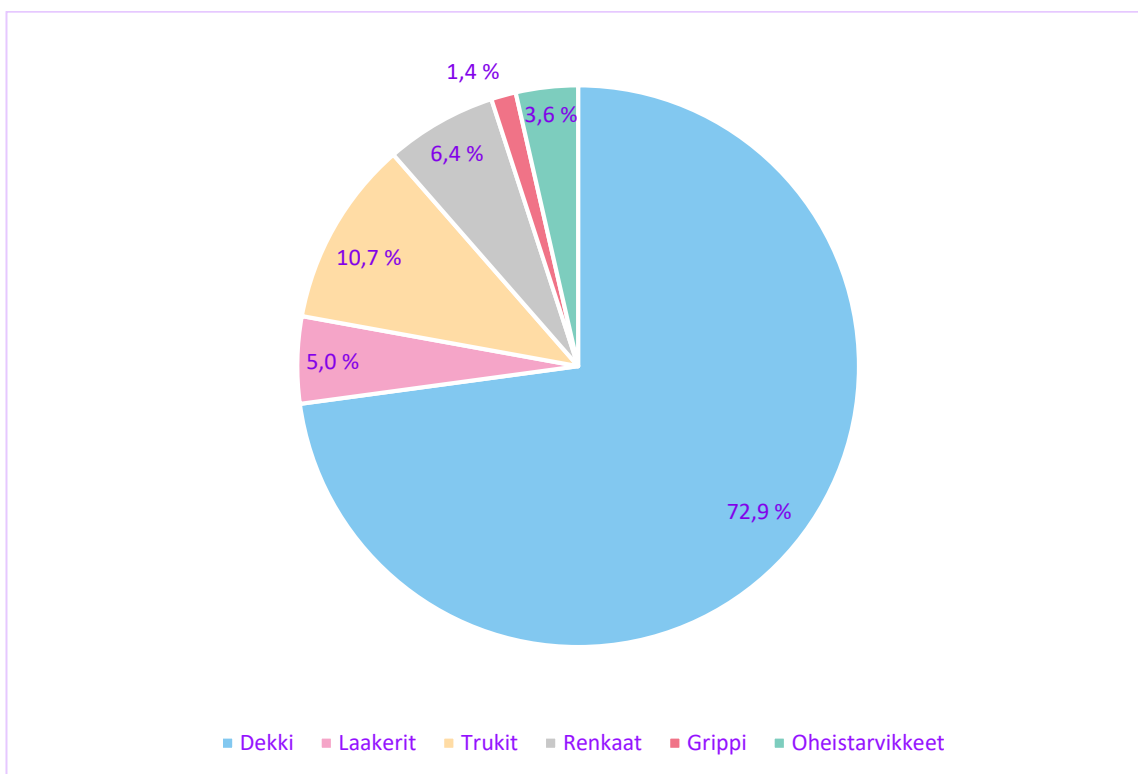


**K3 Kauanko olet harrastanut skeittausta? \***

1. Alle vuoden
2. 1-3 vuotta
3. 4-10 vuotta
4. 10-20 vuotta
5. Yli 20 vuotta

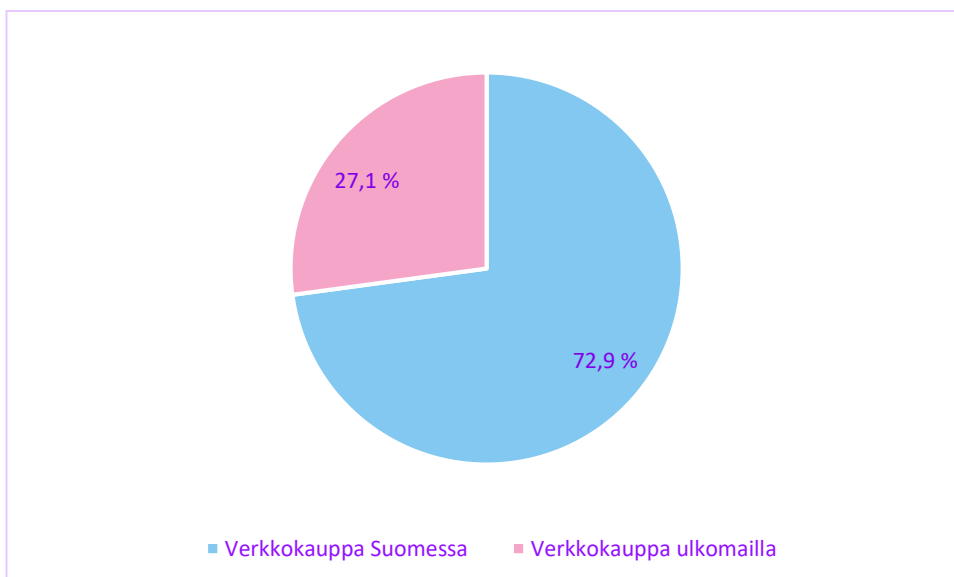
**K4 Minkä skeittilaudan osan ostit viimeksi? \***

1. Dekki
2. Laakerit
3. Trukit
4. Renkaat
5. Griippi
6. Oheistarvike (ruuvit, mutterit, sliderit, korotuspalat jne)



#### K5 Missä teit ostoksen? \*

1. Verkkokauppa Suomessa
2. Verkkokauppa ulkomailla
3. Paikanpäällä skeittikaupassa
4. Muualla



**K6 Mitä tuotemerkkiä osa on? \***

Lyhyt vastausteksti

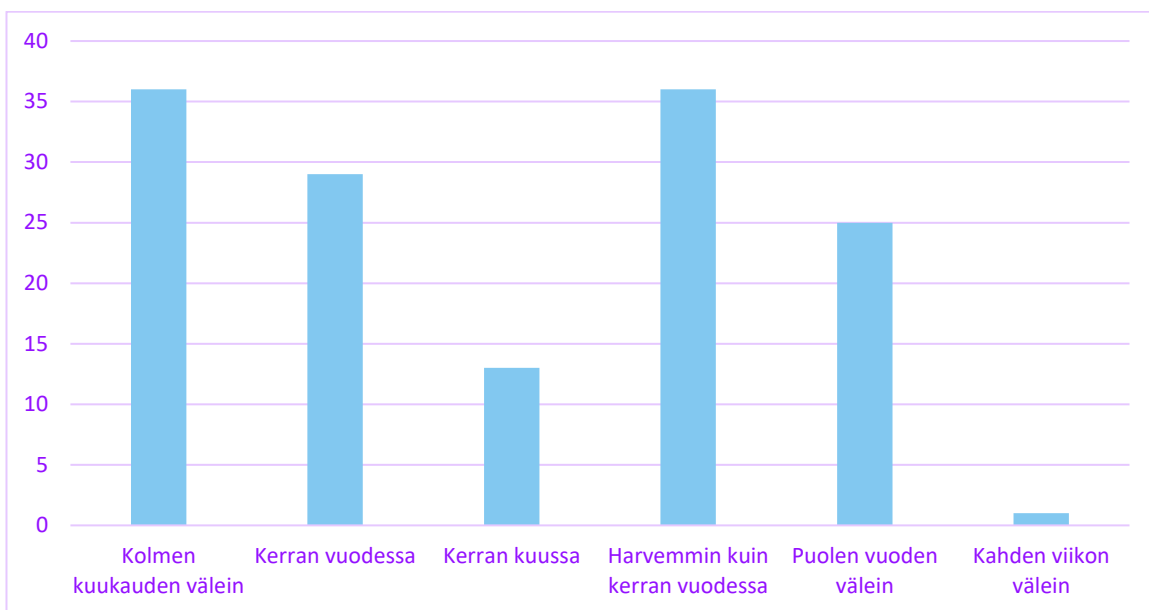
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Aalto Skate, Alien Workshop, Almost, antihero, Aste, Baker, Bastante, Black Label, Blind, Board Village, Bones, Cartel, Chocolate, Cliche skateboards, Control, Creator, Creature, Doom sayer, Dusters California, El Rio Grind, element, Enjoi, Enuff, Evisen, Fire1984, Five Points, Flip, FLU SKATEBOARDS, foghorn skateboards, Frank Skateboards, Fucking awesome, Girl skateboards, Globe, GX1000, Happyhour Skateboards, Hockey, Isle, ITÄ, Jart, Krooked, Kuosi, Lamina, lauta, Madnes, Minilogo, Napalm Custom, Nomad, Otos, Palace, Pinna skateboards, Plan B, Poetic, Polar, Ponkes, Powell Peralta, Primitive, Quasi, Quosi, rassvet, Real Skateboards, Riviera, Rolling Skateboards, Rufus Skateshop, Santa Cruz, Seven Inch Skateboards, SID, Silky Skateboards, sk8mafia, sour, SOVRN, statum, STATUM!, Street Plant, Sweet sktbs, The Day Off, Tikari, Waltz Skateboarding The Prophet, Windmill, Vision, Zanzibar skateboards, Zero, Statum, Bastante, Bones, Bronson speed co, Independent, Minilogo, Spitfire, Tikari, MOB, Enjoi, Holy Sheet, Ace trucks, Independent Trucks, Royal, Tensor, Thunder, Bones, Fast wheels, Krooked, OJ Wheels, Powell, Ricta Cloud 92A, Spitfire, Wayward, windagram, Zipzinger, Bones, Free pizza hardware, Independent, lamina, Pig, Powell&Peralta, Thunder, Windmill

**PART 2/3 – AWARENESS AND RESEARCH STAGES****K7 Kuinka usein ostat uuden kyseisen osan? Valitse lähimmäksi osuva \***

1. Kahden viikon välein
2. Kerran kuussa
3. Kolmen kuukauden välein
4. Puolen vuoden välein
5. Kerran vuodessa
6. Harvemmin kuin kerran vuodessa





3 (4)

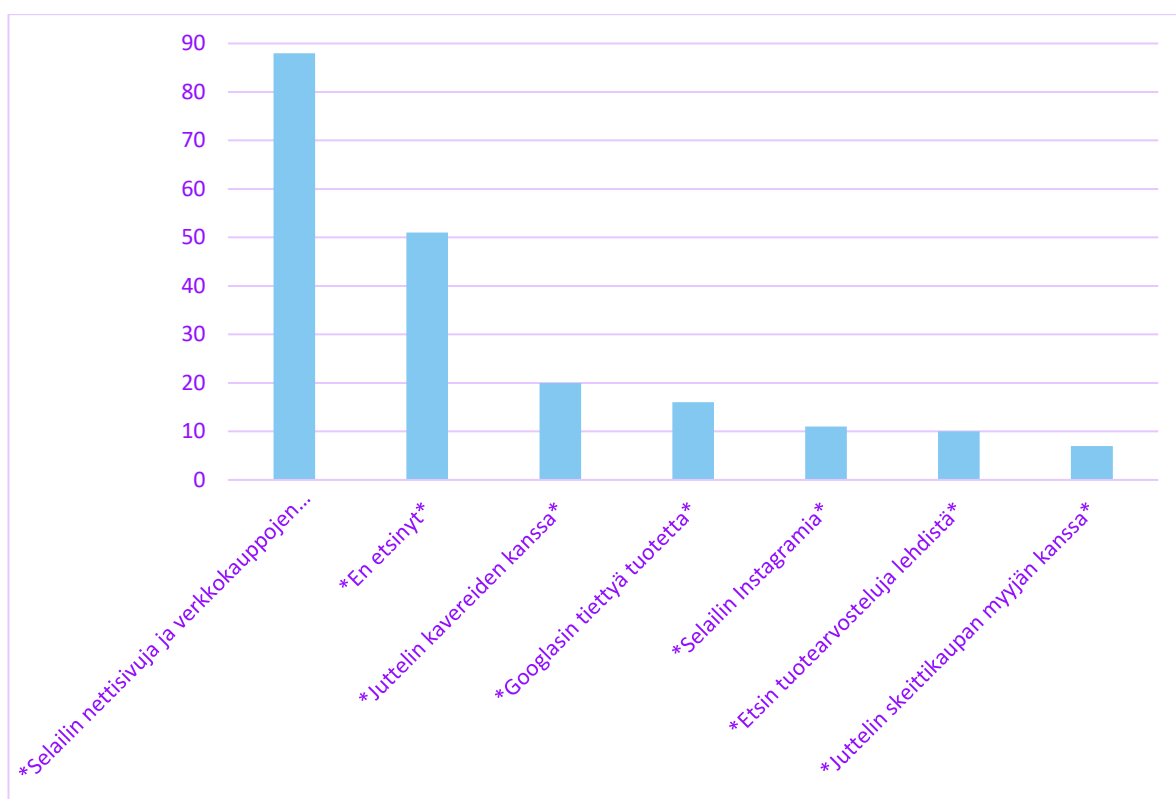
#### K8 Miksi lähdit ostamaan kyseistä osaa? \*

- Vanha osa oli käyttökelvoton
- Vanha osa oli kulunut, mutta edelleen käytettävissä
- Halusin vaihtaa aiemmin käyttämäni tuotemerkkiä
- Ostin varaosaksi valmiiksi
- Muu...



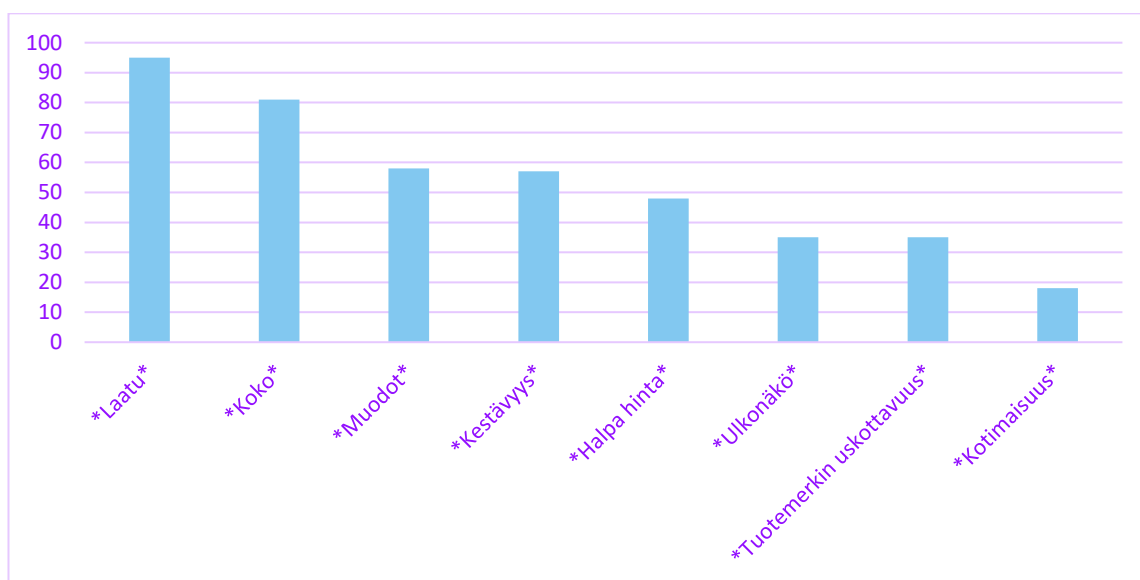
## K9 Miten etsit lisätietoa osasta tai sen hankinnasta? Voit valita useita \*

- Selailin nettisivuja ja verkkokauppojen tarjontaa
- Googlasin tiettyä tuotetta
- Selailin Instagramia
- Etsin tuotearvosteluja lehdistä/netistä
- Juttelin kavereiden kanssa
- Juttelin skeittikaupan myyjän kanssa
- En etsinyt lisätietoa, koska tiesin jo mitä tulen ostamaan
- Muu...



K10 Mitkä ovat kyseisen osan KOLME tärkeintä ominaisuutta? \*

- Halpa hinta
- Ulkonäkö
- Kestävyys
- Laatu
- Tuotemerkin uskottavuus
- Muodot
- Koko
- Kotimaisuus
- Muu...



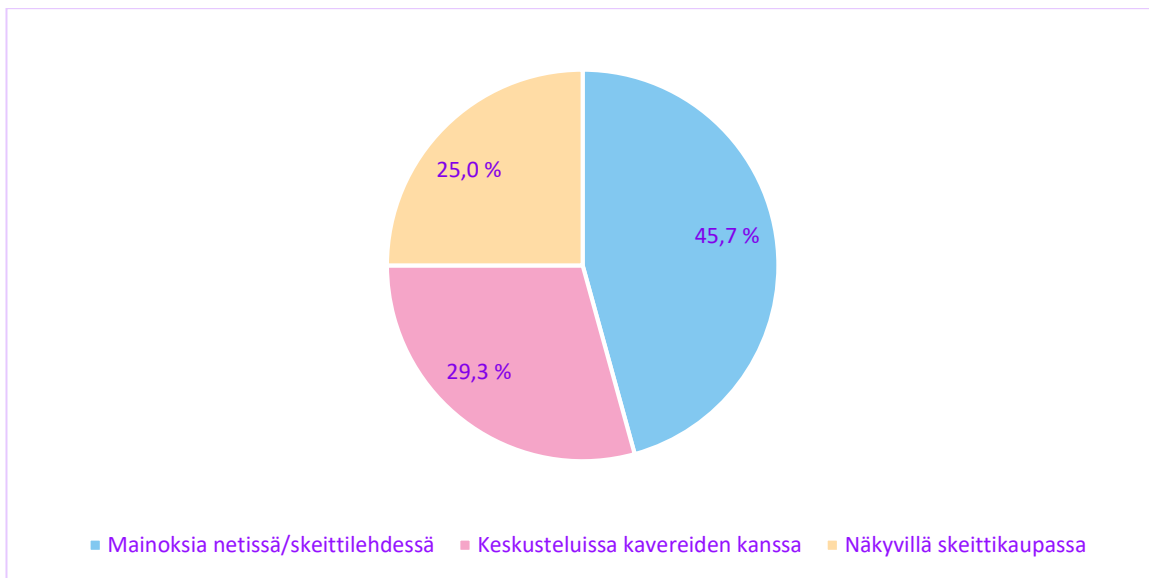
K11 Miksi päädyit juuri tämän tuotemerkin osaan? \*

Pitkä vastausteksti

The results are analysed in Chapter 4.

K12 Missä seuraavista ostamasi tuotemerkki esiintyy kaikista useimmin? \*

- Mainoksia netissä/skeittilehdessä
- Näkyvillä skeittikaupassa
- Keskusteluissa kavereiden kanssa



K13 Ostatko jatkossa kyseistä tuotemerkkiä? \*

1. 1 - En osta enää ikinä mitään tältä tuotemerkiltä
2. 2 - Saatan ostaa muita osia, mutta en tätä osaa
3. 3 - Ostan jos hinta on kohdallaan
4. 4 - Ostan vaikka vähän kalliimmalla, jotta saan tätä tuotemerkkiä



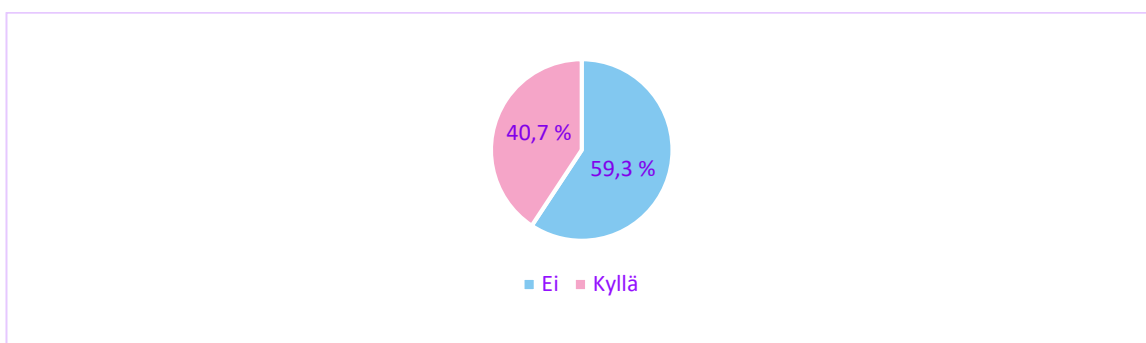
## PART 3/3 – PURCHASE STAGE

K14 Miksi päädyit ostamaan osan juuri kyseisestä liikkeestä? \*

Pitkä vastausteksti

The results for Question 14 are analyzed in Chapter 4

K15 Harkitsitko liikkeessä asioidessasi vielä muita tuotemerkkejä? \*

 Kyllä Ei

K15.5 Jos vastasit edelliseen Kyllä, mikä vaikeutti päätöksentekoa?

Pitkä vastausteksti

The results for Question 15.5 are analyzed in Chapter 4

K16 Mikä oli parasta kyseisessä liikkeessä asiointissa? \*

Pitkä vastausteksti

The results for Question 16 are analyzed in Chapter 4

K17 Kuinka todennäköisesti ostat tämän osan samasta liikkeestä ensi kerralla? \*

1    2    3    4    5

Erittäin epätodennäköisesti                        Hyvin varmasti

