Seniors on board!

Customer retention among +55-year-old customers.

Case TUI.

Virva Katajala

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Author(s)
Virva Katajala

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Travelling has been an essential part of people's lives for long. The senior market has become an interest among tourism service providers. The segment is growing both in size of the market and individual consumers. These senior consumers have more time to spend for travelling and better finances than the previous generations. The senior consumers travel further and want to stay for longer than the other cohorts.

TUI, being the largest tour operator in the Nordics has identified the senior segment as one of their key target groups. TUI marketing would like to understand the preferences and travel habits of this chosen segment, the +55-year-olds. The objective of this research was to find out how TUI can develop their customer retention in the chosen target group of +55-year-old travellers.

The objective of providing superior value to customers compared to competition is having highly satisfied customers. The strategy of customer retention is about keeping the customers with the company by providing superior value compared to competition. This way customers see no reason to switch to another company. It is said that winning new customers is more expensive than keeping the existing ones. For customer retention to work profitably, companies shall divide their customers based on profitability to different tiers and develop strategies for each tier. Creating customer value and satisfaction are in the core in tourism marketing. In addition to looking at the generic 4 P's of marketing, it is important to add an additional 4P's of tourism marketing.

The study was conducted as a quantitative research. A questionnaire was chosen as the suitable data collection method. The questionnaire was sent via TUI CRM system for a chosen target group matching the studied criteria. The questionnaire was built in webropol and the results were analyzed with the help of tilastoapu.

83% of the respondents have a positive image of TUI. These respondents are looking for a relaxed sun holiday that offers new experiences, rest and relaxation and value for money. These present the key determinants when the respondents decide which tour operator to travel with. The majority of the respondents consider themselves as being price sensitive travellers. Getting the entire booking through one service provider is appreciated. These respondents characterize their preferred holiday type being a package including flights, accommodation and meals. These respondents are willing to explore and get to know new people and cultures while travelling. The usage of internet is vast and these customers are willing to recommend and utilize travel recommendations from others. Single-traveller wishes as well as other domestic departures outside Helsinki were seen as areas for development.

Keywords
Senior travelling, marketing, customer retention, generation baby-boomers, tour operators, tourism marketing, customer experience

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1 Introduction

The modern tourism of today is coincided with the rising of the global capitalism. Modern tourism has been seen as a form of travel that is defined both by pursuing pleasure and escaping the everyday realities. Even though wealthy Romans already travelled for pleasure, the modern tourism has been created by the British who came up with the idea that “travel is good for people’s spiritual and physical health”. The modernization of the British society from rapid urbanization, class formation and accelerated technological change soon spread elsewhere. The breakthroughs in transportation have made tourism from being a privilege of a very few to an ordinary way of life for nearly all. (Miller-Davenport 2017.)

The tourism today accounts for nearly 10 per cent of the gross domestic product worldwide. For over a century tourism has shaped people’s understanding about national and cultural differences in the interdependent world we live in. (Miller-Davenport 2017.)

Tourism industry has identified the new senior market as an opportunity for growth for the twenty-first century (Le Serre & Chevalier 2012, 270). There is a growing interest towards the senior travellers because of the growth in the number of seniors as well as the growth in the market size. The seniors of today have become an important market segment because they have time to travel and discretionary income. These travellers tend to travel further from home and stay away for a longer than the other age cohorts. (Horneman, Carter, Wei & Ruys 2002, 23.)

This study focuses on the age group of +55-year-olds. They represent 34.67 per cent of the total Finnish population that means 1 911 348 persons in total at the end of 2017 (Statistics Finland 2017a). This study includes three generational cohorts, those post-World War II baby-boomers (born between 1946-1963) and two cohorts born before 1946.

The senior travellers have often been segmented based on age. The seniors however are shown not to be a uniform or conservative market, which means that there is a need to understand the social and demographic trends affecting their consumer behaviour. (Horneman et al. 2002, 23.) The senior market can be seen either as a heterogeneous group or as an ageing group and the choice affects how the senior's tourist behaviour is approached. The aging approach sees the tourists as a vulnerable group who have mobility issues and whose participation to tourism may be limited. In the heterogeneous group the needs and wants of the individuals vary greatly because of their different motivations, preferences and lifestyles. (Nielsen 2014, 117-118.)

These consumers who have the time and money to travel is a really interesting core target group for the tour operators. By targeting this segment more efficiently their travelling and commitment could increase towards the tour operator offering holidays that are focusing on their interests.

2 Topic introduction

This thesis consists of seven chapters. In this second chapter the topic and the case company are being introduced. This chapter presents the research problem and the research questions. The third chapter of this thesis consists of a literature review going through the different key concepts in both marketing and tourism that are relevant to this topic. The fourth chapter will explain the research methods utilized in this thesis. This chapter includes both the research methods and the research implementation. The fifth chapter presents a thorough go-through of the findings starting with the description of the survey respondents and a thorough analysis of the implemented research. The sixth chapter will present the development ideas that are based on the findings in chapter five. The last, seventh chapter is chapter for conclusions where the reliability and validity of the research is discussed as well as personal learning.

Finns made 8.5 million leisure trips abroad in 2017 (Statistics Finland 2017a). 27 per cent of all leisure trips including at least one overnight stay were package tours. In 2013 the most popular package tour destination was Greece. The popularity of package tours is indicated by the age of the traveller. Travellers aged 25 to 44 made slightly over 20 per cent of package tours of all leisure travels, travellers aged 45 to 64 the percentage was 26 per cent while those aged 65 to 84 almost 50 per cent were package tours. In the last decade 55 to 64-year-olds increased their trips abroad by good one fifth. A package tour is a form of travelling that includes at least the trips and accommodation. When looking at living areas, people living in Helsinki made clearly less package tours than people living elsewhere in the country. (Statistics Finland 2017b.)

2.1 TUI

The case company of this thesis, TUI Finland (formerly Finnmatkat) is part of the world's largest travel group, TUI Group. TUI Group offers holidays worldwide to both beach and city destinations and additionally offers cruises. TUI Group operates with 1800 travel agencies and 6 airlines and owns more than 300 hotels. TUI Group has been listed at London FTSE 100 list as well as MDAX list in Germany. TUI Group is the only travel provider in the world to be part of the UN Global Compact corporate agreement and the Group is also part of Dow Jones Sustainability Index. (TUI2018a.)

TUI Nordic is the largest travel company in the Nordic market with a market share of 20 per cent. TUI Nordic offers travel from over 40 airports in the Nordics to over 1.5 million customers on a yearly basis. 75% of the bookings are conducted online. TUI Finland organizes about 216 000 package tours on a yearly basis. (TUI 2018 a.)

TUI Finland is having a multi-channel marketing approach to its existing and potential customers. Their key marketing channels include paid offline and online media as well as own channels. They have several important target groups, where this study focuses on the +55-year-olds. This target group is one of the key target groups in the company. The goal of TUI is to be a travel services provider fulfilling all possible travel related wishes customers can have. Therefore TUI has enlarged their product offering from beach holidays to cover the holiday needs regarding city breaks and cruises to name a few. (Mettin 29 Jan 2019.)

2.2 Background and research problem

TUI marketing would like to know more around the travelling habits of the chosen target group of +55-year-olds. TUI marketing would like to understand this specific target group better. What are the drivers that makes this target group decide where to purchase their next holiday? What are they key decision-making indicators and how could TUI marketing influence their decision making and offer better targeted products to this important target group? How can TUI retain these customers? The idea of the study is to find out more on the needs and wants of the chosen target group regarding travel and possibly find new ways to enhance the current marketing communications, customer retention and product offerings.

The scope of this study includes the +55-year old TUI customers who have bought travel with TUI (2-3 years ago) and have given a marketing permission to receive TUI marketing communications by email. The scope excludes other customers who are not part of this chosen target group as per their age and also excludes customers who have not bought travel with TUI. The scope of this study includes only analyzing and drafting suggestions based on the survey results as future decisions and improvements are left to TUI for further investigation and development. TUI customers in the target group are living in Finland and travelling from Finland with TUI.

2.3 Research objective and research questions

The objective of the research is to find out how TUI could develop their marketing in order improve customer retention in the chosen target group of +55-year-old travellers.

The research questions for this study are:
How can TUI develop customer retention?

Sub questions:
1) How the holiday offering at TUI is perceived in the target group?
2) What influences the buying behaviour when purchasing a holiday from TUI?
3) What are the barriers for not purchasing a holiday from TUI?

The survey questions presented in Appendix 1. are drafted in a way that these above research questions will be answered in this study. The survey and the questions are presented in chapter 4. The answers to these research questions are presented in the findings in chapter 5. Next chapter is the literature review.

3 Literature review

This chapter introduces marketing in tourism and its key concepts fitting the scope of this study. This includes going through the key marketing concepts and tourism marketing. Customer retention and consumer behaviour will be explained in detail with segmentation and cohorts fitting this study. Customer experience concepts and the definitions of CRM are explained in the latter part of this chapter.

3.1 What is marketing?

Kotler, Bowen, Makens & Baloglu (2017, 31) define marketing as “a process by which companies create value for customers and build strong customer relationships in order to capture value from the customers in return”. In order to succeed in marketing, marketers need to understand the needs and wants of their customers as well as the landscape they are operating in.

A five-step process explains how and what marketers need to consider when thinking of understanding the marketplace and the customer needs. At first, it is important to understand the needs, wants and demands a customer have. Understanding these in detail will provide important input when designing marketing strategies. Conducting customer research is one good way to increase this understanding. Second step is designing a customer value driven marketing strategy so that a company selects which customers it wants to serve, deciding on the concept appropriate and value proposition suitable for their target audience. This strategy is built based on the selection of the customers the company wants to serve (segmentation and targeting) and how (differentiation and positioning). The third step is to create an integrated marketing program that delivers value to the customers so that the strategy is turned into action. As a fourth step it is important to build and manage profitable customer relationships. By creating superior value and satisfaction to the customers makes it more likely that these customers become loyal customers to the company and this way bring more business to the company. The last fifth step is capturing value from the customers. By creating added-value to the customers they are more likely to bring more volume in terms of current and future sales, market share and profits. (Kotler et al. 2017, 31-42, 91)

For companies to be successful in serving customers they need to make choices in which customer groups to focus on. Overall there are just too many customers with too many needs that a company could profitably fulfil these all. A company needs to divide the market so that they can choose their best segments and design strategies for serving these segments at their best. This process involves segmentation and targeting of the market, as well as differentiation and positioning. Market segmentation is a process where the market is shared into distinctive group of customers who have different needs, characteristics and behaviour and who might be requiring different marketing programs or separate products. (Kotler et al 2017, 92.) Segmentation is a method where customers are divided into segments based on their demographic, sociocultural and behavioural characteristics (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012, 8-9). According to Morrison (2010, 208) the main reason for segmentation is to be able to focus effort and marketing money spent in an efficient way. He continues that by answering questions like *who, what, how, where* and *when* helps identifying where the focus should be. After defining the segments a company needs to evaluate how attractive each segment is and choose the segments to enter (Kotler et al. 2017, 92). Targeting means that the attractiveness of each segment needs to be evaluated and then choosing one or more of those segments to enter (Kotler et al. 2017, 225). Then a company needs to know how it will differentiate the offering for each of the targeted segment and what position they would like to have in the minds of the consumer. (Kotler et al. 2017, 92.) Differentiation is about targeting different segments using individual marketing mixes for each (Schiffman et al. 2012, 55). Positioning means that a product or service is perceived by the consumers in a way that it meets the needs of the consumer better than any competitive offering (Schiffman et al. 2012, 39).

Preparing an integrated marketing plan follows the understanding of the customers’ wants and needs. As the marketing plan overall outlines which customers the company will serve and how it will create added value to those chosen customers, the integrated marketing plan that is developed at the next stage actually delivers the thought value to the chosen customers. (Kotler et al. 2017, 38.) An integrated marketing plan integrates different aspects of marketing like traditional media marketing, public relations, direct marketing and other marketing communications media and aspects into one (Grönroos 2007, 305). The marketing plan turns the marketing strategy into action and it consists of a marketing mix that a set of tools a company utilizes to implement the marketing strategy they have. The marketing mix is constructed from 4P's in marketing. These are *product*, *price*, *place* and *promotion*. A need-satisfying marketing offering has to be created first (product), a charge for the offer needs to be set (price), how the offer will be made available for the customers (place) and finally the offer needs to be communicated with the customers and convince them of the merits (promotion). (Kotler et al. 2017, 38.) A value proposition of a company is a set of those values and benefits it promises to deliver to the customers in order to satisfy their needs. The value proposition is being built upon the marketing mix (4 P's). (Kotler et al. 2017, 35.)

There is a modern adaptation of the 4 P's that are called the 4 C's. These four C's are customer value, better convenience, better communications and lower costs (Baran & Galka 2017, 101). The traditional 4P's are looking at the market from the point of view of the seller, while the redesigned 4 C's are taking the buyers viewpoint (Kotler et al. 2017, 93).

There are numerous changes that have taken place and formatted the marketing landscape. The development in digital technology has revolutionized the way we communicate, shop and share information. The digital age has brought online, social and mobile marketing as common channels of marketing today. The economical environment has changed and customers are being more cautious about their spending habits. The sustainability issues and rapid globalization have led to global competition and a need to develop and be part of sustainable marketing practices. (Kotler et al. 2017, 51.)

3.2 Customer retention

The objective of providing superior value to customers compared to competition is having highly satisfied customers. The strategy of customer retention is about keeping the customers with the company rather than giving them reasoning to switch to another company. It is said that winning new customers is more expensive than keeping the existing ones. For customer retention to work profitably, companies shall divide their customers based on profitability to different tiers and develop strategies for each tier. It is not wise to merely strive to retain all customers, rather focus and build distinctive strategies for different tiers. When there are only small defections in customer reductions there is a significant increase in profits because 1. loyal customers purchase products and services more and more often, 2. these customers are less price sensitive 3. it is cheaper to service existing customers and 4. the spread of word-of mouth is referred by the loyal customers. (Schiffman et al. 2012, 8-9.)

Schiffman et al. (2012, 9) continue and suggest building a customer pyramid based on consumer behaviour. These pyramid customer split tracks the costs and revenues of individual customers and as customers are split into tiers based on their consumption behaviours, utilization of consumer behaviour becomes more effective. They suggest that the four tiers are:

1. Platinum tier where the heavy users are included; these customers are not price sensitive and are open to try new offerings
2. Gold tier where heavy users are not that profitable as they are price sensitive, they are after discounts and purchasing from several suppliers
3. Iron tier are those customers whose volume and profitability are not requiring any special treatment from the company
4. Lead tier includes those customers who cost the company money as they need more attention than what money they bring in. They also tie up company resources and possible spread negative word-of-mouth. (Schiffman et al. 2012, 9.)

Higher levels of customer satisfaction lead to more loyal customers which increase the profitability of a company. In addition to making repeat purchases, delighted customers also function as “evangelists” who spread out the positive experiences to other potential customers. (Kotler et al. 2017, 39.) Grönroos (2007, 144) state the same that it is very important to treat those who are very satisfied differently to those who are satisfied. If these two categories are combined, a company loses the crucial information needed to form those profitable customer relationships.

According to Kotler et al. (2017, 441) customer orientation that has a focus on acquisition, satisfaction and retention of customers is superior to a competition orientation that has the focus on monitoring, managing and outflanking the competitors. Payne (2006, 145) continues that many companies are focusing on acquiring new customers instead of retaining the existing ones. He continues that in order for a company to be successful in customer retention the first step is to improve customer loyalty and profitability. In order to measure customer retention a share of wallet should be recognized when customers purchase from several suppliers. Afterwards the existing and future profits for customer retention should be calculated for each different segment. (Payne 2006, 148.) According to Baran & Galka (2017, 279) companies should try and implement three different retention strategies: the bonding, the rewarding and the service structure strategy. They continue that both programmatic and humanistic bonds should be utilized for retention. Programmatic bonds are those including rewarding and procedures that make it difficult for the customer to change the service provider while humanistic bonds are the treatment given to customers by the professional personnel. The purpose of a loyalty programme is to offer a customer high perceived value from shopping regularly at the same brand and gaining higher average sales and revenue (Kingsnorth 2016, 199).

3.3 Tourism marketing

Creating customer value and satisfaction are at the core of the hospitality and travel industry marketing (Kotler et al. 2017, 27). In tourism it is vital to look at the 4 P’s from a different angle. Each element of the marketing mix should be considered separately while evaluating the relationship of each part to consumer behaviour. It is important to make sure that the different components produce the decided effect on target consumers and their behavioural patterns. It is also worth considering how a product portfolio in total impacts the consumer’s behavioural patterns. The role of internet is playing an increasingly important role for tourism organizations and it is vital to include the internet into the marketing mix. (Horner & Swarbrooke 2016, 286.)

According to Morrison (2010, 27) additional 4 P’s should be added from the point of view of the hospitality and travel marketing. These are: *people, packaging, programming* and *partnership*. The travel industry is a people industry. The business is of people (staff) providing services to other people (customers) who then again share these services with other people (other customers). Packaging and programming are customer-oriented concepts and help travel businesses to deal with problems in matching demand (unsold tickets) with the supply or reducing the possible unsold inventory. The partnership in tourism marketing is the cooperative marketing efforts taking place between the different industry players. There is interdependence between different industry companies in satisfying the needs and wants of their customers. (Morrison 2010, 56-59.) Marketing strategy factors (the marketing mix) and marketing environment factors together build the foundation for successful marketing in tourism. These marketing environment factors such as competitors, regulations, technology, often referred to as external environment, are outside the control of the marketing direction and they shape the way the business is done (Morrison 2010, 27).

For a travel agency to retain customers there is a need to focus on three factors. These factors include delivering high-quality service, maintaining a high-level of product knowledge continuously and co-existing to a high-degree with technology. (Viljoen & Roberts-Lombard 2016, 692.)

Service marketing in tourism

There are four characteristics when it comes to marketing tourism services: *intangibility, inseparability, variability* and *perishability*. The intangibility in travel industry services means that the quality cannot be known until the service has been experienced. As travellers cannot know what the service they are purchasing is going to be like, marketers need to provide tangible evidence of the coming service to the potential customers. The inseparability means that the services cannot be separated from the service provider, often both the customer and the service provider are part of the product. In the hospitality industry this means that the service is both produced and consumed at the same time. Variability in service marketing means that the quality of the services is dependent on the service provider, how, where and when the service is provided. Receiving expedited and valuable customer service one day might not take place the following day even the company providing the service stays the same. Perishability means that the services cannot be stored for a use at a later stage. This is a reason why booking guarantees are in use in the hospitality industry. (Kotler et al. 2017, 57-61.)

The consumer innovators are customers who are among the first to purchase a certain service. For marketers it is crucial to identify and reach these innovators as the success or failure of new-service introductions lies in their willingness to try the new product or service. (Schiffman et al. 2012, 403.)

3.4 Consumer behaviour

Studying consumer behaviour enables marketers to both understand and predict consumer behaviours in a certain marketplace. Consumer behaviour is being defined as the behaviour consumers display when they are searching for, buying, using, evaluating and disposing products or services that they believe will satisfy their needs. It includes what, why, when, how and how often consumers buy a certain product or service. Consumer behaviour is being studied at every stage of the consumption process (before, during and after). (Schiffman et al. 2012, 2,16.)

Consumer behaviour can be defined as the behaviour consumers display so that their needs (purchasing, disposing, evaluating and using) will be satisfied. How consumers make the decisions around the resources (time, money and effort) they have on resources around consumption. In order for marketing to be successful, marketers need to understand everything they can about consumers. These include personal and group influences, decision-making process, target audiences. It means marketers should know what consumers want, what they think, how they work and how they spend their leisure time as well as where and how to reach them. (Schiffman et al. 2012, 3.) According to Kotler et al. (2017, 177) consumer behaviour is strongly impacted by cultural, social, personal and psychological characters. These aspects need to be taken into account by the marketers, even they cannot control these behaviours.

3.4.1 Consumer behaviour in tourism

The decision a consumer makes when purchasing a holiday is of large emotional significance. A holiday a consumer purchases could be the highlight of the year and it often includes a major financial spend. During the decision-making process the consumers are faced with many, both internal and external, motivators and determinants when making up their mind about the holiday. Holiday purchasing often involves high income spend and requires more careful consideration and time than purchasing something of everyday life. (Horner & Swarbrooke 2016, 3-4.) The determinants of tourist behaviour come in two phases, firstly whether the holiday can be taken or not and secondly what the holiday type will be in case the tourist is able to realize the first factor (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2016, 63). Tourists' purchasing decision factors are divided into motivators and determinants. A tourism product is complex and multi-layered as it includes both tangible and intangible elements. A consumer buys an overall experience instead of just a clearly defined product. Attitudes, mood and expectations effect the evaluation of a tourism experience and not only the product itself. Also other tourist sharing the same experience impact the experience. (Horner & Swarbrooke 2016, 73.) The tourism industry influences the determinants of tourist behaviour by offering specially featured products that a certain group is after (health focused tourism), providing not only travel related information but also information on the destination, climate and visa requirements to name a few. The promotional messages are also designed the way that they fit a certain group of travellers; emphasizing discount holiday options for those looking for bargains, giving reassurance on the safety of the destination as well as offering resort type holidays with good facilities for families with children. (Horner & Swarbrooke 2016, 99.)

Value is a way to achieve brand differentiation and it focuses on the assessment a customer makes when purchasing a product or service (Tsiotsou & Goldsmith 2012, 148). In tourism perceived value is often seen as a positive impact on customer loyalty (Tsiotsou & Goldsmith 2012, 157). As a long-term viability both perceived and customer value are seen as the key drivers for competitiveness (Tsiotsou & Goldsmith 2012, 158). The level of consumer commitment and involvement are high when making the purchase decision. Often there are high levels of insecurity as the product or service cannot be pre-tested and decision reassurance is often required. Here the help and opinions of friends and family are really important. The booking of a holiday can also substitute buying another service or product such as a car so there is a lot of emotional significance involved. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 72-73.)

The tourism industry has been transformed because of the development of web 2.0. The internet today is a key distribution and communication medium for the tourism providers. This is changing the behaviour of travellers, as they are dependent on the online travel agents and user created content to search for information, plan and purchase their travels. Today it is much easier for the travellers to change their tourism service providers because of massive information overload, fierce price competition and strong price competition. (Curras-Perez, Ruiz, Sanchez-Garcia & Sanz 2017,133.)

Co-creation among travel service providers is part of tourism today. Customers together with the travel company are creating experiences. Additionally the sharing economy has surged as means for individuals to share their homes as hotels to earn additional income. The communications and transacting have been made easy through internet. (Kotler et al. 2017, 51.) Co-creation is empowering the travellers to create stories highlighting their own travel experiences that can be shared with other travellers. These travellers are able to differentiate themselves from the other travellers by pursuing unique products or experiences. For a tour operator to unbundle the offered tourism products, a traveller gets a feeling of a tailored experience when they rebundle these features into a holiday they desire. (Gardiner, King & Grace 2013, 320.) Consumer-created media such as travel comparison sites and social media sites have had a twofold impact in tourism. The rising importance of travel comparison sites have diminished the importance of travel agent professionals as people trust their fellow consumers more. Tourists sharing their experiences, memories and photographs on social media sites have influence on the consumer behaviour but is totally outside of the control of the tourism industry. The ethical issues in tourism are brought closer to all travellers thanks to the media. As people are learning more about climate change and global warming many seek to amend their travel behaviour for the benefit of the planet and the future. More security measures are being taken as an industry as terrorism affects the entire industry worldwide. (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2016, 432-434.)

3.4.2 Segmentation and generational cohorts

According to Kotler et al. (2017, 225) segmentation means dividing a market into separate groups that can require separate products or marketing mixes. Segmentation is a key strategic tool in tourism marketing utilized alongside positioning and competitive strategy. A successful marketing segmentation includes integration with the strengths the business has to offer, the integration of the perceptions of the consumers, integration into the business strategy so that there is long-term competitive advantage, a well-planned and executed market segmentation methodology and collaboration with data analyses as well as target markets. (Tsiotsou & Goldsmith 2012, 31.) A company to stay competitive today it is vital for the company to be able to develop and refine their offering so that they fulfil the needs and preferences of their chosen segments (Pennington-Grey, Fridgen & Stynes 2003, 341).

Segmentation is used in order to split the mass market into more homogeneous groups. Often the variables are classified into four different categories that are: demographics, psychographics, behavior and lifestyle (Pennington-Grey et al. 2003, 342). In tourism the segmentation methods also include the purpose of travel and price and Swarbrooke (2001) would also include the visitor party composition, visit type and purpose and method of travel to attractions as segmentation criteria (Horner & Swarbrooke 2016, 144.)

A cohort can be defined as a group of individuals who are born during the same time period and who experience similar “epochal” events that are known as cohorts (Pennington-Grey et al. 2003, 341). Further it can be said that in a cohort people are sharing experiences with others of the same age (Schiffman et al. 2012, 45). A collective set of behavioral traits and attitudes are produced during each stage of one’s life-cycle. This means that each cohort is unique, because each cohort has a different external environment. (Pennington-Grey et al. 2003, 342-343.) Lifestyle and consumer behaviour changes during the lifecycle of an individual, but also as individuals of a certain generation share similar values, needs and behaviours (Parment 2008, 16).

According to studies the most influential time periods in a person’s life are late adolescence and young adulthood. Events taking place during these periods give direction to the values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of each cohort. (Pennington-Grey et al. 2003, 345.) Experiences that an individual has during the young years are expected to influence his/her behaviour over the entire lifespan (Nielsen 2014, 114). The memories from those formative years influence the cohort members’ current beliefs, values and attitudes towards travelling today (Gardiner et al. 2013, 314).

3.4.3 Generation “baby-boomers”

This study focuses on the + 55-year-olds, baby-boomers, the grey-market, senior citizens who were born between 1946 and 1963 as well as the older cohorts; the GI generation, who were born before 1924, and the silent generation, who were born before 1945. The GI generation is seen “heavily male-fixated" with enormous economic and political power and is seen as a generation where the personalities were significantly impacted because of World War 1 (Strauss & Howe 1991 in Pennington-Grey et al. 2003, 344). The individuals belonging to the silent generation are characterized by indifference and lack of imagination that makes them fundamentally “silent” (Johann & Panchapakesan 2015, 134). The Baby Boomers are characterized by a “quest for self” attitude that resonates with their attitude towards perfectionism, high self-esteem and self-absorption (Pennington-Grey et al. 2003, 344). They have a will of being younger than what their physical age actually is and so they are interested in gaining experiences that keep them young. The nick names such as “grey market”, “the golden years” and “mature consumers” are not often found that positive among the baby-boomers as they feel younger than their age indicates. (Parment 2008, 12.) The term senior is age based while baby boomer refers to the year of birth (Glover & Prideaux 2009, 26).

The +55-year-olds today and in the future are seen to be healthier and to live longer and are better educated and wealthier than the members of those previous generations (Parment 2008, 19). These consumers focus on their lives today instead of planning for the future (Parment 2008, 20). This age group is often divided into two groups, under and over 70 years old. (Parment 2008, 20, 63).

3.4.4 Profiling a senior traveller

A large proportion of the elderly do not fit the stereotyped image of traditional elderly people meaning being week, lacking aspirations or being poor. The elderly with different values, attitudes and behaviour is described as the new-age elderly. These people perceive themselves younger both in age and outlook compared to the traditional elderly and are also feeling more in control of their lives and being more self-confident. (Mathur, Sherman & Schiffman 1998, 265.)

Thinking that a generation behaves the same way than the previous one can be a disastrous way to think for companies that are willing to grow the senior traveller segment (Pennington-Grey et al. 2003, 342). The current senior travellers are travelling differently from their older parents. The number of senior travellers is growing and is already a significant proportion of all travellers. These seniors have more free time and financial to spare for travelling. They are also keen on taking more holidays and staying on holiday for a longer time than other age groups. (Le Serre & Chevalier 2012, 270.) One key feature separating the baby boomers from their parents is their extensive travel experience. They know the product and the service levels they expect and have so become sophisticated travellers. Travel service providers should create their unique selling propositions to differentiate from the competition. (Glover & Prideaux 2009, 33.)

Lower income levels, health problems and not having a travel companion can limit the holiday enthusiasm for senior travellers more than for other age groups (Nielsen 2014, 115). The consumption patterns and preferences of the older generations have a significant impact on the tourism demand overall. There is a need for developing products and services that appeal to multigeneration markets rather than keeping the focus on only one generation. (Glover & Prideaux 2009, 27,31.)

Horneman et al. (2002, 26) have adopted Joseph Banks Group's (1984) six segment split for the senior travellers. They utilized the six-market segments' attitudinal and behavioural profiles corresponding segment discriminators in their study. They had seen that there had been several different techniques utilized to segment the older travellers. They saw from previous studies that segmenting older travellers based on age is not effective and if segmentation was done based on travel motivations, the results could be more useful.

The segments and their discriminators describing the preferred holiday were as follows:
AUSSIES – A place with a real Aussie family environment
PIONEERS – A place where tourists rarely go, where you can pioneer new places, people and experiences
INDULGERS - An exclusive retreat with great food and wine
BIG SPENDERS – A place where you can take in the sights, dine in luxury, and have first-class entertainment
ENTHUSIASTS – A place that attracts the right good-time people
CONSERVATIVES - A reliable package tour that covers all the best spots

Parment 2008, 67) has created a four-segment division between the older and the younger +55 consumers. The split is done between younger +55 (55 to 69-year-olds) and older 70+ year-olds. Both age groups are divided into two, modern and traditional consumers. The younger modern consumers have low price sensitivity when there is a high-quality product or service they are willing to purchase. The disappointment when the quality does not match the promised level is a major issue. This segment is also willing to try new things and speak good English so travelling to an unknown destination could be very appealing. These consumers are experience orientated, they have modern values and lack of time. They are also conscious consumers. The traditional younger +55 group are eager to travel, but the travelling has to happen to a familiar and safe location where service in their mother tongue is available. They present traditional values. This + 55 group are more emotional and conceited than younger generations when it comes to purchasing decisions. They are also high on loyalty and the peer influencing is very strong but at the same time they see travelling often as an investment rather than an experience. (Parment 2008, 76-78). The modern +70-year-olds value experiences and good service. These consumers have good financial status and they are conscious consumers. They present modern values and have time to spare for travelling. The traditional +70-year-olds present traditional values. They are consuming in a limited way and have stiff consumer patterns. However interesting this split into four categories is, this study is not following this set up as there were a limited number of respondents into the survey and this categorizing would split the group of respondents into really small segments. This study looks at these baby-boomers as a whole and not separating them based on age.

There is a potential in recognizing an unmet need in their buying process. Overall pleasure and experiences are more and more acceptable buying criteria (Parment 2008, 85, 110.) This target group is more interested in spending their money on themselves than leaving it for their children (Parment 2008, 134.) This group is also taking longer holidays and more often than before as they can afford the frequent travelling and they also have the time. As purchasing criteria they value the quality of the product or service, the level and friendliness of customer service and the qualified staff as the most important (Parment 2008, 110).

As consumers, the +55's see themselves as rational rather than emotional buyers (Parment 2008, 83). This group has grown from a rational purchasing society to an experience-seeking-society but they see the younger generation Y consuming money as they themselves are investing it (Parment 2008, 46). The +55's of today are enjoying travelling to four-or-five- star hotels, good wine and food unlike the previous generation where only the people really well-off were able to afford this type of travelling (Parment 2008, 21). They prioritize quality over quantity and are rather unfocused on the price, but giving more focus that the service or product they are buying is of high quality (Parment 2008, 80).

These consumers are major spenders on tourism products and so they form an important target group for tourism organizations. These consumers are interested in customizing their travel packages. They are looking for convenience and stress-free experience, so they are interested in ancillary services like transfers. They are also interested in cultural experiences and expect high service quality levels. This group is also interested in nostalgic travel experiences, be it visits made to re-created towns or industrial sites. These customers are health conscious and appreciate that environmental issues are being taken care of. They are after new experiences and are interested in being given an opportunity to learn, so practical activities like cooking or painting are excellent product offerings to this group of consumers. (Horner & Swarbrooke 2016, 362.)

3.4.5 Marketing travel to senior consumers

This group of consumers redefine retirement and are seeking for new products and services (Horner & Swarbrooke 2016, 364). The senior segment should not only be viewed through the segmentation by chronological age but rather through different subjective aspects like preferences, lifestyles or different motivations (Nielsen 2014, 116). Instead of segmenting the elderly market with chronological age-based segmentation, it is better to utilize value-based segmentation (Mathur et al. 1998, 273).

The 55+ consumers are going to stay more loyal to consuming based on rationality than the younger generations. It is important for the marketers to keep this in mind and find suitable ways to argument to the senior consumers. The senior consumers need be able to convince themselves with rational arguments that a product or service is worth purchasing. (Parment 2008, 43.) How ever the emotional side of purchasing is a lot influenced by references from a group the consumer would like to belong to. Indications toward a certain brand or product from such a group have a strong influence on the choices the customer makes (Parment 2008, 83).

Studies show that the +55 consumers are setting themselves free from the ideology of loathing towards consumption and having less guilt about spending. These consumers are more willing to purchase more expensive products and services seldom than cheap products or services more often. (Parment 2008, 44.) Enjoyment and experiences are more and more accepted and aesthetics and beauty more and more important purchasing criteria for the +55-year-olds (Parment 2008, 105). The loyalty towards a known service provider has diminished as these consumers can purchase their next travel from another tour operator just for the sake of experimenting (Parment 2008, 49). These consumers take example of other consumers, the social acceptance is large as an emotional purchasing criterium. A customer wanting to belong to a certain reference group will amend his/her purchasing criteria in order to fit in. (Parment 2008, 83.) It is important to find brand ambassadors that will promote the company products. These brand ambassadors have power and their positive experiences are spread so that new customers are being recruited. (Parment 2008, 145).

In order to make successful marketing it is important that the various “older markets” are not treated as one unfocused and broad group, but rather targeting the different older markets separately (Mathur et al. 1998, 265). A marketing model for baby boomers has been created to incorporate six key features. For this group of consumers youth should be emphasized and nostalgia incorporated as a theme. It is important to promote the experience instead of the product that also means ways to show how the experience can improve their lives. Storytelling is crucial when it includes detailed information and there should be a wide use of different medias, including online. (Horner & Swarbrooke 2016, 364.)

The younger group of +55-year-olds are modernizing their media usage and are moving from the more traditional medias to new channels like internet forums and online TV (Parment 2008, 135). These consumers are more and more used to purchasing products or services online (Parment 2008, 118).

The +55-year-old consumers are more loyal than the younger consumers. This is because the + 55-year-olds are less flexible in their purchasing habits, they do not search the market so intensively and they appreciate the good service experiences. (Parment 2012, 50.)

As for other segments, it is important to keep the single travellers wishes in mind when planning and executing targeted marketing actions. There are a lot of possibilities to differentiate from the competition when it comes to single travellers, as in travel, there are not yet a lot of product offerings to this growing group of people. It is important when single customer services or experiences are being created that they are not presented in an overly humble way.

Singles, despite of their age, dislike being denounced as different or as someone that is being embarrassed of. (Parment 2002, 114.)

3.5 Customer experience today

Customer experience means all those interactions a customer has with a company, be it the brand's products, services or people. The customer experience includes the entire user experience from searching, purchasing, usage and returns to name a few. (Baran & Galka 2017, 71.) In customer experience the focus for long has been around service delivery time, personalization and user friendliness supported by well-built technological environment. The emphasis of these three elements has become even bigger thanks to digitalization. It is crucial that service or product delivery times are taking place real-time. Today customers are expecting the customer experience to be personalized. The user-friendliness is becoming more and more important. Recent research has shown that customer loyalty goes hand in hand with the user friendliness. When transacting becomes troublesome, the customer loyalty weakens. Without a proper IT-infrastructure, developing good digital customer experience becomes almost impossible. The homogeneous service quality is one of the key features when companies want to build customer commitment. Customers in general value the consistent quality of the service or product, the trustworthiness and predictability. (Gerdt & Eskelinen 2018, 58-59.)

The digital customer experience should cover measurements from technology and processes, the digital presence a company has, the feedback collected from customer experiences and customer focused company culture. In order to be successful in providing digital customer experience it is important to remember that the reasons for the digital development should start from the customer, it needs to develop and amend the company IT processes and business strategies. It is also important to keep in mind that the digital customer experience is not going to succeed if it starts by copying the rivalries. It should always start from the needs of the customers. (Gerdt & Eskelinen 2018, 235.)

3.6 CRM

CRM is an overall process of both building and maintaining profitable customer relationships so that superior customer value and satisfaction is being delivered (Kotler et al. 2017, 39). Marketers have shifted the focus from only acquiring new customers into maintaining, enhancing and retaining current customers through numerous CRM strategies (Baran & Galka 2017, 101). According to Kingsnorth (2016, 184) CRM is all about personalization, segmentation and profiling, creating compelling content and providing customers with insights as well as offering them customer service. CRM stands for Customer Relationship Management and it is a marketing strategy where the focus is on managing the customer experience by better understanding the customer needs and the purchasing behaviour of these customers. (Baran & Galka 2017, 39.) Kingsnorth (2016, 184) explains CRM as a way to develop a relationship with the customers so that they are willing to stay. He continues that retention is about changing the mindset of those customers who are thinking of leaving. Through CRM the relationship between the customers and the company can be strengthened. This strengthening is done by transforming acquaintances into friends and partners so that learning relationships are being built. A customer focus is adapted through CRM so that a company can retain their loyal customers and turn them even more profitable by cross-selling and up-selling. It is crucial for a company to master multichannel marketing and to manage touch points. (Baran & Galka 2017, 39.) Kotler et al. (2017, 42) conclude that the aim of CRM is to create customer delight instead of just having satisfied customers. Payne (2006, 22) continues that there are enhanced opportunities when data and information are used to understand the customer better and by implementing relationship marketing strategies.

The focus on CRM is on the relationship between the customer and the company rather than only on one-time transactions. There is an attempt to build customer-company bonds and move towards partnerships between the customers and the company. Not all customers should be equally targeted, as the point for the relationship marketing is to make marketing more effective and efficient. (Baran & Galka 2017, 101.) Customers who are satisfied are more likely to be loyal customers and bring in more revenue to the company (Kotler et al, 2017, 39). Both customer-perceived value and satisfaction are in the core for achieving satisfied customers. This means that the customer evaluates the differences between all the benefits and costs and decides on the services provider that they see providing the highest value. Customer satisfaction then again is dependent on the performance of the product or service in comparison to the expectations the buyer has. There is a possibility for a customer to be disappointed, satisfied or delighted based on the performance or a product or a service. (Kotler et al. 2017, 39.)

Competitive advantage can be gained by leveraging the expectations, preferences and behaviour of the customers. This means that an on-going dialogue with the customers is being built and that the information gained at every customer touch point is being utilized. (Payne 2006, 5). The benefits of good CRM influence building the growing pool of loyal customers, being able to reduce marketing costs, decreasing the price sensitivity of loyal customers (Kotler et al. 2017, 492).

4 Research methods

This chapter is going through the research methods applied in this study. Theory on both marketing research as well as the research design is presented in this chapter. The research strategy and the chosen data collection methods are explained and the reasoning what applies to this studied context are explained. The latter part of this chapter presents the research implementation theories and their application to this research.

The focus of the research is on the existing customers who are +55 years old and who have bought travel and given marketing permission to receive TUI's CRM communications by email. These customers have purchased a trip with TUI between the last 2-3 years but have not purchased a travel from TUI after that and during the recent times. This research excludes other current customers who are not part of the target group per their age and those customers who receive TUI CRM communications but have not purchased travel.

4.1 Marketing research

The purpose of marketing research is to improve the marketing decision making by providing relevant information in a systematic and objective manner after information needs are assessed (Malhotra, Birks & Wills 2012, 33). Burns, Veeck and Bush (2017, 37) define marketing research as: "Marketing research is the process of designing, gathering, analyzing, and reporting information that may be used to solve a specific marketing problem." They continue that the focus in marketing research is on the process that will result in information that can be utilized to make decisions. According to ESOMAR, marketing research is undertaken either because opportunities and problems want to be identified or because there is a need to generate and refine specified marketing actions (Malhotra et al. 2012, 12).

Marketing research serves as a mean to link the consumer to the marketer. With the help of the marketing research the marketer can use the information gathered in making marketing decisions (Burns et al. 2017, 37). According to Burns et al. (2017, 38) marketing research has three different uses. These uses are classified as (1) identifying market opportunities and problems, (2) generating, refining and evaluating potential market actions, and (3) monitoring marketing performance. The market opportunities are not always easy to identify; it is easier to identify the symptoms rather than the cause behind these symptoms. By generating, refining and evaluating potential market actions, management can utilize the outcomes to make better business decisions. The defined actions are different strategies, campaigns or programs utilized among marketing professionals to select a target market and the right marketing mix for the chosen target audience. Additionally marketing research is conducted in product, pricing, distribution and promotion research. Most often marketing research is applied research as it is conducted for the purpose to solve specific problems. (Burns et al. 2017, 38.)

4.1.1 Research design

Research design is broadly classified as either exploratory or conclusive. Exploratory research is an approach aiming to understand marketing phenomena that is difficult to measure. A conclusive research then again is characterized by the measurement of marketing phenomena that can be clearly defined. A conclusive research is set to be measured and to test set specific hypothesis and examine those relationships. It is characterized as a research process that is structured. The information needed is clearly defined, the data analysis is quantitative and the collected data sample is large so the results can be representative. The findings of a conclusive research can be used on their own and the method often used in conclusive research is a survey. (Malhotra et al. 2012, 86-87.)

A descriptive research is part of the conclusive research design category. The key objective of a descriptive research is to describe something, like market characteristics or its functions. It specifies the selected research methods for selecting the information sources and for collecting needed data from specified sources. Descriptive research can for instance be applied for a study purpose where consumer perceptions are being studied. It is also utilized as market studies where the size of the market, consumer buying power and consumer profiles are described. Market-share studies determining the share of total sales is part of descriptive research design as well as image studies where consumer perceptions are determined about the company and its products or services. (Malhotra et al. 2012, 90-91.)

A descriptive research is further divided into two, cross-sectional design and longitudinal design. In longitudinal design a fixed sample is measured repeatedly where in cross-sectional design the sample participants and the data collection is done only once. A cross-sectional study is the most utilized descriptive design method in marketing research. Cross-sectional study can be either single cross-sectional design or multiple cross-sectional design. The single cross-sectional design study draws data from the target population and the information is gathered only once, as in cross-sectional study there are several samples or participants and the information from each sample is collected once. (Malhotra et al. 2012, 91.)

This study falls into the conclusive research category as the research is structured and clearly defined. The research is quantitative and the data collection is collected from a large sample so that the results can be representative of the target group. This study is part of the descriptive research category as it describes perceptions of a set target group. Descriptive research is set to describe something, in this study the descriptions are the views and the image that the target group holds of TUI. The study falls into the single cross-sectional research design, as the survey as well as the data collection is conducted only once and from one sample.

4.1.2 Research strategy

Case study is a typical research strategy in business studies. It functions well as the starting point for a development proposal when the goal is to come up with development ideas. A case study provides information in real-time about a phenomenon taking place in the operational environment. A goal for the case study is to provide deep and detailed information on the chosen subject. This means that the case study enables the understanding of an organization or the development proposal target in a realistic environment. For a case study it is important to find out a lot of information from a concise matter rather than a little from a broad subject. A case study often answers questions like "why?" and "what?" and the information obtained do not need to be generalized, rather to provide additional information to support the development at hand. A case study often starts with the studied case and not general theories. Often the developer has some preliminary information on the phenomenon or the topic so that the preliminary definition for the development proposal can be drafted. It is common and a natural part of the process that the development proposal is changed or amended (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2014, 52-54.)

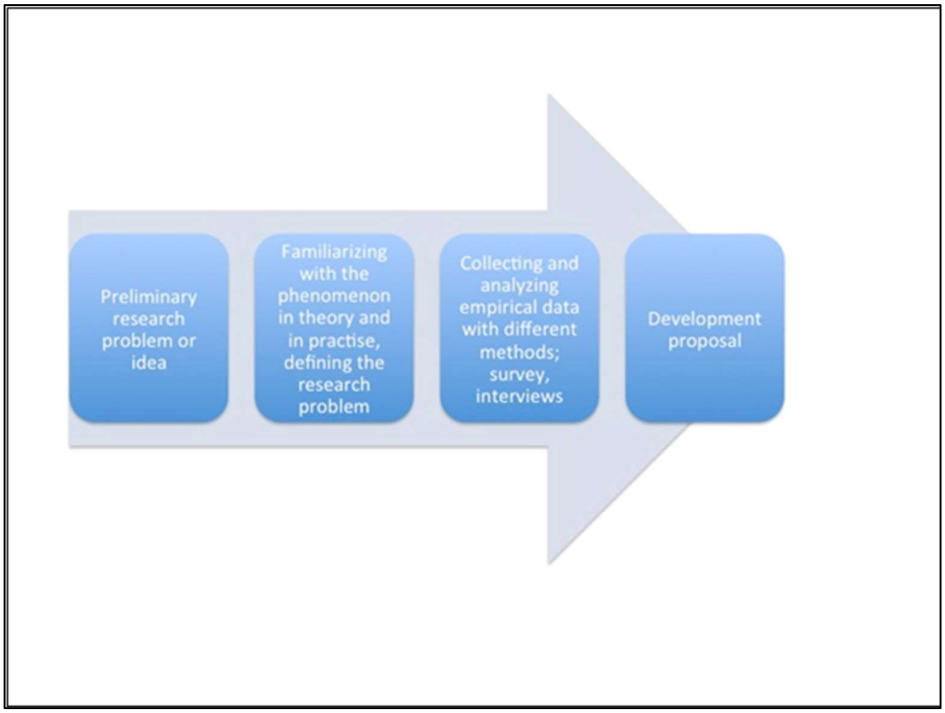

Figure 1. The phases of a case study (Ojasalo et al. 2014, 54)

A survey method is a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of a target group and its purpose is to gather specified information from the respondents. Surveys are a way to obtain information and they may include questions regarding behaviour, intentions, awareness, motivation and attitudes as well as demographic and lifestyle characteristics of the chosen target group. These questions can be asked in writing, via computer or verbally and the replies can be obtained in one or all of the above-mentioned forms. A structured data collection is prepared with a formal questionnaire so that the questions are in a prearranged order. A study can be either direct or indirect, this depends whether the true purpose of the study is told to the participants or not. (Malhotra et al. 2012, 327.)

There are different survey methods where this study is part of the traditional sampling method and is created as an online survey sent by email. This form of a survey is faster to administer and is a cheaper form to collect data than other survey methods. (Malhotra et al. 2012, 330.)

There are several important steps that need to be considered when planning and creating a survey. It is crucial to define what information will be needed. The questions need to be simple so that all recipients understand them in the same way and there is no room for interpretation. The survey sample needs to be defined so that some generalizations can be made out of the results of the survey. (Ojasalo et al. 2014, 41.)

The research strategy for this study is a case study and the research is going to be done with a survey method. Case study is a suitable method when development ideas are the goal outcome of the research. For this research there is a lot of information available on the chosen subject which means that the case study is a suitable method for this study. The goal is to be able to provide additional information of the subject for the studied company. The survey method was chosen as it a quick method to ask the same questions from a large audience. The survey answers are collected into a database for analysis. With survey the perceptions and attitudes of the respondents can be analysed. A survey is a suitable method when there is a need to understand the starting point for the development proposal (Ojasalo et al. 2014, 40). In this study it is important to understand the starting point for the development proposal to gain insight and understanding of the respondents and to be able to produce suggestions and further development ideas for the commissioner.

4.1.3 Data collection method

Sequential formatting, clarity and readability are the key success factors when drafting a questionnaire. The key purpose of a questionnaire is to turn the research questions and objectives into well-structured questions so that related theories can be tested using quantitative data. (O'Gorman & MacIntosh 2015, 168.)

A questionnaire is a data collection method that consists of a series of questions the participants answer. A questionnaire is done in a structured manner and it has three specified objectives. Firstly, the information needs be translated into the form of questions the participants can answer. Secondly, the questionnaire should motivate the respondent to be part of the study, to cooperate and complete the questionnaire. Appreciating what participants expect from the questioning process can produce more high-quality responses. Participants are different when it comes to what they want to achieve by answering the questionnaire. Some people are after personal rewards as others might settle for social benefits. Thirdly, the response error should be minimized in the questionnaire. This means that the possibilities for inaccurate answers are diminished by designing the questionnaire in a way that mis-analysing is avoided. (Malhotra et al. 2015, 453.)

There are structured and unstructured types of questions in a questionnaire. The question formats are open-ended/unstructured questions and close-ended/structured questions. In open-ended questions respondents can respond in their own words whereas close-ended questions are constructed so that the respondent has a limited number of options to choose the answer from. (O’Gorman &MacIntosh 2015, 169.)

Open-ended questions enable the participants to express their opinions and attitudes that can help the researcher interpret the responses given to the close-ended questions. Answering open-ended questions gives the respondents a freedom to answer what they feel important. Open-ended questions have a less biased influence on the response than close-ended questions have. (Malhotra et al. 2015, 464.)

In close-ended questions both the response format and the response alternatives are set. A close-ended question can be multiple-choice, scale or dichotomous question. A multiple-choice question provides the respondent with one or more alternatives to choose from. A scale question is provided in a scale format where the respondents chooses the most suitable alternative. A dichotomous question has only two response alternatives, like yes and no. (Malhotra et al. 2015, 466.)

A questionnaire was chosen as a suitable data collection method for this study. The questionnaire in this study is constructed so that it includes both multiple-choice questions as well as some open-ended questions. The questions in the questionnaire are formatted so that they are easy to understand. These questions have also been pre-tested so that discrepancies in the replies can be avoided and a good cover letter with instructions is included to ease the answering for the recipients. The respondents are motivated by giving them an opportunity to tell their views on TUI that can be further utilized and developed into new services for the target group. Additionally by responding to the questionnaire the respondents are given an opportunity to participate in a draw to win a gift voucher for TUI. The possible response errors in this study are eliminated by drafting a simple and user-friendly questionnaire where all the questions are mandatory to answer. This will avoid possible discrepancies in analyzing the results as all replies have the same amount of data to analyze. It is also important that the questionnaire is built on a chronological order, so that the questions are also presented chronologically.

The data collection in this study is done by creating a questionnaire that is transferred and formatted in Webropol. Webropol is available for students at Haaga-Helia. It is user friendly and the interface is easy to learn. It also provides basic analyzing of the data and the possibility to utilize word clouds and word maps. Word clouds and word maps are a method for information visualization so that text-based content is organized into spatial arrangements. The word clouds are visually engaging as they visually summarize the most frequently utilized words or word pairs from a text-based word document. (Martin 2012, 100. Word clouds.) The word clouds display the most commonly utilized words that have been captured in the responses. The bigger in size the word in the cloud is, the more that specific word has been used. The word map shows those words that occur in the same responses. The background colour of the word and the lines between the words tells that these words appear often together. The distance between the words also explain the context. (Webropol.)

The questionnaire is sent to the target group matching the selected sourcing criteria defined together with TUI marketing. The total size of the recipients is 5040 customers. These customers are sourced through TUI CRM system and these customers have given their marketing permission to receive TUI newsletters and have told to be part of this age group of this research, + 55 years old. The recipients are chosen from the newsletter database of TUI so that they are matching the selection criteria. The selection criteria is a customer who is +55 years old and have purchased travel from TUI 2-3 years ago. A link to the questionnaire is sent in an email communication to the target group customers by CRM Manager at TUI. The CRM Manager is in control of the sending process of the newsletter and on top of any possible technical issues arising.

4.2 Research implementation

In order to be able to interpret the collected data, data analyses need to take place. Data analysis means the process that describes a dataset by computing a small number of those statistics collected that are giving the characters to the various aspects of the dataset in question. In marketing research there are five different basic types of statistical analyses that can be used. Those are descriptive analysis that summarizes the basic findings of the collected sample. Inference analysis determines the population parameters and tests hypotheses. Difference analysis determines if differences exist. Association analysis determines connections and relationship analysis finds possible complex relationships for any variables in the given dataset. (Burns et al. 2017, 317.)

In this study the descriptive analyses as well as association analyses are being used. Descriptive analysis is a way to portray a typical respondent by revealing the general pattern of responses. (Burns et al. 2017, 317). The methods included in descriptive analysis are mode, mean (referred to as average), percentage distribution, range and standard deviation. Mode means the response that occurs the most frequently. (Silver, Stevens, Wrenn & Loudon 2013, 196). Mean value indicates the central tendency of calculated values. In mean calculations the “n” indicates the number of cases that are part of the calculations. Percentage distribution is drawn from frequency distribution that shows the number of times each different value appears in a chosen set of values. These raw counted frequencies are often turned into percentages as they are easier to present and compare. The percent values sum to 100%. Range identifies an interval in which the set values occur. It indicates the distance between the highest (maximum) and the lowest (minimum) value and gives information as how far apart from each other those extreme values are found. Standard deviation is indicating the degree of variation in the given values as it measures the differences of all observations from the mean and is expressed as a single number. (Burns et al. 2017, 321.) The smaller the standard deviation is, the closer the actual responses are to the mean (Silver et al. 2013, 197).

Cross-tabulation is a statistical concept in association analysis. This analysis finds out possible connections between variables and determines whether two variables are related in a systematic way. (Burns et al 2017, 317.) Cross-tabulation is a statistical technique that is usually utilized alongside single variable analysis, like those explained above. Cross-tabulation method is widely used in commercial marketing as the results are easy to interpret and these cross-tabulations can give more insight into a phenomenon than single multivariate analysis. Cross tabulation describes two or more variables simultaneously. The result is presented in a table that reflects the joint distribution of two or more variables. These variables have a limited number of distinct values or categories. In cross-tabulation mostly two (bivariate) or three variables are compared. (Malhotra et al. 2015, 630-32.)

The chi-square analysis examines the frequencies for two scaled variables in cross-tabulation. Chi-square is utilized in order to find out whether there is a statistical significance of nonmonotonic associations in cross-tabulation tables. When starting cross-tabulations there is an assumption that no association exists between the selected variables. (Burns et al. 2017, 393.) In order to find out whether systematic association exists between the frequencies a value of chi-square as large as or larger than one from the cross-tabulation estimates is calculated. The number of degrees of freedom (df) is an important characteristic of the chi-square statistic. This number of degrees of freedom is equal to the number of calculated observations minus the number of those constraints needed for the calculations of a statistical term. (Malhotra et al. 2015, 637.) A p value is calculated and it shows the “probability of observing a value of the test statistic as extreme as, or more extreme than, the value actually observed, assuming that the null hypothesis is true”. (Malhotra et al. 2015, 628.) Frequency distribution is a mathematical distribution where the objective is to obtain a count from the number of given responses that are associated with different values of one given variable and to express these calculated counts in percentages (Malhotra et al. 2015, 620).

In this study the values are calculated utilizing tilastoapu that is a utility program functioning inside excel. The graphs presented are the outcome from the results gathered in webropol and calculated in tilastoapu. The word clouds and maps as well as some values like the splits between the percentages and overall number of responses to certain questions are directly taken from the webropol analysing tool. In this study mostly both percentage and average calculations are used. Standard deviation is presented so possible differences between two variables are found. Certain questions are cross-tabulated between two variables in order to find possible connections and a deeper understanding of the researched data.

4.2.1 Sampling method

A sampling plan addresses three areas of question that are: who to survey (the sampling unit), how many to survey (the size of the sample) and how to select the participants into the survey (the sampling procedure). Deciding on the sampling unit requires defining the market from which the data is sought so that a suitable sample can be found and selected. The size of the sample depends both on the budget and the degree the researcher wants the findings to present. Often a large sample is recommended, so that the results can be generalized, but a smaller sample can also be justified and provide reliable findings. If the findings should be projectable to the total population a probability sample is the right choice, but if it is enough that the findings represent the population then a non-probability sample can be chosen. (Schiffman et al. 2012, 34-35.)

In this study a specified sampling unit was chosen based on the research needs TUI have. The sampling unit consists of TUI customers who are +55 years old and who have bought travel from TUI but not during the past two to three years. These customers have given a marketing permission to receive TUI newsletters and the size of the sample was calculated based on these restrictions. The sampling procedure included these customers who have opted-in and are currently receiving TUI customer communications by email. Here in this study it was enough that the findings are representing the population, so the study sample is a non-probability sample. It can be said that this study sample represents the convenience sample as together with TUI marketing the suitable population members were chosen, the +55-year-olds.

4.2.2 Planning of the questionnaire

The questionnaire planning started with a through familiarization into the topic, the target group and key theories. A meeting with two key marketing persons from TUI was held in order to outline the focus and the key targets for the survey. The thesis supervisor also gave her valuable first insights into the planning stage of the questionnaire as well as the layout and the preliminary questions.

The first draft of the questionnaire was sent to TUI marketing for feedback late August 2018. The questionnaire was commented by three TUI employees all working in marketing with two having a clear focus on CRM. The questionnaire was preliminarily done in word format so that changes and corrections were easy to implement.

The draft questionnaire was submitted into Webropol and a link to the questionnaire was sent for TUI marketing for proofreading and comments. Test audience answered the questionnaire in order to be able to correct possible discrepancies and misunderstandings the questionnaire might include. These were all corrected and implemented into the final version of the questionnaire. After, a couple a round of changes and corrections were implemented, the layout was finalized. An image and logo for the questionnaire were provided by TUI.

The questionnaire started with a cover letter explaining the topic and the goals for the study. It also mentioned the possibility to participate in a draw winning a travel voucher by answering the questionnaire. This incentive was provided because it is thought to increase the response rate (Malhotra et al. 2015, 546).

The questionnaire consisted of a total of 26 questions where the last five questions were demographic background questions asking about the gender, age, education, area of residence and financial status of the respondents. All the questions were indicated with an asterisk meaning that all questions were mandatory to reply to. At the end of the questionnaire there was the possibility for the participants to include their contact information if they wanted to participate in a prize draw. The questionnaire is found in appendix 1.

The questions in the questionnaire are divided into three categories:

Travel behaviour (Q1-Q7)
Travel patterns (Q8-Q16)
Travel wishes (Q17-Q21)

4.2.3 Questions about travel behaviour

The first question (Q1) was a close-ended multiple-choice question asking about a travel category the respondent belongs to when thinking about the travel behaviour. Six predetermined options were presented with an open field if the given options did not match the respondents travel behaviour. The given options were chosen based on the different traveller types TUI have that are matching their holiday selection. The second question (Q2) asked about the travel frequency in a multiple-choice question format. Here the predetermined choices where presented in an order from “several times a year” to “never”.

The following question (Q3) asked about the tour operator the respondent travelled with last time when being on a holiday. This question had predetermined choices as the largest and most well-known tour operators in the Finnish market. The respondents were also given the possibility to indicate other tour operators outside the given list they had travelled with last time. Question four (Q4) was a multiple-choice question asking about the wishes the respondents have for their holidays. Nine predetermined response options were presented and one open field for people to indicate other holiday wishes outside the given options. The respondents were able to choose as many of the options they wanted to as it is difficult to find only one wish a person might have when holidays are concerned. The predetermined options were sourced thinking of tour operators’ advertising so that the key attributes are included in the given options to choose from. Question five (Q5) was asking the respondents about their holiday type preference. Most common holiday types were given as give response options and “other” field was also provided for answers not fitting into any of the given categories. These categories were chosen as the most representative tour operator holiday options available on the market.

Questions six (Q6) and seven (Q7) were both open-ended questions where the respondents were asked to reply in writing. Question six was asking the respondents about their favourite destination whereas question seven asked where the respondents would like TUI to offer holidays to. These questions were asked one after the other to find out whether the replies to question seven were included among the favourite destinations mentioned in answers to the question number six.

4.2.4 Questions about travel patterns

The purpose of question eight (Q8) was to find out the determining factors influencing the choice of a tour operator. The respondents were presented with a multiple-choice question with 10 variables including an open field to write their own reply. The respondents were able to choose as many of the given factors as they thought suitable when thinking about their choice of the tour operator. These quality factors were thought to be representative of the generic indications based on which customers choose their holiday provider. As the respondents were able to choose several of the response options, the desired outcome was to be able to indicate all important reasons behind choosing the tour operator.

Questions nine (Q9) and ten (Q10) were presented to find out the travel companions and the travel decision making. The respondents were asked who they most often travel with and who within the travel group makes decisions regarding the choice of a destination and a hotel. Both these questions were close-ended questions where the questionnaire participants were to choose the alternative describing their situation the best.

The following to questions, questions eleven (Q11) and twelve (Q12) of the questionnaire were asking about the determinants concerning the choice of destination as well as finding out information regarding the destination in advance. Question 11 was a close-ended question so respondents were asked to pick the most suitable answer out of the given options. Option “other” was also given if the respondent did not find a suitable answer among the given options. These response options were given based on the commonly used sourcing criteria when searching for a holiday. In question 12 the respondent was able to choose as many of the multiple-choice options as seen suitable. The given options were chosen based on the most commonly utilized medias and ways for finding travel information.

Questions thirteen (Q13) and fourteen (Q14) were included in the questionnaire to find out more about the image TUI as a company have among the respondents. Question thirteen (13) was a close-ended multiple-choice-question asking the respondents to indicate the image TUI have in their minds. The alternatives given were presented from “very good” to “bad”. Also the option “do not know” was given as an alternative. Question 14 was an open-ended question asking about the reasons the respondents rated TUI the way they did in the previous question. Here the respondents were given an open field to write their answers. This question was included to be able to find out the reasoning behind the response rating to the previous question.

Question fifteen (Q15) in the questionnaire was a multiple-choice question finding out the reasoning why the respondents had not chosen to travel with

TUI lately. “Lately” in the question indicates the timeframe 2-3 years during when the respondents had not travelled with TUI. This criterium was based on the sourcing of the respondents from TUI CRM system. The respondents were presented with six predetermined alternatives and an open field to write an answer outside the given options. Question sixteen (Q16) was presented as a multiple-choice-question giving the respondents the possibility to choose several alternatives if they so choose. The question was around the factors that could make the participants choose TUI as their next holiday provider. Here again in addition to the given options, “other” was provided for the respondents to indicate other reasons. The possibility for choosing several out of the given response options were chosen so that it would be possible to find out all the reasoning behind choosing TUI and not only the most important one.

4.2.5 Questions about travel wishes

Question seventeen (Q17) asked the respondents to look at the given statements and estimate how much or less they agree with them. A five-point Likert scale was utilized to rank the replies between completely disagreeing (1) to completely agreeing (5).

A Likert-scale is an attitude scale measuring the feelings or evaluations of the respondents. It is the most popular attitude scale as it is easy to utilise and interpret and also simple for the respondents to answer. The Likert-scale consists of an equal amount of disagree/agree choices on either side of the neutral choice. The utilization of the responses to each given statement by a Likert-scale can either be analysed separately or by combining the responses to an overall score. (Schiffman et al. 2012, 29.)

The given statements were based on assumptions drafted together with TUI marketing based on the value propositions of the company. Kotler et al. (2017, 35) define value proposition so that it consists of the benefits and values that a company promises for the consumer. A value proposition is a way to differentiate one brand from another and a strong value proposition creates advantage for a company in their target market. From the perspective of a consumer the value proposition gives the consumer a reason why to choose one brand over another brand. For TUI their core value propositions are being trusted, unique and inspiring (TUI 2018b). Specifically for the Finnish market TUI marketing suggested similar value propositions including being trustworthy, safe and offering customers service at ease (Mettin 20 Aug 2018). These proposed value propositions were loosely turned into seven statements presented in question 17.

In question eighteen (Q18) the aim was to find out what the respondents see as their dream holiday destination. The respondents were asked to rank the given statements into their order of preference. The option describing their dream holiday the best was asked to be given the rating of 5 and the least describing option rating 1.

The given five statements were loosely adopted from a previous study by Joseph Banks Group (1984, in Horneman et al. 2002, 26). In their study they were profiling the Australian Senior Travellers. They had segmented the senior travellers into six segments based on their attitudinal and behavioural profiles and matching these with corresponding segment discriminators. These travel behaviour segments seem universal as they describe different kind of travellers and their wishes well and precisely and these segments can be generalized and utilized for all kinds of travellers despite their geographical location. These segments, even though they have been created in 1984, are still valid to describe and differentiate different travellers from one other, as they cover the main reasoning and justifications for the different traveller types.

For this study the original segment names were utilized and the discriminators adopted to match this tour operator study and to come up with a Finnish market equivalent. The discriminators were utilized as the statements in the questionnaire to find out which segment each of the respondents belong to. A segment named “Aussies” was reformatted to “Finns” in this questionnaire. For this study two segments presented were grouped into one, so five different segments remained to be studied. The two original segments (indulgers and big spenders) were combined, as the discriminators were originally rather alike as both were focused around the luxury elements in travel (luxury dining, first-class entertainment, exclusive food and wine).

The segments utilized in this study were as follows:
FINNS - Destination targeted for Finns with plenty of other Finnish people
PIONEERS - An exclusive destination that only a few people get to visit

INDULGERS/ BIG SPENDERS - An exclusive luxury destination focusing on good food and five-star service
ENTHUSIASTS - Destination where likeminded travellers go to spend time together
CONSERVATIVES - A trustworthy package with flights, accommodation and meals

This question was included so that the respondents could be divided into different traveller segments. These segments are hoped to provide to be useful when analyzing the questionnaire questions against other question responses and background information like financial status. Cross tabulation is going to be utilized with these analysis.

The remaining questions 19 to 21 in the questionnaire were around the services on offer before and during a holiday. In question nineteen (Q19) the respondents were asked to rank the given statements based on Likert-scale ranking from 1-5 where number one indicated that the respondent is not at all interested in the service concerned while number 5 indicated that the respondent is very interested in the stated service respectfully. These statements were gathered based on assumptions on what services this target group could be interested before and during their holidays. Most of the services included into these statements can be referred to as ancillary services. These ancillaries are important for TUI business-wise. The ancillaries give the customers an opportunity to include extras into their holiday that make the experience tailored to their personal taste. (TUI 2018c.)

Question twenty (Q20) continued in asking about other services the respondents would see adding value before and during their holiday. This question was presented as an open-ended question. This question was presented in order to be able to find out possible other interests towards ancillary services. The last question in the survey question twenty-one (Q21) asked the respondents to reply yes/no to the given statements concerning travel tips, personalized booking services and getting destination and hotel information before others.

At the end of the survey five background questions were presented (questions 22-26) to find out the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

5 Findings

This chapter introduces the findings of the research. First there is an analysis of the demographic factors of the respondents followed by a through and detailed analysis of the answers to the questions in the survey.

The questionnaire was sent 1 October 2018 to 5040 recipients. These recipients were sourced from TUI CRM database based on the set criteria (certain age, have not travelled with TUI for the past 2-3 years). The questionnaire is presented in Appendix 1. The email including the questionnaire was drafted by CRM Manager at TUI. The survey recipients were given an opportunity to participate in a draw by answering the survey and by leaving their contact details in a prize draw. This is believed to increase the interest to reply to a questionnaire as there is a possibility for a reward. During the two weeks the survey gathered 202 responses. The response rate of the survey totaled at 4%.

The questionnaire was open for answers for two weeks so that the respondents had enough time to participate. As the data questionnaire was conducted online, the recipients could themselves choose the time and location where and when they wanted to answer the questionnaire.

After the first week of the data collection a reminder was sent to the recipients who had opened the newsletter but had not answered the survey. This email including the questionnaire was again drafted by CRM Manager at TUI. This reminder email was sent in order to grow the total number of respondents.

The initial email including the questionnaire was opened by 31% of the recipients (1587). This email gained 7% click rate (346 recipients). The reminder email sent a week later was sent to 1028 recipients. This email was opened by 712 recipients (70%) and got 7% click rate (67 recipients). (Mettin 29 Jan 2019.) It needs to be noticed that both the original and the reminder email included other sections than the questionnaire only, so some of the clicks gathered were for other sections in the email than the questionnaire. The statistics at Webropol tell that a total of 580 recipients opened the questionnaire. 209 recipients had started answering the questionnaire where 202 recipients answered all questions and sent in their replies.

5.1 Description of the survey respondents

The demographic characters as well as other background information gathered in the survey are presented in Appendix 2 in more detail. The main characteristics of the background information about the survey respondents are presented below.

57% of the respondents identified themselves as female, 43% as male. 55% of the respondents told that they are being part of the age group 55-64 years old, 38% being part of the age group 65-74 years old and 5% to be part of the age group +75 years old. The survey was aimed to reach the target group of +55-year-olds, so it is good that nearly all of the respondents identified themselves part of the age group studied. 2% of the total number of respondents identified themselves to be outside the studied age group so not belonging to any above indicated age groups. This confirms the fact that TUI marketing has gathered age group data well in their CRM systems as only a few (4 people) discrepancies were outside this survey target group. This indicates that age-based target audience sourcing is efficient and customers belonging to a specific target group receive relevant travel related newsletters.

When looking at the educational level of the respondents almost half (46%) have a vocational education background. 22% of the respondents have a Polytechnic degree and 18% have gone to the university. Elementary school education was among 8% of the respondents and high school among 7% of the respondents in total. This split in educational levels seems to represent the considered age group well; earlier on it was not that obvious that people educate themselves to an extensive degree, rather start working early on.

Half of the respondents reside in Southern Finland (51%). 21% of the respondents are living in Western or Inland Finland and 10% live both in Eastern and Northern Finland. Southwestern Finland has 7% and Lapland 1% of the respondents living in their respective areas. Even though TUI offers flights to holiday destinations from smaller Finnish airports, majority of the departures are still taking place from Helsinki Airport. The connections to the airport from outside the capital area are good, but the duration of the travel in total increases with a connecting flight, train, bus or private car when travelling from other parts of the country. The increase is substantial when the domestic travel takes five hours or more. This can increase the total cost of the holiday remarkably.

A large majority (61%) stated that they get on well financially, where 5% of the respondents said to get very well on financially. The option to get financially on moderately was chosen among 32% of the respondents and none of the respondents stated that they get on poorly when financials are concerned. As travelling on a holiday has become more of a commodity among Finnish people it is still true that holidays abroad are not part of everyone’s life.

5.2 Travel behaviour

The first question (Q1) in the questionnaire aimed to find out how the respondents see themselves as travellers. What are the characteristic that describe them the best when they look at their travel behaviour.

Figure 2 presents the split of the answers into the given categories. 43% of all respondents see themselves mostly as price sensitive. They look for reasonably priced holiday packages with good value for money. It does not seem to mean they are after the cheapest option, but rather that they are rigorous with their spending. They want value for money but are also willing to spend more when they see the value added. Like Parment (2012, 80) stated this target group is after quality and not quantity. They see travel more as an investment worth paying for than only as an experience.

The second largest response rate was for the luxury seekers (15%). This answer choice is most likely emphasized in this studied segment as they have more money to spend than ever before and are willing to pamper themselves for quality holidays. These travellers are keen on the paying extra for staying in luxury five-star hotels and they enjoy the wine and dine what these resorts have to offer.

13% of the respondents see themselves as adventurous. This group is looking for new adventures different holidays have to offer. They might be after some adrenaline-rush but can also see being adventurous as trying a new destination, participating in an active day trip or trying some new hobby at the destination. This group of respondents are definitely keen on participating in excursions the tour operators have on offer as long as these excursions are active offering time outdoors while exploring new places.

“Other” responses (11%) were mostly combinations or adjustments of the given options. Respondents highlighted that they want to be relaxing or enjoying themselves while being on a holiday. The respondents are looking for new experiences whether it is in a new holiday destination or somewhere already familiar.

8% of the respondents chose “home lover” as best description to their travel behaviour. This choice does not mean that these survey participants would not travel or would not like to travel outside their “home comfort zone”. These respondents enjoy spending time at home and are most likely investing in making their home appealing. These travellers are keen on travelling, they maybe just need a bigger push from the tour operator to indicate them the added value when going on a holiday instead of just staying at home.

6% of the respondents stated their holiday behaviour to be culturally oriented while 4% found themselves to be sporty in travel behaviour. Both these groups are looking for activities while being on holidays. They want to seek new experiences outside the hotel area whether it is experiencing the local culture or hiking on top of a close-by mountain. These respondents are ideal participants on the excursions the tour operators are offering.

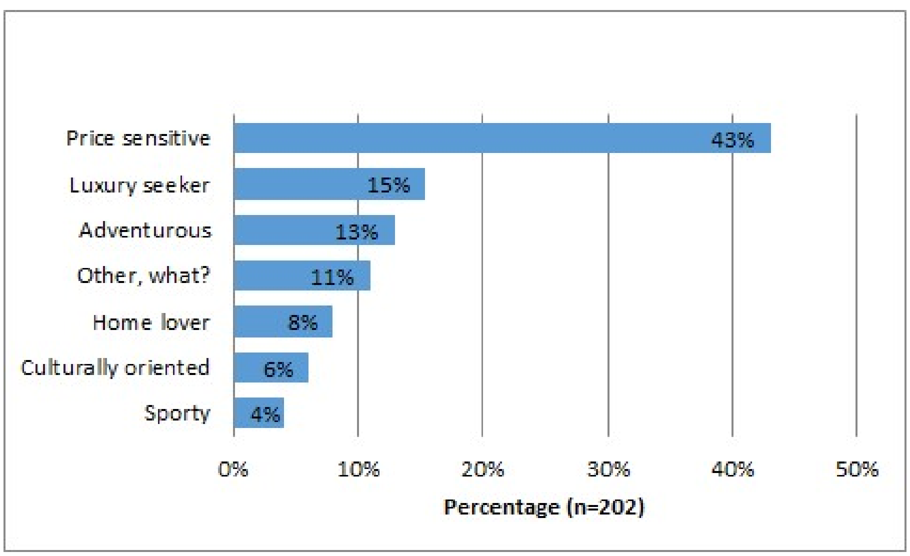

Figure 2. Thinking about your travel behaviour. Which of these categories do you belong to? (Choose one)

The second question (Q2) was about the frequency to travel abroad (figure 3). Almost half (45%) of the respondents travel abroad twice a year for a duration of minimum 7 nights. 28% said to travel abroad every year while 19% stated that they travel several times a year. This means that they travel abroad more often than twice a year. Only 5% of the respondents travel abroad every one-to-two years while 3% travel less often than every two years.

Like it has been stated before, this age group is very active when it comes to foreign travel. They have the time and finances to spare. These seniors like to enjoy life, gain new experiences and visit new countries and places and want to stay on a holiday for a longer time, whenever possible. Over 90% of the respondents travel abroad at least on a yearly basis.

For the sake of the target group of this survey, these travellers have purchased their latest travels from other tour operators than TUI as the respondents for this questionnaire were sourced so that they had not travelled with TUI during the past two years. There is an obvious possibility for a discrepancy with the sourcing of the recipients as for instance it is possible that a couple have travelled with TUI during the past two years, but the one purchasing travel is not part of TUI CRM subscribers and therefore is not part of the target group at TUI. It is also possible that lately these respondents have bought their holiday elsewhere than from a tour operator. Anyhow this shows that the there is a huge travel potential in this segment for TUI.

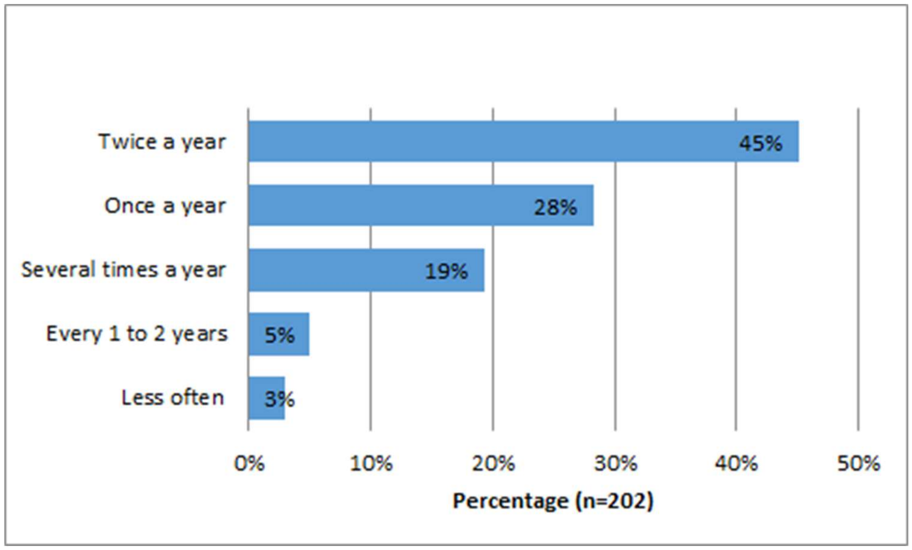

Figure 3. How often do you travel abroad by plane (minimum 7-night stay)?

The third question (Q3) in the questionnaire asked about the tour operator the respondents chose to travel with last time they booked a holiday abroad. The answers are presented in figure 4. The leading tour operators in the Finnish market were given as the response options as well as the possibility to indicate other tour operators or other means of organizing travel. The answers were really split between given options, the option “other” gaining the largest amount of responses at 29%. Aurinkomatkat gained most answers as a named tour operator (26%) while TUI got 22% of the answers, Tjäreborg 16% of the answers and Apollomatkat 7% of the answers.

These responses within the category “other” varied very much, but the three main indicators were either self-organized travel or the usage of tour operators Detur and Matkavekka as well as some mentions for Albatros organizing tours, online travel agencies like ebookers and low-cost airline Norwegian.

These above-mentioned tour operators are obviously direct competitors of TUI. Detur is offering package tours mostly to the most popular destinations among Finns like the Canary Islands, Greece and Turkey. Detur does not seem to offer long-haul destinations. Matkavekka has a wider selection of holidays, Thailand though being the only long-haul destination on offer but they also offer tours and destinations close by like Estonia.

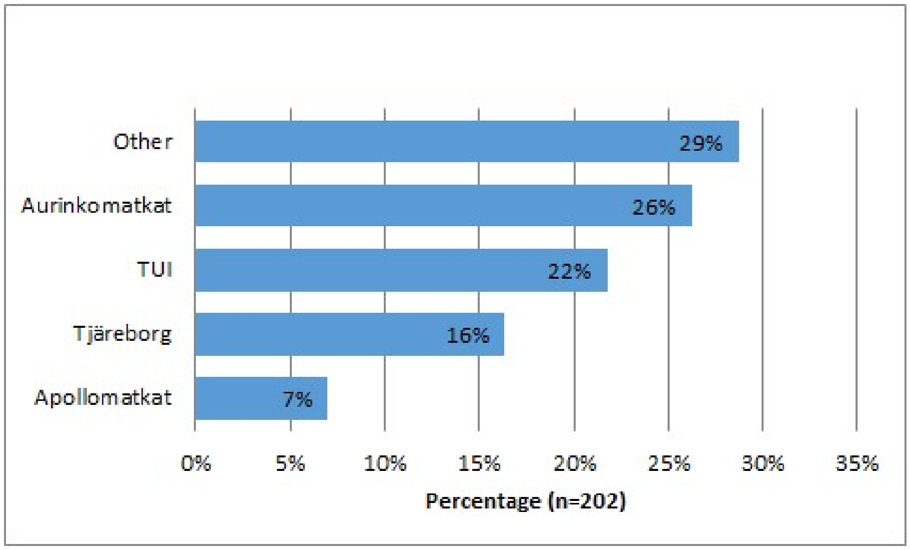

Figure 4. Which tour operator did you purchase travel last time when on a holiday?

The fourth question (Q4) asked about the wishes the respondents have when thinking about holidays. What are the main factors they are after when they are on a holiday? The responses are presented below in figure 5. Here the respondents were given the opportunity to choose several different answers from the given options (multiple-choice question) and to indicate their own wishes outside the given options. In total these 202 respondents gave 610 answers which means that in average respondents chose almost three (3) alternatives.

Sun and warm weather got 78% of all answers, so almost four out of five respondents feel that sun and warm weather are important when on a holiday. People do seek sun outside Finland as here during the winter season it is barely seen and the during the summer season the weather varies a lot.

“Rest and relaxation” was the second most chosen alternative (59%) so more than half of the respondents seek rest and relaxation when they are on a holiday. People want to switch off from their everyday routines and escape the ordinary so holidays offer a great way to get away from home and to be outside the daily routines and chores.

Gaining new experiences is also important for the respondents as almost half (45%) thought it is important when being on a holiday. People are interested in learning new things and getting to know new people and cultures. The excursions organized at the destination offer great and easy way to gain new experiences. The tour operator offers these experiences and the holiday-makers basically only need to jump on a bus to start enjoying and exploring.

As Parment (2012, 105) stated that people belonging to this segment, +55-year-olds, have accepted that enjoyment and experiences are important criteria when making a purchasing decision. Value for money got 35% of all answers. This indicates that the value for money is not one of the key indicators when choosing a holiday. Holidays are often expensive but this segment often has the finances to spare and have the possibility to travel rather often. They appreciate other factors in addition to the value money spent brings when purchasing a holiday. This is a good indicator for the tour operators. The segment is willing to spend as long as the highly appreciated factors are met; the weather is good and sun is shining, travellers are provided the opportunity to rest and relax as well as gain new experiences while being on holiday.

25% of the respondents indicated that escaping the everyday life is important when thinking about wishes one has for a holiday. This low percentage could be explained with the fact that most of the respondents (55%) are part of the age group 55-64 where many are still working. When retired it is most likely that the escape from routines and work stress is not needed anymore but other, more soft factors come into play when thinking about one's wishes for a holiday. Maybe "time with family and friends" was associated to be included into "rest and relaxation" as it gained only 20% of all replies. It can also be that when couples are travelling with each other and the younger generations are not travelling with them, the time spent as a couple is not seen to fit this category.

17% of respondents answered that luxury experiences are important factor on a holiday. The all-inclusive holidays are becoming a commodity but still the all-inclusive service is offered in the high-end hotels (four or five stars). Maybe getting used to the all-inclusive holidays in nice hotels have also made this segment more aware of the luxury hotel experiences over all when travelling. Luxury experience can obviously indicate a lot of different aspects during a holiday, be it gourmet food, fast cars, private beaches, business or first-class flights and limousine transfers. Also 17% saw that hobbies are important while on holiday. “Time for myself” was only indicated by one person, so for these respondents it is not important.

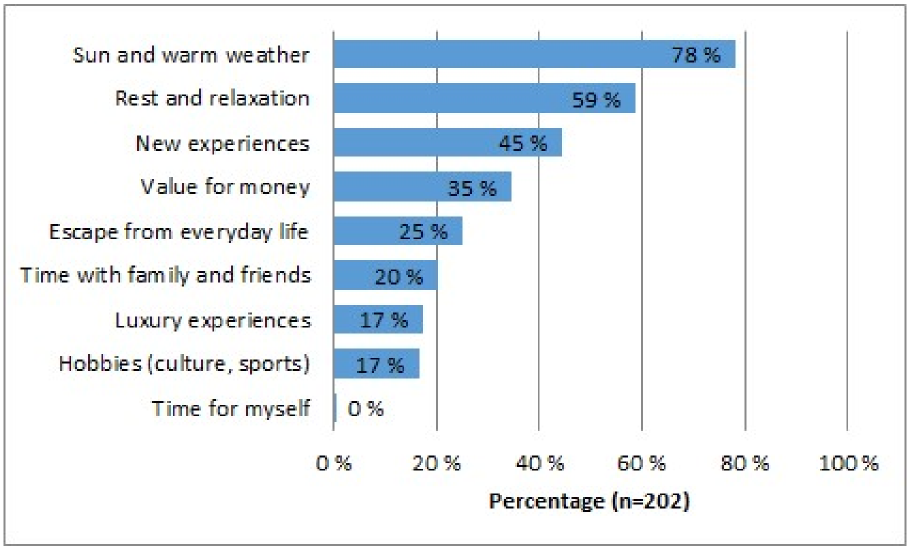

Figure 5. What are your wishes for a holiday?

When asking the respondents what kind of a holiday they prefer (Q5), a combination of a beach and city holiday (46%) just outnumbered beach holiday (40%) alone (figure 6). When the majority of responses in the previous holiday wishes question were around sun and warm weather, rest and relaxation as well as new experiences all of these criteria are fulfilled while being on a combined beach and city holiday. This combination offers a balanced holiday between relaxation and activities and offers an opportunity to match different kind of holiday wishes people travelling together might have.

The respondents clearly appreciate the sun and warm weather as city holiday alone was only chosen among 6% of the respondents. It does not mean that a city holiday would not offer sun and warm weather, but the likeliness to enjoy sunny days is more likely at a beach destination than in a city.

Tours were chosen by 6% of the respondents as their ideal holiday. Tours offer a great possibility to visit several places in a rather short period of time. Tour also offers easiness as the travel programme is pre-organized and planned and the trips often also include Finnish language tour guides. They also suit this segment well in the way that tours are often quite expensive and exclusive as they can include accommodation in five-star hotels and dinners in high quality restaurants. Naturally also less expensive options are available.

There was also a possibility to answer “cruise” to this question but none of the respondents saw cruises as their ideal type of a holiday. The category “other” got a few responses, golf and countryside holidays worth mentioning.

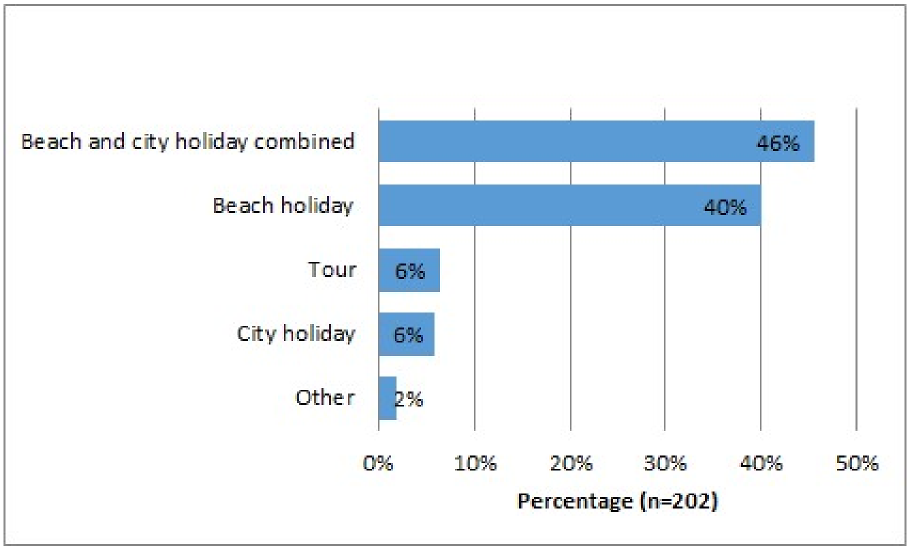

Figure 6. What kind of a holiday do you prefer?

The following question in the questionnaire (Q6) was an open-ended question asking about the favourite destination of the respondents. Below (figure 7) is a word cloud presented out of the open replies. The top two replies as seen from the cloud below are “Greece” with 31 mentions and “Spain” with 24 mentions. The most mentioned long-haul destination is “Thailand” with 14 mentions. Other long-haul destinations mentioned are Cuba, Mexico, the Caribbean, Australia and Africa. The fourth most mentioned destination “islands” which can be seen to refer to the Canary Islands. The Canary Islands was mentioned 10 times. The predominance of Greece and Spain is emphasized as there are several mentions about Greek Islands such as Rhodes and Crete and Corfu. The same applies to Spain as Compostela, Ingles and Tenerife are mentioned. To generalize we can say that the majority of the respondents present a traditional Finnish traveller when it comes to the preferred choice of destination.

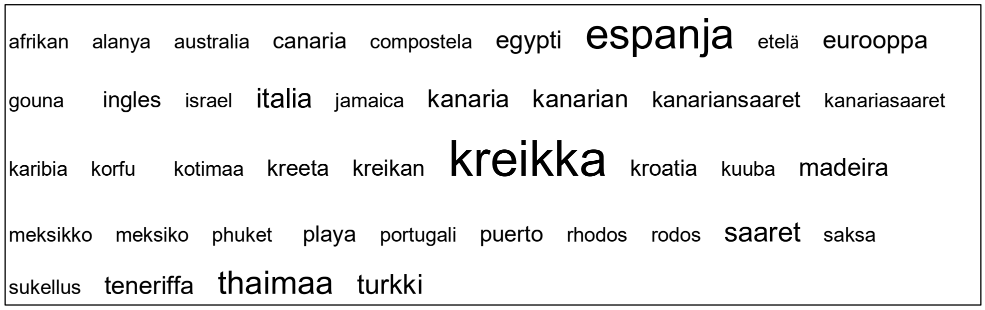

Figure 7. What is your favourite destination?

The following question (Q7) asked about preferred destination where the target group would like TUI to offer holidays to. This question was an open-ended question and below is a word map derived from the word cloud of the open answers (figure 8). The answers that were most utilized in the open-ended responses were “destinations”, “inexpensive” as well as “new” and “alone”. The respondents were most often mentioning destinations like Greece, Europe, Croatia and Egypt that are already included in TUI offering. The individual responses included a huge variety of both different European and long-haul destinations. Also “exotic” destinations were highlighted as well as completely new destinations. New holiday destinations included mentions of Thailand and places outside mass tourism. The exotic options were not often specified, but Borneo, Cambodia and Panama were replied to mention a few.

The respondents were after cheap holidays and direct flights and commented their interest in having the possibility to depart elsewhere than only from Helsinki. An interesting discovery was to emphasize on the willingness to travel alone and to be able to find inexpensive options for the single-traveller. Several respondents are interested in finding single-traveller options so that a single-traveller would not need to pay extra price for their travels.

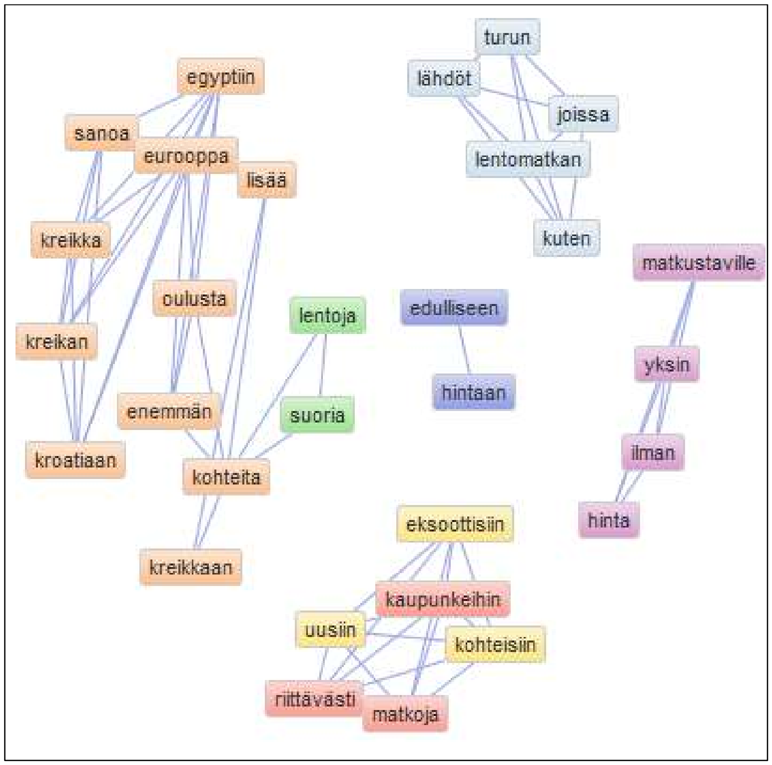

Figure 8. I would like TUI to offer holidays to..

5.3 Travel patterns

The eight question (Q8) in the questionnaire was about the determinants that influence the choice of the tour operator. The respondents value a good variety of destinations from where to choose their holiday (figure 9). They appreciate value for money and quality. They want to hear about offers. Personalized services either before or during the holiday are important but are not among the key determining factors when choosing the tour operator.

The respondents were able to choose several options given or write other determinants outside the list given. In total the respondents gave 547 answers which means that on average a respondent chose almost three of the given options (2.7%). 66% of the respondents valued the variety of destinations on offer. This option gained the largest share from the respondents so it can be said that this is the key reason a tour operator is chosen. It is obvious that the choice of destination plays a major role in choosing where to buy your holiday as customers often have predetermined options among destinations where they want to travel to.

Price of travel plays the second biggest role when thinking about where to purchase a holiday. 59% of the respondents think price of a holiday is an important determinant among the tour operators. Customers compare prices and search for value. The price comparison sites today have made it easy to look for suitably priced options and as purchasing travel has shifted so much from a holiday shop online, it is understandable that also the comparing of the prices is easier than before. Still it can be seen that only a bit more than half consider price to be a key decision influencer, this target group is not only after the cheap option but most likely are more willing to pay more for a holiday they are looking for at a given time.

For 41% of the respondents offers available are also an important factor. As mentioned before comparing prices and offers available is easy and it is quick to compare different offers online. Available offers also often tempt a person to start searching for their next holiday. It can easily happen that offers lure people so that by looking at gorgeous beaches and tempting holiday surroundings they end up purchasing something else than what the offer they initially searched for included.

Professional customer service was chosen by 21% of the respondents. This must be in decline as a lot of the purchasing is done online, so the traditional customer service is not often needed. This can also be a deal breaker for those who want to have customer service. A tour operator not providing this option for its customers could miss out on the opportunity to sell holidays to these travellers. Customer service online includes other means of communication, like chat and email. There could be a need to educate this target group more towards the user friendliness and usability of these services when the personal customer service over the phone is in decline.

Almost as many 18% of the respondents think guide services at the destination are important. This target group is willing to utilize the expertise of the guides when at the destination. They are often easily provided so that the guides visit the hotels at certain days and hours during the holiday and provide valuable information about tours and the local life to the travellers in Finnish.

Personalized customer service prior to departure is a key factor for 11% of the respondents. This goes hand in hand with the professional customer service option. Both these are scarce as holidays often are purchased online and the personalized service then is non-existent.

Option “other” gained 9% of the replies. A word map of the most mentioned words and their correlations is presented in figure 10. As in total there were 19 replies into this category the word cloud represents the variety of replies very well. There were combinations of given reply options mentioned here like “suitable price and destination”. Respondents mentioned online bookings and wished for departures from other domestic airports like Oulu.

Recommendations are a key factor for 7% of the respondents and loyalty programme for 5% respectively. Recommendations definitely play a more important role when thinking about destinations and specific hotels. There are so many options overall where to choose from so that getting a recommendation for a certain destination or hotel will narrow down the choices and ease the purchasing decision.

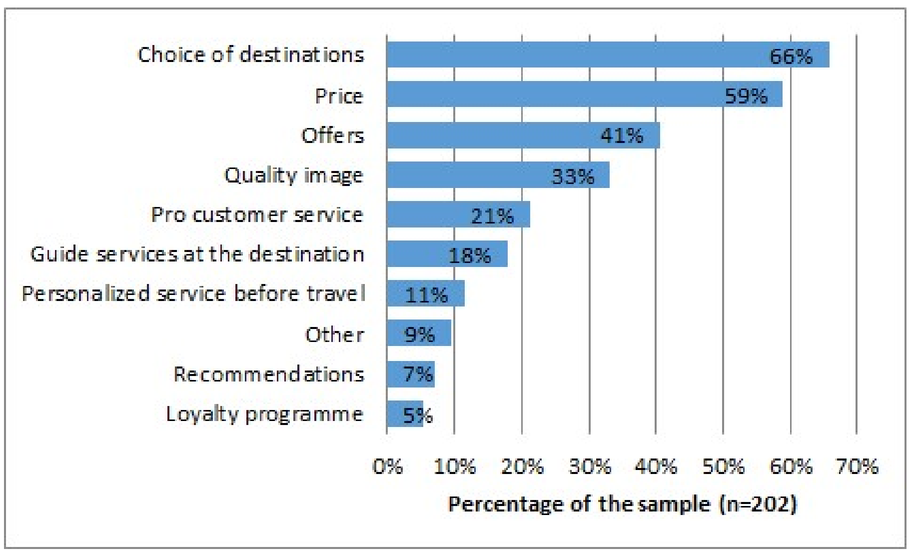

Figure 9. What factors influence the choice about a tour operator?

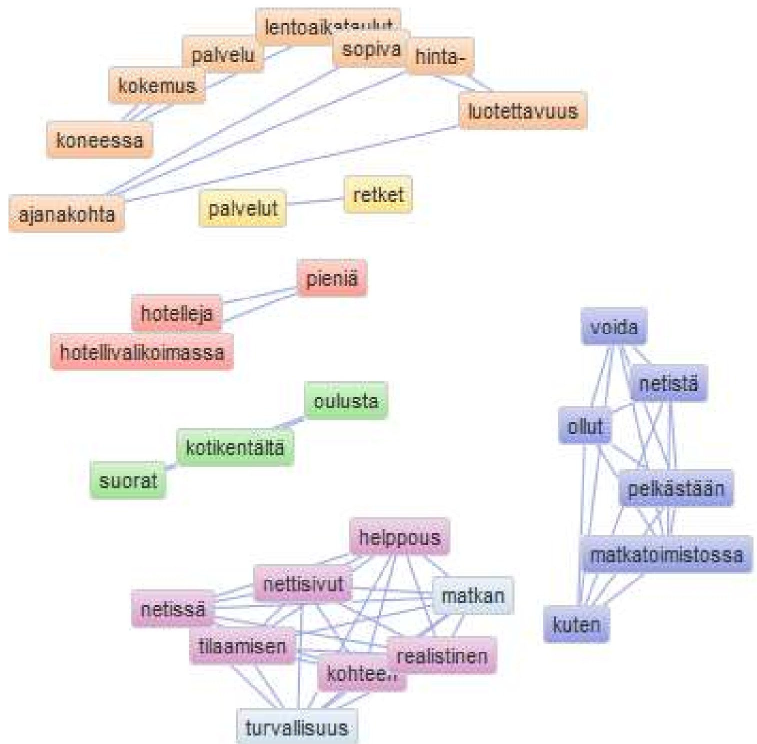

Figure 10. Word map of the option “other” responses to question number 8

The following question (Q9) asked about travel companions. Who do the respondents prefer to travel with? The responses are presented in figure 11 below. Over 2/3 (69%) of the respondents prefer to travel with their spouse, 13% with friends, 10% with family and 8% alone. A majority of the respondents are living in a relationship and they most likely choose to travel with their spouse. Ideally they share the same interests when it comes to the choice of destination and the type of holidays they want to take. They also seem to find time to travel together, spending holidays travelling together or when retired finding the suitable holiday options to satisfy both. Maybe the remaining 31% are not living in a relationship as they are not travelling with a spouse but rather sharing their holidays with friends or family or choosing to travel alone.

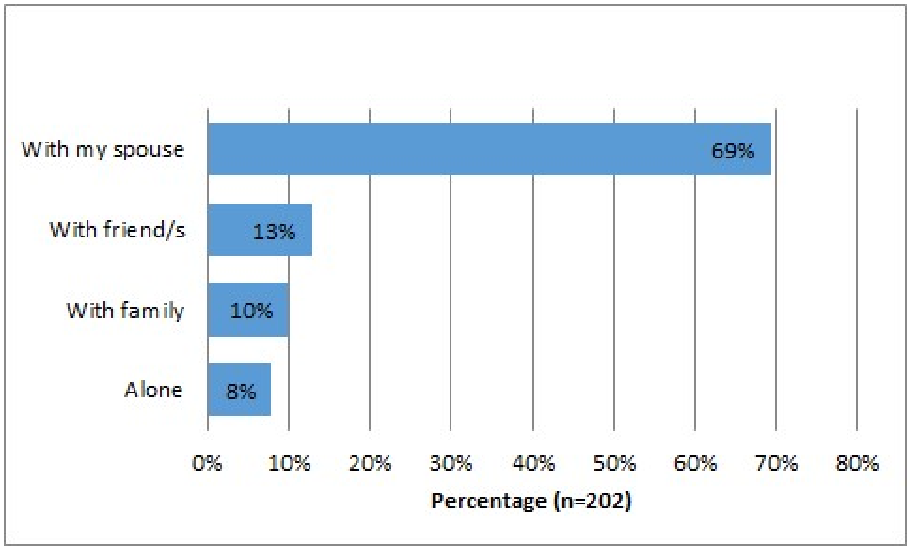

Figure 11. Who do you prefer to travel with?

The next question (Q10) was about who makes the travel related decisions. From below figure 12 we can see that over 4 out of 5 make the decisions together with whoever they are travelling with, only 17% decide on their own. People in general are interested in having a word to say when it comes to their spare time and how they are spending it. Holidays require financials and people most likely are unwilling to spend money without knowing whether they like the made travel choices or not. Sometimes it is adventurous to let another person decide on a destination for the sake of novelty but part of the travel excitement comes also from the pre-planning and getting to know the destination in advance.

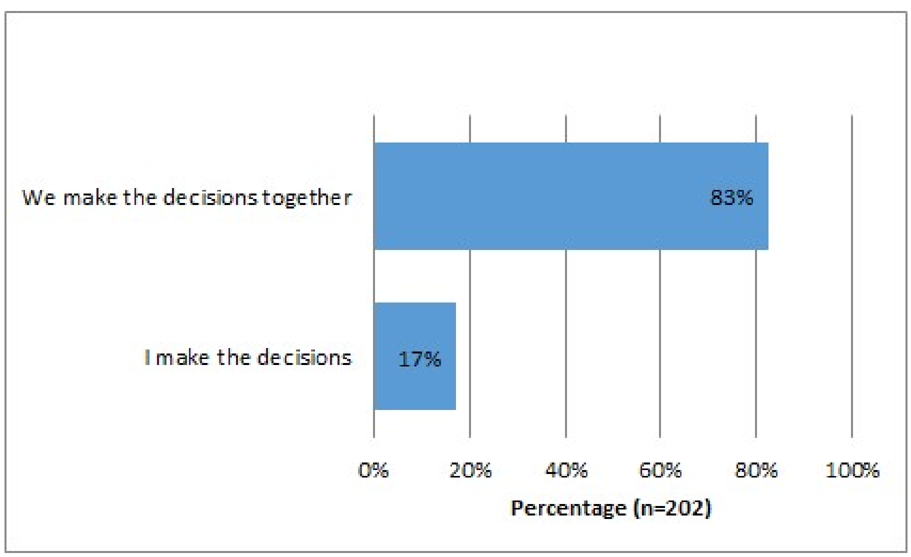

Figure 12. Who makes the travel related decisions (destination, hotel) in your group of travellers?

The following question (Q11) asked about the criterion for choosing a destination. The responses are presented in figure 13. Respondents were given five options to choose from or to write about their own criterion. The most important criterion for choosing a destination is its location. 55% of the respondents chose this alternative. The remaining 45% of the answers were split between price (17%), the uniqueness of the destination (13%), safety of the destination (8%), recommendations (4%) and other reasons (3%).

When thinking about travel experience the destination plays a crucial role whatever the traveller is after. Location also often includes some of the other features like uniqueness or mass destination, safety issues and clearly also recommendations from friends and family or other travellers. Location can here be understood in a larger scale like a destination or in smaller scale a certain area in a destination, city or village. Anyhow it can define a holiday in a major way as it can either seclude the traveller somewhere remote be it voluntarily or involuntarily or it can place the traveller on the busiest street or beach at a certain location.

As seen with other questions in this questionnaire price is not the key determinant for this studied segment. It can be seen with these answers as well, as only 17% of the respondents think it is the major determinant for choosing the destination.

The uniqueness of the destination was chosen by 13% of the respondents as the most important criterion. As “unique” can mean different things to different people, the respondents were given “quality, novelty” as determining factors for choosing this response option. As travel experiences vary greatly between different travellers it means that for some a novelty destination is somewhere he/she has not been before while for someone else the novelty comes from the destination being a place where the tour operators have just started offering holidays to. The same applies for quality, different people value quality in different ways, so it is difficult here to draw some conclusions from these given answers.

Safety was chosen by 8% of the respondents and recommendations by 4% respectively. Maybe safety issues are not that much emphasized here as tour operators source their destinations with safety criteria. All destinations offered are safe so travellers do not need to focus on these issues as much as when they are looking for travel outside the tour operator offering. Recommendations do not seem to be important enough to be chosen as the most important criteria when choosing a destination. As only 4% saw it as the most important criteria, it is likely that recommendations are important but do not serve as the key. It can be that recommendations are more important when looking at a single hotel or ideas what to do when at a destination. Other (3%) mentions included mainly combinations of the given responses like location and price.

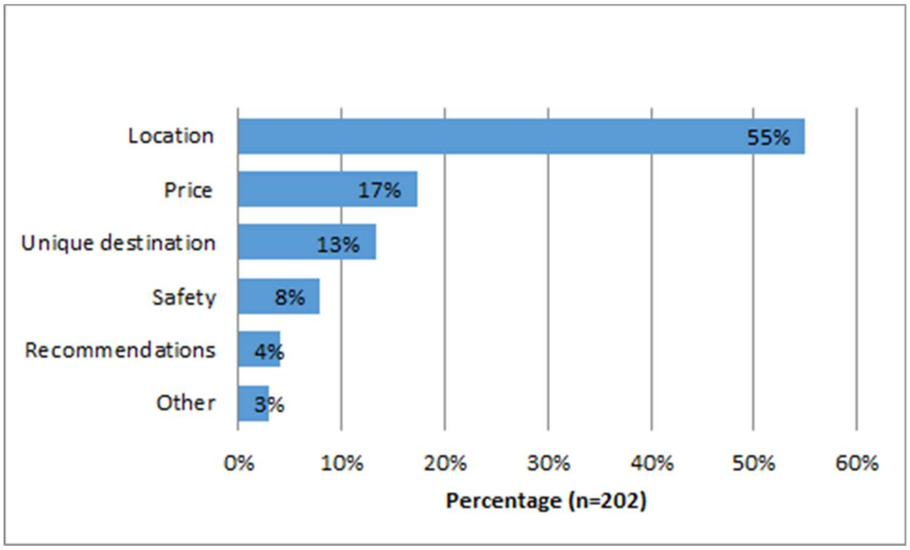

Figure 13. What is the most important criterion when choosing a destination for your travel?

The next question (Q12) asked the respondents where they acquire information about the travel destination prior to making their booking. The respondents were given the possibility to choose several predetermined options or to write about their own outside the given list of options. The replies are presented in figure 14. Overall 355 replies were given which means that on average a respondent chose almost two of the given response options (1,76). 89% of the respondents utilize internet to source information about their travel destination. As mentioned before (Parment 2012, 135) this segment is very computer literate and interested in searching information online with the different gadgets they possess. Almost half (42%) search information from tour operators, 18% from travel guides. Recommendations are utilized among 14% of the respondents whereas blogs by 5% and magazines 4% respectively. The option “other” got 5% of the replies. Respondents wrote that they also source information from their friends, social media and their own previous travel experiences.

The high response rate for searching information online is no surprise. Internet offers endless options and channels for the information savvy and most likely people also read travel guides, blogs and magazines online to gather information about the destination they are travelling to. People in general are interested in other travellers, even strangers' experiences and with the information overflow these shared experiences can balance the need to acquire information from several sources.

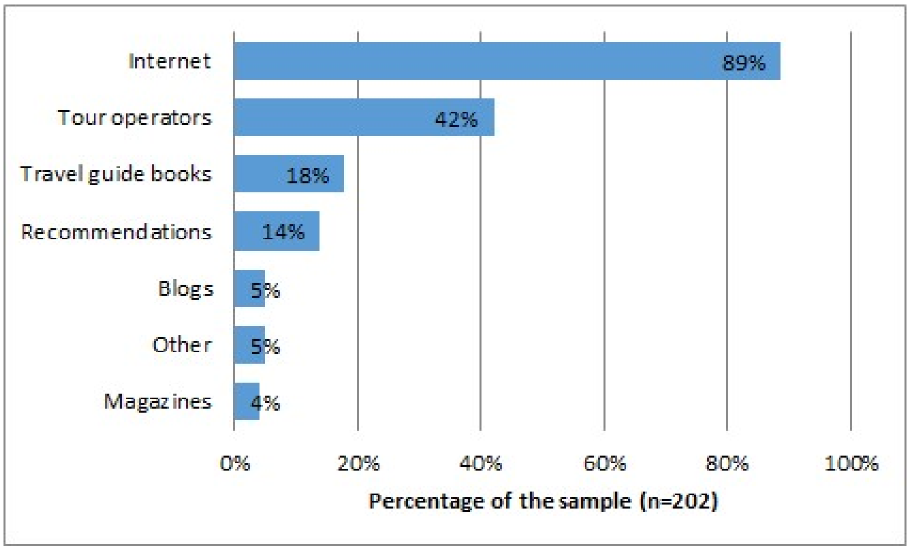

Figure 14. Where do you acquire information about the destination before booking?

The following question (Q13) asked about the image TUI has among the respondents. The responses are presented in figure 15 below. The image TUI has among the respondents is good. 83% of the respondents say that TUI has good or very good image as a tour operator. 7% said that the image is below average and one respondent replied the image to be poor. 9% of the respondents did not have an opinion. These results are very promising but it is important to consider that most likely those customers who are generally happier about the services provider are participating in answering a questionnaire. Those ones who are unhappy should in general immediately be dealt with as the negative feedback spreads fast and it is difficult to redeem the reputation afterwards. Also as Schiffman et al. (2012, 33) state that companies that are striving to satisfy customers rating the company image "good" are making a crucial error. Those indicating that they are very satisfied (rating very good) are much more profitable and loyal than those customers rating a lower value.

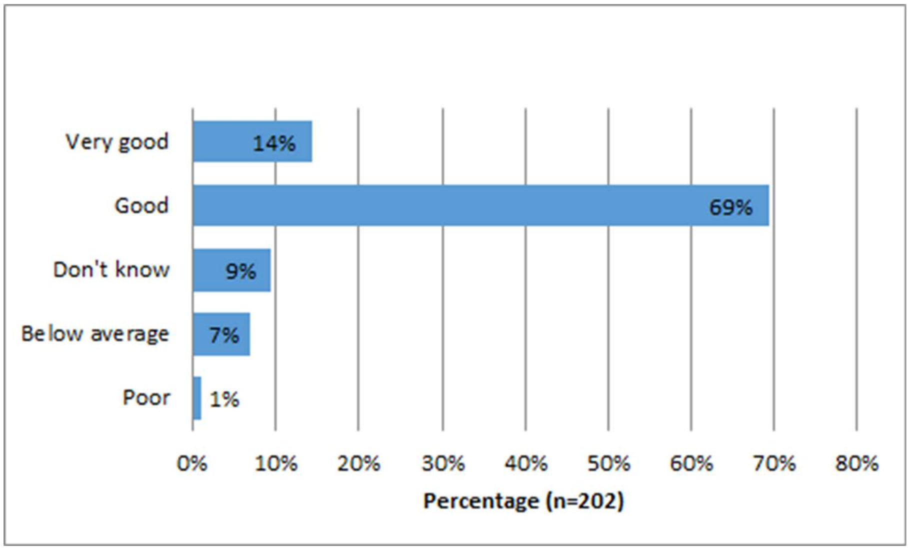

Figure 15. What kind of an image do you have of TUI as a tour operator?

The next question (Q14) asked about the reasoning why the respondents rated the image of TUI the way they did. This question was an open-ended question and below is a word map derived from the results. This word map below (figure 16) presents the positive replies as they were a majority among all replies. The word map below presents that the respondents have overall been pleased with TUI holidays they have been on as they have "good experiences", "everything has worked well", "they have gained good experiences and have encountered good service", "they have been on successful holidays with a reliable tour operator". Highlights from the pleased customers are the appreciation of a varied selection of holidays, the holiday options are well presented on the site with plenty of destination information as well as that TUI delivers what customers are expecting.

In total there were 14 negative replies (below average or poor). When looking at the open answers, striking negativity can be seen from the negative media coverage TUI has perceived lately and the delay of flights. The delay or ignorance in returning negative feedback got some respondents give below average value for the image. A few customers also commented the lack of Finnish speaking guides at destinations to be the reason why their image is negative while some replied that the lack of a loyalty programme is the reason behind the negative image.

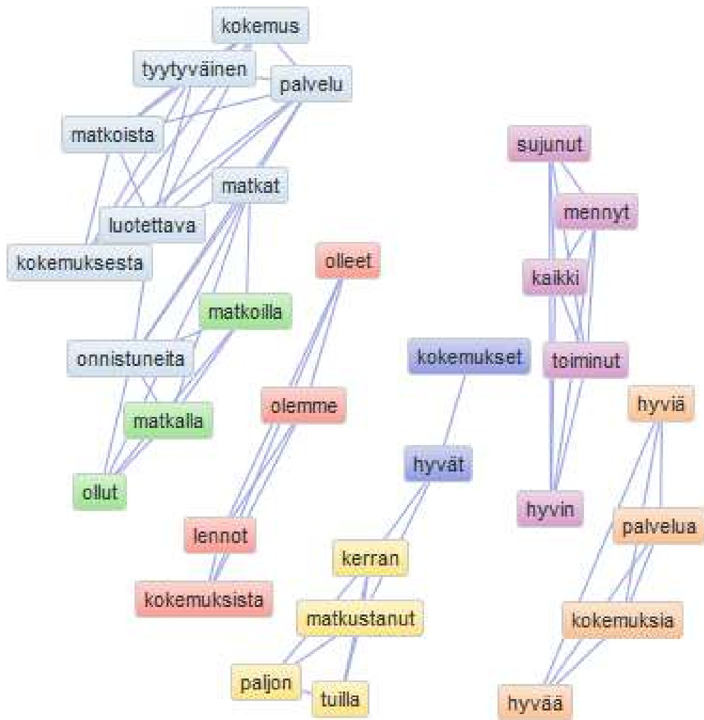

Figure 16. What is the reason behind the given rating about the image of TUI?

The next question (Q15) asked why the respondents have not chosen to travel lately with TUI? The answers are presented below (figure 17). The respondents were to choose one of the most suitable option out of the given possibilities or choose "other" and write their own reasoning. The answers were quite split between the given options as well as the option "other".

Most often the response is that the destination where one would like to travel to has been unavailable. 22% of the respondents chose that this is the key reason why they have not chosen to purchase travel from TUI lately. Is it that the destination a respondent wants to travel to has been sold out or is not available that season concerned or TUI does not have that destination in their range at all? As found out previously in this study, the preferred destinations among the respondents are the top destinations where the tour operators offer the most variety like Greece and Spain. These destinations are available both during summer (Greece, Spain) and winter (Canary Islands) season so there should be enough options available. Is there enough inventory on offer? Can it be that respondents are booking too late when those preferred destinations are sold out? Could it also be that among the most popular destinations, travellers are in need of new assortment, like new Greek Islands and new locations both in mainland Spain and Canary Islands to be made available?

The second most chosen option (20%) were other reasons. All together 41 respondents chose to indicate their own reasons for not choosing TUI. Here the respondents mentioned mostly that they bought holidays from other tour operators, there were no flights offered from an airport close by to where they live, they wanted to organize their holiday themselves without the help from a tour operator or support the local airline and fly with Finnair.

Finding the suitable time to travel or a suitable hotel was also a reason why the respondents had not chosen to travel with TUI. Suitable time to travel was the main reason for 13% of the respondents and not finding a suitable hotel for the holiday was the reason not choosing TUI for 9% of the respondents. 10% of the respondents chose “expensive” as their reason not to travel with TUI. It is interesting to see that price still pays the most important role for some respondents even the share is rather small.

There was also the possibility that for some of the respondents a holiday by TUI was actually the last holiday they had been on so that is why this was given as one of the options for answering this question. 10% of the total respondents had been travelling with TUI when on holiday the last time.

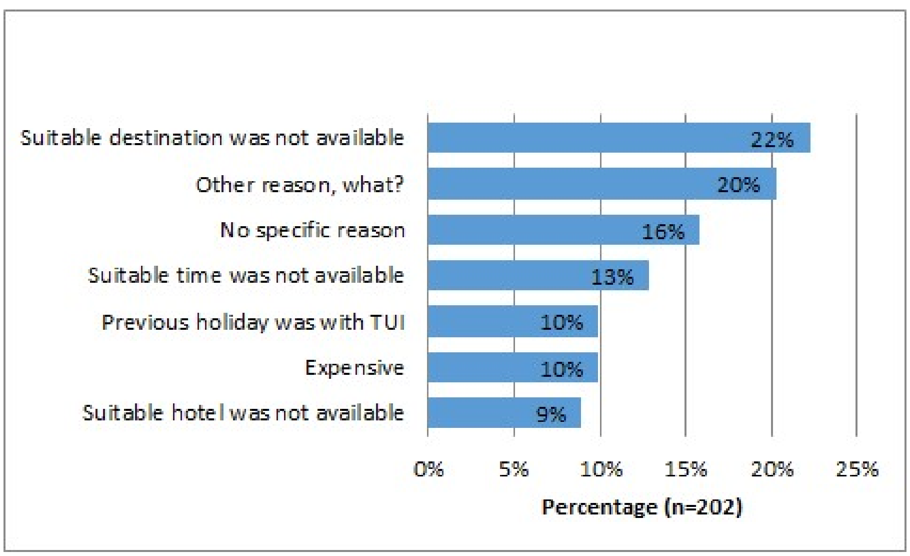

Figure 17. Why have you not chosen to travel with TUI lately?

The next question (Q16) asked the respondents what factors would make them choose their next holiday from TUI. This question was presented as a multiple-choice question and the respondents were able to choose several out of the given answers that match their criteria. The given responses are presented below in figure 18. The respondents chose on average 1.7 of the given response options, as in total there were 337 response choices made to this question.

Like the two previous questions and those given answers indicate, the most valued factors when choosing a holiday are having the right destination at the right time and for a good price. Here the answers follow the same path, as having a suitable destination/hotel gained the most responses at 72% and reasonable price 58%.

It was surprising to see how little impact the easy and clear site for bookings (17%) and personal service (6%) have when choosing the tour operator. It can be that the impact for these were bigger if these factors were not well functioning at TUI. Currently customers are happy with the site and the personal service when they need it and this does not function as a deal breaker when making the buying decision whether to book the holiday with TUI or with a competitor.

“Other” replies (10%) were mostly around the offering for holidays from other domestic airports than Helsinki. Some respondents mentioned that a selection criterium to purchase their next holiday from TUI could be the offering on new destinations they have not visited before.

Recommendations was the smallest portion of replies, only 3% indicated recommendations to be among the key decision-making criteria when thinking about buying their next holiday from TUI. It seems that it got such a low impact as the other criteria were so crucial for almost all respondents.

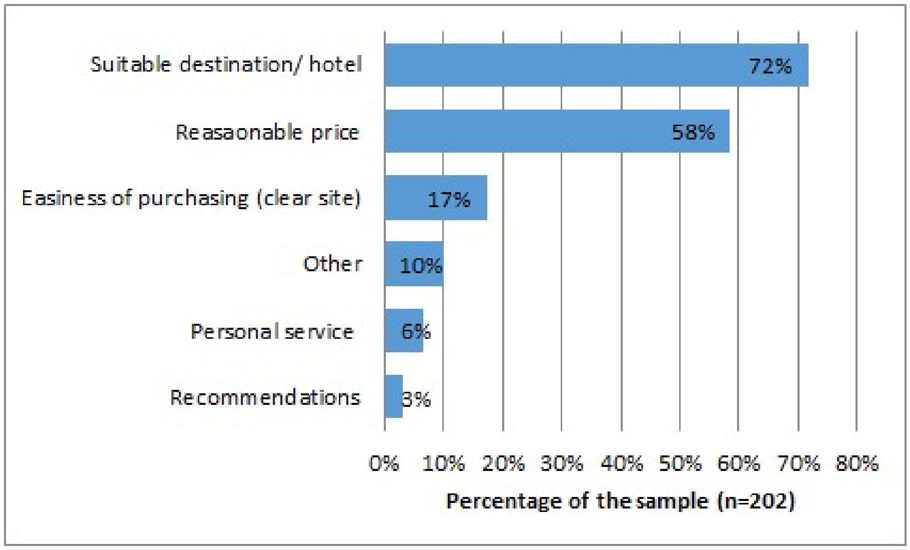

Figure 18. What factors would make you purchase your next holiday from TUI?

5.4 Travel wishes

Question 17 (Q17) asked the respondents to evaluate the given statements when thinking about their travel behaviour. The respondents were given a five-point Likert scale rating for answering the question. The results are presented in figures 19 and 20. The response options were as follows:

1= I strongly disagree
2= I disagree
3= I don't disagree nor agree
4= I agree
5= I fully agree

The given replies varied between 4.5 and 3.9. All of the statements got on average more positive replies, as the ratings were closer to 5 than to 1. The respondents valued the statement "I like it when I can make the entire booking (flights + hotel) from one place" the most, it received a rating of 4.5. 63% of the respondents rated this statement with a value of 5. These respondents value the easiness of a one-stop-shop so that they can get all their holiday booking needs fulfilled with one service provider. The second highest rating was given to a statement "TUI is a trustworthy tour operator". These respondents clearly appreciate TUI in being a reliable tour operator as they gave a rating of 4.3. In the eyes of customer retention, being a trusted service provider is especially true in the online environment. Reputation is the key reason for online customer retention as trust increases repeat purchase intentions. (Curras-Perez et al. 2017,141.) Only 4.5% of the respondents thought that TUI is not reliable (ratings 1 or 2). The same rating of 4.3 was given by the respondents to the statement “I feel safe when travelling with TUI”. Only 3% saw that travelling with TUI is not safe (ratings 1 or 2). It is very important for a tour operator being ranked as safe and trustworthy among the customers. It is easier to build on the customer satisfaction when the core pillars of the operations are well functioning and appreciated among the customer base.

“When travelling one gets to know new people and cultures” got a rating of 4.2. Travellers are interested in exploring new places and getting to know local cultures, people and their way of life. Travelling is expanding the horizons of travellers. There is room for expanding the current excursion offering when thinking of the local life at the destinations. Getting involved in the lives of the locals is a way to understand and also give back to the places people visit during their travels. Maybe it is worth exploring the opportunity to offer more deep interactions with tourists and locals than just a quick visit to a village? Rating 4.1 was given to the statement “Transacting with TUI is easy”. This means that a majority of the respondents appreciate the current way of interaction they have with TUI, be it online or in personal encounters. “Travelling is an experience I am willing to invest money into” received a 4.0 rating among the respondents. Here 50% of the respondents replied that they agree with this statement. 10% of the respondents however replied that they do not agree with this statement. The lowest rating of 3.9 was given to the statement “TUI holidays offer value for money”. Most of the respondents gave a ranking of 4 (53%) so the majority is satisfied that TUI holidays are offering value for money. Value for money is subjective and holidays wishes in general are really varied. Some might settle and be really pleased with something that other travellers find below average. It is important to give travellers relevant and reliable information on their destination, hotel and the features early on, as it can avoid excess expectations and disappointments. These disappointments can lead to thinking that a holiday was not value for the money spent. Customers seem to be price sensitive, as it can be seen throughout this survey that these respondents as well are looking for value for the euros spent and are willing to choose the tour operator based on price.

There was not a lot of variation between the replies as the standard deviation for all the replies ranged between 0.7 and 0.9.

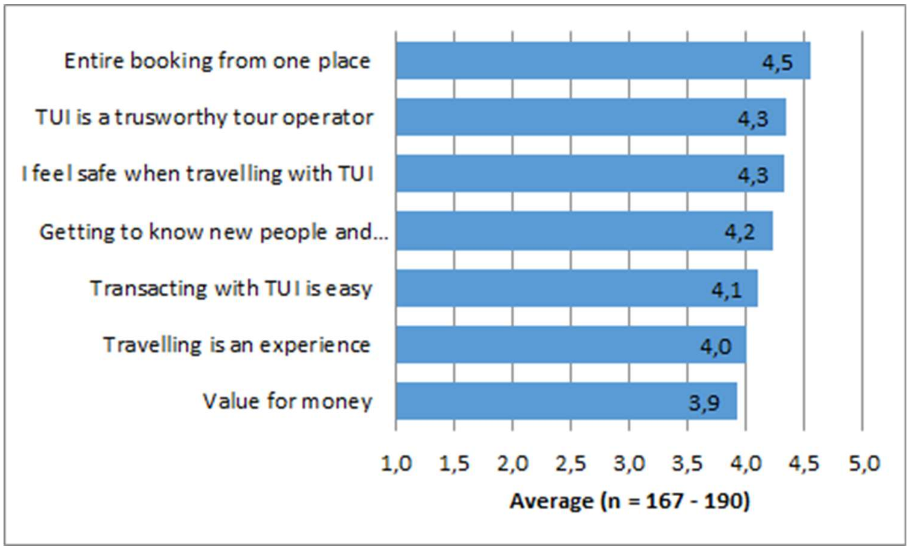

Figure 19. Evaluate the following statements that describe your travel behaviour. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the statements?

Additionally for the presentation on the average calculations for question 17, below is a figure 19 for the average opinion split for the given statements. To generalize, it can be seen that all of the given statements were seen as mostly positive (ratings 4 and 5) and only a few people were unsatisfied with these statements. Overall most people had an opinion about all statements, as rating 3 did not get lots of replies for any of the given statements. It is good to see that the security related statements were well scored and gained only really few low ratings. The most negative ratings were given to the emotional statements like “TUI holidays offer value for money” and “travelling is an experience I want to invest money into”. There most likely the possible negative or unsatisfied experience influences this rating and can impact the attractiveness of TUI as a tour operator in the eyes of these respondents. As Parment (2008, 69) stated these +55-year-old consumers might often have a low price sensitivity when there is a high quality service they want to purchase. However if the quality does not match the expected or promised level the disappointment is a major issue.

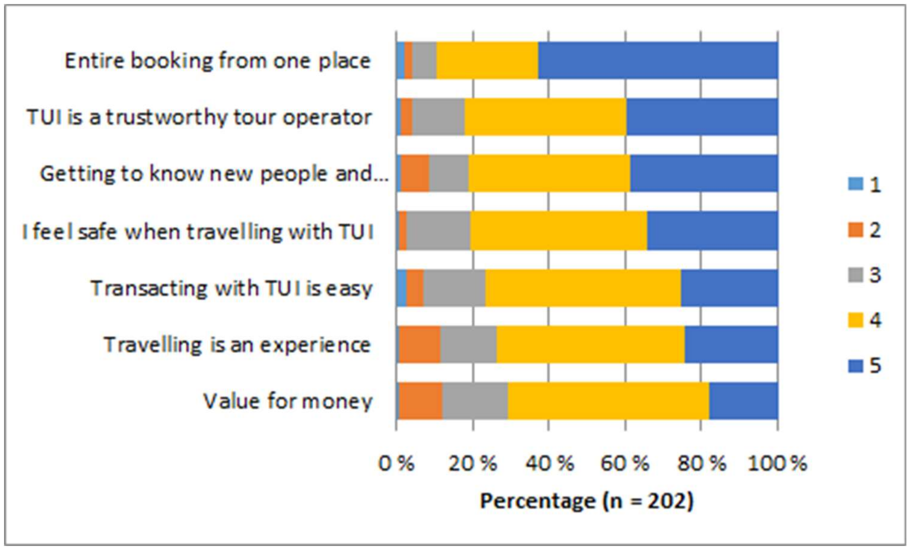

Figure 20. Evaluate the following statements that describe your travel behaviour. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the statements?

The following question (Q18) was about defining a dream destination. The respondents were asked to rate the given options so that the option describing their dream destination the best gets 5 points and the one describing it the least gets 1 point. Below figures 21 and 22 present the findings.

The given segments to rank the dream destinations were described as follows and are presented in the order of magnitude:
CONSERVATIVES - A trustworthy package with flights, accommodation and meals
PIONEERS - An exclusive destination that only a few people get to visit
ENTHUSIASTS - Destination where likeminded travellers go to spend time together
INDULGERS/ BIG SPENDERS - An exclusive luxury destination focusing on good food and five-star service
FINNS - Destination targeted for Finns with plenty of other Finnish people

These given replies allow the segmentation for these respondents to be divided into five different segments based on their travel interests. The average calculations below in figure 20 show the division of all replies to all five categories. The highest ranking of 3.9 was given to the “Conservatives” type of a dream destination. This was followed by “Pioneers”, “Enthusiasts” and “Indulgers/Big spenders” all ranking at 3.1. The least chosen dream destination type was “Finns” that got the ranking of 1.8.

“Conservatives” was ranked as the preferred traveller type by 47% of the respondents. This is followed by “Pioneers” totaling 19%, “Enthusiasts” 15%, “Indulgers/big spenders” 13% and “Finns” 6% respectively.

The “Conservatives” that received the highest ranking are customers who are looking for a package holiday that includes flights, accommodation and meals, in other words, an all-inclusive holiday. “Pioneers” are customers who are looking for an exclusive holiday destination where only few people go. On these holidays the respondents are interested in getting to visit new places, meeting new people and getting new experiences. “Enthusiasts” enjoy holidays where likeminded travellers go to spend time together. “Indulgers/big spenders” are after an exclusive and luxury holiday where they can focus on good food and five-star service. “Finns” then again are looking for a holiday where there are plenty of other Finnish people sharing their holiday experiences with.

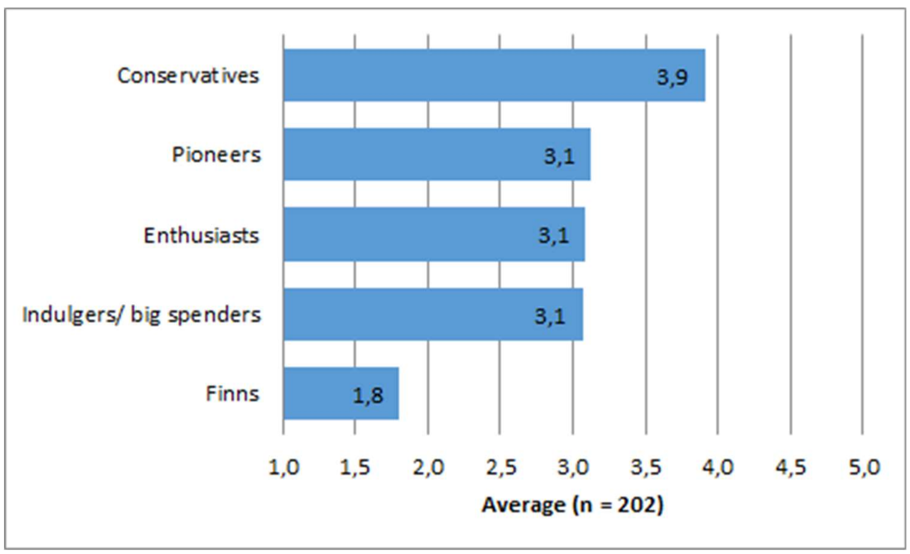

Figure 21. What would your dream destination be like?

In addition to the calculations for the values for each traveller type, the percentage of average options are presented below. This figure 21 shows the split between all the ratings the respondents have given of all five dream destination types. The split between the chosen dream destination types is varied based on the chosen ranking of the responses.

From the below percentage split it can be seen that there is quite a lot of variation between the different dream holiday types. Only a few people didn’t see themselves at all like “Conservatives”, the number of respondents choosing option 1 was only 6% of the respondents that feel that their dream holiday is not about having an all inclusive package. For “Pioneers”, “Enthusiasts” and “Indulgers/big spenders” there was rather an even mix of responses varying between rankings 2-4 even we can see that there were quite a lot of respondents indicating that the “Enthusiasts” type of holiday is not what they are looking for (32% of the respondents ranked this with a value of 2). This means that among the respondents having a destination where likeminded travellers go to spend time together is not something these travellers appreciate. An interesting finding was also that only 10% rated “Finns” with a value of 4 or 5. This means that among these respondents overall the type of a holiday where a lot of Finns travel together to spend time with each other is the least appreciated holiday type among the respondents.

All of these types of holidays are offered by TUI. The all inclusive holidays that were the most appreciated dream destination type are available at TUI with plenty of different short- and long haul holidays, to both familiar and more exclusive destinations.

The standard deviation for this question ranged between 1.2 and 1.3. It shows that the responses were rather close to each other but as the standard deviation is not close to zero, it means that the responses overall are not so close to the mean value.

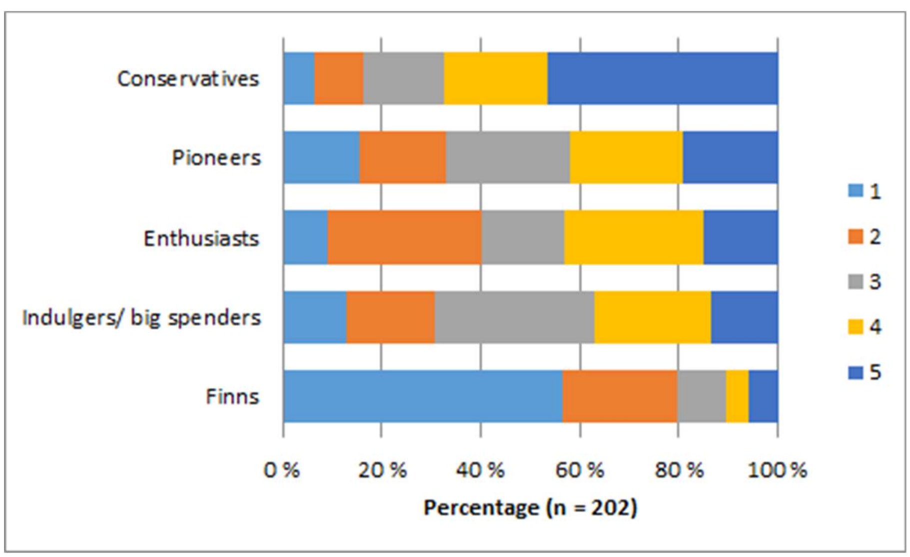

Figure 22. What would your dream destination be like?

The next question (Q19) was asking the respondents to indicate how interested they are about the concerned services before and after their holiday when booking with TUI (findings presented in figures 23 and 24). The respondents were asked to rate the given nine statements based on a five-point Likert scale set up. The response options were as follows:

1= I am not interested at all
2= I am not interested
3= I don't know
4= I am interested
5= I am very interested

The fact that the respondents were mostly keen on getting to know local people is consistent with their replies earlier on to question 17 where this same statement got a high ranking. The statements for having a personal transfer at the destination, ordering an inflight meal or choosing a seat on a flight were among the highest rating statements (ratings between 3.9 and 3.8). These services are already provided as ancillaries among the tour operators, including TUI. The personal transfers are less available and only offered among selected destinations. Ratings between 3.0 and 2.6 were given to statements including having a personal guide for tours, being interested in personal holiday booking assistance and having domestic transfers as well as showing interest towards hotels targeted for seniors. The respondents were the least interested in booking a personal trainer at the destination. This statement only got a rating of 1.6.

The standard deviation ranged between 0.9 and 1.6. so there was a lot of variation between the replies and as the responses are not close to zero they overall are not close to the mean value.

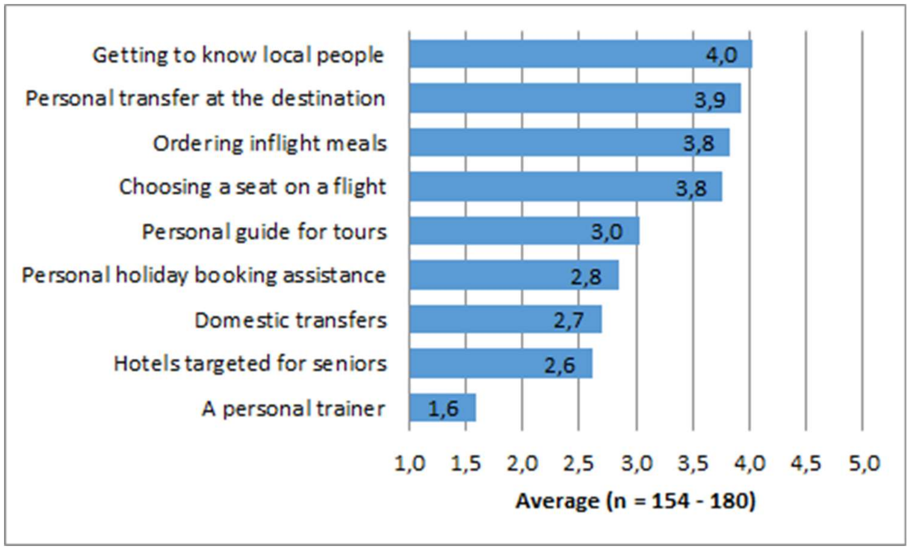

Figure 23. How interested in the following services before and during travel would you be when booking your holiday with TUI?

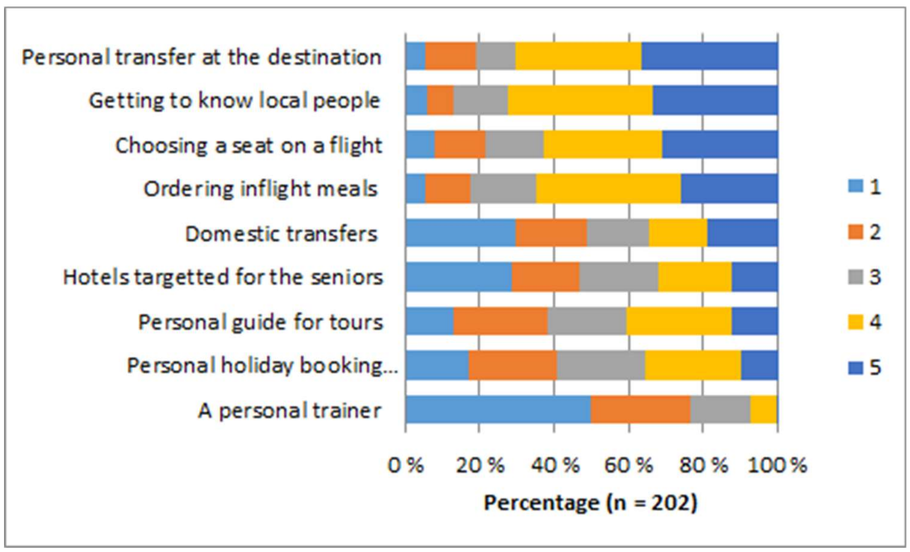

Figure 24. How interested in the following services before and during travel would you be when booking your holiday with TUI?

Question twenty (Q20) was an open-ended question asking the respondents to indicate what other additional services would add value before and during their holiday. Below (figure 25) a word map is presented where the most commonly used wording from the replies is put together.

There were several areas where the respondents found the need for additional or improved services. These respondents would like to have the possibility to select their room at the booked hotel. They would like to choose the actual room (floor, the proximity to the elevator, view) prior to departure. The option to decide on the check-in and check-out times were also mentioned. These customers are interested in receiving destination brochures including information on local sightseeing, restaurants and events in order to be able to plan and explore the destination themselves. In addition to having a concrete brochure the respondents are also keen on having access to an online brochure. At the destination they are keen on receiving the paper brochures typically handed out during the transfers to the hotel including a wide-range of information on the destination and the hotel. These respondents are hoping to have a Finnish speaking guide at the destination both during the transfers and hoping that a guide is being available at the hotels at a given time. Single-travellers travelling more economically and not paying the single-travellers premium for the single room was also mentioned as an additional service the respondents would appreciate. The wish to have the airport transfers were mentioned a lot even though this was already given as a response option in the previous question.

It seems that several of these appreciated additional services are already offered by the tour operators. The brochures, be it advance online or a hand-out at the transfer bus are commonly utilized forms of handing out destination related information. Guide services seem to be on the decline especially so that a Finnish speaking guide would always be available. Some Nordic guide services have been combined, so that there is one guide speaking one Nordic language often present at the given times at the hotels. The dilemma facing the pricing travelling for single-travellers seems to be coming up in every possible question in this survey.

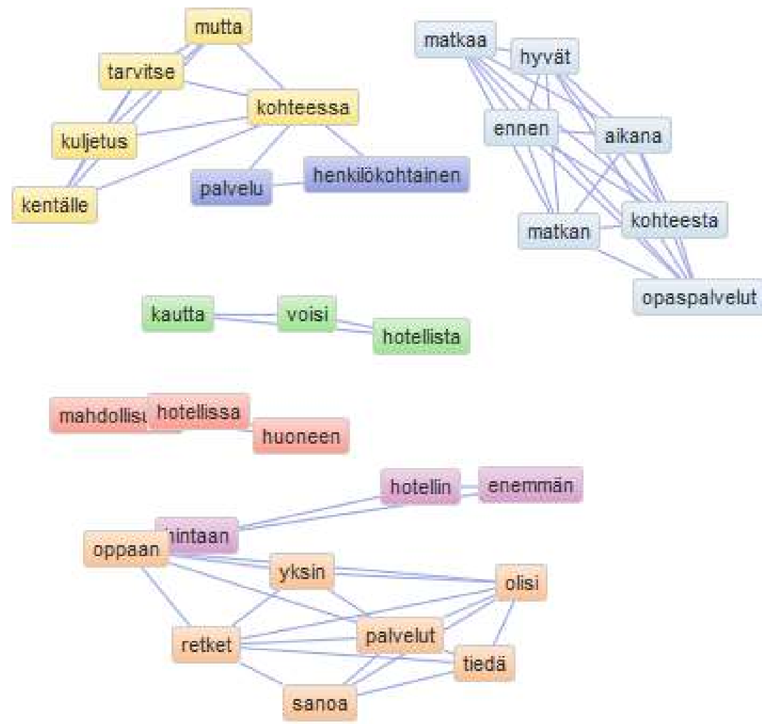

Figure 25. What other additional services would add value before and after your travel?

The last question in the questionnaire (Q21) asked the respondents to answer the given statements either yes or no. The statement that got most “yes” replies was whether the respondents are interested in hearing about new destinations before other travellers. Figure 26 below presents the findings.

74% of the respondents would like to receive information about new destinations and hotels before these trips can be booked by all customers. This indicates that these respondents are willing to be “loyal” or “selected” customers, as often this kind of exclusive information is given to the most important and profitable customers. By having a loyal customer segment means that customers being part of this exclusive group are getting some added-value for their continuous and loyal customer relationship with the company. This exclusivity can also be of added-value to customers who are travelling less frequently and could be a good way to commit these customers to a certain service provider. Schiffman et al. (2012, 403) talked about the diffusion of innovations. The consumer innovators are those customers who are the first to purchase a certain service, play a key role here.

71% of the respondents have given travel tips while 64% have been asked for travel tips respectively. Recommendations, comments and opinions coming from others influence travellers to a great extent. The impact on word-of-mouth recommendations is larger among people organizing their travels than other Internet users. Word-of-mouth recommendations can also mitigate perceived possible travel related risks especially when travellers are planning a trip to a destination they have not been to before. (Hernandez-Mendez, Mundoz-Leiva & Sanchez-Fernandez 2015, 1001-1002.)

Out of the respondents, 56% of the respondents are willing to recommend a certain destination or hotel at tui.com. First of all, this means that these respondents have had such a positive travel experience with TUI that they are willing to share it with other travellers. This also gives a good opportunity for TUI to utilize these happy customers to refer their experiences to other travellers. The power of word-of-mouth recommendations are also valid when the referee and the recipient do not know each other. Assistance that helps the holiday sourcing is most likely always welcome as there are so many providers and options to choose from.

17% of the respondents are interested in paying for personal booking service. This means that for a certain fee these respondents would pay the tour operator for assisting in finding the suitable for holiday option. Some tour operators take a fee when making a booking for a customer over the phone. As the majority of the bookings are done through online booking channels there would be a good opportunity for the customer service agents to offer this personalized service to those who are willing to utilize it and even pay for it. Still the interest is rather low, as only 17% indicated that they are willing to pay for this service, so it can be that the assistance when making a booking online should be included into the price of the holiday itself. How many people would be willing to utilize the booking assistance without paying for it and what extra features should be included if a person is willing to pay for this service? Maybe it would require more assistance (like destination comparisons, finding the suitable hotel with ancillaries) than only making the actual booking alone.

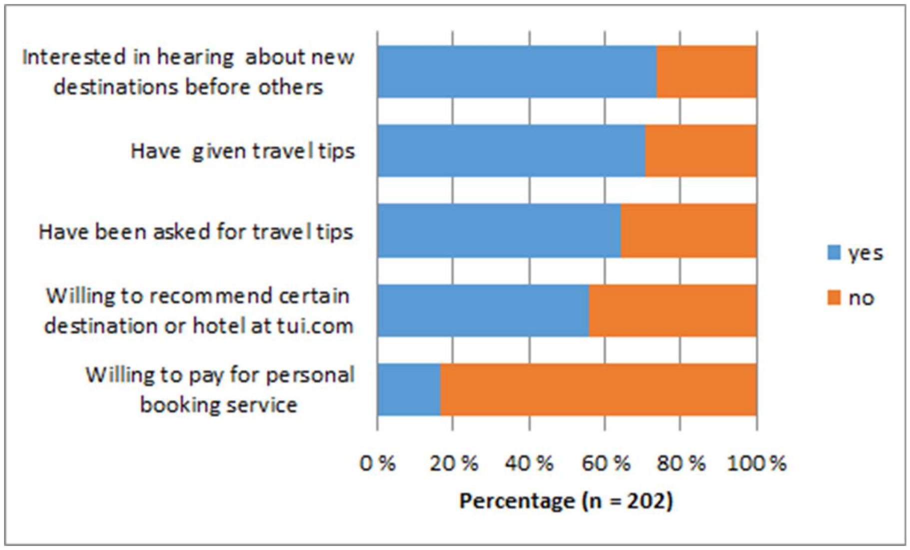

Figure 26. Please answer the following statements yes/no

Additional analyses, cross-tabulation and summaries

In addition to analyzing the responses to the questions one by one, there is a willingness to deep-dive into certain topics to enlarge the understanding of these respondents. These additional analyses are calculated utilizing both cross-tabulation and overview calculations. Below are 5 comparisons from the individual results from the respondents.

The first comparison (figure 27) utilizing cross tabulation was between the background questions 23 and 26. The idea was to see whether the age of the respondent correlates with the financial status the respondent has. The vertical axis below indicates the number of respondents part of a certain age group (as per the colour coding below) and the horizontal axis presents what category the respondents fall when thinking about how well they see themselves getting on financially.

As we have seen from the analysis of question 23 (how well do you see yourself getting on financially?) the majority of the respondents consider themselves financially well-off. This means that the number of responses to other age groups are small so the comparisons between the results cannot be generalized. We can however see that among the respondents to this survey all age groups are getting on mostly well or moderately, this is especially true in the younger group of the respondents, the 55-64 years old. Those part of the age group 65-74-years old are also well off and some more respondents have indicated to be very well off.

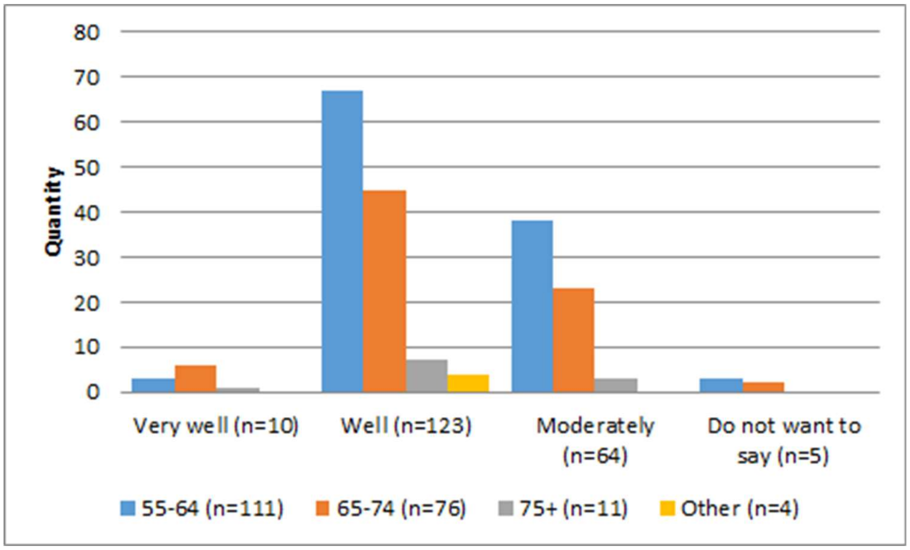

Figure 27. Does the age of the respondent correspond to how well the respondent gets on financially?

The following comparison was done between questions 4 and 26. This comparison is presented below (figure 28) and it shows whether the reported financial status has an impact on the wishes the respondent has for holidays. This figure 28 is presented in a larger format in Appendix 3 as the readability below is not very good. The response options 1-5 for question 4 are opened below and none of the respondents stated that they get on poorly financially, so option number 4 is not part of this graph. This comparison is calculated as a summary drawing together data from both questions.

1= very well
2= well
3= moderately
5= do not want to say

Here it needs to be noted that as we see from the split between the responses 1-5 most of the respondents chose values 2 or 3, so comparing them reliably to values stating 1 or 5 is misleading. Those blue (1) and orange (5) marked values seem much more dominant than they actually are as there were only a minority of respondents in total choosing these alternatives.

The below graph presents these responses so that each financial value is marked with a certain colour and each statement is presented with each financial value stating the percentual group value from total in the horizontal axis.

We can however see that no matter what the financial status is, all respondents value sun and warm weather as well as rest and relaxation and new experiences. Value for money and new experiences are highlighted among those respondents who are getting on very well or well financially. Also escape from everyday life is higher among the respondents who are having good financial situation. Even though the number of respondents getting who are getting on very well financially (n=10) is very small, we can see that these respondents really value luxury and new experiences.

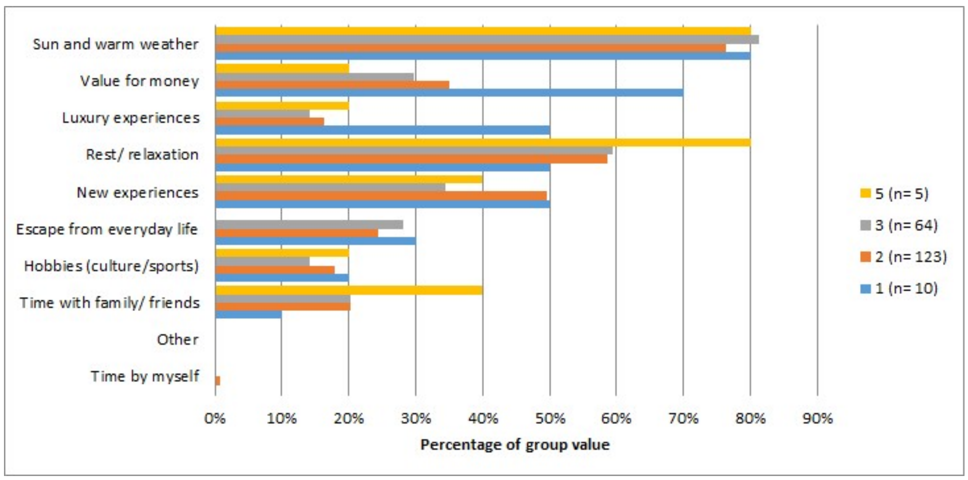

Figure 28. How do financials affect the wishes for a holiday?

The third comparison was a cross tabulation between the frequency for travelling abroad (Q2) and the image these respondents have of TUI (Q13). The comparisons are presented in figure 29. The vertical axis presents the quantity of respondents and indicates the frequency they travel abroad on annual basis. The horizontal axis presents the image the respondents have of TUI. A majority of the respondents having either a very good or a good image of TUI travel abroad twice a year. Also those respondents who are rating the image of TUI as below average seem to mostly travel abroad twice a year. It is good to see that the respondents rating TUI with a good image travel more often than those rating TUI less favourably.

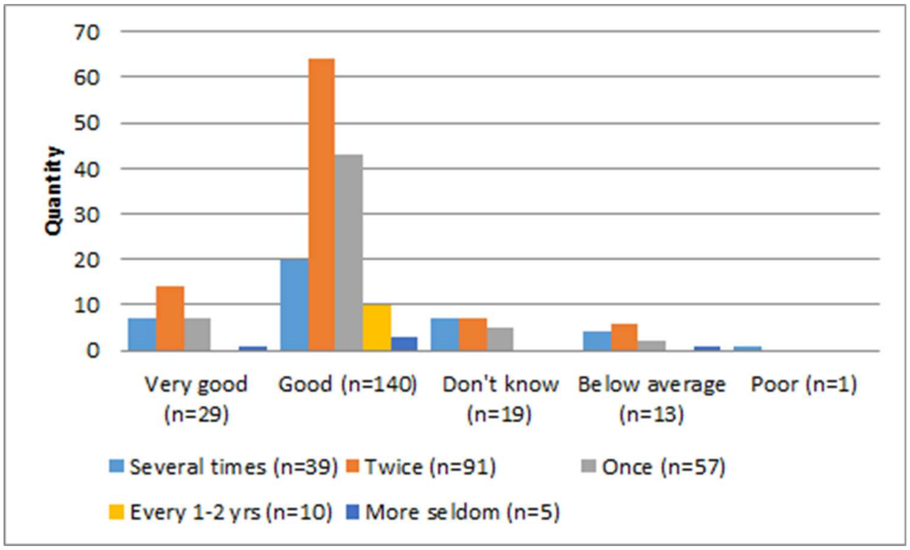

Figure 29. How often the respondents travel abroad and what kind of an image they have of TUI?

The following comparison was done as a cross tabulation between questions 13 and 15 wanting to find out whether there is a link between the image the respondents have of TUI and those reasons indicating why they have not travelled with TUI last time they were on a holiday (figure 30). The vertical axis of the graph presents the quantity of the respondents indicating the image TUI has. The horizontal axis presents the responses to those statements indicating why they have not travelled last time with TUI. Those question 15 statements can be seen in full writing from figure 17.

Those respondents having a good image of TUI seem to give the biggest impact on destination meaning that a suitable destination was not available when they chose not to travel with TUI last time. No specific reason and other reasons were also highlighted among these respondents. It is good to see that the price of a holiday was not the main determinant why these respondents being overall pleased with TUI have not chosen to travel with TUI lately. Those respondents who are having a very good image of TUI responded that for them the biggest constraint for not travelling with TUI was that a suitable time to travel was unavailable. For those respondents who are having below average image of TUI see the biggest obstacle for travelling with TUI being that it is too expensive.

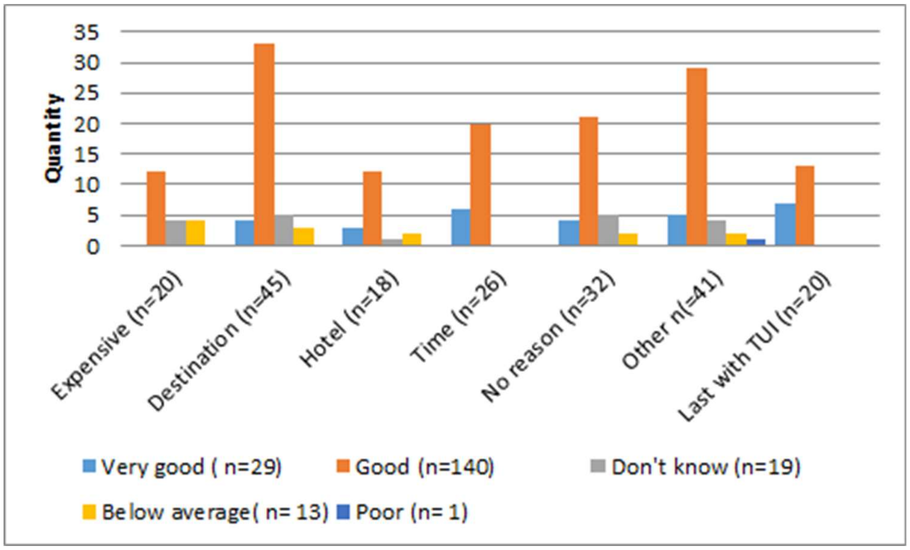

Figure 30. Is there a link between the image of TUI and the reasons why the respondents have not travelled with TUI when being on holidays the last time?

Comparing the responses of these two above analyses (figures 29 and 30) we can see that there is potential for more travels among this target group for TUI. The customers overall are having a good image of TUI, they are keen on travelling often. Just when the current holiday offering matches the wishes of these respondents, there are more travellers for TUI to be conquered.

The last and fifth comparison analyses was done between questions 1 and 18 in order to find out whether there is a link between the travel behaviour category and the dream holiday type the respondents have chosen. Below figure 31 presents these findings.

The respondents were asked to rank the dream destination types given the best matching dream destination type 5 and the least matching type 1 points. These dream destination categories were: Conservatives, Pioneers, Enthusiasts, Indulgers/big spenders and Finns. More information on the descriptions behind each category can be found in text explaining figures 21 and 22. The travel behaviour category texts have been shortened into the below figure 31, but in full writing they are: Sporty, Culturally oriented, Luxury seeker, Adventurous, Home lover and Price sensitive.

From the figure below it can be seen that Conservatives are quite evenly split between the different travel categories, culturally oriented striking out as a choice the best describing their answers while adventurous describing them the least. Pioneers on the other hand are the most adventurous and least price sensitive, while enthusiasts are sporty and least luxury seeking travellers. It seems obvious that the indulgers/big spenders are the most after luxury experiences while on holiday and they are the least keen on sport activities. Finns on the other hand are price sensitive and not appreciating luxury experiences that much.

It seems that the split matches the previously analyzed dream holiday types really well. The respondents have been consistent in their responses as of what are the key features they are looking for when on holiday. This analyses again confirms how heterogeneous group these respondents are. The more personalized holiday services the tour operators can offer regarding different needs, the more pleased and most likely loyal customers it will have.

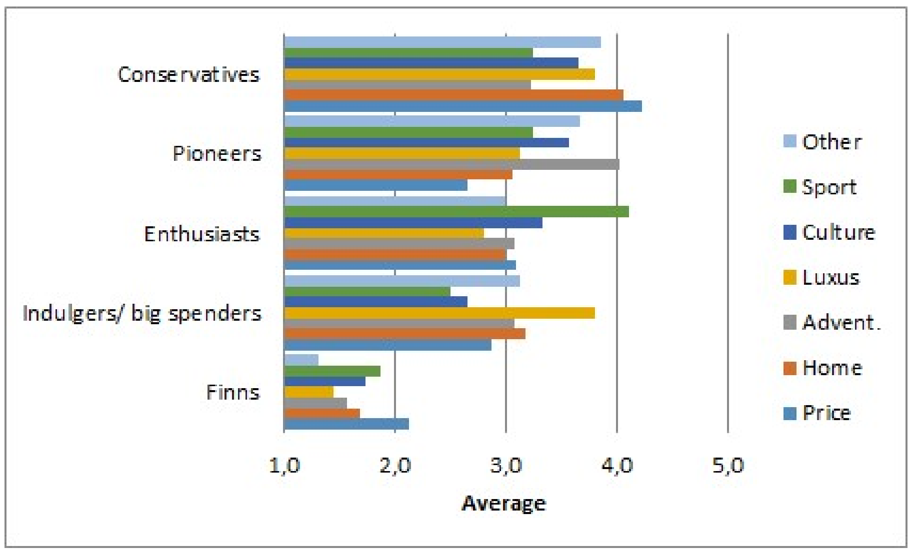

Figure 31. Is travel behaviour category linked to the dream holiday type?

With this study there was no need to be able to generalize these results to the public at large. All results have been looked at the perspective of these 202 respondents. Even though when calculating the cross-tabulations these important values such as chi-square, df and p values were calculated. Still those values are not presented with the findings. To generalize the findings of the cross-tabulations in this study, it can be said that these above additional calculations and cross-tabulations are not having such chi-square, df and p values that these results could be generalized into the wider public.

5.5 Summary of key findings

Here the key findings of this study are presented in a concise manner.

Travel behaviour

The majority of the respondents see themselves as price sensitive travellers. Other highlighted traveler types based on this study are the luxury seekers and adventurous travellers. Here there is a huge opportunity for the tour operators to make sure that their holiday offering and the communications concerned are in line with these customer segments and their holiday needs. For the price sensitive, whether they are after a cheaper or more expensive holiday, they surely are looking for added value for their money spent. For the cheaper holiday options the price focused arguments could be utilized in more detail and for the high-end holidays the value adds highlighted. When thinking about the customer experience when purchasing a holiday mostly online, some clear hotel and holiday segmentation criteria could be an answer.

45% of the travellers make on average two 7-night travels during a year. The choice of the tour operator for their last holiday split the answers between several different holiday providers. The potential for TUI from this category of travel is substantial. In addition to offering nearly all the same travel possibilities than Detur and Matkavekka, TUI also has a large offering on long-haul destinations, city holidays, weekend trips and holidays combining two destinations into one. The question is whether the target group is aware of the different possibilities TUI has on offer in addition to the package tours? Maybe instead of always buying self-organized travel elsewhere this target group could utilize TUI holiday offering on city breaks or weekend getaways in Europe for instance. This would mean that the target group should be made aware that such offering exists with TUI.

The most seeked-after holiday wishes among the respondents were sun and warm weather which was appreciated by 78% of the respondents, while 59% value rest and relaxation. Almost half of the respondents want to gain new experiences while being on a holiday (45%). Value for money was indicated by 35% of the respondents as a key determinant for their holiday.

A combination of beach and city holiday was most appreciated by the respondents (46%). Greece and Spain were the most choices as a preferred choice of a destination and Thailand was the most preferred long-haul destination. In addition to the current holiday offering by TUI the holiday destination wishes were mostly answered with words like “inexpensive”, “destinations”, “new” and “alone”.

Travel patterns

Choice of destinations, price and available offers were seen as the key determinants when thinking about which tour operator to choose to book with. Two-thirds of the respondents prefer to travel with their spouse. Over 80% of the respondents make the travel related decisions together with the person/s they are travelling with. A destination is most often (55%) chosen by location. Other key determinants were price and the unique characters of the destination. Internet is the most commonly used source to find information prior to travelling. 89% of the respondents stated that they look for travel information online. The other highly ranked response options were tour operators (42%) and travel guide books (18%).

83% of the respondents have good image of TUI as a tour operator. The respondents have overall been pleased with TUI as a tour operator, as the majority of the replies asking about the given image are stating. The respondents indicate that they have had good experiences with TUI on holidays where everything has worked well. A suitable holiday destination has not been available was the most chosen response when asking why the respondents have not chosen to travel with TUI lately. Other mentions included that the respondents had chosen to travel with another tour operator or that there were no holidays offered from their preferred airport from a close proximity to their home. Also the respondents wanted to make their holiday arrangements themselves as the assistance from a tour operator was not needed. Suitable time for travelling was not available was also one of the key issues indicated by the travelers for not choosing to travel with TUI. The main reasons for the respondents to choose TUI as their next holiday provider were around finding the suitable destination and hotel and getting the holiday for a reasonable price.

Travel wishes

When the respondents thought about their travel behavior, they indicated that they mostly appreciate getting the entire booking from one service provider, appreciating TUI as a trustworthy tour operator and having the feeling that travelling with TUI is safe. These respondents were also keen on getting to know new people and cultures while being on holiday. A majority of the respondents characterize their preferred holiday type is being one safe package including flights, accommodation and meals. A share of respondents describe their holiday preference as a destination that only few people get to visit or an exclusive destination focusing on good food and quality service or a destination where like-minded travelers get to spend time together. The category where a lot of other Finnish people travel together was the least chosen alternative among the respondents.

Services before and during travels that ranked the highest among the respondents were those services already offered by TUI. An additional mostly non tour operator related was the wish for the respondents to meet and get to know local people while at the destination. These respondents were not really interested in booking hotels targeted for senior travelers nor having personal trainer services at the destination. Additional service needs before and after holidays arising from the respondents were having the possibility to choose the room at the hotel as well as check-in and check-out times. These respondents would like to receive more hands-on destination information in the form of an actual brochure including a through go-through of the local “what to do”. Finnish speaking guide is much appreciated and the possibility for single travelers to travel more economically rose again in the responses. Other features were among the ones the tour operators already have on offer like transfers and guide services. Travel statements that were highlighted among the respondents were hearing from new destinations and hotels in advance, in other words having a loyal customer status. These respondents have been active in giving and receiving travel tips from their family and friends. More than half would be willing to recommend a destination, hotel or ancillary service at TUI.com.

6 Development ideas

This chapter will provide concrete development ideas for TUI marketing with regards to customer retention for the surveyed target group of this study. First there is a small summary of each development idea topic followed with concrete suggestions for development in the form of bullet points. The purpose of these development ideas is to provide TUI with practical ways to improve and enhance the current planning and execution of their specified marketing activities. All the below mentioned development ideas aim at a higher customer retention and customer satisfaction.

Segmentation

This study has confirmed that this segment of +55-year-old travellers are not a homogeneous group. This studied group should not be treated as one segment, but rather split into segments based on their lifestyles and interests. Segmenting only based on age might disappoint certain customers and even function as an unwillingness to purchase holidays from TUI among those who are part of this age group biologically but do not see their actual age matching this age group.

- Segmenting based on the lifestyles and values instead of age
- Segmenting based on the profitability levels

Pricing

The sensitivity towards holiday pricing rose in all survey questions relating to this topic. These respondents are after a high-quality travel for a reasonable price. They are not necessarily looking for the cheapest option, rather the option giving them the best value. The respondents of this group who have retired have much more flexibility around the timings and durations for their holidays. Therefore it is good to explore the possibilities for pricing holidays outside the high-season so that they are more attractive to these travellers. Bundling the low-season holidays with value-adds and features that are of interest to this target group means that the price itself does not need to be lowered.

- Low-season pricing to match the flexibility and availability of these respondents

- Utilizing seasonality and off-peak times to attract these senior customers who have the time and money to travel by offering them additional added value for choosing TUI
- Highlighting the price focused arguments (what you get for your money)
- Highlighting the high-end holiday value adds (half-board, sports facilities, luxury restaurants, spas)
- Pay what you want promotion where a customer group gets to price the holiday themselves

Single travellers

There definitely is lot of demand for amending the single traveller pricing towards a more user-friendly way as it seems to be unfair that a person travelling solo would need to pay a lot of extra for the same comfort others travelling in pairs are getting without any extra cost. Tackling this issue in a customer-friendly way by answering the customer demand could boost loyalty and re-purchase at TUI and is definitely a differentiating factor from the competitors.

- Introducing economical single traveller rooms at some of the concept hotels that are mostly visited by adult target groups (TUI Sensimar, Robinson, TUI Sensatori). These hotels would offer single rooms for single travellers for a single traveller fare, so that the customer would not need to bear the cost for the "empty" bed.

Holiday search and booking path

Upgrading the customer journey on the site could work as a differentiating factor when thinking about competition.

- The price calendar could be taken a step further by introducing more choices and price comparisons.
- A world map-based search could also function as an inspiration.
- The holiday categories could be named after the key traveller types utilized in advertising (the adventurous, the seekers, the best friends etc.) so there would be instant recognition from advertising.

- Introducing “surprise holiday” section could work to draw interest of those who have “seen it all” as what special there is on offer. Additionally “inspire me” category could work well to get inspiration to the holiday dreams that are open for suggestions.
- The booking path to include an option to “tell a friend” through which a customer searching or booking for a holiday could send the looked at options or the itinerary to their travel companion or even to their own email.

Holiday types

Are people aware enough to distinct the different concept hotels TUI have on offer? Do these researched customers understand the differences between TUI Sensatori, Robinson and TUI Sensimar concepts? Understanding that these are worldwide concepts at TUI but some localization could help boost the understanding of the different choices available. As these respondents are not particularly keen on branded “senior” hotels or features it is good that the hotel concepts targeted for this audience function under another name (like between adults).

When thinking about the customer experience when purchasing a holiday mostly online, some clear hotel and holiday segmentation criteria could be an answer. According to this study it seems that these respondents are not fully aware of the vast holiday selection TUI has on offer. Instead of being aware of the beach holidays available, the multiple other holiday types (weekend getaways, city breaks) should be made more well-known. Highlighting these options in advertising is always one way to gain awareness but there could also be other ways to emphasize the large holiday offering TUI has on their own site and through CRM as well as social media and even through some blogger cooperation.

- Offering city holiday features into beach holidays can attract those who want to combine both holiday types
- Increasing emphasis in highlighting the large holiday offering through CRM, social media, brand ambassadors and blogger cooperation.

Hotel room selection

The wishes for selecting a preferred room could be an interesting added value for many customers with different needs, be it older passengers with mobility issues, families travelling with babies in prams or simple a choice for a room filling a customer desire. A single customer wish given to the hotel via the tour operator might go unnoticed. Knowing that a request is being handled and taken care of is a sign of personalized customer service but also a possibility to avoid disappointments when arriving at the destination. It seems that customer requests are often being handled directly by the traveller at the destination with the hotel staff whether it is about a certain room type or a late check-out. Here there is a possibility for a tour operator to stand out from the rest by taking care of these customer requests in advance and not making the customer to wait until arrival to find out that these wishes cannot be fulfilled. Hilton Hotels have had such an app since 2014 that among other features includes this possibility for a room selection. (Hilton Honors). Similar example can be found from the Nordics, as Nordic Choice Hotels subsidiary eBerry also provides this room selection possibility through their App in Finland just this spring 2019 (Nordic Choice Hotels). TUI could introduce such feature in one of their signature concept hotels and see the feedback before considering the expansion to other hotel groups.

- Possibility to select a certain room and check-in and check-out times from a hotel before departure (from site, app)
- Later on the App can include to be featuring other elements like ordering amenities into the room or using the mobile phone as a room key.

Ancillaries

The preferred airport for many of the respondents is a smaller domestic airport outside Helsinki. Instead of having more flights offered from other airports, TUI could create strong partnerships with Finnair/Norra for domestic flights, VR for train connections from everywhere in Finland to Helsinki Airport and the hotels located at the Helsinki Airport. To a certain extent such cooperation already exists.

- Holiday booking path to include domestic ancillaries (domestic flights, train tickets, airport hotels) to be booked alongside the holiday for a bargain deal price.

- Stronger emphasis on these services while searching the holiday “did you know”-style, as this inclusion can be a deal breaker for the travellers.

Tailor-made holidays

As almost half of the respondents are willing to gain new experiences while on holiday it is important to have a selection of new experiences available for the travellers. In addition to guided tours TUI could offer more local experiences partnering with local service providers so that travellers could participate in the activities in local villages, even stay overnight at a local home and be taken on tours by local people. These longer visits could be combined with the package holiday. Introducing less typical tourist activities to travellers could spark interest in giving back to these communities.

- TUI has a TUI Care Foundation that is already connecting the travellers to good causes. This work of the foundation could be combined with more concrete means for Finns to participate through activities by doing things with the locals by Doerz (Doerz 2019) or living part of their holiday like a local through Duara for example (Duara 2019).

Loyalty and brand ambassador

74% of the respondents are willing to hear about new destinations and hotels before they are available for all travellers.

- Different customer levels could be developed based on the profitability so customer groups are formed based on loyalty.
- As more than half of the respondents are willing to recommend a destination, hotel or an ancillary at TUI.com a recommendation made under one’s own name could bring discount or other benefits to these customers of their future travels. This way TUI could collect some key brand ambassadors from their customer base who would be creating content and inspiring other travellers. The customers who already prove their loyalty by rating the image of TUI with the highest value (very good) should be connected with in hoping to turn some of the respondents into brand ambassadors.

Recommendations and word-of-mouth

The user generated content is authentic and recommendations coming from a real person are also more reliable. Also finding celebrity spokespersons/brand ambassadors representing these traveller segments could work as a differentiator from competitors and serve towards an increasing interest toward TUI and its holidays.

- For this segment a blog written by tour operator or their appointed writer could work well and grow the share for recommendations.
- Additionally TUI staff could be encouraged to produce quality content on their own travel experiences focused to this studied target group.

Other recommendations

- Larger distribution of the fantastic TUI magazine
- Facebook-style offer communications included into other medias like own media and the site
- Print outs of the destination brochure from "my holiday" to be either handed out or found printed in the hotel file
- Encouraging TUI staff to produce quality content on their own travel experiences focused to this studied target group

Further study topics for future research

What kind of new experiences the travellers are after while on holiday?

How well are the customers aware of the different holiday types and hotel concepts TUI has to offer?

7 Conclusions

This chapter provides answers to the set research objectives and discusses those findings in comparison to the presented theories. Also this chapter discusses the theory on both reliability and validity in research both in general and with regards to this study. The chapter is finished with findings on personal learning.

How can TUI develop customer retention?

The focus of this study has been on one customer age group the +55-year-olds. This segmentation for the study has been done based on demographic criteria, age. In order to make profitable marketing, the customers should be split into tiers based on their profitability, segmented based on their lifestyle and values instead of just age.

Like Schiffman et al. (2012, 9) suggested customer retention at TUI can be improved/developed by creating customer tiers and focusing on those delivering the most profits and bringing value to the company. Existing customers should be divided into customer groups, so that each tier represents a certain profitability level. The marketing focus can then be drafted based on these profitability levels when thinking of personalized targeted marketing through email, for instance. Each of these customer segments should be treated differently and the focus shifts based on the current needs. It is important to try and turn those currently not so profitable customers into more profitable ones.

TUI can utilize these research results in planning and executing their targeted CRM marketing better towards the researched customers who are part of a certain profitability level.

How the holiday offering at TUI is perceived in the target group?

Overall the respondents are very happy with holidays provided by TUI. These respondents see TUI as a trustworthy and safe service provider who have had good experiences while travelling with TUI. TUI offers a large selection of holidays all around the world and has a strong focus in the Mediterranean where the respondents like to travel the most. With the variety of holidays, TUI well answers the holiday demand of these researched customers as these customers are looking for luxurious and adventurous holidays with value for money.

As seen from the research by Parment (2002) these customers make a superior customer base, as they are focusing on their lives today and not just planning for their future. These customers in general appreciate good quality holidays and are willing to invest money into quality holidays.

What influences the buying behaviour when purchasing a holiday from TUI?

The driving force of the buying behaviour of the respondents is the easiness of being able to get the entire booking from one place. It is important that there is value for the money spent when these respondents choose which tour operator they travel with. Having suitable offers, a good choice of destinations for a good price seem to be the key determinants when these respondents look for a holiday. These respondents are looking for sun and warm weather, rest and relaxation and new experiences.

What are the barriers for not purchasing a holiday from TUI?

Most often the barriers are around the choice of destinations, hotels and departure dates. When a suitable destination or time has not been available, these respondents have not been able to travel with TUI. Additionally these respondents are looking for value for money, so the holiday offering does not necessarily need to be cheap, but there needs to be value for money found for these respondents. It is important to offer a wider variety of holidays departing outside Helsinki Airport and take single-traveller wishes more into consideration. Like Parment (2002, 114) stated there is a lot of room for improvement when it comes to creating services for single travellers. A tour operator taking stand in this regard will definitely increase interest towards them as a services provider.

7.1 The reliability and validity of the research

The basic idea behind validity is the notion of accuracy and honesty. In general, validity is divided into internal and external validity. Internal validity derives from the conduct and focus of the research design. External validity derives from the outside factors that are involved in the research. From the point of view of the research the internal validity refers to the clarity, focus and integrity of the research. Does the research actually measure what it was supposed to measure? Did the research follow the steps that were planned?

(Mayo 2014, 140,146). Internal validity refers to what actually caused the observed effects on the dependent variables. Was there manipulation of the independent variables? The external validity observes whether the relationship between the variables during the experiment would occur again under real-life situations. Can the results be generalized beyond the research at hand? (Malhotra et al. 2015, 105, 378.)

In marketing research compromising is done either on behalf of internal or external validity. Often the other type of validity needs to be traded for the other. If internal validity is lacking, it is not meaningful to generalize these results. (Malhotra et al. 2015, 378.)

The reliability in research refers to the consistency in the research. Is the research so clear and so well organized that if the research was conducted at another time, the results would be similar? Would the findings be similar if the research was conducted by another researcher? Inconsistencies in the use of language, concepts and types of questions that can be found in an unreliable questionnaire is referred to as internal consistency reliability. Equivalent form reliability indicates the extent to which two test questionnaires actually measure the same information and produce same results. Inter-rated reliability is found when two people analyzing the same information come up with similar results. Test-retest reliability is the least utilized because there are difficulties in conducting the same research again. This reliability however indicates that similar results should be the outcome if the research was administered for the second time. (Mayo 2014, 148-149.)

The validity of this research should be OK as the survey was tested in advance in order to avoid misunderstandings. Marketing professionals at TUI have read and commented the questions and the structure of the questionnaire so that validity issues can be avoided. The questions in the questionnaire are built in a way that the results will give answers to the presented research questions in this study. The structure of the questionnaire follows the predetermined plan and it measures what it was set to measure.

This research has not been constructed or organized in a way that the results would be generalizable to a wider public. The sample size collected is smaller than required and there has not been comparisons made whether the sampling matches the universal population.

Concerning the reliability of this research certain measures have been taken in order for the study to be reliable. The layout of the questionnaire layout is kept simple and the questions have been pre-tested with TUI marketing employees as well as target group individuals in order to avoid possible misunderstandings. The questionnaire was tested and the test result gatherings functioned well during the test phase. The sending of the questionnaire was timed so that there are were no down-times at Webropol. The data gathering for the questionnaire was open for answers for two weeks, so there were enough time for the respondents to choose the time, location and situation to participate in the survey. TUI committed to a prize draw among the participants to attract enough responses so that the data gathering is more reliable.

7.2 Personal learning

I have gained a lot of new knowledge during this thesis process. I have increased my understanding both on the theoretical part of +55-year-old travellers as well as generational studies and cohorts. My understanding of marketing theories have strengthened during this time. My understanding towards quantitative research has increased and thus I have gained interested into this area as well. The quantitative methods course proved to be really useful during this process and the help of the quantitative analyzing tool Tilastoapu turned out to be really helpful throughout this process.

This was an interesting but lengthy process. I wanted to work with a concrete topic that had the possibility of being useful for the client company. It was difficult to narrow the topic and keep the focus on certain the literature findings. There were so many interesting texts to cover. My wish from the beginning for this thesis was that it would prove beneficial for TUI be it theory, the study itself or the findings. I am glad it turned out to be that way.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Questionnaire

TUIn asiakaskysely

Hyvä vastaanottaja, toivomme että vastaat alla oleviin kysymyksiin matkustustottumuksiisi liittyen. Kyselyn tarkoituksena on kartottaa asiakkaiden matkustustottumuksia- ja toiveita sekä entisestään parantaa palveluamme. Kysely toteutetaan yhteistyössä ammattikorkeakoulu Haaga-Helian opiskelijan kanssa. Kyselyyn voi vastata 14.10.2018 saakka.

Yhteystietojensa jättäneiden kesken arvotaan TUIn 100 euron arvoinen matkalahjakortti.

* merkillä varustettuihin kysymyksiin on vastattava

1. Mihin alla olevaan kategoriaan koet kuuluvasi, kun mietit matkustuskäyttäytymistäsi (valitse yksi)? *

- Hintahakuinen
- Kotoilija/kotona viihtyvä
- Seikkailunhaluinen
- Luksushakuinen
- Kultturelli
- Sporttinen
- Muu, mikä? ______

2. Kuinka usein matkustat lentokoneella lomalle ulkomaille (vähintään viikon matka)? *

- Useita kertoja vuodessa
- Kaksi kertaa vuodessa
- Kerran vuodessa
- 1-2 vuoden välein
- Harvemmin
- En koskaan

3. Kenen matkanjärjestäjän matkalla olit viimeksi? *

- Aurinkomatkat
- Apollomatkat
- TUI
- Tjäreborg
- Muu, kenen? ______

4. Mitä toivot lomamatkoilta? *

- Aurinkoa ja lämpöä
- Uusia kokemuksia
- Vastinetta rahalle
- Pakoa arjesta
- Aikaa yksin
- Aikaa läheisten kanssa
- Lepoa/rentoutumista
- Harrastuksia (kulttuuri, urheilu)
- Luksusta arkeen
- Muu, mikä?

Valitse vähintään 1 vaihtoehtoa
Valitut vaihtoehdot: 0

5. Minkä tyyppisillä lomilla käyt mieluiten? *

- Rantaloma
- Kaupunkiloma
- Ranta- ja kaupunkiloman yhdistelmä
- Kiertomatka
- Risteily
- Muu, mikä?

6. Mikä on suosikkimatkakohteesi? *

7. Toivoisin, että TUI tarjoaisi lomia... *

8. Mitkä tekijät vaikuttavat matkanjärjestäjän valintaan? *

- Laatumielikuva
- Hinta
- Kohdevalikoima
- Asiakaspalvelun ammattitaitoisuus ja palvelualttius
- Tarjoukset
- Suositukset
- Kanta-asiakasohjelma
- Yksilöllinen palvelu ennen matkaa
- Opaspalvelut kohteessa
- Muu, mikä?

9. Millä kokoonpanolla matkustat useimmiten? *

- Yksin
- Puolison kanssa
- Ystävän kanssa/ystäväpariskunnan kanssa
- Perheen kesken (lapset ja/tai lapsenlapset)

10. Kuka matkaseurueessasi tekee päätökset matkaan liittyen (kohde, hotellivalinta)? *

- Teen päätökset itse
- Teemme päätökset yhdessä matkaseuralaisten kanssa
- Toinen matkaseuralainen tekee päätökset

11. Millä perusteella valitset matkakohteesi? (valitse tärkein vaihtoehto) *

- Hinta
- Sijainti
- Suositukset
- Turvallisuus
- Kohteen ainutlaatuisuus (laatu, uutuudenviehätys)
- Muu, mikä?

12. Mistä hankit tietoa matkakohteeseen liittyen ennen matkavarausta? *

- Internet
- Matkanjärjestäjät
- Aikakausilehdet
- Blogit
- Ystävien/tuttavien/perheen suositukset
- Matkaoppaat
- Muu, mistä?

13. Millainen mielikuva sinulla on TUIsta matkanjärjestäjänä? *

- Erittäin hyvä
- Hyvä
- En osaa sanoa
- Välttävä
- Huono

14. Mistä tämä mielikuva johtuu? *

15. Miksi et viime aikoina ole valinnut lomaa TUIlta? *

- Kallis hinta
- Sopivaa kohdetta ei ollut tarjolla
- Sopivaa hotellia ei ollut tarjolla
- Sopiva matkan ajankohta ei ollut vapaana
- Ei erityistä syytä
- Muu syy, mikä?
- Olen matkustanut viimeksi TUIn matkalla

16. Mitkä tekijät saisivat sinut valitsemaan TUIn seuraavan loman järjestäjäksi? *

- Sopiva kohde/hotelli
- Suositukset
- Sopiva hinta
- Henkilökohtainen palvelu
- Ostamisen helppous (mm. selkeä varaussivusto)
- Muu syy, mikä?

17. Arvioi seuraavia väittämiä, jotka kuvaavat matkustuskäyttäytymistäsi. Kuinka samaa ja eri mieltä olet väittämien kanssa. Vastaa seuraaviin väittämiin asteikolla 1-5 *

1=Täysin eri mieltä
5=Täysin samaa mieltä

	1	2	3	4	5
TUIn matkapaketit tarjoavat vastinetta rahalle	○	○	○	○	○
Matkustaminen on elämys, johon olen valmis käyttämään rahaa	○	○	○	○	○
Matkustamalla tutustuu uusiin ihmisiin ja kulttuureihin	○	○	○	○	○
Asiointi TUIn kanssa on helppoa	○	○	○	○	○
Pidän siitä, kun voin tehdä koko matkavarauksen (lennot ja hotelli) samasta paikasta	○	○	○	○	○
TUI on luotettava matkanjärjestäjä	○	○	○	○	○
Koen oloni turvalliseksi TUIn matkoilla	○	○	○	○	○

18. Minkälainen olisi unelmalomakohteesi? *

Laita alla olevat vaihtoehdot tärkeysjärjestykseen niin, että parhaiten kuvaava vaihtoehto saa 5 ja vähiten kuvaava vaihtoehto 1 pisteen

Luotettava sekä turvallinen matkapaketti, joka sisältää lennot, majoituksen ja ruokailut	Valitse ▼
Lomakohde, jossa vain harvat käy. Kohteessa voi tutustua uusiin paikkoihin ja ihmisiin ja saada uusia elämyksiä	Valitse ▼

18. Minkälainen olisi unelmalomakohteesi? *

Laita alla olevat vaihtoehdot tärkeysjärjestykseen niin, että parhaiten kuvaava vaihtoehto saa 5 ja vähiten kuvaava vaihtoehto 1 pisteen

Lomakohde joka on tarkoitettu suomalaisille ja jossa on paljon muita suomalaisia matkailijoita	Valitse ▼
Ekslusiivinen luksuslomakohde, jossa keskitytään hyvään ruokaan ja jossa saa ensiluokkaista palvelua	Valitse ▼
Lomakohde, johon matkustaa muita samanhenkisiä lomailijoita, joiden kanssa viettää aikaa	Valitse ▼

19. Kuinka kiinnostunut olisit seuraavista palveluista matkaasi ennen ja matkan aikana, jos varaisit loman TUIlta? *

Vastausvaihtoehdot:

1 En lainkaan kiinnostunut 2 En todennäköisesti kiinnostunut
3 En osaa sanoa 4 Jonkin verran kiinnostunut 5 Erittäin kiinnostunut

	1	2	3	4	5
Istumapaikan valinta lentokoneeseen	○	○	○	○	○
Lentokoneaterian ja juomien ennakkotilaus lennolle	○	○	○	○	○
Seniori-kohderyhmälle suunnatut hotellit	○	○	○	○	○
Henkilökohtainen lomanvarauspalvelu puhelimitse	○	○	○	○	○
Kotimaan kuljetukset kotoa lentokentälle ennen ja jälkeen matkan	○	○	○	○	○
Henkilökohtainen kuljetus lomakohteessa lentokentältä hotellille ja takaisin	○	○	○	○	○
Henkilökohtainen opas lomakohteessa mm. retkille	○	○	○	○	○
Henkilökohtainen kuntovalmentaja kohteessa	○	○	○	○	○
Tutustuminen paikalliseen kulttuuriin ja paikallisten ihmisten arkeen	○	○	○	○	○

20. Minkälaiset muut lisäpalvelut toisivat lisäarvoa ennen matkaa ja matkan aikana? *

21. Vastaa seuraaviin väittämiin kyllä/ei *

	Kyllä	Ei
Olisin halukas suosittelemaan tiettyä hotellia, lomakohdetta tai lisäpalvelua TUIn nettisivulla	○	○
Viimeisen puolen vuoden aikana olen antanut matkavinkkejä lähipiirilleni/ystävilleni	○	○
Viimeisen puolen vuoden aikana minulta on pyydetty matkavinkkejä	○	○
Olen kiinnostunut saamaan tietoa uusista lomakohteista ja hotelleista, ennen kuin matkat tulevat varattaviksi kaikille asiakkaille	○	○
Olisin valmis maksamaan henkilökohtaisesta lomanvarauspalvelusta	○	○

Vastaa ystävällisesti muutamaan taustakysymykseen

22. Sukupuoli *

- ○ Nainen
- ○ Mies
- ○ Muu
- ○ En halua sanoa

23. Ikä *

- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75+
- Ei mikään yllä olevista

24. Koulutus *

- Peruskoulu
- Lukio
- Ammatillinen oppilaitos
- Korkeakoulu
- Yliopisto

25. Asuinalue *

- Etelä-Suomi
- Itä-Suomi
- Lappi
- Lounais-Suomi
- Länsi- ja Sisä-Suomi
- Pohjois-Suomi
- Ahvenanmaa

26. Tulen mielestäni taloudellisesti toimeen *

- Loistavasti
- Hyvin
- Kohtalaisesti
- Huonosti
- En osaa/halua sanoa

27. Yhteystiedot arvontaa varten

Etunimi

Sukunimi

Matkapuhelin

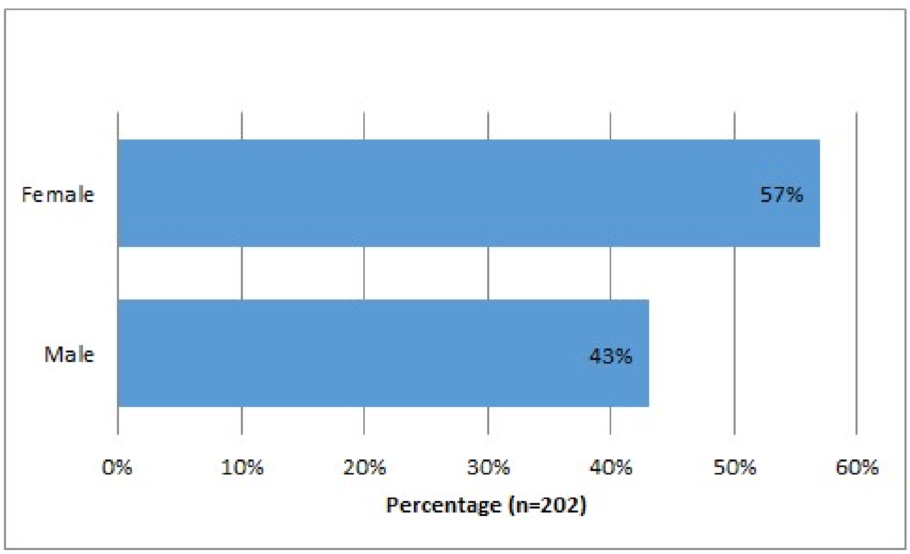
Sähköposti

Arvonnan järjestäjä on TUI Finland, Jaakonkatu 3 C 6. krs, 00100 Helsinki.
Osallistumisaika on 1.10.-14.10.2018. Arvontaan voi osallistua jättämällä kyselyn jälkeen yhteystiedot.
Palkinto on 100 euron TUIn matkalahjakortti. Palkinto arvotaan kaikkien osallistujien kesken. Ellei voittajaa tavoiteta 7 päivän sisällä arvonnasta, arvotaan uusi voittaja. Voittajalle ilmoitetaan henkilökohtaisesti.
Arvontaan voivat osallistua Suomessa asuvat, vähintään 18 vuotta täyttäneet henkilöt. TUIn työntekijät perheineen eivät saa osallistua arvontoihin. Yksi osallistuja saa osallistua arvontaan ainoastaan yhden kerran.
Palkinto on henkilökohtainen, eikä sitä voi vaihtaa rahaksi. Järjestäjä ei vastaa tietoteknisistä syistä tai puutteellisista, asiattomista tai lukukelvottomista vastauksista, jotka estävät arvontaan osallistumisen. Arvonnan järjestäjä sitoutuu maksamaan lakisääteisen arpajaisveron palkinnoista. Osallistumalla TUIn arvontaan osallistujat sitoutuvat noudattamaan näitä sääntöjä. Vastaajien yhteystietoja käytetään ainoastaan arvonnan yhteydessä ja itse kysely suoritetaan anonyymisti.

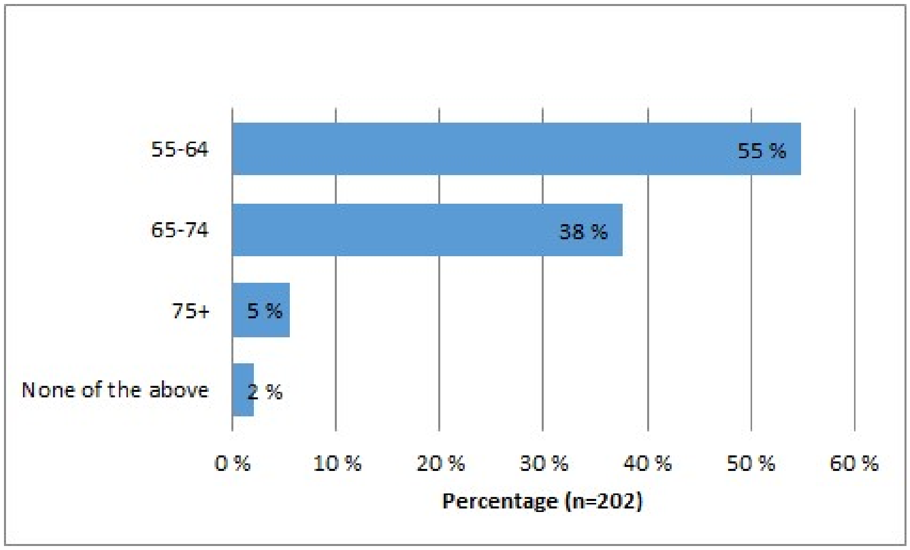
Seuraava

0% Valmis

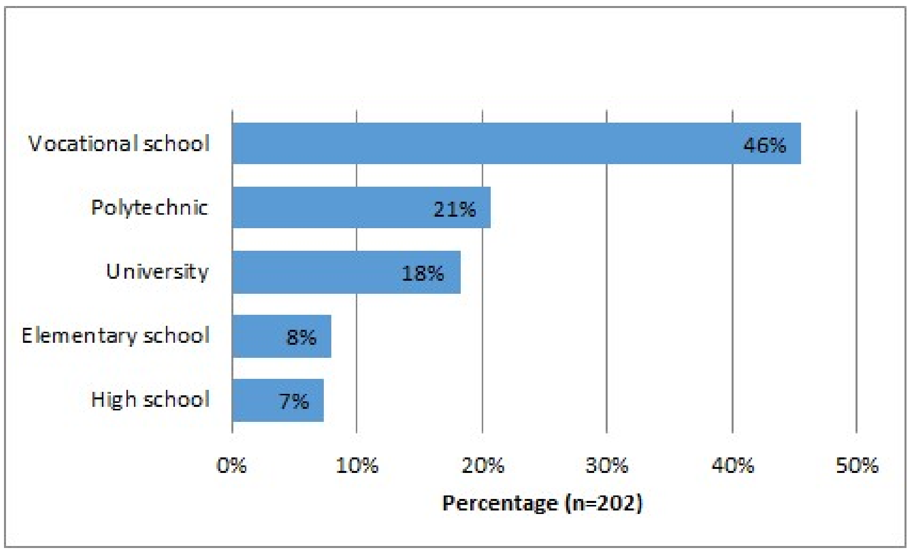
Appendix 2. Demographic characters of the survey respondents



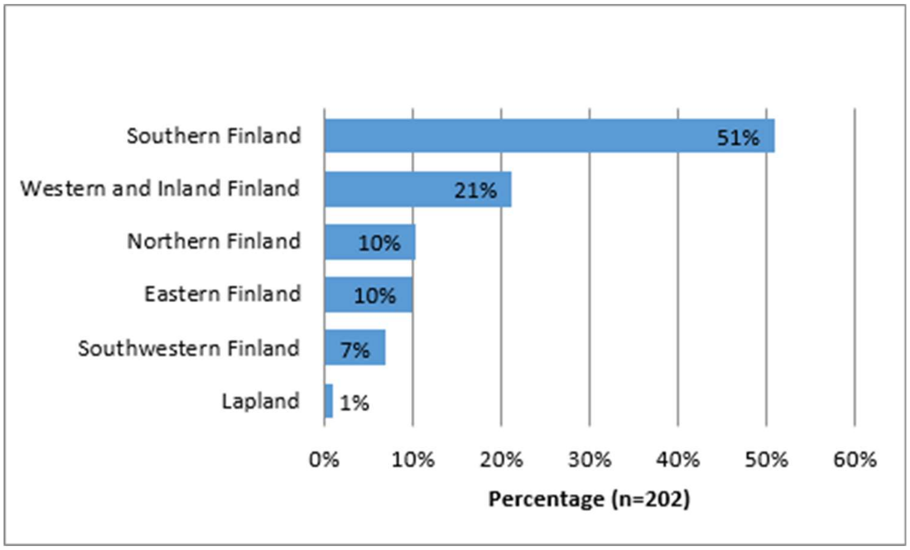
Q22. Sex



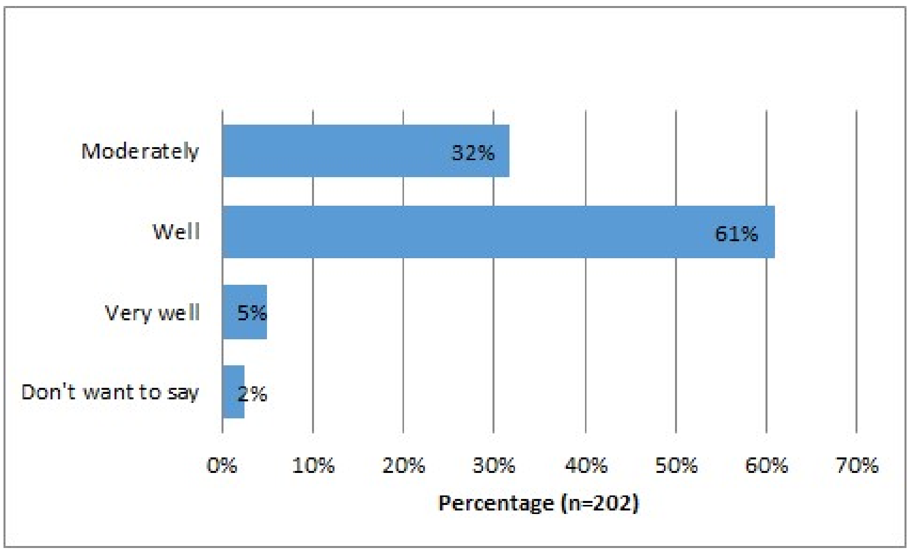
Q23. Age



Q24. Education



Q25. Region



Q26. I get on financially

Appendix 3. Figure 28. How do financials affect the wishes for a holiday?