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Substituting Travelling By Virtual Meetings in the Finnish Broadcasting Company Yleisradio Oy (YLE)

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Virtual meetings, e.g. tele, video and web meetings offer great changes in the meeting behaviour. Companies are beginning to realise the potential of cost savings as well as ecological savings when introducing virtual meetings as an option to business travel. The possibilities are endless but can this form of meeting be adapted in a broadcasting company? The objective of this thesis is to find out if a Finnish Broadcasting Company Yleisradio Oy (YLE) could use these means as a substitute for travelling.

At the moment YLE already has different means of virtual meeting –the main concentration on this research is web meeting tool called Sametime. The most recent addition to Sametime tool is the upcoming possibility to utilise it also on external use, whereas at the moment it is only on internal use between the different regions at YLE throughout Finland.

Theoretical framework concentrates in understanding factors influencing employees' meeting behaviour and costs due to business related travelling. Also, introduction to travel management in general and specifically at YLE is provided.

Method of research is a combination of quantitative and qualitative: two open interviews with employees specialized on travelling and Sametime tool and a questionnaire sent to most active travellers at YLE.

The results indicate that although employees claim to need virtual meetings at their work they do not use them as much as the management would hope. The reason for this behaviour is that employees feel that they cannot or do not want to apply this mean of meeting in their work. Also, the culture of face-to-face meeting at YLE is strong and amount of business travel is not that considerable that it would feel unpleasant but rather enjoyable change to daily routines.

Key words
Virtual meeting, Meeting behaviour, Business Travel, Travel Management

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1   Introduction

Virtual meetings are increasing their popularity within companies around the world. Different kinds of virtual meeting tools have become widely available and along with the increased use of the Internet the use of virtual meetings has become easier.

There are several means of virtual meetings: audio-meetings are in general telephone calls between participants, video meetings are considered to be meetings which combine audio and video possibility but requires hardware which can be difficult to move from one location to another and web meetings or online meetings which take place via Internet with personal computer programmes. For simplicity's sake the term virtual meeting will be used to describe all of the means above but the main emphasis on this research in on web-meetings.

The model in business meetings today seems to be face-to-face meetings. Virtual meeting challenge this by suggesting that the benefits of virtual meetings are worth the effort and investment made in it. Another issue to be taken into consideration is the wellbeing of the employee, which may suffer more than in one ways due to regular business related travelling.

This thesis about substituting business travel with virtual meetings is commissioned by Yleisradio Oy (further on referred to as YLE), the Finnish broadcasting company. The main unit is located in Pasila, Helsinki, but it has units all over Finland in different regions since as a national broadcasting company its news and radio programmes cover the whole of Finland. This latitude of business naturally requires having meetings and contacts between the different regions as well as travelling around Finland and the world to produce news, programmes and meeting co-operation partners. This adds up to considerable amount of travelling, which not only takes resources but can also take a toll on the employees.

The idea for the thesis was introduced when I discussed about the possible topics for my thesis work with YLE's Travel Manager Tuija Snellman at the end of my work placement period in the summer 2009. I started researching this subject again in summer 2010 after beginning working in the travel management unit again, since I had easy access to necessary data and the possibility to discuss the topic with people who know about the subject. It was also beneficial to send out the questionnaire as a part of a survey from the travel management unit.

At the moment YLE provides various means for virtual meetings: tele –meeting possibility, hardware for video meetings and pc –based web meeting tool called Sametime. This thesis concentrates on Sametime and the low usage of the tool. A new possibility is the extension of Sametime for external use, since at the moment it is only for internal use, for example for interaction between different regions at YLE across Finland. It can of course be so that all the employees who have the possibility to use virtual meetings in their field of work already use them and therefore the usage cannot be increased any further.

These issues are approached by looking at the different factors influencing meeting behaviour: situational and contextual (Kogg 2000). The aim is to find out which factors can be altered to increase the use of virtual meetings and especially the use of Sametime web meeting –tool.

It will be interesting to find out if the employees at YLE see travelling and issues related to meeting behaviour the same way and are keen on increasing the use of virtual meetings in their work habits, or are they content with the way things are at the moment.

1.1 Research problem

This thesis aims to find out whether or not travelling could be substituted by virtual meetings at YLE. The technology already exists, but I want to find out if it would be possible to increase the use of these tools and especially the use of web meeting tool Sametime.
The thesis also aims to answer the following questions:

- What are the problems in using Sametime?
- Can the use of virtual meetings be increased?
- How do the employees perceive business trips?
- Do employees need Sametime for external meetings?

The research problem became current again in 2010 when YLE decided that it was time to expand the use of virtual meetings from internal to external. Before this decision the software majority of virtual meetings had been taking place between different regional stations in YLE, but hopefully in the future more of the meetings would be online also with participants outside of the company.

1.2   Research aim, objective and method

This thesis aims to give insight to the company about the use of Sametime, as well as tries to figure out what measures would need to be taken in order to increase the use of virtual meetings, and how do the employees feel about it.

The objective is to find out whether or not virtual meetings could be used to substitute for travelling in YLE. YLE uses virtual meetings already, but mainly to keep contact within the company. Web meeting tool Sametime is used to interact between different regions but now the plan is to increase the use of it also to contact participants outside of the company.

The research method used is a combination of qualitative and quantitative. As Muijs (2004, 9) states "Mixed methods research is a flexible approach where the research design is determined by what we want to find out rather than by any predetermined epistemological position". I believe that with this combination I can achieve a holistic picture of the situation.

1.3   Structure of the thesis

Chapter one (1) presents the research problem together with aim, objectives and method. It also gives an introduction to the company YLE in order to receive understanding of the extent of its business, which is important when trying to understand the need for travelling.

Chapter two (2) gives background about business travel and travel management in general along with an introduction to different means of virtual meetings: audio meeting, video meetings and web meetings. Also, different factors influencing meeting behaviour are inspected; the factors are divided to situational and contextual factors influencing meeting behaviour.

The main emphasis in this research is on the contextual factors and in examining on how these factors could be altered in order to encourage virtual meetings. Also, different types of costs due to travelling are examined to gain an understanding of what types of costs occur and how these need to be taken into consideration in a company when attempting to calculate return on investment (ROI). In this research investment is the meeting and the possibility is it being a virtual one.

Chapter three (3) takes a look at travel management specifically at YLE and aims to find out why employees within YLE travel, where they travel and how they do their travelling. This is important when attempting to understand how much of the travelling costs could be reduced by increasing virtual meetings. The third chapter also provides knowledge about the volume of travelling which takes place at YLE.

Chapter four (4) introduces research approach and methods, data collection process and data analysis and looks at reliability and validity in general and specifically in this research. In chapter five (5) all the data from the conducted survey within YLE is analysed and research results are presented. Basis for the analysis are different contextual factors mentioned before and introduced later on in the thesis. Finally in chapter six (6), the conclusion of the research is made along with suggestions from the basis of the conducted survey.

Figure one (1) simplifies the structure of this thesis:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Introduction to business travel, travel management and virtual meetings

Chapter 3: Travel management at YLE

Chapter 4: Research approach and methods

Chapter 5: Research results and suggestions
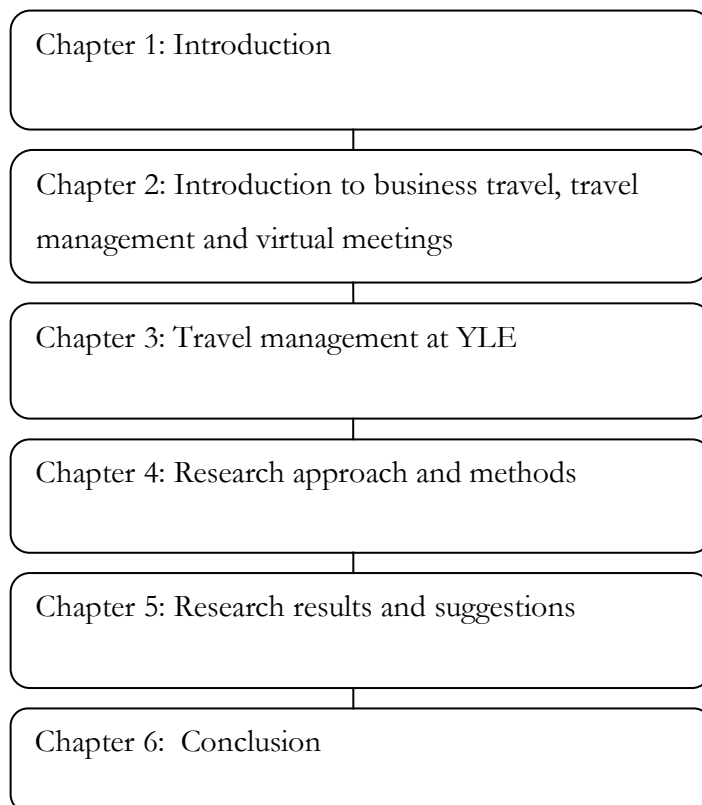
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Figure 1. Structure of the thesis.

1.4   Facts about Yleisradio Oy (YLE)

YLE is a Finnish Broadcasting company which was established in 1926. The majority of the company is owned by the state of Finland and the current Director General is Lauri Kivinen who was appointed to office in 2010 (Yleisradio Oy 2010.) In a broadcasting company the need for business -related travel is as obligatory as in any other company and varies from daily meetings within the company to travelling to another location or country to produce programmes and news.

YLE has four television channels: YLE TV1, YLE TV2, YLE Teema and YLE FST. It also has six different types of radio channels: YLE Radio 1, YLE Radio Suomi, YLE Ylex, YLE Radio Vega, YLE X3M and YLE Puhe. In addition to these it maintains various internet services. (Annual report 2010.)

YLE regional services cover the whole of Finland. Regional radios consist of twenty Finnish-language and five Swedish-language radios channels as well as YLE Sámi Radio, which is a radio channel for the Sámi-speaking people as shown in figure two (2). In addition YLE produces daily regional news from eight areas around Finland. (Annual report 2009.)
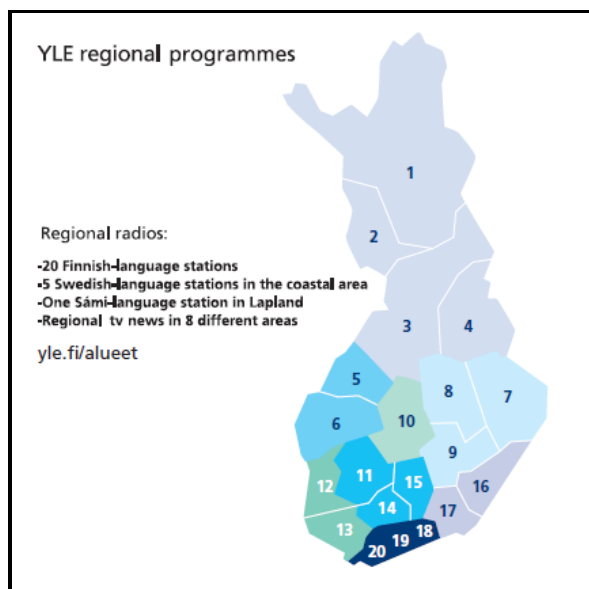

Figure 2. Yle regional programmes (Annual report, 2009)

YLE produces programmes and services in Finnish, Swedish as well as Sámi, Romany and sign language. The aim is to produce 80% of the programmes and purchase 20% from independent broadcasting companies. YLE aims to be both politically and commercially

independent and operations are funded with a national television fee. Yleisradio is 99, 9% state –owned and Administrative Council which is appointed by the Parliament of Finland supervises it operations. (Yleisradio Oy 2010.) Figure three (3) presents the company matrix and the programme service units of the company.
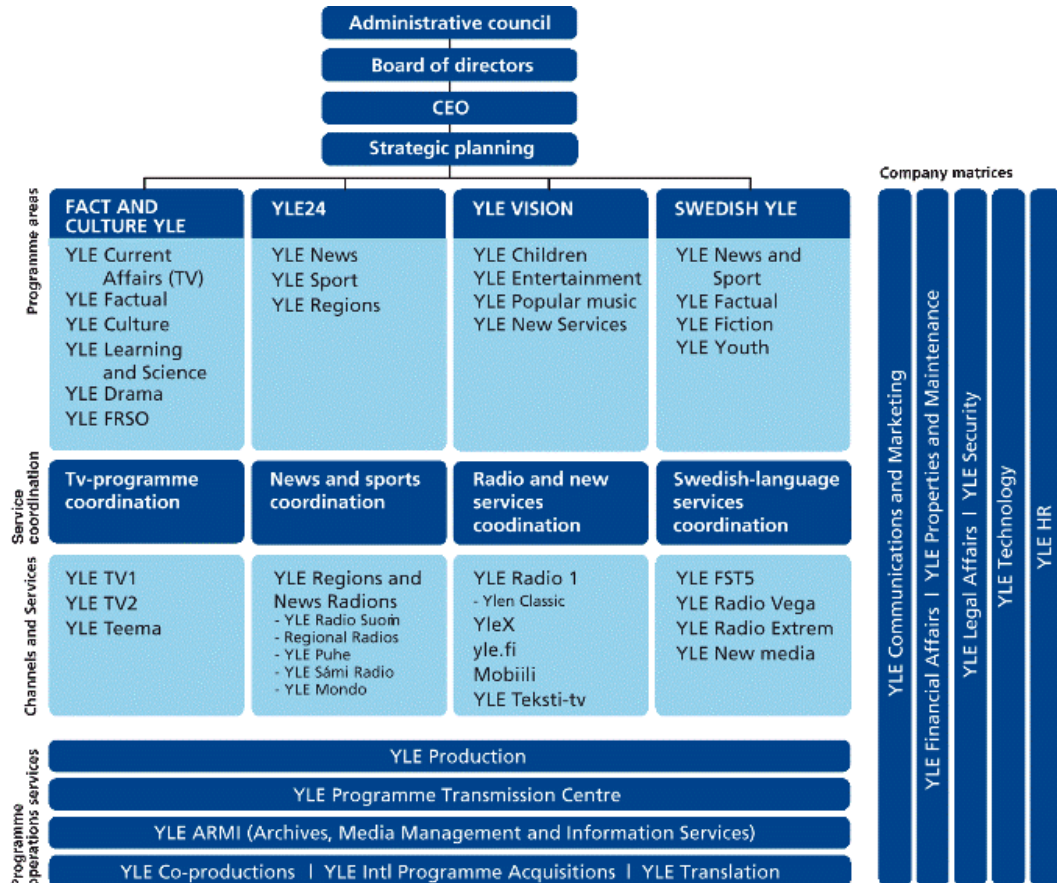

Figure 3. Company matrix (Yleisradio 2010)

YLE's mission is: "YLE exists in order to strengthen democracy and Finnish culture. YLE safeguards the future of wide-ranging Finnish electronic media" (Annual report 2009).

YLE's vision is: "YLE wants to be the most significant producer of electronic media content for Finns and a bold pioneer in journalism and culture" (Annual report 2009).

Due to the extent of the business travelling is mandatory not only within different regions but also between these regions. Already now the Sametime web meeting tool is being used to communicate between different regions but now YLE is looking forward to expanding the use of it also to communicate with participants outside the company.

2 Business travel, travel management and virtual meetings

This chapter introduces business travel, travel management in general in order to gain an understanding of the travel process in a company and of the factors that support and enable the employees travelling decisions. Also current trends in virtual meetings are looked at and the different means: audio, video, and web meetings. After that different factors influencing meeting behaviour are inspected, as well as different types of costs of a meeting.

2.1 Business travel and travel management

Business travel "comprises all trips whose purpose is linked with the traveller's employment or business interests" (Davidson & Cope 2003, 3). There are several different types of business travel, for example:

-Meetings, which can be anything from internal meetings between participants to meetings with associates, business partners or sources of information
-Incentive trips, which in general are prizes from the employer to the employee
-Conventions and exhibitions, which consist mainly of trade shows and trade fares of a specific field of industry
-Individual business travel, which are trips made by the employees whose work requires travelling, for example journalists or salesmen. (Davidson & Cope 2003; Swarbrooke & Horner 2001.)

On figure four (4) is presented different types of reasons for business travelling:
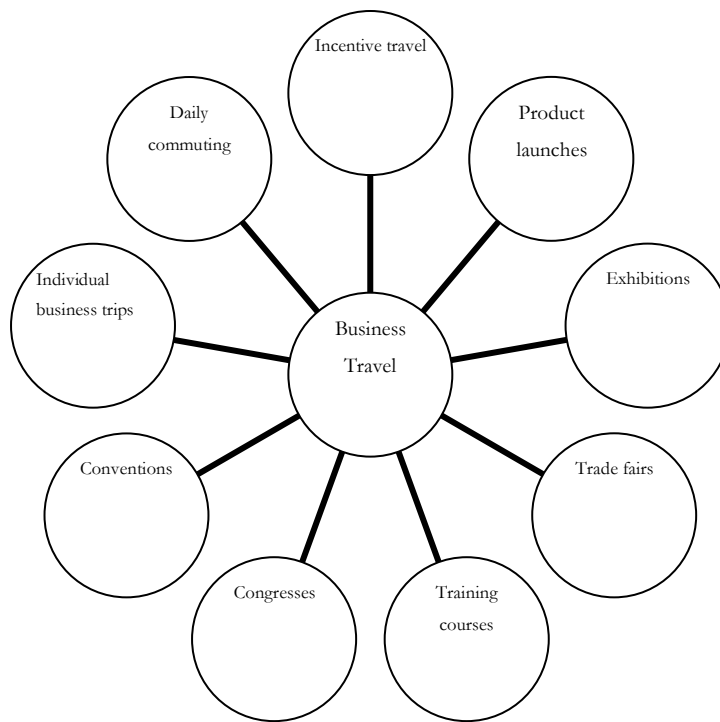
Figure 4. A typology of business travel (modified from Swarbrooke & Horner 2001, 4)

All of the introduced modes of business travel can be either local or international but there is one thing in common with all of the above: they all generate costs to the company and therefore need to be managed and controlled.

Travel management aims to provide services and to control the travel expenses within the company. To achieve this different means are introduced: travel policy to give guidelines for travellers, management of booking tools as well as management of travel expenses and data. It is also important to negotiate with different suppliers to gain the lowest prices possible -in short; travel management manages the whole of the travel process. One also needs to consider where the fine line goes between making savings and making travelling easy and satisfactory for the traveller.

Efficient travel management consists of three core elements: managing travel -related data and information, providing a sufficient travel policy and negotiating with suppliers to attain competitive contracts and maintaining them. When combining these elements a company can achieve savings in its travel costs and follow up when and where the money is spent.
In figure five (5) is presented a simple continuum of meeting and travel process:

Purpose →	Method →	Booking →	Meeting/Trip→	Follow-up
-Information -Communication -Relationship -On-site task -ROI	-Face-to-face -Virtual	-Self-booking -Personal service	-Efficiency -Quality -Tools -Risk prevention	-Financial -CO_2 -Meeting report -ROI evaluation

Figure 5. Meeting and travel process in a company (modified from Início 2010).

The purpose of the meeting automatically affects the choice of the communication channel; is it suitable to have the meeting as virtual or does it require face-to-face meeting. If the meeting requires the person to travel the employee needs to book the necessary flights, hotel etcetera by using the technology provided by the company. Since the majority of companies use self-booking tools the employees can handle it themselves.

The next step is the meeting. A meeting should produce something beneficial to the company, whether it is a new client relationship, maintaining a current relationship or investing into something new. This is linked to the purpose of the meeting and determines if the money spent on the trip is worth it.

After the meeting the costs can be analysed and compared to the benefit received from the meeting. The purpose and method of the meeting and factors influencing them will be examined more in the section factors influencing meeting behaviour (2.3.). The follow-up and issue of return on investment (ROI) will be furthermore examined in the section costs and return on investment (2.4.).

2.2   The world of virtual meetings

Virtual meetings are used for "—communicating between two or more, geographically separated location" (Arnfalk 1999, 7). It seems that virtual meetings have become more popular within recent years; at least there is more discussion about them now than before. There are several reasons why this could be; development of new and improved technology, growing awareness and pressure for corporate social responsibility and the realization of the possible cost and time savings. (Davidson & Cope 2003; Härkönen 2009; Lehto 2009;

Leskinen 2009; Persuasive Speeches Now 2010; Pitney Bowes Oy 2009; Swarbrooke & Horner 2001.)

When searching this subject on the Internet the number of results was endless. Different companies provide their own solutions to virtual meetings from renting of video meeting rooms to providing software for web meetings. There are lots of possibilities; global video meetings, virtual meeting rooms, virtual work spaces and virtual conferences. (Virtual Meeting.com 2010; Seltra 2010; Compodium.com 2010.)

This is definitely a growing trend in the meeting industry and highly promoted for being fast, efficient, economical and ecological option for travelling. Also, global epidemics –or the threat of them- have encouraged corporations to consider virtual meetings as an option. For example, during the last springs' H1N1 threat many companies announced that as a precaution they will reduce their travelling and substitute it by virtual meetings. (Davidson & Cope 2003; Härkönen 2009; Lehto 2009; Leskinen 2009; Persuasive Speeches Now 2010; Pitney Bowes Oy 2009; Swarbrooke & Horner 2001.)

It is probable that virtual meetings cannot fully replace physical attendance in many cases in business travel, but it can be a valuable addition and in some cases also a substitute. (Davidson & Cope 2003; Spielman & Winfield 2003; Swarbrooke & Horner 2001.) Another issue to think about is the status-related thinking when it comes to travelling in business; it has been seen somewhat as a status symbol –if you matter you get to travel. This ideology is something that needs to be altered in order to increase the number of virtual meetings. (Arnfalk 1999; Lehman & Niles 2001.) There are also other incentives for travelling; time away from the office, meeting other people from the field of work and different types of allowances paid to the traveller. These factors may also influence the decision making whether to travel or to have a virtual meeting.

2.3   Audio, video and web meetings

Audio meetings are in general "normal telephone calls between two or more locations" (Arnfalk 1999, 10). In this form of virtual meeting is beneficial that the participants already know each other well and just need to keep up with various daily tasks. Audio meetings can be considered as impersonal, though, since the participants cannot see each other and there is also a lack of non-verbal communication between the participants.

This is probably the most common mean of communication between different participants and available for all employees at YLE.

Video meetings allow participants to use both audio and video communication. In short, it "combines both sound and the possibility for the participants to see each other" (Arnfalk 1999, 103) but usually requires expensive technology which cannot be easily moved from one place to another; therefore video meetings are tied to a certain location. Video meeting combines audio and video, and therefore can be considered to be more personal, which can in some cases be an advantage, especially if the participants do not know each other before hand (Spielman & Winfeld 2003; Time Management Guide 2010).

An example of this at YLE is the audio meeting rooms which provide facilities for video meetings (YLE intra 2010a).

Web meetings combine sound and the possibility to see the participants but also to share online documents needed before, during and after the meeting. PC.mag Encyclopedia (2010) defines web meeting as:

> A videoconferencing session via the Internet. In order to interact with other participants, attendees use either a Web application or an application downloaded into their client machines. Web conferencing offers advantages over traditional room-based videoconferencing because applications such as collaborative Web browsing, file transfer and application sharing are easily supported over the Internet.

The participants are not tied to one location, but can have a meeting as long as they have access to internet via pc or laptop. The meeting can also be recorded and observed later on. Web meeting tools are also in general quite affordable.

Each employee at YLE has Sametime meeting tool on their computer in the Lotus Notes programme and therefore have –if they wish- daily access to web meetings (YLE intra 2010a).

All forms of virtual meetings; audio meetings, video meetings and web meetings are efficient, since the participants can return to their work tasks right away after the meeting instead of spending time on travelling from one place to another (Time management guide, 2010). The problem is that the technology for these might fail, participants cannot use them sufficiently

or in the cases of video –and web –meetings participants might not be willing to use them if they feel insecure about this new technology. Figure six (6) is a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of each virtual meeting option.

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Audio	- Available for everyone -Quick -Low cost	-Impersonal -Might be considered as unprofessional -Limited non-verbal communication
Video	-Personal -Quick -Possibility to see participants -Non-verbal communication	-Technology fails -Difficult to move from one location to another -Expensive -User friendliness -Fear of new technology/attitudes
Web	-Personal -Quick -Possibility to see participants -Possibility to transfer data during the meeting -Low cost -Non-verbal communication -Recording possibility	-Technology fails -User friendliness -Fear of new technology/attitudes

Figure 6. Advantages and disadvantages of different types of virtual meetings.

In this thesis the main focus is on web meetings via online-system, since Sametime meeting tool is being expanded so that it will work also outside of YLE employees and therefore there is potential for it to reduce travelling. YLE provides three means for virtual meetings: tele-meetings, audio meeting rooms for example in Pasila and Tohloppi and Sametime –tool which is on each employees' computer in the Lotus Notes –program.

Before Sametime has mainly been used to communicate between different regional stations within YLE, but the most recent reform will allow employees to communicate with Sametime also with participants who do not share the same software. This is crucial if YLE aims to

introduce virtual meetings as a realistic option for travelling, since a lot of travelling happens because of the need to interact with sources outside of the company.

2.4   Factors influencing meeting behaviour

Although technology for virtual meetings exists at YLE, the use of it is still more occasional than frequent. If the company wants to increase the use of virtual meetings it needs to establish what are the factors behind the decision making. In the following two sections this research looks at two types of factors influencing meeting behaviour: situational or unvarying factors and contextual or varying factors.

2.4.1   Situational factors

Figure seven (7) presents different situational factors, which influence the choice of communication channel: purpose of the meeting, location of different meeting participants, time, relation between meeting participants and character of the message to be communicated (Kogg: 2000, 29). Situational factors change for each meeting and thus influence the employees' meeting behaviour but the factors as such cannot be altered to increase certain type of meeting behaviour, it being virtual meetings in this research.
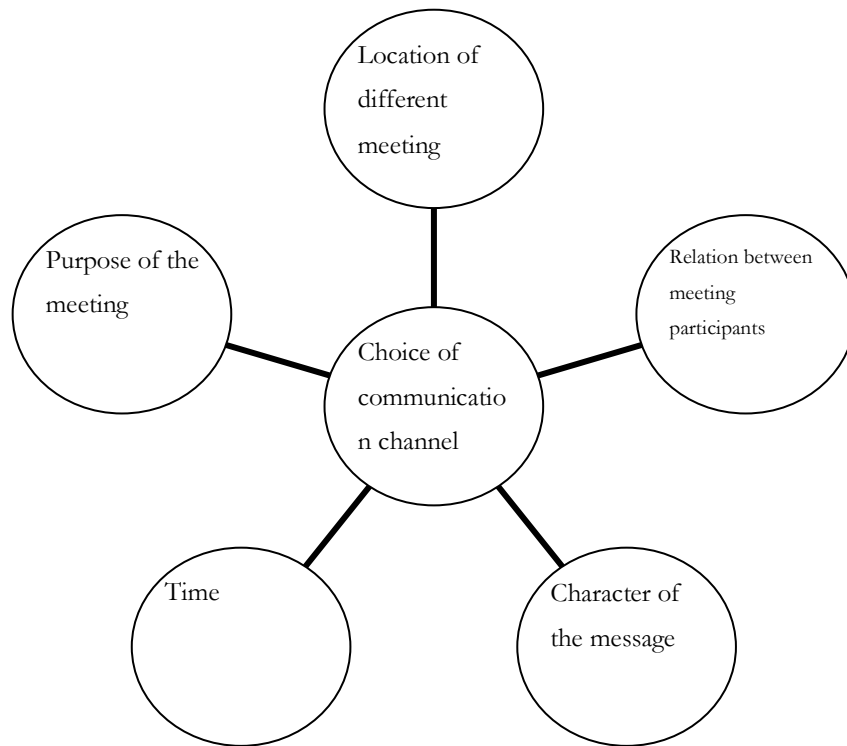
Figure 7. Model of situational factors that may influence the choice of communication channel (modified from Kogg, 2000: 29)

Each time when planning a meeting one should of course think about the purpose of the meeting and if or not virtual meeting is an option for that particular meeting. The character of the meeting could be something which for example requires meeting face-to-face in the beginning but the relationship can be carried on through virtual meetings further on.

If the meeting participants are better acquaintances a virtual meeting could be used but then again if the relationship between the participants is more formal this meeting type might seem to be awkward or unpleasant.

Time is always an issue in a hectic environment such as a broadcasting company and yet again one must make the decision whether the meeting can be held virtually or if it requires travelling to the meeting point and how long it takes.

2.4.2 Contextual factors

I have already examined the situational factors influencing decision making, now this thesis examines more in depth the factors influencing individuals' decision making by examining the different contextual factors which influence the employees' meeting behaviour (figure 8). Contextual factors also influence each other and therefore it is necessary to later on examine which factors would need to be altered, or as Kogg (2000) says "manipulated" in order to encourage virtual meetings. This model is modified from Kogg (2000) and although not all points are relevant for this thesis it does give more idea about the different factors which affect decision making:
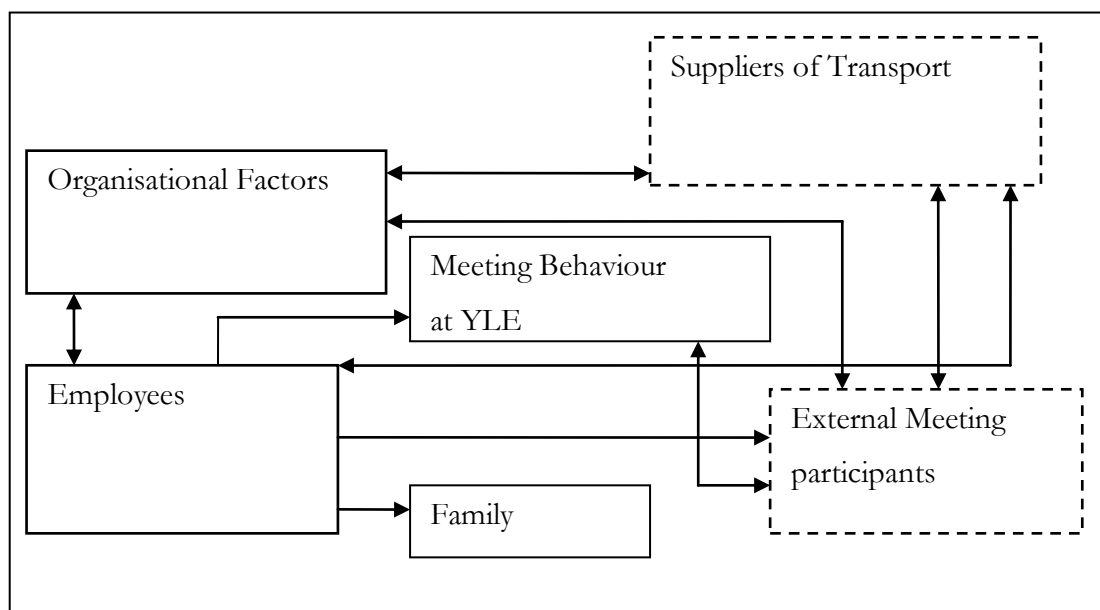

Figure 8. A model of contextual factors influencing meeting behaviour (modified from Kogg 2000).

> Organisational factors: meeting infrastructure, human resource management, organizational culture, management control system, organizational structure, travel policy, environmental policy and information policy (Kogg 2000).

This factor looks at how the company is investing in supporting virtual meetings. What kind of infrastructure does it provide, what does its travel policy state and altogether examines what are the attitudes from the company's side to virtual meetings.

> Employee (individual) factors: skills, values, preferences and attitudes (Kogg 2000).

This takes a look at how the employees see the new technology, how much they are informed about it and the factors behind introducing it to the work community. Usability and access play a major role but one must not forget education and its importance. If the employee feels comfortable about using new technology and tools, he or she is more likely to use it more frequently. One factor influencing the use can be age; younger employees have grown along side with new technology and might feel more comfortable about using it than older employees to whom technology can be more intimidating and seem more difficult to use.

One also needs to take into consideration the employees' wellbeing. This is a factor seldom researched but recently it has been more examined. How does travelling influence the employee? Maybe this affects the employees' will to travel and then again employees' will to use alternative choices.

Suppliers of personal transport: airlines, the railroad and travel agency (Kogg 2000).

Suppliers of different types of transports are the ones with whom the company has agreed on contracts and negotiated suitable prices. When the travel volume is great the company naturally has more leverage in the negotiations. In this research this contextual is more or less irrelevant, but if the supplier of virtual meeting tools is added to the list, one also needs to consider the most suitable option for the company on that front.

External meeting participants: subsidiaries, non- subsidiaries (Kogg 2000).

How willing are the other meeting participant in participating into a virtual meeting? Maybe the technology is not there for them or they have other motives to resist this option. Also the relationship between the participants affects this factor; does it seem suitable to have an online meeting or do the participants feel that they need to meet face-to-face? In cases of internal meetings one could assume that participants are acquainted already and feel comfortable about meeting online.

When communicating with participants outside of the company it might feel unprofessional at least in the beginning, since the current atmosphere in business meetings seems to favour face-to-face meetings although the technology for virtual meetings has developed within recent years, for example Internet connections are faster than before, which allows for better connection between the participants.

Family, spouse (Kogg 2000).

Travelling naturally takes time away from other things; maybe it is time away from other work or time away from the employees' personal relationships. This factor may influence the employees' will to travel, for example in some personal situation the possibility of not travelling to a location may seem more compelling than in another. This factor needs to be taken into consideration when thinking of the employees' wellbeing.

Meeting should also be recognised as an investment for the company. There is a reason why it has been arranged and the company should get something profitable out of it whether it is new ideas, new business partners or it is necessary for its daily operations; tv – and radio-programmes and news broadcasts. This issue will be dealt with in the following section (2.4.).

2.5 Costs and return on investment (ROI)

When considering options for travelling a company should take notice of different costs due to travelling as well as corporate social responsibility. Some of the costs are more obvious than others, for example hard costs (Spielman & Winfield 2003, 23) of travel are easily calculated through gathering data and thus receiving facts and numbers. Other, so called soft costs (Spielman & Winfield 2003, 23) might be harder to detect but should be taken into consideration. Kogg (2000, 6) divides further on the costs of a meeting into three categories:

> Private costs should reflect the sum total of each meeting participants' individual discomfort from a meeting, this could include; having to stay away from home over night, or getting up very early in the morning to catch a flight etcetera. (Kogg 2000, 6)

This factor looks at the employees' will to consider using virtual meetings as an option for travelling and are considered as soft costs (Spielman & Winfield 2003, 23) since they are harder to detect straight forward. Also, since expenses due to the trip are compensated by the company the employees do not suffer from financial loss due to it -therefore they might not consider the cost of it to the company.

> Organisational costs should reflect the participating organisation's full cost of the meeting including, e.g. cost of personal transport, cost of accommodation, cost of travel allowances, the connection costs (virtual meetings), cost of time not used for effective work during transport, etcetera. (Kogg 2000, 6)

These costs can be described as hard costs (Spielman & Winfield 2003, 23) e. g. costs that can easily be measured by analysing data gathered through for example online booking tools. The company keeps track of travel expenses through gathering data but it might not think of how to use it in order to reduce costs. Travel policy plays an important role in managing these costs, for example by setting an upper limit for hotel costs per night etcetera. The cost of time used on travelling from point to point is more difficult to detect if thought within a company at all.

> Social costs should reflect the costs to our society of a meeting, including environmental impact caused by the meeting, but also costs of infrastructure, health care etcetera, that has not already been included through taxes or pricing mechanisms, i.e. mechanisms. (Kogg 2000, 6)

Social and environmental factors can be thought of as somewhat hidden costs. For example environmental impact of travelling is something which one might not consider but it exists nevertheless.

As stated before in this research, a trip should always be an investment for the company. What are the benefits of it compared to the costs? Do the benefits suffer if the trip is substituted by a virtual meeting or are the benefits of substituting greater than the costs of the trip would be. This can be measured with Return on Investment (ROI) and its five levels which measure the value of the investment (Vanneste 2008, 47) as seen below on figure nine (9):
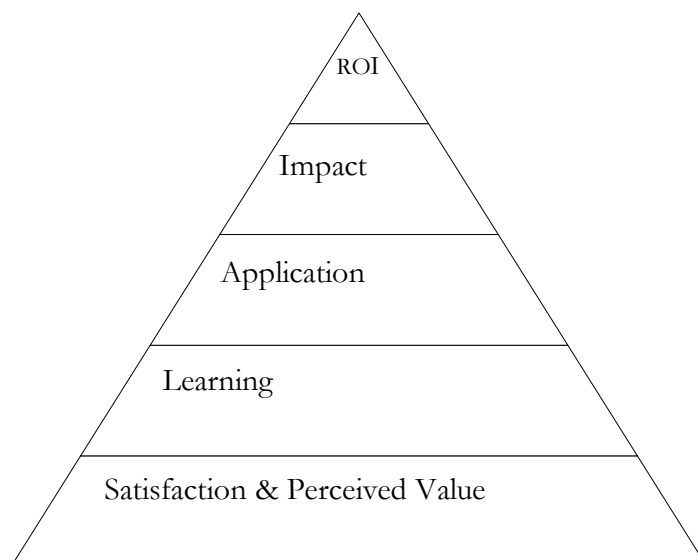

Figure 9. The five levels for measuring ROI in meetings (Vanneste 2008, 47)

Level one (1) looks at how satisfied the employee is during the meeting as in "we must have happy participants in order to open them to learning"(Vanneste 2008, 47) which is level two (2). Once the employee has learnt something from the meeting he or she applies it to the work (level 3), which has an impact on business (level 4) and generates more business or income or decreases costs (level 5).

This model can be applied to the idea of reducing travelling by virtual meetings; if employees feel confident in using technology for virtual meetings, they are more likely to use it and learn more about it and thus use it more as a substitute to travelling. This can create cost savings on travel costs but it can also create more travelling and business once the groundwork has been done with virtual meetings. These factors will be later on examined together with answers received from the questionnaire.

3   Travel management at YLE

In this chapter travel management specifically at YLE is looked at. This is important in order to understand the full picture of travel process in the company. The nature and means of travelling and travel volume are introduced, which helps in speculation about cost savings which could be achieved if substituting more trips by virtual meetings.

3.1   Why do they travel?

A large portion of travelling expenses consists of national, short distance point-to-point trips (Amadeus Finland, 2010, 10; Kaleva Travel 2009) due to the nature of the work. Most of the travelling within YLE happens between the different regions throughout Finland in which both television- and radio programmes are being produced. The need for continuous contact between these regions is obsolete from weekly meetings to occasional longer trips. Alongside is the type of travelling which is being aimed outside of the company, for example when bringing news and producing current affair programmes. (Snellman Tuija, 2010.)

Another important reason for travelling at YLE is keeping contact with its cooperation partners worldwide, such as the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) in London and Sveriges Television (SVT) in Stockholm. The need for keeping up with current affairs in broadcasting – world on the other hand creates the need for travelling to different types of fairs and conferences related to this type of business.

It is obvious that some travel cannot be substituted by virtual meetings -it is impossible for a reporter to interview person for the news via for example an online meeting tool. Then again, it is possible to decrease trips between the different regions as well as for example for the journalists to have virtual meetings with their sources to do data check-ups etcetera. If more of this could be replaced by virtual meetings both economical and ecological savings could be possible. (Snellman Tuija, 2010.)

3.2   How do they travel?

When looking at travelling at YLE, the majority of it is point to point trips within Finland. Therefore, naturally the majority of costs consist of train-and petrol- costs and kilometre- and daily allowances. Also hotel expenses make up a big item of expenditure. Flights within Finland are restricted but frequent outbound flights to for example Stockholm as well as to other destinations add up to another big slice of the costs. In 2009 the top routes within Finland were: Helsinki-Vaasa, Helsinki-Oulu, Helsinki-Rovaniemi, Helsinki-Kuopio, Helsinki-Joensuu and Helsinki-Kajaani; in other words between the main unit in Pasila and the furthest regions. Top routes abroad were Helsinki-Stockholm, Helsinki-Copenhagen, Helsinki-London and Helsinki-Zürich. (Snellman Tuija 2010.)
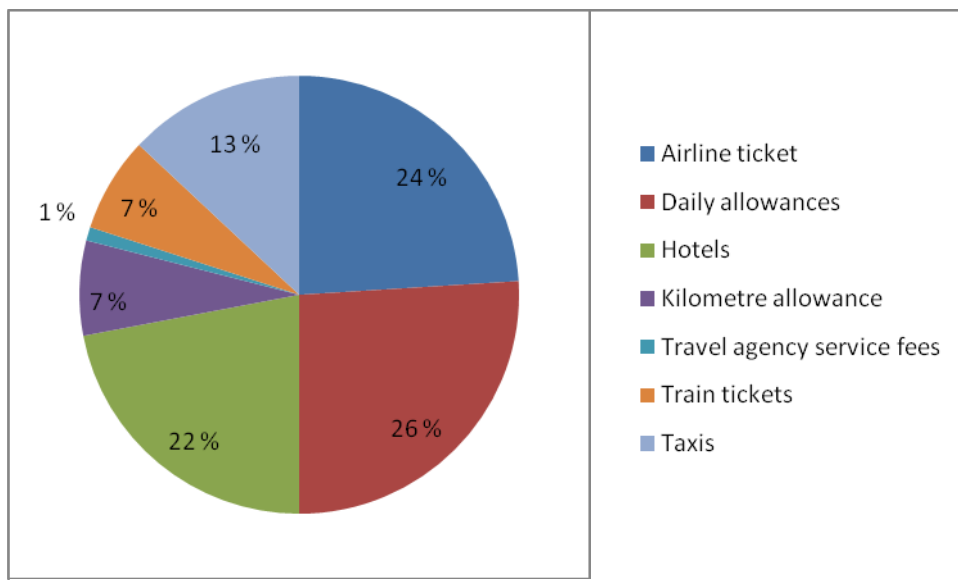

Figure 10. Travel expenses 2009 (Snellman Tuija, 2010)

As figure ten (10) presents, travel expenses at YLE are divided as such: airline tickets 24%, daily allowances 26%, hotels 22%, kilometre allowances 7%, travel agency service fees 1%,

train tickets 7% and taxis 13 %. Expenses consist both of YLE employees' expenses as well as freelancers' and guests' expenses when they participate in a program.

YLE provides its employees with NetGate self-booking tool, through which employees can access several services: e-travel for booking flights and hotels, National Railway (VR) tickets, webfares –tool to browse online ticket prices and Hotelzon to book mainly domestic hotel nights. YLE cooperates with Kaleva Travel, which handles e-travel reservations as well as bookings for travellers who do not have the necessary over 6 -month contract to access NetGate booking tool (Yle intra 2010a). Also, YLE provide its employees with credit cards for travel expenses, for example booking hotels but also to purchase other things either travel related or related to other YLE activities such as costs due to props -purchases for different programs produced by the company. Travel management at YLE aims to support the employees in each step of the travel process as will be seen on figure eleven (11).

YLE has joined Hansel (the central procurement unit of the Finnish Government) travel management agreements. Since Hansel negotiates travel purchasing agreements for the whole Finnish government, institutions and organisations the purchasing volume is huge and the prices low. This ensures cheaper prices and discounts for YLE employees as well as a fixed price ceiling on the purchased services. (Hansel Ltd., 2010.)
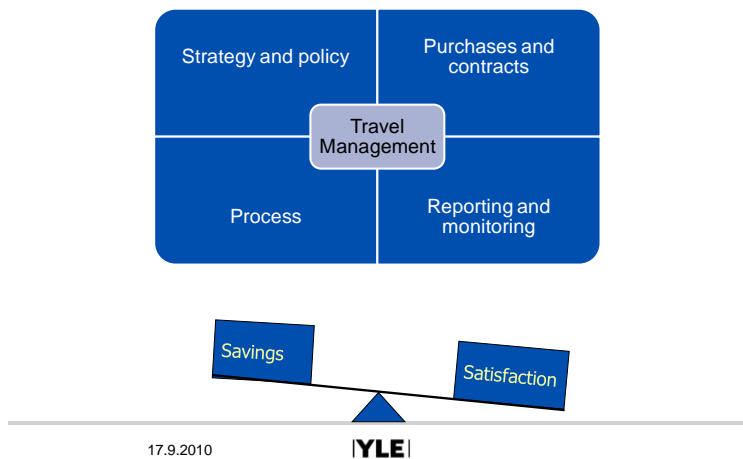

Figure 11. Different components of travel management (Snellman Tuija 2010)

Travel management provides all the tools for the employee to have a trip but it also keeps in mind the possibility of substituting it by a virtual meeting. It is up to the employee which one of the options he or she chooses. Organisational factors at YLE fortunately support the idea of virtual meetings; there are audio meeting rooms, travel policy states that employees should

consider the need to travel and the possibility of using virtual meetings to gain economical and ecological savings. YLE has also stated that it wishes to reduce its CO2 emissions by 5% by the end 2010 and to improve virtual meeting tools to decrease domestic flights by 10% and through that also CO2 emissions. (Yleisradio 2010b.)

3.3   Travelling volume

According to Tuija Snellman (Amadeus Finland 2010, 10) travelling at YLE is daily and altogether trips add up to about 30 000 per year. YLE uses Personec Travel program to coordinate travel expenses in addition with NetGate self-booking tool, which combines different online booking tools for different travel purposes including, air and rail travelling and hotel bookings (YLE intra 2010a).

Permanent YLE staff, 2001–2009
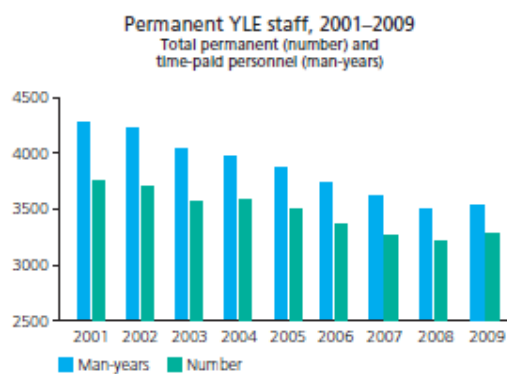Total permanent (number) and
time-paid personnel (man-years)

Figure 12. Total permanent and time-paid personnel (Annual Report, 2010)

Each employee who has over six month contract at YLE has access to NetGate self-booking tool. As seen in figure twelve (12) altogether little over 3 700 people work at YLE (Annual report, 2010), of which 3 300 are in Personec Travel system. Personec also contains the data of freelancers as well as other guests which add up to data of over 7 200 people. (Amadeus Finland, 2010, 10.) This gives some idea of the amount of travelling ad travel related billing which takes place at YLE.

4   Research approach and methods

This chapter concentrates on introducing the research approach and research method, the data collection process from primary and secondary sources and explains the data collection process: which were the questions in the survey, which tool was used to create the survey,

what was the timeline in which the survey was conducted and how many answers were received. This chapter also first explains what reliability and validity in a research mean and after that briefly discusses reliability and validity in this research.

4.1   Research approach

The research combines both qualitative and quantitative research method in the primary data collection. Qualitative method was used mainly to gather data about the organisational factors and to understand the need of travelling in the company YLE. To gain this information interviews, formal and informal, were made throughout autumn 2010 as well as e-mail correspondence with Tuija Snellman.

Quantitative research method was used to gain knowledge about the opinion and attitudes of the masses, in this case a large number of YLE employees, who travel frequently at their work. This simple questionnaire provided the research with answers to questions about employees' attitudes towards travelling and whether they enjoy it and would they be keen on substituting it by virtual meetings. The basis for the questions in the questionnaire was the contextual factors influencing meeting behaviour (section 2.3.2.).

In addition to these research methods, I collected theoretical data form secondary sources i.e. books and mainly the Internet, which attains a lot of useful articles and news which I was able to use to construct the theoretical framework for this research.

4.2   Data collection process and data analysis

As mentioned before, the idea for this research came up in the summer 2009, after my work placement –period at the travel management unit. After starting working at YLE again in summer 2010 and gaining access to sources important for the thesis I was able to finish the research.

Data collected from primary sources was done by firstly interviewing people who have knowledge about travelling at YLE and Sametime. I had several meetings throughout autumn 2010 with Tuija Snellman, the Head of Travel Management Unit at YLE, to gain understanding of the following questions: what is the need for travelling, what is the travelling volume at YLE and to understand whether or not this could be reduced by virtual meetings.

This gave me valuable insight into travelling at YLE. I have also had access to YLE intra, the internal pages of YLE, which has been a great help to me.

I also had an open interview with Leila Mäkeläinen, Infrastructure and Development Manager, in autumn 2010 to learn more about Sametime and the use of it at YLE. This part of the research was mainly to back up the theory gathered from books, existing researches and other, mainly Internet sources.

The main focus was on the quantitative research part –the questionnaire. The questionnaire was a part of a survey from Travel Management Unit and created on Webropol, an online tool for creating questionnaires. It was sent to 504 most active travellers at YLE in order to gain answers to these ten questions (appendix 1):

1. Do you need virtual meetings at your work?
2. Use of virtual meetings is quite low at YLE. Why do you think this is?
3. Have you used Sametime tool or other virtual meeting options?
4. Do you need Sametime tool for external use?
5. Have you used tele meeting which can be ordered from YLE Keskus (YLE Call Center)?
6. From whom/from where do you get support in travel issues?
7. How do you feel about business travel?
8. How do you think the amount of your business trips will develop next year?
9. How satisfied are you with the travel services at YLE?
10. Age

The answering time was deliberately kept short, since in general employees are busy and if they do not answer the questionnaire right away they forget about it. Also the questions were kept in minimum, since after discussing the matter with Tuija Snellman we agreed that if there are multiple questions employees are not keen on spending time on the questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to 504 employees and 128 answers were received in total. This means that the response rate was 25%.

The questionnaire was sent by e-mail to employees and the answering time was one week, from Wednesday 27.10.2010 to Wednesday 3.11.2010. The questions were designed so that the majority of them were yes or no answers. In some of them three options were given to

choose from. The questionnaire was conducted in Finnish since the majority of YLE employees are of Finnish nationality. The service used to create the questionnaire, Webropol, automatically analyzed the answers into charts.

4.3 Reliability and validity

The reliability of a research refers to consistency of the research. How reliable are the results? Reliability can be measured for example by repeating the research and comparing these two sets of answers to each other (Social research methods, 2010). If repeating the research is not possible, the researcher needs to estimate the coherency of the research by analysing the data collection process, data analysing process and compare it to the theoretical part of the research together with the results from the questionnaire.

The questionnaire could not be sent twice due to the lack of time, but I am confident that the employees who had the time to answer gave accurate answers. The questionnaire was deliberately created so that there would be little space for interpretation and the answers received could be analysed in a straightforward matter.

Validity measures the ability of making correct assumptions according to the measurement and thus accuracy of the research. In other words for example the amount of answers was enough to make a valid assumption of the research results. Were there compromising elements, such as low attendance to the questionnaire, or can the researcher assume that he or she can make reliable propositions on the basis of the research. (Social research methods, 2010).

In the survey conducted using a questionnaire the number of answer received (128/505) was good and the fact that the questionnaire was sent to employees who are the most active travellers increases the validity since they know what they are talking about. Also, they are the ones who can change their meeting behaviour and thus their travel habits.

5 Research results and suggestions

This chapter focuses on the results of the questionnaire first by analysing the answers based on the contextual factors introduced in chapter about contextual factors (2.3.2.):

- Organisational factors
- Employee (individual) factors
- External meeting participants
- Family, spouse

(Kogg, 2000)

For this research contextual factor "suppliers of personal transport" and "family" are deliberately left out, since they have no significance on this research. YLE already has a service provider for web –meetings and therefore this factor does not need to be discussed. The factor about family is not relevant to this research, since the main focus is on other issues. Questions six (6) and nine (9) were aimed for the purpose of the travel management unit and I will not analyse the answers for those in my research.

The situational factors purpose of the meeting, location of different meeting participants, time, relation between meeting participants and character of the message to be communicated (Kogg: 2000, 29) introduced in chapter 2.3.1. will not be further analysed, since these factors cannot be altered in order to influence decision making.

The issues of costs and return on investment (ROI) are also analysed together with the results.

As figure thirteen (13) below shows, over half of the respondents say that they need virtual meetings at their work, which shows that there are already active users. The issue is if or not it is possible for the remaining 47, 6% of respondents to use virtual meetings as an option or not.
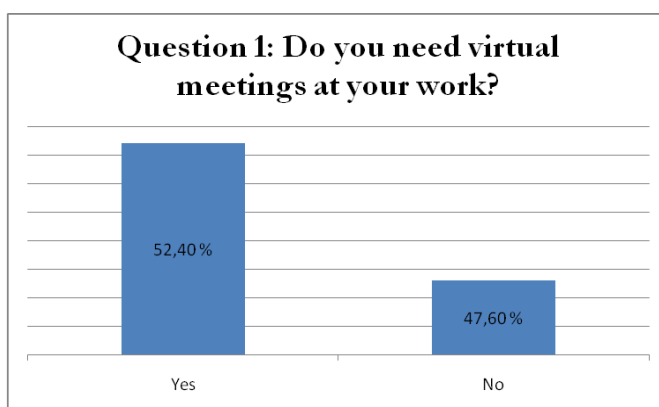

Figure 13. Do you need virtual meetings at your work?

As suggested before in the thesis, age can influence the use new technology. The majority of respondents were over 40-year-olds (figure 14), which can be an influencing factor in why Sametime and other forms of virtual meetings are rare; maybe they do not feel comfortable using new technology. This is, of course, only speculation but in general younger employees are more willing to adapt to new technology since they are more familiar with it through other channels as well.
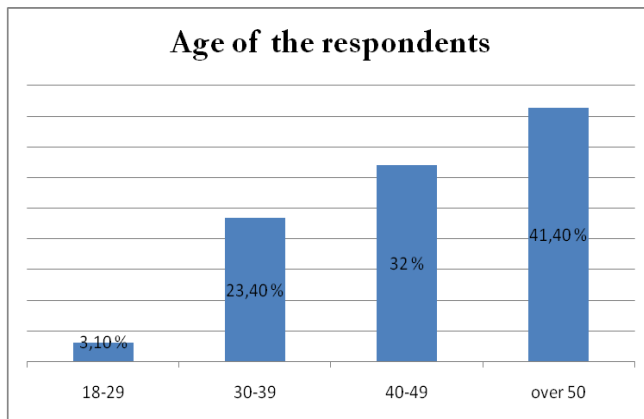

Figure 14. Age of the respondents

5.1 Organisational factors

Organisational factors look at the company's "meeting infrastructure, human resource management, organizational culture, management control system, organizational structure, travel policy, environmental policy and information policy" (Kogg 2000).

YLE provides different means of virtual meetings to its employees: tele meeting, video meeting and web meeting tools. It also has included virtual meetings to the travel policy and has as an agenda to increase the use of virtual meetings. The organization is therefore, at least on paper, supporting these as a mean of meeting. Organisational culture in travel management at YLE is not mandating, which means that the employees need to follow the guidelines provided in the travel policy but there is room for flexibility.

When discussing the issue of Sametime web meeting tool with Leila Mäkeläinen (2010) it was more or less obvious that YLE tries to promote Sametime through different campaigns in intranet as well as holding training sessions both at Pasila and regions. The problem is that people seldom attend these and afterwards when attempting to use Sametime clashed to a problem when not knowing how to actually use it.

The use of Sametime is low at YLE (Mäkeläinen, Leila 2010) at the moment. As figure fourteen (14) shows: 58, 3% of the respondents have not used Sametime or other virtual meeting tools. Interestingly enough on the other hand, as seen before in figure thirteen (13), over half of the respondents claim that they do need virtual meetings at their work.
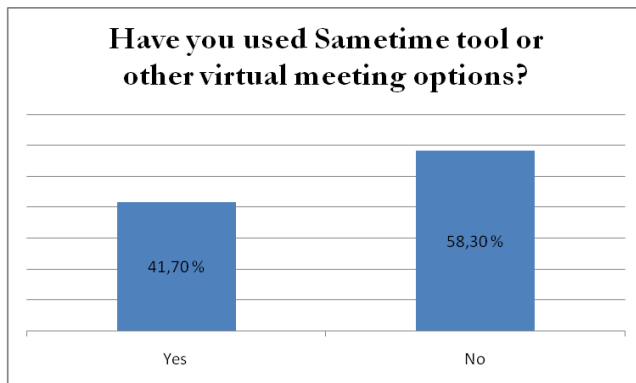

Figure 15. Have you used Sametime tool or other virtual meeting options?

I also wanted to know if employees who do not use Sametime use tele meetings, but the answer was strongly "no", as seen in figure sixteen (16) below. Over 75% responded that they have not used tele meetings either.
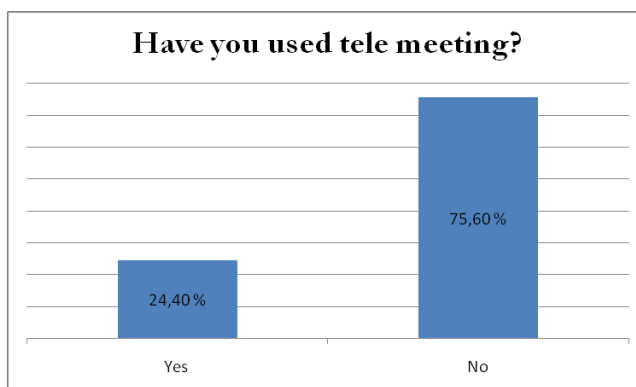

Figure 16. Have you used tele meeting?

When asking how the respondents see the number of trips evolving next year (figure 17) almost 70% replied that they believe it will stay the same as this year. Out of the respondents 18, 9% believe that the number of trips will decrease and 14, 2% speculate that trips will increase.

Question 8: How do you think the amount of your business trips will develop next year?

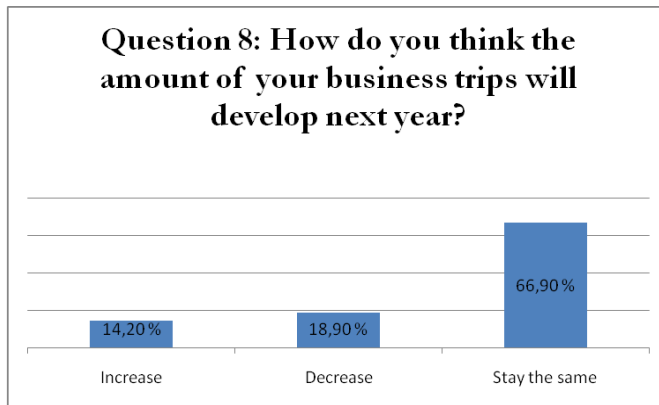|		
14,20%	18,90%	66,90%
Increase	Decrease	Stay the same

Figure 17. How do you think the number of your business trips will develop next year?

When thinking of the organisational costs discussed before (2.5.), "e.g. cost of personal transport, cost of accommodation, cost of travel allowances, the connection costs (virtual meetings), cost of time not used for effective work during transport, etcetera" (Kogg, 2000, 6) this indicates that although the amount of business trips would stay the same the market prices are rising and thus travel costs are likely to increase.

5.2   Employee (individual) factors

This factor looks at the individuals' "skills, values, preferences and attitudes" (Kogg 2000).

I wanted to find out what could be the reason for the low use of Sametime and other virtual meeting tools: the "culture at YLE" of meeting face-to-face, the fact that virtual meetings cannot be used in the employees' field of work or if the employees feel that there is no system support for the use of Sametime. As can be seen in figure eighteen (18) over half of the respondents replied that virtual meeting is not an option, whereas only 22% said they want to meet face-to-face and 22,8% answered that they feel there is a lack of system support.

Question 2: Use of virtual meetings is quite low at YLE. Why do you think this is?

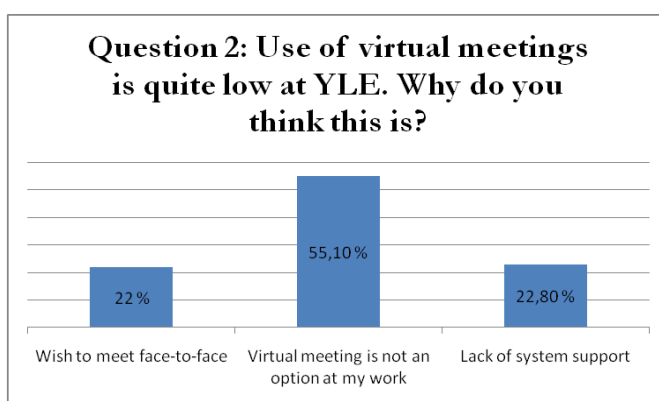|		
22%	55,10%	22,80%
Wish to meet face-to-face	Virtual meeting is not an option at my work	Lack of system support

Figure 18. Use of virtual meetings is quite low at YLE. Why do you think this is?

It is of course a possibility that the employees who are able to use Sametime or other virtual meeting tools are already using it and it cannot be increased. Or then the employees are yet to realise the opportunities and possibilities of virtual meetings as Leila Mäkeläinen (2010) seemed to believe.

When considering the model of return on investment (ROI) introduced before in the thesis the company should consider the meeting to be an investment. A model from Vanneste (2008) gives five levels which measure the value of the investment: satisfaction and perceived value, learning, application, impact and return on investment (ROI).

As I suggested before, this can be modified to meeting behaviour so that cost savings on travel expenses may occur. If the employees feel more confident in using the technology, they are more likely to use it and the use of virtual meetings decreases travel expenses such as daily allowances, kilometre allowances and other mobility expenses. The issue is, how much more can YLE do to educate employees about the use of Sametime? Maybe a course for it should be compulsory but then again more resources to organise it would be needed.

As seen before in figure seventeen (17) 22, 8% of the respondents answered that there is lack of system support. At the moment Leila Mäkeläinen is the only person helping employees with practicalities in using Sametime and it is obvious that she cannot be reached whenever employees need assistance. 22% of the respondents notified that they prefer meeting face-to-face with meeting participants. If these two latter groups of employees could be convinced into changing their preference and system support would be increased the use of virtual meetings could potentially be increased.

When asking how employees feel about business travel if it is a self-evident part of their work, a burden or nice change (figure 19) 60, 6% answered that it is self-evident. Interestingly 32, 3% said that it is a nice change to their daily routines. Only 7, 1% felt that business travel is a burden. This gives us some clue about the low use of virtual meetings. If employees feel that business travel is a natural part of their work it may be difficult to re-think their meeting behaviour. Then again if they feel it is a nice change they might not even be willing to change it, since they enjoy the trips. The second biggest percentage, 32, 3%, consider travelling to be a nice change, and they might not be willing to change their travelling habits and meeting behaviour without a good incentive, since they enjoy it.
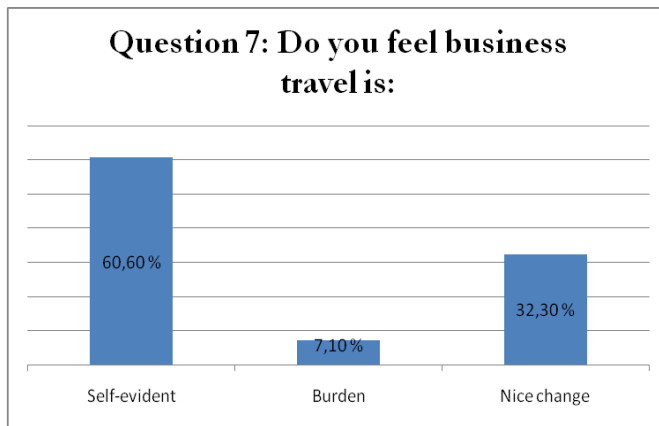
Figure 19. Do you feel business travel is (which of the options)?

When looking at the personal costs discussed before (2.5.) which reflect "the sum total of each meeting participants' individual discomfort from a meeting, this could include; having to stay away from home over night, or getting up very early in the morning to catch a flight --" (Kogg 2000, 6) this result indicates that employees do not see travelling as being unpleasant but rather as something which gives a nice change to routines or at least they do not see travelling as a consuming part of their work.

All these results indicate that the employees are in theory aware about virtual meetings but are not willing to use them. It might be so that the culture of face-to-face meetings is so strong at YLE that virtual meetings just cannot push through as the management would hope.

5.3   External meeting participants

As stated before YLE is now looking to expand the use of Sametime also to external use. Question four (4) tried to figure out whether or not employees feel that they have need for it. Surprisingly 80, 20% responded that they do not need Sametime for external use, as shown in figure twenty (20). It seems that they will rather travel to their meetings, use other means than the web meeting tool or the meeting cannot be held virtually due to the nature of it.
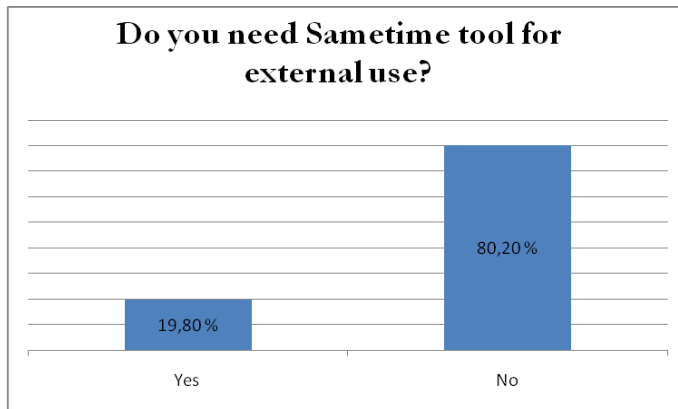
Figure 20. Do you need Sametime tool for external use?

It can be so that since the option of external use of Sametime is not available yet the employees do not realize the possibilities. Hopefully after it becomes a reality they would re-consider the possibility of virtual meetings as a reliable option to travelling.

6 Conclusion

This thesis aimed to find out whether or not travelling could be substituted by virtual meetings. The main focus on the research was the use of web meeting tool called Sametime and on the wish from the company's side to find out if this virtual meeting tool could be increased or not.

There are many advantages in using virtual meetings, for example as long as an employee has an internet connection one can have a web meeting anytime and afterwards return to work right away rather than taking the time to travel point to point. Virtual meetings also cut costs on travel related expenses and are therefore economical and beneficial on the company's side. One should also consider savings on ecological point of view since travelling is ecologically consuming and if the company is able to cut back on trips it would decrease its CO_2 emissions.

YLE has several means of virtual meetings for its employees: video meeting rooms, tele meeting possibility and web meeting tool Sametime. YLE also provides training meetings for Sametime users in the main unit Pasila, Helsinki as well as in the different regions. At the moment the main responsibility is on one person at YLE, which has shown to be problematic since she cannot alone meet the needs of the employees having problems using Sametime. This surprised me, since one would think that when a company has a tool which is supposed

to be used in a variety of different meetings throughout the company, system support would be self-evident necessity.

The results are mainly based on a survey conducted by the travel management unit. The questionnaire included ten questions, of which eight were used in the analysing process; the remaining two were for the purpose of the travel management unit since the survey for this research was included into a questionnaire which would benefit both parties. Also, information gained from the open interviews is used when analysing the situation at YLE.

The results were somewhat contradictory, since the respondents say that they do need virtual meetings but they do not use them or virtual meetings cannot be combined with their field of work. Work related travelling is seen as a necessity or as a nice change to daily routines. The latter is understandable for example in cases of meetings between the different regions. An employee working in a region may prefer travelling to Helsinki for a meeting and thus possibly combining it with leisure time rather than having a virtual meeting. On the other hand, an employee might not yet realise the possibilities of a virtual meeting and come to think of it as a valid option to travelling. As YLE's organisational culture does not have strict travel rules of which employees cannot stray from, there is room for flexibility which can cause different types of travel behaviour –depending on the employee's preference. It is of course a possibility that the use is as high as it can be and the rest of the meetings and trips cannot be held virtually. Based on the results the employees need virtual meetings but are not willing to use them -this could be due to meeting culture of face-to-face meetings or lack of system support. Most likely it is a combination of both.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Työmatkustus

1) Tarvitsetko työssäsi etäneuvottelumahdollisuutta ?

○ En ○ Kyllä

2) Etäneuvottelujen käyttö on Ylessä varsin vähäistä. Miksi näin ?Valitse vaihtoehto jonka arvelet olevan suurin syy.

○ Halu tavata kasvotusten/YLE kulttuuri ○ Asioita jonka tiimoilta tapeemme/matkustamme, ei voi hoitaa etäneuvotteluin. ○ Järjestelmätuen puute

3) Oletko käyttänyt Sametime-järjestelmää tai muita yhtiön etäneuvottelumahdollisuuksia ?

○ Kyllä ○ Ei

4) Tarvitsetko Sametime-järjestelmää myös yhtiön ulkopuolisten toimijoiden välisiin neuvotteluihin ?

○ Kyllä ○ En

5) Oletko käyttänyt YLE Keskuksesta tilattavaa puhelinneuvottelu mahdollisuutta?

○ Kyllä ○ En

6) Keneltä/mistä saat tukea työmatkan valmisteluun ?

○ Intranetista ○ Travel Helpistä ○ Omalta Travel tukihenkilöltä ○ En mistään

7) Koetko, että työmatkustaminen on

○ Itsestäänselvyys ○ Rasite ○ Mukavaa vaihtelua

8) Kuinka arvelet työmatkojesi määrän kehittyvän ensi vuonna ?

○ Kasvaa ○ Pienee ○ Pysyy samana kuin tänä vuonna

9) Kuinka tyytyväinen olet nykyisiin matkustuksen tukipalveluihin ?

○ Täysin tyytyväinen ○ Tyytyväinen ○ Jokseenkin tyytyväinen ○ Tyytymätön

10) Ikäsi on

○ 18-29 ○ 30-39 ○ 40-49 ○ yli 50

Lähetä