

Why do Aurinkomatkat customers visit the service office and how do they feel about the online services?

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Degree programme Bachelor of Hospitality Management	
Report/thesis title Why do Aurinkomatkat customers visit the service office and how do they feel about the online services?	Number of pages and appendix pages 43+6
<p>The purpose of this thesis is to research Tour Operator Aurinkomatkat Oy service office clientele. In this thesis there are two main research questions or topics. The first objective is to discover why Aurinkomatkat customers use and go to the office for services and what are their motives behind it. The other objective is to discover how many of the service office clientele have used the online services and how do they feel about them. The target of this research is to get development ideas for Aurinkomatkat online services and how to make them more user friendly for the clientele who would prefer the service office.</p> <p>The first part of the theoretical framework considers website usability and design, as well as contemplates what good websites are like. As Aurinkomatkat service office has mainly older generation consumers, the theory will also focus on older generations as website users. The second part of the theoretical framework is about consumer behaviour and the differences between younger and older generations. The last part of the theoretical framework is about Aurinkomatkat, which concentrates on the basic information such as who they are, what customer groups they have, what kind of services they offer, what they consider their strengths to be and what are their development plans. This introduction to Aurinkomatkat is done so that the user gets a better understanding of the clientele in question and the target of the research.</p> <p>The empirical part of the thesis describes the research methods and working methods used, as well as presents the results of the research. The research was made mainly as a qualitative case study, but also used mixed method research. The research was made by interviewing thirty (30) participants in the Aurinkomatkat service office. The interviews were recorded and later put into written format.</p> <p>The results of the study show that the main reasons for visiting the service office was to plan a holiday, reserve or buy a holiday, pay for the booked holiday, make changes to the booked holiday and check-in to flight. The main motive why the customers preferred visiting the service office was that they wanted personal service and did not know how to use the online services. Many of the participants however had used the online services, but were unsure of themselves. The rated order of importance of the online services was: 1. Website 2. Online reservation system 3. Email 4. Chat. The participants gave good ratings to Aurinkomatkat website and online reservation system, but had some issues in using them.</p> <p>From the results and analysis of the whole thesis, the development ideas for the online services was to have instructions and guidance on how to use the online services, more information and marketing of their chat service and minor changes to the website to make it more user-friendly for older generation consumers and the consumers who used to visit the service office.</p>	
Keywords Aurinkomatkat, Website usability and design, Webpages, Consumer behaviour, Older generations, Online services	

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1 Introduction

The internet nowadays is a big part of life and many people use it daily. People use it while working, for paying bills and for leisure activities such as watching a movie or searching for the perfect holiday. As the internet is a part of the now and the future, many companies have moved online, such as seen in the growing trend of online travel agencies. As customers go online to do their daily activities, things such as website design, functionality and usability are key factors to take into consideration. There is such a vast selection of online companies, consumers/users can simply choose the best website for their need. Therefore, companies must keep their websites competitive and contemplate on the user experience. Some people however are still not part of this age of technology, such as older generations. People who belong to the older generations might not have accessibility to computers or do not have the habit or knowledge of using them.

Generations consist of groups with people born around the same years. These generation groups are usually known by the names: The Greatest Generation, the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y or Millennials, and Generation Z (The Center for Generational Kinetics 2016). In 2016 the ages of people in the Greatest Generation were 92-115 years old (born around 1901-1924), Silent Generation were 71-91 years old (born around 1925-1945), Baby boomers were 52-70 years old (born around 1946-1964), Generation X were 40-69 years old (born around 1965-1976), Generation Y were 22-39 years old (born around 1977-1994) and Generation Z were 1-21 years old (born around 1995-2015). Different countries and cultures can have different names and age groups for the generation groups. This is because different trends and events may occur at separate times or only in certain areas. (The Center for Generational Kinetics 2016; WJSchroer 2017.)

The World Health Organization (2016), the National Institute on Aging (2009), as well as several articles and studies define the age of older people 65 years and older (Arch 2008; Campbell 2015; Nielsen Norman Group 2013; Tilastokeskus 2004). This would put Baby Boomers, the Silent Generation and the Greatest Generation into the definition of older generations. As in different generations, also the older generations have different ways of life and have a different behaviour as consumers. This can be seen for example in the way they appreciate personal customer service and loyalty in brands.

The purpose of this thesis is to research Aurinkomatkat clientele about their consumer behaviour, specifically related to online services. There are two main research questions/topics to my thesis. Firstly, my objective is to discover why Aurinkomatkat customers use and

go the office for services and what are their motives behind it. The other objective is to discover how many of the service office clientele have used the online services and how do they feel about them considering the functionality, usability, design and overall user experience. The research was conducted in Aurinkomatkat service office when the office was still open in 2016. The target of this thesis is to get development ideas for the online services. The development is done by taking specifically older generations and the clientele who used to visit the service office into consideration. The aim is to make the online services more user-friendly and beneficial for this customer segment.

The thesis theory concentrates on website usability and design, as well as the consumer behaviour. This is done by especially taking older generations into consideration. The theory on consumer behaviour also considers the differences and possible similarities between older and younger generations. The theory also consists of an introduction of the research target Aurinkomatkat Oy. Since Aurinkomatkat cannot reveal specific company information on issues such as online service and reservation growth, the theoretical framework will concentrate more on who Aurinkomatkat are, what customer groups they have, what kind of services they offer, what they consider their strengths to be and what are their development plans. This will give a basis for the results, as it is important that the reader understands what kind of company and clientele is in question.

After the theoretical framework will come the results from the research. The thesis was conducted mainly as a qualitative research, but also had a mixed methods approach. I used both qualitative and quantitative methods to better benefit the thesis and my own learning. In the results chapter, I will describe more clearly the research methods and the working methods used. The results are divided into the two main researched topics: what are the reasons and motives behind visiting the service office and Aurinkomatkat online services.

The results will then be analysed in the discussion chapter by also referring to the theoretical framework. The results analysis will take into consideration the validity and credibility of the research and results. From analysing the whole thesis, I will give three main development ideas. The development ideas are based on Aurinkomatkat results and are thus aimed mainly at them. However, the thesis and development ideas are beneficial for also the industry and other online companies who want to take older generation consumers into consideration. Lastly, I will reflect on my own learning and evaluate the thesis process.

2 Website usability and design

A good website can be described as empowering decision making, logical, understandable, consistent, ergonomic (easy to use), predictable, responsive and has conveniently everything what and where the user needs it to be. In a good website both the user and provider must benefit from it and both parties must be able to achieve their goals. For a user to be able to achieve their goals the website must be designed to be user friendly, so taking into consideration what kind of users the website has (the customer segment) and what is their purpose there. (Mele, De Ascaniis & Cantoni 2016, 299.)

2.1 Usability

When researching what good websites are like, the term usability pops out frequently. It has several definitions, but all quite similar. Eric Reiss in *Usable Usability: Simple Steps for Making Stuff Better* (2012), defines usability as the ability to accomplish certain tasks and goals. Good usability then means being able to accomplish tasks easily, pleasantly, efficiently and quickly. The Nielsen Norman Group (2012) define the word usability as ease-of-use and by different design goals or quality components. These components are learnability, efficiency, memorability, errors and satisfaction. Functionality can be included into the quality components as well as it also influences usability (Reiss 2012). Functionality means that the system preforms the way a user needs it to. For example, on a website this means it functions well on different browsers (e.g. Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Internet Explorer) and other things such as the buttons and links work too.

The components are defined as followed. Learnability in usability means how easy it is for a new user to learn how to use a website and comprehend its design. Efficiency means how long does it take for a user to preform and accomplish specific tasks after they have learned the website design. Memorability means how much does the user remember when coming to use the website or system again. Error as a quality component means how the errors are prevented and how many errors can a user make? Then if a user makes an error, how are they identified, how bad an error has been made and most importantly how do you fix them. The user satisfaction describes how the user felt about the design and using the system. (The Nielsen Norman Group 2012.)

Because of poor usability, online travel agencies and retailers are losing more than £2 billion a year (Reiss 2012). Website inefficiencies are impacting on loss of travel sales. These inefficiencies can be a wide range of issues such as errors in functionality, bugs or overly complex website structures where tasks cannot be performed or information cannot

be found. Poor website usability leads to users not liking the site, making mistakes, causing frustration, spending too much time on how to use the website, resulting in users leaving the site with bad feelings and leaving a bad reputation. If a website does not have the information a user is looking for or cannot perform the way a user wants it, they will go somewhere else. This is an option a user can make as competition is huge, especially in the travel business.

2.2 Design

According to Kathy Jacobs Design and Marketing (2015), websites should not seem too cluttered, busy or have too much text, information or photos. It is important to keep a design structure that is simple, lightweight and with clean content that is well formatted on the webpages. Things that help keep the content clear for a reader is for example using headings, sub headings and bulleted lists. This makes it easier for users to scan the webpage for information they need, rather than having to read the whole text.

Homepages are significant for a website as it is the first thing users see. Homepages should be a platform for the whole website and give a user a proper idea on what they offer. From the homepage users should have the possibility to already accomplish some tasks without opening a new page. For example, in online travel agencies you can already begin the booking process from the homepage. Often websites are vast where the user must scroll down to see the whole page. However, the part of the homepage that is visible without scrolling should be compelling enough to make the user stay. After that, it should make users want to see more and scroll on. (Nielsen Norman Group 2012; The Tourism Company 2016.)

Site navigation is how users move from one webpage to another. When visitors use a website, they should know where they are going and what to expect when opening a new webpage. It is important to the design because it must be easy to use and be responsive. Buttons such as next or previous should be where users think of them being, making the navigation easier. If users are interested in finding more information on another page, there should be a maximum of two to three clicks before getting there. If the navigation to the desired information is too hard to get to, users may leave the webpage without accomplishing the wanted goal. (Jyväskylän Yliopisto 2011; Kathy Jacobs Design and Marketing 2015; Plumley 2011.)

Websites should be designed so that when a user visits different sections of the website, they don't get confused and think they have accidentally left the website. This can happen

if the style changes too much between the websites different pages. Webpages should keep a consistent design with logos and colours. It is easier for users to look at colours that complement each other, rather than ones that clash (Kathy Jacobs Design and Marketing, 2015). This way the user will not think they have gotten lost, as well as helps the user learn more quickly how the structure of the website works and where to find the needed information as previously mentioned in the learnability quality component. In the error quality component, good design is important to already prevent users from making mistakes (Reiss 2012).

With the design, the user should always be taken into consideration. The whole design should be user-centred and user-friendly. It is important to make the design fit for everyone who visits the website. This is important especially for online travel agencies, because if the design is usable for all kind of customer segments, more people can make the bookings online. If an online travel agency wants a customer to make the booking, personalized webpages can help the process. When the text sounds like it is made directly for the user who is reading it, it gives a very personalized effect. Therefore, website design should be personalized. (Kathy Jacobs Design and Marketing 2015.)

Images are also part of the website design. Especially for travel websites photos of destinations and hotels provoke the customer to fall in love with the product and make the booking. This boosts the attractiveness of the website. The key is to use optimised images, that do not take more than 5 seconds to download. This means that the images should be optimum sized, but of good quality. However, even if pictures usually inspire customers to make the purchase, images should not clutter the webpage so that it stays simple and lightweight. An option for this could be a separate photo gallery, where users can take a better look if interested in that section of a website. With images, also the webpage loading speed should not take that long. It should not take more than 2 to 3 seconds for a user to have the website on view, or else the user might leave to explore another website. (Gupta 2011; Jyväskylän Yliopisto 2011; Plumley 2011; The tourism company 2016.)

In websites such as online travel agencies or online shopping sites product presentation must be designed to perfection. The product design must make users want to purchase it. However, there are other issues than making the product look good that must be taken into consideration. The EU law states that all prices must be displayed for the consumer, this includes additional charges, taxes and the whole price breakdown. Also, it must be clearly visible if the product is available to ensure customer satisfaction. Users might have spent time looking at a specific hotel only to find it is not available for certain dates. With

the price and availability, all other information should be visible as well so the user can learn all the product details before purchase. (Europa 2017; Gupta 2011.)

If a user could not find the information or products that they are looking for, on-site search is central when designing a website. There should always be a visible place where users can make searches. If a search has no results, then websites should design the system to make suggestions based on the search made. If a user in a travel website searches for possible holiday destinations, it is practical to have a sorting or filtering system. This way the user can get a more specific and wanted outcome of the search. There may be situations where the user has made an error, the site has an error or wanted information could not be found. In these situations, help systems should be found on every page and be easily located from the screen. The help system should contain contact information or error messages in case of failure. (Gupta 2011.)

2.3 Usability and website design for older generations

As previously written in chapter 2.1 and 2.2., same issues are seen in website design for older generations. When designing websites for older generations age is a factor that should be taken into consideration as issues such as hearing loss, vision and cognitive changes occur. Changes in vision already start to form from about the age of 40, where small and close text is hard to read (Campbell 2015). Other problems with vision relate to eye sensitivity towards colours, details and light. Cognitive changes relate to the declining abilities in memory, being able to comprehend text, focus and perceptual speed. (Holt & Morrell 2008; National Institute on Aging 2009.)

The number of older people who go online have grown significantly (Nielsen Norman Group 2013). Even though the number of older generation online users have grown, most of them still have trouble in using online services. In a study directed by the Nielsen Norman Group (2013), users from the ages of 65 and older were 43% slower than users from the ages of 21-55. Other issues such as completing tasks and time spent on tasks were significantly different in the two age groups. According to Statistics Finland, in 2015 the biggest age group in Finland was 65-69. Most of the Finnish population belong to the Baby Boomers, who make up the older generation. Studies show that even though a website is made user friendly for older generation users, the design does not cause any negative effect on younger generation users (Arch 2008). By making website usability and design for also older generations, business' can get a larger customer segment and thus get more profit.

It is good to keep the website structure simple and uncluttered for also the benefit for older generations. Because older generations usually read the whole webpage when searching information, the website should be well structured and organized (W3C 2010). This can be done by using headings and labels and making sure the user understands how the information is organized throughout the page. The important information should be put on the top of the page, so that the user who reads the whole webpage already might find what they were looking for in the very beginning. By sustaining the focus of older generation users, the text should be written in short sections and paragraphs. The language of the text should not be hard to understand, so defining hard and unfamiliar terms should be done as to not lose the reader. (National Institute on Aging 2009.)

The website text language should be simple enough to understand, but also the text size and font should be readable for older generation users. The text size should be big enough so that people with declined vision can easily read it. The text should be 12 or 14-point type size in a website. If the text is not readable for older generation users, then there should be an option for them to make the text bigger. However, even if this is already an option in websites, many older generations users don't know about it or don't know how to change it (Kazimi 2014). That is why it should be clearly marked so that older generations users can see and find this option. Text font is also important for text comprehension and understanding. The font should be readable to everyone, as well as capital letters and italics should be avoided. (Finn & Johnson 2013; Home Care Pulse 2015; National Institute on Aging 2009.)

Even if text on websites are well structured with good font and size, some users in the older generations want other options as well. These options can be for example pictures, videos and text-to-speech software. This way information is available in different forms for many kinds of users. Nevertheless, website should not be too animated as it may be a distraction. Overly animated websites might also slow up some computers than are not the newest models. If using videos on websites, there should be options to make them hidden, started and stopped by the user themselves. If a website uses photos directed at older generations, the photos should relate to the text with it and have older adults in the pictures themselves. If there is a young couple in a picture advertising elderly cruises the message might be confusing. (Home Care Pulse 2015; W3C 2010.)

As older generations take a little bit longer to read text and browse a website than younger generations, automatically scrolling webpages should not be used. If the webpage requires scrolling it should be indicated so that the user knows more text is below. Links, buttons, scrolling, swiping and other that are normal for younger generations

are harder for the older generations to comprehend according to the National Institute on Aging (2009). Scrolling altogether is hard for some older generation users because of using a mouse. This is due to issues such as arthritis and Parkinson's. Using a mouse can be hard with pull-down and fly-out menus and clicking precise buttons and links. Instead menus that operate by clicking open and close, as well as big buttons and links are a better option. (W3C 2010.)

Links, buttons and icons should be big, as well as be clearly visible from the background for example with different colours. When opening a link, the colour of the link should be different than the ones that have not been opened. This way older generation users won't get confused on what link they have already opened and read. Webpages should also clearly state on where the link will take the user when opening it. If a link is underlined to make it more visible, nothing else in the website text should be underlined in the same design. (Finn & Johnson 2013; Nielsen Norman Group 2013.)

For older generation users site navigation must be as simple as possible. This is to help older generations users know all the time where they are in the website and how to get to different webpages with ease. For example, links to home pages, search engines as well as "previous page" and "next page" buttons should be visible to make different webpages easily accessible. Older generations like to read information several times to comprehend a text. Site maps and navigation bars are good to indicate the location of the user on the website. As older generation users might make more spelling mistakes with keyboard use, searches should concentrate on giving good suggestions and having contact information visible. To make completing tasks successful, it should be done by as few clicks as possible. (Finn & Johnson 2013; National Institute on Aging 2009.)

Some websites like online travel agencies require inputting information in the booking process. For good usability for older generation users, clear instructions should be provided to make inputting easier. Good instructions for filling forms can have examples, such as how to write a date of birth in the right form. When all information has been entered the user should have a chance to read and possibly correct it. If errors are made whilst inputting information, a good feature is indicating where the error is, what the error is and how to correct it. Another helpful feature is jumping to the error. The Nielsen Norman Group (2013) reported that 45% of older generation web users had trouble with using websites that split information and tasks into multiple windows and tabs. This is because older generation users might not know how to work in several different tabs, as it would be easier to have the information on one webpage at a time. (W3C 2010.)

As learnability and memorability might be harder for older generations to comprehend, it is important to make this easier by having a standard design and navigation throughout the website. This can be done by having the same style, colour schemes, as well as button, symbols and icons in the same places. Of course, websites must be updated from time to time, but drastic changes should not be made so that older generations still remember and know how to use it. High contrast colour combinations should be used to make certain aspects easily visible such as black text against white background. For older generations with declining vision it is hard to distinguish highly patterned backgrounds, as well as colours that clash with each other such as red-green, blue-yellow and neon colours. (Home Care Pulse 2015; Morrell 2002; National Institute on Aging 2009.)

3 Consumer behaviour

Consumer behaviour is generally described as a process, as actions and decisions of how consumers satisfy their wants and needs. The process includes problem recognition, information search, evaluation, purchase and post-purchase evaluation, which is called *The Standard Behavioural Model* or the *Consumer Decision-Making Process* which can be seen in figure 3. below. The first step of the process is problem recognition. For example, someone realizing they want to go on a holiday. Step two is information search; where to go on holiday, what kind of holiday and who can make the holiday happen. The third step is evaluation; gathering all the information found and thinking what would be the best option by comparing companies, prices and other factors. Step four is purchase, which is making the decision to buy the product based on the wants, needs and preferences. Step four is post-purchase evaluation, where the consumer evaluates if the purchase was indeed successful and filled the wants and needs. (Marketing Teacher 2017; San & Yazdanifard 2014; Study.com 2017.)

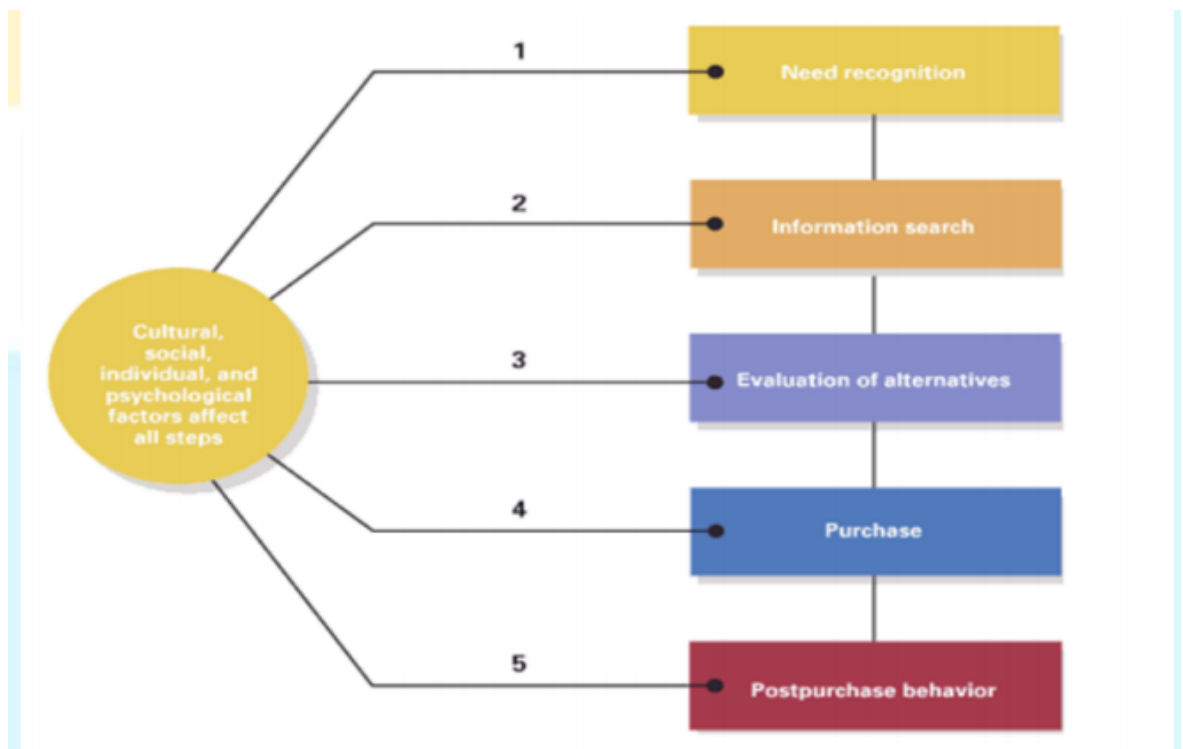


Figure 3. Consumer decision making process (San & Yazdanifard 2014)

People in same generations have similar characteristics as they usually have grown in similar circumstances. For example, Generation Z are good with technology as they have grown up with it while the Baby Boomers or generations before them are not as familiar. Characteristics differ because of the changing trends, world situation and the way people are raised in different eras. These characteristics consist of different things such as habits,

values, beliefs, communication and education. Therefore, people belonging in the same generation group might have similar consumer behaviour (The Center for Generational Kinetics 2016). There are however other factors besides age and generation that affect consumer behaviour. These are social factors (e.g. lifestyle, family), cultural factors (e.g. religion, social class, nationality), psychological factors (e.g. motivation, values, trust, loyalty and attitudes) and marketing factors. Marketing factors can be described as the 7 P's: Product (fits consumers wants and needs), Price (price vs. value), Place (availability), Promotion (Marketing), People (staff), Processes (how the service/product is delivered and received) and Physical Evidence (getting the specific service or product). (The Chartered Institute of Marketing 2015.)

According to Swarbrooke and Horner in *Consumer Behaviour in Tourism* (2011), consumer behaviour is a difficult subject to research as little empirical research has been conducted. However, when studying consumer behaviour, one should look specifically at psychological, personal and social factors. Especially studying previously mentioned factors such as decision making, motivation, attitudes, trust, loyalty and values. This is because the consumers values have a vast influence on their behaviour towards certain brands and product choices. Research can also be conducted on how consumers are influenced, how they feel, their behaviour and what are their determinants (limitations).

Consumer behaviour research and study is important for both the academic field as well as organizations. For organizations consumer behaviour research can effectively help target customers and provide knowledge on customer segmentation. Segmentation is when just a specific group is targeted rather than targeting everyone, thus ensuring that specific products and services go towards the right consumers. Consumer behaviour study also helps understand how consumers act, what motivates them and how their decisions affect the competition in the market. Knowing more about consumer behaviour improves marketing, products and services thus providing value and satisfaction for the consumer. As the consumer is satisfied and buys more products and services, the value of the company is enhanced and creates a good competitive edge for the organization in the market. More importantly consumer behaviour can also be a way to predict future trends and megatrends, which again benefits both the consumer and the supplier. (Benckendorff, Moscardo & Pendergast 2009; Swarbrooke & Horner 2011.)

3.1 Consumer behaviour of older generations

Older generations as consumers are used to making purchasing decisions from rational thinking. They are used to buying what they need and not much extra as they value rationing funds, as well as ethics and morals. As consumers, older generations should not be seen as “old people” because many have young lifestyles and attitudes, as health, exercise, wellness and energy are main goals in life for them. (A.T. Kearney, Inc 2013.)

Older generations depend on loyal products that have been tested and are true. As Cohen, Moital and Prayag (2014) state, loyalty is a deep commitment towards re-buying a product or a service, despite any factors that could cause switching behaviour. But for the consumer to give loyalty, there must be trust from the product, service or company. “Trust evolves through a dynamic process of exceeding consumer expectations and repeated satisfaction over time and therefore plays a central role in determining loyalty and future behaviour” (Cohen, Moital & Prayag 2014). That is why loyalty is highly important to keep with any consumer, especially with older generation consumers whom value it. Older generation consumers value recognition and gratification with statements like “We need you” or “You are important to our success” (Page & Williams 2011). They want to feel respected and feel like they are making an impact or are involved in a significant role. (A.T. Kearney, Inc 2013; Page & Williams 2011.)

As older generations may find change and new things hard to embrace, they like services and products that can fix their problems and needs with minor change which has an impact instantly. However older generations are willing and eager to learn new ways if it may save them time, make life easier and are good value for money. Like in website design and usability, older generations in consumer behaviour value ease of use, accessibility, simplicity and convenience. As most consumers and especially older generations, if a consumer feels that a product or service is of excellent value they tend to be less price sensitive and are ready to pay for more. (Holt & Morrell 2008; Page & Williams 2011.)

As consumers, older generations like communication to be formal and informative. They respond best through traditional means of communication and marketing like face-to-face, television, radio as well as printed media like newspapers, magazines and mail. Addressing older generations consumers as “Sir” or “Mam” gives a nice show of respect to this consumer group. They depend on word of mouth recommendations rather than reading reviews online. Marketing to older generation consumers should tell a story, a story of how this product or service would benefit them and be of excellent value. It should also be

trustworthy and should be a promise to deliver whatever is being marketed, as older consumers believe that the marketers word is a promise. Older generations can be dazzled by the amount of options, which is why they prefer information put into simple options and categories to help them decide, again using rational thinking to fit their wants and needs. They have time to listen to all the information and like to have their questions well answered. (Page & Williams 2011.)

3.2 Consumer behaviour of younger generations

Younger generations have grown up in a fast-changing world where technology, globalization and cultural diversity have thrived. They have grown up to know a world where almost anything is possible and everything is at their reach. As technology and the internet has always been there for younger generation consumers, they are used to a wide range of suppliers and products that are easily accessible also online. Because of the fast-changing pace of the world, the younger generations easily learn new things and adapt to it. (Page & Williams 2011.)

Younger generation consumers make decisions more based on emotional factors. They like to have help and approval from others to decide. When buying products younger generation consumers like to know of the products features and like to be explained why would it be necessary for them. As purchase decisions are made emotionally, they want the service or product to be more of an experience. Products that stimulate, challenge, encourage and have a greater purpose with no long commitment should be aimed for younger generation consumers. (Ordun 2015; Parment 2013.)

Marketing towards younger generation consumers should be unique, honest and a little humorous. Ads should contain visual images, music, colours and be creative. The marketers most valuable tool for younger generation consumers is technology and the internet. Once the attention has been captured it should also be maintained. This can be done by asking younger consumers to give feedback online or share their experiences through social media channels such as Facebook or Instagram. To keep the younger consumers interested, suppliers should keep products and services up to date and change them when needed. (LaMontagne 2016; Page & Williams 2011.)

3.3 Consumer behaviour differences between younger and older generations

Both the younger and older generation consumers enjoy shopping as more than just a need or requirement. Older generations see shopping also as a leisure activity or a social event. As consumers, younger generations tend to care more about what others think of

their purchases and look for peer connections and acceptance. Often the peers of younger generations have a vast influence on the buying behaviour of certain products or brands. Older generation consumers like the Baby Boomers have said the opinions of others do not have such an impact when getting older. (A.T. Kearney, Inc. 2013; Page & Williams 2011; Parment 2013.)

Younger generation consumers tend to buy more cheaper products than the older generations. The older generation consumers are more rational, and they tend to buy products of quality and timelessness. Younger consumers tend to buy more for less money, rather than older generation consumers who buy a quality shirt that fits several of their existing trousers rather than buying the whole outfit. However, both generation consumers are willing to pay a larger amount for their own reasons. Younger generation consumers might buy more prestige products because it has been recommended by a peer or is in fashion. Older generation consumers might buy a more expensive option if they feel it is excellent value for money. (Benckendorff & al. 2009; LaMontagne 2016; Parment 2013.)

As younger consumers are used to a lot of different options, they are not as brand loyal as older consumers. Older generation consumers have a habit of using one supplier or retailer, as they find this easy, familiar and convenient. Usually a purchase with older generation consumers start with finding a trusted supplier and then asking for advice on a product or service selection. Whereas younger generation consumers start the purchase process with selecting the product or service they want/need and finding the best supplier taking into consideration price or convenience. The product itself is more significant for younger generation consumers rather than who is the supplier. (Parment 2013; San & Yazdanifard 2014.)

Marketing towards younger and older consumers are quite different as the younger generation use technology and internet daily and the older generation use more of the traditional ways. Because of the significance of peers with the younger generation word-of-mouth channels should also be included with the online and offline marketing and targeting. Older consumers can be better targeted through mail, posters, telephone, or face-to-face, but also through the internet and email. (Page & Williams 2011.)

4 Oy Aurinkomatkat - Suntours Ltd Ab

The target of this thesis and research is tour operator Oy Aurinkomatkat – Suntours Ltd Ab. A tour operator specializes in travel and tour packages, for example selling a whole package that includes food, accommodation, transportation, guide and other ancillary services (Cambridge Dictionary 2017). Aurinkomatkat tour operator was founded in November 1963 and is the only fully Finnish tour operator. Aurinkomatkat has a daughter company located in Tallinn, Estonia under the name Aurinko Estonia Oü. Aurinkomatkat vision is roughly translated as follows: “We will raise package tours into a whole new level by exciting our customers and partners to make every single Suntour a unique experience”. (Aurinkomatkat 2017.)

Aurinkomatkat specializes in package tours, which offer the flight, hotel and guide services at the destination. One piece of carry-on luggage and one piece of checked luggage per person is included, as well as meals on the long-haul flights. Other ancillary services are available to add to the package holidays for example bus transportation from the airport to the hotel and back, different tours or the “All inclusive” hotel option where food and beverages are included in the price. Aurinkomatkat package holidays are divided into beach holidays, city holidays, combination holidays and group holidays. For example, London is a city holiday and Tenerife a beach holiday. Combination holidays have two destinations in one, for example in Thailand seeing both Bangkok and Krabi, or having an island-hopping trip in Greece. Group holidays can also be arranged with a group with at least 20 adults travelling together. Aurinkomatkat also offer other services such as “flight + hotel” –packages and only flight services. The “flight + hotel” -service only contains the flight transportation and the hotel booking, so it does not include guide services, flight luggage or meals or possible destination taxes (hotel tax). When booking only flights through Aurinkomatkat it includes the flights, taxes and service fees. (Aurinkomatkat 2017.)

Aurinkomatkat turnover in 2015 was 172 million euros, which around 90% were tour packages and 10% “flight + hotel” -services. In 2015 Finland had approximately 750 000 tour packages, where the share of Aurinkomatkat tour packages was 25.7%. In 2015 Aurinkomatkat had nearly 200 000 customers, which were served by the 200 personnel with 90 of them positioned outside of Finland. Aurinkomatkat clientele in 2015 was formed by couples (35% of bookings, 28% of customers), seniors (23% of bookings, 17% of customers), families (19% of bookings, 36% of customers), friends (14% of bookings, 16% of customers) and singles (9% of bookings, 3% of customers). (Aurinkomatkat 2017; Uhlbäck 2016.)

Aurinkomatkat products and services are built and tailor-made for their Finnish clientele and represent a wide product selection. Important for the Finnish clientele is that the personnel consist of Finnish speaking employees in Finland as well as abroad, so the customers can get service in their native language 24/7. (Aurinkomatkat 2017.)

Aurinkomatkat considers some of the key trends in tourism to be “All in –experiences”, “With the locals”, “Well-being holidays”, “New learning”, “Smarter travelling”, “Kids decide”, “Affordable luxury”, “Luxury is own peace”, “Good conscious travelling”, and “Consumers define the products” (Aurinkomatkat 2017). These trends can thus be seen in Aurinkomatka’s own products and themes. Aurinkomatkat themes roughly translated from Finnish are: “Energy from the sun” (“Auringosta voimaa”), “Well-being” (“Hyvään Oloon”), “Like the locals” (“Paikalliseen tapaan”), Best for families (“Parasta perheelle”), “More at one time” (“Kerralla enemmän”) and “For the adult taste” (“Aikuiseen makuun”) (Aurinkomatkat 2017). The objective is to have something to offer for all their different customer groups. (Aurinkomatkat 2017.)

4.1 Finnair Oyj

Aurinkomatkat belongs to the Finnair Corporation, which is a Finnish airline company founded in November 1923. Finnair’s long-haul routes connect for example Asia, North America and Northern Europe. Because of Helsinki’s positioning Finnair creates good “Via Helsinki” routes for many travellers. “Via Helsinki” means that because travellers decide to travel through Helsinki-Vantaa Airport to their destination, they get an efficient transfer in a well-functioning airport with various shops and facilities, as well as a faster and shorter route which leads to more time at the final destination. (Finnair 2017.)

Because of the good connections with Finnair’s long- and short-haul flights, Aurinkomatkat can offer a diverse selection of destinations for their customers. Below in figure 1. and 2. can be seen the main country destinations during the summer and winter seasons. The numbers represent how many destinations there are in a country. During the summer Greece, Spain and Italy have the most destinations to offer and during the winter season Thailand and the Canary Islands. With Finnair’s modern fleet, straight connections and professional crew the flight itself becomes a valuable part of the product and customer experience. (Aurinkomatkat 2017; Finnair 2017.)

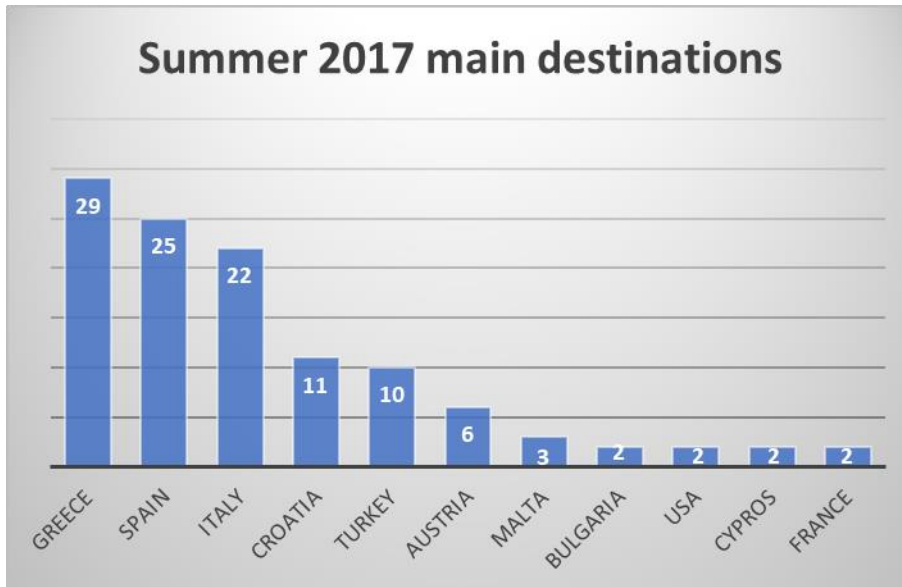


Figure 1. Summer 2017 main destinations (Aurinkomatkat 2017)



Figure 2. Winter 2017 main destinations (Aurinkomatkat 2017)

4.2 Aurinkomatkat sales channels and development

Aurinkomatkat had a service office located in Helsinki, Finland that was closed in December 2016. The travel agents at the office helped customers who had an issue that couldn't been dealt with online, or who are unsure of the online services. Now Aurinkomatkat only has a sales and customer service office located in Vantaa, Finland which serves customers over the phone and online. The service office was closed due to the higher number of reservations coming from their online and phone services. (Aurinkomatkat 2017.)

Aurinkomatkat online services include their website, online reservation system, chat, e-mail and social media (Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, Blog and YouTube). With the online services, the customers can book the packages and the additional services by themselves. Some services for example car reservations can only be booked online. The chat service is beneficial for customers that want a quicker answer than by phone or email. Customers also have access to their “Own Holiday” –account on Aurinkomatkat website, where they can for example view their reservations and book additional services such as flight seating, meals and other. During a holiday, customers have access to a “Sun-line”, which is a service where the Finnish guides are accessible 24/7 by social media (Facebook and Twitter) as well as by phone (including WhatsApp). (Aurinkomatkat 2017.)

Aurinkomatkat development concentrates on digital and online services, where Aurinkomatkat will strengthen the online customer service by making the online reservation system even more fluent. Aurinkomatkat are continuously doing changes to the website such as text modifications as well as adding and updating pictures. They are planning to make new webpages, as well as reform their online customer service and online selling channels. The reason why Aurinkomatkat concentrates more on growing the online services is simply because of the expenses, as a large group of people doing reservations in the office and over the phone is big expense. The objective is to get 80% of the reservations to come via online reservations by 2017. Already the growth of online reservations has grown systematically between 2010 and 2016 by 60%, almost 80%. (Aurinkomatkat 2017; Uhlbäck 2016.)

Aurinkomatkat will also strengthen the customer participation in the development. An addition to the website is a customer feedback channel, where customers can themselves go comment and rate the hotels and destinations for all to see on Aurinkomatka’s website. New destinations, hotels and additional services are added to the product selection and the flight experience with Finnair is also developed. Ease of use, freedom of choice, diversity, high quality, price competitiveness, as well as Finnish customer service are the elements were Aurinkomatkat will keep developing their customer experience on. (Aurinkomatkat 2017, Uhlbäck, 2016.)

5 Why do Aurinkomatkat customers visit the service office and how do they feel about the online services?

The research was made of Aurinkomatkat customers who visited the service office and it was conducted while the office was still open in 2016. The objective of the research was to discover the reason for visiting the service office, as well as to discover how many of them had used Aurinkomatkat online services and what they thought of them and possible found difficult. As the service office is no longer in use, the target of this thesis is to get development ideas on how to make the online services more user-friendly to those who used to visit and prefer the office for services. This chapter includes a description of the chosen research methods, working methods, results and the summary.

5.1 Research methods

The research was conducted on a qualitative basis. Qualitative research is defined by Saldana, Leavy and Beretvas (2014) as a study of natural social life. Qualitative research focuses more on descriptive and non-numerical data with a lower number of participants, rather than quantitative data which uses numerical data from a larger focus group. As qualitative research has a more descriptive approach it concentrates on analysing for example the experience of participants in their own words and behaviour. Qualitative research answers to questions such as why, how and what. The data for qualitative research can be gathered in several ways as it has different research methods. The data can be either from textual materials such as transcripts, notes or other documents, as well as visual materials such as videos or recordings. The data can be collected for example in interviews, open-ended surveys, focus groups or by observation. (Crossman 2017; Haaga-Helia 2016; Saldana, Leavy & Beretvas 2014; Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault 2015.)

In my thesis I used case study research and mixed methods research. The oxford dictionary (2017) defines a case study as research conducted on a specific person, group or situation over a period of time. The research is thus conducted in a specified environment of a chosen focus group. Even though there might be fewer participants in a case study Saldana, Leavy and Beretvas (2014) state that there are still diverse results as the participants have different experiences and perspectives. The mixed methods research combines both the qualitative and quantitative method. In a questionnaire the mixed method research can be seen for example with having a question to rate the satisfactory level of something from one to four (1-4), but also having in-depth open questions to get a better understanding of the reasons. In my questionnaire I used the Likert Scale in a couple of

my questions as a mixed research method. A Likert Scale is defined in the Business Dictionary (2017) as “A method of ascribing quantitative value to qualitative data, to make it amenable to statistical analysis. A numerical value is assigned to each potential choice and a mean figure for all the responses is computed at the end of the evaluation or survey”. Instead of using the Likert Scale with 1-5 rating, I chose to have 1-4 rating so that there would not be no middle option to choose from, in other words not to have a neutral choice. (Business Dictionary, 2017; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner 2007; Saldana & al. 2014.)

The reason I chose a qualitative research method for my thesis was because it fit better to my objectives. I wanted a more comprehensive analysis of the reasons why Aurinkomatkat customers visited the service office and understand the reasons behind it. As I wanted open answers to my some of my questions I chose to interview a smaller group of people. This way the answers would be more personal and in-depth so they could explain their experiences and reasons freely in their own words. Therefore, I chose a case study for my research because it focuses on a specific group in a specified environment over a given period. The reason for choosing to use the mixed method research was to get quantitative results as a basis and then get a better understanding of them with the qualitative results. I also chose to use quantitative data to better present the findings with figures and charts for example in showing the rating of Aurinkomatkat website.

5.2 Working methods

I was first interested in researching many things related to the topic. The topics I wanted to research as well were customer service satisfaction, future of travel agencies and how much do customers use technology and online services when planning a trip. These issues were related to the technology and online part of travel agencies, but would have been too broad for one research. Thus, it was better to have a narrower topic to get a deeper and detailed research on the main problem/question; why do customers go to the service office to use the services rather than using them online?

The first thing I did was contact a couple of tour operators in Helsinki by going to their service office and asking about the possibility to do a thesis with their clientele. This lead me to do my thesis with Aurinkomatkat. I then started my research by finding out about Aurinkomatkat as a company and considering especially their online services. I analysed how the webpages and online services felt and what was their usability and functionality. I benchmarked Aurinkomatkat website and online services with TUI and Tjäreborg for comparison. I also got a lot of information from Aurinkomatkat customer service manager. She

provided for example, a powerpoint presentation for me about Aurinkomatkat clientele, their products and services as well as figures and charts on their turnover numbers and development areas. The information used in the theory part of Aurinkomatkat was thus used from their own website, as well as through the powerpoint presentation and emails/interviews I had with the customer service manager. As online services and webpages were a big part of my thesis I researched also what good websites were like and what were the most important quality components. I knew from my research of Aurinkomatkat that the clientele of the service office were older people, so I did research on consumer behaviour of older generations and older generation website design.

To prepare the questionnaire and interview of the research, I observed Aurinkomatkat clientele for a day in a travel fair as well as in their customer service office. I used participant observation as a research method which is defined by Musante and DeWalt (2010) as: “a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture”. In the office the observation happened for example by observing the customer service situations and listening to the reasons people visited the office, what were their problems as well as discussing and talking to the customers about the topic.

After having a base for my research with theory and observation I did a questionnaire with fifteen (15) questions, with a semi-structured interview. This meaning the interview had both written down structured questions to be asked, but also had open-ended questions and open comment possibility to get a more expanded and detailed answer (Skills you need, 2017). I decided to record the answers and the whole interview rather than having the participants write them down. The interviews were recorded with my mobile phone and the permission was asked before recording. Some of the questions had readymade choices which were there as an example on what the question was after. For example, asking why the customers had visited the service office, there were answer options such as: Holiday reservation, check-in, paying for holiday and so on. I had one copy of the questionnaire printed out as an aid in the interviews.

After preparing the interview questions I sent them for review to my thesis supervisor as well as my contact at Aurinkomatkat. After receiving feedback from both parties, I made some changes to the questionnaire. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1. in Finnish and Appendix 2. in English. I went to do a test interview at the service office and found out that the interview went rather quickly (5 minutes). This meaning I had to do several interviews to get better results, which meant I would do thirty (30) interviews. The

thirty interviews were conducted at the Aurinkomatkat service office in Helsinki throughout 5 days. They were conducted at different days and times to get answers from a wider range of different customers. Aurinkomatkat service office was open from Monday to Friday at 9 am. to 6 pm. and Saturday at 10 am. to 4 pm. On Tuesday I interviewed people from 9-12 am., Wednesday from 12-1 pm., Thursday from 2-4 pm., Friday from 4-6 pm. and Saturday from 11 am. to 2 pm. Before the interviews I stated that I was a student in Haaga-Helia conducting my thesis and that the answers would be anonymous so that I would get more truthful answers.

After I had done all the interviews I did a transcript of them on my computer in Microsoft Word. I wrote down everything from word to word so that nothing could be missed. When all the interviews were in written format I printed them out and started to read and analyse them thoroughly by doing notes and highlighting the most prominent issues and results. After analysing the transcribed interviews, I put them systematically into Microsoft Excel so that I could better see the bigger picture and compare the interviews. With excel I could calculate average numbers, percentiles as well as other numerical data which helped me to get a clearer visual of the results. This is where the mixed method research could be seen well, as I could make charts with the numerical data but also compare and analyse the open-ended questions. Again, to make it even clearer, I made a table of the most important results including averages and written answers.

5.3 Results

The research was conducted with thirty (30) interviews which lasted from 2 minutes 55 seconds to 15 minutes 46 seconds, with an average of 6 minutes 36 seconds per interview. The interview participants were 73% female (22 participants) and 27% male (8 participants). Most of the participants were from the older generation, as the average age of the participants was 51-60 years old. Most of the participants belonged to the 70+ age group as seen below in Figure 3. Age of participants.

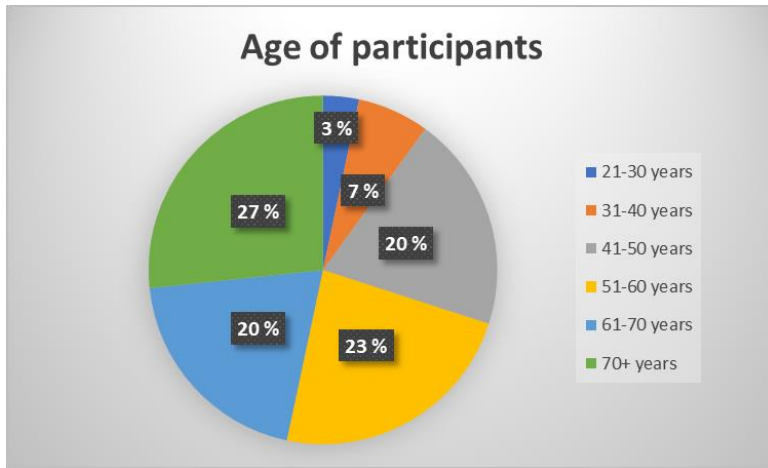


Figure 3. Age of participants

The participants travelled from 1 to 6 times per year with an average of 2,5 holidays per year. Of these holidays an average of half was travelled with Aurinkomatkat. Sixteen (16) out of thirty (30) of the participants always travelled with Aurinkomatkat.

5.3.1 Reason for visiting the service office

There was a total of five (5) reasons for visiting the service office. The reasons were: holiday planning 26,7% (8/30 participants), reserving/buying a holiday 26,7% (8/30 participants), paying for the holiday 26,7% (8/30 participants), editing/making changes to the holiday 13,3% (4/30 participants) and check-in to flight 6,7% (2/30 participants).

When the participants were asked why they preferred the service office rather than the online services there were seven (7) different answers. The most common answer, 16/30 participants, was that they did not know how to use the online services or that they were unsure of themselves in using them. Four out of thirty (4/30) participants stated that they could not take care of their issue online, thus had to visit the service office. The second most common answer, 14/30 participants, was that they wanted personal service, having someone to talk to face to face. Eight out of thirty (8/30) participants found it easier to come to the service office. Four out of thirty (4/30) of the participants stated that they could get more information from the service office rather than themselves searching for it in the online services. Some of the participants who preferred personal service did not use Aurinkomatkat online services at all (8/30) and two out of the thirty (2/30) did not trust the internet in reserving and paying for a holiday.

5.3.2 Aurinkomatkat online services

Eight out of the thirty (8/30) participants had not used any of Aurinkomatkat online services. Aurinkomatkat online services are their website, online reservation system, chat and email. Out of those eight (8) participants who had not used any of the online services, two (2) however had used other company's online services for example, online banking services or the online services of The Social Insurance Institution of Finland (KELA). Both participants who used other company's online services but not Aurinkomatkat online services, stated that they felt Aurinkomatkat webpages were too difficult when making a holiday decision, too much information to choose from.

The most used online service of Aurinkomatkat was their website, as twenty out of thirty (20/30) participants had used them. Email was the second most used online service with fourteen out of thirty (14/30) participants who had used it. Twelve out of thirty (12/30) participants had used the online reservation system and only four out of thirty (4/30) participants had used the chat service. When asked to rate the online services into an order of importance the results were as following: 1. Website 2. Online reservation system 3. Email 4. Chat. When choosing the most important online service, 73% of the participants stated that Aurinkomatkat website was the most important online service. For the second most important online service, 67% of the participants chose the online reservation system. Email was the third in the order of importance by 62% and the least important online service was the chat with 83% choosing it as the last one. As seen in the figure below (Figure 4. Aurinkomatkat online services' order of importance), the chat service which was chosen as the least important online service (ranking number 4.) was not chosen at all to be the most important or second important online service.

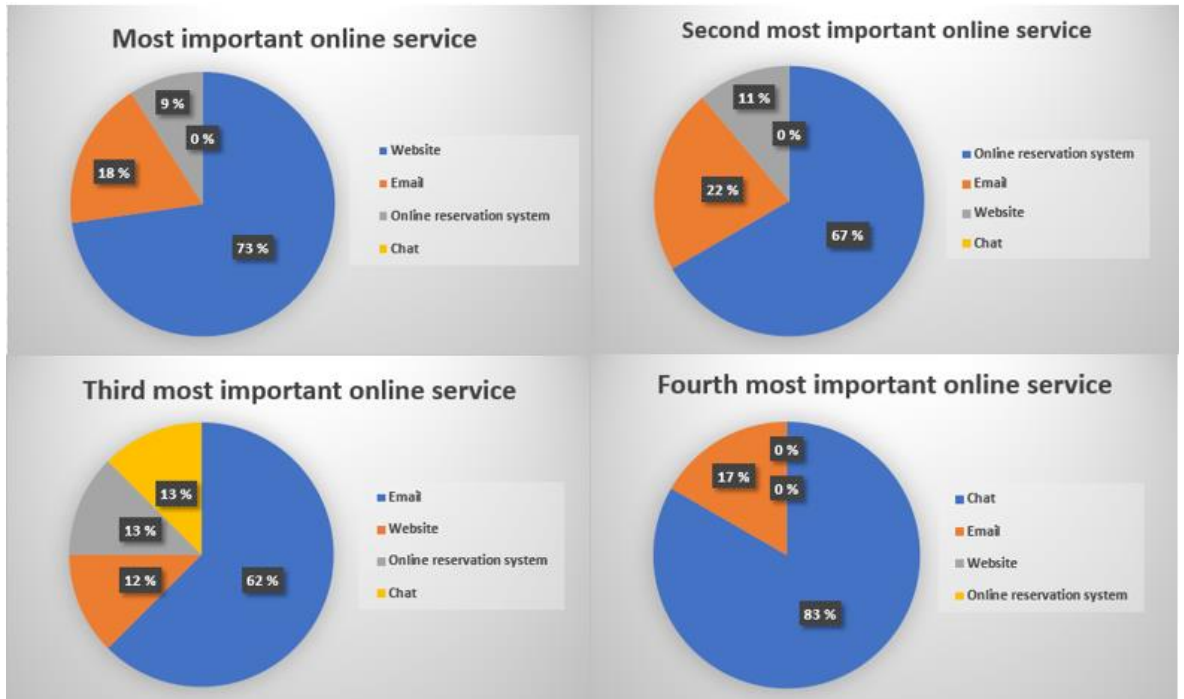


Figure 4. Aurinkomatkat online services' order of importance

The participants who had used Aurinkomatkat website were asked to rate the ease of use, clearness, attractiveness, functionality, information and user experience of the website. The rating was done with the Likert Scale with a 1-4 rating option, 1 being very bad and 4 being very good. The website got a good rating with the average of 3,2 from all the rated aspects. As seen below in Figure 6. Aurinkomatkat website rating, functionality got the best score whereas attractiveness and the user experience got the lowest scores. However, all the rated aspects had very similar scores with a biggest difference of only 0,3.



Figure 5. Aurinkomatkat website rating

Aurinkomatkat online reservation system rating was also done in the same way as the website rating, with the Likert Scale from 1-4. The aspects that were rated were ease of use, clearness, functionality, trustworthiness (especially the online payment) and user experience. Of all the aspects together, the online reservation system got an average rating of 3,7. The highest scores of 3,8 were given to clearness and trustworthiness and the lowest score of 3,3 was given to the user experience as seen below in Figure 6. Aurinkomatkat online reservation system rating. The biggest difference between scores was 0,5.

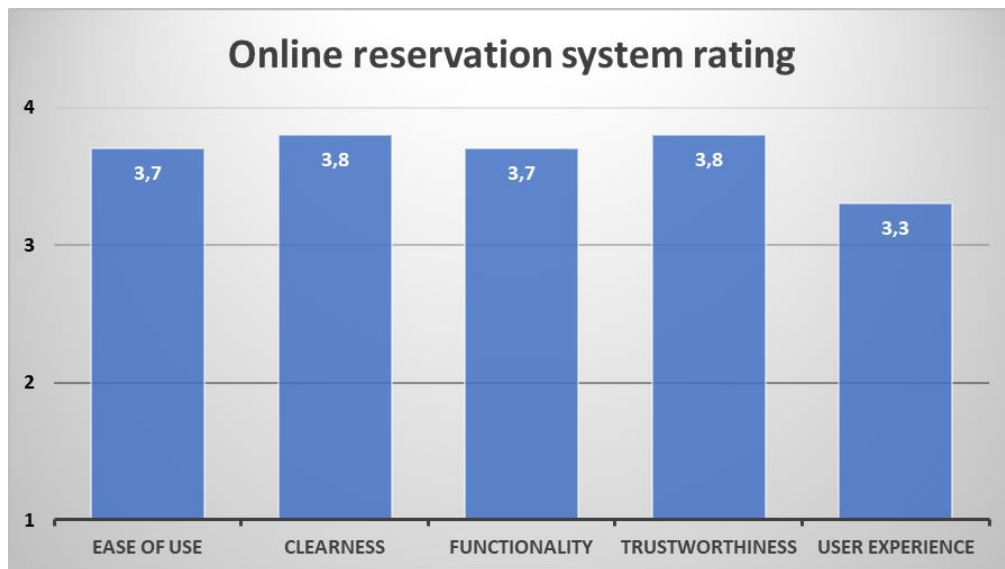


Figure 6. Aurinkomatkat online reservation system rating

When asked what was hard or difficult when using the online services, the following issues were stated by the participants:

- Do not know how to use the online services
- Do not trust the internet payment system
- Do not know where to get help/assistance if needed on webpage
- Too many options, hard to compare prices
- Hard to compare options, hard to understand the big picture
- Too many clicks with mouse to get to wanted place/result
- Information hard to find, not enough information
- Text too small
- Slow system

One of the solutions and improvement ideas that were given of Aurinkomatkat online services were that there should be instructions and guidance on how the website works and how to use the online reservation system. The webpages should be more simple and clearer so that the important things can be found easier. Also, the webpages should have bigger text and should be more attractive. The website should induce people to go on a holiday. Aurinkomatkat should also make it easier to make changes to the reservation

through online services such as the online reservation system. As one of the problems as stated earlier was a slow system, a solution would be to have a quicker one.

Even though some participants found the online services hard or difficult, others commented them as easy to use, clean and informative. Finnish service was very much appreciated, and the participants praised the customer service and stated that the staff always helps when needed. Twenty out of thirty (20/30) participants which is 67%, would rather make the reservation online in the future. However, the 33% (10/30 participants) who would rather make the reservation in the service office, hope that everything does not go to the internet. These participants also miss the paper catalogue, as not everyone has a computer to go see the destination selection. They hope that Aurinkomatkat could keep and develop their phone services as well, as the waiting period on the phone is too long at times and they would rather call in a problematic situation than use the online services.

5.4 Summary

As previously mentioned, the objective of the research was to discover why customers visited Aurinkomatkat service office, as well as to discover how many of them had used the online services and what they thought of them and possible found difficult. The study was conducted as a qualitative case study and mixed method research. The research was made with primarily interviews as a method, but also with a small amount of observation.

The study had thirty (30) participants of whom twenty-two (22) were female and eight (8) men. The average length of an interview was 6 minutes and 36 seconds. The average amount of holidays per year was 2,5 and an average of half of them was with Aurinkomatkat. The reasons for visiting the service office was to plan a holiday (26,7%), reserve or buy a holiday (26,7%), pay for the booked holiday (26,7%), make changes or edit the booked holiday (13,3%) or check-in to the flight (6,7%). The motives behind coming to the service office rather than using the online services were that the participants felt it was easier, they did not know how to use the online services, were unsure of themselves, they wanted personal service, they could not take care of the issue online, they felt they could get more information from the service office, they do not trust the internet or do not use online services at all.

Twenty-two out of thirty (22/30) participants had used Aurinkomatkat online services. Of the eight (8) participants who had not used Aurinkomatkat online services, two (2) had used other company's online services and six (6) do not use any online services at all. Twenty out of thirty (20/30) had used Aurinkomatkat website, fourteen out of thirty (14/30)

had used the email, twelve out of thirty (12/30) had used the online reservation system and four out of thirty (4/30) had used the chat service. The average order of importance was: 1. Website 2. Online reservation system 3. Email 4. Chat.

The website was rated with a modified Likert scale from 1-4, 1=Very bad and 4=Very good. The results are shown below in Table 1. Website rating.

Table 1. Website rating

Ease of use	3,3
Clearness	3,2
Attractiveness	3,1
Functionality	3,4
Informative	3,2
User experience	3,1

The online reservation system was rated similarly as the website, but with some differences in the aspects. The online reservation system average of all aspects was 3,7, which was better than the website average rating which was 3,2. The rating can be seen below in Table 2. Online reservation system rating.

Table 2. Online reservation system rating

Ease of use	3,7
Clearness	3,8
Functionality	3,7
Trustworthiness	3,8
User experience	3,3

The issues that were considered hard or difficult in Aurinkomatkat online services were that the participants did not know how to use them, as well as did not know where to get help and assistance when needed. The options on the website for the participants were hard to compare and understand, for example when comparing prices. It also took too many clicks with a mouse to get to a desired result or information and the information was hard to find or there was not enough. The participants also stated that the text was too small, and the system seemed slow. Some of the participants did not trust the internet payment system.

As a solution and improvements to these issues the participants stated that there should be instructions and guidance on how to use the website and online reservation system. The online services should be made more simple and clearer so that this customer segment who do not know how to use them properly could find the important things easier. The website should have bigger text, should work faster and the website should be more attractive, so that the visitor should feel a desire to book a holiday. Aurinkomatkat should also improve the online reservation system so that it is easier to make changes to the reservation.

Ten out of the thirty (10/30) participants would still want to use the office for services. This segment still misses the paper catalogue and appreciate the phone services which they would rather use over the online services. Some participants stated that as not everyone has an internet possibility, the phone service should not have such a long waiting period. The Finnish customer service was greatly appreciated and the fact that the staff has been there to help in different situations. The participants who appreciate the online services, said that the webpages are easy to use, clean and informative which is just what they need in searching for a holiday.

6 Discussion

This chapter will analyse the results even further, also considering the theory part of the thesis. When analysing the results, I will also consider the credibility and reliability of the research. After the further analysis of the results this chapter will include conclusions and suggestions for Aurinkomatkat on their online services, as well as suggestions on future research. The chapter will end in the evaluation of the thesis process and evaluation of my own learning.

6.1 Analysing the results

The interview was done in Finnish and the interview questionnaire was also in Finnish as can be seen in Appendix 1. Haastattelu kysymykset. As the results were translated into English, it could be that the validity of the results was compromised in the translation. However, as I am fluent in both languages I believe the most prominent issues and the answers were the same. The translated interview questionnaire can be seen in Appendix 2. Interview questions.

The first question of the interview was to specify gender. There were more women participants (73%) in the study which could mean that the validity of the results could be questioned as the answers are more of a women's point of view. However, the idea was not to analyse what a certain gender had said, but to analyse the results as a whole. Considering the validity of the age, it was good to get answers from all the different age groups from 21 to 70+. Most of the participants belonged to the 70+ age group and the average age group was 51-60, so belonging to the older generations. It was already known beforehand by Aurinkomatkat that most of their clientele belonged to the older generation and the study now proved it further. When analysing the results to the average age of the participants, a conclusion can be made that age is a factor affecting the results. As previously stated, all generations have different behaviour and motivation that affect what they do and how they act.

Consumer behaviour of older generations could be seen well in the results. In my theory I wrote about consumer behaviour and how older generations prefer the traditional means of customer service and marketing, such as face-to-face communication and word-of-mouth recommendations. In the results, one of the main motives for coming to the service office was the participants wanted personal service. All the reasons for visiting the service office could have all been done online (planning, reserving, paying, editing and check-in), but the participants trusted they would get more and better information from the service

office in person. Also, a characteristic of older generations consumer behaviour was brand loyalty and loyalty towards a trusted and true product. Over half of the participants (53%) were loyal to Aurinkomatkat by always travelling with them. It would be interesting to know if these participants and customers continued using Aurinkomatkat as their tour operator by phone and through online services now that the customer service office is no longer open.

Considering older generations, the theory about website usability and design had similarities with the results. In chapter 2.3 *Usability and website design for older generations*, I wrote that the Nielsen Norman Group (2013) had done a study about older generation online usage. The Nielsen Norman Group (2013) had found that older generations had trouble using online services more than younger generations and difficulties completing different tasks. This could be seen in the results of my study as the most common answer in visiting the service office was that the participants did not know how to use the online services or that they were unsure of themselves. The age of the participants who had not used any online services all belonged to the last two age groups being 61-70+ years old.

In addition to the participants not knowing how to use the online services, they felt it was easier and more informative to visit the service office. This brought up the question of is Aurinkomatkat website user-friendly enough and how is the usability and functionality? Thus, I analysed more closely the results on the website and online reservation system rating as well as the results on what the participants found difficult in the online services. The rating for the website and online reservation system was above average as stated in the results rating 3,2 and 3,7 from a scale of 1-4. In both the website and online reservation system rating, the user experience got the lowest score. The user experience is the overall experience a user gets from using a certain product or in this case a website. In the website rating, attractiveness got a lower score as well. Functionality was however given a higher score. Analysing this, the participants found the usability and design a little bit harder to comprehend than the functionality.

Even though the various aspects in the website and online reservation system were not rated badly, the participants still found some issues difficult such as finding information, option comparison, text being too small, slow system and not knowing where to get assistance. If the issue is poor usability and design in Aurinkomatkat website, it is a problem. As stated in chapter 2.1 *Usability*, poor usability can lead to users feeling bad and frustrated and leaving the site to go to someone else's website to buy a product or service. However, in my opinion and analysis of the website I believe the bigger problem to be that the participants did not know how to utilise all the aspects of the website.

As stated in my theory, older generations are eager to learn new ways if it can save time, money and make life a little bit easier. This is possibly why one of the development ideas the participants said was to have some sort of instructions on how to use the online services, so that they could learn how to use them properly. The number of older generation online users is growing all the time. This can also be seen in my research in the results where twenty out of thirty (20/30) of the participants stated they would like to do future reservations through online services. Twenty-two out of thirty (22/30) participants were already familiar with at least one of the online services, which is a good basis to become familiar with more of them. However, there are exceptions in every case like in this one where eight out of thirty (8/30) had not used online services and wished that everything would not go online. In my opinion if people are against online services and would rather use printed material such as paper catalogues, it is also harder to teach them and make them use the online services. Fortunately, there is still the phone service for this kind of customer segment.

6.2 Conclusions and suggestions for development

The conclusion of the results is that as most of the customers who visited the service office were from the older generations, it affected the reasons why they preferred the service office rather than the online services. The reason why they came to the office to do their reservations was because they wanted personal service and they did not know how to use the online services properly so that they could get all the information they needed and wanted. Many of the participants however had used the online services, but were unsure of themselves. Even though the chat was the least used and preferred online service, well utilised it could be very beneficial for most of the participants and users. Even though the website and online reservation system got good ratings, there are always issues which can be made better and addressed such as better attractiveness, clearness, bigger text, quicker system and better instructions. All in all, Aurinkomatkat has good and functioning online services that give good customer service.

From this thesis, further research could be made on how the customers who used to visit the service office have adjusted and oriented to the new way of using Aurinkomatkat services. For example, researching how many of them chose to start using the online service instead, or how many of them transferred to using the phone services. Also studying the feelings and customer satisfaction on how they felt about the transition. For a more quantitative research, there could be a study on how much did the online service usage grow

and what have been the benefits from closing the service office and developing the services more online.

To developing the online services, I came up with three suggestions:

1. Instructions and guidance on how to use the online services
2. More information and marketing of the chat service
3. Minor changes to website, to make it more user-friendly for older generation consumers and the customers who used to visit the service office

6.2.1 Instructions and guidance on how to use online services

It was clear from the research and results that it would be highly beneficial to have instructions, guidelines or guidance on how to use Aurinkomatkat online services. The reason why is because most of the participants who visited the service office and possibly other users who are not as familiar in online services do not know how to use them or are unsure of themselves. They can't make the most out of all the valuable services online.

The results from the research were that the participants found the website had too many options, comparison was hard, and information was hard to find. Thus, the instructions could specifically focus on how to find information, as well as how to compare results and options. Aurinkomatkat already have a good filtering system for holiday searching as seen below in figure 7. The search can be modified to wanted needs such as star rating, hotel services and other travel related preferences. The instructions could include how to use this filtering system, so that the users get options that only fit their preferences thus decreasing the amount of options and making comparison easier. To make information easier to find, the instructions could include how to use the search, where to find the search field, where to find the frequently asked questions (FAQ) page and how to navigate throughout the site.

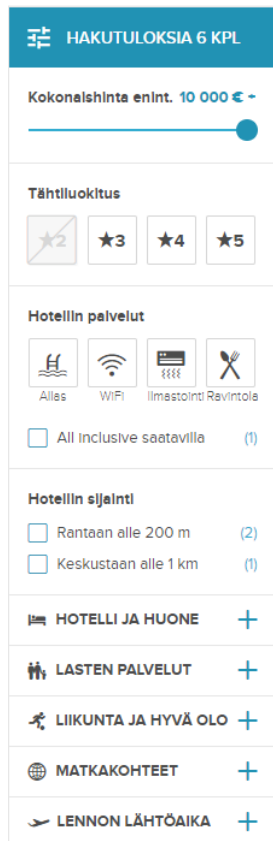


Figure 7. Aurinkomatkat search engine filtering system (Aurinkomatkat 2017)

The other part of having the instructions made is having them available for the users. As most of the users who would need instructions might be from the older generations the instructions could be sent through traditional means of media, but also with online media. As Aurinkomatkat uses emails to send marketing messages, users could be reached by email. The instructions could be directly emailed, or the email could present the possibility of ordering instructions to your email or post. This could be an effective way of marketing the new learning possibility and help. Another place where the instructions could be found would be directly on the site. This could be done by displaying visibly a link to the instructions on the front page. The link would then lead to a webpage where you could find different guides and information on how to use for example the holiday search or the online reservation system.

6.2.2 Chat service

As a second suggestion based on the analysis of the thesis I chose to have the chat service more marketed so that users could have more information and knowledge of using it. In the results the participants stated that they did not know how to use the online services, information was hard to find, they did not know where to get assistance from when needed, they wanted instructions or guidance on how to use the online services and

wanted personal service. The reason why I brought specifically these answers up was because I feel the chat service could help all of them. The chat was the least used online service with only four out of thirty (4/30) participants had used it. 83% of the participants also rated it the least important online service. However, I believe the bigger issue to be that as many have not used it they don't know the real benefits of it. The chat service is a quick way to get help right there on the site and can be opened from the top where it says, "Open the Sunchat". After you click the button a small window pops up in the bottom right hand side that instructs how to start the chat. The view from the homepage can be seen in Figure 8. Aurinkomatkat online chat.

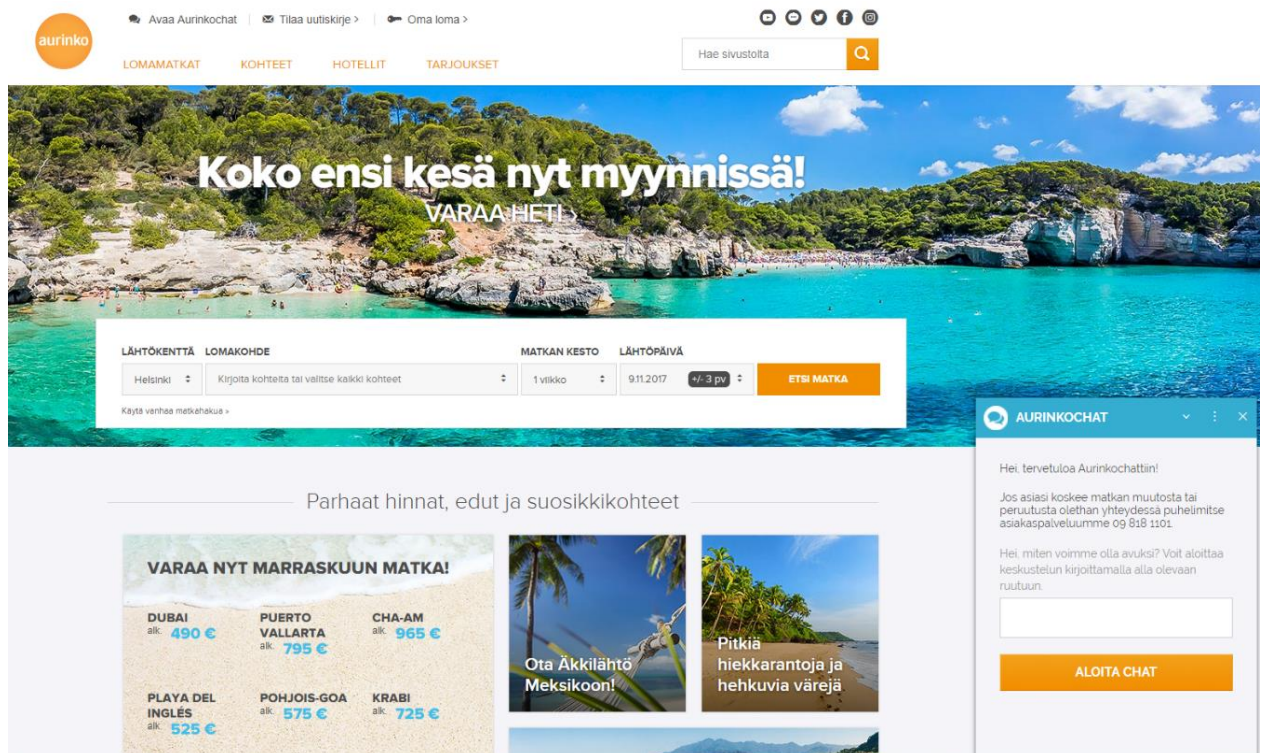


Figure 8. Aurinkomatkat online chat (Aurinkomatkat 2017)

The chat is a faster way to get help than for example calling, as there may be a long waiting time in the phone service. If the users are on the Aurinkomatkat website and can't find what they are looking for, or don't know how to search for a certain holiday destination they can open the chat and ask the questions directly from the website. This is a solution to the problem when the participants stated that they did not know where to get help from. The chat service can also be in a way an online means to give personal service. It is not a face to face personal service solution, but a way nonetheless to be in contact with a customer service agent.

6.2.3 Improvements to the website

As a third development idea from the basis of the research I chose improvement of the website. Aurinkomatkat website and online reservation system got good ratings from the participants, but in the world of technology there is always something to improve. From the participants answers I gathered some ideas that could be implemented on the website which are not a possibility now.

One of the issues that rose from the results was that information was hard to find. Aurinkomatkat already have a search field in their website in the top left side, but I found some issues that could arise in some situations. As mentioned in my theory chapter 2.2 *Design*, when a search is made and there are no results the system should make suggestions based on the search. When searching for example Spain as a holiday destination the search field gives lots of options on the search on Spain. However, if you misspell the word Spain the system only says "0 results" and does not give any suggestions. This can be a problem especially for older generation users, as using a keyboard might be harder to use. Misspelling is not just a problem for older generations users, but can happen to anyone. The user might not even notice they have misspelled the word and think there is not information to be found on the searched item.

Another issue for specifically older generation users that rose from the results was to have bigger text on the website. In chapter 2.3 *Usability and website design for older generations* was written that the text on a website should be big enough to read clearly or there should be an option to make it bigger. However, even though there is a possibility to enlarge text many users do not know about this option. This should be added to Aurinkomatkat website as well and marked somewhere clearly that a user can find the option. This option could also be in the new previously mentioned instructions of using the website.

In the rating of Aurinkomatkat website the participants gave attractiveness one of the lowest ratings. However, they could not specify any exact reasons why, only stating that the website did not give an impression that a holiday must be booked. As a travel website should empower a user to book a holiday, Aurinkomatkat could make the attractiveness of the website better. Other suggestions for the website were to make the system faster, as well as keep the website simple and clear.

6.3 Evaluation of the thesis process

From writing the thesis I learned how to make a research and what different research methods there are. I especially enjoyed writing the results and analysing them. I learn and can understand information better visually, which is why I used a lot of charts even though it was mainly a qualitative thesis. The thesis was good to write in sections and it was very helpful to get feedback as sometimes you go blind to your own writing. For the benefit of the thesis, other thesis projects should also be researched to understand what types of thesis there are and what makes a good thesis.

Important for the thesis was to learn how to choose reliable sources, what sources are too old to use and not too use too few sources so that the text is credible enough. I found the theory was the hardest to write as good references were harder to find. There were lots of blogs and other articles that were very interesting and belonged to the topic but would not have been very reliable. It would have been beneficial to keep the references in one list as soon as you find and use one, so that they are all available in one place. I also learned and realised how important the theory is for the research, as it backs up the results if written correctly.

It was hard to keep the thesis narrow, so that I would not go out of topic. When I researched and wrote about the theory I got very interested and excited on the topic and could have written more on it, but it would have gone too much off topic. I should probably have written a longer thesis, but I kept thinking all the time that it should be kept simple, kept interesting and on the subject.

The thesis took over a year to write as there was a long pause between doing the interviews and writing the thesis. It would have probably been better to write the whole thesis down at the same time so that all the ideas and comments that came from the interviews would have been fresh. The theory part should have been written before the interviews. Even though I had done research on the subject and taken notes and references, the subject would have been easier to comprehend to have it together already written down.

In the interview there could have been more in-depth questions. For example, more detailed questions on the answers such as what did the participants find wrong about the attractiveness of the website. The questionnaire may not have needed so many options in some of the questions. This is because the participants had their own reasons and did not need to pick a specific answer, for example on why they came to the office. At the time of

the research I did not know the service office would close, so it would have been beneficial to ask the participants what is going to make the transition to online services easier and how can Aurinkomatkat help that happen. However, the research brought well out the main questions I wanted the answers to: why do the customers visit the service office, what are the motives behind it, what online services have they used and how do the participants feel about them.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Haastattelu kysymykset

Opinnäytetyö haastattelu



1. Sukupuoli

- Nainen
- Mies

2. Ikä

- 21–30
- 31–40
- 41–50
- 51–60
- 61–70
- 70+

3. Miten usein matkustatte ulkomaille vuodessa?

4. Miten usein matkustatte Aurinkomatkoilla vuodessa?

5. Millä asialla tulitte toimistoon asioimaan?

- Matkan suunnittelu
- Matkan varaus
- Matkan maksaminen
- Lisäkysymyksiä matkasta
- Matkan tarkistus
- Muokkaus/peruutus
- Lähtöselvitys
- Muu, mikä?

6. Miksi tulitte mieluummin Aurinkomatkojen toimistoon kuin käyttäisitte heidän online palveluita?

- Haluan henkilökohtaista palvelua
- Palvelunlaatu on hyvää
- Epävarma online palveluiden käytöstä
- Internetsivuilla ei tarpeeksi tietoa
- Internetsivu vaikea käyttöinen
- Olen tehnyt online varauksen, mutta silti epävarma varauksesta
- En luota internetmaksuihin
- Muu, mikä?

7. Mitä Aurinkomatkojen online palveluita olette käyttäneet?

- Sähköposti
- Chat
- Internetsivut
- Online varaus
- En mitään

8. Listaa Aurinkomatkojen online palvelut tärkeysjärjestyksessä 1-4, 1=tärkein.

- Sähköposti
- Chat
- Nettisivut
- Online varaus

9. Jos ette ole käyttäneet Aurinkomatkojen online palveluita, käytätekö muiden yritysten online palveluita (kuten kirjojen, vaatteiden tai muiden internetostosten tekemistä)?

- Kyllä
- Ei
- Jos kyllä, Mitä tavaroita ostatte internetin välityksellä?
- Jos kyllä, Minkä takia ette käytä Aurinkomatkojen online palveluita?

10. Mitä mieltä olette Aurinkomatkojen internetsivuista? Esimerkiksi:

- | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|---|---|---|---|---------------|
| - Helppokäyttöisyys | Erittäin huono | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Erittäin hyvä |
| - Selkeys | Erittäin huono | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Erittäin hyvä |
| - Houkuttelevuus | Erittäin huono | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Erittäin hyvä |
| - Toimivuus | Erittäin huono | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Erittäin hyvä |
| - Informatiivinen | Erittäin huono | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Erittäin hyvä |
| - Käyttäjäkokemus | Erittäin huono | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Erittäin hyvä |
| - Muu, mikä? | | | | | | |

11. Mitä mieltä olette Aurinkomatkojen online varauksen teosta? Esimerkiksi:

- | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|---|---|---|---|---------------|
| - Helppokäyttöisyys | Erittäin huono | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Erittäin hyvä |
| - Selkeys | Erittäin huono | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Erittäin hyvä |
| - Toimivuus | Erittäin huono | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Erittäin hyvä |
| - Luotettavuus | Erittäin huono | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Erittäin hyvä |
| - Käyttäjäkokemus | Erittäin huono | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Erittäin hyvä |
| - Muu, mikä? | | | | | | |

12. Mikä Aurinkomatkojen internetsivujen kautta tehtävissä asiointissa/varauksissa on mielestänne vaikeaa?

- Vaikea/epäselvä esillepano
- Liian paljon tietoa
- Liian vähän tietoa
- Vaikea löytää tuloksia
- Teksti liian pientä tai vaikeasti ymmärrettävää
- Vaikeita termejä
- Vaikeakäyttöinen valikko
- Muu, mikä?

13. Haluaisitteko tulevaisuudessa ostaa matkoja Aurinkomatkojen internet-sivujen kautta (online) vai tulemalla Aurinkomatkojen toimistoon?

- Miksi?

14. Mikä olisi ratkaisu tai mitä pitäisi muuttaa Aurinkomatkojen online palveluissa, että käyttäisitte niitä tulevaisuudessa?

15. Onko teillä avointa palautetta Aurinkomatoille heidän internet-sivuistaan ja online palveluistaan?

Thesis interview



HAAGA-HELIA

1. Gender

- Female
- Male

2. Age

- 21–30
- 31–40
- 41–50
- 51–60
- 61–70
- 70+

3. How often do you travel abroad in a year?

4. How often do you travel with Aurinkomatkat in a year?

5. What was the reason for visiting the service office?

- Holiday planning
- Holiday reservation
- Paying for holiday
- Information/questions on holiday
- Checking holiday
- Holiday editing/changes to holiday
- Check-in
- Other, what?

6. Why did you prefer coming to Aurinkomatkat service office rather than using the services online?

- I want personal service
- The service is good
- Unsure of using the online services
- Not enough information online
- Online services are hard to use
- I have made an online reservation, but now am not sure of how it works
- I do not trust online payment
- Other, what?

7. What Aurinkomatkat online services have you used?

- Email
- Chat
- Website
- Online reservation system
- None of the above

8. Rate Aurinkomatkat online services in the order of preference from 1-4, 1=most important

- Email
- Chat
- Website
- Online reservation system

9. If you have not used any Aurinkomatkat online services, do you use other companies' online services (e.g. online shopping, online bank)?

- Yes
- No

- If yes, what services do you use online?
- If yes, why do you not use Aurinkomatkat online services?

10. What do you think about Aurinkomatkat website? For example:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------|---------|-----------|
| - Ease of use | Very bad | 1 2 3 4 | Very good |
| - Clarity | Very bad | 1 2 3 4 | Very good |
| - Attractiveness | Very bad | 1 2 3 4 | Very good |
| - Functionality | Very bad | 1 2 3 4 | Very good |
| - Informative | Very bad | 1 2 3 4 | Very good |
| - User experience | Very bad | 1 2 3 4 | Very good |
| - Other, what? | | | |

11. What do you think about Aurinkomatkat online reservation system? For example:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------|---------|-----------|
| - Ease of use | Very bad | 1 2 3 4 | Very good |
| - Clarity | Very bad | 1 2 3 4 | Very good |
| - Functionality | Very bad | 1 2 3 4 | Very good |
| - Trustworthiness | Very bad | 1 2 3 4 | Very good |
| - User experience | Very bad | 1 2 3 4 | Very good |
| - Other, what? | | | |

12. What is hard or difficult in using Aurinkomatkat online services?

- Hard/unclear design
- Too much information
- Not enough information
- Hard to find results/information
- Text too small/hard to understand
- Hard terms/concepts
- Site navigation/menu hard to use
- Other, what?

13. Would you like to make reservations through the online services or at the service office in the future?

- Why?

14. What would be the solution or what could be developed that you would start using Aurinkomatkat online services in the future?

15. Do you have any open comment or feedback related to Aurinkomatkat online services?