

Customer Satisfaction of Internal Business Travel Services at Finnair  
Plc

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Degree Programme in Tourism

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<p>The title of your thesis Customer Satisfaction of Internal Business Travel Services at Finnair Plc</p>	<p>Number of pages and appendices 55+2</p>
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<p>The objective of this thesis is to assess and measure the level of satisfaction of the internal business travel customers at Finnair Plc. The internal business travel services are provided by the Travel Management unit within the organisation. Its internal business travel customers are the departments and subsidiaries of the Finnair Group. The study was aimed at the representatives of the internal business travel customers rather than the entire departments as a whole.</p> <p>The internal business travel services at Finnair are mainly self-service by nature. The managers of the Travel Management unit negotiate agreements with business travel service suppliers and the agreements are placed on the company's intranet. Booking services are not part of the internal business travel services. The only exceptions to this are flight reservations and ticketing that are provided by the Staff Travel Office operating within the Travel Management unit.</p> <p>Theoretical framework of the thesis is focused on customer satisfaction and service quality. These two themes are by no means new and plenty of previous research is available on them. This thesis employs the service quality dimensions of SERVQUAL and the Gaps Model of Service Quality as the main theories for the research. The contextual framework deals with Travel Management processes and concepts.</p> <p>The empirical research was conducted by using a quantitative method. The study was carried out by a questionnaire which was given to the representatives of internal business travel customers in person during a meeting. Those not present in the meeting received the questionnaire by internal mail afterwards. The questionnaire had eight sections designed according to the internal business travel services offered by the Travel Management unit of Finnair. Each section also had an open-ended comment possibility. The eighth section was left entirely for additional feedback and comments. The total amount of the sample was 42 and the response rate was 59.52%.</p> <p>The results of the questionnaire indicate that currently the overall level of satisfaction among the departments using the internal business travel services of the Travel Management unit is quite high, yet not excellent. The importance of providing excellent service to internal customers needs to be enforced better within the Travel Management unit, especially to the service personnel that are in contact with the representatives of the internal business travel customers.</p>	
<p>Key words Internal Customer, Customer Satisfaction, Travel Management, Service Quality</p>	

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# 1 Introduction

Organisations are more customer-oriented today than ever before. Being customer focused requires listening to the customer needs and constantly improving and changing according to their desires and wants to be able to satisfy and retain them. It is said that retaining existing customers is easier than acquiring new ones so the efforts made to please customers are worthwhile. In the end, satisfied customers make profitable businesses as they generate more profit by staying loyal to the business.

Customer satisfaction does not only apply to those external customers. The satisfaction of internal customers is equally important. Internal customers need to be satisfied in order to enable them to satisfy external customers of the organisation at their fullest potential. This thesis will take a look at the importance of customer satisfaction from the point of view of the internal customers.

The theoretical framework of this thesis is concentrated on service quality and customer satisfaction. The most significant theories used are the SERVQUAL service quality dimensions developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry and the Gaps Model of Service Quality according to Zeithaml. Some literature from Grönroos is also used when describing the concepts of internal customer satisfaction.

Travel Management is also a part of the context of this thesis. Travel costs of a company can amount to be one of the biggest costs for a company with substantial travel volume and therefore, they need to be managed well. Travel Management of Finnair differs from many other businesses, in the sense that there are no third parties such as external travel management companies involved, all deals and agreements are directly negotiated with external suppliers and other airlines.

Finnair is the market leader in the airline business in Finland. Finnair Group has around 9700 employees. This research was commissioned by the Travel Management unit of Finnair which provides internal business and leisure travel services to Finnair Group personnel. The writer of the thesis worked in the Staff Travel Office, which is a part of the Travel Management unit, as a trainee during a five-month period in autumn 2007.

## 2 Central Concepts

A simple definition of a business travel customer is a traveller whose employment requires him or her to travel to be able to carry out their work. The expenses that occur from the trip are paid by the business the person works for (Davidson & Cope 2003, 7). From Finnair's perspective, the above described customer segment is open to the entire public and it consist of what could be called the external corporate customers. While the internal business travel customers at Finnair are departments, business units and subsidiaries within the Finnair Group. The business travel services are provided internally by the Travel Management unit of the company. The internal business travel services are obtained from/through the Travel Management unit. The actual business traveller remains the individual employee but the department is regarded as the internal business travel customer.

The Travel Management unit of Finnair is the only supplier of business travel services for the employees within the Finnair Group. When anyone in the organisation needs to travel on business, the only possibility is to turn to the Travel Management unit. The majority of the services consist of agreements that are in the intranet for anyone in the organisation to use. The only exception to this is flight reservation and ticketing that are handled through the Travel Management unit, more specifically through the Staff Travel Office operating within the unit. The Staff Travel Office provides tickets to Finnair Group personnel for both leisure and business trips.

The communication between the Travel Management unit and its internal business travel customers, which are the departments and subsidiaries, happens through travel secretaries or assistants that make travel arrangements in their respective departments for the employees of that particular internal business travel customer.

A group of the above-mentioned travel secretaries have been selected to make up an information sharing channel called Travel Forum. It is a communication tool between the Travel Management unit and its internal business travel customers. The views of the internal business travel customers are represented in the forum by the selected travel secretaries and assistants. Travel Forum acts as a channel for spreading information regarding the internal business travel services across the entire organisation.

## 2.1 Aims and Limitations

The objective of this thesis is to assess the level of customer satisfaction among different departments and subsidiaries using the business travel services within the Finnair Group organisation. The research aims at proposing a solution to problems linked to the service processes of the internal business travel services. There is no official assessment system for the internal business travel customers and the only method of feedback is through email and face-to-face communication. Previously, feedback has been gathered in person; however, prior to this research, it had not been measured in writing or statistically. The aim of the research is to improve the internal business travel services of Finnair Group by improving the service processes of the Travel Management unit.

Additionally, the study aims at providing a systematic tool to track the level of satisfaction through time. After analysing the questionnaire results, the researcher aims at offering a feedback instrument, which may be used regularly to get feedback from the internal business travel customers and continuously keep improving the service level.

Limitation to the study is that only representatives of the internal business travel consumer group participated in the survey. The unit of analysis is the members of an internal information sharing platform called Travel Forum. This sample consists of secretaries and assistants that make travel arrangements for the actual travellers and interact with the Travel Management unit.

Though the reason for the limitation is because otherwise the sample might be too large and it could be impossible to research the entire departments as such. Also, including other employees that are not directly concerned with the research topic might give the research a different meaning. Therefore, the sponsor specifically requested that the study should focus only on the members of the Travel Forum. This means that it does not involve all employees and the actual travellers and end-users of the services but the employees acting as contact persons between the internal business travel customers; departments and subsidiaries of Finnair Group and Travel Management unit of the company.

Finnair also has agreements with incentive travel agencies but these agreements were left out from the study as they are not used by many in the organisation and count for a small part of the internal business travel services. These agreements are in the intranet and bookings are

made directly with the suppliers, not through the Travel Management unit as with the rest of the agreements.

## 2.2 Research Problem

The research studies the current level of satisfaction among internal business travel customers, meaning the different departments and subsidiaries of Finnair Group, using services offered by the Travel Management unit. The research problem in the form of a question is "What is the current level of satisfaction of internal business travel customers at Finnair Plc?" The level of satisfaction is measured by the opinions of the Travel Forum members who represent the internal business travel customer groups within the Finnair organisation.

The research problem can be divided into following sub-questions; what are the main factors contributing to the level of satisfaction, and in case low level of satisfaction exists, what could be the strategic responses of Finnair's Travel Management unit to improve the situation.

There were three hypotheses used in this thesis. The first hypothesis was "the internal business travel customers are satisfied with the services of Travel Management unit" and the second one "enough information on Finnair's internal business travel services is distributed by the Travel Management unit". Third hypothesis was "tools provided by the Travel Management unit are clear and easy to use". These hypotheses were tested by conducting a questionnaire to the representatives of those internal business travel customers. The questionnaire results are analysed and presented in chapter seven.

## 2.3 Research Method

The chosen research method for gathering empirical material was a quantitative method. A quantitative questionnaire was chosen as the data collection method since the sponsor of the study wanted to have numeric results from the survey. As the internal business travel customers are entire departments and subsidiaries, the questionnaire was given to their representatives only. The total amount of these representatives was forty-two people.

The sample and unit of analysis is made up of so-called Travel Forum representatives that are summoned together by the management of the Travel Management unit. The Forum consists of travel secretaries and assistants that are responsible for making travel arrangements as part of their job. More information on Travel Forum can be found in chapter 3.1. Statistics were



formed based on the results of the questionnaire. The results are described and analysed in more detail in chapter seven. Final conclusions on the results can be found in chapter eight.

Background information concerning functions of the Travel Management of Finnair Group was gathered by interviewing Finnair's Travel Manager Tuula Juhava and Staff Travel Office Manager Minna Pekkala. The interviews were conducted in Finnish. The questionnaire was also conducted in Finnish as requested by the sponsor.

## 2.4 Justification

The customer satisfaction of the internal business travel services at Finnair has not been researched previously, and therefore, there is a need for the research today. The results of the study will be used by the Travel Management unit to develop the internal business travel services and the internal service processes in the future.

Also, a meeting between the representatives of internal business travel customers and representatives of the Travel Management unit was organised in February 2008. The meeting was considered as a good forum to introduce and conduct the survey. The representatives of the internal business travel customers consist of the members of the Travel Forum. The number of Travel Forum members invited to the meeting was around 42 and this is considered as a large enough sample population for the research.

Another reason for conducting the research is to examine the level of awareness, usability and accessibility of the intranet's duty pages and the internal business travel information provided through the pages. All the information regarding the internal business travel services such as the travel policy and agreements can be found on the intranet.

## 2.5 Structure of the Report

The report is divided into clear entities. The contextual framework is firstly presented in chapter three, followed by an introduction to the sponsor organisation in chapter four. The contextual framework is concentrated on Travel Management. It opens up some concepts that are relevant to the industry and brings background information to the operations of Finnair's Travel Management unit.

Theoretical framework of this research is based on customer satisfaction and service quality. The framework weighs heavily on five service dimensions of SERVQUAL and the Gaps Mode of Service Quality. Theoretical framework brings background to the problems of what could be the reasons behind possible high or low level of customer satisfaction. It also aims to answer the questions about what customer satisfaction is and why it is important to measure internal customer satisfaction. Theoretical framework can be found in chapter five.

After the presentation of the theoretical framework, the research method used for the empirical study is discussed in chapter six. The researcher evaluates the validity, reliability and objectivity of the research before going in to the results of the study in chapter seven. The concluding discussions on the results form chapter eight. Improvement suggestions and suggested further research are presented at the end of the conclusions.

### 3 Travel Management

Travel management is a specialized business function that supports and works towards the same business goals as the overall company strategy. The goal of any business is to make money and the purpose of a corporate travel department is to save money and enable the business to grow. Travel costs can be one of the biggest costs for a company after salaries and IT. In order to minimize those travel costs, they need to be well-managed. (Lehtisalo 2007, Lubbe 2000, 197-209)

Travel management aims to minimize the costs of travel but at the same time, it is important to take care of the travellers' comfort as they need to be able to work efficiently while travelling on company business. Employee/traveller's needs need to be balanced with corporate business goals. Travel management ensures that all business trips are relevant to the company's business but done at the lowest possible cost level. (Lehtisalo 2007)

According to Huvilinna (2008) essential issues in travel management are the following:

- Strategies (aligned with business strategies)
- Travel Policy and guidelines
- Purchasing strategies and contracts
- Electronic tools (IT, self-booking tools, invoicing etc.)
- The perspective of Financial Management
- Safety issues, security, CSR, and Risk Management
- Monitoring and reporting
- Outsourcing

Travel management is integrated in the company's other activities and other departments are involved in travel management processes. Department such as Human Resources, Sourcing, Finance, Risk Management and IT are all part of the travel-related processes. Travel management and its processes are shaped by the travel volume and how travel is structured, what kind of deals are negotiated, service models, support functions management structure and IT. Each company has its own way of structuring travel, depending on the above mentioned factors. (Snellman 2007, 23, Lehtisalo 2007)

Travel management departments are in charge of negotiating discount deals, and choosing and implementing necessary tools e.g. self-booking systems or electronic invoicing. The department also supervises how travel guidelines are followed and it reports data to other departments in the company. A basis for travel management functions is good knowledge of the company's organisational structure and finances. Ticket costs, daily allowance costs, costs during travel, taxation, travel insurances, employment contracts and internal communication are all part of travel management. (Snellman 2007, 23)

Lubbe (2000, 197-209) states the most important factor in the work of the travel management departments is setting and implementing a travel policy. The policy states how the company will organise its travelling and what standards are to be followed. The policy gives the management an idea where the costs of travel come from and how they can be managed. Knowing the costs, it is easier to set objectives in order to save money. The travel policy sets the procedures of making travel arrangements, what kind of authorisation is needed and formulates a reporting system. A good travel policy supports the business strategies of the company and ensures compliance so that travel data can be gathered and monitored.

The travel policy also informs the employees, the actual travellers, of the limitations to their travel and how they will be reimbursed for the travel. The policy restricts the traveller's choices, and therefore, it must be understood and enforced properly by all parties involved so that it will be effective and help the company to reduce the costs of travel to the lowest possible level. (Lubbe 2000, 197-209)

Travel management process starts from planning of a business trip and ends with submitting travel receipts to the company's accounting records. Travel management aims to automate its functions and processes, for example, by implementing electronic invoicing. Automated processes save time and resources as well as help in gathering travel data and following whether the travel guidelines are being followed. (Snellman 2007, 23)

The risks during business trips are constantly increasing and therefore, travel management needs to take risk management into consideration in its processes as well. In the future, sustainable development as well as social and environmental responsibility will affect travel management. (Snellman 2007, 23)

## 4 Finnair Plc

Finnair Plc is the leading airline in Finland. It was founded in 1923 and it is one of the oldest still operating airlines. Finnish government owns 55.8 per cent of the company shares. Other shareholders include insurance companies, various other companies and private individuals. Also foreign shareholders count for a major part of the share owners. Approximately 42 per cent of the shares are owned by foreign investors. (Finnair Plc 2008)

Finnair Group operations cover scheduled passenger traffic and leisure traffic, technical and ground handling operations, catering, travel agencies as well as travel information and reservation services. Approximately 9 700 employees work for Finnair Group. Subsidiaries of the company provide air traffic support services or operate in other related areas. The 22 business units and subsidiaries of the Finnair Group are divided in to four business areas: Scheduled Passenger Traffic, Leisure Traffic, Travel Services and Aviation Services. (Finnair Plc 2008)

The mother company Finnair Plc owns 18 subsidiaries. The most important of them are Finland Travel Bureau, Travel Agency Area and Finnair Catering Oy. Other significant subsidiaries are Oy Aurinkomatkat - Suntours Ltd Ab, Finnair Aircraft Finance Ltd, Finnair Cargo Oy, Northport Oy and Finnair Facilities Management Oy (Finnair Plc 2008).

Finnair's strategy is heavily concentrated on the Asian market and providing a good connection from all the European destinations to Asia via Helsinki-Vantaa airport. Finnair's route network covers all major destinations in both continents. Finnair also has an extensive network within Finland and in addition to regular scheduled traffic; the airline operates leisure flights to over 60 destinations. Leisure traffic is mainly concentrate on holiday resorts in the Mediterranean, the Canary Islands, South-East Asia, the Caribbean and South America. Geographical expectations of the company are placed on the growing Asian, Scandinavian, Russian and Baltic markets. (Finnair Plc 2008)

## 4.1 Travel Management Unit of Finnair

The Travel Management unit of Finnair provides travel services to the employees within the Finnair Group. The scope of its operations includes internal leisure and business travel services to the Finnair Group employees. It functions only internally within the Finnair Group. The Travel Management unit operates under the Human Resources in the Finnair organisation and the head of Human Resources is the final decision-maker in issues concerning the internal travel services.

The Travel Management unit consists of Finnair's Travel Manager, Assistant Travel Manager and an additional employee in the position of System Specialist. The Travel Manager reports to the head of the Human Resources. The Travel Management unit negotiates agreements with other airlines, hotels, car rentals as well as other co-operation companies. These agreements can be accessed on the company intranet pages. Information regarding the internal travel guidelines and policies is communicated by the unit through Finnair's communication tools such as the intranet and personnel magazines. An additional communication tool is the so-called Travel Forum. More details on the Travel Forum in sub chapter 4.4.

Additionally, Finnair Staff Travel Office is also a part of the Travel Management unit. The Staff Travel Office provides solely tickets to both internal leisure and business customers whereas the unit as a whole is responsible for the entire range of the internal business travel services which are, apart from the tickets, mainly self-services through the agreements on the intranet. Only flights are booked and purchased through the Travel Management unit from its Staff Travel Office, otherwise the internal business travel services at Finnair Plc are agreements on the intranet. In 2006, 16 915 business travel related tickets were issued by the Staff Travel Office. 1050 of those were returned and refunded. The Staff Travel Office Manager is responsible for the daily running of the office and has around eight subordinates in the office. The Staff Travel Office Manager reports to the Travel Manager.

This chapter aims at explaining how the Travel Management unit operates, who its internal customers are and what are the internal business travel services they offer.

## 4.2 Internal Business Travel Services at Finnair Plc

The term internal business travel services in this context refers to the business travel services offered and sold by the Travel Management unit of Finnair exclusively to the departments and

subsidiaries within the Finnair Group when the purpose of travel is solely for the business activities of the company. These services differ from the other services offered by Finnair in the sense that they are not open to the public, they are only offered internally and can only be obtained through the Travel Management unit. The costs of the services are paid by the departmental cost centres and credit cards depending on the service. Flights are charged through the departmental costs centres, other services the employees pay for themselves with credit cards and the expenses are reimbursed after submitting receipts and acquiring necessary approvals.

The internal business travel services of the Travel Management unit extend to setting the travel policy of Finnair Group, negotiating and making agreements with suppliers and providing access to those agreements in the company's intranet. Intranet pages related to travel act as an information channel for the internal business travel customers. Information provided on the pages includes the travel policy, agreements with car rental service providers, hotels, meeting facilities, coach, ferry and incentive travel agencies. Agreements with other airlines are also in the intranet pages in the form of an excel table. The table provides information not only to the internal business travel customers but also to the personnel at the Staff Travel Office making bookings and issuing tickets.

Additionally, a travel and expense management program is part of the services even though it is owned by FTS Financial Services Oy, a subsidiary to Finnair Plc. Therefore it is not a product of the Travel Management unit. There is a link to the program in the intranet pages. The current program in use is webtraveller but will be changed into a program called TEM in the near future.

Customer service offered in the traditional sense to internal business travel customers includes only flight reservations and ticket delivery. The customer service also extends to email, phone and front desk service when it comes to tickets, booking, route planning and other advisory services, however, the rest of the services are provided through the intranet as self-service. The agreements with for example hotels are on the intranet, yet the actual booking services are not provided by the Travel Management unit.

#### 4.3 Internal Customers of the Travel Management Unit

The internal customers of Finnair's Travel Management unit can be categorized into leisure and business travel customers. Internal leisure travel customers are individual employees of

Finnair and its subsidiaries. Leisure travel covers solely personal holiday trips of the employees or their family members. The only service offered to the internal leisure customers is the possibility to buy airline tickets and holiday packages. The end-user is always known as it is the employee or their family member. The employees pay for the service themselves.

Internal business travel customers are the departments within Finnair and the subsidiaries of Finnair Group. They are the buyers of business travel services. The end-users can be employees of Finnair or external customers such as employees from other airlines coming for simulator training at Finnair. The end-user might not even be known by the Travel Management unit. The agreements on the internal business travel services available are on the intranet; however, it is not followed who actually uses the services. E.g. if Finnair Catering holds a meeting with its suppliers, the meeting facilities are booked through the agreements negotiated by the Travel Management but it is not tracked whether it is an internal or external customer that actually uses the facilities since the services are self-services through the agreements.

Internal business travel customers differ from other customers in the sense that they are not individuals but departments and subsidiaries. They purchase services only for business purposes and/or on the behalf of the company.

In most departments, there are few appointed persons that are in touch with the Travel Management unit regarding the business travel service needs of that particular internal business travel customer. They make travel arrangements for the actual travellers in the department. Some of these persons have been selected to represent their departments in the information sharing channel, Travel Forum. This is the unit of analysis that will be given the questionnaire in the empirical part of the study.

#### 4.4 Travel Forum

Travel Forum is an internal information sharing platform at Finnair. It was put together by the Travel Manager in 2003. Prior to this, there was no official channel for internal communication of business travel information between different parts of the organisation and that was the main reason for the creation of the Travel Forum. It is an interactive group that receives information regarding internal business travel services but also gives feedback to the Travel Management unit regarding the services. Members of Travel Forum are representatives of their respective departments within the Forum and act as contact persons in their own



departments informing others on the internal business travel issues. Currently there are forty-two members in the Travel Forum representing the departments and subsidiaries of the organisation. (Juhava, T. 15.1.2008)

Travel Forum is made up of assistants and secretaries that are responsible for making travel reservations and arrangements in their respective departments. They were chosen as members of Travel Forum for this reason. Travel Forum members were also chosen on the basis of travel volume of the departments and the amount of reservations these assistants are personally responsible for in their departments. (Juhava, T. 15.1.2008)

Travel Forum does not include all secretaries and assistants within the organisation but the ones that make travel reservations and arrangements. Some departments do not have secretaries to do travel arrangements and in general, travel is less frequent in those departments. It is possible for any employee of the organisation to make travel arrangements themselves. In such cases where there are no travel assistants in the department, the only option for the employees is to make the reservations themselves. (Juhava, T. 15.1.2008)

Members of Travel Forum have different know-how of the travel reservations and bookings. Some of the members need to make travel arrangements more often or they might have more experience in using the reservation systems, and therefore, have a better knowledge of what is needed for the reservations. Some of the assistants have perhaps previously worked in a position within the organisation where they handled flight reservations. These assistants only need ticketing from the Staff Travel Office, while others might need more assistance, starting with route planning and other basic information. (Juhava, T. 15.1.2008)

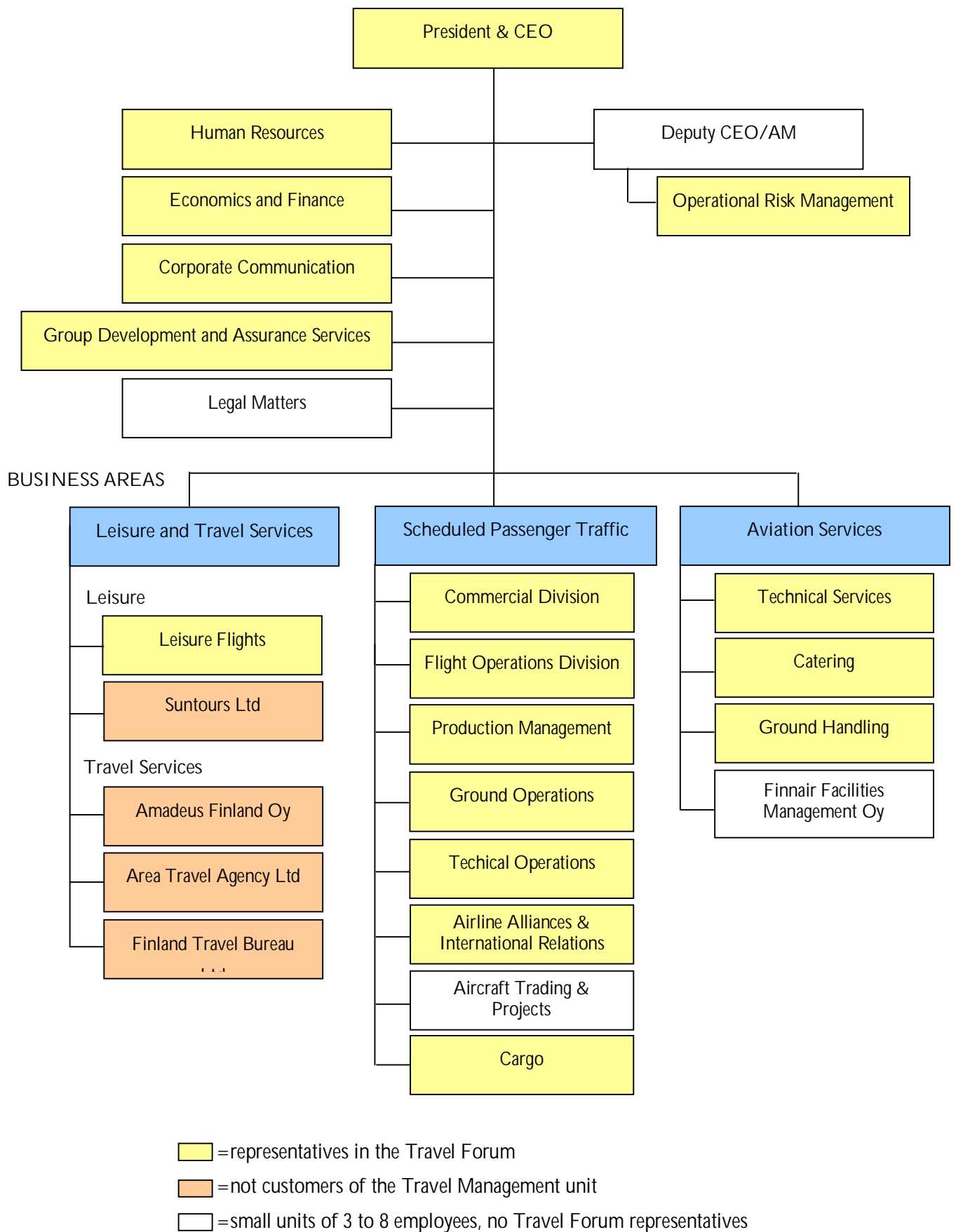


Figure 1. Finnair Group Organisational Structure 26.2.2008

In figure 1, the Finnair Group structure is presented. As seen in the figure, the Travel Forum members come from across the organisation and represent the internal business travel customers that are department and subsidiaries. Some of the smaller units or departments do not have representatives in the Travel Forum due to their size but also the amount of travel is less frequent or non-existing. Also the businesses of some units, such as the subsidiaries Area Travel Agency and Finland Travel Bureau, are such by nature that they naturally handle their own travel arrangements and therefore, are not part of the internal travel service customer group.

#### 4.5 The Travel Process

Travel has naturally an essential role in Finnair's business functions. Finnair Group's business is all over the world and the employees of the Group need to travel to all these locations as part of their work. Travel budget of Finnair is about 15 Million euros including crew transfers and crew hotel stays on duty. (Juhava, T. 15.1.2008)

Finnair Group has an official travel policy that sets the limitations and guidelines of travel for the personnel. Finnair Group has a Travel Manager who is responsible for setting the travel policy. She is also in charge of negotiating agreements with hotels and other service providers. All agreements are negotiated directly with suppliers, and there are no third parties such as travel management companies involved. The Travel Manager's office is located next to the Staff Travel Office. The Travel Manager reports to the head of Human Resources. (Juhava, T. 15.1.2008)

Staff Travel Office Manager is responsible for negotiating agreements with other airlines and also for the daily running of the office. Flights are booked on the Amadeus reservation system and tickets issued at the Staff Travel Office by its employees. (Pekkala, M. 22.1.2008)

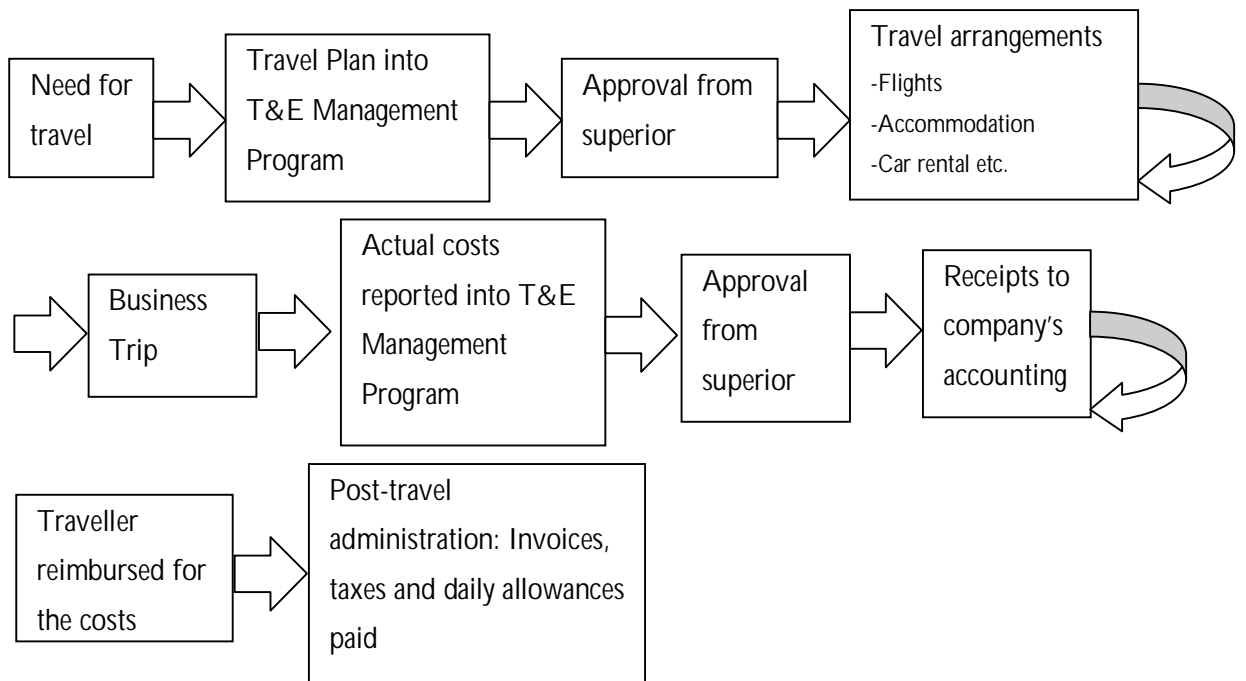


Figure 2. Travel Management Process of Finnair Group

Figure 2 illustrates the travel management process at Finnair. When an employee goes for a business trip, first a travel plan is made on the travel and expense management program in the company's intranet. The plan goes automatically to the email of the employee's supervisor and he or she has to approve it prior to the trip. After the necessary approvals, a ticket order is placed either in person, on phone or email to the Staff Travel Office. A serial number from the approved travel plan and the information of the cost centre is used when issuing tickets for a business trip. Other travel arrangements such as hotel bookings and car rental are also made at this stage either by the employee or by a secretary. (Pekkala, M. 22.1.2008)

After the trip, the traveller reports the actual expenses that occurred on the trip again in the travel and expense management program. The receipts are to be submitted to the financial department of the company within two weeks of returning from the trip. The receipts are checked by the financial department and the employee is reimbursed for the expenses and gets his or her daily allowances. Post-travel administration is also taken care of by the financial department. (Pekkala, M. 22.1.2008)

Considering the mostly self-service nature of the internal business travel services at Finnair, one could see a need to examine the level of customer satisfaction. There is not much contact with the service personnel outside the ticketing services and in addition to that, there is no feedback system regarding the services. Therefore, it is essential to research the opinions of

the internal customers so their views of the services are recognised and taken into consideration, particularly as the customer satisfaction has not been researched previously. Also, as the services are mostly self-services, it is important that the procedures are understood by the internal customers.

The following chapter explain more deeply, what customer satisfaction entails and what the reasons behind internal customer satisfaction are.

## 5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework presented in this chapter is divided in two entities. Firstly, customer satisfaction is discussed, more specifically the details of internal customer satisfaction and how to measure customer satisfaction. Service quality discussion concludes the theoretical aspect of the research.

### 5.1 Customer Satisfaction

In the service industry customer satisfaction is the key to any successful business. If customers are not satisfied with the services provided to them, they can simply switch service providers and previous provider will lose its business. The case of internal customers slightly differs from external customers.

Lovelock and Wirtz (2004, 44) describe satisfaction as an attitude-like judgement following a purchase or a series of consumer product interactions. Customer decides whether he or she is satisfied after purchasing an item or after experiencing some kind of a service encounter with a representative of a company. Customer satisfaction comes from the quality of service delivery that is expected by the customers during the act of purchase and while being served.

Customer satisfaction of a product is often measured with specific attributes that describe the product features. Comparing experiences to earlier expectations is also common. Similar elements of assessing the features of physical goods have been taken into models that describe how service is experienced. Due to this development, there has been debates in literature, whether there is a difference between service quality and customer satisfaction and if so, is the quality experienced first and satisfaction then follows or vice versa. Logical analysis proves that this debate is irrelevant. Service quality is evidently experienced first, followed by either feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. (Grönroos 2000, 79-80)

Customers have certain standards and expectations in mind prior to consumption; they observe the service performance, compare it to their standards and finally, form a satisfaction judgement when comparing with earlier expectations. These judgements can be labelled either negative confirmation when the service is lower than expected, or positive confirmation when the service exceeds expectations or simply confirmation when the service is just as expected. (Lovelock & Wirtz 2004, 44)

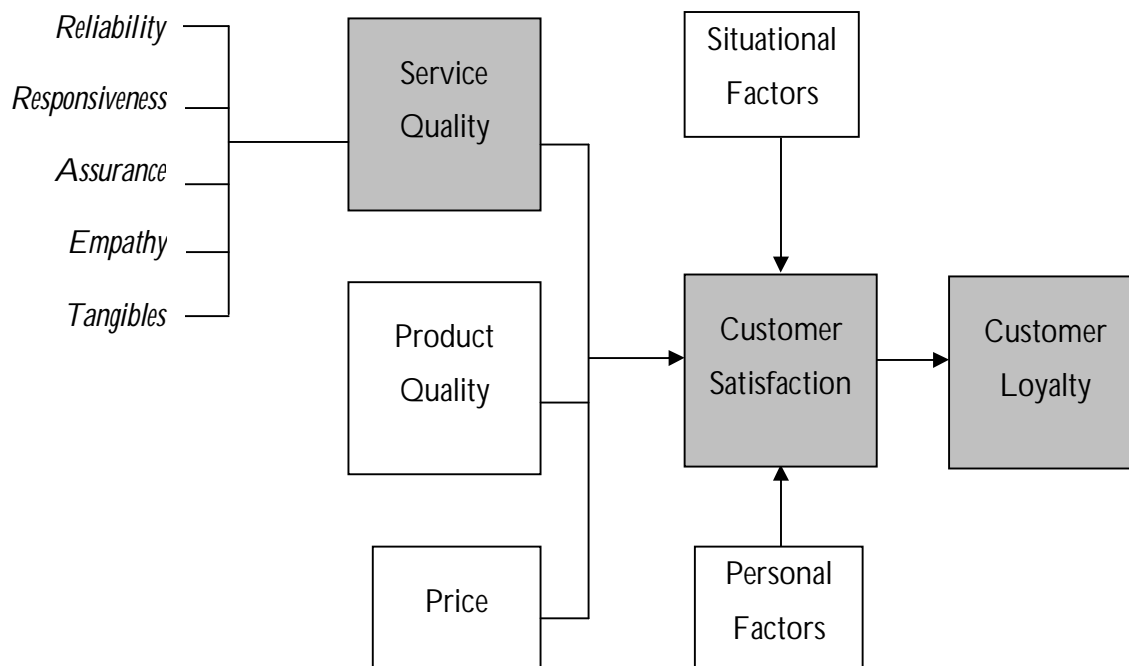


Figure 3. Customer Perceptions of Quality and Customer Satisfaction (Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler 2006, 107)

The term quality and satisfaction are sometimes referred to as identical. However, it is believed that perceived service quality is only one component of customer satisfaction. (Lovelock & Wirtz 2004, 44) Satisfaction and quality have things in common but certain underlying causes are different. Satisfaction is a broader concept where as service quality has specified aspects of service. Hence, perceived service quality is an element of customer satisfaction. The relationship of these two concepts is presented in figure 3. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 107)

Service quality is a reflection of the customer's perception of reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy and tangibles. Whereas customer satisfaction is more general term and influenced by perceptions of service quality, product quality, price, situational and personal factors. For example, the service quality of a hotel is affected by attributes such as what kind of meeting facilities are available and is the equipment in working order, how attentive the staff is, and how well-maintained the facilities are.

Customer satisfaction of a hotel on the other hand, is a wider concept. It is affected by perceptions of service quality but in addition to that, also the perceptions of product quality, price of one night's stay, personal factors such as the customer's emotional state or situational factors such as how much traffic there was when driving to the hotel. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 108)

## 5.2 Internal Customer Satisfaction

Each organization has both external and internal customers. External customers rely on the company's employees to meet and exceed their needs and expectations, while internal customers are employees that rely on each other for products, services and support in order to meet or exceed their needs and expectations. There are differences and similarities in external and internal customers and it is important to understand them. (Naumann & Giel 1995, 363)

Traditionally customers have been considered to be people or organisations outside of the company. These external customers have to be served so that their needs are fulfilled and they are satisfied with the service given to them by the company. Relationships like this exist also within the organisation. The customer service personnel and functions of a company need support from other employees within the company in order to serve external customers. Products cannot be delivered in a customer-friendly manner if the company's storage does not provide the driver of the truck with the right items to be delivered or there is no driver at all, for example. (Grönroos 2000, 307)

Each service organisation is full of internal service functions that support each other and the customer service personnel and functions that interact with external customers. Usually there are more internal service functions than functions serving the external customers. (Grönroos 2000, 307)

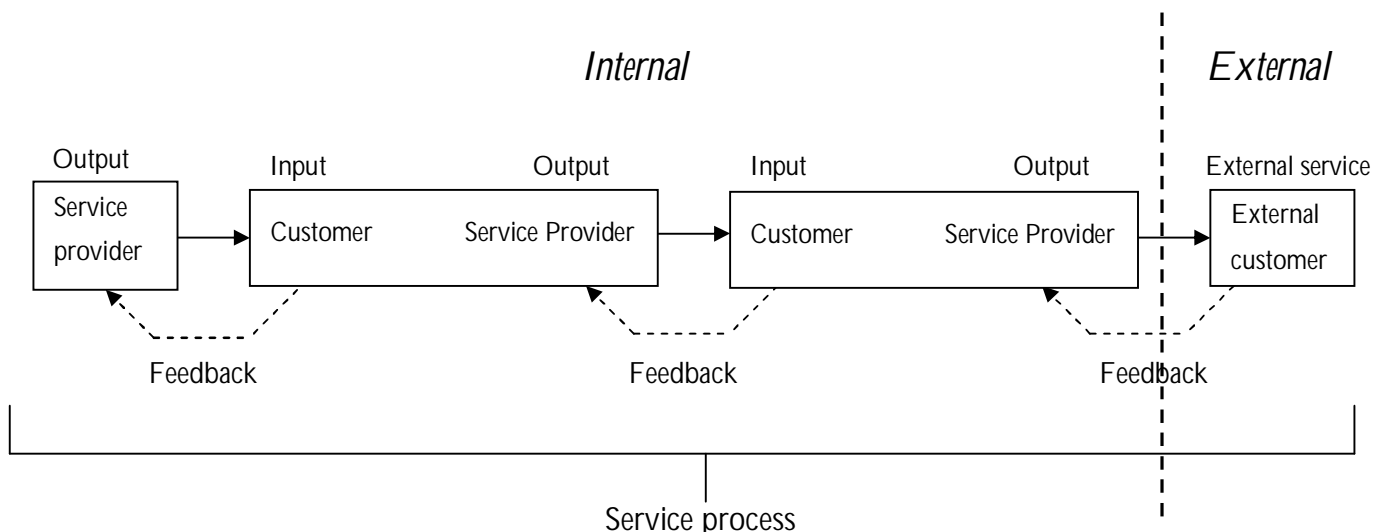


Figure 4. Internal service functions and internal customers (Grönroos 2000, 308)

There can be one or a whole range of internal service functions as presented in figure 4 above. The internal service functions are shown inside the larger boxes in the figure. These functions



are internal customers to other internal service providers; they are also service providers to other internal customers. The final output of the service process is the external service received and perceived by the external customers. The internal service provider-internal customer relationships have to be managed in a customer-oriented manner so that the ultimate external customers receive high quality service as well. (Grönroos 2000, 307-308)

If internal service is not of good quality, external service will suffer as a repercussion. It is often hard for people working within the internal service functions to realise the significance of their input on the service process. They do not have a chance to see the external customers and easily feel that they are only serving their co-workers and it does not affect the external input in any way. (Grönroos 2000, 307)

The term "internal customer" brings the customer relationship inside the organisation. This term brings a new dimension to the functions performed internally. It can help deal with the attitude problems of employees working within the internal service functions. Once the company personnel realises the importance of internal customers, their attitudes are more easily changed. They also know that "a satisfied customer" does not only refer to customers outside the organisation and that the internal customers need to be served as well as those external are expected to be served. (Grönroos 2000, 307)

Whilst an employee is working inside his or her own organisation, he or she is serving a co-worker, in other words, an internal customer. No one can do their job alone; each person needs the work input of their colleagues to be able to do their job. Hence, the input of each employee affects the next person's output. The better the company's personnel serve each other in daily work, the better service the external customer will get. (Jokinen, Heinäluoma & Heikkonen 2000, 222)

The former head of Scandinavian Airlines, Mr. Jan Carlzon brought a new service-oriented leadership model into the company in 1980's and managed to turn about 10 billion loss into about 70 billion in profit in just a few years. He realised the importance of internal service and his strategy for the entire personnel of the company was "Your job is to always serve somebody." (Jokinen et al., 2000, 223)

### 5.3 Designing Customer Satisfaction Measurement Program

Measuring customer satisfaction is extremely important in the service industry. Studies of what the customers want, allow companies to improve their service delivery processes. The customers' characteristics, the products of the company, the competitive intensity and the customers' attitudes constantly change and evolve; the measurement program also needs to change. However, the process of designing, implementing and utilising the program does not need to change. (Naumann & Giel 1995, 13)

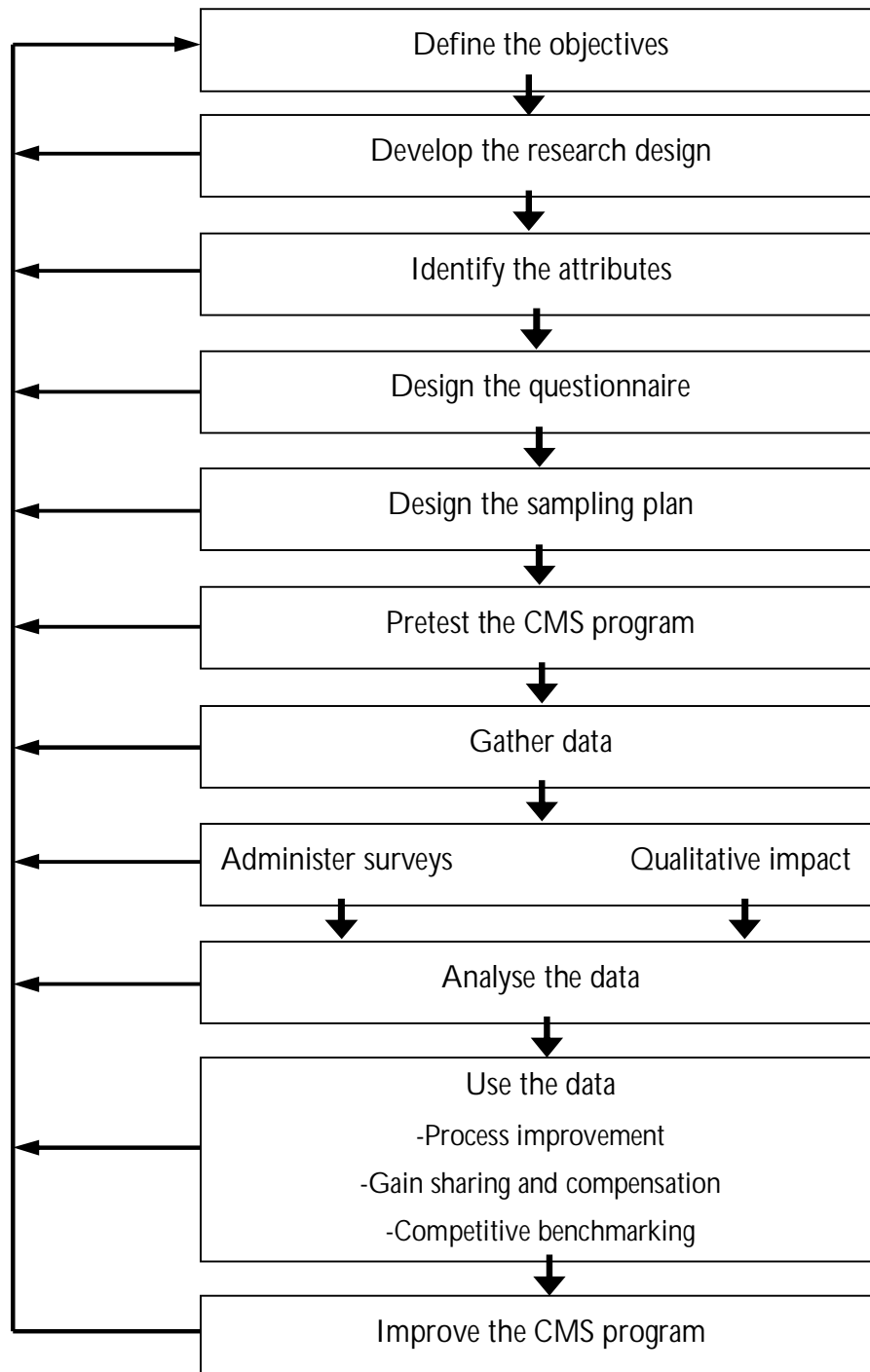


Figure 5. Design and use of a CSM program (Naumann & Giel 1995, 14)

Figure 5 illustrates the process of designing and using customer satisfaction measurement program according to Naumann & Giel (1995, 14). The first step in measuring customer satisfaction is setting the objectives for the satisfaction measurement program. It is the most important step, as it determines what the aim of the program is and gives a clear direction to it. The objectives have to fit into the company's culture and environment. Clarifying the objectives also means to identify research hypotheses that are necessary to achieve the objectives. If the objectives are ambiguous, it is difficult to develop hypotheses for the study. (Naumann & Giel 1995, 19)

Clear objectives also make the research design less ambiguous. Research design is developed to ensure reliability and validity. This ensures that the research is meant for its original intent and is not biased. The aim of the research design is to have precision and ability to detect shifts in customer attitudes. (Naumann & Giel 1995, 31)

The attributes that are important to the customers are essential to identify to guarantee the usefulness of the customer satisfaction measurement program. These attributes give direction to which direction the program should be build in. If wrong attributes are used, the program does not serve its purpose. There are different ways to verify those attributes. Naumann & Giel (1995, 90) suggest using methods such as focus groups and in-depth interviews and not to rely only on internally produced attributes.

Questionnaire designed for a customer satisfaction measurement purpose should be as short, simple and manageable as possible. It should have some logical flow, continuity and transition from section to section. It should be viewed as a whole, not as a collection of individual questions. (Naumann & Giel 1995, 116) The questionnaire should always be pretested as this process enables the data quality to be improved and possible errors can be noted and corrected. The more carefully designed the pretest is, the better data the final data produced by the questionnaire. (Naumann & Giel 1995, 189)

After gathering the data, the analysis of it is essential in order to determine the attributes or characteristics driving customer satisfaction. Data analysis and subsequent understanding of customer satisfaction determinants is the driving force behind quality improving efforts. (Naumann & Giel 1995, 238) Without proper analysis of the results, the data is not used to its full potential and cannot be used in enhancing the processes in the company to the right direction. It is also important to analyse the CSM program at times so the best possible results can be achieved each time.

## 5.4 Service Quality and the SERVQUAL dimensions

This chapter deals with the concept of service quality, which is an element of customer perception. When considering pure service such as education or health care, service quality is a major factor when customers evaluate the service. Whereas customer service and physical products are offered together, the quality of service might become a significant factor in determining how satisfied the customers are. Service quality is in other words an important feature when concluding customer satisfaction. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 116)

According to Zeithaml et al. (2006, 116), customers judge service quality based on several factors. The research done by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry identifies five service quality dimensions; reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. The following paragraphs describe the five dimensions according to Zeithaml et al. (2006, 116-120) in more detail.

*Reliability* is the company's ability to perform the service dependably, accurately, and consistently keeping given promises on delivery, service provision, problem resolution and pricing. Keeping promises about service outcomes and core service attributes is the most significant factor in the eyes of the customers. Reliability is performing the service right the first time, as promised. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 117)

*Responsiveness* is the willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service. Responsiveness from the customer's view means how attentive to customer requests, questions, complaints and problems the company personnel is. The level of responsiveness is judged based on the time these issues are dealt with. If the customers feel they have to wait a long time, the perception of responsiveness is weakened. This dimension of service also includes flexibility and ability to customize to a particular customer's needs. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 117-118)

*Assurance* is the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence. Assurance dimension is important to high-risk services such as banking, medical or insurance. The employees need to have a certain level of knowledge and skill to treat customers with respect and make them feel that they can trust their business to the company. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 119-120)

*Empathy* is providing caring, individualized attention to customers. Providing individual and personal attention to specific customers portrays empathy and lets the customers know their needs are understood. Companies that provide this personal service are able to have a competitive edge against other companies that do not treat the customers as individuals. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 120)

*Tangibles* refer to the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials. Tangibles physically represent the service quality that customers evaluate. This dimension is especially important when it comes to new customers. Tangibles might be used to enhance the company image, provide continuity and signal quality to the customers but often tangibles have to be paired with another service dimension. For example, if no attention is paid to the appearance of tangibles such as the physical facilities, the responsiveness factor will have little effect on the customer's perceptions. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 120)

The above described service quality dimensions represent how consumers organise service quality information in their minds. The dimensions apply to various service contexts, including internal services. Sometimes customers use all of the dimensions in determining their service quality perceptions but sometimes only some of them are relevant. For instance, in the case of a phone service tangible factors are not included at all, yet other factors, such as the willingness to serve the customer and show responsiveness, still affect the customer's view of the service process. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 117)

In the case of customer satisfaction and service quality studies, all dimensions are relevant in some way. However, the dimensions that are most relevant in the case of this research are reliability, responsiveness and tangibles. Reliability is a factor in the case of the internal business travel services since services are mostly on the intranet as self-service. The internal customers need to trust the information on the intranet to be accurate and up-to-date at all times. Regarding the customer service on ticketing issues, the delivery time is important since often the business trips happen within a short period of time and tickets are needed quickly. This aspect also involves the responsiveness factors. The ticketing office personnel need to be willing to serve the internal customers by answering their questions and by providing prompt and fast service. Tangibles meaning the tickets and the intranet pages in this case affect the internal customers' evaluation of the services.

## 5.5 The Gaps Model of Service Quality

The SERVQUAL service quality dimensions are often regarded as the introduction to the Gaps Model of Service Quality. In this chapter the researcher takes a deeper look at the model which points out the key concepts, strategies and decisions in services marketing.

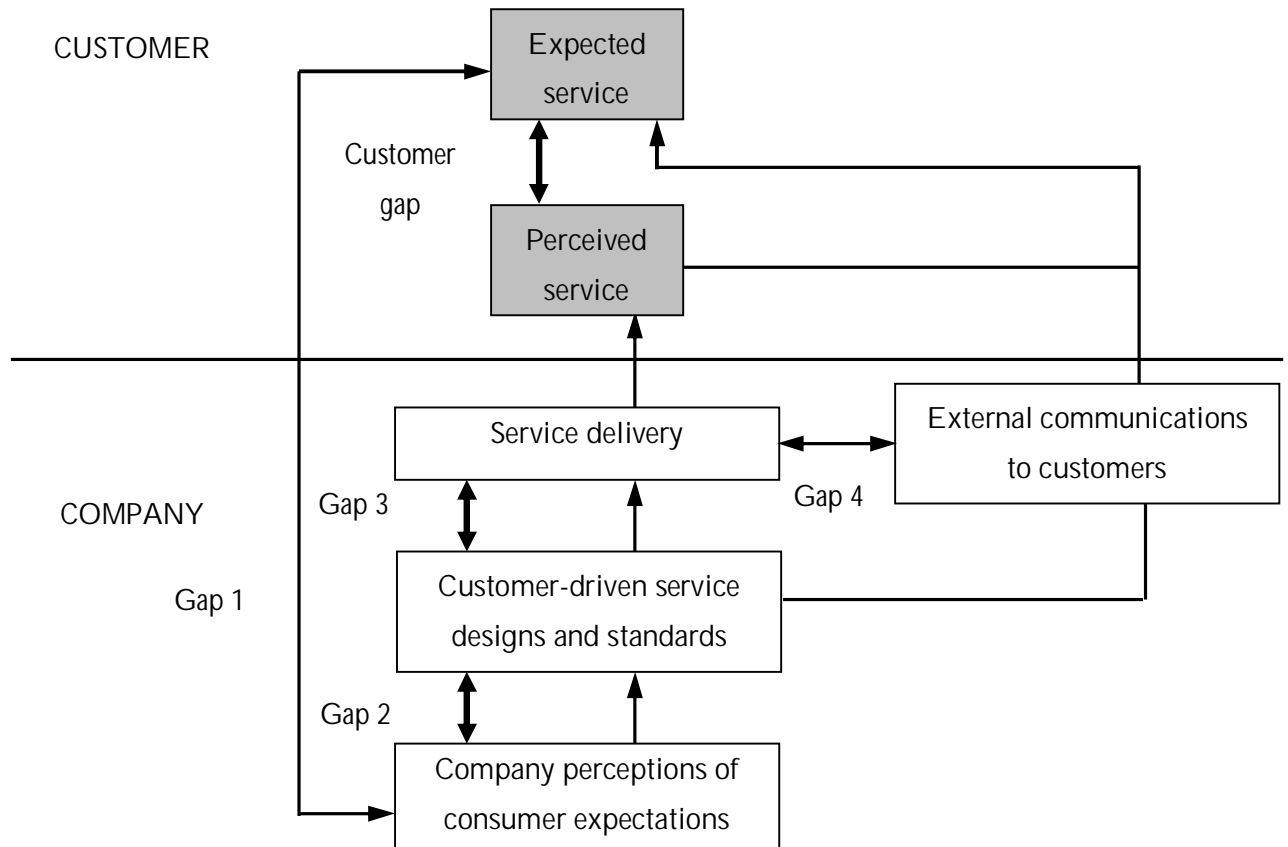


Figure 6. Gaps Model of Service Quality (Zeithaml et al., 2006, 46)

The customer gap is the difference between customer expectations and perceptions. Customer expectations are standards of service that the customer has prior to the service situation and perceptions are assessments of the actual service experienced in the service situation. Expectations are beliefs of what should happen and perception will be formed based on how the customer perceived the service he or she experienced. For example, when planning on eating in a fast-food restaurant, the customers do not expect to get high-class service. The customer gap forms the basis for the Gaps Model of Service Quality as it is vital to close the gap between customer expectations and perceptions to be able to provide excellent service quality. The smaller the gap between expectations and perceptions is, the better the service quality will be. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 33-34)

The service gaps described in the following paragraphs are the provider gaps. These gaps appear within the organisation delivering the service and hence, they are called the provider gaps. The Gaps Model suggests that all of the provider gaps need to be closed in order to close the customer gap.

Gap 1: "Not knowing what customers expect". This means there is a gap between the customer expectations and how the company understands those expectations. This gap results from lack of understanding the customers' needs and wants. If the company does not conduct customer satisfaction surveys or otherwise ask the customers of their wants and needs, it is likely that the company will experience this gap. Lack of communication between managers and customer is another cause for this gap. Managers need to ask questions about customer expectations or be prepared to address any arising problems. The company can also be keen on finding ways to make new customers and forgetting the importance of retaining existing customers. Additionally, how the company handles customer complaints has an effect on provider gap 1. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 35-38)

To close provider gap 1, the company needs to turn to its customers and implement marketing research strategies to find out what they want. Additional approach for minimizing provider gap 1 is building strong and lasting customer relationships so that customer needs can be monitored over time. Also creating service recovery strategies to deal with customer complaints is needed in case of a service failure. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 35-38)

Gap 2: "Not having the right service quality designs and standards". Another requirement, in addition to understanding customer's needs and wants correctly, is having service designs and performance standards that reflect the existing customer expectations are understood and enforced properly. Provider gap 2 is a result of the company having service designs that do not produce what the customers want. In addition to poor service design, the absence of customer-driven standards causes this gap. Thirdly, inappropriate physical evidence and servicescape creates provider gap 2. Physical evidence refers to the physical tools that the service is provided with, such as business cards and other equipment. Servicescape means the physical settings that the service is delivered in. Tangible objects and the servicescape need to be designed according to customer expectations and employee needs or the service quality suffers. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 38-39)

Gap 3: "Not delivering to service designs and standards". After having designed and implemented the right service quality designs and standards; systems, processes and people are

needed to ensure that the service delivered matches or exceeds the set standards. Provider gap 3 is inconsistency between development of customer-driven service standards and actual service performance of the company employees. Suitable resources and proper enforcement of the service standards need to be in place so that the service standard is delivered and the customer receives quality service. Poorly trained or poorly motivated workers can cause this gap to appear within the organisation. Management needs to ensure that employees have the skills and the proper tools to perform their jobs. Employees need to know what the management expects of them. Ineffective recruiting, role ambiguity or conflict, poor appraisals and compensation, lack of empowerment and team work are reasons behind gap 3. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 39-42)

Customers can also be the reasons behind gap 3. If customers do not know their roles and responsibilities, for example, do not follow instructions, they risk deteriorating the service quality. Customers can also negatively impact other customers by taking too much time in the service situation and making others wait. Problems can also arise with service intermediaries as it is difficult to control their performance quality. Gap 3 can also be a result of failing to match supply and demand. Services are cannot be put in storage for future demand so it is common for service companies to experience lack of capacity. Varying the size of the employee pool and marketing strategies such as price changes and advertising can help. (Zeithaml et al., 2006, 39-42)

Gap 4: "Not matching performance to promises". Provider gap 4 is the difference between service delivery and service provider's the external communication, hence it is a communication gap. If a company makes promises through advertising and other means of communication, the customer expectations may grow and standard of quality expected to be provided by the company becomes higher in their eyes. In case the customer expectations are raised, it also affects the customer gap which is based on the customer expectations. When reality does not add up to the promised level, the customers perceive low service quality. Companies need to create realistic customer expectations through honest and accurate communication about what they can and will provide. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 42-43)

Customer expectations can be managed and customers can be educated to use the services properly. Another aspect of provider gap 4 is the pricing of services. Pricing of services needs to be different than that of tangibles goods, as customers have no internal reference points for services prior to purchase and consumption whereas they have an idea of what the price level of goods should be, compared to similar products. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 42-43)



Service advertising promises what people will do and people cannot be controlled, and therefore, external marketing must be co-ordinated with interactive marketing which is the marketing between contact employees and customers. Employees who promote the service need to understand the reality of service delivery so they do not make exaggerated promises. When actual service delivery is co-ordinated with external communications the provider gap 4 is narrowed. This affects the customer gap positively as well. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 42-43)

A strategy for improving service quality includes closing all the provider gaps through one to four and keeping them closed. The service quality the customers perceive is threatened if one or more gaps exist in the organisation. The gaps model of service quality is a framework for improving service quality and services marketing. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 43)

The gaps that are examined more closely in this research are the customer gap and provider gap 1. If the management of the Travel Management unit do not know what the customer expect and how they perceive what they get, they will have problems in designing and delivering the right service standards to satisfy the internal business travel customers of the unit. Additionally, provider gap 3 has an essential role in the operations of the Travel Management unit as the internal business travel services are mostly self-service by nature, it is essential that the internal customers know where to look for information and how to apply it on their own as there is necessarily no one to guide them through the process.

## 6 Method Discussion

In this chapter the write will discuss the research method used in this study and also give details on the background of the questionnaire. The chapter also includes discussion on validity, reliability and objectivity.

### 6.1 Background Information of the Questionnaire

The empirical section of the thesis was based on the business travel services produced internally within the Finnair Group by its Travel Management unit. The quantitative questionnaire was designed together with the sponsor according to their wishes. The questionnaire was divided into eight sections based on the internal business travel services. The emphasis of the survey was on the customer service of the Staff Travel Office and therefore that section had the most questions. Each section also had an open-ended comment section. The sections are listed below:

1. Travel policy of Finnair Group
2. Customer service of the Staff Travel Office
3. Duty agreements with other airlines
4. Hotel agreements
5. Other co-operation agreements
6. Travel and expense management program
7. Intranet/duty travel

Other co-operation agreements refer to agreements with bus and boat companies, car rental, and meeting facilities. The travel and expense management program is part of the internal business travel services, however, it is owned by a subsidiary to Finnair, FTS Financial Services Oy. The Travel Management unit has been involved in the development and implementation of the program and is able to give feedback on the program features; though the final decision-makers concerning the program are at the subsidiary. The eighth section of the questionnaire was reserved for open-ended comments and feedback only.

The respondents of the questionnaire were selected on the basis of their membership in the so-called Travel Forum. As mentioned before, it is an information sharing forum between the Travel Management unit and the representatives of its internal business travel customers which are entire departments and subsidiaries. Currently Travel Forum has 42 representatives.

The members are responsible for arranging business travel services in their respective departments, and therefore, represent the views of that particular internal business travel customer in the Travel Forum. The forum also has three representatives from the Travel Management unit but they were not part of the sample as they are on the commissioning side of the research.

The questionnaire was given 5 February 2008 at a Travel Forum meeting. There were 20 representatives of internal business customers present. Also two representatives of Travel Management were present to introduce the study. Those who did not participate in the meeting received the questionnaire in internal mail with an envelope they could use to mail it back to the Travel Management. The questionnaires were sent 6 February 2008 and the deadline for sending it back was 12 February 2008.

## 6.2 Chosen Research Method

Chosen research method for this study is a quantitative method. The empirical data was gathered using a quantitative questionnaire. The method was chosen as it was the wish of sponsor to have numeric results from the survey.

A quantitative approach to research is one in which the researcher mainly uses post positivist claims for developing knowledge. This means cause and effect thinking, reduction to specific variables and hypotheses and questions, use of measurement and observation, and testing theories. In quantitative studies the researchers also employ strategies in inquiry such as experiments and surveys and collect data on predetermined instruments that generate statistical data. (Creswell 2003, 18)

Quantitative research often uses close-ended questions, predetermined approaches and produce numeric data. The purpose of quantitative research is to test theories and explanations. It identifies variables and relates them to the questions or hypotheses. Quantitative approach also uses standards of reliability and validity and unbiased methods in the research. The method observes and measures information numerically and statistically. (Creswell 2003, 19)

### 6.3 Validity

One aspect to consider when evaluating a research is its validity. The term validity refers to whether the research method used in the research measures what the researcher has intended it to measure. (Ghuri & Grønhaug 2005, 80) For example, if the respondents of a questionnaire do not understand the questions as the researcher has meant them to be understood, the answers do not give answers to the original research questions. If the researcher goes ahead with the analysis as he or she originally intended it and uses these misinterpreted answers when analysing, the research will not be valid. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2007, 227)

The measurement may also contain errors and affect the measurement. The respondents may vary in the way they respond, some normally use the extreme ends of the response scale while others prefer the centred options. However, their opinions of the questioned issues may be the same. The responses can also be influenced by personal or situational factors such as person's mood, time pressure or mechanical factors (e.g. checkmark in wrong box). (Ghuri & Grønhaug 2005, 80)

*Internal validity* refers to what extent a causal relationship exists between variables. A correlation as such does not indicate a causal relationship and does not indicate whether it is influenced by other factors. For instance, a positive correlation between the consumption of coffee and cancer has been found, other factors such as smoking while drinking coffee need to be taken into consideration when studying whether there really is correlation between coffee and cancer. (Ghuri & Grønhaug 2005, 85)

*External validity* relates to what extent the findings can be generalized. (Ghuri & Grønhaug 2005, 86) If the researcher uses the results from the sample data to generalize to wider concepts or groups beyond the sample wrongly, the external validity is at risk. For the research to externally valid, same results would be gotten if the study was to be conducted in another setting, time and to a different sample.

In this research personal and situational factors might have influenced the results as the questionnaire was given at the end of a meeting after a long day so the respondent might have been feeling tired and reluctant to fill in the questionnaire. The situation in the room as the questionnaire was handed out and filled in was slightly restless as well. Additionally, the respondents were sitting close to their co-workers and this might have influenced the

willingness to write honest opinions in case the colleagues see the answers. All of these factors may have influenced the responses.

#### 6.4 Reliability

According to Ghauri & Grønhaug (2005, 81) reliability refers to the stability of the measure. Research reliability means how similar the results would be if another researcher conducted the same research in another place and time. If the acquired results would be similar, the research can be said to be reliable.

In the case of this research, it would be fairly easy to get the same results if the survey was to be repeated as it is by another researcher in another place and time. In a quantitative questionnaire the answer options are mostly fixed so it would not be complicated to come to the same conclusions. The results of this study can also be generalized to some extent as the response percentage was ~59.52% of the sample population.

If plenty of time went by, however, acquiring similar results would probably be harder as there are changes on the way in the internal business travel services. Traditional customer service will be reduced and the services will be more automated and technology-related. Also the sample population might be quite different in case employees leave the company and new members are taken into Travel Forum.

#### 6.5 Objectivity

Remaining objective when conducting a research is vital for success of the research. As the researcher writes his or her interpretations of certain data and sources, it is important to remain objective and not mix own opinions with the actual data. The sources should be chosen with care and used in a proper manner and facts that are contradictory to the researcher have to be presented as well. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2007, 292-293)

This research studied the customer satisfaction of internal business travel services provided by Travel Management unit of Finnair. As the research was conducted for a company acting as a sponsor for the study, it is important to concentrate on the actual results and research findings, rather than giving the results preferable to the sponsor. In this case, the researcher is not being compensated for carrying out the study, and does not gain anything from portraying

certain kind of results, for example results that indicate higher level of customer satisfaction, it can be said that the research has been done objectively.

As the writer of the thesis had also worked in the Travel Management unit, it was also essential that her own opinions were not mixed with the opinions of the respondents. The researcher worked in the unit during a five-month internship period, and got an inside view of how the internal business travel services were arranged and handled at Finnair Group. She also served the internal customer personally and got her own opinion of the present situation of the internal business travel services. In that sense, careful consideration went into remaining objective and not letting personal opinions influence the research.

## 7 Results of the Study

In this chapter the researcher presents and analyse the questionnaire results. Firstly, the researcher describes the background of the questionnaire design and its actualisation. This is followed by the questionnaire results, presented in separate sections in the same way as in the questionnaire itself. Finally, the results will be analysed.

### 7.1 Questionnaire results

The total amount of questionnaires given at the Travel Forum meeting was 20 and 22 were sent via internal mail the next day. 19 questionnaires were filled in at the meeting and 6 answers were received via internal mail. Therefore, the total amount of responses gotten out of the 42 Travel Forum members was 25. The response rate was ~59.52%.

The results will be presented section by section in more detail the following subchapters. Each section has a scale from 0 to 5, with zero being I do not know, one poor and five excellent. The table below represents the average scores from each section.

#### 7.1.1 Travel Policy

There were three questions on the travel policy section. The main focus of the questions was on how accessible the policy is on Finnair's intranet and how clear and understandable it is to the readers. Personnel of Finnair Group need to be aware and able to apply the guidelines of travel when they are travelling on the company business but also to be aware what kind of tickets they can use and so on. The third aspect of this section was how changes or amendments to the policy are communicated by the Travel Management unit.

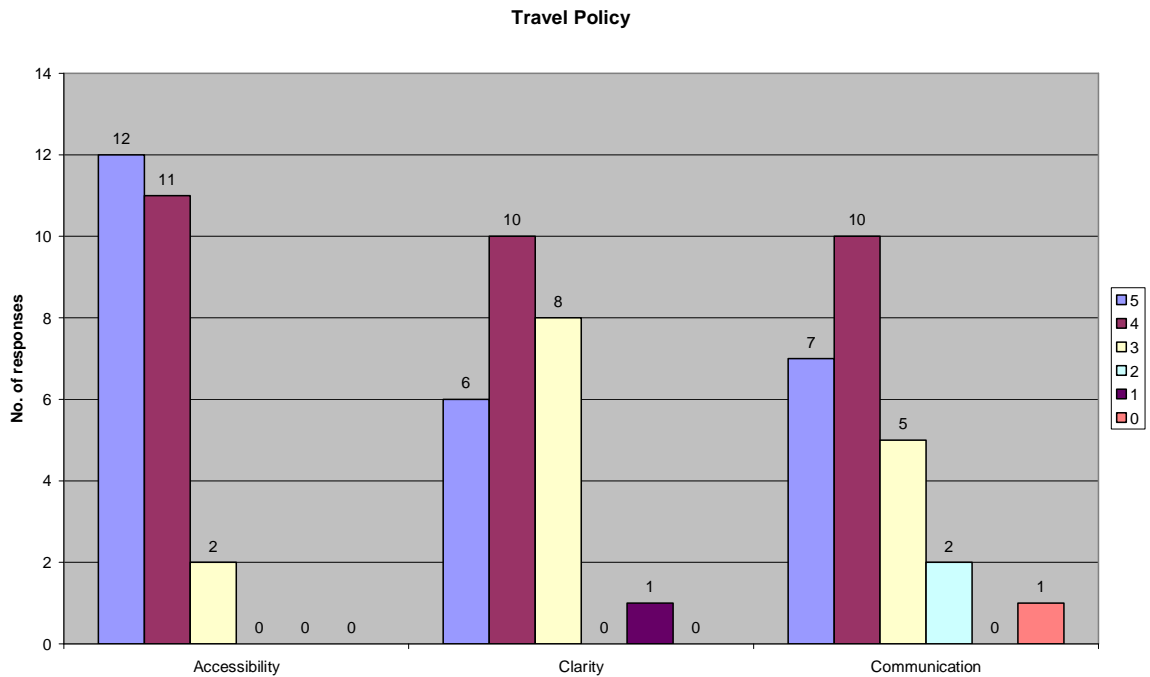


Figure 7. Travel Policy

Figure 7 above shows that the respondents think the accessibility of the policy is good, with the most answers being on the highest end of the scale. No lower values were chosen on the accessibility of the policy. When it came to clarity and communication, the answers were more varied. The emphasis is still on the high side of the scale indicating a fairly positive overall result on the travel policy. However, judging by the responses there is need for improvement in the areas of clarity and communication. The fact that some respondents indicated zero and one shows that these areas need some more attention, or perhaps the respondents are not experienced in these areas. All 25 of the respondents answered the questions on travel policy.

#### 7.1.2 Customer Service of Staff Travel Office

The purpose of the questionnaire was to focus on the actual customer service provided by the Travel Management unit through its service personnel from the Staff Travel Office in person, on phone and email. The Staff Travel Office provides ticketing and flight reservations, the only part of the internal business travel services of the Travel Management unit that is not a self-service. Therefore this section had the most questions, altogether eleven questions. The questions concerned firstly the communication flow from the Staff Travel Office regarding the internal business travel services but in addition, what kind of communication is received from the Staff Travel Office personnel. Whether the information provided by them is accurate



and whether they provide enough advice on alternative routes and other issues. Another aspect of the questions was on ticket delivery and their accuracy.

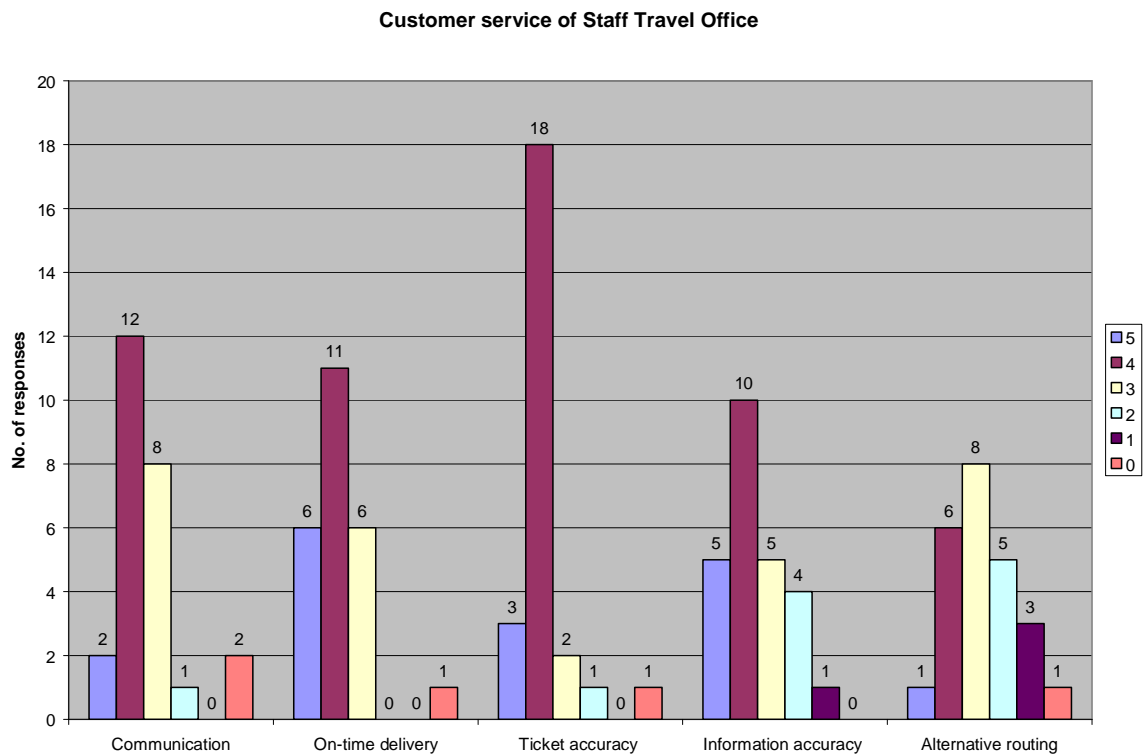


Figure 8. Customer Service of the Staff Travel Office

As shown in the figure above, the responses indicate that the respondents do not feel they get enough advice on when it comes to alternative routing. This question has the lowest overall score in the whole questionnaire as well. Issued tickets however, seem to be accurate from the respondent's point of view as the majority of them chose four on the scale. Ticket delivery on-time and communication got high scores as well. The question "Is the information provided by the Staff Travel Office accurate?" received mixed answers but the most popular choice of answer was still four which was the option chosen by ten respondents. In all of the questions options the lowest scores were also chosen by few of the respondent so there is room for improvement.

The section on the Staff Travel Office also dealt with the three possible means the internal business travel customers have for communicating with the service personnel from the Travel Management unit in ticketing issues; phone, email and counter. Firstly, "how well the personnel can be reached by each of these methods" and secondly, "what is the level of service provided once they are reached".

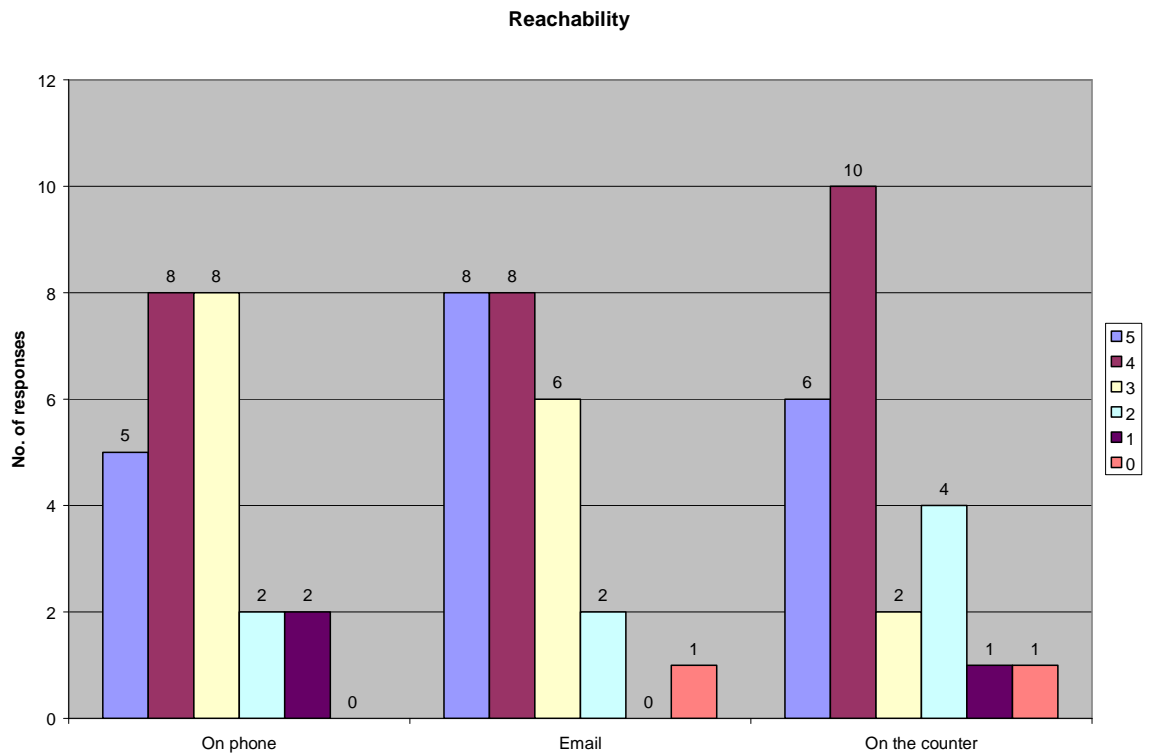


Figure 9. Reachability on phone, email and counter

Figure 9 shows how well the respondents felt they can reach the personnel in the Staff Travel Office via email, phone or in person on the counter of the office. Email seems to be the best way to reach the office according to the responses. The two other options, phone and on the counter received more low responses, yet overall the three methods do not vary that much from each other.

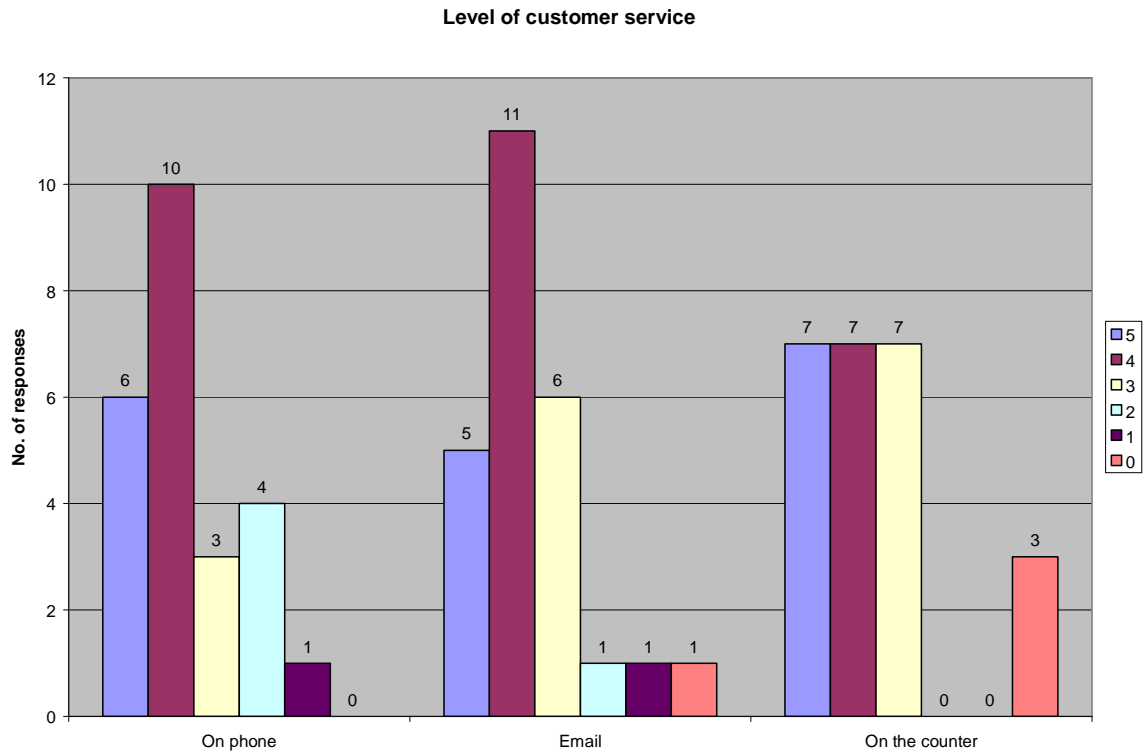


Figure 10. Customer Service Quality

In figure 10, the customer service quality is presented in the three areas; phone, email and on the counter. Once the customer reaches the office, the service quality they get appears to be on similar level by any of the methods. However, getting served in person on the counter got more mixed responses and the overall score is lower on that question. Service on the phone and on the counter is more dependent of the person serving so personal factors might effect the results. Also some of the respondents do not go to the office in person and that affects the scores.

### 7.1.3 Duty Agreements with Other Airlines

The section on duty agreements with other airlines had only two questions, “how easily the agreements can be found in the intranet” and “how understandable they are”.

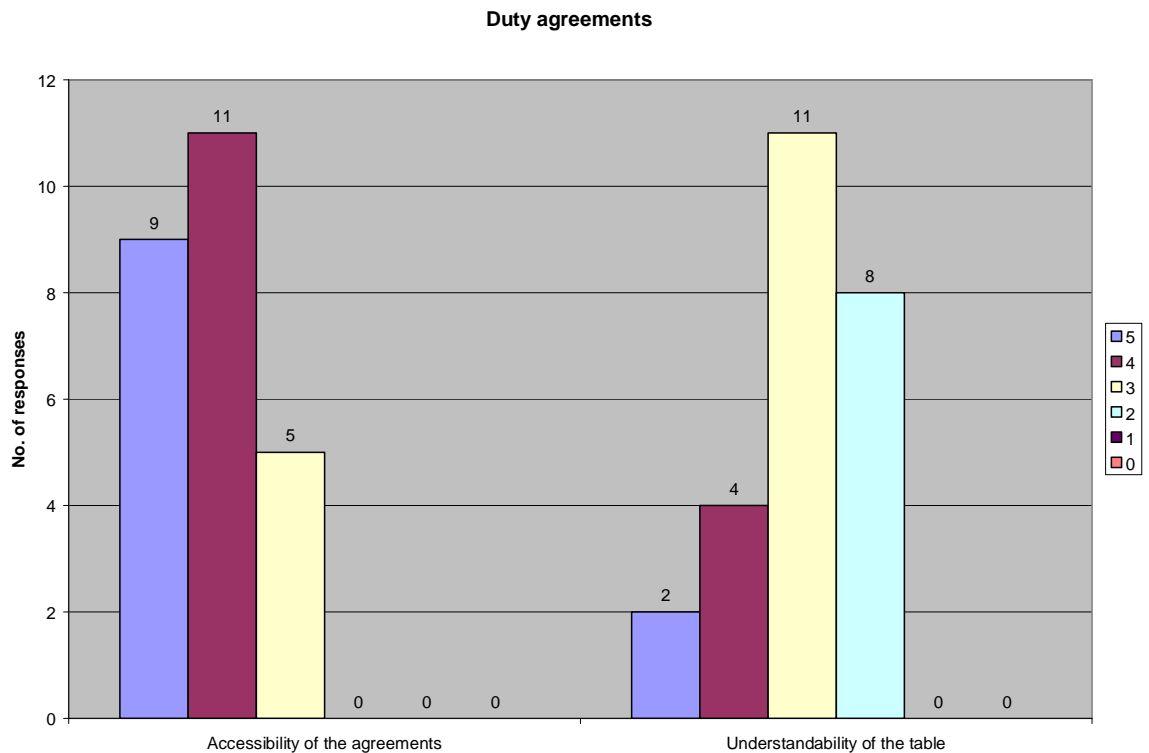


Figure 11. Duty Agreements with Other Airlines

Figure 11 indicates the respondents view's on the duty agreements. The accessibility of the agreements seems to be relatively good as there are no lower values present in the responses. The lowest score is three and most responses are four or five. The understandability of the table is not on the same level, yet still good. The higher values are fewer and eight respondents scored the understandability of the agreements as two.

#### 7.1.4 Hotels Agreements

The sections on hotel agreements had three questions. This section also concentrated on "how accessible the agreements are" and "how clear and understandable they are". Additionally there was a question on "how easy the booking process is".

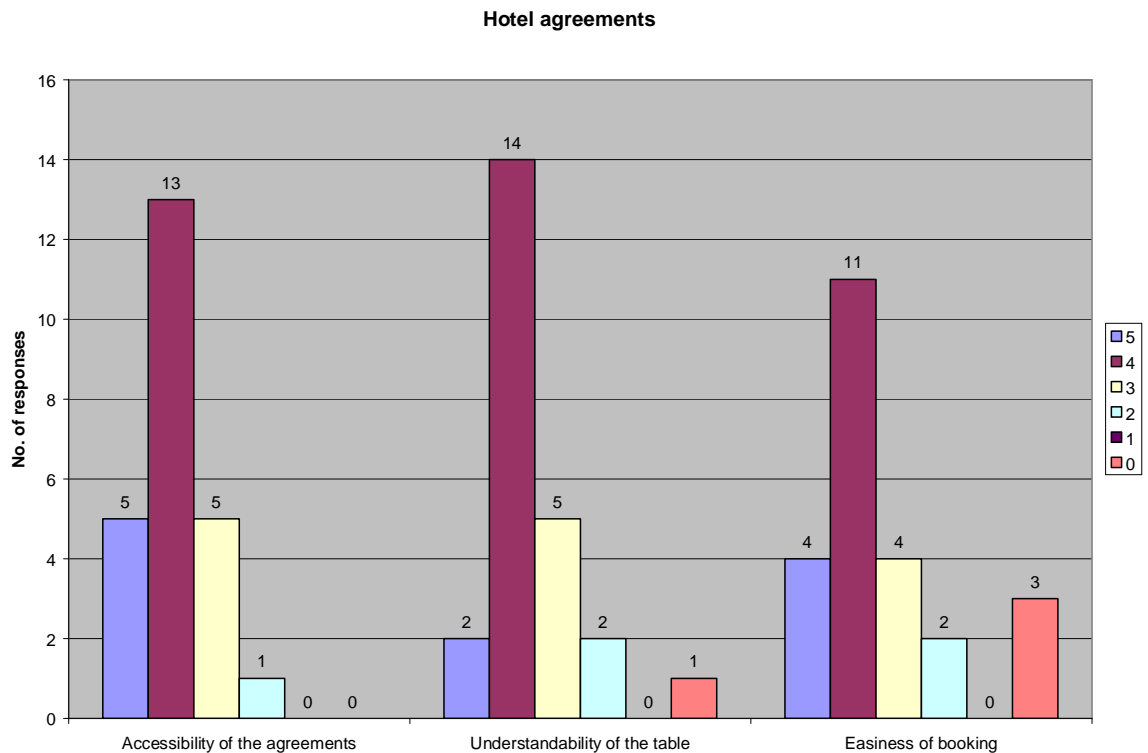


Figure 12. Hotel Agreements

Figure 12 illustrates how the answers on the hotel agreements are distributed. The respondents are clearly of the opinion that the agreements are easily accessible and understandable. The scores on the booking process seem to be a bit more spread but still the overall score is high, indicating that the booking is easy. The option “I do not know” was also chosen by three respondents on the question “how easy is it to book hotels” which may indicate that they have no experience of booking hotels yet.

#### 7.1.5 Other Co-Operation Agreements

The other co-operation agreements, i.e. agreements with car rental, bus and ferry companies and meeting facilities, focused only on the accessibility of the agreements. The agreements are located in the intranet pages and the question was “how easy they the agreements are to find”.

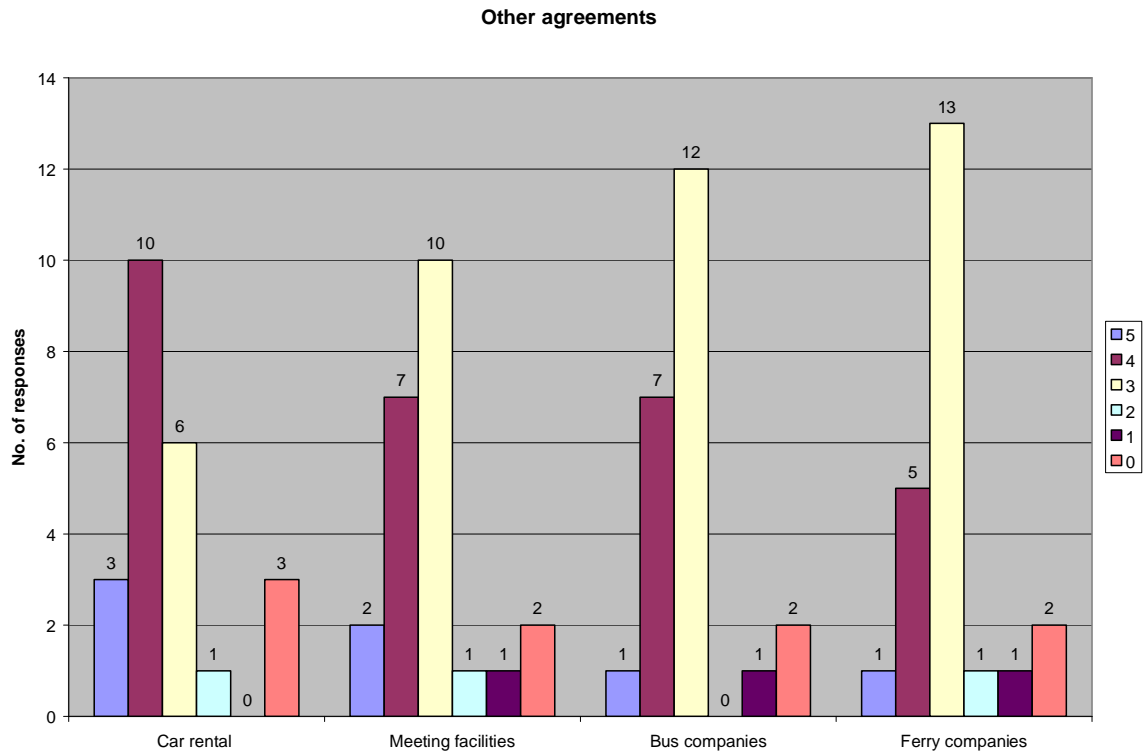


Figure 13. Other Co-Operation Agreements

As seen on figure 13, the responses indicate that the other co-operations are easily found. The highest scoring section is car rental whereas on the agreement with ferry companies the scores are the lowest. The most popular choice in the answers in this section has been three as shown in the figure but also four, especially when it comes to car rental. However, the option “I do not know” was frequently chosen and it indicates that these services are not very often used.

#### 7.1.6 Travel and Expense Management Program

As the Travel and Expense Management Program is in the process of changing, this section might have been slightly confusing to the respondents. Currently there are two programs in use and some use both simultaneously, until the old program webtraveller will completely be replaced with the new program TEM. Therefore, it is quite clear that it caused confusion among the respondents.

### Travel & Expense Management Program

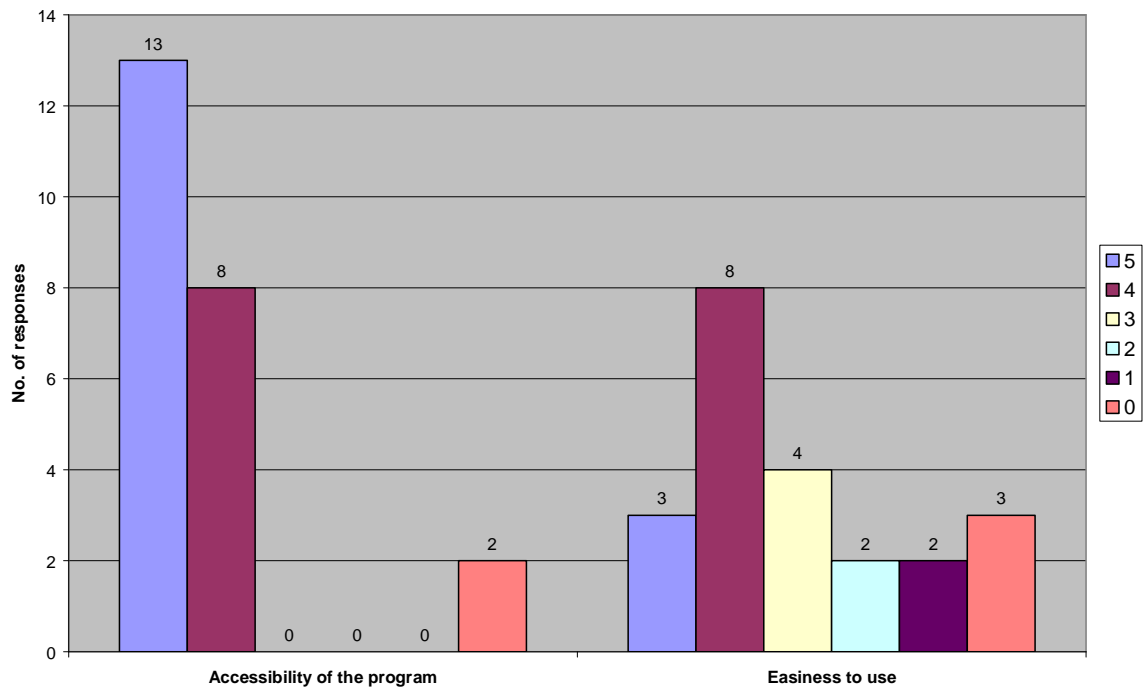


Figure 14. Travel and Expense Management Program

In figure 14, the responses on the accessibility and easiness to use are shown. According to the results, the accessibility of the program is excellent, though two respondents did not know where to find it. However, due to the confusion of the two programs being in simultaneous use at the moment, this section had only 22 answers out of the total 25 so three of the respondents left out this section complete without answering.

#### 7.1.7 Intranet ID/Duty Pages

There were four questions on the intranet section of the questionnaire. All the agreements and other information provided by the Travel Management unit are placed on the Finnair intranet pages. There is a separate section regarding travel information and the section is further divided into two, ID/leisure and ID/Duty. The first one is meant for internal leisure travel information and the latter for internal business travel information. This survey was concentrated on the business travel side of the pages and whether the information on the pages is clear, sufficient and up-to-date to the internal business travel customers.

Intranet's ID/duty pages

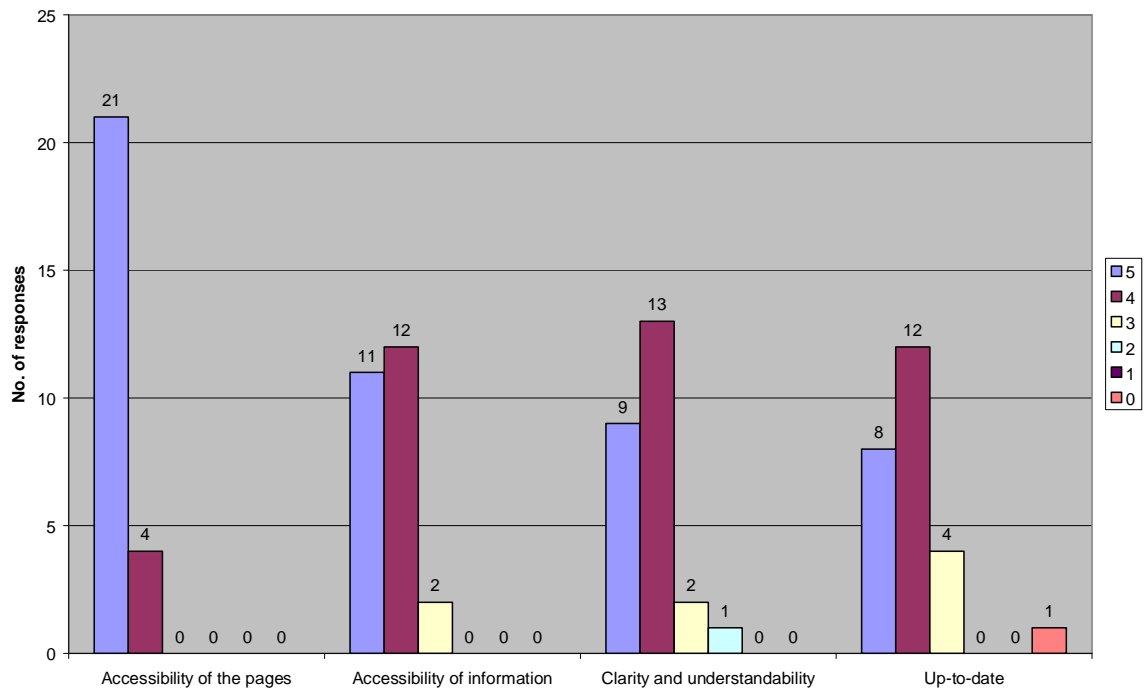


Figure 15. Intranet's ID/duty pages

In figure 15, the responses of the intranet are presented. The accessibility of the pages is excellent according to the responses. Also the pages seem to be clear and easily accessible with understandable information. Updating the pages however could be improved as it received some lower scores.

#### 7.1.8 Open-Ended Comments

The open-ended comment section was at the end of each section as well as a separate section at the end of the questionnaire. The sponsor of the study particularly wanted to encourage the respondents to express their opinions freely so feedback could be gathered and used in improving the internal business travel services of the Travel Management unit.

Open-ended comments on the travel policy indicated that perhaps the actual travellers are not as aware of the policy regulations as those that do the travel arrangements. The respondents felt that supervisors should get more information on the changes so that the secretary of a department is not the only one that knows. One respondent pointed out that "the travel policy could be located on its own in the intranet, not among other company guidelines" to make it more accessible and clear.



The second section of the questionnaire received the most comments but also had the most questions. The majority of the comments regarding the customer service of the Staff Travel Office and ticketing issues concerned the level customer service received from the service personnel. Comments such as “service level depends on the person” and “I feel as if I am disturbing the service personnel” indicate strongly that the satisfaction level is quite low and the service quality varies according to which employee happens to be at the counter, phone or email.

Duty agreements with other airlines received comments on the clearness of the table. The respondents felt that the table is not as clear as it could be. The excel table contains information also for the ticket issuers/Staff Travel Office personnel and it causes confusion according to the respondents. Some of the respondents suggested that “different colours could be used to differentiate the columns meant for the ticket issuers and for the customers”.

The comments on the other co-operation agreements as well as on the hotel agreements indicated that these agreements have either not been used by all of the respondents or they have not gotten to know them yet. One respondent also wished that there would be a more extensive range of agreements, or rather service providers, to choose from. One of the comments on the hotel agreement was “we get tips on which hotels to book from the sales units abroad” so it might be that not all of the internal business travel customers use the hotels indicated on the intranet pages.

The section on the travel and expense management program got some mixed comments. As the program is in the process of being changed, the respondents were confused as to which one they should comment on. At the moment both programs are in use in some departments while others are still using the old program. Comments on the current program included “the system is old and complicated” and it seems that the respondents are looking forward to the new program; however, one respondent feared that “the new program will bring new problems to replace the existing issues”.

Comments on the intranet duty pages included a remark about “possibly marketing the pages better within the organisation as they are a good source of information, yet the users are not aware of them” and in general, the respondent felt that in people do not know how to take the full advantage of the pages.

The remarks from the feedback section included a comment pointing out that service should be provided in “an understandable language as the booking codes and terms are not familiar to all”. The fact that the table of the duty agreements has information for both the ticket issuers adds to the confusion if the terms are not familiar to the users of the table and the result is that they do not know which information is even relevant to them. Amongst the comments on the feedback section was a wish for “an organisation-wide policy as to which kind of tickets are issued”. According to the respondent, it is not clear, what kinds of tickets are allowed to be issued for the internal business traveller customers. Another comment was “there should be a hierarchy system for those that travel often”, so they would get better service. One of the respondents also suggested “whether the Staff Travel Office could also handle visa applications of the business travellers”.

Overall, the open-ended comments were concentrated on the customer service of the Staff Travel Office and in particular the service personnel. Some of the sections got very few comments and the amount of the comments in total does not indicate a high level of interest in changing and developing the internal business travel services. If the service included more face-to-face interaction in all aspects of the internal business travel services, the situation might be different.

## 7.2 Analysis of the Results

In this section the researcher presents the main findings of the questionnaire and analyses the results.

According to the survey findings, it can be summarised that the overall customer satisfaction level of the internal business travel services provided by the Travel Management unit is good, yet not excellent. The results indicate a 3.7 final average for the overall performance, if a number digit is to be construed on a scale of 0 – 5 for the general performance of the Travel Management unit. The average values from each section are presented in figure 16 below.

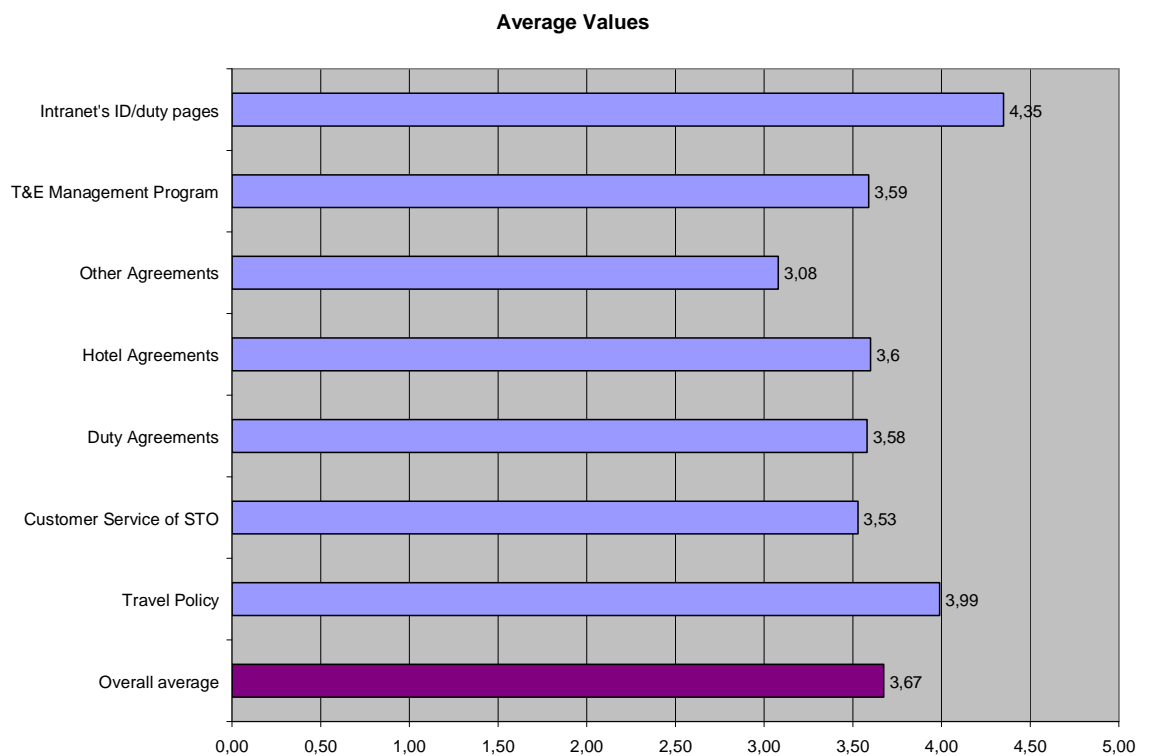


Figure 16. Average Values of the Responses

Travel policy is an important, if not the most important issue when it comes to setting the structure of travelling within a company. The policy needs to be understood by the company's entire personnel to be effective. According to the results of the questionnaire, the travel policy of Finnair Group seems to be well understood across the organisation. Most answers were "excellent" or "very good", when questioned on the clarity of the policy. As seen in figure 16, the travel policy got the second highest rating according to the responses. However, one of the respondents scored the clarity of the policy as "poor" and it sends a message that the travel policy is not clear to everyone.

Judging by the answers, the respondents feel the service they receive is not very customer-friendly. Most of the open-ended comments concerned the fact that customer service at the Staff Travel Office is not up to a high standard. The fact that both the customers and service employees are employees of the same company might have an effect on this. The service personnel within the Travel Management unit may feel they are on the same level as the internal customers they are serving and as a result do not provide as good service as they would to an external customer. However, the provider gap 3 in the Gaps Model of Service Quality indicates that it can also be uneducated customers that cause a negative impact on others by not taking too much of the service personnel's time, for instance. The service employees need to have the right skills to perform their jobs, and the management needs to ensure right people are hired for the customer service positions.

On duty agreements it can be said that the accessibility of the agreements is good as the lowest score was three and overall the answers are not varied at all, the scores are between five and three. This correlates with the frequency of the use of the agreements table. It is the most important tool when it comes to checking which airlines Finnair has agreements with and what kind of tickets are available. The clarity and understandability of the agreements however, is an issue to be looked at more carefully. Eight of the respondents chose the answer option two indicating that the agreements are not clear to them. Due to the fact that there is information for both the ticket issuers and the travellers causes confusion for the users. According to the provider gap 2 of the Gaps Model, tangibles need to be designed so that customer expectations and needs are met or the service quality is in danger of suffering. Since the duty agreements table is an essential tool of the internal business travel services, it needs to be developed to satisfy the customer needs.

Hotel agreements can be found on the intranet as well but the booking service is not provided by the Travel Management unit. Each traveller or his or her secretary takes care of the hotel bookings on their own. It is the same with car rental, bus and boat companies and meeting facilities. The agreements are negotiated and provided by the Travel Management unit of Finnair, though the actual booking is a self-service so to say. Bearing this in mind, the awareness and usability of the agreements on the intranet needs to be high in order for the service quality to be high. The level of awareness of the hotel agreements seems to be good at the moment, judging by the responses. As the scores on the easiness of booking were a bit lower than on the accessibility and understandability, and also three of the respondents indicated " I do not know" on the question about booking. It might be that the respondents do not need to book hotels so much and have not got that much experience on the area for

that reason. The same can be said on the other co-operation agreements. This section's responses included more answers indicating "I do not know" than the rest of the sections.

The travel and expense management program was included in the questionnaire even though it is not produced by the Travel Management unit but by a subsidiary to Finnair. The program is very much involved in the internal business travel services. The Staff Travel Office cannot issue tickets without a travel plan being put into the program and approved by the employee's supervisor. This section caused confusion because it was not clearly indicated which of the programs currently in use the questions were meant for. It is also difficult to analyse which program the responses correlate with. The accessibility seems to be excellent as 21 respondents chose the option "excellent" or "very good". The usability however, got really mixed and varied answers and this most likely is due to the confusion of the questioning. However, since the program is not designed by the Travel Management unit, even if the scores were really poor, they can only give feedback but cannot change the features according to their wishes.

## 8 Conclusion

Usually, if customers are not satisfied with the services provided, they can choose to take their business elsewhere and the company will lose valuable income. In the case of internal services, the situation is different. At Finnair, the internal business travel services are accessible through different self-service channels provided by the Travel Management unit. The internal business travel customers cannot choose where to do business in and the only option for anyone in the organisation is to use the internal business travel services offered by the Travel Management unit when in need of travelling for business. It is important that the satisfaction level remains high in the internal service environment, though there is no competition. Unsatisfied employees may not perform their best in serving external customers. Poor internal service may also lead to huge SERVQUAL gaps that lower the service quality of the entire organisation.

Factors that contribute to the satisfaction of the internal business travel customers are getting necessary information and understanding it so it can be applied in practise. The delivery of accurate tickets is another important factor as it is the main physical evidence of the internal business travel services provided by the Travel Management unit of Finnair. Being able to reach the service personnel fast and when needed is another aspect of the customer satisfaction as well as how customer-oriented or friendly the provided service is.

It was evident from the answers that the customer service level is not up to the highest standard according to the respondents; it often depends on the person serving. The management of Travel Management unit have to solve the problems with providing service to internal customers. They need to understand and enforce the concept of internal customers also to the service personnel at the Staff Travel Office. The internal customers need to be served as well as external customers are served. The better the service internal customers get, the better service can be given to the external customers outside the organisation. If the internal service provided is poor, the external service provided by Finnair Group employees to the company's external customers is in danger of suffering as a repercussion and in the end; the profitability of the entire Finnair Group is at stake.

### 8.1 Suggestions for Improvement

As pointed out earlier, one of the major aims when initiating this survey was to create a continuous assessment of the satisfaction level within the Travel Management unit. The questionnaire created for this research is fairly easy to repeat in the following years since it is a

quantitative survey and all the questions are fixed. Some changes, however, have to be made to questions on the travel and expense management program as it is in the process of changing and the old program will be replaced. It is left for the subsequent researchers to decide whether to use the current questionnaire or create a brand new one for the issues at hand. Though, the most important issue is that the same phenomena are studied with the same variables in order for the results to be comparable with the results of this study. Some amendments could be made to categorize the respondents so for example, the effects of experience vs. technological knowledge can be pointed out from the responses. According to the model of Customer Perception of Quality and Customer Satisfaction seen on figure 3, personal factors such as previous experience of travel services in this case, affect how the internal customers view the services provided to them.

Also, if the exact same questionnaire is distributed to the same sample group the following year, the results can easily be compared to the previous results as any changes will be easily visible from the answers. However, bearing in mind that possible changes in the organisation, such as employees reassigned to different tasks and therefore leaving the Travel Forum, changes the sample group used for this study and alters the research results as well.

Having a service recovery strategy and ability to deal with complaints is needed for closing provider gap 1. The Travel Management unit of Finnair offers the possibility to give feedback through phone, email and in person in its Staff Travel Office. Also the Travel Forum acts as a feedback channel so the facilities to complain are in place but need to be further developed. Possibly an easily accessible form or section in the intranet pages where the internal customers can go and express their views on the services or ask about issues they are unsure about, without identifying themselves would increase the level of feedback. Through the received feedback, service can then be improved to satisfy the customers.

It is important that the management of the Travel Management unit does not assume information on the internal business travel services is familiar to all of the internal customers. It is their job to make sure that the provided information clear and is understood and in case there are misapprehensions or confusion, they are obliged to provide the accurate information. Strategies for closing provider gap 4 include the possibility of educating customers so they know how to act and what to do in the service situations.

Service designs and standards need to be designed so that they match with what the customers want and furthermore, so the service designs enable the employees to provide the services.

When improving the service processes, the views of the employees providing the service are important and need to be heard. If the service designs and standards are not designed to match the customers wants, provider gap 2 will appear and decrease the service quality level.

According to the results of the study, provider gap 3 appears most obviously in the Travel Management unit of Finnair. The employees are not delivering the service up to the set standards. The management of the unit needs to make sure that employees have the skills needed for the job by recruiting and training the right employees. Also providing the right tools for performing the job is essential in closing the gap between service designs and their delivery.



## 8.2 Suggested Further Research

Further research on the customer satisfaction of internal business travel services provided by the Travel Management unit of Finnair will be carried out by the sponsor themselves. The aim is to issue the same survey each year so the satisfaction level can be monitored continuously. The results can then be compared to the results of this research.

The point of view of the service personnel working in the Staff Travel Office was left out from this study but research could be conducted on the providing side of the internal business travel services. The employee needs and wants should also be taken into consideration when designing the service processes. According to Naumann & Giel (1995) job satisfaction plays a role in internal customer satisfaction. Therefore, some research on the effect of job satisfaction on the internal business travel services could be done in the future.

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## FINNAIRIN HENKILÖKUNNAN TYÖMATKAPALVELUT

### Asiakastyytyväisyystutkimus 2008

Tämä kyselyn tavoitteena on saada Finnairin sisäistä työmatkapalveluista palautetta ja sitä kautta parantaa palvelujemme toimivuutta ja asiakasystävällisyyttä. Kysely kohdistetaan Travel Forumin jäsenille. Kyselyssä on kahdeksan osuutta ja arvosteluasteikko on nolasta viiteen. Täytä kysely merkitsemällä rasti ruudukkoon valitsemasi numeron kohdalle. Toivoisimme, että myös perustelet vastauksesi. Kiitos vastauksistasi!

Asteikolla nolasta viiteen, 0=en osaa sanoa, 1=erittäin huono, 5=erittäin hyvä.

<b>1 Matkustussääntö</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
a. Kuinka helposti sääntö on löydettävissä?						
b. Kuinka selkeä ja ymmärrettävä sääntö on?						
c. Kuinka hyvin saat tiedon sääntömuutoksista?						
<b>Muita kommentteja matkustussäännöstä?</b>						
<b>2 Henkilökunnan lipputoimiston työmatkapalvelu</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
a. Miten lipputoimiston työmatkatiedotus toimii?						
b. Kuinka ajallaan saat tilaamasi liput?						
c. Kuinka virheettömiä saamasi liput ovat?						
d. Koetko saavasi virheetöntä tietoa lipputoimiston henkilökunnalta?						
e. Miten saat tarvittaessa vaihtoehtoista reititysneuvontaa?						
f. Miten lipputoimiston henkilökunta on tavoitettavissa?						
1) puhelimitse						
2) sähköpostitse						
3) tiskillä						
g. Millaista asiakaspalvelua koet saavasi lipputoimistossa työmatka-asioissa?						
1) puhelimitse						
2) sähköpostitse						
3) tiskillä						
<b>Muita kommentteja lipputoimiston työmatkapalvelusta?</b>						
<b>3 Työmatkalippusopimukset vieraiden lentoyhtiöiden kanssa</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
a. Kuinka helposti sopimustaulukko on löydettävissä?						
b. Kuinka selkeä ja ymmärrettävä sopimustaulukko on?						
<b>Muita kommentteja vieraiden yhtiöiden työmatkasopimuksista?</b>						

<b>4 Hotellisopimukset</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
a. Kuinka helposti sopimustiedot ovat löydettävissä?						
b. Kuinka selkeät ja ymmärrettävät sopimustiedot ovat?						
c. Kuinka helppoa hotellihuoneiden varaaminen on?						
<b>Muita kommentteja hotellisopimuksista?</b>						
<b>5 Miten helposti löydät tietoa työmatkapalveluiden muista sopimuksista?</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
a. Autonvuokraus						
b. Kokoustilat						
c. Bussiyhtiöt						
d. Laivayhtiöt						
<b>Muita kommentteja työmatkapalveluiden muista sopimuksista?</b>						
<b>6 Matkahallintajärjestelmä (webtraveller/TEM)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
a. Kuinka helposti järjestelmä on löydettävissä?						
b. Kuinka helppoa järjestelmän käyttö mielestäsi on?						
<b>Muita kommentteja matkahallintajärjestelmästä?</b>						
<b>7 Intranetin ID/työsivut</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
a. Kuinka helposti sivut ovat löydettävissä?						
b. Kuinka helposti tieto sivuilla on löydettävissä?						
c. Kuinka selkeää ja ymmärrettävää tieto sivuilla on?						
d. Miten ajan tasalla sivujen tiedot ovat?						
<b>Muita kommentteja intranetin ID/työsivuista?</b>						
<b>8 Muita parannusehdotuksia tai palautetta yleisesti työmatkapalveluja koskien?</b>						

Hyvä Travel Forumilainen

Ohessa löydät kyselyn, jonka tarkoituksena on saada palautetta Finnairin sisäisistä työmatkapalveluista ja sitä kautta parantaa työmatkapalvelujen toimivuutta ja asiakasystävällisyyttä. Kysely kohdistetaan Travel Forumin jäsenille. Kysely on myös osa allekirjoittaneen opinnäytetyötä, jonka teen Haaga-Helian ammattikorkeakoululle. Opiskelen englanninkielisessä matkahallintoon erikoistuneessa koulutusohjelmassa.

Vastaamalla kyselyyn annat arvokasta palautetta työmatkapalveluista ja tärkeää materiaalia opinnäytetyötäni varten. Lomake koostuu kahdeksasta eri osuudesta. Arvosteluasteikko on nollasta viiteen, mutta jokaisessa osuudessa on mahdollisuus antaa myös vapaamuotoisia kommentteja. Kahdeksantena osuutena on vielä erillinen palaute- ja kommenttiosuus.

Ohessa löydät myös palautuskirjeen, jossa voit kyselyn täytettyäsi laittaa sisäiseen postiin henkilökunnan lipputoimiston palvelupäällikölle Minna Pekkalalle osoitteella .....Travel Forum kysely.

Vastaathan kyselyyn mahdollisimman pian. Postita vastauksesi kuitenkin viimeistään tiistaina 12.02.2008. Vastaukset käsitellään luottamuksellisesti.

Kiitokset jo etukäteen!

Ystävällisin terveisin

Jenni Huhtiniemi

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