

Consumer attitudes towards hotel products and services

Heidi Holmberg

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Author:	Heidi Holmberg
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Supervisor (Arcada):	Susanna Fabricius
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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>This thesis is about finding out if there are differences in consumer behaviour and how these possibly affect or are shown in the accommodation market. With the results I will suggest how Omena Hotels can develop their concept, products and services.</p> <p>Theories used for the study are about service development, consumer behaviour (age subcultures) and tourism of the future. To back up the theories, a web based survey was conducted and shared on Facebook during a three week period. The survey was in Finnish and collected 1055 answers that were afterwards analyzed with the help of SurveyMonkey and Excel.</p> <p>From the results it was clear that although many accommodation preferences are the same in different age groups, there are still some behavioural aspects that are inconsistent in the groups. The future of accommodation is also changing and consumers are becoming more demanding, really wanting value for money or even more. In conclusion, for Omena Hotels the best approach would be to firstly improve their core product, then find out who their customers are and who do they want to concentrate on, and then develop products and services that suit those customers.</p>	
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<p>Sammandrag:</p> <p>Detta examensarbete behandlar skillnader i konsumentbeteende och hur de möjligen påverkar eller syns i logi marknaden. Med resultaten kommer jag att föreslå hur Omena Hotels kan utveckla sitt koncept, produkter och tjänster.</p> <p>Använda teorierna för detta arbetet är tjänsteutveckling, konsumentbeteende (ålders subkulturer) och turismen i framtiden. För att få stöd för teorierna, var en nätbaserad enkät gjord och delad på Facebook under en tre veckors period. Enkäten var på finska och samlade 1055 stycken svar som i efterhand var analyserade med hjälp av Survey-Monkey och Excel.</p> <p>Från resultaten var det klart att fastän många logi preferenser är samma i olika ålders grupper, finns det ändå några beteende aspekter som är inkonsekventa i ålders grupperna. Framtidens logi håller även på att ändra, konsumenterna börjar bli mera krävande och vill verkligen ha värde för pengarna, eller t.o.m. mera.</p> <p>Sammanfattande, för Omena Hotels är bästa tillvägagångssättet att först förbättra deras huvudprodukt, sedan ta read på vem som verkligen är deras kund och vem de vill koncentrera sig på, och sedan utveckla produkterna och tjänsterna för att passa dessa kundgrupper.</p>	
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OPINNÄYTE	
Arcada	
Koulutusohjelma:	Matkailuala
Tunnistenumero:	4539
Tekijä:	Heidi Holmberg
Työn nimi:	Kuluttaja asenteet hotelli tuotteita ja palveluita kohtaan
Työn ohjaaja (Arcada):	Susanna Fabricius
Toimeksiantaja:	Omena Hotels Oy
<p>Tiivistelmä:</p> <p>Tämä opinnäytetyö käsittelee eroavaisuuksia kuluttajakäyttäytymisessä ja kuinka se mahdollisesti vaikuttaa tai näkyy majoitus markkinoilla. Tuloksien perusteella tulen ehdottamaan miten Omena Hotels voi kehittää konseptiaan, tuotteitaan ja palveluitaan.</p> <p>Käytetyt teoriat tässä työssä ovat palvelun kehittäminen, kuluttajakäyttäytyminen (ikä alakulttuurit) ja tulevaisuuden matkailuala. Teorioiden tueksi, tehtiin web-pohjainen kyselytutkimus joka jaettiin Facebookissa kolmen viikon ajan-jaksona. Suomenkieliseen kyselyyn sain 1055 kappaletta vastausta jotka jälkikäteen analysoitiin SurveyMonkeyn ja Excelin avulla.</p> <p>Tuloksista päätellen oli selvää että vaikka moni majoitus suositus oli sama eri ikäryhmässä, löytyi kuitenkin joitain käyttäytymisaspekteja jotka olivat epäjohdonmukaisia. Tulevaisuudessa majoitusala on myös muuttumassa, kuluttajat alkavat olemaan vielä vaativimpia ja haluavat todellakin saada arvoa rahoilleen, ellei jopa enemmän.</p> <p>Yhteenvetona, Omena Hotelsille paras lähestymistapa on ensin parantaa heidän päätuotettaan, tämän jälkeen ottaa selvää ketä heidän asiakkaansa oikeasti ovat ja kehen he haluavat keskittyä, ja sitten kehittää tuotteet ja palvelut sopimaan näihin asiakasryhmiin.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

The travel industry is constantly changing and the amount of people traveling is growing bigger every year. According to UNWTO's World Tourism Barometer and Statistical Annex for the beginning of year 2014, international arrivals grew by 5% and for the period May - August 2014, over 460 million tourists are expected to travel abroad. The strongest growths were seen in Asia, the Pacific and the Americas, with Europe and Africa following behind. The continuing growth in traveling has already during the last four years grown by approximately ten million. In the centre of the growth are clearly Asia (South Asia and North-East Asia) and the Pacific. Europe has kept its' strong popularity through the years. (UNWTO, 2014:1)

According to PRB (Population Reference Bureau), the increase in the world population has had a growth rate of 237 209 people a day in 2014, where 4 017 are from the more developed countries and 233 193 from the less developed countries (PRB, 2014:3). Poverty rates have been seen falling in many countries and child mortality rates are steadily declining throughout the whole world (ibid:4). The age structure in the world has changed quite a lot since 1970, with people aged 30 or more declining in numbers by age group, but people aged 0-30 keeping a steady higher number altogether (ibid:5). These stats clearly show that the population is steadily growing throughout the world, people are becoming more wealthier and the different age groups show us how the population is divided and will approximately look like in the future.

There is no denying that the future population will be bigger since eg. technology and health care are constantly developing for the better, giving people better living conditions and opportunities to strive and succeed in life. Society in the mean time shape what different people do, see and believe. Still we can't forget that the outcomes of eg. world economy and aging population, will also affect the world and people of tomorrow. These factors, and many more, are a part of what will shape the tourism industry in the future. How businesses will survive in the future, is a lot depending on how they understand the consumers that run the world, today and tomorrow.

The changes in the world can also be seen in accommodations, where hotel chains are having a more difficult time to strive and please consumers, and boutique, theme, luxury and budget luxury accommodations are going their own successful way. People are becoming more comfortable and demanding when traveling, which means that hotels need to offer more variety and specific traits to appeal to certain types of consumers. At the same time the internet has made it a lot easier for people to compare and judge what is already on the market. The more tricks, treats and special features in an accommodation, the better.

For Omena Hotels, the last half a year to a year, has been one of the hardest times for the company because of company reorganization. A couple of hotels have due to the reorganization been shutdown, but also new ideas with franchising has been taken into trial. The worst part now being over, it's time to start thinking about how to rejuvenate the business and the hotels in order to become one of the leading hotel chains in Finland, and hopefully more in the future. For this to be able, a serious look into how the travel and hotel industry is developing or will develop, needs to be taken. There has to be an understanding to what the population looks like now and in the future, what the world looks and will look like, and how this has to show in hotels and accommodations. For that specific reason, I've conducted this thesis.

1.1 Problem area

The problem at this point, is that Omena Hotels has a unique concept that involves minimum staff with no reception, no restaurants, no bars etc. at the hotels. Instead of the traditional hotels where the staff are doing most of the work, in Omena Hotels the customer does all the work, and everything not so necessary, is removed altogether. This is perfect for the people who don't need any extra from their accommodation. With this concept, Omena Hotels are able to offer cheaper accommodation with a good quality. The question is, how open are consumers for this and are there still some things they are not open to let go of? After all, the idea is not to strip the hotel from everything unnecessary to make it cheap, but to make it something that is easier, faster and more exciting. How we can find the perfect balance with the amount and sort of services and amount of customers choosing Omena Hotels, is the big question. What do consumers

see regarding services, as the most fundamental and what could they be willing to pay for? What exactly needs to be taken into consideration when choosing services and making the concept as attractive as possible for the right customers?

1.2 Purpose and demarcation

The main purpose of this thesis is to find out how the different generations see accommodations and what these have to offer, and see if there are clear changes in consumer behaviours in the accommodation market. With the result I hope to give more answers to Omena Hotels on what could and would be the best way to improve or change the concept and brand for the future.

1.3 Method and theories

I'm using a quantitative method to find out consumer thoughts and preferences on accommodation. I'm going to conduct a survey for Omena Hotels regarding consumer demands and wants in the accommodation world. The survey will be distributed on the internet to as many people as possible and to ensure a huge response rate, the survey will also be shared on Omena Hotels Facebook page. With the survey I want to find out what kind of behaviour is common in different age groups when traveling and needing to accommodate in a hospitality establishment. I also hope to find glimpses of how traveling and accommodation are seen by the different generations and estimate how the hospitality industry according to these findings will develop in the future.

Since Omena Hotels is my assignment principal, the thesis will concentrate on giving service development ideas that suite their concept and brand.

The theories in this thesis will concentrate on explaining service development, consumer behaviour and future tourism.

2 THEORIES

In order to understand what type of services that should be available for consumers in the hotel world now and in the future, I'm going to focus on two basic theories; consumer/tourism behaviour and service development. In addition to these theories, I will also present thoughts and ideas that have surfaced about tourism and hotels of the future. With these components, I will be able to understand the theoretical development of consumers and services, have them faced with the already suggested thoughts for the future.

2.1 Service development

According to the Finnish marketing expert, Christian Grönroos, a service itself is divided into three different categories; core, support and ancillary service. In the hotel world this would mean that the core service of a hotel is the actual accommodation, a supporting service could be eg. breakfast at the hotel and as an ancillary service there would be eg. customer service at the hotel. (Edvardsson, 1996:30) But services are also more than that. From a more recent publication, Grönroos explains how services are about three basic characteristics; they are processes that consist of activities or a series of activities, they are at least to an extent produced and consumed simultaneously, and the consumer participates as a co-producer in the production process to some extent. The activities can eg. be booking a hotel, contacting the hotel, paying for the hotel etc. For example a hotel accommodation can be produced and consumed at the same time by the consumer. Not only do the additional services affect the outcome of the whole service, but it means that the consumer is using the services in different ways by eg. going to a hotel restaurant or ordering room service etc. during accommodation. By this they become a part of the whole service experience. (Grönroos, 2007:53-52)

Shortly described, the core function of a service development is to attract and keep customers, to keep them satisfied, loyal and profitable. So, it's about creating conditions for profitable customer relationships. (Edvardsson, 1996:158)

The service development process itself, starts with a service idea that is based on customer needs that needs to be satisfied. So it's important to have the customer needs in

focus when developing an existing or new service. Besides the customer needs, also competitors and their services have to be taken into consideration in order to develop something that is more functional and gives better results than others' on the market. Importantly, it's also substantial to start developing services that fit the already existing service range of the company. (ibid:30-31)

A more recent study on service development also further suggests that consumers should more often be a part of the service development process to get ideal value of the product or service that appeals to them personally. (Edvardsson et al, 2012:2)

2.2 Consumer behaviour

One of the core things when selling services or products, is to understand who you are trying to sell them to. Besides knowing who, you should also understand the customer and how he/she thinks and acts, in order to know exactly what to offer. A study that gives guidelines and insights into these kind of things, is consumer behaviour.

Consumer behaviour is "*..the study of the process involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires.*" (Solomon, 2013:31). Some of the typical ways to categorize different groups of people are according the following; age, gender, family structure, social class and income, race and ethnicity, geography and lifestyles (ibid:35-37). Because of the nature of this project and seeing the future challenges with eg. ageing population, the focus will be on the age category and lifestyles seen with these different age groups. Additionally, there will also be a short look into what generally is seen as the motivators and determinants for tourists.

2.2.1 Age subcultures

Although age groups within their own group have a lot of differences, there are still a lot of values and ideas that are similar because of the common cultural experiences of their time (Solomon, 2013:35). A good example is the time of the internet, that has a totally different meaning to people born eg. in the 1950s, compared to the people born in the 1980s or 1990s. Understandably, generations who have experienced developments of the different kind, have also developed ideas, norms and values that reflect the

time they have lived and are living. Since age is such a big part of one's identity (ibid:522), there is great value in knowing and understanding the distinct behaviour of these age groups. The groups are commonly separated into the following (ibid:523):

The Interbellum Generation - People born at the beginning of the 20th century

The Silent Generation - People born between the two World Wars

The War Baby Generation - People born during World War II

The Baby Boom Generation - People born between 1946 and 1964

Generation X - People born between 1965 and 1985

Generation Y - People born between 1986 and 2002

Generation Z - People born 2003 and later

Out of these, the most interesting to look at, at the moment, are the baby boomers, generation X and generation Y.

Generation Y is seen as a age group that is hopeful of the future and positive in mind. They also often associate change with something new, hopeful and exciting. The generation is one of the most diverse and commonly grows up in non-traditional families. Additionally generation Y is often considered footloose, wants to be connected with friends and companies, have relatively traditional values, wants to fit in instead of being rebellious, are multitasking thanks to computers and internet and are also hard to fool. Generally seen, generation Y people do not want to be talked down to, they want to see authenticity, and they want to be entertained and understood. (ibid:526-528)

Generation X was during their younger time seen as a lazy and alienating group of people, who were "to no good". But growing up, these people have turned into a group that has brought us a lot of cultural-changing and meaningful things and services, eg. Google and YouTube. Although values might be of the different kind than generation Y's, generation X has been the main contributor to all things great for generation Y. (ibid:531)

Baby boomers are at the moment in their peak earning age and are the biggest spending age group when talking about housing, cars and entertainment. They are also big spenders on food, apparel and retirement programs. Besides talking about a big spending group, this is also one of the biggest age groups at the moment and should not be seen as a group that will just retire soon. Thanks to modern society people live long and

healthy lives which also means longer consumer cycles. The baby boom generation might have challenges with retirement in the near future, but will still be wealthy and keen on being surprised and delighted by brands and products. (ibid:532-534)

Although not typically brought up, another still important age group and market to look after, is the grey market. The grey market age group (60+ of age), is the second biggest group and is also the fastest growing group. This group is seen as very enthusiastic, active and loyal, and since the group is only growing bigger and living longer, they should really be taken into consideration. Areas that really benefit from the grey market are exercise facilities, cruises and tourism, cosmetic surgery and skin treatments, and books and university courses that offer enhanced learning opportunities. All in all we are talking about a group of people who are more lively than ever, have paid their loans and are eager to spend the money they now have, on things that keep them active and make them feel good. (ibid:534-539)

Generally seen, these age groups will be the driving forces in developing and shaping tourism of the future. (Cooper et al, 2008:663)

2.2.2 Consumer behaviour in tourism

To get a general idea why consumers buy and consume particular products and services in tourism, we have to see what motivates and determines the decisions. In this purchase-decision process, some of the motivators are cultural (wanting to see new things and experience new cultures), physical (wanting to relax, exercise, sunbath), emotional (traveling for nostalgia, romance, adventure), personal (visiting friends/family, make new friends), personal development (increase knowledge or learn a new skill) and status (wanting to experience exclusivity, fashionability, get a good deal) and many more. The motivators can appear as one main one or many together, which then influence what type of product or service is purchased by that specific person. But it should also be taken into consideration that these motivators change with time because of eg. having a child, increase or reduction in income, health issues or simply because of change in expectations or preferences as a tourist. This also means that there are differences in motivating factors depending on age groups, since different age groups seek to fulfill different needs. (Swarbrooke and Horner, 2007:53-55,58)

Then again, sometimes it's not about what someone wants, rather than what they can have. Determinants are factors that determine if a consumer will be able to take a holiday or determine what type of holiday they can take. These determinants can show on a personal level with circumstances (eg. health issues, work or family commitments), attitudes and perceptions (eg. political views, preferences for particular countries or cultures, fear of some sort of traveling), knowledge of (eg. destinations, price differences) and experience of (eg. types of holidays, different destinations, taking trips with certain type of individuals or groups). On an external level the determinants can be views of friends/family, influences of the media, national factors or global factors. These are hard to completely understand and affect, since these are all perceived differently by different people. (ibid:62-64)

2.3 The future of tourism

To get the idea of how tourism will change in the future, we have to know what challenges are ahead. At the moment the world is dealing with a global financial crisis and depending on how it will work out, it will affect tourist traveling behaviour. If the outcome were to lean for a more negative, it would mean higher prices, less money for consumers to spend, lack of oil would lead to more expensive transportation and travel, there would be over supply and lack of demand, cities in comparison with the city outskirts will be the prime travel destination, travel will be seen as a luxury etc. In a more positive outcome the results would be a stable market shift with a clear rise in Asian travelers that take over the ageing population, more traveling and oil might have been replaced with alternative energy. (Yeoman, 2012:29-31)

Another challenge of the future is the ageing population. The ageing population will result in a pension crises where government aid will be lowered and the divide between rich and poor will rise (ibid:34-35, 38).

But are the outcomes really that simple and clear?

2.3.1 The future of tourists

The economic crisis and the ageing population are of a very big meaning when thinking about the future of traveling, but there is also hope.

Although some countries will be more affected by changes in the future, the main group driving the economic growth are the middle classes. Globalization has lead to this group growing the need and desire for tourism and travel (Yeoman, 2012:18). Today people are driven by rising income which also means that the consumer of today is more demanding, informed and is expecting quality (luxury goods), value-for-money, effective and more personalized customer service and more (ibid:23-24). Especially for the MBRIIC countries (Mexico, Brazil, Russia, India, Indonesia and China), the improvements in prosperity will rise. This will the further more act as one of the key components in global consumption development (ibid:24).

Baby boomers will be retiring in the next decades, which means that they will be the main group shaping consumption behaviours, eg. traveling. Most problematic aspect of this however, will be the pension crisis. Rising volumes of retiring people will put more restrain on governments and might lead to clear fall in the amount of financial aid that is possible to offer (ibid:34). In results, people might not be able to fully retire or retire much later in life and money will be scars, which leads to less to use for eg. traveling. Especially for more economically troubled countries, eg. Spain and Italy, this will mean a clear fall in the value of tourism (ibid:44-45). Generations X and Y will with this outcome most probably retire with very little income, and by that will not be able to travel in the future (ibid:45). Longer lifespan and wealthier life might on the other hand turn different type of traveling more popular. The older population will have more interest in wellbeing (healthy food, activities etc.), Eastern medicine (yoga, meditation, herbs etc.), non-medical treatments, cosmetic treatments etc., to be able to find the "fountain of youth" (ibid:43).

In conclusion, there is bound to be changes in tourism and tourist behaviour according to the mentioned challenges. Baby boomers and senior tourist will be the dominating tourist group in 2030 but with what variety and amount, is still unclear. Fortunately, the impacts on tourism regarding demographic changes will be more predictable than eg. sustainability and technology innovations. (ibid:48-49)

The tourist, with rising income and wealth, will want more of everything. For the tourist it means better experiences, multiple choices, satisfaction, fast service and more. Whereas when the wealth falls, the tourist will become more simple with decisions and needs. (ibid:50-51)

The "fluid identity" tourist (wealthy), is interested in different types of traveling and evolves constantly. They are less predictable and are always ready to share their opinions with the rest of the world, especially since internet and social media. This has also meant that other consumer opinions are of more importance today, than ever. The modern society today has evolved in such manner, that people no longer live and breathe according to groups or classes, rather doing exactly what that specific individual wants. This has lead to increased assortment of specialty products and services to fill all these individual wants and needs. Globalization on the other hand, has turned traveling to a norm and people are more and more looking into experiencing something unique and cultural. Technology has with its development made people more impatient and spontaneous. All in all, the fluid identity tourist is all about having the money to travel often, see and do something special etc, but this also means that travel destinations need to know what to offer. (ibid:51-54)

The "simple identity" tourist (less wealthy), will most probably travel less and concentrate more on domestic traveling. The needs and wants are no longer of the same importance. Simplicity is the key, meaning that the tourist is more willing to compromise on eg. accommodation in order to save money but still travel and experience something new. People are also starting to be more responsible, consume less and enjoy what is already there, eg. nature. (ibid:57-58)

Concluding, travel businesses need to supply multiple demands and interests than before. Also, the constant development of technology will become a challenge to tourism, simply because it's starting to evolve to be a experience itself. Fortunately, technology will seldom go to replace the real deal altogether. (ibid:60-61)

2.3.2 The future of hotels

Hotels have been around for a long time, and although the concept and idea of a hotel is quite simple, to offer a "home away from home", it can be offered in many shapes and sizes. We have hotels ranging from one to five stars, room to condo, b & b to luxury,

boutique to chain hotels, but what exactly determines which of the types survive and which die? How exactly is the hotel industry seen in the future and what are seen as the key factors to take into consideration when keeping a hotel alive and successful? A very interesting project looking into possible future hotels and their most important components, was done by students from Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. The project included thoughts about what determines the hotel branch today and in the future, and then building these thoughts into two different rooms that were tested by professionals and consumers. (Björkqvist, 2009:6-7)

According to the main author, there have been some major changes in the consumer behaviour and how it's seen in the hotel business. Of the consumers, leisure travelers are seeking to get away from home, where as business travelers prefer to be home. Hotels have been categorized as such, leisure or business. Now hotel categories have multiplied in amounts and there are more and more to choose from to fit the more demanding consumer. Consumer needs are no longer the most important component in the hotel world, instead the wants of the consumer are in focus in order to have unique and memorable experiences from hotel accommodations. The ever changing consumer behaviour will probably lead to megatrends that demand hotels to change every few years or decades. (ibid)

Another important factor changing the hotel world, is technology. Technology will probably allow consumers to enjoy the hotel experience in a more tailored way, with interior, sounds, lightning etc. Technology will also allow the consumer to do and experience more in the room, and also allow easier communication with the staff of the hotel. The author also means that although there will be new possibilities with technology, it will not remove the need for actual on-sight service, rather liberate the staff to do more actual customer service. Environmental issues will still be seen as important components to take into consideration in hotels. Overall, hotels are seen to change in the future to be more of the actual travel experience and not the destination itself. (ibid:8-9)

As the base of the project and building the two experimental rooms, the three most likely seen megatrends are; technology, sustainability and ecology (ibid:16). To meet the sustainable and ecological aspect, in the future consumers might be paying according to consumption of heat, water, electricity etc. Whereas with technology, in the future consumer preferences might be possible to be better taken into consideration, connections

will be better and easier during the stay, and feedback will be more direct and in real-time. (ibid:19)

After building the two different concept hotel rooms, "Connection to nature" and "The technology" room, with various details and equipment, they were first tested by guests and after that by professionals. Overall experiences from guests were positive. The uniquely manufactured beds were highly appreciated, interior beautiful, some details well thought about, but there were also negative things pointed out. The nature room was somewhat experienced as too small, had unpractical furniture, whilst the technology room required check-ups for the equipment, clear instructions, more silent equipment and so on. In general, the guests said to appreciate cleanliness, fresh air, a peaceful sound environment, large rooms, high-quality beds, well-equipped bathrooms etc. Computer and a large flat screen television was seen as least important. A good work space divided opinions. (ibid:29-33)

According to the hotel business professionals, the top three megatrends will be the ecological approach, cost-efficiency and service customization. When regarding the hotel experience, it seems as the most important needs of customers will be comfort, good acoustic environment and quality sleep. As a good addition to hotel concepts of the future, there should be user-friendly adjustments to eg. lighting, air, sounds, for the guests in the rooms. The professionals are skeptic about the environmental aspects of rooms and hotels, considering that almost all target groups need the same equipment and services as the average business traveler, but are less likely to want to pay for it. So, the professionals proposed the following suggestions for the hotel of tomorrow; there should be a third room built for testing that includes aspects of both rooms, ecological aspects need to be determined further, consumers should be able to see, understand and affect their carbon footprint better, feedback should be collected more often, during a longer time and be examined according to consumer profile, and it would be interesting to separately investigate the importance of different aspects and equipment in the hotel room. Another highly discussed subject was about the importance of human interaction in the hotel. Advanced technology development would turn into cost cuts and increased efficiency. (ibid:34-37)

As a conclusion, the main author thinks that by the year 2015, hotel division into leisure or business hotel, is gone. Wants of consumers will be more in focus, which means that supplies offered by hotels will be more important, and they will be willing to pay for it. Interesting qualities, tailored experiences, uniqueness etc, will be more valued. 3.5-star hotels and self-services will be either in trouble or in need of change. The hotels will not understand what the customers of the new generation will be looking for. All in all, the hotel business will likely be operated by two extremes; utmost cost-effective and polished hotel models, and new luxury for the middle class or extreme luxury. Hotel chains in all will be in trouble when smaller hotels with unique themes and brands, take over. (ibid:41-43)

Thoughts, ideas and conclusions in this project are probably not that farfetched. In an recent article by a Finnish travel magazine, some of the following things will be a part of traveling in the year 2025. Full vacations or part of a vacation, will become more common in airports. Reason for this is that the airports are more and more turning into experience centers with restaurants, cinemas, pools etc. When talking about services, the likelihood of robots or hologram services is quite big. By removing personnel and adding a robot or hologram, the costs will minimize without compromising the quality of the service. Last but not least, the article points out that it will become more common for guests to style their own hotel room. Some hotels already allow guests to choose their pillows and with the ever developing technology it is not hard to see that in the future, guests will be able to impact the rooms lightning and temperature with pads or maybe choose what type of scenery is reflected on the room walls. (Poutanen, 2015:49-53)

Although technology is starting to show more in hotels, they still need further development. For example, the Aloft hotel offers an electronically used room key that works through the mobile phone, called SPG Keyless. The function seems easy to use and quite frankly, the chance of losing your phone feels less likely than losing your hotel room key. Unfortunately the process of getting your SPG Keyless system to work in your phone, is far harder than to just use your given key. The system requires that the guest is a member of SPG (Starwood Preferred Guest) and after that to sign in to your account through your phone. But, if you have not done this before checking in to the hotel, it will not work. The registration (and device) need to be activated by SPG per-

sonnel, before entering the hotel. The whole idea of the keyless system is probably helpful for people staying at the hotel for a longer time, but the trouble of getting the system to work for a one or two nights stay in a hotel you might not visit again, is too much of a hassle. At least that is what I thought about the system when visiting Aloft hotel in New York last December.

All in all, hospitalities need to focus on knowledge-based competition and continuous innovation. In the ever so connected world, the importance of multi-channel strategies is getting more important and the need to exist on the right selling platforms is big in order to survive. Some aspects to consider are to know your customers to make better image and brand marketing on the available platforms. Having the customers in mind, it is evident that customers are getting more demanding and are harder to satisfy. Since the internet, it has become very easy for people to also compare products and services. For accommodations to be as appealing as possible, hotels need to work on understanding customer motivations, moods and adding personalization to the mix. (Buhalis, 2003:234-236)

In a more recent study by Buhalis and Amaranggana, it appears that in the future consumers are expecting to receive more personalized services when accommodating that include eg. help in planning and getting information before a trip, being able to save time when booking and checking in. When in the destination they would like personalized welcome messages and services, with the personnel knowing the consumers overall preferences. During and after accommodating the consumers would like to be able to interact more with feedback on a social media level and some also keen on getting more offers and updates in the future. (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2015:9)

In the future we might be looking at having Bluetooth and biometric systems for quick recognitions and services, not to mention that rooms will be more equipped with entertainment and working facilities to give the room the illusion of being just like home. Although technology can minimize staff, there will still be the need to have some human contact, but with them possessing all the updated information for that specific guest, in order to understand the wants and needs instantly. With this type of service it is possible to make relationships with customers that last for a lifetime. (Buhalis, 2003:236-237)

"Never before have consumers had as much power as they have today and never before could consumers influence their tourism product more than in the 21st century." (ibid:326).

2.3.3 Hotel trends for the future

Hotel concepts and trends have also taken a turn the last years with eg. the opening of luxury hotels for a budget price. The main features in these hotels are good locations in the cities and thought out high technology design, all for a budget price. More commonly these hotels have smaller rooms with restricted service, eg. the guest has to do the check-in him-/herself with an electronic key. Usually the hotels also have a more modern interior and restaurants, and also free Wi-Fi. In Europe, luxury budget hotels are eg. Citizen M, Bloc, Moxy and Yotel. (Goldhammer, 2014:31)

In a more recent article about hotel trends to know about, we can see clear similarities. Besides nature and sleeping in nature still being one of the exciting trends, boutique hotels are getting more popular. These hotels offer intriguing interior and also want to make the public areas more comfortable for guests. Emerging art galleries with the lobby area is also one way to change a public area and making it more fascinating for customers or others. An example of a more home like atmosphere, again comes from the Marriott's Moxy hotel. In addition to nature accommodation like rooms in the trees or igloos in the snow, a new up and coming hotel trend is called glamping. "Glamping" refers to camping and living in caravans, and as an accommodation offers tents near hiking trails and services like cooked dinners on open-fires, but with more high-end meals. Another very trendy accommodation in today's world is Airbnb. This concept is all about individual people renting their rooms, condos or flats for unknown travelers. This so called sharing-economy with Airbnb has become very popular with accommodations to pick from in over 34 000 cities in the world. A great way to find accommodation cheaper and getting directly in contact with the locals. Something that is also emerging in the hotel world is hotels that are even more suitable for families. Although a lot of hotels suit families, some have come to realize that they still need more. Families with small children are needing more child safe rooms and condos, and with services like pediatricians nearby. Eg. Kid & Coe hotels have over 400 properties that include play rooms and babysitting services. As mentioned before, trends are still includ-

ing budget hotels that today may offer a more modernized accommodation. Although these hotels or hostels might be a little bit more pricier they are still cheaper than the average stay elsewhere but offer a cleaner and better environments with the same interesting communal feel. For the person seeking the opposite of hostels, the all-inclusive hotels and resorts are still trending. All-inclusive hotels are for those seeking to get as much as possible from the accommodation, with different programs and activities arranged by the hotel itself. Another repeated hotel trend involves technology. Technology is more commonly becoming very interesting, especially where people are not that often used to seeing it. The hotels have here a great opportunity to feed peoples curiosity by adding new exciting and trending technology to the hotel experience. Google glasses have for example been taken into use in Stanford Court hotel to enhance guests hotel experiences and are also working on getting GoPro cameras available for rent. In the earlier mentioned citizenM hotel, guests check in on touch-screen kiosks and are also able to change their room temperature, window blinds etc., with the help of a "Moodpad" tablet. Whereas Yotel hotel has taken into use a robotic luggage handling machine and motorized beds. Even motion-detecting systems have been incorporated in rooms in Umstead Hotel and Spa to make it easier and faster for cleaners to know if a room is currently occupied. If these aren't enough of an experience, you can also decide to sleep in a museum. Some museums have added the possibility for sleepovers including interesting activities and/or experiences in the museum itself, like eg. dinners, stand-up comedies, edible insect snacks and more. (Loftus, 2015:58-66)

One interesting concept idea could also be to combine a few trends, like the Lloyd Hotel and Cultural Embassy did in Amsterdam. Besides having art galleries, library of monographs, meeting areas and a cultural event salon, the hotel offers rooms that range from one to five stars. All rooms have their uniqueness but the guests can choose to live in a one star room that shares bathrooms or the five star room that has its own piano and more. The hotel itself is furnished and styled with unique pieces which many have an interesting story or history. They are also currently working on an audio tour that tells the guests all these various stories. (Stuart, 2015:18-19)

2.3.4 Expert look on future hotels

In conclusion to the thoughts about hotels and their future, the following aspects were brought out by hospitality experts, hoteliers and planners.

The things that will be in center of the hotels of tomorrow are personalization to fit guests own preferences, customized services, female friendly hotels specified to meet women's needs, be more experience-oriented with art etc. and have more casual dining establishments that offer quick bites and to-go food. When discussing the hotels brand identity, boutique hotels will be more common to meet the needs of different niches, they will still have the brand fitness centers and Spas, and have celebrity chef restaurants for added value. The check-in process will no longer rely on front desks, rather have phones and kiosks to do it through and use phones to get into the rooms. Society today is not the type to wait in line and have patience, rather see to get the things they need and want, now. The rooms themselves will have easy-to-access technology, intelligent furniture that can be changed according to guest preferences, head-to-toe body dryers will be the new way to help the environment, amenities will include high-end skin-care products, humidifiers and built in TVs and touch screens in mirrors, a virtual concierge will be available in the room to use for restaurant reservations, room service orders, lightning and temperature adjustment and many more, rooms will be of smaller size since people are more common to spend less time in the room, also the interactive TVs will become more important to allow guests easy and quick sync from their own devices. For the meeting scene, the future will also bring customized meeting spaces, meetings with higher purpose with online platforms and having meeting attendee kiosks to make check-in and personalization easier for meetings. (Doyle, 2014:26-31)

3 METHOD DESCRIPTION

When doing projects like this, it's important to back the facts with some sort of research, to contribute to the already found knowledge (Altinay and Paraskevas, 2008:1). Depending on the project type, you can choose to do a research by interview, observation or survey. By doing an interview/interviews, the research is focused on getting closer and more detailed information about experiences, situations and knowledge (ibid:107). These interviews are categorized as qualitative research, which means focusing on the

actual quality of the research and answers. It's not about getting many correspondents but having a thought out few or a little group. The observation method is a great way to compliment the other methods since it focuses on following what people do, say or act in certain situations, eg. during a group interview (ibid:117). Observation is also a qualitative research type. By using surveys or questionnaires, the researcher will be able to sample a large amount of information about bigger groups of people, with little or no cost. This is a way to effectively get the information about simple and easy questions that pretty much anyone can answer (ibid:120). This method is also known as the quantitative method. The research, eg. survey, can be distributed to a specific target audience or left open for anyone to answers. It all depends on what the main goal of the research is and what needs to come out of it.

For this specific research, I'm looking into getting a lot of answers in order to get an idea about what the overall opinion about hotels and their services are. Because of this, I'm going to conduct a quantitative research in the form of a survey.

3.1 The survey

One of the most common quantitative research methods are surveys. Through this type of research I'm able to further investigate the answers with ordinal and graded scale or interval and ratio scale. Ordinal and graded are a form of qualitative variables that means that the values can be arranged or ranked according to the worth. A part of the quantitative variables are the interval and ratio scale. The variables can be arranged to suit an interval or have a lowest and highest value possible. (Djurfeldt, 2010:42-43) Since the results can be presented in so many different ways, it's important to choose the right one for the specific question in order to have the information presented and analyzed in a correct way (Altinay and Paraskevas, 2008:194).

I chose to make the survey web based to make the possibility of fast sharing possible. The survey itself was made through SurveyMonkey and as a finished product had a link to access from. In the beginning of the survey, there is a short description to why this survey is done. After discussing with the Omena Hotels vice president, we agreed on marketing the survey on Omena Hotels Facebook page, with people answering having the chance to win one of five one night gift cards to Omena Hotels. The thought of the

survey was to have it short, max. ten questions, and be easy to answer. The first five questions are to give more background information of the person answering with questions about gender, age, work status and how often the person travels because of work or leisure. The following two questions are the most important about what type of accommodation the person prefers and what type of services and supplies they prefer and how much. Last question is optional for the person to answer freely about if they could choose or ask for anything regarding accommodations, what would it be. Of the questions five have answers to choose from, two have a scale from 1 to 5 with the first being how much the person prefers something and the other being about how important something is. The survey was conducted in Finnish and is found in the end of this thesis (app. 1).

3.2 Conducting the survey

The survey was done and approved on the 23rd of March 2015. I personally marketed it on my own Facebook page by asking friends and family to help answer and share it forward. On the 31st of March I got the approval to get the survey published on Omena Hotels Facebook page with the five one night gift card competition. The second time it was published on the 8th of April. There were quite a lot of people liking and sharing the post and when the participation ended on the 9th of April at midnight, it had gathered 1055 answers. Originally hoping to get at least 200 answers, this result was great. Although, Omena has over 47000 likes on their Facebook so there could have been even more. The very next day, 10th of April, five winners were picked and these were four women and one man across Finland. One night gift cards that are valid for the next six months were sent to all the winners personally. The survey itself got a good amount of answers with people from different age groups answering and having many people comment extra, even though it was not mandatory.

4 RESULTS

In the following section I will present the outcome of the web survey questions. I have used SurveyMonkey and Microsoft Excel to make all the figures and tables from the survey results.

4.1 Background information

The first five questions in the survey were background questions to get an idea of what type of people that are answering. From the 1055 correspondents, 858 were women and 197 were men.

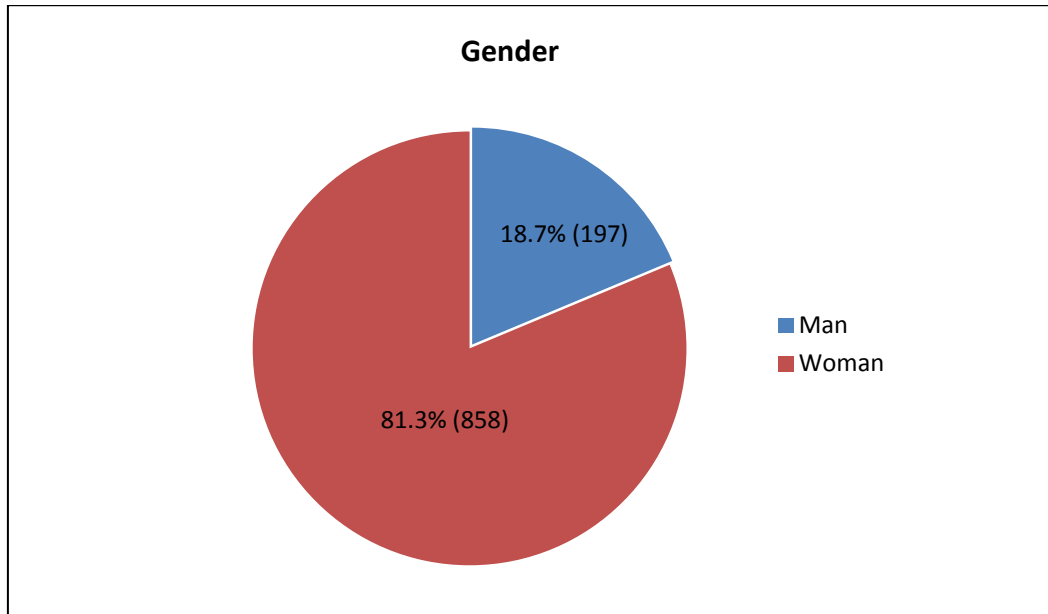


Figure 1. The amount of men and women who participated in the survey.

There was a good distribution of age groups in the survey and of these the biggest were the groups 31-40 and 41-51 years old. Third biggest group was the 51-60 years old, following with the two youngest groups and lastly the two oldest groups.

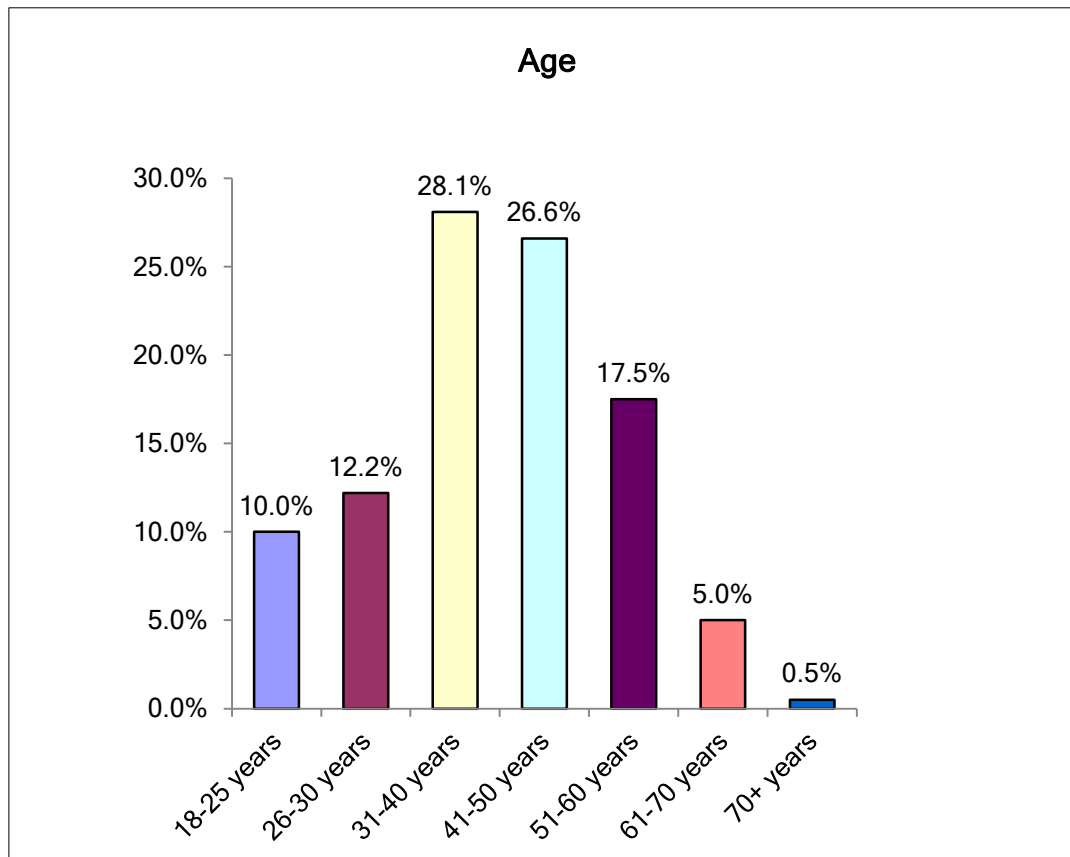


Figure 2. The divide of different age groups who answered the survey.

The following figure shows the divide of correspondents work statuses. Biggest group is the workers with over half of the answers. In addition to this question there was also the possibility to write something other than the options offered. In that case the correspondent would choose which group he/she belonged to and after write under "Other" what that was. From these the biggest groups were unemployed with 41 answers. After that there were 13 who were stay at home moms, 10 were entrepreneurs and 8 were either on maternity leave or child care leave.

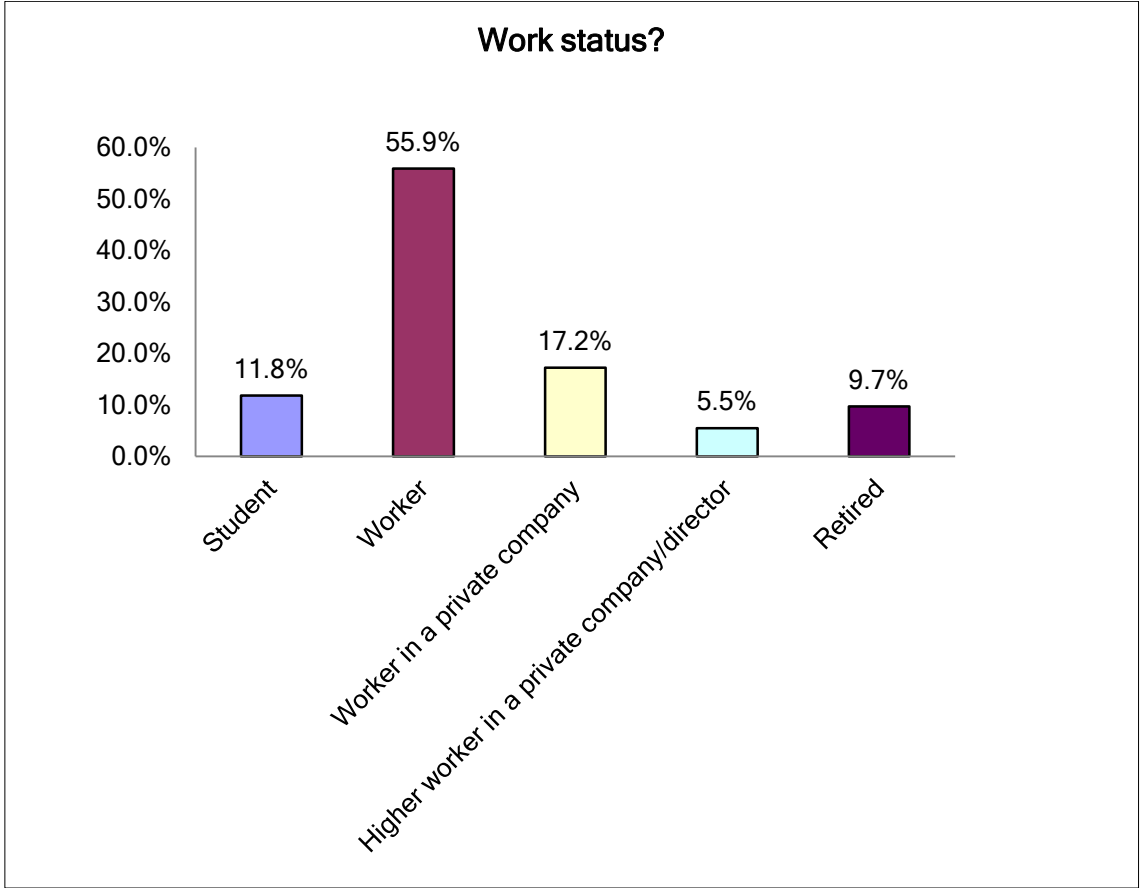


Figure 3. Work statuses of all the correspondents.

From the next figure we can see how many times a year the correspondents are accommodating in a foreign place when on work trips. Altogether almost 70% of the correspondents are either not working or do not go on work trips. Second biggest group, tied with "I'm not working", is the ones who do work trips with accommodation 1-2 times a year. A little over 10% travel for work, with accommodation, from 3-5 times or even 6 times or more a year.

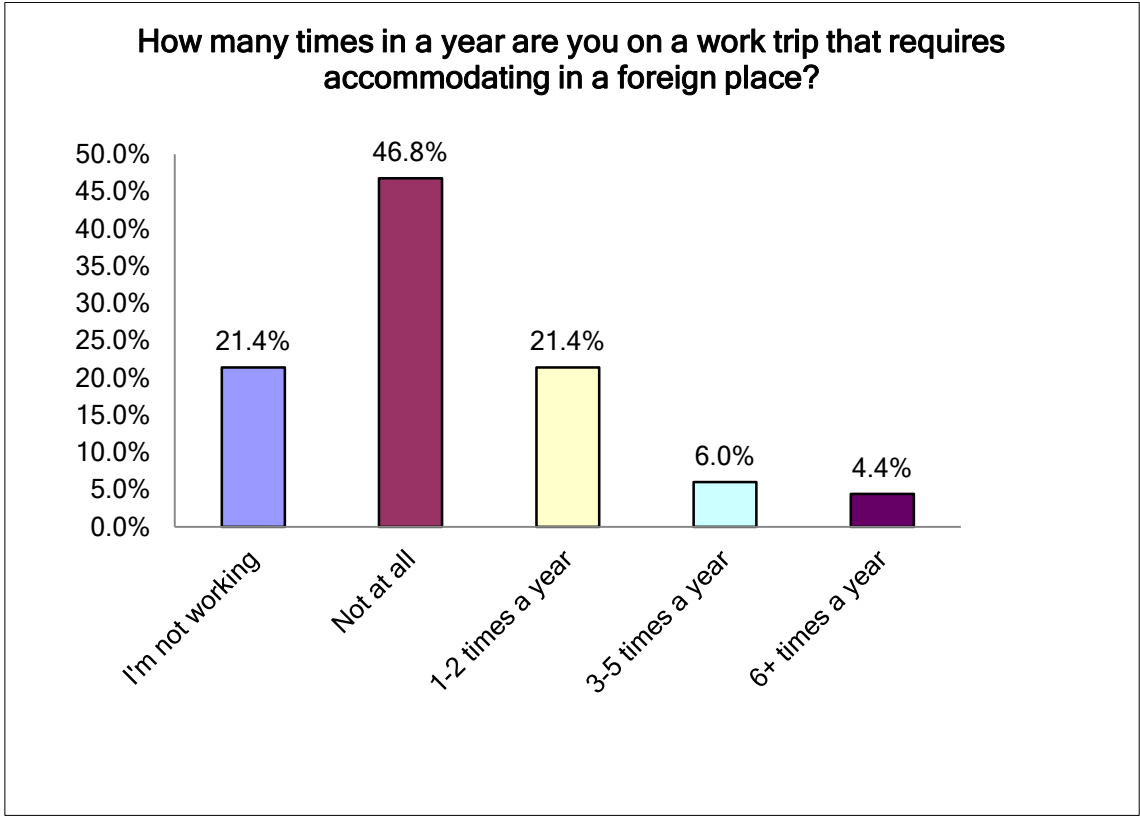


Figure 4. How many times the correspondents accommodate in a foreign place during work trips.

The next question was almost the same as the latter, but asking about how often the correspondents accommodate during leisure trips. Over 40% say to accommodate during 3-5 trips a year, with 1-2 times following after with 37%. Almost 20% accommodate during a leisure trip 6+ times a year. The ones not going on trips that need accommodation, were only 1.8%.

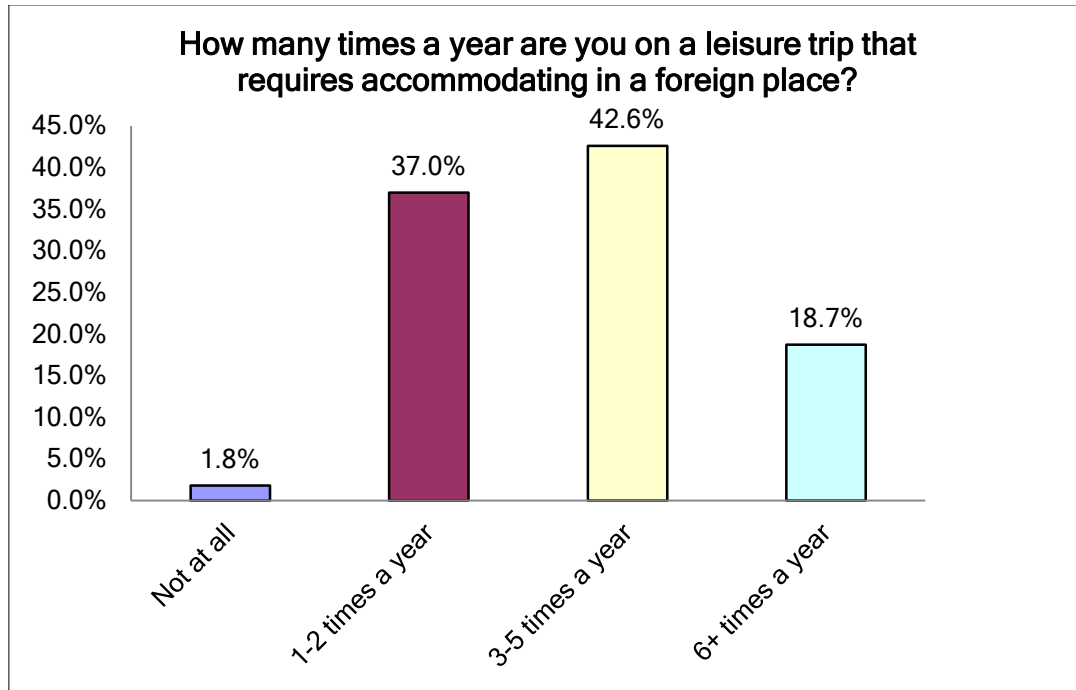


Figure 5. How many times the correspondents accommodate in a foreign place during leisure trips.

4.2 Additional questions

The next three questions were asked to find out more about accommodation wants and needs from the correspondents.

The first question was about how much the correspondents preferred certain type of accommodation. All alternatives had to be ranked according to personal preference. From the figure, most popular/preferred accommodation was 1-3 star hotels, but almost with the same amount was also 4-5 star hotels and staying at friends or family. From the rest of the alternatives "Hostel" was highest with "Other" and different rentable apartments behind. Answering the "Other" section required written explanation to what else. From the many different accommodation, the most popular was a cottage with 18 people and

camping area with 13 people. Third place was a tie with 7 people each for camping van, tent and rentable cottage. Next after that was a boat with 5 people.

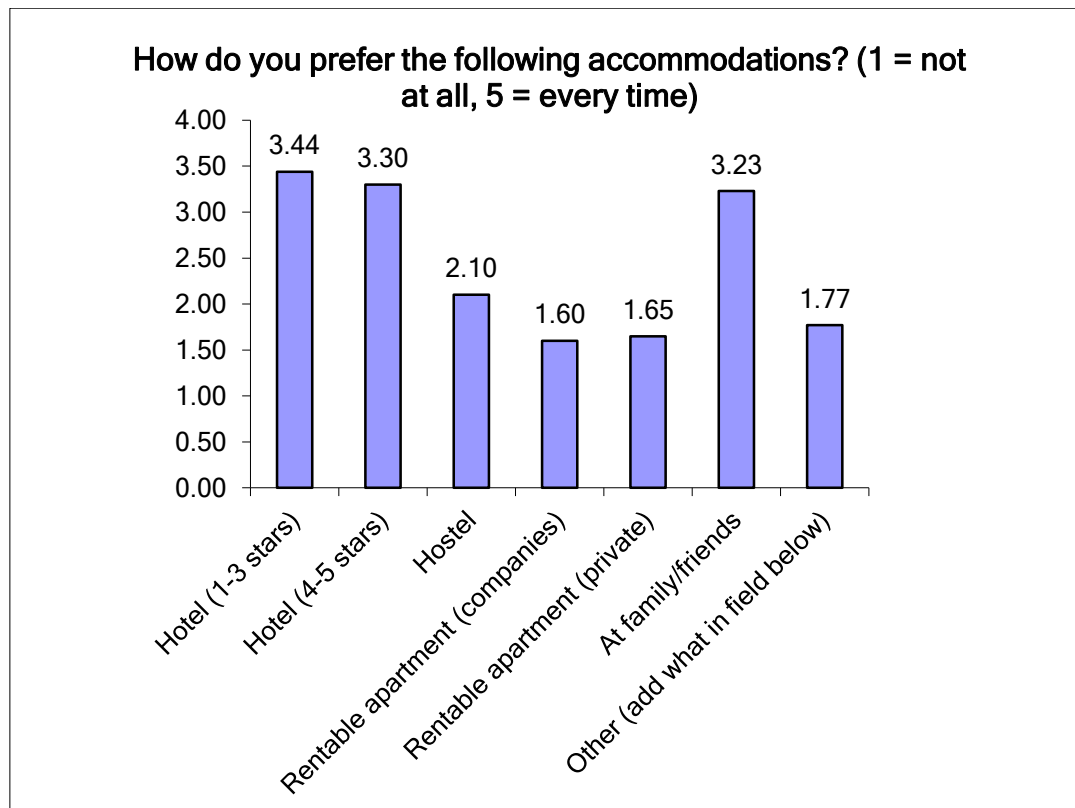


Figure 6. Average of how much certain accommodation types were preferred by the correspondents.

Following question in the survey was about services and supplies, and how important the correspondents saw these during accommodation. All of the alternatives had to be ranked from 1-5 with 1 being not at all important and 5 being very important. From the results the clearly most important aspect is the accommodation location with an average of 4.38 of a possible 5. Quite close to each other are the following alternatives in the following order, price included breakfast, possibility for earlier or later check-in/check-out and TV. The first alternative to hit under 3, is a possible hotel reception with restaurant/-s and bar at the accommodation close after. Very close to one and other after that are work desk, iron and ironing board, safety box, gym, minibar and more. Least important for the correspondents were room service at 1.97 and other at 1.91. When choosing "Other", the correspondents had to specify what that was. From these comments the following were most mentioned. Having a sauna was mentioned by 12 people, refrigerator by 11 people, tea kettle/coffee maker and swimming pool by 8 people, peacefulness by 7 people, kids playroom by 6 people and pet consideration by 5 people. Other then

these there were also air conditioning, good bed, cleanliness, value for money balcony etc. mentioned.

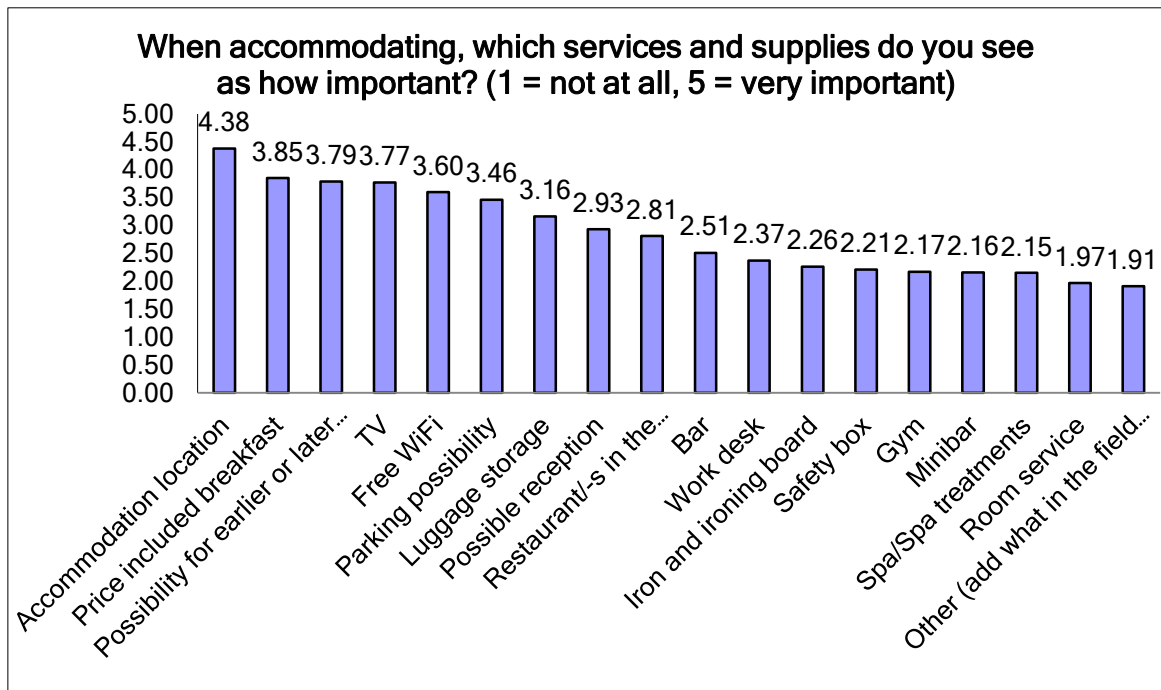


Figure 7. Services and supplies, and how important they are according to correspondents.

The last question was very wide ranged since the correspondents had the chance to write whatever they feel that they would wish for in accommodation. A lot of the answers were alternatives that were already found or mentioned in the previous question, eg. sauna, pet friendly, cleanliness, value for money, breakfast, parking and so on. Other things that came up quite often were; more or alternative pillows in the rooms, some type of small surprise or welcoming gift in the room (eg. champagne and glasses, chocolate, candy, snacks, fruit) for a hint of luxury, allergy rooms with no full floor carpet or strong scents (also non-smoking rooms), cheaper prices (luxury budget hotels) and more special offers, more options for bigger families (5+ persons) and night snack serving (free or for extra charge). Some of the less popular wishes were ear plugs, customer loyalty programs/offers, helpful reception, discounts to local events and restaurants/bars, airport transportation, easy booking processes, list of activities in the area, child beds, bathrobes, hair dryer, enough outlets in the room, smoking room, dark curtains, easy check-in, possibility to pre-book parking and being able to personally choose the room in the hotel. Around 20+ answers consisted of only once mentioned things, eg. rentable tablet, HDMI outlet in TVs, hotel nanny, small library, no forced breakfast, free

bicycles for use, radio, DVDs or games and many more. Some grateful comments were also written for Omena and their procedures and wanting more of them in Finland, or at least the same type of hotels.

4.3 Comparing results

With the figure below I wanted to show how the work and leisure trips ranked between different age groups.

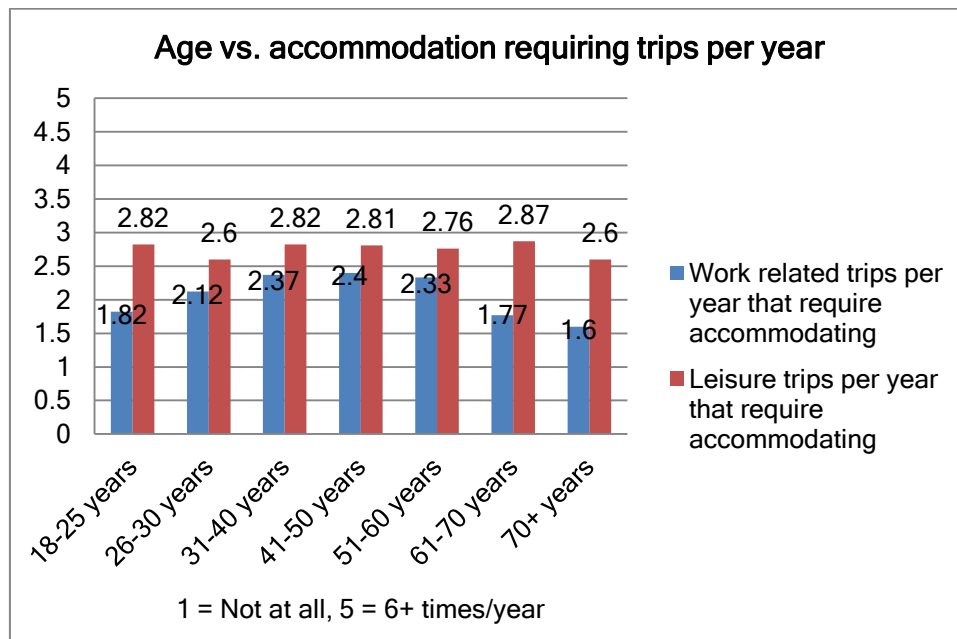


Figure 8. Average amount of trips a year that require accommodation according to age groups.

Work related trips in comparison to the age groups shows quite a clear difference with middle aged people traveling more than the young and the old people. In the leisure trips there is a clearly less visible difference with different aged people traveling almost as much as any other group.

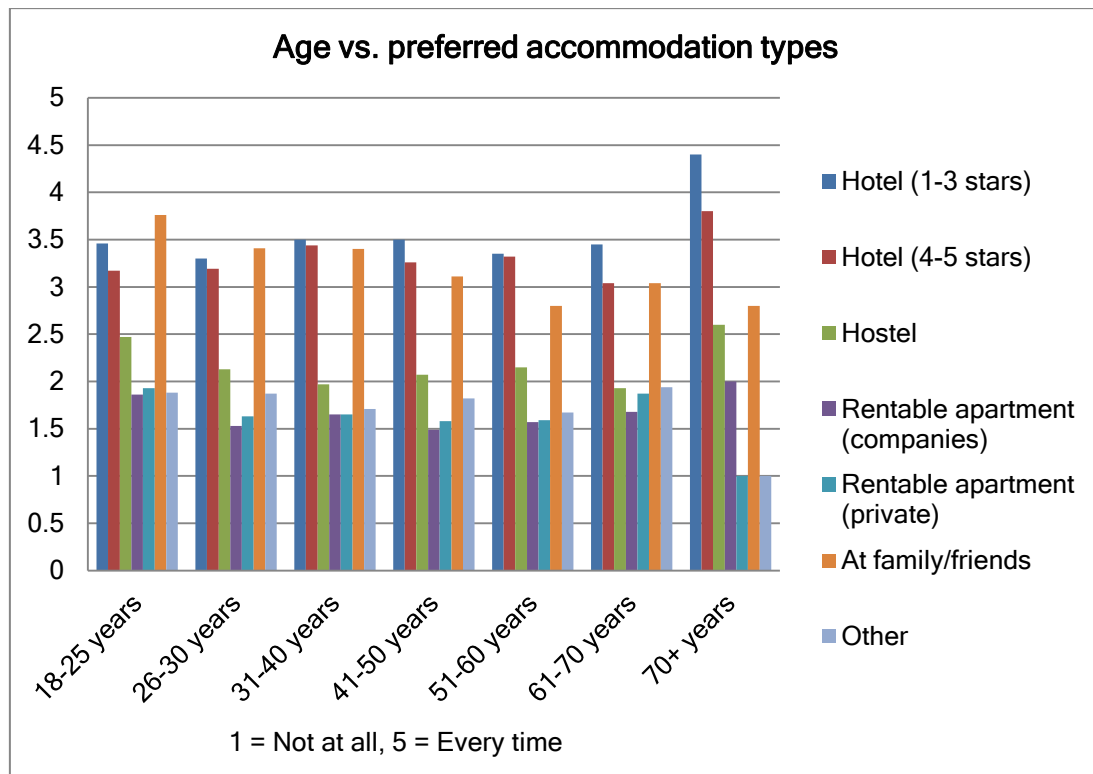


Figure 9. The preferred accommodation types according to age groups.

By comparing age groups with preferred accommodation types, we get an idea about what is appealing to whom. All the accommodation forms have relatively same divide in the age groups but for the more "open" types like hostel and rentable apartments, 18-25 year olds have the highest ratings. Family/friends have a downwards leaning line with younger people more often preferring to stay there, whereas the older the group, the lower the result. Hotels are quite even with each other with biggest differences in 18-25, 61-70 and 70+ year olds. Hostel seems to have a more irregular divide with age groups finding it more or less appealing than the other.

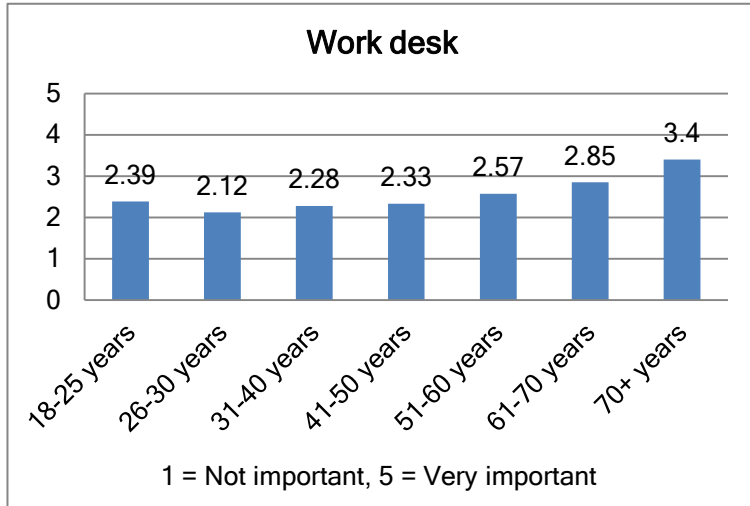


Figure 10. How important a desk is for different age groups.

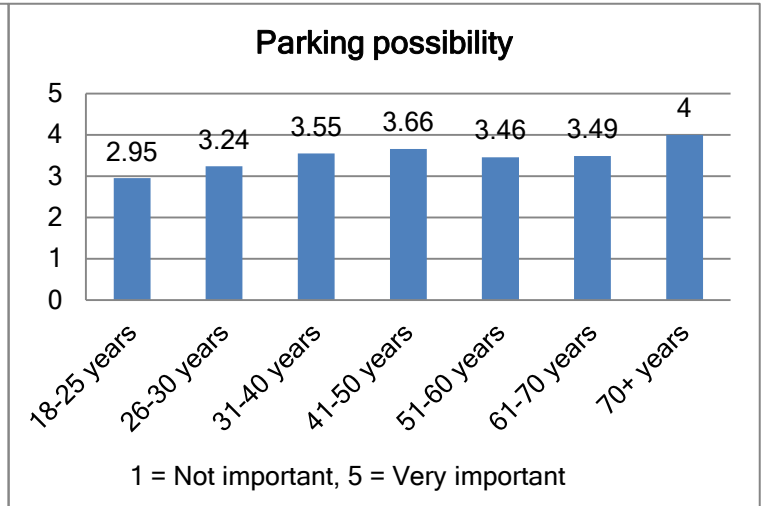


Figure 11. How important parking is for different age groups.

Some of the services and supplies in accommodations had such big differences between age groups, that it felt obligatory to share some more closely. Biggest divide was found on "Work desk" with a 1.28 difference between the age groups 26-30 years and 70+ years. "Parking" also showed over 1.00 difference in average results for the groups, making it one of the clearly dividing element in accommodations.

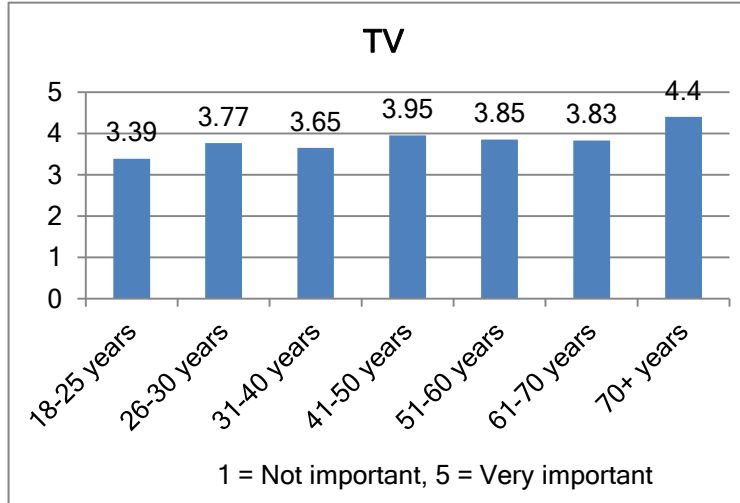


Figure 12. The importance of a TV to different age groups.

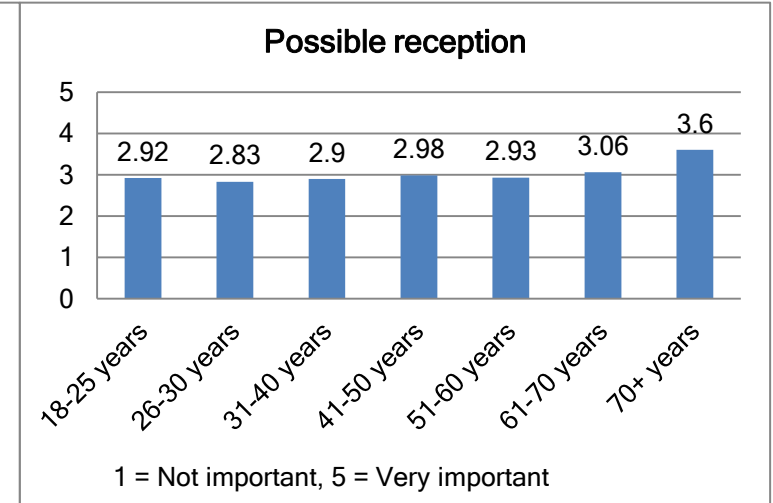


Figure 13. How important reception is seen by different ages.

In comparison with other supplies and services, the TV is clearly one of the highest ranked ones. But, there are still some varieties in age groups that should be taken into consideration. The reception itself deemed interesting since the average result for the age groups were relatively low (not so important, but still sort of important), and no really big differences were found except for the oldest group.

5 DISCUSSION

In this following chapter I will more closely analyze the results of the survey and also have the results compared with the theories written earlier; service development, consumer behaviour and future of tourism. From this analysis I will then suggest ideas for Omena Hotels to take on in order to develop their products and services.

5.1 Survey results

I was very pleased to get so many answers, but since almost all of the answers came through Omenas Facebook page posts, there was a risk of not getting enough bias and versatile answers. After going through the results I reacted to a few things, there was a possibility that someone might have jokingly answered to participate in the competition and people might have answered thinking straightly that it's about Omena Hotels. At least in the comment sections quite a few things were written directly as a response to Omena and its products and services. Overall, the results were really good and I was happy to see answers from different groups of people.

From the background questions I was not too surprised to see that the correspondents were mainly women. The surveys type and the prizes were not the typical that I'd think men are that interested of. Seeing the distribution with the age groups, I was very pleased to notice that all of the age groups got representatives. Next thing that baffled me, was that most correspondents were in the age groups 31-60 years old. After that with around 10-12% each, was the two youngest groups. Facebook is maybe commonly seen as the place for young people and winning a free hotel night seems as something any young boy or girl would appreciate. Omena Hotels also being sometimes way too much know as a hotel for partying youngsters, I'd think more of these people would have participated. Work statuses had nothing special I was waiting for, but I expected the "Worker" category to be the most common. Analyzing the question about how many work trips a year the person does that require accommodation, I was expecting more trips. In this case over 20% were not working at all, a lot unemployed by choice (because of studies) or not, and almost 50% didn't travel at all with accommodation. Quite a small part of the correspondents were on 1-6+ trips.

From this is of course was not possible to know where these trips were, domestic or abroad.

Asking almost the same question as above, I was sure there would be more leisure trips done by people in a year that require accommodation. Although people might not be working there is still a desire to travel and usually where there is a will, there is a way. Again, from these it doesn't show what type of trips they are, domestic or abroad. A lot of trips are probably to friends and family, weekend getaways and family week long holidays here and there.

From the figure comparing age groups with different types of trips, the work trips don't show much surprise with understandably a lot of young people not working and also the older groups probably retired. I was just expecting the amount of work trips overall to be higher with today's global world. Interesting enough, leisure trips were for all age groups near the three trips a year mark. Although not knowing where these trips are made, I'm quite sure that here lies one key thing, people want to travel more and will find a way to do so. The age group 18-25 years that consists of many students and people not having a job, they travel the second most in a tie with the 31-40 year olds. Whereas the two oldest groups, 61-70 and 70+, most definitely have more time and money to travel. All the age groups clearly have a priority to have time and money to travel although different life situations.

The following two questions were for me, the most exciting to analyze. Since hotels brands have been changing more in the last years and new ideas and innovations are starting to pop-up in the hotel world, and also peoples way of traveling has changed a lot, I was keen on seeing how people felt about different accommodation types and their services and supplies.

From the results of which type of accommodation was most preferred by people, I was not all that surprised that the hotels are mostly preferred. Family and friends are for many eg. families and students the most affordable accommodation type when traveling is a must, but money is scars. For a closer look, I decided to again compare different age groups to the preferred accommodation types. The youngest age group shows a lot of openness for different accommodations and it's no surprise that family/friends and 1-3 star hotels have such a high result. Younger people are commonly seen as the group that

wants to travel but because of less money, staying somewhere for free or very little, is completely acceptable (or even important). Hostels are because of this also mostly accepted by younger people, but surprisingly also an option for 70+ people. We still have to have in mind that only five people at 70+ contributed to this research. Hotels at 4-5 stars I found to be unexpectedly high in all age groups but understandably maybe a bit higher in the older classes. The rentable apartments were quite low for all the groups, but there is a slight downward curve noticeable from the youngest to the oldest group, with the 41-60 year olds having the lowest scores. Apartments can partly be less expensive for people and also leave room for more flexible planning during trips. Hotels are often fixed with check-in and -out times and breakfasts feels sometimes more of a pain for many people when needing to wake up early to attend. People don't want to pay for something they don't use, so why not rent an apartment and decide yourself. The results itself are a bit hard to closely examine since there is nothing to compare to, but I think the average might be a little higher now than for eg. 5-10 years ago. In today's world people are more open and willing to plan their own trips without having a travel agency in between, which means apartments are getting more common to rent. The existence of Airbnb is also one example of factors that is making this type of accommodation even easier to find and book.

The next question was one of the biggest and most important. I asked the correspondents to determine how important some services and supplies were for accommodation. From the results there were clear rankings on what was overall seen as the most important things. The top results were in a way implying to the peoples more independent ways of traveling. People are also clearly wanting and demanding more, making the accommodation business more about the customer saying what he/she wants, rather than the accommodation saying how it is. People want to freely do things but still get the most of accommodating. Because of these reasons we see breakfast, earlier or later check-in/-out, WiFi, parking and luggage storage in the top. People want to get the most of the trips and are more keen on doing and looking for things themselves. I think partly this is why eg. a possible reception is found in the middle of the results. Services like restaurants, bars, minibars, room service etc., are probably because of this also in the end of the figure. No need for anything extra that costs more, people can find them all on their own and probably types that are also more suitable for them.

Looking through the alternatives with age groups in mind, there were a few that more or less divided opinions. The biggest divide was regarding the work desk with a 1.28 difference from the smallest to the biggest average. I find it a little hard to know why exactly this difference is, since the age group 18-25 years result is higher than the following three groups. The reason could be that younger people tend to have their laptops with them and a desk makes it easier to use with outlets nearby. The middle aged people are maybe more commonly on leisure trips with partners or families and the last thing they want is to drag a laptop on a trip, when using a laptop in work settings is already enough. Older people might with better time, traveling more and having more money, stay longer on trips and also being on trips without children. This makes the need for laptops bigger and wanting to have a bigger space to do things more important. Parking being quite important for all age groups is understandable but the difference is also not such a big surprise. Public transport can be expensive and sometimes not so flexible, making it more common for people to bring their own cars. But parking is also usually very expensive and the accommodation having their own free parking is a very positive thing for customers. I'm thinking that younger people have less need for parking since not many have cars, but then again a car makes it more free to move around in the destination. Middle aged and older people requiring parking is most often because they are either traveling with children or the comfort of having your own car is much better.

Two other differences that I felt were good to point out, is the difference in results with the TV and a possible reception. The different opinions about the TV seem not so surprising but depending on individual people, can have a totally different meaning for everyone. Younger people are probably more interested in being anywhere else but the hotel, making the TV not so necessary, but if they are staying at the accommodation, having some sort of entertainment is usually important. For the middle aged groups, having a TV can be relaxing after a day on the town with eg. children. TV is also the best way to "calm down" the children when at the accommodation. For older people not having children gives more room to be doing other things than being on the room, whereas for a little bit older people, not having the strength and energy to be out and about for many hours, a TV is good to have on the room for entertainment. The reception had a little bit smaller difference in average between groups, but having it

ranked in the middle as not so important but still in a way good, got me interested. I understand that for older people it's a comfort to have people in a reception to turn to, but then again younger people are more interested in doing their own things and seldom need help from a reception personnel. 18-25 year olds might still be shy travelers that like having someone local to ask about things. 26-30 year olds are more skilled travelers that know what to do, whereas middle aged people probably also have families to look after and feel secure when there is someone to turn to in a foreign place.

Some of the other alternatives that also divided the opinions a little bit more by the different age groups were; WiFi that was not so important for older people, Gym that was seen more important by younger and older people, Minibar that was seen most important to younger and older people but deemed unnecessary for most middle aged people and the security box seen more important with age but quite important by the youngest age group.

The last survey question that was optional to answer regarding things to wish for in accommodation, it seemed in my opinion very clear that people are expecting more from the accommodation, without having to necessarily pay more for it. People are expressing themselves more as individuals with different wants and needs, and they want to be recognized more. So it doesn't surprise me that a lot of things in the comments were about special surprises, luxury without having to pay a lot, having a pillow assortment to choose from, being able to choose which room to stay in and many more.

5.2 Service development

Christian Grönroos' ideas on how a service needs to look like, is a very important part of this research. Having read the results from the survey and also since I've worked at Omena Hotels for little over two years, it feels clear to me that there is a need to get the different categories in shape to get the business running even better. Since people are more open to accommodating in different types of places, it's important to get the core service of this 3-star hotel, Omena Hotels, in shape to keep its place on the market. People clearly still find hotels reliable and the most common place to stay at according to the survey results, but are also demanding that what they pay for works and is like they thought. Omena Hotels having such an unique concept with very little services, might

have to look into adding something more, or at least make the existing services a bit better. Having less makes it that much important that the existing works. Additional services and supplies seem in a way to have less value today but still people are looking to get a lot without paying a lot. There is a clear balance that needs to be found in this category and that's why I think it would be important to firstly look into what type of customer they have and what type they want. After knowing this it shouldn't be that hard to figure out what services and supplies these customers want or need. The concept itself is not all wrong, since it seems that people aren't that dependent of services on sight anymore, but there should still be a clear red line for the product and service, and how it looks and works without compromising the identity of the company. After all, we are existing in a world that is vastly changing and if we don't follow, we will go under sooner or later.

As Grönroos points out, the services are also about different characteristics that involve different activities. For the consumer and Omena Hotels, this means eg. having the booking functionality working without problems, being able to contact the hotel easily and more. Since the hotels don't have staff or any additional services on sight, there is no room left for consumers and service providers to affect the outcome of the whole service experience. This means that even higher importance should be put on the actual accommodation because this is probably the last factor determining if the service or product bought, is what the consumer wanted and is happy with.

5.3 Consumer behaviour

In today's world where the consumers have more to choose from, the possibility to compare products and services, and have more to say and demand in general, it's really important to understand and know him/her better. Since one main topic in this study was the age subcultures, a lot of the data was for that reason compared with the different age groups.

For me it feels pretty clear that although different age, a lot of the results from the survey were quite similar and no truly remarkable differences were found. Although, when we go closer into the market itself and see what type of accommodations we have today and what types, services and supplies are developing, it's clear that a lot of changes are

on their way because of technology, the world situation and the consumer. It feels like various people are having some same preferences and ideas of accommodation, but there is a distinct different behaviour in age groups. Generation Y (18-30 years groups) is familiar with technology and usually very open to new things, whilst being not too demanding. From the results it seemed to me as the youngest groups were more independent and didn't need that much, which also showed in the comment section where the wants and needs were more expressed, the older the correspondent was. I also felt quite clear to me that younger people were more after the experience of the destination than the accommodation itself, and this showed in the amount of leisure trips and type of accommodation they preferred. Generation X (31-50 years groups), the "up to no good" group, were seen as lazy in their younger days but have really upped the ante by working themselves up in the workplace and taking care of families. It has made them wanting more, which I think also shows in the accommodation world. Because these people really work for everything they have, it's obvious that they want the most of everything. It's also about having everything needed for eg. the family and have something that suits everyone. Personally I think this is a hard group to work with, because they have so many different needs but at the same time huge wants. The results also showed various things about this group, they want a little bit of everything and a little bit extra too. It's hard to keep someone satisfied who always wants more. The baby boomers (51-70 years groups) have some similarities to generation X, but baby boomers have more options and are more for the wants since needs are a given. These people are either working in high positions or retired. Their children have moved out and for most, all the loans have been paid off. Since they have the time and money, they will want to truly spend them on themselves. This means that accommodation core and supporting services have to be really good, but also the ancillary services. From the survey results I could see that surprisingly these people are also quite open for new things, but they really need to work like they want them to. They know what they want and they will take it where it's offered. From the additional comments, it became clear that although some a little bit more modest, a lot the correspondents would like hot tubs, saunas, possibility to decide the room and to be able to in some way affect the accommodation itself more. They also seem to appreciate brand loyalty with some expressing the want for repeated customer benefits and more Omena Hotels or budget hotels to Fin-

land.

The grey market (60-70+ years groups) was represented by quite a few people, although age 70+ with only five persons. The reliability of their answers might not be too high, but gave a good idea of things. From the results gotten, they seem like the type that want to feel secure and have everything possible during accommodation. Surprisingly there was also interest shown for gym and spa, which corresponds to the theories of these people wanting to stay healthy. In their own way these groups are also a little tricky, since the need to have more help or services around, is bigger. They are probably also more reluctant to new and "complicated" things, which means that they value things as they were before.

From the consumer behaviour in tourism perspective, it seems clear to me that motivators are slowly becoming the more dominant factor when people are traveling. People are more keen on seeing the world, experiencing and learning new things, even though their current life situation might not support it to the fullest. Eg. the youngest age group travels quite a lot compared to the other groups, although many pointed out to be studying and/or unemployed. There is clearly a high need to satisfy the different motivators (personal, physical, cultural etc.) and they will find a way to do it. If that means eg. choosing alternative accommodations that save money, it's definitely a possibility to consider using. Motivators changing because of different life situations, is also evident. People with lower incomes will be willing to stay cheaper to be able to travel or having a family will affect the wants and needs of the accommodation itself. These factors being more as determinants than motivators, also show how accurate they are. From the survey results it seems that people are in a way either well or not well informed about prices, since for many it felt obvious that more budget hotels should be offered or then again prices should be lowered. There were also clear needs, especially for the older groups, that it should be clean and it should be peaceful to accommodate, making these some of the determinants in choosing accommodation. Since internet and social media, people are also more easily convinced of good and bad things that are written about products and services, making it probably the biggest determinant factor for tourists today.

These age groups with all their different wants and needs, really need to be taken into consideration if/when Omena Hotels starts developing their product and services in the future. Most importantly, they have to figure out who their most important customers are and develop the concepts different factors to suit them as good as possible. We live in a competitive world where consumers are more free to do what they want and choose what they want. The fact that these choices can change in such a short notice and because of really small things, it's really important to have loyal customers and customer groups, that will be there in good and bad.

5.4 The future of tourism

The future of tourism is in many ways dependent of how the world economy will develop. It will probably not affect tourism in a way that would stop traveling altogether because people have to save money, but rather change the way people travel. As pointed out from the survey results, young people who are not working because of eg. studies, still manage to travel. There is a clear need and want to go away and experience new things, and to do so, people are willing to compromise. So, in today's world and in the future, I don't think there is a great risk for traveling to stop. There will rather be a demand of certain types of accommodation that suits the traveler better. If the economic crisis will turn good and people will have enough money for everything, they will be willing to put more money on traveling and its different aspects. This will also mean that the demand of quality for money and luxury for budget will rise. These are things that I strongly feel to have come out from the results of the research. Correspondents clearly pointed out that they want to get what they paid for, get value for money and would greatly appreciate getting something little extra for a luxury vibe. If the outcome of the crisis would be bad, it would probably make the traveler more simple and focused on getting the experience to travel, but not so much about the accommodation itself. This could eg. impact the traveling generation X and Y if they have to work really long before retirement and have to retire with little money. The big baby boom generation will become one of the biggest traveling group and seeing from the results, I'd say pretty certainly that they're going to need quite a lot from the accommodation. I'd see it more of an experience itself and making it a really big part of the trip. This means that good and interesting services is needed to keep this generation happy. This is, however, also

strongly linked with the possible pension crisis. If governments can't afford to pay proper retirements to people, they won't afford to travel as much and more restraint is put on the younger generations to work and provide. It will be hard to exactly predict how things will evolve, but we know that consumers' opinions have truly never been this important before, as they are today. People have the chance to affect more and demand more, making it harder to satisfy all wants and needs. We are no longer talking about groups of people, rather about individuals and what exactly they want and how they can be satisfied. If things turn "to the worse", we might have a group of people or individuals looking for the very basic of traveling. But as Edvardsson pointed out, it's starting to feel like the consumer truly should be more a part of the service development process, in order to truly understand and know what they want and need.

From the room project that students at Haaga-Helia put up, I noticed from the results and comments that consumer wants are taking over the needs, technology is starting to show more and hotels in all are starting to partially turn into entertainment centers. These are things that also came up in the research. Correspondents were more fixed on wanting things than needing and expressing how bookings and check-ins should be really easy. Nothing should be too complicated any more. The current consumer doesn't have patience anymore. There was also pointed out that guests wanted customized services like pillows in the room, big bed and a calming environment. These too were all brought up by the correspondents in my results. Hotels are no longer seen as alternative place to sleep, but as an even better accommodation experience than home, or at least just like home. This is one of the reasons why one point in the student project was brought up, that 3-star hotels will be in trouble in the future. There is a need to change these hotels to something unique and something truly amazing for the consumers. If there is nothing special, there will probably not be that many customers either. One important thing to think about in service and product developments, is also technology. It's rapidly evolving to amazing things and there are some that people live with on daily basis. Still, there is also the older generations that are not that keen on technology and all its weird and complicated features. But, if you want to succeed in this world you have to evolve like all the others are. This is one part that I think Omena Hotels has been partly a forerunner. They've developed a system that actually allows people to accommodate without any personnel on sight. It might not be flawless, but quite effective. It is also

interesting to see that in other parts of the world, check-in machines and robotic luggage storage systems have emerged and become very interesting talking subjects in tourism, but why no talk about Omena and their concept? It could be the not enough developed concept that is slowing them down or maybe consumers are not ready for such a drastic option? For a long time, there has been a question in my mind about why Omena Hotels with its size and uniqueness, hasn't become more popular and talked about? Technology is becoming more of a key stone in tourism and the fact that they have something so unique, should really be amplified.

5.5 Omena Hotels in the future

As a summary, I think some of the most important things right now for Omena Hotels would be to concentrate on making the sold product as good as possible. There is also a serious need to look into who their customers really are and who they need to focus on. After this is figured out, there should be improvements made to fit these consumers. Value for money and getting luxury for a low price is really becoming one of the essential guidelines in the future. At the same time there is a growing demand of getting more personalized products and services, really showing that wants are overgrowing the needs of today's consumer. I personally would see that the middle mediocre accommodations aren't appealing anymore, but instead it's about offering the essential or the whole deal. To have an unique and modern concept is something that truly is seen as attractive to the traveler today and tomorrow. After looking into this closer, I mostly got very intrigued about the thought to have two different types of Omena concepts that included the effective, quick and very technology based concept, and the more luxury based concept that had the essentials of the basic Omena concept but offered much more. Other idea would be to have hotels that consisted of different floor types for different customers. Lower floors could offer hostel like rooms whereas higher you go, the more luxury it became. But for all these, there might be a need to have some type of on sight staff to give the customers the feel of really being looked after and being close by for possible assistance. This aspect is at this point still hard to define.

Overall, Omena Hotels need to fully develop the core idea of the business, implement it with consumer behaviour today and tomorrow, and make it stand out from the crowd for all it is. There is truly a chance to develop something magnificent that will awaken peoples curiosity everywhere and make life-time customers.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Looking at this thesis after it's all done, I truly feel that I accomplished what I sought after to do. I've studied the tourism of the future and researched about different consumers to really understand what it is that Omena Hotels need to do at this point of their business. I have offered them my advice on how to develop their business and concept to make it work even better in the future. I've found out some thoughts and ideas about how different consumer generations feel about accommodations and noticed that there is a clear change and some differences in the age groups. These taken into consideration with how the accommodation scene is developing, brought out some quite important aspects. Although Omena Hotels are a part of the possibly troubled 3-star hotel type in the future, they still have something unique to build on.

6.1 Reliability and validity

The reliability of the research is not at a 100%. Reasons for this is that the survey was to nearly 90-95% answered by people already "liking" Omena Hotels on Facebook and made it more open for critic and opinions directly directed to Omena. The risk of people also answering the survey in a more jokingly manner is also highly possible. It might be that people quickly answered the survey just to be able to participate in the competition. This would of course endanger the results of the survey when not bigger than only 1055 answers. The survey itself was also conducted in Finnish and to Finnish consumers, which makes it a little trickier to draw conclusions based on the theories. Although Omena has a lot of Finnish customers, there are also a lot of foreigners that most likely have in some way a little different view on these subjects. But, at this point the Finnish consumers were put into focus.

6.2 Limitations

In a bigger timeframe I would have loved to have the survey open for a longer time period and also made sure to get it more diverse. If there would have been more time, I could have shared the survey more, could have taken the time to walk around town gathering answers from passersby and try to get it also directed to foreigners. With more time there would also have been the opportunity to analyze and compare the results more with each other, with eg. SPSS. It would also have been interesting to get to compare the results gathered with some sort of research already done on the subject, to see if thoughts and opinions on things have changed and how much.

Otherwise, I really concentrated on making the survey as easy as possible to answer, so gathering the amount of answers that I did, wasn't a problem. Also having the survey restricted to max. ten questions made it more appealing to fill out. So, although it could have been better and more versatile, I think the results gathered work as a great base for future improvements.

6.3 Future research

My knowledge is that Omena Hotels has not done that much research regarding consumers and hotel markets since starting the business in early 2000, which makes this study something really good to start with. Based on discussions with the company vice president and what I have found out from the research, there is a need to study the consumers that they have and what they need, which would make this thesis a great base for further more advanced research on the subject after that. But overall, I'm pleased with the outcome of this study and although I partly hoped to offer Omena Hotels something more specific to work on, I truly feel that the things brought up are really important. I hope that these results also bring something essential that they can continue to work on in the future.

6.4 Final words

I set out to do a thesis for Omena Hotels over a year ago, only to find it ready now and totally different from the original idea. I was put into a really interesting, but demanding position when I was offered a part-time chief customer officer position at Omena Hotels last spring. After taking over last summer, everything changed since the company went into reorganization and the CEO of the company changed. Having survived these tough times and having to postpone my thesis and graduation, I'm really ecstatic to see this study finally reaching its end.

I honestly hope that this is something useful for Omena Hotels and that I could contribute my final share to the Omena Hotels story, since my own story with them will end after this summer.

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APPENDIX

Appendices 1. Survey in Finnish

Also on the web address <https://fi.surveymonkey.com/s/D85BY96>

Nimeni on Heidi Holmberg ja olen lopputyötä vailla valmis restonomi. Olen opiskellut matkailualaa ammattikorkeakoulu Arcadssa sitten vuoden 2011 ja nyt olen lopputyötä varten kehittänyt kyselytutkimuksen selvittääkseni ihmisten majoitustapoja sekä tarpeita. Lopputyön ja kyselyn ideana on saada selville tiettyjä ajatuksia, tarpeita ja haluja majoituksesta, jotka ilmenee tietyissä ihmisryhmissä. Kysely koostuu kahdeksasta nopeasta kysymyksestä, joista viimeiseen ei ole pakko vastata.

1. Sukupuoli

Nainen ☐ Mies ☐

2. Ikä

18-25 vuotta ☐ 26-30 vuotta ☐ 31-40 vuotta ☐ 41-50 vuotta ☐
51-60 vuotta ☐ 61-70 vuotta ☐ 71+ vuotta ☐

3. Työstatus

Opiskelija ☐ Työntekijä ☐ Toimihenkilö ☐
Ylempi th/johtaja ☐ Eläkeläinen ☐ Muu ☐ _____

4. Kuinka monta kertaa vuodessa olet työmatkalla joka vaatii yöpymistä vieraalla paikkakunnalla?

En ole töissä ☐ En ollenkaan ☐ 1-2 kertaa vuodessa ☐
3-5 kertaa vuodessa ☐ 6+ kertaa vuodessa ☐

5. Kuinka monta kertaa vuodessa olet vapaa-ajan matkalla joka vaatii yöpymistä vieraalla paikkakunnalla?

En ollenkaan ☐ 1-2 kertaa vuodessa ☐
3-5 kertaa vuodessa ☐ 6+ kertaa vuodessa ☐

6. Minkälaista majoitusta suosit kuinka paljon?
(1 = en suosi ollenkaan, 5 = suosin aina)

	1	2	3	4	5
Hotellissa (1-3 tähteä)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hotellissa (4-5 tähteä)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hostellissa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vuokra huoneistossa (yrityksen)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vuokra huoneistossa (yksityisen)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sukulaisten/ystävien luona	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Majoituessa, mitkä palvelut ja tarvikkeet näet kuinka tärkeinä?
(1 = ei ollenkaan tärkeä, 5 = erittäin tärkeä)

	1	2	3	4	5
a. Majoituksen sijainti	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Mahdollinen vastaanotto	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Mahdollisuus aikaisempaan tai myöhempään sisään-/ulos- kirjautumiseen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Matkatavarasäilytys	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Pysäköintimahdollisuus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Hintaan kuuluva aamupala	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Ilmainen WiFi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Room service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. TV	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Minibaari	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. Kassakaappi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. Silitysrauta ja -lauta	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. Työpöytä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n. Ravintola/-t majoituksessa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

o. Baari	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
p. Kuntosali	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
q. Spa/Spa hoitoja	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Jos saisit itse pyytää / toivoa mitä tahansa yöpymiseen liittyvää, mitä se olisi?

Vapaamuotoinen vastaus alla olevaan kenttään: