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**MEASURING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT 5TH FLOOR
BEAUTY SALON**

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I declare that I have compiled the paper independently
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ABSTRACT

The topic of the thesis is “Measuring customer satisfaction at 5th Floor Beauty Salon”. The choice of topic was presented by 5th Floor Beauty Salon management, who have little feedback and understanding regarding their customer satisfaction. The main goals were to find out whether clients felt satisfied after their visit to the salon, what could be the elements of service that the customers feel should be changed and whether customers felt they would like to return to the salon after their visit.

The author studied the topic of customer satisfaction as well as the tools for customer satisfaction measurement. To gain further knowledge of the beauty salon market in Estonia, the author gathered relevant data about the competing beauty salons on the market.

To find answer to the research questions, the author conducted a survey that was distributed via e-mail to 1048 customers who had previously visited 5th Floor Beauty Salon and whose e-mail address was in the salon’s database. The total of 114 responses were gathered.

The results show that customers are fairly satisfied with their perceived service quality at 5th Floor Beauty Salon. The total of 94 respondents stated they would very likely or likely visit the salon again in the future and thus feel positive about the salon.

Some key points to further improve in the salon’s work would be to ensure there is enough time for every client so that the work would not be performed in a rush by the staff and to notify customers about the changes regarding their bookings better.

Keywords: Customer satisfaction, beauty salon, SERVQUAL.

INTRODUCTION

On the ever-changing and highly competitive service market, having high customer satisfaction and a great number of loyal customers is something desirable, yet complex to achieve. Markets grow, and customers' demands satiate faster than ever before meaning it is more difficult to surprise clients, make them feel satisfied and keep them loyal to a certain brand or business (Soone 2010, 13). In order to stand out from other competitors, businesses must acknowledge the experience their clients get from them and work to achieve better results and feedback.

Even though great customer experience is crucial for a business, it is often negative. It is not only a product or service that a customer buys, it is experience as a whole that a client gets. A client perceives the whole process through his or her senses and psychology thus customer satisfaction is often related to a feeling that a client gets when acquiring a product or service. (Watkinson 2016, 18-23)

The topic of the thesis, "Measuring customer satisfaction at 5th Floor Beauty Salon", has been chosen by the author for two main reasons. Firstly, 5th Floor Beauty Salon has not conducted any research of this kind before and secondly, it is important for a business to know whether the expectations of their clients meet the output of the business in order to stay competitive on the market.

5th Floor Beauty Salon was opened in October 2016 and operates on the market by offering its customers the services of hairdressers and beauticians. It is located in the city center of Tallinn, on the 5th floor of Stockmann department store.

The aim of the research is to find out the level of satisfaction that 5th Floor Beauty Salon clients have felt after using the businesses' services and if they are pleased with it. From the survey conducted it will be analyzed whether the service level of the beauty salon meets the expectations of the clients and what could be the areas for further improvement.

The main research questions are:

- 1) Did clients feel satisfied after receiving a service in 5th Floor Beauty Salon?
- 2) What are the elements that clients felt would have to be changed?
- 3) Would clients return to 5th Floor Beauty Salon after their first visit?

The thesis consists of three parts. The first part introduces the theory of customer satisfaction and different methods on how to measure it. The second part gives an overview of beauty salon industry, its aspects of service as well as the nature of 5th Floor Beauty Salon. The third part consists of the analysis, results and assumptions made by the author on how to improve the service of the salon for future benefit.

1. THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

The first chapter covers the concept of customer satisfaction, why the topic is important as well as how to measure satisfaction and improve it.

1.1. The concept of service

Services are a part of everyday life and contribute to the development of many areas. Service sector such as tourism is the key to creating new jobs in developing countries. Services are complex and diverse in their nature, therefore there is no single definition to describe them. There is a general understanding of what they are and how they contribute to the society. (Gilmore 2003, 3)

Gilmore (2003) has listed service to be any or a mixture of the following:

- 1) service as a main product, such as a holiday package or insurance policy;
- 2) service as a whole company, such as charity;
- 3) service as product enhancement, such as complementary tea at a beauty salon;
- 4) service as a support, such as an update;
- 5) service as an act, such as recommendations or giving advice;

Service could be described as an act, a process or any economic action that has added value from which the customer can benefit. A service-based business puts more effort to the service offered than the end product the client receives. Such examples could be businesses that offer services and end-products together, such as beauty salons, restaurants and retail shops. (*Ibid.*, 4) Even though services often combine tangible elements such as a meal or shampoo, the performance done is intangible. (Lovelock, Wright 1999, 10)

Services could be classified based on their operational dimensions. Based on the research of Silvestro *et al.*, the six service dimensions could be categorized as follows (Silvestro *et al.* 1992, 67):

- 1) equipment or people focus – equipment focus such as vending machine or people focus such as a cashier;
- 2) customer contact time per service – leveling from high to low, depending on how much time a customer spends time in direct contact with the business;
- 3) the degree of customization – again, leveling from high to low, how flexible is the customization and personalization of a service;
- 4) the degree of discretion – the level of freedom and rights the staff in contact with the customer have in order to meet customer expectations;
- 5) value added back office or front office – weights whether the proportion of back-office staff is greater or lower than those in front-office
- 6) product or process focus – is more effort put into what the customer buys or how the service is delivered

The goal of a service-oriented business should be creating value for the customer to gain value from a long-term relationship in return. Good service can be done only by using knowledge and skills as resources. The list of resources depends on the firm but could be physical such as food, activities such as transportation, or even information in form of consulting for example. (Grönroos 2015, 3)

Baron and Harris (1995) have divided the elements of a service to be “core” and “peripheral”. Core element is described as the necessary output a client seeks in a service and that is crucial for creating the intangible elements of a service. Peripheral elements are beneficial to the experience and rather complementing a service rather than being an actual necessary part of it. Taking an airline operator as an example, the core element of an airline company is offering flights, but the peripheral elements are complementary in-flight services as well as beverages and entertainment. (Baron, Harris 1995, 4)

In order to carry out a service, there are also invisible elements contributing to the outcome that a client can not see. They are usually carried out before the service takes place and therefore left unnoticed for a customer. Such invisible elements could be mandatory staff trainings to perform a service, system setups to successfully manage client registration or even preparing a massage room to be ready for a customer. Such invisible aspects are not directly valued by customers. (*Ibid.*, 5)

What the client can see and perceive are the physical environment in which the service is performed and the staff. The environmental elements are not limited to the design of a space, but also include the ambient conditions such as temperature, humidity, noise, and the utility of the space such as how spacious layout plan it has. (*Ibid.*, 5)

The people involved in a service, often the staff of a business, is a crucial element in determining the success of a service. The appearance and manners of staff are grasped by the emotional and cognitive senses of a customer. (*Ibid.*, 6)

As services are actions and processes, customers are inevitably a part of them. When services are being offered, the buyer and the seller must often be at the same location, therefore the buyer is involved in the production phase of the service. It would be unimaginable to offer a manicure without the client and staff contact. (Gilmore 2003, 11)

As people are involved in the making of service and services are often intangible in nature, it may be difficult to standardize and control the quality. It is understood that human nature is changing, and people are unlikely to work in a reliable and constant manner such as machines. There are a lot of uncontrollable and unpredictable elements affecting the result of a service. Even an over-demanding and noisy customer may affect the service quality of another customer being served at the same time. (*Ibid.*, 11)

1.2. The nature of customer satisfaction

Emphasizing customer satisfaction and gathering data about the opinion of the clients towards a company to further improve its services is an important issue regarding businesses of all kinds. In order to stay competitive and be on top of the market a company must follow the new customer-orientation philosophy of the modern age. (Grigotoudis, Siskos 2010, 1)

Looking back at history, client has not always been the main focus of businesses. Taking Henry Ford's innovational mass-production in the beginning of 1900s as an example, cutting manufacturing costs and being the leader of a market by having lower prices than competitors was the key to success and catering customers. Ford's system expected that factory's efficient work to come first and customers just had to accommodate with what was offered. (Reis *et al.* 2003, 2)

During the World War times and the following years, there was a great shortage of food as well as any kind of product items and services. To combat such issue, people, the customers, were even given coupons to distribute the scarce resources. People accepted that the products they bought and consumed could be of poor quality and that companies were rather focused on production than customer service or satisfaction. (Shaw 2005, 9)

These times were a total opposite of today's globalized business world. A shift to customer treatment came in the 1980s and beginning of 1990s, when new trend peaked around the world teaching businesses to raise customer satisfaction as the priority number one (Reis *et al.* 2003, 2). This was largely affected by the rise of the Internet making information easier to access for the clients who now had the chance to easily compare businesses and read reviews. (Aquila, Marcus 2004, 18)

The consumers today have more information in their hands than ever before. They have the ability to search, compare and choose among several different service providers and products. They are confident and have high expectations towards the end product they wish to receive. By being educated and informed, consumers cannot be easily manipulated, they are well aware of their rights and are willing to fight for themselves when feeling violated. (Cook 2008, 3-5)

This has caused a shift in customer-business relationship. Today's customer knows well he or she has options and is free from being loyal to one business. The client knows what he or she wants, demands good service over staying in relationship and if not satisfied, moves on to a competitor. (Aquila, Marcus 2004, 15)

For nowadays customers the experience they get when buying is as important, or even more important, than just the products or services that come along with the purchase. Consumer behavior has grown to be unpredictable and businesses need capabilities to respond to unknown demand that may happen in the near future or even tomorrow. (Shaw 2005, 11) It is not so much about what people need anymore, because most of peoples' needs get satisfied. People have started to live in a world full of wishes and they desire their wishes to be satisfied by businesses. (Watkinson 2016, 64)

Giese and Cote (2002) have given three possible descriptions for consumer satisfaction:

- 1) a type of affective and cognitive response;
- 2) based on the comparison of product-related standards, previous experiences of the same kind;
- 3) expressed before or following the choice, after consumption or extended experience;

Consumer satisfaction revolves around the choice of product or service, purchase and consumption of it, and the time length of being involved in the process of making a purchase or being served. The last varying in duration as the length of every service is different. (*Ibid.*, 15)

Satisfaction could also be linked to personal pursuit of happiness. The pleasurable experience coming from the consumption of products and services is a desirable end-state. Conscious relates this feeling to achievement, it gives the idea that the consumer has solved the complexity of the market and found something that meets his or her expectations. (Oliver 2015, 4)

There is a controversy between a satisfied and dissatisfied customer. It is in the human subconscious to warn others of bad experiences rather than promoting the positive. Dissatisfied customers are a burden and financial loss on the business as research shows they are more likely to spread the word about bad experiences than satisfied tell about their positive feelings. (*Ibid.*, 12)

Satisfied customers are more likely to bring further profit to the business. In the survey conducted among Toyota buyers, 75 percent of the surveyed were satisfied, and 75 percent intended to buy a Toyota again in the future. (Kotler 2000, 101)

Dissatisfied customers may abandon the product or worse, return it. They may even take further steps when the product is intangible, such as hair coloring. They may complain to customer protection agencies in addition to taking personal steps such as warning friends and acquaintances. These are perfect examples indicating the poor job done by the business. (*Ibid.*, 101)

Szwarc (2005) brought out there is a difference between a loyal customer and a satisfied customer, namely how much either of them contributes to the revenue of a business. Satisfied customers are more prone to promote and spread the word of mouth to other potential clients. Loyal customers, on the other hand, are more profitable for a business as they come back without hesitation and make their purchase. (Szwarc 2005, 12)

Customers usually give their loyalty to a business over a period of time. There are several ways of measuring loyalty but taking profit from sales of an individual customer as an indicator, some companies have found that the top 20% of their clients bring in most of the profit as well as help to ease the burden of losses caused by less loyal customers. This also indicates that instead of desperately seeking for new clients, a business could focus on promotion and active selling to their loyal ones. (Heskett *et al.* 1994, 170-171)

The service-profit chain (Heskett *et al.* 1994) connects the elements of profit, customer loyalty and employee satisfaction. The development and amount of sales is linked to customer loyalty whereas customer loyalty is directly coming from customer satisfaction. Satisfaction is closely tied to how the customers were treated by the staff and the behavior of staff is related to how well the company treats its employees. (*Ibid.*, 1994, 165)

A key element involved in the formation of customer satisfaction is the expectation that the customer has prior to the service. It is advised to manage customers' expectations before providing the service, so they would not expect the impossible. The expectations of a customer could be characterized as fuzzy, explicit and implicit. (Grönroos 2015, 116)

A customer has fuzzy expectations when they know they want something, but they do not know what it exactly is that they want. Taking a restaurant service as an example, the client knows he or she wants to have a great evening with a dinner but does not really know what would specifically make them feel satisfied. When the service provider fails to fulfill those unknown wishes the client leaves unsatisfied. (Grönroos 2015, 117)

Explicit expectations are clear to a customer and could be divided further into realistic and unrealistic. In case of unrealistic expectations, the business must help adjust the customer's mind to make it possible to meet the expectations. (*Ibid.*, 117) Taking transportation service as an example, the customer may want to arrive to the destination earlier than it realistically is possible.

Implicit expectations are those that a client does not consciously think of but when left out of the service could lead to dissatisfaction. Customers tend to take implicit expectations for granted. (*Ibid.*, 117) Examples could be complementary beverages or magazines at the beauty salon to make the client feel relaxed.

1.3. Development of customer satisfaction

Consumer satisfaction from acquiring either goods or services is the result of comparing the expectation a customer had before the purchase to the end experience the customer perceived. Expectations are predictions what a customer imagines he or she will get from making a purchase. (Walker 1995, 6)

Nowadays' reality is that customer satisfaction can be achieved as a co-creation between both sides involved, the customer and the business. The customer has never before had such strong impact on a company's success and the development of new products. Organizations have understood the only way to surviving is to listen and involve their target audience in their work. (Cook 2008, 7)

There are three possible zones linked to customer experiences. First zone occurs when the experience is greater than the expectation and that leads to customer satisfaction. Second zone leaves a customer feeling indifferent or neutral meaning the expectation met the experience received. Third zone, least favorable to a business, means a customer had higher expectations than the experience they encountered leading to dissatisfaction. (*Ibid.*, 6)

Employees play a vital role in the way customers perceive a business. Their views and attitude towards their employer are important as service is offered through the staff to customers. If employees feel they are not treated well, they may feel the urge to revenge and give the message of negativity over to customers. (Szwarc 2005, 13)

The performance of a service that a client encounters can be divided into two: instrumental and expressive. The instrumental performance concludes what the customer has when the service has ended. The examples could include transportation or hospitalization. The expressive performance is tied to the communications and relations between a business and a customer. The expressive performance of an airline company could be the behavior of the flight crew and the physical elements such as the plane itself. (Grönroos 1984, 37-38)

Kotler (2000) has identified satisfaction to be a post-purchase behavior. It is the final step in the purchase process during which the customer feels either satisfied or dissatisfied. If the business met the client's expectation of a service, the client feels delight. On the contrary, if the client is dissatisfied, he or she feels disappointment. (Kotler 2000, 100-101)

1.4. Customer satisfaction measuring tools

1.4.1. The SERVQUAL model

One of the most widely used service quality measurement tools is the SERVQUAL model presented by Parasuraman *et al.* in 1985. The idea behind SERVQUAL indicates that in order to make clients feel satisfied, the service a client encounters in a business must meet the expectations the customer had beforehand. (Parasuraman *et al.* 1985, 46)

Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) presented 10 categories to assess the quality of service in a business (Grönroos 2015, 102):

- 1) reliability as for the client always gets served in time and the quality is guaranteed to be the same;
- 2) responsiveness as for the client will always be answered quick;
- 3) competence as for the staff has the required skills, experience and knowledge to serve a client;
- 4) access as for the location is easily accessible and the waiting times are tolerable;
- 5) courtesy as for the staff and business is respectful and friendly towards clients;
- 6) communication as for being able to communicate with clients in their respective languages, informing customers about the prices of services, solving any problems the customer may encounter;
- 7) credibility as for always putting the customers' need and wishes first and serving them with best interests;
- 8) security as for keeping clients' personal information confidential and making them feel safe in the business environment they have entered;
- 9) understanding the customer as for listening to the feedback and making respective adjustments or providing customized solutions;
- 10) tangibles as for having necessary equipment to offer services and putting effort into the appearance of the staff;

The later study done on the SERVQUAL model suggested that the 10 determinants of service quality could be decreased to five of the following:

- 1) tangibles as for how the client sees the environment of the business, the equipment used and the overall appearance of the employees;
- 2) reliability as for how accurate and stable service quality the business offers and if the delivery time is always with the same duration;

- 3) responsiveness as for how polite and helpful are the staff with the customers and how well the clients are informed before and after the service;
- 4) assurance as for how safe the business makes its customers feel and how the staff behaves with the customers;
- 5) empathy as for how well the business listens and understands clients' needs and wants and if the business performs in the best interest;

The five remaining determinants will be described by 22 attributes and the survey respondents are asked to value the service received on a seven-point scale beginning with “strongly disagree” up to “strongly agree” (*Ibid.*, 104)

The limits of SERVQUAL method may apply in some service sectors where all five determinants can not be found. The SERVQUAL method should be applied with proper evaluation of available dimensions before the survey is done. (*Ibid.*, 104)

1.4.2. The Liljander-Strandvik model of relationship quality

The Liljander-Strandvik model analyses and compares a single service encounter with the service standard as a whole not just the expectations towards a service as other service quality methods usually do. The method assumes that the customer forms the value towards a business by comparing a single service encounter quality, also called an episode quality, to the sacrifice, usually time or money, made. This either makes the client feel satisfied, dissatisfied or leaves in the zone of tolerance. (Grönroos 2015, 111)

The model also states that there are factors affecting the relationship of a customer to a business called bonds. The bonds have an influence on how the customer perceives the company and how tightly the customer is tied to the company. These bonds are (Grönroos 2015, 115):

- 1) Legal bonds such as contracts that bind the client to a business;
- 2) Economic bonds such as being price-sensitive and preferring less-expensive businesses over others;
- 3) Technological bonds such as owning a product that requires maintenance at a specific business;
- 4) Geographical bond such as choosing a business located the closest;
- 5) Time-related bond such as using the services of a business that offers flexible appointment times;
- 6) Knowledge-related bond such as the staffs' knowledge about a customers history;

- 7) Social bond such as the close relationship of staff and the customer;
- 8) Cultural bond such as choosing a business established by people of similar ethnical background;
- 9) Ideological bond such as choosing environmentally friendly business;
- 10) Psychological bond such as the customer feels a brand is the best of all;

Liljander-Strandvik model describes the service quality as well as how the customer flows through the process and eventually forms an image of the business. It could be highlighted that the model is great for helping managers understand which part of the bonds should be further improved. (Grönroos 2015, 114)

1.4.3. The GAPs model

Parasuraman *et al.* developed an additional method for evaluating customer expectations and perceptions – the GAPs model. This method helps discover the major gaps between what the customer expects from a service or business and the actual experience perceived. They identified four gaps. (Baron, Harris 1995, 162)

The first gap states managers have to always keep their customers needs and demands in mind. If a customer comes in to a business and feels there is a gap between the service offered and the service perceived, he or she is left unsatisfied. This gap could be avoided by conducting market surveys, demand analysis and listening to front-end staff's feedback. (Grönroos 2015, 131)

The second gap concerns the level of quality a business offers. Sometimes a business is unwilling, unable or just does not care to solve a problem of a customer. For example if a customer is tight on time, he or she wishes to receive a service as soon as possible but long queues make him or her feel frustrated. These issues could be caused by the bad time management of a business, lack of planning knowledge or clear goal-setting or lack of financials to improve the situation. (*Ibid.*, 131)

The third gap or the service delivery gap states that the quality specifications of a service does not meet the actual level of quality offered. This is often related to the behaviour and experience of staff members. Employees may not be fulfilling the specifications required because the standards are too complicated or they just do not care. Also, the lack of training affects the ability to carry out a service. (*Ibid.*, 132)

The fourth gap concerns with the promises a company makes to its customers. Advertisements may rise the level of expectation that a customer has too high. This could be avoided by incorporating service operations to the planning process. Overpromising, exaggerating and failing to market the real level of services a business offers may leave a customer unsatisfied. (*Ibid.*, 133)

The perceived service quality gap or gap 5 states the perceived quality of a service is not consistent with what the customer expected. It is important to constantly meet the previous service quality levels offered. There is a positive aspect to this gap though, namely it is possible to even offer “overquality” when the customer is surprised with a sudden positive change in a service. (*Ibid.*, 134)

2. BEAUTY SALON MARKET AND 5TH FLOOR BEAUTY SALON

This chapter gives an overview of the beauty salon market in Estonia as well as an overview of 5th Floor Beauty Salon brand and its customers.

2.1. Beauty salon market of Estonia

Beauty salons go hand-in-hand with the multi-billion beauty industry. It is an exciting yet highly competitive and rapidly expanding field to work in. More and more people turn to professionals to achieve their beauty goals by having treatments in beauty salons, spas and clinics. In addition to independent salons, hotels often establish their own beauty salon to offer a broader selection of services to their guests. (Medcalf, Yousef-Zadeh 2009, 1)

The beauty salon market belongs under personal service activities as “hairdressing and other beauty treatment” services. In this market as of year 2016, there were 1938 active personal service businesses out of which 1650 stated beauty services as their main business and the remaining as side business. The average business earned 18 285€ of profit, the five biggest businesses on the market were Sinine Salong OÜ, Hera Salongid OÜ, Aqva Hotels OÜ, Estonia SPA Hotels AS and Baltic Beach Holding OÜ. The five previously mentioned totaled up to 11.17% of the market. (Creditinfo AS 2017, 8-9)

All beauty services are considered personal services and they are divided as hairdressing, manicure, pedicure, cosmetics, massage and tanning services. Most beauty salons offer 2-3 of the services mentioned previously with hairdressing usually being the main activity. (EAS 2008, 1)

The number of employees in a beauty salon is small with up to five workers being an average. The staff works in shifts and has one or two workers per service per shift. This means one or two hairdressers may work at the same time during a shift. (*Ibid.*, 1)

The biggest cost for a beauty salon is labor cost which accounts for 40-50% of the total costs. Material cost counts for an additional 10-30%. As rent and other utility costs have also risen in the previous years, salons offer rental spots to self-employed specialists. This way the salon does not employ workers under working contract but under rent contract. (*Ibid.*, 1-2)

2.2. Overview of 5th Floor Beauty Salon

5th Floor Beauty Salon was established in October 2016. It is located in the centre of Tallinn, on the 5th floor of Stockmann department store. The salon offers both – hair care and body care – to its customers. The salon has a bigger number of employees than the average on the market – 19. The staff consists of 6 hairdressers, 7 beauticians, 2 masseuses, 1 professional make-up artist and 3 administrators. All staff members have respective diplomas as a proof of their qualification to perform the services. (Manager of 5th Floor Beauty Salon, 2018)

5th Floor Beauty Salon is dedicated to using high-quality health-conscious and organic products when offering services to its customers. The salon offers 27 different services for hair care for men, women and children, 20 different types of hand, feet and nail care services, 9 different eyebrow and eyelash services, 19 different face care services, 9 different body care services and massages, Chinese medicine therapies, make-up, piercing and depilation services. (Fifthfloor.ee, 2018)

The salon promotes sustainable and health-conscious way of personal care on a market that is satiated with products consisting of chemicals harmful to both health and nature. The salon has used elements of nature in its design to create a calm atmosphere in the salon. Aromatherapeutical air diffusers and calming music are used to further relax the mind of clients. (*Ibid.*)

The clients of 5th Floor Beauty Salon are mostly Estonian citizens. The salon has several loyal clients who come at least once a month. Finnish tourists are the second biggest client group of the salon as the business is located in an easily accessible location not far from the port of Tallinn. (Manager of 5th Floor Beauty Salon, 2018)

Although the beauty salon market is satiated and has tight competition, the main clientele of 5th Floor Beauty Salon stands out to be women of higher income who value their time, health, quality and privacy. The clients are less price-sensitive and they value the brand of 5th Floor Beauty Salon.

(Ibid.)

3. MEASURING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT 5TH FLOOR BEAUTY SALON

The author conducted a survey among 5th Floor Beauty Salon clientele to measure the level of satisfaction. The chapter introduces the aims and methodology of the research as well as discusses the results and conclusions.

3.1. The aim and methodology of the survey

The aim of the research was to find out the opinion and satisfaction level of 5th Floor Beauty Salon's clientele towards the services offered and encountered. Respondents had the option to express their satisfaction with the salon as well as offer suggestions on how to further improve the service.

In order to measure satisfaction, the author conducted an online survey to gather information from the customers in the most convenient way for them. The survey was distributed via e-mails that clients have entered into the salon's database. To keep the results accurate, the survey was not distributed in social media where random people could have given their answers.

The survey was sent out on 22 March 2018 to 1048 recipients from whom 409 opened the e-mail. Of those 409 people, 172 clicked on the survey link. The open rate of the e-mail was 39.4% compared to the 18.5% industry average (MailChimp, 2018) which could mean that 5th Floor Beauty Salon e-mails are appealing to clients. From the total 172 people who clicked on the survey link, 114 responses were collected.

The author chose SERVQUAL method among other studied in the thesis to form the survey as this enables the respondents to compare their expected and perceived service. The method was chosen among others during the process of writing the theoretical part.

The questions were based on the five dimensions of SERVQUAL – tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The respondents were asked to read a statement and give their assessment on a 7-level Likert scale with 1 being the option “totally disagree” and 7 “totally agree”. There was an additional “do not know” option as well.

The first part of the survey focused on the expectations of the clients and the respondents were asked to express their expectations prior going to a beauty salon. The second part of the survey focused only on the service that clients encountered on their visit to the salon.

The third part consisted of open-ended questions where respondents were given a chance to express their thoughts in longer sentences as well as questions about basic background information of the respondents such as age and gender. The open-ended questions in the third part were not made compulsory.

In order to motivate clients to finish the survey and collect more answers, all respondents who left their e-mail address had a chance to win one of the two prizes. The main prize was a free haircut together with hair wash and blow-dry hairstyle in 5th Floor Beauty Salon and the second prize was InSight products’ kit including shampoo, conditioner and hairmask. 108 respondents left their e-mail address for a chance to win either one of the prizes whereas 6 respondents decided not to.

The respondents were guaranteed anonymity and the responses were only used generally for data analyse for this research to draw conclusions.

As pictured on figure 1, out of 114 respondents, 112 were female and 2 male. This can be considered as expected as vast majority of 5th Floor Beauty Salon customers are female and minority male.

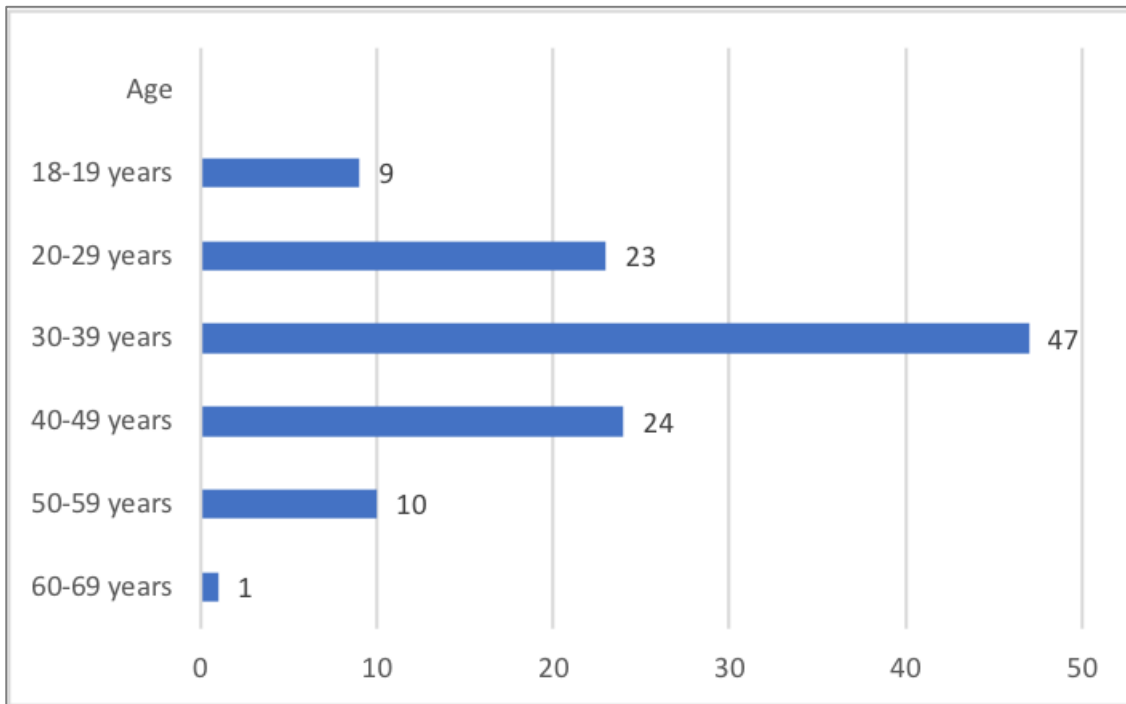


Figure 1. Respondents age groups (number of respondents, n=114)
Source: Author's research

The most respondents belonged to the age group between 30-39 years old (47 respondents), followed by age group 40-49 years old (24 respondents) and 20-29 years old (23 respondents). Minority of respondents identified themselves as 50-59 years old (10 respondents) and 18-19 years old (9 respondents). Only one respondent stated they were 60-69 years old.

The first 23 questions of the survey covered clients' expectations prior going to a beauty salon. The next 23 questions covered clients' perceived level of service in 5th Floor Beauty Salon. The remaining five questions included basic background information, a Net Promoter Score question and open-ended questions to give respondents the opportunity of giving their feedback in informal writing.

3.2. Research results and analysis

To conduct the satisfaction research, the respondents were asked to answer 46 Likert scale SERVQUAL method questions out of the total 51. The questions covered the five SERVQUAL

dimensions - tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Respondents had the opportunity to answer on a 7-level scale with an extra option of “do not know”.

To analyze the results, the author calculated the means for every statement’s answers. Figure 2 covers the 16 questions where customer’s average answers resulted in expectation exceeding the perceived quality of service.

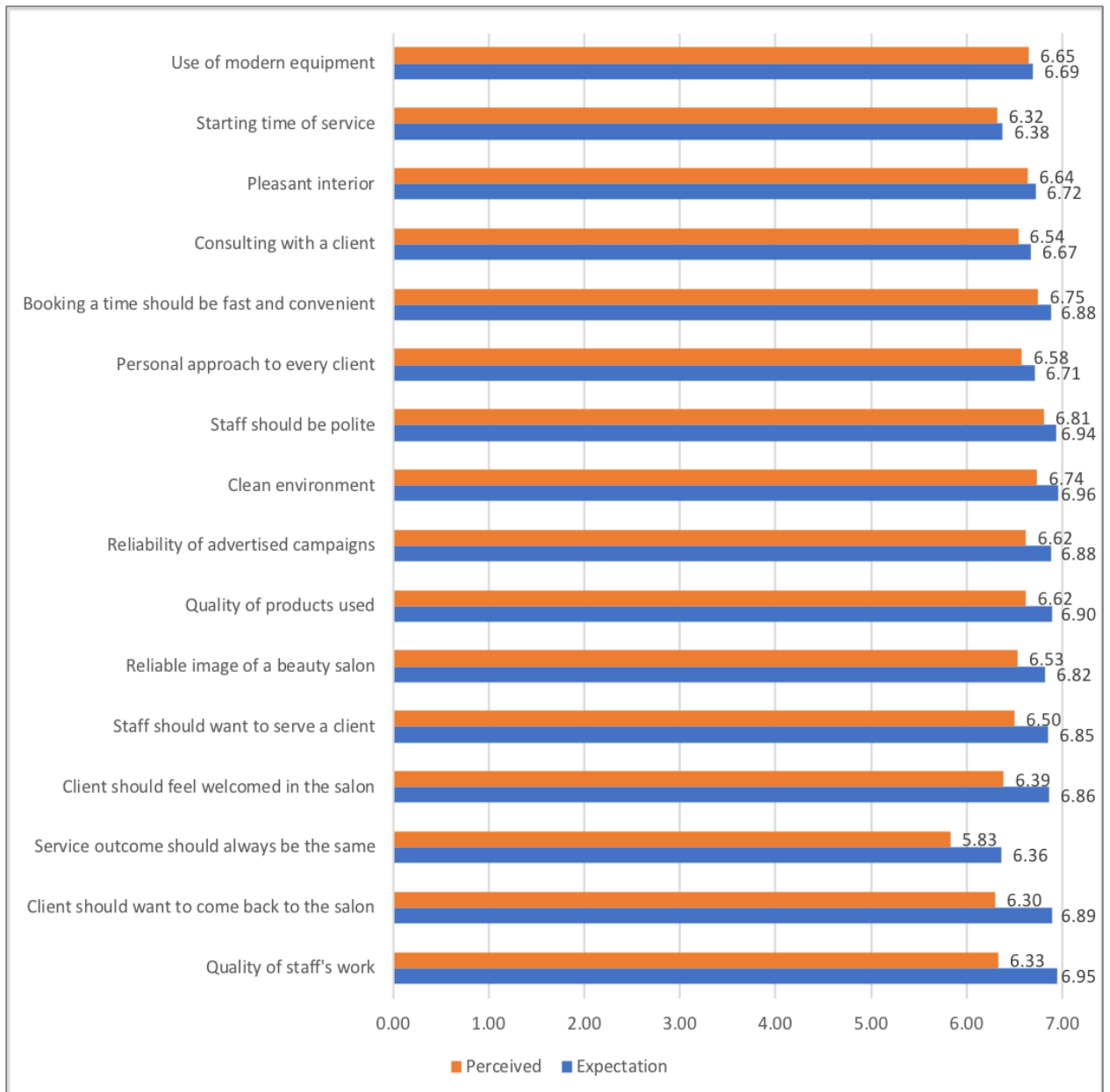


Figure 2. Respondents’ opinion towards expected and perceived quality of service where expectation exceeded perceived quality of service.
Source: Author’s research

As seen on figure 2, 5th Floor Beauty Salon clients had rather high expectations before visiting the salon.

16 statements' results show the expectation was higher than the perceived experience. The remaining 7 statements' results show the experienced service exceeded the expectation of the clients.

The most important statement for the respondents was clean environment. The statement "The rooms of a beauty salon should be clean" gathered a mean of 6.96 from the answers. This was followed by the quality of staff's work and the politeness of staff with 6.95 and 6.94 respectively. As 5th Floor Beauty Salon is being advertised as a luxury beauty salon in the city centre, it is clear that clients expect high quality work offered by polite staff in a neat and clean environment.

The least important factors prior going to a beauty salon for the respondents were the number of services offered by the salon, the variety of products offered for sale in the salon and whether the service lasts for exactly the same time period as was stated in the booking.

The least important factors had the mean of 5.79, 5.21 and 5.2 respectively. This could be indicating that clients are not that much interested in the variety of services they could choose from or buying products for at home use, but rather stress the importance of the work quality and how they are being treated in the salon. Also, the respondents do not seem to mind if the length of the service is shorter or longer than the booking indicated.

From the results of perceived service statements, respondents gave the highest score to the politeness of the staff with a mean of 6.81. Salon work hours and location are also highly appreciated by the staff with the means of 6.79 and 6.76 respectively.

5th Floor Beauty Salon is opened from 9am to 9pm on workdays and as the results also reflect on figure 3, clients appreciate the opportunity of being able to visit the salon either in the morning or late in the evening. As the salon is located on the 5th floor of Stockmann department store, it is easily accessible by public transportation or with a car. Clients have the opportunity of parking without a fee for 2 hours when registering their ticket in the salon.

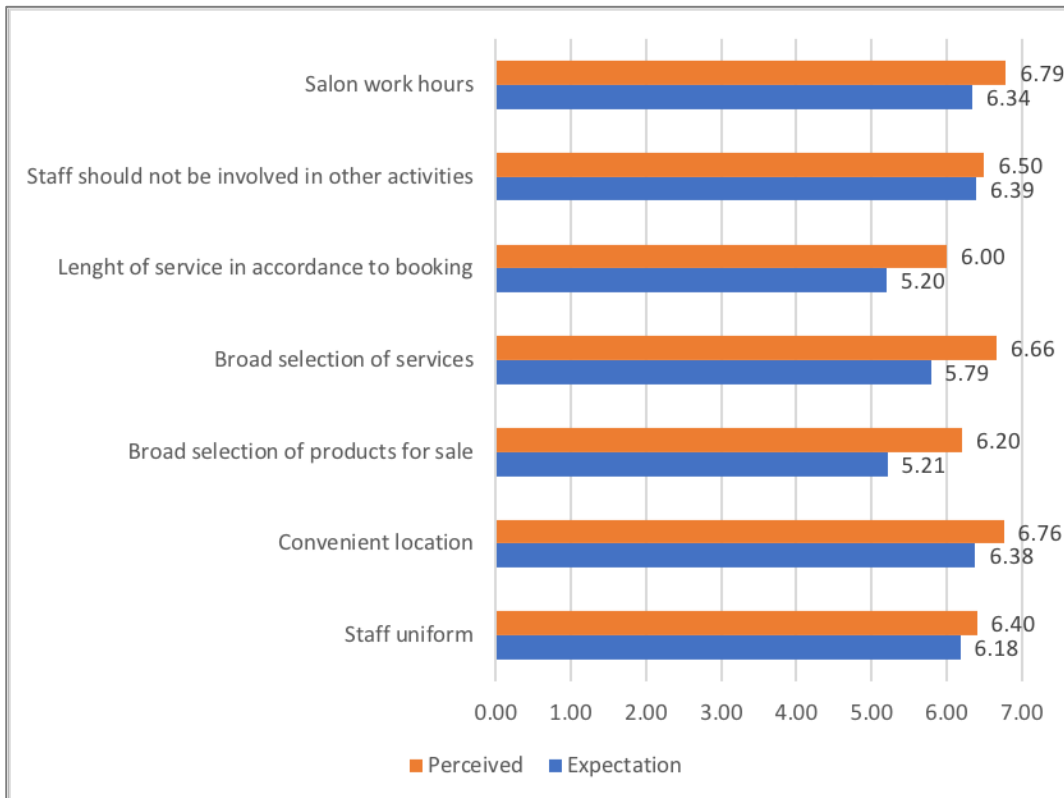


Figure 3. Respondents' opinion towards expected and perceived quality of service where perceived quality exceeded those expected.

Source: Author's research

Respondents gave the lowest perceived service means to the statements about the variety of products on sale, the length of service and the service outcome. The statement “the service in 5th Floor Beauty Salon always has the same outcome” had the lowest mean of 5.83 indicating that clients do not always get the same result as they did before or, as 33 respondents chose the option “do not know”, it could indicate that the respondents had not been to the salon for the same service for a second time.

Even though the statements “the service in 5th Floor Beauty Salon lasts as long as stated in the booking” and “the selection of products on sale at 5th Floor Beauty Salon is broad” got the means of 6.0 and 6.2 respectively, the respondents do not seem to care much about these factors as they were among the least important in the first part regarding expectations as well.

On the other hand, 51 respondents chose the option “do not know” for the statement regarding the variety of products on sale at the salon indicating that they either are not interested in buying products for at home use or they were not informed about the products by the staff.

Figure 4 displays the gaps between respondents' expectations and perceived service levels. The results have been presented in shrinking order. Positive values indicate that the expectations of respondents' were higher than the service they got whereas negative values, which are beneficial for the salon, show that the perceived level of service was better than customers had expected.

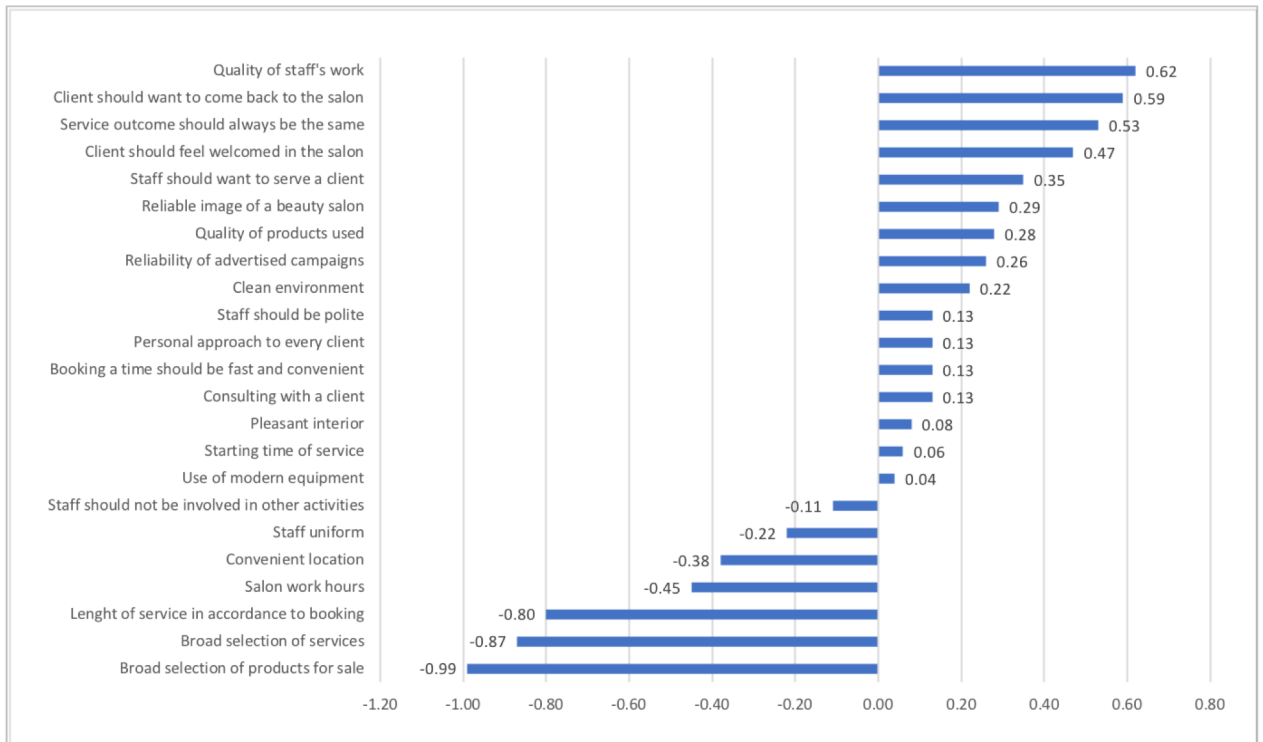


Figure 4. Graphical representation of gaps between expected and perceived service.
Source: Author's research

The biggest gap is shown where the expectation of the quality of staff's work was higher than the perceived level of service. It is important to investigate the result of this question more deeply and what emerges is that clients do not really state that the quality of 5th Floor Beauty Salon staff's work is not of high quality, rather the importance of the statement was one of the highest of all.

As seen on figure 5, when asked about the expected quality of a beauty salon's staff's work, 89 respondents chose level 7, 17 respondents chose level 6 and the lowest expectation of all for 8 respondents was level 5. The results of perceived level of service are more dispersed and therefore the mean of the results is lower than that of the expected service.

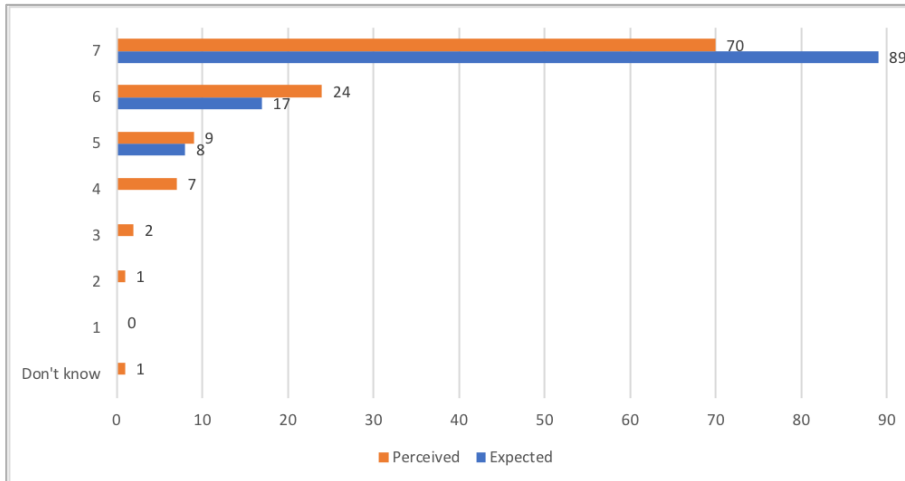


Figure 5. Graphical representation of expected and perceived quality of staff’s work.
Source: Author’s research

As clients seek to always get a similar outcome from the service, the gap of “the outcome of service should always be the same” could show that clients wish to receive the same outcome from all staff members. For example, when a client is used to going to the same hairdresser, but the hairdresser is not available on a certain day, the client still expects to get the same result when choosing a different hairdresser.

The gaps that have a negative value and that are favorable for the salon indicate that customers appreciate the location of the salon as well as the work hours of it. They also appreciate that the staff is not involved in other matters such as phone calls during the time they work with a client.

Respondents also showed their attention towards 5th Floor Beauty Salon staff’s work clothes, namely, the staff are asked to wear clothes in dark shades. As the gap was negative between the expected and perceived service element, clients seem to be pleased of the unity of the staff’s attire.

As seen on figure 4, the gaps between expected and perceived elements of service are relatively small, which indicates that customers received somewhat similar service as they were expecting. When investigating the gaps on figure 3, the elements of service that need further improvement can be listed.

The survey also included some open-ended questions asking for which aspects of the visit the respondents liked and which they did not like. 78 respondents chose to answer what they liked in the salon and 36 chose to answer what they did not like in the salon.

Respondents praised the interior and atmosphere of the salon as well as how politely they were treated. Some respondents also mentioned they appreciate that 5th Floor Beauty Salon uses natural beauty products that are health-conscious. Five people also mentioned they appreciate that it is possible to book time in short notice and that the salon has a convenient online booking system. Some staff member's names were also mentioned and they were thanked for their excellent work.

Some negative aspects that were brought out were the pricing of 5th Floor Beauty Salon services, the absence of staff's names on the salon's web page and some uncomfortable experiences when hairdresser or beautician had done their work in a rush.

Here it could be said that the staff member's names are not on the web page on their own request, just as the names are not in the salon's online booking system as it made the booking process more difficult for new customers.

3.3. Author's suggestions

The chapter will cover the author's suggestions for 5th Floor Beauty Salon based on the results from the survey to further improve the service level and provide excellent service in the future as well.

The respondents number exceeded the expectations of the author as well as the e-mail open rate which indicates that clients are interested in 5th Floor Beauty Salon's work. The majority of responses were given on the same day that the e-mail was sent out.

As written in the previous chapter, majority of the respondents feel positive towards 5th Floor Beauty Salon and would be happy to recommend the business to others. It was mentioned for several times that people appreciate the calm and earthy interior of the salon as well as the warm and polite staff. 73 respondents, which is 64% of the total, totally agreed to the statement, that they felt welcomed when entering the salon whereas 99 respondents, that is 86%, stated they totally agree that the staff is polite.

Some worrying comments stated that there have been incidents where clients felt the work has been done in a rush. This has either happened because of the beautician or hairdresser or simply

because the salon was fully booked and in a rush. To avoid such shortcomings, staff members could extend booking times in order to ensure every client is served properly.

The absence of staff member's names on the salon's web page was listed a few times as well. When the salon opened its online booking system, the staff's name's list was put up, but this caused confusion among new clients who did not know which member to choose. The names are also missing on the web page upon the staff's request.

From Likert scale questions, 56% of respondents chose "do not know" for their answer to the statement "5th Floor Beauty Salon delivers campaigns as advertised" which could indicate that the respondents were not aware of campaigns and had not participated in them. Advertisement channels should be evaluated to improve the message distribution.

Also, 25% of respondents stated they do not know whether the products used by 5th Floor Beauty Salon are of high quality, therefore the staff could always inform customers which products are being used and how they are beneficial for the client.

Clients also appreciate when the staff member they initially booked time to does not change. This was brought up by a couple of respondents who indicated that their beautician or hairdresser had been changed without prior notice. This is particularly important for those clients, who have already developed a trust towards their favourite staff member. To avoid such problems in the future, all clients whose staff member is being changed should be contacted by the administrators either by phone or via e-mail.

In order to decrease the number of unsatisfied customers as well as the number of respondents who stated they felt unlikely to return to the salon, it is important to receive constant feedback from new as well as already loyal customers. All complaints should be investigated separately in the future as well in order to show customers their opinion is important and heard.

CONCLUSION

The topic for the thesis was “Measuring customer satisfaction at 5th Floor Beauty Salon”. The topic was chosen by the author firstly because 5th Floor Beauty Salon had not collected feedback from clients on such scale before and secondly, as the business is fairly new on the market, it is important to measure how satisfied customers have been with its service so far.

5th Floor Beauty Salon is located on the 5th floor of Stockmann department store in the city centre of Tallinn. It has been operating since October 2016 and offers high-quality body and hair care services by using health-conscious products. As the business is promoting a luxury salon image, it is important to offer top quality services.

The aim was to find out how satisfied have customers been when using the services of 5th Floor Beauty Salon. The thesis is divided into three main chapters from which the first one focuses on the background of customer satisfaction theory, the second gives an overview of beauty salon market in Estonia and the third was devoted to measuring customer satisfaction and describing the results.

As several satisfaction measurement methods have been developed, some of those have been described in the first chapter. The author chose SERVQUAL model for it had the dimensions suitable for measuring customer satisfaction at a service-based beauty salon. Also, the method compares customers expectations to the perceived service which gives an overview of which aspects the clients expected but failed to receive.

The author developed a survey based on the chosen research method and the research questions. The survey questions concerned the five dimensions of SERVQUAL model – tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. There were additional open-ended questions for respondents to give their feedback and some basic background questions for methodology.

The survey was distributed via e-mail to clients who have visited 5th Floor Beauty Salon before. The majority of responses came on the same day of the distribution and to further motivate clients to respond, two prizes were presented for a chance to win.

The majority of respondents were pleased with the salon's services stating that the staff is polite, the interior is pleasing and the rooms are kept clean. Respondents also praised the location of the salon, flexible booking times and the possibility of booking a time with short notice.

From the open-ended responses and the gaps discovered with SERVQUAL method, the author has made suggestions to:

- 1) Ensure there is enough time for every client that work does not need to be done in a rush.
Reserve extra time for services when the day is fully booked.
- 2) Better distribution of the salon's campaigns as respondents were not informed of those.
- 3) Always notify a customer when his or her originally booked staff member can not perform the service.
- 4) Gather feedback from customers and investigate each case separately to express concern and interest towards clients and their opinion.

In conclusion, as the total of 94 respondents stated they were very likely or likely to visit the salon again in the future and the positive feedback from the open-ended questions, the author evaluates the satisfaction of the customers to be very good.

This level of service should be preserved and with some minor changes the obstacles brought out by the respondents can be changed for better. Satisfaction surveys could be repeated periodically to keep up with the feedback and get a more in-depth insight into the opinion of 5th Floor Beauty Salon customers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Survey questionnaire

Lugupeetud vastaja! 5th Floor Beauty Salon soovib läbi antud küsimustiku välja selgitada Teie rahulolu salongis kogetud teenindusega ning vastavalt tulemustele salongi igapäevast tööd parandada. Küsitluse täitmine võtab aega umbes 8 minutit ning see on jagatud kolme peatükki. Esimeses osas palutakse Teil hinnata üldist ootust ilusalongi minnes, teises osas tuleb hinnata päriselt kogetud kvaliteeti 5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalongis ning kolmandas osas palume hinnata üldist rahulolu antud salongiga. Vastamine

on anonüümne ning vastuseid kasutatakse vaid andmete analüüsimiseks! Kõikide vastanute vahel, kes soovivad kolmanda osa lõpus sisestada oma e-maili, loosime välja peaauhinna "Juukselõikus, pesu, föönisoeng" 5th Floor Ilusalongis ning lisaauhinnana "InSight tootekomplekt - shampooon + palsam + mask". Loosimine toimub 15. aprill 2018 ning võitjatele saadetakse teavitust sisestatud e-mailile.

Küsimustiku esimeses osas palume Teil hinnata vastavaid väiteid ning nende olulisust Teie jaoks. Allolevad küsimused on üldised ning ei seostu Teie visiidiga 5th Floor Ilusalongi.

	1 (ei nõustu üldse)	2	3	4	5	6	7 (nõustun täielikult)	Ei oska öelda
Ilusalong peaks kasutama kaasaegseid töövahendeid. *								
Ilusalong peaks kasutama kaasaegseid töövahendeid. *								
Ilusalongi töötajate välimus peaks olema korrektne ja ühtne. *								
Ilusalong peaks olema puhas. *								
Ilusalong peaks asuma hästi ligipääsetavas kohas. *								
Ilusalongis müüdavate toodete valik peaks olema laialdane. *								
Ilusalongis kasutatavad tooted peaksid olema kvaliteetsed. *								
Ilusalongi saabudes peaks teenus algama täpselt kokkulepitud ajal. *								

Ilusalongis pakutavate teenuste valik peaks olema laialdane. *								
Ilusalongis pakutud teenus peaks tagama alati sama tulemuse. *								
Ilusalongi teenus peaks kestma täpselt sama kaua, kui kaua kestab broneering. *								
Ilusalong peaks kinni pidama reklaamitavatest allahindlustest või kampaaniatest. *								
Ilusalongi maine peaks olema usaldusväärne. *								
Teenindaja peaks enne iga teenuse algust kliendiga konsulteerima. *								
Teenindajad peaksid tahtma klienti teenindada. *								
Teenuseks aja broneerimine peaks olema kiire ning mugav. *								
Teenindajad peaksid olema viisakad. *								
Teenindaja ei tohiks kliendi juuresolekul tegeleda kõrvaliste tegevustega, nt mobiiltelefonis olla. *								
Teenindaja peaks tegema oma tööd kvaliteetselt. *								
Ilusalongi lahtiolekuajad peaksid arvestama klientide vajadusi. *								
Teenindaja peaks igale kliendile personaalselt tähelepanu pöörama. *								
Ilusalongi tulles peaks klient tundma, et ta on sinna oodatud. *								

Klient peaks pärast teenust soovima salongi tagasi tulla. *									
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Küsimustiku teises osas palume Teil hinnata allolevaid väiteid vastavalt Teie kogemusele 5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalongis.

	1 (ei nõustu üldse)	2	3	4	5	6	7 (nõustun täielikult)	Ei oska öelda
5th Floor Beauty Salon kasutab kaasaegseid töövahendeid *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon sisekujundus on meeldiv. *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon töötajate välimus on korrektne ja ühtne. *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon ruumid on puhtad. *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon asub hästi ligipääsetavas kohas. *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalongis müüdavate toodete valik on laialdane. *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalongis kasutatavad tooted on kvaliteetsed. *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalongi saabudes algab teenus täpselt kokkulepitud ajal. *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalongis pakutavate teenuste valik on laialdane. *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalongis pakutud teenus tagab alati sama tulemuse. *								

5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalongis pakutud teenus kestab täpselt sama kaua, kui kaua kestab broneering. *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalong peab kinni reklaamitavatest allahindlustest ja/või kampaaniatest. *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalongi maine on usaldusväärne. *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalongi teenindaja konsulteerib enne iga teenuse algust kliendiga. *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalongi teenindajad tahavad klienti teenindada. *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalongi aja broneerimine on kiire ja mugav. *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalongi teenindajad on viisakad. *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalongi teenindajad ei tegele kliendi juuresolekul kõrvaliste tegevustega, nt mobiiltelefoniga. *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalongi teenindajad teevad oma tööd kvaliteetselt. *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalongi lahtiolekuajad arvestavad klientide vajadusi. *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalongi teenindajad pööravad igale kliendile personaalselt tähelepanu. *								

5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalongi tulles tundsise, et olite sinna oodatud. *								
5th Floor Beauty Salon ilusalongist lahkudes tundsise, et sooviksise sinna veel minna. *								

Kas sooviksise lisada, mis teile 5th Floor Ilusalongis meeldis?

Kas sooviksise lisada, mis teile 5th Floor Ilusalongis ei meeldinud?

Teie sugu: Naine / Mees

Teie vanus: *

18-19

20-29

30-39

40-49

50-59

60-69

70-79

Kui soovite osaleda loosis, palun kirjutage siia oma e-posti aadress:

Source: Author's research survey

Appendix 2. Survey e-mail



Armas <<First Name>>, täida küsimustik ja osale loosis!

Täname, et oled käinud meie juures iluhoolitsusel. Selleks, et pakkuda järjest paremat teenindust, oleme läbi viimas rahulolu-uuringut.

Küsimustiku täitmiseks kulub umbes 8 minutit ning see on anonüümne, andmeid kasutatakse vaid analüüsi läbiviimiseks.

Kõikide vastanute vahel, kes soovivad küsimustiku lõpus sisestada oma e-posti aadressi, loosime välja tasuta paketi "juukselõikus+pesu+föönisõng" ning lisaaahinnana "InSight tootekomplekti - shampooon, palsam, mask". Loosimine toimub 15. aprill 2018 ning võitjatele saadetakse teavitus sisestatud e-posti aadressile.

Iga vastus on meile oluline ja aitab meil rõõmustada kliente ka tulevikus!

Kõikide uuringut puudutavate küsimuste kohta saab lisainfot: info@fifthfloor.ee

Täname Sind!

AVA KÜSIMUSTIK

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MailChimp

Vaata veebis | Loobu | Muuda seadeid

Source: Author's research survey