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**CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING PROCESS – DIFFERENCES
BETWEEN MILLENNIALS AND OLDER GENERATIONS WHEN
BUYING NEWSPAPER**

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the paper independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors has been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading. The document length is 11899 words from the introduction to the end of conclusion.

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ABSTRACT

Consumers make decisions regarding purchases every day. This thesis examines the decision-making process and factors that affect it. The aim of the research was to provide an overview of decision-making process and to find out if the factors that affect it are different for millennials and older generations. The decision-making process was examined thru purchases of newspaper Helsingin Sanomat (HS).

The first chapter presents a theoretical background. Decision-making process and its steps are introduced and factors that affect it defined in detail. The following chapter explains the research methods in detail and how the age groups were divided, as well as, gives an overview of Helsingin Sanomat. The final chapter introduces the results, findings and discussion.

The empirical part of the research was conducted by using a quantitative research method in an online survey. Conducting the literature review gave the author a reason to assume that different reasons affect the decision-making process of millennials than people older than them. The survey sought to find out if that is true in terms of purchases of Helsingin Sanomat. It was found that this is true, as external factors had greater impact on millennials. Social factors affected much more, whereas, representatives of older generations relied almost solely internal factors: their own experiences and beliefs. It was also found that intentional information search was frequently skipped in HS purchases and, therefore, subliminal messaging could be the best way for HS to affect consumers' behaviour.

Keywords: Consumer behaviour, Decision-making process, Millennials, Newspaper, Helsingin Sanomat

INTRODUCTION

As consumers age, their behaviour in the markets change along the way. Age is named as demographic factor in every consumer behaviour theory, but it's relation to decision-making process is less studied. Especially what factors affect the decision-making process and how the factors differ between millennial generation from older ones is interesting because studies about that don't exist in context of newspaper market of Finland. Helsingin Sanomat (HS) was chosen to be the example case because it is undeniably the number one daily newspaper in the country. The author has worked for HS in the past and knows the newspaper and its history and is interested in the matter. The study focuses on the decision-making process and the steps that the process consists of and how different the components of the process are to millennials and older generations. That is the research problem.

The main research question is: Are the factors affecting purchase decision the same in different stages of decision-making process; comparison of millennials and older generations? Other research questions are built based on the steps of decision-making process and to understand the main research question more deeply. They are as follows: "What are the main reasons why people subscribe HS?", "Where do people get information about HS?", "what do consumers value in a HS", "How does the actual purchase of HS differ between the two age groups?"

The research gathers and analyses information about affecting factors in the decision-making process and points out what factors affect each age group and how. By doing that the research provides information about the market and helps marketers in targeting the two age groups, which are also the objectives of the study. The thesis will provide valuable information such as should marketing efforts towards millennials be different to older generations and have the factors that affect the decision-making process changed for the millennial generation. Segmenting target groups is vital part of a marketer's work and understanding how certain groups make decision is vital information for marketers when dividing masses of consumers into to effective target groups.

In the first part, which is the theory, the information needed was gathered from existing sources. Literature such as books and articles were used to create a theoretical background that supports the empirical part of the thesis. The research method used for the empirical part of the study was quantitative research. The information gathering was executed by conducting a survey with relevant questions to the topic. The survey responses were then analysed, and results, discussion and findings presented. Anyone who has ever subscribed HS was free to answer and a relevant respondent.

The thesis is divided to three main chapters. The first one presents a theoretical background. Theories of decision-making process and factors that affect consumer behaviour were chosen as relevant topics for the theory part. First the decision-making process is introduced. Following part of the first chapter presents the factors that affect decision-making process.

Second chapter presents the research methods used for the empirical part. Research methods are described in detail, and the survey and its structure, introduced. Also, short sections about Helsingin Sanomat and the age groups and how they were divided are included to the second chapter as well.

The third chapter presents the results, findings, and discussion. Firstly, results and main findings. This is mostly numbers and figures providing underlay to the following parts. Main findings are presented with the results to help readers understand what the results mean. Discussion and more findings are the last part. In this part, the author analyses and discusses the results and findings and reflects them to the theoretical background.

After the final chapter, the author presents conclusions of the research. The Conclusion is followed by a list of references and appendices.

1. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1.1. Definition of consumer behaviour

The American Marketing Association Dictionary defines consumer behaviour as “The dynamic interaction of affect and cognition, behaviour, and the environment by which human beings conduct the exchange aspects of their lives”. It illustrates that the aspects to consider are numerous and consumer behaviour is a broad area of study. Previously, consumer behaviour has been considered a study of purchase and consumption. Nowadays it takes to account other things as well, such as disposing and recycling. (Ekström, 2010 p.32). Consumer behavior is influenced to meet customer’s needs. Consumers’ needs are genuine and therefore, for example, products and services must offer real benefits and unique usability. While consumers are faced with manipulation to influence behaviour, social legitimacy nevertheless guarantees and preserves freedom of the consumer to make his own choice (Engel, et al. 1990, 10)

This thesis focuses on the decision-making process, therefore other aspects of consumer behaviour are not introduced in a theoretical level. Definition of consumer behaviour in general is included because decision-making process is a part of it and same factors affect the decision-making process.

1.2. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs

Every purchasing decision starts from a recognition of need and to satisfy the need, the consumer has to acknowledge it. All human beings have the same basic needs, and probably the best-known model of human needs and how they are connected to each other is Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Maslow’s theory names five basic levels of need and ranks them in order of their importance from lower-level needs to higher.

According to Solomon the basic lesson of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is that we must satisfy basic needs before moving up the ladder (Solomon 2013, 151-152). A starving man would not be

interested in status or self-fulfilment before satisfying the need for food, security and belonging. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is presented as a pyramid with five levels. Lower-level needs are at the bottom of the pyramid providing a foundation for the higher-level needs. The hierarchy proceeds as follows:



Figure 1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs.
Source: (www.coachilla.co)

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is included to the thesis to better understand human needs and where the needs stem from. Need is important part of decision-making process and its recognition is never skipped by a consumer as are some other parts of the decision-making process.

1.3. Decision-making process

The process of a purchase and decision-making regarding it starts long before the actual purchase of the product and continues long after. Marketers need to understand the above fact and concentrate on the whole process rather than only to the purchase decision or product choice as it is referred in this thesis. (Armstrong, Kotler 2006, 142) Consumer decision-making process can be divided into five stages. Typically, the five stages are described as follows (Solomon et al. 2002, 235):

1. Need recognition
2. Information search
3. Evaluation of alternatives
4. Product choice

5. Outcomes

The process of consumer decision-making starts when a consumer detects a need or problem to be solved with a purchase of product. Consumer then proceeds to the information gathering and when enough information is gathered, it is time to evaluate possible alternatives. When the best alternative is found, consumer makes a decision to buy and actually buys the product or service. After purchase the consumer evaluates the quality of the decision and the product. In routine buying situations some of the steps are likely to be skipped, but more complex the decision is, the clearer and more important the steps of the process become. (Solomon et al. 2002, 235-249)

1.3.1. Need recognition

The recognition of need is likely to occur when a consumer is faced with a 'problem'. A need can be triggered by internal or external stimuli. The need is triggered by internal stimuli when person's basic need, for example hunger, rises to high enough level to become a drive. Example of external stimulus would be friend praising a product, let's say a certain newspaper, leading the consumer to consider purchasing the newspaper. (Armstrong, Kotler 2006, 142). Typically, these situations occur when the consumer feels that the product currently being used is starting to get outdated or gets broken. Among consumers, there seem to be two need recognition styles. 'Actual state type' consumers tend to recognize a need for an update when the product currently in hand starts to fail to satisfy their need properly, e.g. telephone that develops constant static. People categorized to the second bracket are called 'desired state type' consumers. These people recognize the need for purchase based on their desire of having something. For example, there is a new innovative product in the market which the consumer desires, he/she could recognize a need for it even though the old alternative still works perfectly. (Schiffman et al. 2012, 70)

1.3.2. Information search

Information search begins once a consumer has detected a need that might be satisfied by the purchase of a product or service. Pre-purchase search refers to a process of searching specific information after need is recognised. Some consumers like to go shopping and browse thru online catalogues for fun. They come across useful information and stay up to date of alternatives all the time even though specific information search is not implemented. Their need for a pre-purchase search is lesser because the information is obtained already. These consumers are engaging to ongoing search. (Solomon et al, 2002, 240) Past experiences might provide the

consumer with some information, or even sufficient picture of how to make the choice in hand. However, in most cases, some external information is needed, and if the consumer does not have any prior experience of the field in hand, even an extensive search about alternatives and their features might be necessary. The strength of drive to satisfy the need and the value consumer puts for additional information about the product correlates to the extent of information search as well. (Armstrong, Kotler 2006, 142-143). The complexity of the extensive information search will vary also based on the riskiness of the purchase. Higher risk requires more complex search and evaluation of the search than cases where the risk is lower.

Past experience is considered an internal source of information, and the greater the past experience is, the less external sources of information is needed. Most consumer decisions are based on a combination of internal information and external information such as marketing and non-commercial information. Shopping experiences, internet searches and word of mouth from friends or relatives are all considered as external sources of information as are the marketing and advertising efforts of companies who provide products the consumer is seeking. (Schiffman et al. 2012, 70-72).

The internet has made the information search much easier and more sufficient in recent years. According to Tang, Zhang and Fei Wu, “Along with the rapid growth of Internet users, online advertising has been a popular method for promoting commercial products and services, advocating public goods, and communicating political agendas.” (Tang, et al. 2013). All the information in the world is always available for everyone in matter of seconds or minutes. Rather than going out to shopping, you can just google the product and its qualities are in your phone in seconds, or rather than asking around from friends you can just google reviews of the product that other consumers have posted online. (Schiffman et al. 2012, 70-72). For some people, the ones who engage in ongoing search mentioned above, searching for information about products online can be more of a hobby than a necessity. These people have high knowledge of the market and tend to make more impulsive buying decisions. (Solomon et al, 2002, 240)

1.3.3. Evaluation of alternatives

Making a selection from a sample of all possible brands (or models) is a human characteristic that helps simplify the decision-making process. To evaluate potential alternatives, consumers tend to use two types of information (Schiffman et al. 2012, 72):

1. A list of possibilities, brands, models and different products, from which they plan to make their selection (the evoked set).
2. The criteria they will use to evaluate each possibility.

Evoked set is a subset of all brands available. It refers to a selection of brands that a certain consumer remembers from past activities, is familiar with and finds acceptable. If a product is not part of the consumer evoked set, it will most likely not be even considered for purchase. (Schiffman et al. 2012, 74). Consideration set narrows down the options to the ones that the consumer actually considers to purchase. Even a favourable option that can be listed in the evoked set might not be considered for the actual purchase because it is e.g. out of the consumer's price range (Solomon 2013, 337-338).

Important product attributes is the first and most important criteria for consumers to evaluate product alternatives in hand. For example, frozen food is evaluated according to taste, price, type of the dish and its preparation requirements (Schiffman et al. 2012, 74). If the important attributes are similar in two or more alternatives, consumers rely on determinant attributes to make the decision. Examples of determinant attributes for food products would be their naturalness and freshness. (Solomon 2013, 342-343). A consumer who values natural and local production would most likely end up choosing the organic alternative, at least if its important attributes match with the mass-produced alternatives.

1.3.4. Product choice

When the alternatives are evaluated and the consumer feels that the right product is found, it is time to make the purchase. Consumers make three types of purchases: trial purchases, repeat purchases, and long-term commitment purchases. (Schiffman et al. 2012, 83). Attitudes of others might come between purchase intention and decision. A consumer might be convinced that a particular product is the best alternative, but requirements others has set to the purchase might change the actual choice. For example, if an important person to the consumer in hand thinks that the consumer should buy the lowest-priced car, the consumer is less likely to buy an expensive one even though it would be the preferred the alternative and affordable enough. (Armstrong, Kotler 2006, 143)

When the product or brand selected in alternative evaluation is a new one to the consumer, he/she is likely to make a trial purchase. Quantity purchased is likely to be smaller than usual,

simply because the consumer wants to test out the new product before committing to it. (Schiffman et al. 2012, 83).

When a new brand or product is found better or more satisfactory than the other alternatives via trial, the consumer is likely to repeat the purchase. This time, the quantity of the purchase is likely to be significantly larger, since the consumer has now approved the product and is confident that the product meets his/her requirements. (Schiffman et al. 2012, 83).

Long-term commitment purchase is quite self-explanatory as a term. A consumer purchases a product knowing that he/she will be committed to it for a long time. A trial is more than often impossible in these situations, simply because one cannot buy e.g. a refrigerator for trial and after a week or two decide it was not the best option and try a new one. With durable goods, consumers move directly to long-term commitment skipping the trial and repeat purchases in the process. (Schiffman et al. 2012, 83-84).

When a consumer reaches a point where the purchase of a certain product is routinized to a level that no thought is spared for the decision-making process, the consumer is likely to feel monotony or boredom. This might lead to a situation where even the most preferred option becomes unacceptable. The consumer then feels a need to complicate the buying situation and look for new brands and products. The phenomenon is called psychology of complication. (Howard, Sheth 1969, 27-28). In routine purchases such as which can of milk the consumer chooses, the above phenomenon can cause unpredictable variations. Product choice is sort of random pick, a trial of a new product without evaluation of alternatives. In routine situations, we also often rely on instinct. Human brain processes incredible amounts of information in matter of seconds and provides the consumer a short cut to make the decision without proper evaluation of the situation. This has happened in all the cases where the consumer felt like he/she just took some particular product of the self for no specific reason. (Lindström 2009, 129-130)

1.3.5. Outcomes

After purchasing a product, the consumer uses it. During the use of the product, particularly in the trial phase but in all other phases as well, the consumer evaluates the product relatively to his/her expectations. These evaluations can conclude to three different outcomes:

1. Performance matches the expectations, leading to neutral feeling.

2. Performance exceeds the expectations, causing a positive disconfirmation of expectations, leading to satisfaction.
3. Performance is below expectations, causing a negative disconfirmation of expectations, leading to dissatisfaction.

(Schiffman et al. 2012, 84).

Consumers look for value and quality when they purchase products, which are the matters that lead to satisfaction. Companies that have high customer satisfaction rates tend to have a competitive advantage compared to their rivals with lower rates. Satisfied customers come back and buy more, not to mention the word of mouth marketing they might provide to the company by praising the product in their social circles. The above can be turned upside down in case of dissatisfaction. If unsatisfied customers don't get compensations for their bad experiences, they are likely to try new a product next time a need is recognised. Dissatisfied customers are more likely to take retrospective action than satisfied ones, more so if the product in hand was expensive. Complaints are made more easily than praising reviews. (Solomon 2013, 378-380).

1 4. Factors affecting consumers decision-making

Consumers decision-making and purchasing process is affected by various things. Purchasing behaviour is influenced by demographic and psychological factors together with external factors such as social factors and companies marketing efforts. However, all these factors have different influences into the process. Demographic and social factors and a company's marketing mix are viewed as stimuli that can be detected via psychological factors in consumers behaviour.

1.4.1. Demographic factors

Demographic factors in consumer behaviour are the factors of individual that can be easily found, measured and analysed. The main demographic factors are:

- Age
- Gender
- Marital status & life stage
- Profession, education, and income
- Location/habitation

The factors above can clarify consumers needs and motives to purchase goods but do not explain the actual choice to which the consumer end up to. (Bergstöm, Leppänen 2009, 102). For example, age does not really explain why a certain consumer decides to buy an expensive designer clothing piece and not the affordable alternative from an unknown brand.

Demographic factors – age

The willingness and ability to buy and consume varies in relation to consumer age, and age is one of the key figures in segmenting consumers. People tend to consume accordingly to their stage of life. Even though the importance of age in purchasing behaviour seems to be lesser than before, people in similar life stage and age tend to have similarities in their purchasing habits. Self-image and perception of what it should be can control consumers preferences and expectations quite drastically. (Puustinen 2008, 157-158.)

People born and bred in the same era tend to create a cultural bond between each other over the years. They have experienced similar things and might share memories of the same things and events. For obvious reasons, it is quite possible that their view of the world and way of seeing things have significant similarities. Therefore, age is a key figure in creating one's self-image (Solomon et al. 2002, 405.)

Today's youth have grown up in the age of internet and social media and are often fluent with computers and the internet without cognizant effort, whereas the elderly might not understand these scenes even with significant effort. Teenagers buy energy drinks and sweets while hanging out in the city with a group of friends, while pensioners buy coffee and biscuits and head home to watch tv with their loved one. (Lampikoski, Lampikoski 2000, 90-91)

Demographic factors – Gender

Talking about gender is becoming a taboo and seems that we are moving towards gender neutrality, at least in the western world. However, in a sense of consumer behaviour, gender is not an indifferent factor. Habits in consumption between men and women differ to each other, and those differences can relate to biological and physical facts, but also to cultural norms and traditional gender roles of the society. Every single culture has presumptions when it comes to gender roles and expectations of how men and women should act and behave (Solomon et al. 2002, 197). Just like age, sex as a category of consumer segmentation is based on history and culture. (Puustinen 2008, 171).

For women, shopping is often an enjoyable social event that takes time but is fun. For men, on the other hand, shopping might be a stressing thing, done because of necessity. Shopping experience takes less time and is more efficient. Pre-shopping research is likely to be more extensive and spending time in the shops are seen as a waste of time (Markkanen 2008, 87).

Even though today's society continues to shape traditional gender roles to more free mould, some patterns of thinking and acting still exist. Women more often than men, are in charge of household duties and daily care of the children, whereas men tend to be the ones taking care of the family cars and electronics. However, in many families, these roles are upside down, and nowadays men are more and more involved in the care of the children. Women invest more and more to education and career, and a lot of men can be found from beauty salons and cosmetics shops. (Clow, Baack 2007, 73).

Demographic factors – Marital status & life stage

Consumers act differently in different stages of their lives and marital status also affects consumption. Single people spend considerably less in grocery shopping than families, but people with little kids will most likely not spend large portions of their salaries into partying. Single people tend to spend more freely since they don't need approval from their spouses, consuming rests less on necessity. On the other hand, married people consider their purchasing decisions more, because everyone in the household needs to be taken into consideration. The needs of a family depend on the number of family members, their age and the jobs the parents have. A large family spends considerably large amounts on daily needs, especially when the kids are small. When the kids grow older, more and more money is spent on kids' hobbies and needs to express themselves. (Solomon et al. 2002, 354-355).

Demographic factors – profession, education and income

At the end of the day, money is what matters the most. Consumers simply can't buy products they can't afford. Loaning money is possible, but loans have to be paid back at some point. Income affects purchasing decisions by defining the amount of money available for spending.

The income a person earns is affected by the job and the position he/she currently is in. To have job, education is needed, so education affects as well. CEO of a company earns more than a factory worker because the job is more demanding and much higher level of education is needed

to be competent. Profession and income are classical viewpoints in consumer behaviour, because they affect one's buying power significantly. Also, job description and working relationships can directly affect consumers' buying behaviour (Lampikoski, Lampikoski, 2000, 103). Some jobs require e.g. a particular type of dressing. Lawyers are expected to dress neatly, and suits are almost mandatory for male lawyers. It is fair to assume a male lawyer would spend a portion of his income on suits. A construction worker would not need as many suits as the lawyer, and different kinds of special clothing are most likely needed in his/her job as well.

Demographic factors – location/habitation

Segmenting customers by location, the place they live in, is one of the oldest methods. Incentives that steer consumer behaviour are very different in the downtown of a big city than in the countryside. City centres have more stimulants than the countryside, and people are more easily affected by advertising than the people who live in the countryside where adverts might hardly exist (Puustinen 2008, 149-153).

Dwelling place affects consumers' behaviour also in terms of availability. In the countryside the closest grocery store might be located miles away, not to mention brand outlets or electronics shops, whereas, in the city, they might be located right next door. (Puustinen 2008, 149-153).

1.4.2. Social factors

A consumer's behaviour is affected by other individuals, amongst other things. In consumer behaviour, the influence of others is described as social factors. All social factors are external factors and they can be divided accordingly (Ylikoski 2000, 82):

- Reference groups
 - o Family
 - o Friends
 - o Relatives
 - o Co-workers

- Role in society

- Social status

Humans are social beings, and social belonging is mentioned as a need even in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Craving for acceptance is natural for humans and we all want to be part of

something, to belong somewhere. Everything and everyone surrounding us influences our behaviour and shapes our decisions, and our close ones even more so. (Schiffman et al. 2012, 116-117).

Social factors - Reference groups

Reference groups in consumer behaviour mean groups of people which the consumer is more or less part of and affects the consumer's decision-making. Reference groups can be divided into primary (membership groups) and secondary groups (aspirational groups). Primary groups refer to the cluster of people that the individual is actually part of, and everybody is part of some group. Examples of primary groups are family, friends, co-workers, and relatives. Secondary groups don't necessarily share a direct relationship. One might seek approval of a certain political party even though he/she doesn't share an actual relationship with anyone in the party, and that could influence his/her shopping behaviour. Secondary group can also be a group to which the consumer wishes to be part of and acts accordingly (Kotler, Armstrong 2005, 142) (Ylikoski 2000, 82).

If a certain consumer is friends with a lot of people who are interested in beauty and appearance, let's say bloggers, who also spend large portions of their income into these things, it is likely that the consumer in hand acts similarly. The consumer's thoughts and values are shaped towards to his/her friends' ones, he/she takes influences from the people he/she appreciates and value. The consumer is also exposed to stimuli of the interests of his/her primary reference group more than other stimuli. One might not be too interested to spend a lot of money to a designer purse, after the all the purse of an unknown brand looks exactly the same but ends up buying the expensive one to get the approval of the group. Individuals tend to be willing to adopt the habits of their reference groups (Korkeamäki et al. 2000, 103)

Family is a reference group but sometimes it is viewed as an individual social factor apart from the other reference groups because its meaning and significance can be lot bigger. Norms and values are absorbed first from family and family teaches the child how to be a consumer, sets the basis for everything else to come (Ylikoski 2000, 83). Most people have two families, the family they were born to and their own family they put together later in life. The own family of consumer influences the decisions differently. Everybody has to be taken into consideration and everyone's opinion count. If everyone agrees the decision making is easy, but often extensive negotiations are needed. Money causes friction the most (Solomon et al. 2002, 357).

Social factors – role in society and social status

Income is one factor when sorting out people to social classes, but not the only one. Other factors are education, job, and overall wealth. Social classes have quite vague borderlines and a consumer can move to an upper or a lower class during his/her lifetime, even though it is not likely to happen. Some people work hard throughout their lives to be upper class but others are born to it and tied to it forever. People who are part of the same social class tend to act similarly in terms of consumption; the fitting way for the particular class (Kotler, Armstrong 2005, 141).

By consuming specific brands and buying products of a certain price bracket, the consumer signals others about his/her social status. It is common to consider a consumer who spends a lot and to expensive products in higher regard than ones who settle for less. Consumers often want to be seen in the highest regard possible and tend to spend accordingly, for example, drive an expensive car which indicates a high standard of living, therefore high status. Everyone else might know why a certain consumer acts this way, but the consumer most likely sees the scenario differently. The consumer thinks his/her status is now higher because he/she can act this way, but others don't see as big correlation with status and the spending. (Lee, Luster 2005).

1.4.3. Psychological factors

Psychological factors are characteristics traits of a person that appear in consumers behaviour. External stimuli together with psychological factors and consumers personal traits influence the consumer's behaviour. Psychological factors answer questions of why, and therefore offer explanation to choices a consumer makes. Psychological factors are:

- Motivation
- Perception
- Learning
- Values, Attitudes, and beliefs

(Kotler, Armstrong 2005, (148-153) (Bergström, Leppänen 2009, 105)

2.4.3.1 Psychological factors – Motivation

When a need emerges, so does motivation to satisfy it. When the intensity of the need reaches an adequate level, it becomes a motive which means a need that sufficiently presses a person to satisfy it (Kotler and Armstrong 2005, 148).

Motives can be divided to two. There are personal and social motives. Personal motives are such as refreshing yourself or working out physically. Social motives are things such as reaching for higher status or pressure of a reference group (Markkanen 2008, 67).

Psychological factors – perception

Perception is a process which consists of choosing from which information is relevant, then analysing and interpreting it. Perception offers insight to how consumers react to their own motives. (Kotler & Armstrong 2005, 151). The world is full of different kinds of stimuli that can catch the eye of a consumer, but only a small portion of those stimuli gets noticed. We don't actively process all the information available, but the ones we perceive and render are based on our individual processing combining our beliefs, needs and past experiences. (Solomon et al. 2002, 35-36)

All human beings perceive the stimuli on display differently, and we all perceive selectively at least to some extent. Selective perception happens in cases where the consumer has currently a bigger need for something specific or in unexpected situations of need. Consumers perceptions can become biased if his/her observations are based on past experiences and beliefs, and therefore are moulded close to the beliefs he/she already had. It is impossible to remember everything you have seen or experienced during your days and our brains pick the memories that support the assumptions we have created in the past. (Kotler, Keller 2012, 184)

Senses are used to perceive things and we all use them differently. The five senses we use for perception are, sight (vision), hearing (audition), taste (gustation), smell (olfaction) and touch (somatosensation) (Kotler, Armstrong 2005, 151). Senses offer us information about the stimuli around us but don't interpret them; they provide the information to our brain which then processes it. (Solomon et al. 2002, 37).

Psychological factors – learning

Learning is a constant process and happens all the time. Most behavioural patterns are learned through experiences had in life, even though it might not be deliberate. Learning could be subconscious as well. (Kotler, Armstrong, 152).

Learning can be divided into stages. The lowest level is conditional learning, whereby the consumer learns to act accordingly to stimuli; certain action follows certain stimulus. Modelling or observational learning is deliberate imitating of an existing model of behaviour or paragon.

The Fashion industry makes a good example; people see what their idols wear and try to dress up similarly. The highest level is cognitive learning. In consumer behaviour goal-directed problem-solving between alternatives and intentional information searching fall in the bracket of cognitive learning. (Bergström, Leppänen 2009, 113).

Memory and memorising things are part of learning. It is a process of acquiring knowledge and storing it to memory for later use. New information is processed with existing memories and then added to them. Certain information can be in one's memory but still impossible to use and sometimes an incentive is needed in order to find a specific piece of information from the depths of a person's memory. (Solomon et al. 2002, 75). Learning and memory are important components of decision making, more accurately information search and evaluation of alternatives parts of the process.

Psychological factors – values, beliefs, and attitudes

Values are goals that guide our thinking, choices we make and our actions. They are things that a person holds in high regard, such as safety and responsibility (Bergström, Leppänen 2009, 110). Attitudes describe someone's relatively consistent feelings, evaluations and tendencies towards something, in this case, product or service. "Japanese companies make the best electronics products" would be an example of an attitude. A belief is a more descriptive thought or idea that a person has about something. A belief can be based on almost anything, from real knowledge to nonsense opinions (Kotler, Armstrong 2005, 152-153).

1.4.4. Marketing efforts of companies

Companies actively try to affect the decisions their possible customers will make. Marketing efforts in this context refer to any marketing activity taken by a company in attempt to reach, inform and persuade consumers to buy its products or services. These inputs to a consumer's decision-making process are anything from any promotional effort to pricing strategies and the product itself (packaging, guarantees etc.). Store lay-out also affects a consumer's decision-making and salespeople inside the store are an important component of overall in-store experience. Personal selling conducted by a capable salesperson can make a huge difference. (Loudon, Della Bitta 1993, 550-559). In case of newspapers sales, the salespeople are often not located in a store, but in a sales stand. The sales stands are located, for example, in hallways of

shopping malls, so in these cases the salespeople are brought to the consumer rather than the other way around.

Companies try hard to keep up with consumers' perceptions of their marketing efforts and products since these perceptions are reflections of their marketing efforts. (Schiffman et al. 2012, 68) Companies use set of tools in this activity of persuasion which are called the marketing mix. 4P model is a foundation model of a marketing mix and in consists following components (Bergström, Leppänen 2009, 166):

- Price
- Product
- Place
- Promotion

The 4P model is often criticised as outdated as it concentrates too much to the product. 7P model is an advanced version of the 4P model, created in the 1980's, and it adds three more P's to the older model. These three additional components are (Bergström, Leppänen 2009, 166):

- People
- Processes
- Physical evidence

Another widely used variation of the 4P model is the 4C model. It concentrates on the consumer rather than the product. The competitive advance doesn't come from the product itself, but from understanding the consumer needs in actual level and satisfying them by developing products accordingly. The 4C's are (Bergström, Leppänen 2009, 166):

- Consumer
- Cost
- Convenience
- Communication

These C's are consumer orientated alternatives to the 4P's. (Bergström, Leppänen 2009, 166)

2. METHODOLOGY AND OVERVIEW OF NEWSPAPER HELSINGIN SANOMAT

2.1. Age groups

In this research, the author has divided the respondents into two generations respectively to their birth year. The two groups are millennials and older generations. Many theories divide these two groups into several subsections, but in this research, the subsections are ignored since the author wants to divide the sample into two, not more. Perhaps the most widely used definitions for generations are provided by generational theorists Neil Howe and William Strauss. They define millennials as people born between the years 1980 and 2000. (Rosenberg, 2018). The author uses the above definition to describe millennials. People born before 1980 are referred to as 'older generations'.

The world we live in is changing fast. The millennial generation was born to an era of the internet and is fluent with computers, mobile devices and the world wide web. It is quite clear that these changes in the world order have an impact on the consumption habits of people. Millennials and older generations have major differences in their buying behaviour but also undeniable similarities states content strategist Mia McPherson in her blog post (McPherson, 2016). The news market makes no difference to the fact above. Kaius Niemi, the senior editor-in-chief of Helsingin Sanomat stated 12.4.2019 that the subscription numbers have grown for two years in a row, even though the case in printed version is opposite. In the same statement he said; that the number of subscriptions for online content only, made by people younger than 40 years old has grown over 50%. (Sanoma newsroom, 2019). Niemi's statement is clear evidence of McPherson's view being quite accurate. Millennials still read news, they just read them from a different platform. This study focuses on the purchase of the newspaper and the factors affecting the decision-making process. The author seeks to find out if the purchase behaviour of millennials and factors affecting it compared to older generations has changed similarly to consumption habits.

2.2. Helsingin Sanomat

Media markets all around the world are significant, and Finland doesn't make an exception. Helsingin Sanomat is the biggest player in Finnish daily newspaper market and part of privately owned Sanoma Corporation that is one of the largest corporations in Finland and number one in field of media. It has been published since 1889 and its original name was Päivälehti. The name Helsingin Sanomat was established in 1904. Since then Sanoma Corporation has been steadily growing and expanding to other media fields, for example, television. In 2001 they expanded their operations outside from Finland and nowadays Sanoma is one of the biggest media companies in northern Europe. Helsingin sanomat is the crown jewel of Sanoma Media and it has more than 1,7 million weekly readers. That is a fairly large amount considering Finland's population of 5,5 million, of which 1,7 million is over 30%. The second largest daily in Aamulehti reaches 680 000 readers in a week so it is fair to say that HS is quite an outstanding leader in the business. (Media Audit Finland, 2018). HS is recognised as the only national newspaper by many Finns, which partly explains why it is so comfortably the market leader. It also has excellent reputation outside Helsinki metropolitan area too, and readers in every end of Finland. All Finnish people recognise the brand Helsingin Sanomat, even if they have never read a page of it.

Helsingin Sanomat can be subscribed in various ways. Printed and online versions exist, and it is possible to subscribe only one of the two or a hybrid package that includes both types. Subscriptions can be made with fixed-period or automatic continuity. For a fixed-period contract, customers can choose the length from 2 months to a year. For a contract with automatic continuity customers can choose the length of each billing period themselves too, and the length options are the same as they are in fixed-period ones. The customer is committed to HS for a billing period at a time and cannot terminate the contract in the middle of a billing period. (Hs subscription portal, 2019)

2.3. Research methods

The empirical part of the research was conducted by an open online survey to gather more specific information about the topic in hand. Sampling method was non-probability sampling and to be more precise, convenience and snow ball sampling. The questionnaire was shared on social media, Facebook and LinkedIn, for the social networks of the author. The survey was shared by respondents 11 times in total, nine times in Facebook and two times in LinkedIn. Because of the snowball effect, the survey reached approximately 7000 people of which 136 chose to answer. The answers were collected in time frame of roughly 48 hours. The method of research was quantitative. The method is a statistical investigation method which is widely admitted and used. The author has studied the method during his time in Taltech University.

The survey targeted anyone who has ever subscribed the newspaper Helsingin Sanomat and divided the participants to millennials and people older than that. It was drafted to provide answers to research questions of the thesis and therefore the topic as well. The survey concentrates on decision-making and the steps along the process. The survey questions are implemented in a way which allows each one of the five steps of decision-making process to be reviewed. Factors affecting consumer behaviour serve as the basis for answer options for each question.

The author executed the survey with tools offered by SurveyMonkey Inc, US based company offering online survey templates and data-analysis tools. SurveyMonkey was comprehensive enough to match the requirements of the thesis, but simple to understand and use as well.

3. RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

3.1. Results and main findings

This chapter presents the result of the survey questionnaire. In total, 136 people answered the questionnaire and 10 of them had never subscribed HS. Those who had never subscribed ended the survey to that question, but their demographics were still collected to find out what kind of people had never subscribed. All the respondents that had never subscribed were millennial men with relatively low income. Four of them reported their income to be more than €30 000 per year and only two earned more than €50 000.

First question was about age and it divided the respondents to millennials (born 1980 or after) and older generations (born before 1980). 57% of the respondents were millennials, and 43% was older.

Your age?

Answered: 136 Skipped: 0

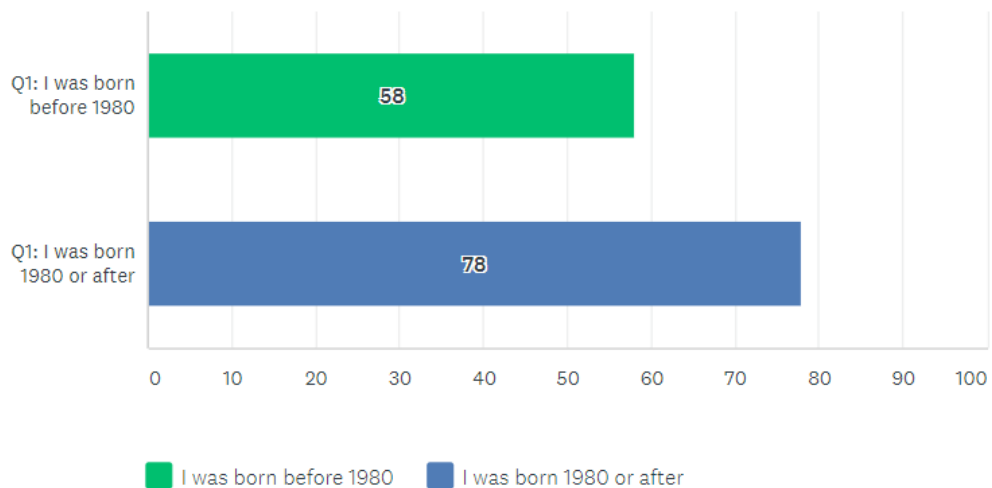


Figure 2. Survey question 1.
Source: The author's survey

Second question was simply “your gender?” Of millennials, 59% answered “man” and 41% “woman”. The division was similar for older generations as well, 51% was men, and 49% women.

Your Gender?

Answered: 136 Skipped: 0

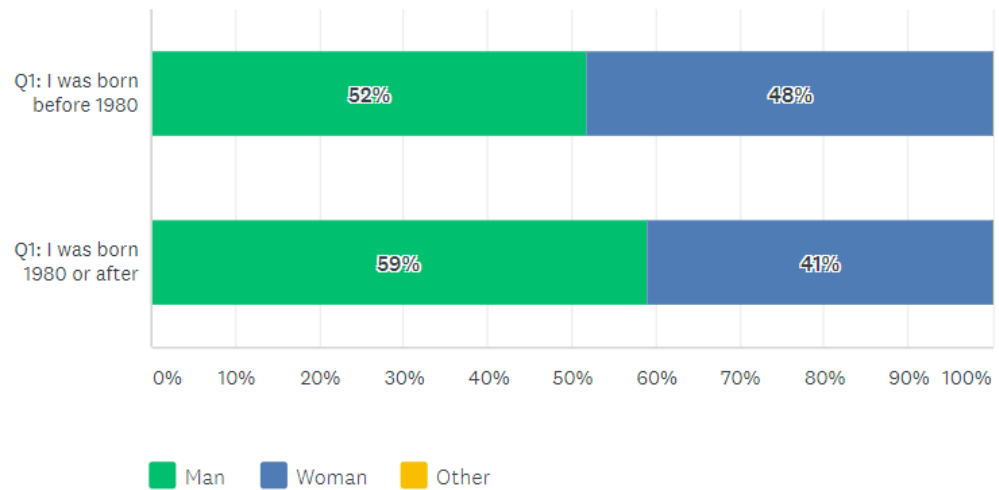


Figure 3. Survey question 2.
Source: The author’s survey

Third question examined the earnings of the respondents. Millennials in general, earned significantly less. 40% of millennials earned less than €15 000 in a year, whereas for older generations the number was only 2%. Only 15% of millennials earned more than €50 000 and one person more than €100 000. From older generations, almost four out of five did that and 22% more than €100 000. Older generations seem to have much more money to spend.

How much do you earn?

Answered: 136 Skipped: 0

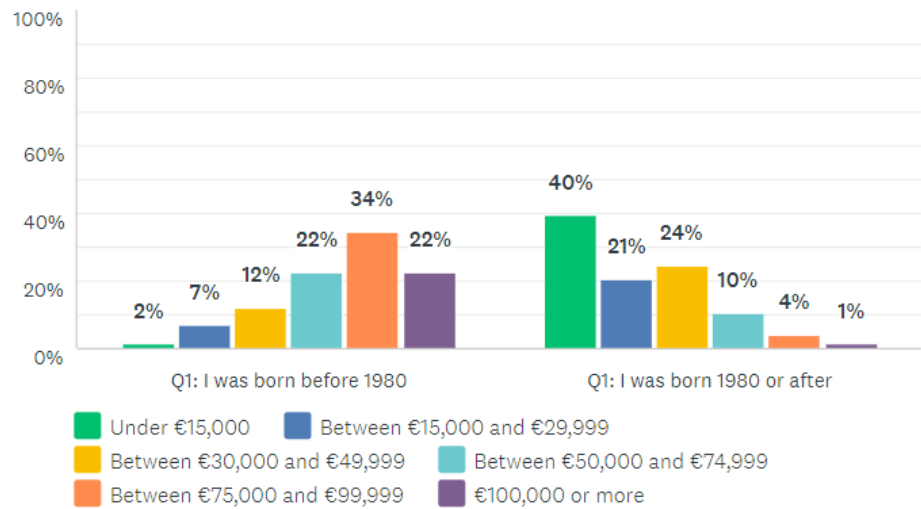


Figure 4. Survey question 3.
Source: The author's survey

Fourth question was “have you ever subscribed Helsingin Sanomat?” Out of 136 respondents only 10 answered no, and those ten ended the questionnaire to that answer. All ten people who answered no were millennial men. Income didn't seem to have too much effect. “No” answers were divided quite evenly to all income brackets but the two highest. However, all respondent who earned €75 000 or more had subscribed HS at some point of their lives.

Have you ever subscribed Helsingin Sanomat?

Answered: 136 Skipped: 0

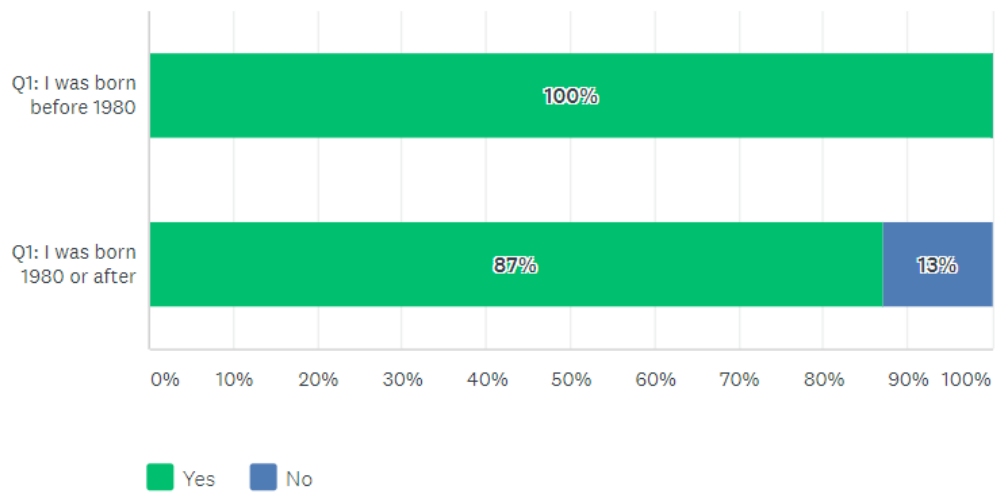


Figure 5. Survey question 4.
Source: The author's survey

The next two questions focused on the type of subscription. Of all respondents 80% had subscribed at least the online version and roughly half of them had the printed version as well. Online version was much more popular than printed version and more so for millennials. Only 13% of millennials had subscribed only the printed version whereas 28% of older generation said the same. However, older generations were much more keen on the printed version since just 19% subscribed only the online version whereas the equivalent number for millennials were 56%.

Did you subscribe printed version or online version?

Answered: 126 Skipped: 10

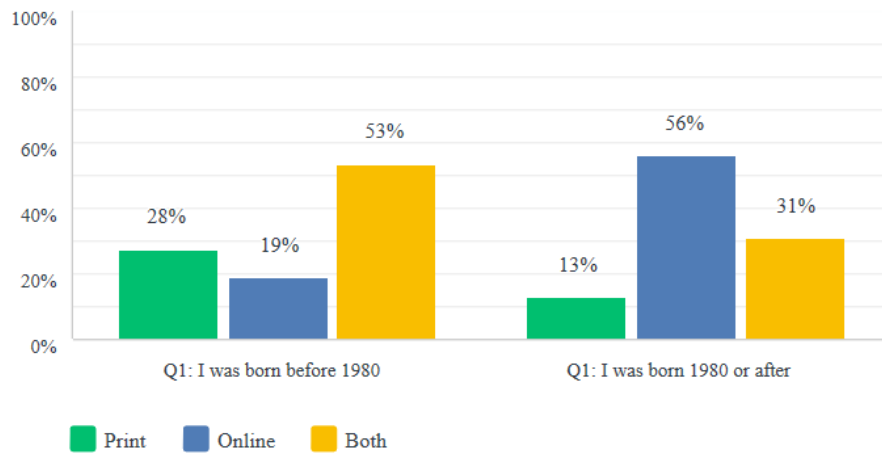


Figure 6. Survey question 5.
Source: The author's survey

Subscriptions with automatic continuity were most popular and 57% of the respondents chose that as their answer. Division between the two age groups were similar for the question “type of subscription”. Millennials did a little bit more short-term fixed-period orders and older generations were ready to commit to a continual subscription more easily. Older people have naturally more experience on HS since they have been around longer and therefore have had more time to become familiar with the newspaper. Trial purchases are less likely to occur for older generations, simply because the trial is likely to have been conducted already before.

What type of subscription did you purchase?

Answered: 126 Skipped: 10

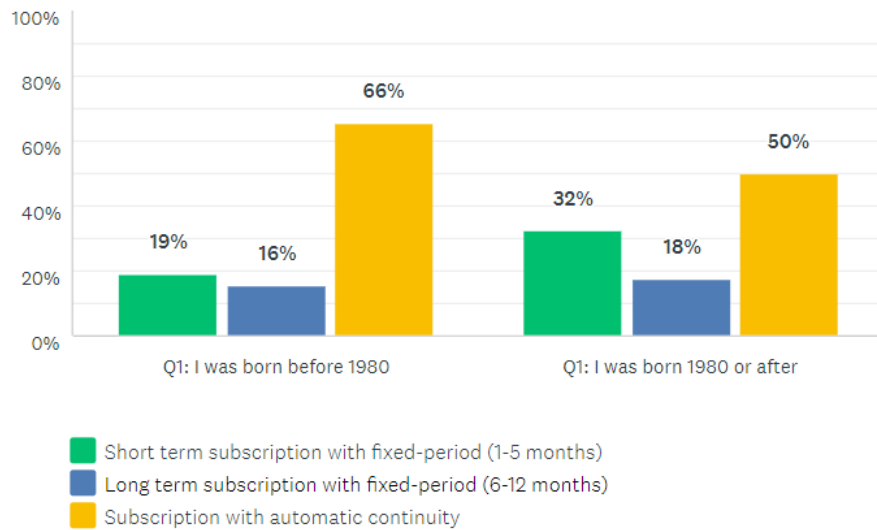


Figure 7. Survey question 6.

Source: The author's survey

Question number seven asked where the subscription was bought from. Half of the respondents bought the subscription from the Internet and for millennials the number was even bigger. Continuing the old subscription was the second favourite of the alternatives, which happens automatically by paying the bill that HS automatically sends the customer when the currently ongoing period nears its end. One out of four respondents chose that answer and majority of them were part of the older generations. Sales stands were a popular answer as well, and one out of six people fell for a pitch of HS salesperson.

Where did you last purchase the subscription from?

Answered: 126 Skipped: 10

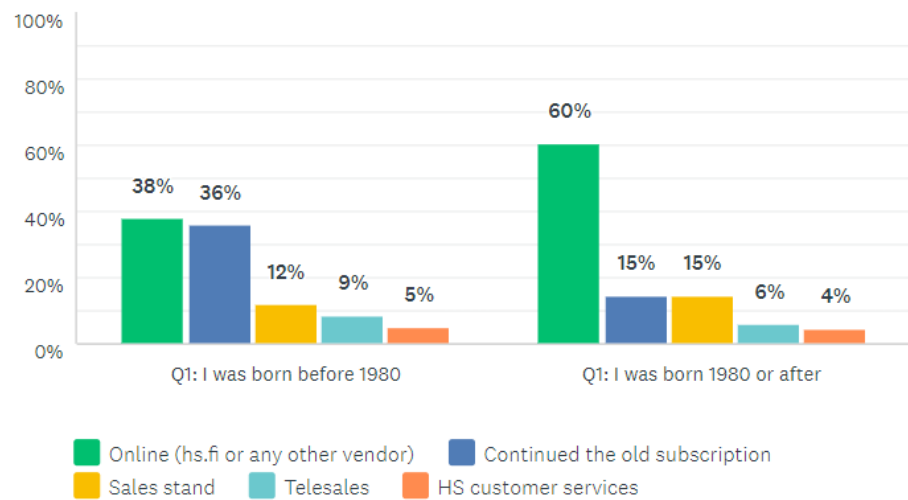


Figure 8. Survey question 7
Source: The author's survey

Next question focused on the reasoning behind the purchase. Respondents chose two answer form five main reasons taht the author had defined for them. Need for daily news was the most popular answer. 75% of millennials chose to answer that like did almost half of the people of older generations. HS being the local paper was also one of the two main reasons for nearly half of the respondents. Old habits likewise lifestyle and family reasons collected similar amounts of respondents. Old habits and just liking HS were more popular in older generations and millennials bought it for the use of other family members more often.

What were the main reasons for you to subscribe Helsingin Sanomat? (choose two (2) alternatives)

Answered: 126 Skipped: 10

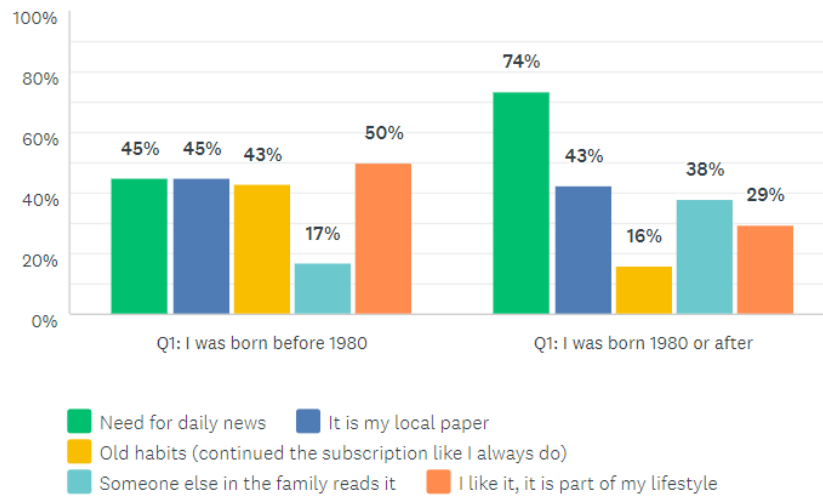


Figure 9. Survey question 8.
Source: The author's survey

Theory part of the thesis introduces two need recognition types, actual state and desired state types. Question number nine seeks to find out to which category the respondents fall in terms of HS purchases. The question was in form of statement; “my purchasing decision was based on actual need?” and the respondents were asked how well they agree. More than half of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the provided statement so it is fair to say that in HS purchases the need recognition of actual state type is preferred. A little bit over fifth of the respondents gave a neutral answer and the same amount either agreed or disagreed.

My purchasing decision was based on actual need?

Answered: 126 Skipped: 10

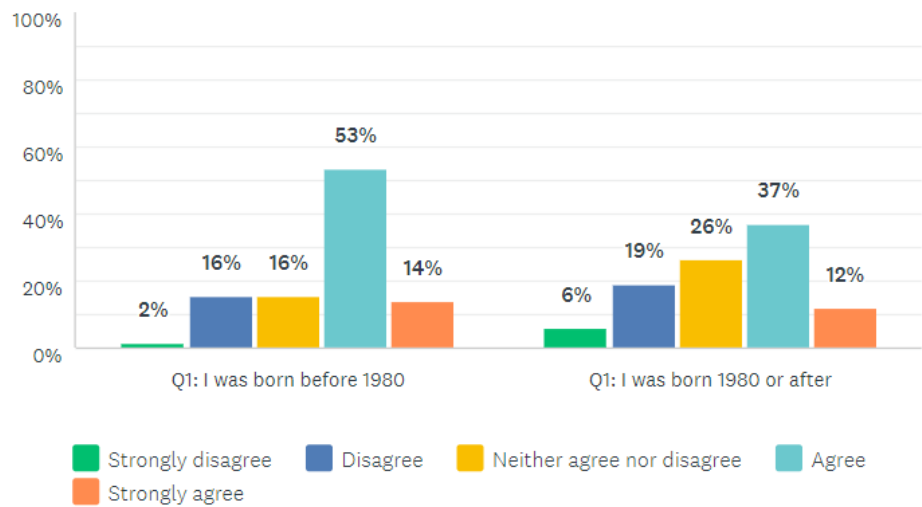


Figure 10. Survey question 9.
Source: The author's survey

Next four questions investigate the information search. How did the respondents get information about newspapers before choosing HS was the message in question number 10. 56% of the sample knew HS because of its reputation and the fifth that answered "other" specified their reasons to be that they knew everything needed without searching for information. Searching the Internet for information was the method for fifth of the respondents. Asking friends and family and relying on advertisement were not popular means to get information, but millennials trusted the judgement and opinions of their close ones more.

How did you get information about newspapers before choosing Helsingin Sanomat?

Answered: 126 Skipped: 10

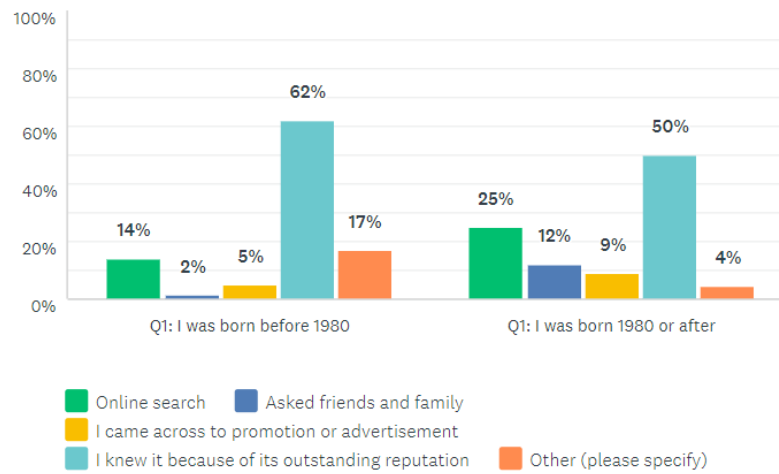


Figure 11. Survey question 10.

Source: The author's survey

Next question was about the effort put to the information search. 70% of the respondents made zero search efforts and a fourth of the respondents 1-3. Only 7 people out of the total 126 made four or more search efforts. People seem to think that they know everything relevant about HS already. Every single Finnish person knows the brand Helsingin Sanomat to some extent, and the respondents seemed to trust their impression of the brand to be truthful enough to serve as knowledge and justification for the purchase.

How much effort did you put on searching for information?

Answered: 126 Skipped: 10

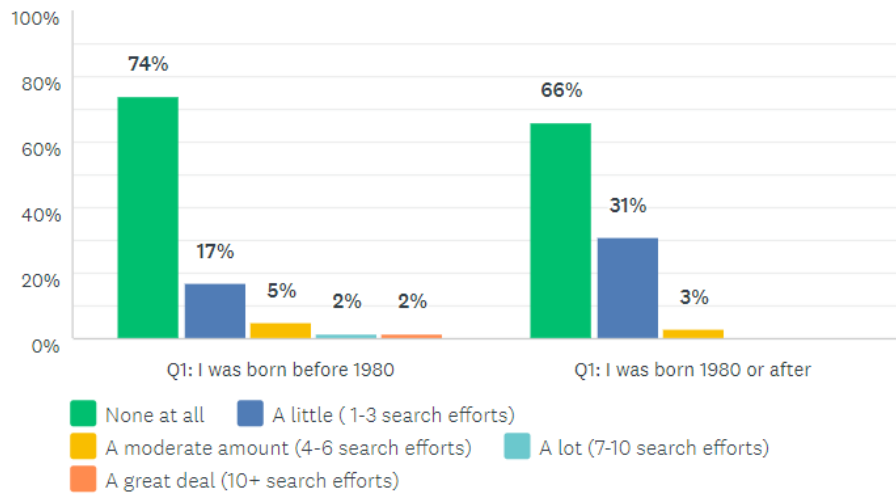


Figure 12. Survey question 11.

Source: The author's survey

Next two questions were about effect of other consumers to the choice to buy HS. First one about close ones, family and friends, and the second about ones the consumer don't have a relationship with, for example online reviews. Majority of older generations denied the effect of others completely but fourth of them said family and friends affected a little. 15% said that they affected a lot or a great deal. Millennials depend on the opinions of their friends and family opinions much more. A lot and a great deal gathered 32% of the answers from millennials.

Did the opinions of your friends and family affect your decision?

Answered: 126 Skipped: 10

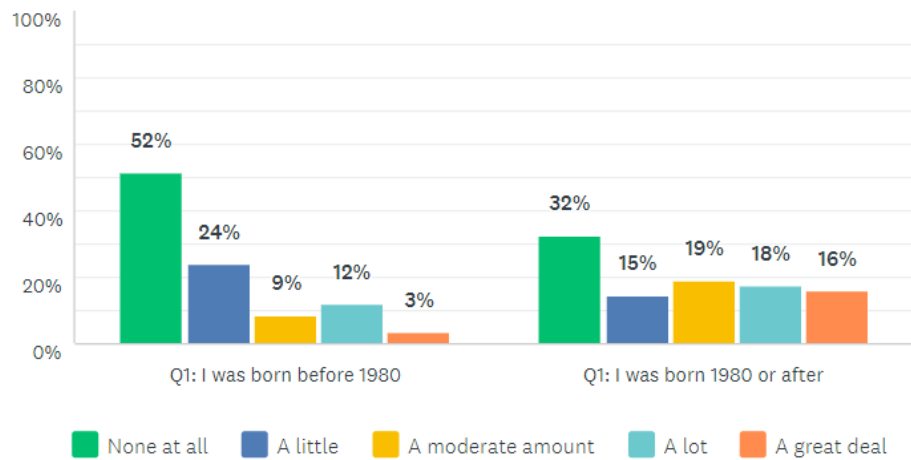


Figure 13. Survey question 12.
Source: The author’s survey

Roughly a third of the millennials said that other consumers than family and friends affected a little or a moderate amount. For older generations the number was only 10%. “A lot” and “a great deal” gathered only 5 answers in total which indicates that the respondents like to at least think that their judgement is the best on when it comes to HS.

Did the opinions of other consumers, for example, online reviews affect your decision?

Answered: 126 Skipped: 10

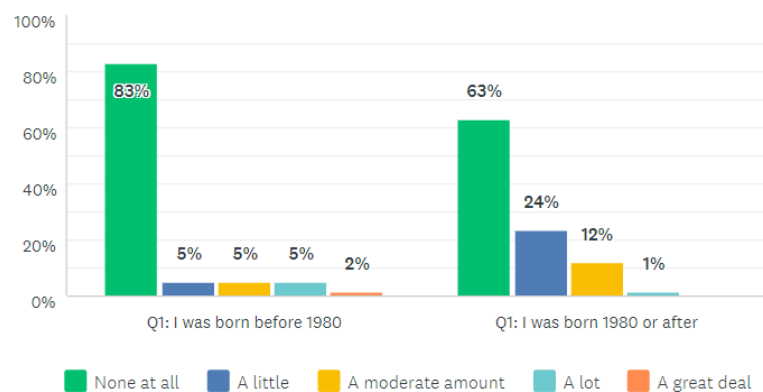


Figure 14. Survey question 13.
Source: The author’s survey

14th question was “why did you choose Helsingin Sanomat from the possible alternatives?” 35% of the respondents answered that they did not look for alternatives at all. Roughly a fourth of the sample valued traditional newspaper content to a high regard and chose HS in order to have that. 28% of the millennials chose credibility of information as the reason whereas only 7% of the older generations did that. Millennials seem to value credible information more, but likely also feel that HS is very credible more often than the older generations do. 15% of the respondents chose HS because they wanted the local newspaper.

Why did you choose Helsingin Sanomat from the possible alternatives?

Answered: 127 Skipped: 9

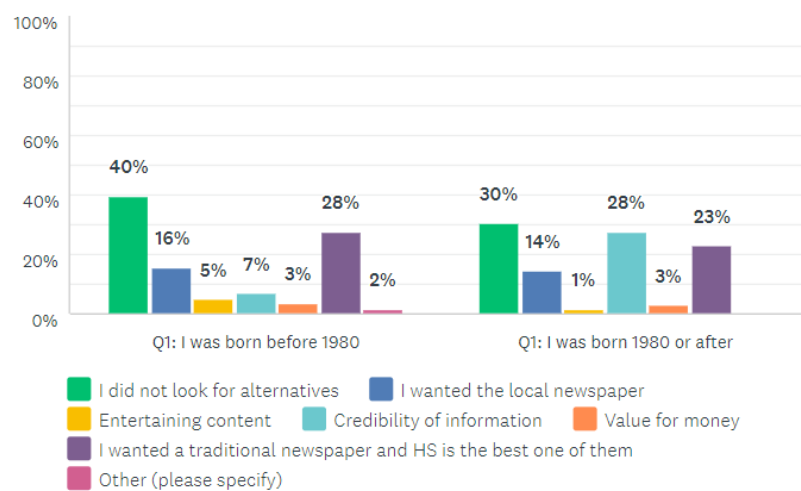


Figure 15. Survey question 14.

Source: The author’s survey

Next question sought to find what incentives motivated to the respondents to buy HS. 92% of the respondents named content as one of the two reasons. Price and boosting social status were the second most popular alternatives for millennials, each were chosen by roughly 40%. Of older generations, 28% chose price and 36% boosting social status as a reason. Promotional efforts of HS affected the older generations a little bit more than the millennials. Only one millennial admitted that professionalism of salesperson was motivation at all. The respective number for older generations was 6 people which is 10% of the age group.

What motivated you to buy Helsingin Sanomat? (choose two (2) most important alternatives)

Answered: 126 Skipped: 10

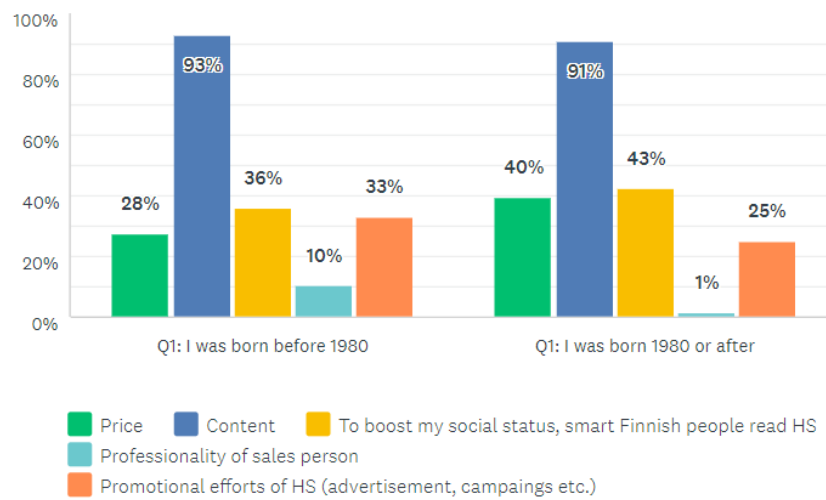


Figure 16. Survey question 15.
Source: The author's survey

Question number 16 asks the respondents how much marketing efforts of HS affected them. And the one after that, what marketing efforts affected the most. None at all and a little were the most popular choices gathering two thirds of the answers. Older generations were more reluctant to admit the effect of marketing than millennials, and 40% of millennials answered that marketing affected a moderate amount or a lot. Only 21% of the older generations said the same. Online advertisement emerged as the type of marketing effort that affected the most with 30% of all the answers. Advertisement on HS.fi was more compelling to millennials than older generations. Discounts was a close second with 27% of the answers. Other alternatives did not gather significant numbers of answers.

How much do you think marketing efforts of Helsingin Sanomat affected your decision?

Answered: 126 Skipped: 10

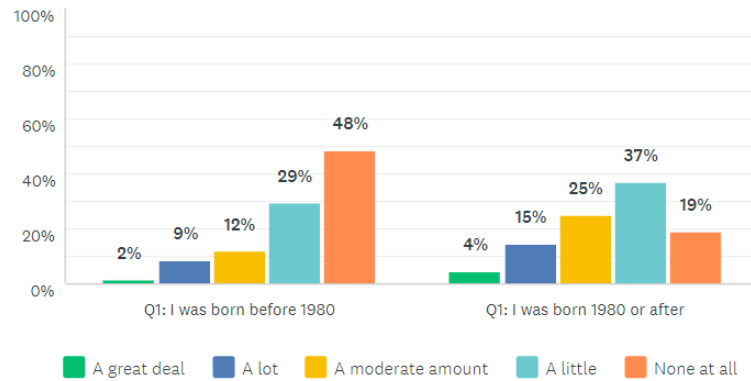


Figure 17. Survey question 16.
Source: The author’s survey

What kind of marketing do you think affected you the most?

Answered: 126 Skipped: 10

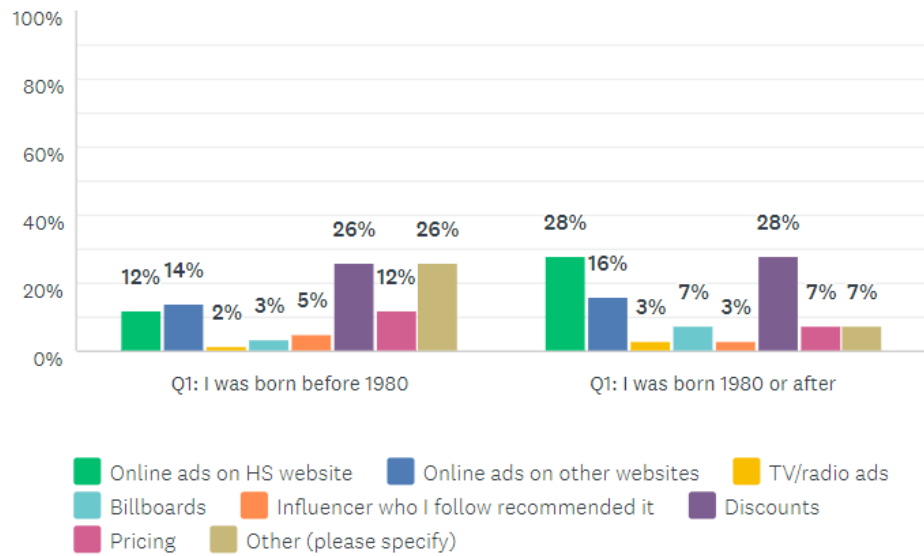


Figure 18. Survey question 17.
Source: The author’s survey

The next two questions measured the satisfaction of the respondents. First one of the next two asked if HS matched the respondent’s expectations and the second what matched the expectations. 84% of the respondents answered that they either agree or strongly agree with the claim that HS matched their expectations. The division was similar for both age groups. A tenth

of the respondents neither agreed or disagreed. Reasons behind the answers provided a bit more dispersion between the age groups. Credibility of information was the most answered alternative in total and for millennials, for older generation it was the third. For older generations the fact that it has kept up with the expectations it has created to itself over the years was most impressive. Traditional newspaper content was earlier mentioned as an important reason to subscribe and it matched the expectations with roughly same rate. Value for money did not emerge as factor that matched the respondent's expectations even though the content of HS seemed to please the respondents and it was deemed credible. This leads to believe that customers of HS think it is over-priced.

Helsingin Sanomat matched my expectations?

Answered: 126 Skipped: 10

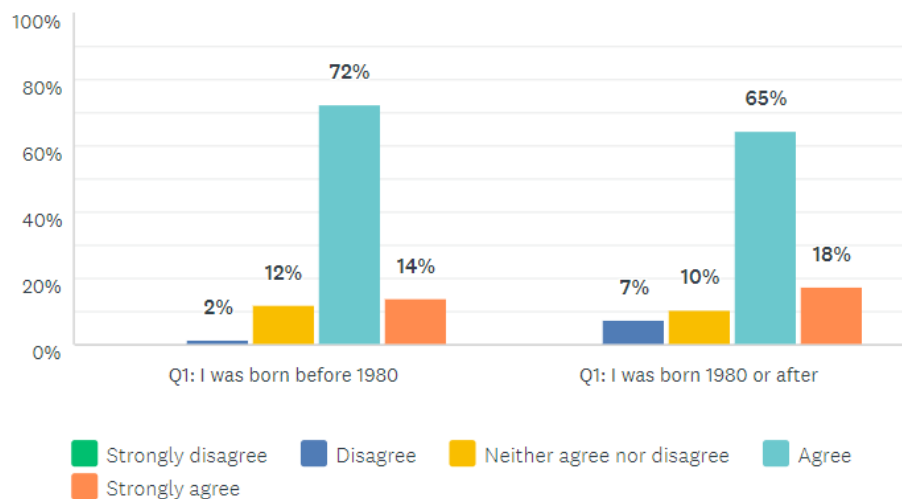


Figure 19. Survey question 18.
Source: The author's survey

What matched your expectations?

Answered: 126 Skipped: 10

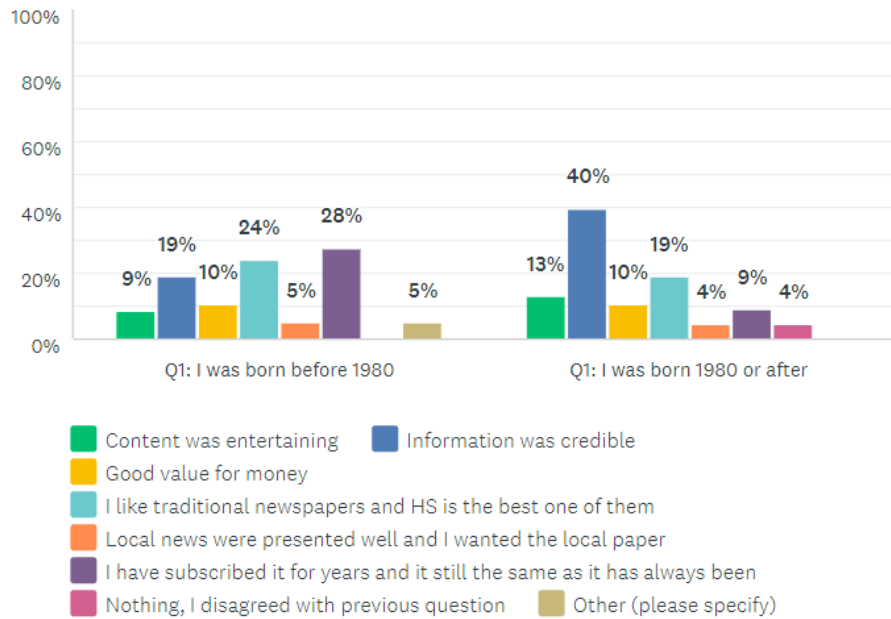


Figure 20. Survey question 19.

Source: The author's survey

Last question was simply “will you subscribe again?” Most people answered yes. A fourth of millennials were undecided and 12% said no. 79% of older generations answered yes and only 5% no. the rest did not know. One might say that customers of HS are quite loyal according to this information.

Will you subscribe again?

Answered: 126 Skipped: 10

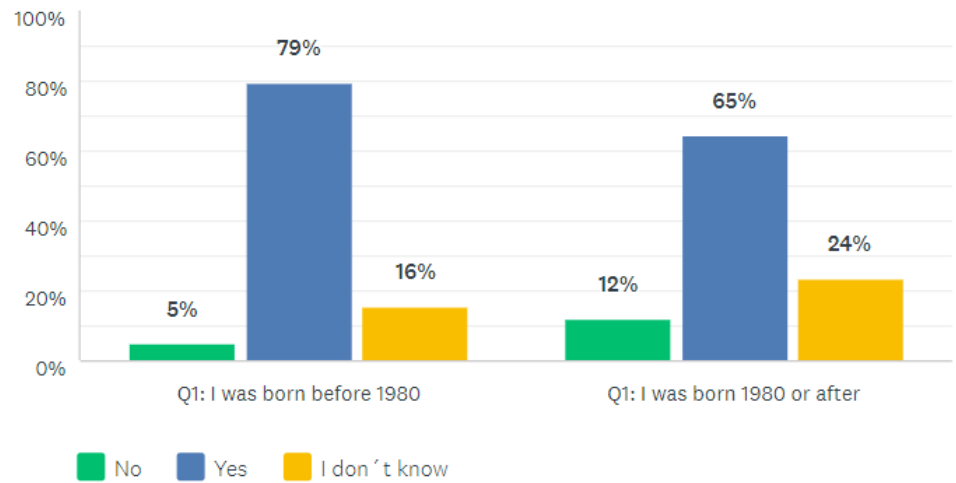


Figure 21. Survey question 20.
Source: The author's survey

3.2. More findings and discussion

Demographics of the survey respondents are presented in the above section in detail, and there is not much discussion to be had about them. Responses came from people with various demographics. Both age groups and genders were almost evenly represented and the income levels of the respondents were well divided to all income brackets. Location of the respondents was not asked, since convenience sampling was used, and the population was located in the Helsinki Metropolitan area. The fourth question separated the ones not eligible to answer the rest of the survey and ended the survey for those people. All the excluded respondents were millennial men with relatively low income. However, there is not much to conclude from this, since people knew what the survey was about before clicking the link provided. Many people most likely chose not to answer at all, because they have never subscribed HS, and therefore knew that their participation would be irrelevant.

Next, the type of the subscription was examined. Online subscriptions were clearly the most popular ones, even though older generations were very fond of the printed version and only a fifth of them chose to rely solely on the online version. Almost a third of them read only the paper version. Reading the printed version is a habit and a sort of tradition for many people,

especially in the weekend mornings, but the daily news is often checked from a mobile phone or a tablet, for example, during the bus ride to work. Generally, older people tend to have more traditions and be more conservative which explains why their numbers for the printed version were bigger. Many millennials grew up with the Internet being a part of their daily lives and are therefore fluent with it and more comfortable with reading the news from a device than older people. A millennial person might have always read it online and be very accustomed to it, whereas for older generations the situation is the opposite. The online version offers convenience since you can read it anywhere and whenever you want to, and printed version offers tradition and even nostalgia. Respondents of this survey opted for convenience, but valued tradition as well.

HS can be subscribed with a contract with a fixed-period or with automatic continuity. Fixed-period deals often offer discounts, “try now with lower price than ever” type of way. That is probably why many millennials opted for them, as they earned significantly less than older generations. Most millennials who chose the fixed-period option also chose a short version (1-5 months), which indicates that they want to commit to subscription for a short time only. Probably, because their life stage may change significantly in a matter of weeks or months. The vast majority of older generations reported their subscription to be continual and half of the millennials as well. Convenience could explain this as well. Once you have subscribed with a continual contract, all you have to do is to remember to pay the bill which is automatically sent to you. They tend to be a bit more expensive than fixed-period ones, but if money doesn't matter too much, this is the best option. A higher number for older generations could be explained with stability in life stage in comparison to millennials. It is fair to assume that most people in their forties or older than that don't expect sudden or significant changes in their life stage and therefore are more easily ready to commit to a subscription even right away. Trials are also less needed for older generations than they are for millennials, since the trial is probably conducted already in the past. However, half of the millennials chose the continual one too, which leads us back to the convenience argument. Also, for many millennials too, HS is established part of their every-day-life, and it is easiest to order it continuously. HS also has quarantine time of two weeks after fixed-period contract before the customer can make another fixed-period subscription. Therefore, one must subscribe continuously if he/she doesn't want to have a gap of two weeks between the two subscriptions. Continual order can be made right away after the old one.

Next question asked where the subscription was bought from. Online was the most popular answer especially for millennials which was expected too. Continuing the old subscription, sales stands, and telesales gathers almost all the rest of the answers which again brings us back to the convenience argument. All of the above-mentioned sales methods bring the purchase situation to the customer and allows the purchase to happen by the customer just saying yes. The customer doesn't have to put effort into the purchase, and the decision is made easy for him/her. Only 5% of the respondents actively sought to subscribe it from other places than the Internet where subscribing takes of roughly two minutes and is about five clicks away from the start. Again, convenience seems like an essential factor for both age groups.

The reasons why the respondents chose HS varied quite nicely, and all the answer alternatives got considerable amounts of answers. Need for daily news was by far the most answered option for millennials and joint second for older generations. Of course, all news outlets and papers offer daily news, and the above answer doesn't really explain why HS was chosen instead of some other news outlet or newspaper. The content was the primary motivator behind the purchase for the respondents which explains why HS was chosen over others. Content related things seemed to match the expectations of customers quite well according to the survey results. HS also has excellent and encompassing reputation among the survey respondents which leads them to choose HS easily, more so, encompassing among older generations and good among millennials. The locality of HS emerged as the second most important reason to subscribe, and the numbers were similar for both age groups. However, it was not a factor that satisfied either one of the age groups. Many people especially people from older generations relied on their old habits and just continued the subscription, like they always do. Beliefs and attitudes towards HS seem to be quite good, and they are positively influencing the sales of HS, and third of the respondents did or even look for alternatives. Rest of the respondents subscribed for someone else in the family or just because they like the product. Millennials bought it for someone else more often which again speaks for the esteem HS has among them, they think it is, e.g. good present even though they don't even read it themselves. Just liking the product and it being a part of the respondent's lifestyle is quite similar reason to old habits. However, the latter doesn't tell if the customer actually likes HS rather than just doesn't cancel it and pays the bills out of habit, as the first one does. Liking the product was a more common reason for older generations than for millennials. Price and discounts emerged as an important motivator for the purchase, but value for money was not a satisfactory factor for nearly anybody. Valuing traditional newspaper content allured roughly equal amount of millennials and people from older generations to buy

HS over strolling thru free newsfeeds. A fourth of the respondents in total chose to do so. People like to get their news effortlessly from a single place and are okay with paying for it. The respondents were still fairly satisfied in general, so it indicates that the respondents see HS as a quite pricey product but good enough to pay the hefty price. Both age groups were equally satisfied to HS so their reasoning behind the purchase must be well justified.

The theory part of the thesis defines two different need recognition types. The types were actual state type and desired state type. By agreeing that the purchase of HS was based on need, the respondents indicated that they belong to the actual state type bracket. More than half of the respondents did so, so it is fair to assume that actual state type is preferred in purchases of HS. More than two out of three respondents from older generations did so. Roughly half of the millennials did that as well. HS can also be viewed as a premium product since it is quite pricey and free news is available as well. A fifth of the respondents disagreed with the claim that their purchase was based on actual need which indicates that they bought the product out of a desire to have it. The rest did not have an opinion and gave a neutral answer.

When asked about how you got information about HS, majority of the respondents answered that they knew it already because of its outstanding reputation. They also felt that their information and knowledge was trustworthy enough to make the purchase based on that and not look for any additional information about alternative products or HS. The ones who looked for additional information mainly searched the Internet and asked around from friends and family. Millennials searched for further information more often, so the number for those who said that they looked for information online was consequently bigger as well as was the number for the ones who asked friends and family. Millennials seem to trust the opinions of other consumers much more than people of older generations and most the latter age group denied the effect of others in the decision-making process almost entirely. Impact of online reviews was diminishing among older generations and quite small among millennials as well. A Fourth of the millennials said that they affected a little. Both age groups relied on friends and family for some information, but millennials did that much more. A fourth of older generations said that family and friends affected the decision at least a moderate amount, whereas more than half of millennials said the same. In general, millennials seem to be much more affected by other consumers, or at least recognise the effect more often.

Most respondents did not feel that the marketing efforts of HS affected their decision much. In a sense of marketing as well as opinions of others, people of older generations thought they were more independent. Almost 70% of them said that marketing efforts affected only a little or none at all. Millennials answered a moderate amount or more, almost twice as often as the older generations, and more than twice as rarely none at all. The types of marketing efforts that affected the most were similar between the age groups. Millennials were more affected by advertisement in the HS website, and a bigger portion of the older generations felt the need to specify to the “other” section that marketing definitely did not affect them at all. Only five respondents were affected by influencers which can be considered surprising. A bigger number for millennials was expected.

At the end of the survey, the respondents were asked if they will subscribe again. Most said that they will. The answers were well aligned with the responses for a question if their expectations were matched. Millennials were less likely to subscribe again even though they were pretty evenly satisfied with the product. People of older generations seemingly have a strong relationship HS and will subscribe in the future regardless. Millennials need a bit more convincing and expect the product to exceed their expectations to be sure to re-purchase in future. All in all, customers of HS seem quite loyal, and the longer one has subscribed the more loyal he/she is.

CONCLUSION

The topic of what influences the decision-making process and how the factors affect millennials and older generations has been examined. This is to conclude the findings and discussion, results and the author's thoughts on it.

The main research question was: are the factors affecting purchase decisions the same in different stages of decision-making process; comparison of millennials and older generations? Millennials have grown up in very different environment than people older than them, as for many, the Internet and mobile devices have always been a part of every-day-life. This has created an assumption that they act very differently in the markets, which would suggest that different factors affect their decision-making process than older generations. The thesis sought to find out if this is the true and examines the question thru purchases of Finnish newspaper Helsingin Sanomat. According to the survey results, the stages of decision-making process seem to be the same for both age groups, but as expected the factors affect differently.

To understand the main one better and more deeply, other and more precise research questions were conducted. The questions were formed to follow the steps of decision-making process.

The first one of the supplementing questions was: what are the main incentives why people subscribe HS? The question provide insight to the need recognition and how the need emerges, but also gives reasoning to the product choice and evaluative criteria the consumer use when deciding between newspapers. The need recognition of actual state type was preferred by both age groups and only few of the respondents identified into desired state type bracket. Older generations felt that a daily news flow in form of HS is more like a necessity than desirable luxury. Reading HS seems to be a habitual manner for older generations, and they will subscribe it until it lets them down badly. Millennials, even though they felt a stronger need for daily and credible news, did not feel as strong need to for HS. They are more capable of using search engines online and keeping up with news without centralizing the news flow to one place. Even though actual state type seems to be preferred for HS purchases, HS should take the fact, that

many consumers don't feel like they need it but still buy it into consideration, when lining their marketing efforts. Especially millennials felt that way, and they are the ones, who will soon have the most significant buying power in the market.

Second one of the questions focused on information search, the second step in the decision-making process. The question was: where do people get information about HS? Interestingly, most respondents said that they skipped the information search completely or put minor effort into it. Especially older generations relied strongly on their own experiences and feelings about HS. Millennials relied more on the opinions of others. They didn't put much more effort into the searching, they probably learn effortlessly about the newspaper without even realising it, since the opinions of others are taken into much greater account by them. Almost no one recognised the effect of online reviews or influencers, and it seems like that the information about HS that reaches the consumers does so subliminally. The author believes that the consumers doesn't necessarily recognise the information they absorb in daily basis, and influencing the consumer's subliminally could be a huge opportunity for HS. Millennials are more affected by others and exposed to affiliate marketing. As they will be the most important target group for HS in coming years, if they aren't that already, affiliates could be the best way to influence millennials and their beliefs about the product.

The third supplementing questions was: what do consumers value in Helsingin Sanomat? This question offers insight to why the respondents chose HS over other alternatives. Evaluation of alternatives is an important part of the decision-making process, and is executed in most cases of purchase, even the simple ones. E.g. in a grocery store a consumer most likely spends some time choosing between milk cans. He/she might not compare the attributes the cans possess, but anyhow, to some extent he/she is evaluating the possible alternatives. Interestingly, significant portion of the survey respondents reported that they did not look for alternatives at all. The factors that made the respondents choose HS over alternatives, were more or less the same factors that emerged their need for the purchase, and the information and beliefs regarding them already existed in the minds of the respondents. Millennials want daily news from a credible source, and HS seems to be that for them. For older generations HS is established part of their lives and they are not willing to let go of it. These are the things people value in HS, and neither of the age groups don't seem to see real alternatives for it. HS is quite obviously doing great work, but they should make sure that the situation stays this way. Free news feeds are always

available, probably even more as time goes by. So, HS should make sure their customers stay satisfied, and thus, assure their loyalty in the future as well.

The fourth one of the supplementing questions is as follows: how does the actual purchase of Helsingin Sanomat differ between the two age groups? The question investigates the fourth step of decision-making process: the product choice. Where from, and what kind of a type of the product was purchased. The most significant finding was that millennials bought the product from the Internet much more often than older generations. Online subscriptions were also much more favourable options for millennials than older people. HS should direct their development efforts towards the online version and online purchase portals to secure the millennial generation as their loyal customers. Fixed-period subscriptions collected as many answers from millennials than continual ones. HS should find a way to turn as many of these as possible to continual ones, as it would offer security, and thus, continuity to the subscription quantities. Older generations favoured continual subscriptions.

Investigating the last part of the decision-making process, the outcomes, was excluded from the research questions, because it is still an ongoing process for many respondents. It affects the future purchases rather than the last one, and therefore is not as relevant in this research as the other parts of the decision-making process. However, it is part of the process, and therefore some concluding words about outcomes are needed. In general, HS matched the expectations of the respondents and most of them will re-purchase. Some factors matched the respondents' expectations that made them purchase the product in the first place. HS' brand image is strong and matches the actual product.

The main conclusion of the thesis is that the millennials are more affected by external factors, including marketing efforts of HS than older generations, who rely mostly on their own experiences and beliefs. Subliminal messages are the most affecting ones since intentional information search is skipped by most people, but everyone had knowledge about HS. Social factors influence millennials more, whereas older generations rely on psychological factors such as learning and perception.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. The author's survey

Purchasing decision of Helsingin Sanomat

Buying process of Helsingin Sanomat

This is a short survey about the buying process of newspaper Helsingin Sanomat and differences in the process between millennials and older generations. The information collected will be used for a Bachelor's thesis. All questions must be answered to complete the survey. Please answer the questions in relation to your latest subscription purchase of Helsingin Sanomat

* 1. Your age?

- I was born before 1980
- I was born 1980 or after

* 2. Your Gender?

- Man
- Woman
- Other

* 3. How much do you earn?

- Under €15,000
- Between €15,000 and €29,999
- Between €30,000 and €49,999
- Between €50,000 and €74,999
- Between €75,000 and €99,999
- €100,000 or more

* 4. Have you ever subscribed Helsingin Sanomat?

- Yes
- No

5. Did you subscribe printed version or online version?

- Print
- Online
- Both

6. What type of subscription did you purchase?

- Short term subscription with fixed-period (1-5 months)
- Long term subscription with fixed-period (6-12 months)
- Subscription with automatic continuity

7. Where did you last purchase the subscription from?

- Online (hs.fi or any other vendor)
- Continued the old subscription
- Sales stand
- Telesales
- HS customer services

8. What were the main reasons for you to subscribe Helsingin Sanomat? (choose two (2) alternatives)

- Need for daily news
- It is my local paper
- Old habits (continued the subscription like I always do)
- Someone else in the family reads it
- I like it, it is part of my lifestyle

9. My purchasing decision was based on actual need?

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

10. How did you get information about newspapers before choosing Helsingin Sanomat?

- Online search
- Asked friends and family
- I came across to promotion or advertisement
- I knew it because of its outstanding reputation
- Other (please specify)

11. How much effort did you put on searching for information?

- None at all
- A little (1-3 search efforts)
- A moderate amount (4-6 search efforts)
- A lot (7-10 search efforts)
- A great deal (10+ search efforts)

12. Did the opinions of your friends and family affect your decision?

- None at all
- A little
- A moderate amount
- A lot
- A great deal

13. Did the opinions of other consumers, for example, online reviews affect your decision?

- None at all
- A little
- A moderate amount
- A lot
- A great deal

14. Why did you choose Helsingin Sanomat from the possible alternatives?

- I did not look for alternatives
- I wanted the local newspaper
- Entertaining content
- Other (please specify)
- Credibility of information
- Value for money
- I wanted a traditional newspaper and HS is the best one of them

15. What motivated you to buy Helsingin Sanomat? (choose two (2) most important alternatives)

- Price
- Content
- To boost my social status, smart Finnish people read HS
- Professionalism of sales person
- Promotional efforts of HS (advertisement, campaigns etc.)

16. How much do you think marketing efforts of Helsingin Sanomat affected your decision?

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all

17. What kind of marketing do you think affected you the most?

- Online ads on HS website
- Online ads on other websites
- TV/radio ads
- Billboards
- Other (please specify)
- Influencer who I follow recommended it
- Discounts
- Pricing

18. Helsingin Sanomat matched my expectations?

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

19. What matched your expectations?

- Content was entertaining
- Information was credible
- Good value for money
- I like traditional newspapers and HS is the best one of them
- Other (please specify)
- Local news were presented well and I wanted the local paper
- I have subscribed it for years and it still the same as it has always been
- Nothing, I disagreed with previous question

20. Will you subscribe again?

- No
- Yes
- I don't know