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**Customer satisfaction research**

Taitopuoti Paperinauha

Thesis

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## Thesis abstract

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The purpose of this thesis was to measure the level of customer satisfaction in Taitopuoti Paperinauha. By doing the customer satisfaction research the level of satisfaction of Taitopuoti Paperinauha's customers with its customer service and products was determined. Both the physical store and online store were included in the research.

Consumer behaviour and customer satisfaction are concepts that are dealt with in the theoretical part of the thesis. After the theoretical part the results of the customer satisfaction research are introduced. The research was executed as a quantitative research by carrying out a customer satisfaction survey. The survey was available online and a paper version was available in the physical store. 267 answers were collected. Different kinds of charts were made to help analyze the results.

The research showed that the customers of Taitopuoti Paperinauha were satisfied, especially with the customer service. The respondents also provided good suggestions for improvement that the company in question can take into consideration. With the help of the results of this customer satisfaction research, the operation of the company can be further improved.

Keywords: Consumer behavior, customer satisfaction, customer satisfaction research

SEINÄJOEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

## Opinnäytetyön tiivistelmä

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Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli mitata Taitopuoti Paperinauhan asiakastyytyväisyyden taso. Asiakastyytyväisyystutkimuksen avulla pystyttiin selvittämään, kuinka tyytyväisiä Taitopuoti Paperinauhan asiakkaat olivat saamaansa asiakaspalveluun, tuotteisiin sekä liikkeeseen ja verkkokauppaan.

Opinnäytetyön teoreettisessa osassa käsitellään kuluttajakäyttäytymiseen sekä asiakastyytyväisyyteen liittyviä käsitteitä. Teoriaosuuden jälkeen esitellään asiakastyytyväisyystutkimuksen tulokset. Tutkimus toteutettiin kvantitatiivisena tekemällä asiakastyytyväisyyskysely. Kysely oli vastattavissa internetissä sekä paperiversio kyselystä löytyi liikkeestä. Kyselyyn saatiin 267 vastausta. Tulosten analysoinnin helpottamiseksi tehtiin erilaisia kuvaajia.

Tutkimuksesta kävi ilmi, että Taitopuoti Paperinauhan asiakkaat olivat tyytyväisiä yrityksen toimintaan, erityisesti saamaansa asiakaspalveluun. Kyselyyn vastanneilta saatiin myös hyviä parannusehdotuksia, jotka kohdeyritys voi halutessaan ottaa huomioon. Asiakastyytyväisyystutkimuksesta saatujen tulosten avulla kohdeyrityksen toimintaa voidaan edelleen kehittää parempaan suuntaan.

Avainsanat: Kuluttajakäyttäytyminen, asiakastyytyväisyys,  
asiakastyytyväisyystutkimus

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The topic of this thesis is customer satisfaction research. Customer satisfaction is always important to any company. If a customer is not satisfied with the company he or she can easily walk out of the store and go to the store next door. If a customer is not satisfied it is not very likely that he or she would return to the store. Especially in a company where customer service plays a big role, the company needs to keep their customers satisfied, without customers the company can't exist. With a customer satisfaction survey the company can measure the current level of the satisfaction of their customers. Based on the survey they can find out what the strengths of the company are and what are the parts that need to be improved. Customer satisfaction survey helps both the company and the customers, by doing the survey the company becomes more aware of its customers' needs and can improve what needs to be improved thus having more satisfied customers.

This customer satisfaction research was done for Taitopuoti Paperinauha. The topic is significant because Taitopuoti Paperinauha is a relatively new company and hasn't yet measured the level of its customers' satisfaction. This topic is also very interesting to me because I am a customer of this company. The owner of the company and her employee are under the impression that their customer service is good. By doing the customer satisfaction survey we can find out whether the company has a realistic image of its customer service.

## 1.1 Purpose and goals of the thesis

The purpose of this thesis was to find out how satisfied the customers of Taitopuoti Paperinauha are. The level of customers' satisfaction towards customer service, products, the physical shop, the online store and to the company in general was of interest. I had set three sub goals to the thesis:

1. The first goal was to find out about consumer behavior through theoretical literature. I wanted to find out who the consumers are and how they make purchasing decisions. Understanding consumer behavior is important to Taitopuoti Paperinauha in order for them to know who their current and potential customers are why customers purchase their products.
2. The second goal was to find out through literature what are the factors influencing on customer satisfaction, why is it important, and what are the differences between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.
3. The third goal was to measure the level of customer satisfaction of Taitopuoti Paperinauha by doing a customer satisfaction survey.

## **1.2 Taitopuoti Paperinauha**

Taitopuoti Paperinauha is a craft shop that sells material mainly for card making and scrapbooking. The company was founded and is owned by Heli Aalto. The company first started out as an online shop ([www.paperinauha.fi](http://www.paperinauha.fi)) in 2008. The owner had been making cards for about a year when she noticed that text stamps in Finnish were quite rare; only one store sold them. Also, the other stamps she wanted were hard to find in Finland. She realized that this could be a very good idea for a company. The company was meant to be only an online store, but after storing the products at her home for a year she realized that it was no longer possible. A change was ahead, either open a physical shop along with the online store, or quit the company entirely. Taitopuoti Paperinauha opened its physical store in Seinäjoki in 2009.

Nowadays about 30 per cent of the profits come from the physical store and 70 per cent comes from the online store. The physical store is, however, becoming more profitable and soon bringing in half of the profits. Per each day they have at least 10 customers in the physical store, more on Saturday, it being the busiest day of the week. Per week they have customers from 60 to over 100 in the physi-

cal store and every week the online store is visited from more than 500 different IP-addresses.

Delivery time in Taitopuoti Paperinauha's online store is quite fast. Their terms of delivery promises delivery in 5 days, but usually it takes them only 3 days to get the products to the customers. Taitopuoti Paperinauha doesn't sell its products to customers outside of Finland; however, most of their products with competitive value come from abroad, mainly from the United States.

In Seinäjoki the biggest competitors of Taitopuoti Paperinauha are Puoti-Pike and Näpsäkkä. However, the selection of products varies very much between these companies, so these two companies aren't seen as threats. The main competitors are other big online stores like Heinikka, Craftica, Paperella and Klemmarikellari. The biggest difference between Taitopuoti Paperinauha and these competitors is the variety of products, for example Taitopuoti Paperinauha has more variety in stamps.

### **1.3 Card making and scrapbooking**

Crafts were at one time becoming almost extinct; there were only small circles where crafts were still a part of every-day-life. Nowadays, however, doing crafts has become trendy; especially doing something new from old items is wildly popular, it is a way to ensure that the items you have are unique.

Card making was earlier seen as children's hobby, but nowadays people, both women and men, of all ages are doing it. It is a fun and an innovative way to use your imagination and to create something beautiful to greet your friends with. You can find the basic materials needed from your own home, such as cardstock, scissors and adhesive, what you don't have can be found in craft shops. By doing cards yourself you can give more personalized, one-of-a-kind, greeting cards than you would find in a store. Some people make cards just for fun and some also sell them. If you are selling hand-made cards with stamped images, depending on the

manufacturer of the stamp, you might need the manufacturer's permission to sell a card with their image on it. This, however, depends on the manufacturer, for some company's stamps you don't need any permission.

Scrapbooking is a hobby where you are creating a personalized photo album or a memorabilia. There are usually only one or two pictures on one page with decorations, such as flowers, stamps, text, etc. Usually the page, or the background paper, itself is also decorative. The materials for scrapbooking are quite same as in card making, so it is easy to do both. Card making and scrapbooking are becoming more and more popular and there are many blogs on the internet about card making and scrapbooking.

## 2 CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

For companies understanding customer behavior is important for developing strategies. Foxall & Goldsmith (1994, 7) state that in order for companies to survive and grow in a competitive economic system they need to know not only what their customers buy, but also how they buy, why they buy and where they buy. For companies to sell their products or services as efficiently as possible they need to understand that the process of decision-making, whether to buy the product or not, starts a lot before the customer enters the store.

According to Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (1995, 4) consumer behavior is activities involved in obtaining, consuming and disposing of products and services, including the decision process that leads to and follows these actions. Cultural differences, family background, customer's age, among other things, influence on consumer behavior.

In order for companies to develop successful marketing strategy they need to have an understanding of consumer behavior. According to Winer (2007, 88) in order to understand customers five questions must be answered:

1. *Who* are the current and potential customers?
2. *Why* they buy?
3. *How* they make purchasing decisions?
4. *Where* they buy the product or service?
5. *When* they buy?

### 2.1 Segmentation

People are all different, they look different from each other, they have their own opinions and they behave differently. This is not only the case in our every-day-life, but because we are so different, our buying behavior is different. This is why

companies need to categorize their customers. This is called segmentation. Segmentation is needed because people vary much from each other. Market segmentation wouldn't be needed if all people had the same needs and wants and behaved the same. If this were the case every product would be identical. (Engel, Blackwell & Miniard 1995, 42.)

Companies need to know who are buying their products or services and in order to market their products to the right potential customers they need to use segmentation. In order to reach the potential customers, segmentation is not only sensible but also reasonable. It is more efficient to use segmentation approach to the market rather than mass-marketing approach because then money is used only on the determined potential customers. This way less money is used for those customers not likely to buy the product. (Winer 2007, 89–90.)

There are two groups used in segmenting consumer markets. Some form segments by looking at consumer characteristics, such as geographic, demographic, and psychographic characteristics. Some, on the other hand, form segments by looking at consumer responses to see whether they are associated with different consumer characteristics. (Kotler 1997, 256.)

According to Kotler (1997, 257) major segmentation variables for consumer markets are divided into four main groups: geographic, demographic, psychographic, and behavioral.

**Geographic segmentation.** In geographic segmentation the market is divided into different geographic units such as nations, states, regions, countries, cities, or neighborhoods. Using this segmentation the company can easily decide in which geographic area or areas it wants to operate. These units, for example cities, can be subdivided if found useful. (Kotler 1997, 256.)

**Demographic segmentation.** In demographic segmentation the market is divided into groups based on demographic variables such as age, family size, family life cycle, gender, income, occupation, education, religion, race, generation, nationali-

ty, or social class. Demographic variables are the most used bases for distinguishing customer groups. (Kotler 1997, 258–259.)

**Psychographic segmentation.** In psychographic segmentation consumers are divided into different groups based on lifestyle and/or personality. In some cases this type of segmentation is more useful since for example people in the same demographic group can show very different psychographic profiles. (Kotler 1997, 259–260.)

**Behavioral segmentation.** In behavioral segmentation consumers are divided into groups based on their knowledge of, attitude towards, use of, or response to a product. Behavioral variables are occasions, benefits, user status, usage rate, loyalty status, buyer-readiness stage, and attitude. It is believed by many marketers that these behavioral variables are the best starting points for constructing market segments. (Kotler 1997, 260–264.)

According to Kotler (1997, 268–269) for market segments to be useful, they need to have the following qualities:

- *Measurable*: The size of the segment, its purchasing power, and its characteristics can be measured.
- *Substantial*: The segments are large and profitable enough to serve.
- *Accessible*: The segments can easily be reached and served.
- *Differentiable*: The segments respond differently to different marketing-mix elements and programs.
- *Actionable*: The segments can be attracted and served by formulating effective programs.

It is not enough that companies segment the market once; it has to be regularly redone since market segments change. People change, they move, they grow older, people are born and introduced to new ways, these among other things, are influencing on segmentation. This is why segmentation must be done regularly to keep up with the changing market.

**Niche marketing.** Typically market segments are large particular groups within a market. A niche is usually a small market whose needs are not being met and it is a more narrowly defined group. Niches are usually identified by dividing segments into subsegments or by defining a group with distinctive needs. Niches typically attract small companies and because niches are quite small it usually attracts only one or a few competitors, whereas, segments that are quite large attract many competitors. (Kotler 1997, 251.)

Taitopuoti Paperinauha is operating in a niche market. This is because Taitopuoti Paperinauha is a store that specializes in providing material for card making and scrapbooking. Because it is a specialized store they have a clear clientele and the needs and wants of its customers are quite similar. Segmentation is needed in order to know where and how to market to reach potential customers. Because Taitopuoti Paperinauha operates in a niche market, it is clear for them how to reach their potential customers; this is done by for example advertising in craft magazines and appearing in craft fairs.

## **2.2 Consumer decision making process**

When a decision to buy a product is made, our heads fill up with questions. Why do I need the product? Where to buy it from? Do I order the product from the internet or do I want to go and buy the product from the store? Do I want a specific brand? Which store has the lowest prices? Do I go to the store by car or do I use public transportation? Do I buy with cash or credit? Buying something involves a huge amount of decisions. The buying process starts long before the consumer buys the product and has consequences long after the purchase (Kotler 1997, 192).

### 2.2.1 Consumer buying process

It is not the case in every purchase and consumers might sometimes skip or reverse some stages, but Kotler (1997, 192–198) and Engel, Blackwell & Miniard (1995, 142–154) show a five-stage model of the typical consumer buying process. The five stages are: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post purchase behavior.

**Problem/need recognition.** Problem recognition is the first step of the consumer buying process and happens when a consumer recognizes a problem or need, in another words, it occurs when a consumer sees a significant difference between the current state of affairs compared with the ideal state. There are internal and external stimuli that can trigger a need. Internal stimuli are for example hunger and thirst, person's normal needs that, when raised to a certain point, need to be satisfied. Consumer's needs can also be aroused by external stimuli. External stimuli can occur for example, when a consumer passes by a candy store. After seeing the treats in the window he or she suddenly feels the need to buy candy. Or when a baby is born to a family a need for a bigger car may arise. (Kotler 1997, 192–193.)

**Information search.** The next step of the consumer buying process is search for information. Engel, Blackwell & Miniard (1995, 146) divide the information search in two, internal and external search. In internal search we search our memory whether we have enough information about the product or service we want without the need of further information gathering. If this is not the case external search is needed. Whether consumers use external search at all is affected by individual differences and environmental influences. Some consumers search for information long before making a purchase decision, some don't even compare prices.

Kotler (1997, 193) on the other hand, categorizes consumers to two different groups by the level of their arousal: heightened attention and active information search. The heightened attention is a milder search state. It means that consumers simply pay more attention to the advertisements of the product or services and

listen more carefully to conversations about the topic. In the level of active information search consumers look for reading material and consult people they know with experience with the product.

According to Kotler (1997, 193) the four groups of information sources the consumer will turn to, and marketers need to keep in mind are: *personal sources* such as family, friends, and acquaintances, *commercial sources* such as advertising, packaging, and displays, *public sources* such as mass media and *experiential sources* such as handling, examining, and using the product.

**Evaluation of alternatives.** After the information search comes evaluation of alternatives. Kotler (1997, 194) states that there is no single evaluation process every consumer uses, or uses every time when purchasing a product. Kotler, however, identifies three basic concepts that help understand consumer evaluation process: First is *need* that the consumer is trying to satisfy. Second, the consumer is expecting certain *benefits* from the chosen product. Third, the consumer sees every product as a *bundle of attributes* each having some or all of the benefits looked for. The attributes interested by a consumer vary from consumer to consumer. For example if a consumer is trying to decide to which restaurant to go to the attributes to consider can be what kind of food do they serve, the atmosphere, location, and customer service. Or if a consumer is in the process of trying to decide which mobile phone to purchase the attributes can be manufacturer, whether to buy Nokia, Siemens or Samsung, model, color, and the amount of mega pixels in the camera.

**Purchase decision.** After a consumer has evaluated the alternatives he or she forms an intention to buy the product. Kotler (1997, 196) however, states two factors that can come between a purchase intention and the purchase decision. The first is *attitudes of others*. For example, a consumer has decided to buy a mobile phone manufactured by Nokia and if a friend recommends a mobile phone by Samsung, can the consumer's decision go towards the phone manufactured by Samsung. Why a consumer might change his or her already made decision depends on two things: (1) how negative the other person's attitude is towards the

product the consumer has already decided to buy and (2) how much does the consumer want to please the other person. The more the other person has negative attitude towards the product and the more closer he or she is to the consumer the more it will reduce the consumer's interest towards the product he or she has chosen. On the other hand, the more people the consumer likes favor the same brand the consumer does the more it increases the consumer's interest to purchase the product. The more people telling their opinion, if of contrast, the more difficult it becomes to the consumer when wanting to please them all.

The second factor is *unanticipated situational factors*. These factors can be things such, losing a job, or the consumer gets the product from somewhere else, for example as a birthday gift. When a purchase decision is made a consumer can make up to five purchase subdecisions. These subdecisions can be as shown by Kotler (1997, 196–197) brand decision (Nokia or Samsung), vendor decision (Elisa Shopit or Tekniset), quantity decision (one mobile phone), timing decision (whether to buy the product on weekday or on weekend), and payment-method (cash or credit). However, if buying an every-day-product, such as milk, a consumer pays a little attention to the previously mentioned decisions.

**Post purchase behavior.** Post purchase behavior is the last stage of the consumer buying process. The consumption of the product hasn't been of any interest to the marketers in the past, their only focus was to get the product sold. Now, however, customer satisfaction and retention have become of great interest to the marketers. (Engel, Blackwell & Miniard 1995, 152.) After a product has been purchased the consumer experiences either satisfaction or dissatisfaction. How satisfied a customer is depends on how his or her expectations towards the product were met. Satisfaction usually leads for the consumer to visit the store again, to prefer a certain brand, or the continuous buying of the product. A satisfied customer is also likely to say good things about the product to his or her friends. A dissatisfied customer, however, isn't likely to purchase the product again. In some cases a consumer experiencing dissatisfaction may file a complaint against the company, write about his or her disappointing experience or in severe cases file a law suit against the company. A dissatisfied customer is also likely to tell his or her

disappointment to his or her friends. Post purchase behavior also includes the disposal of the product. A consumer must decide whether to recycle the product or remarket it. (Kotler 1997, 197–198.)

### 2.2.2 Variables that shape decision making

There are many things shaping decision making that consumers don't even come to think of. Engel, Blackwell & Miniard (1995, 143–146) have listed factors influencing consumer's decision making. These variables fall into three categories: (1) individual differences, (2) environmental differences, and (3) psychological processes.

#### 1. Individual differences

- *Consumer resources*: Every consumer brings three resources into every decision-making situation: time, money, and information reception and processing capabilities.
- *Knowledge*: Knowledge is the information stored in memory. It contains information on the characteristics of the product, where and when to buy it and how to use the product. To provide knowledge and information about the product is one of the main goals of advertising, since consumers need them in decision making.
- *Attitudes*: Consumers have attitudes towards brands and products. These attitudes influence strongly on how the consumer behaves. Attitudes vary from positive to negative and are overall opinions on how we see products. Once an attitude is formed it is difficult to change. Attitudes influence heavily on whether a consumer buys a product or not.
- *Motivation*: Consumer's needs and motivations affect all the stages in decision process.
- *Personality, values, and lifestyle*: Individuals differ in many ways due to their personality, values and lifestyles. All these affect the consumer's decision process and his or her buying behavior.

## 2. Environmental influences

- *Culture*: Marketers need to have knowledge of cultures, since it is one of the many things influencing consumer's decision making. Culture, when talking about consumer behavior, refers to the values, ideas, artifacts, and other meaningful symbols that help individuals to communicate, interpret, and evaluate as members of the society.
- *Social class*: Social classes are the subgroups of society formed by individuals with the same values, interests, and behaviors. People in the same social class usually have same kind of buying behavior, for example what kind of clothes they wear or what kind of car they drive.
- *Personal influence*: Consumer's behavior can be affected by the people close to him or her. Consumers value the opinion of the people they choose to spend their time with. As mentioned in the previous chapter, people close to the consumer can have positive or negative influence on how a consumer sees a product. If a friend has negative experiences with a certain product and voices them out to the consumer, it can have the effect that the consumer now sees the product in a negative way. On the other hand, if a friend has positive experiences with a product and expresses these feelings to the consumer, the consumer might see the product in a more positive light. Whether the opinion of others have a great influence on the consumer depends on how close the other people are to the consumer, or how much does the consumer respect their opinion.
- *Family*: Family is often the primary decision-making unit with complex roles and functions. Conflicts and cooperation can be simultaneous and as a result it might lead to very interesting behavioral outcomes.
- *Situation*: Consumer's behavior changes every time the situation changes. Changes can either be predicted by research, or they are unpredictable, such as a job layoff.

### 3. Psychological processes

- *Information on processing:* Information processing addresses the ways in which information is transformed, reduced, elaborated, stored, recovered, and received.
- *Learning:* Learning in consumer behavior is the process by which experience leads to changes in knowledge and behavior.
- *Attitude and behavior change:* Attitude and behavioral changes are important marketing objectives reflecting basic psychological influences.

In the case of Taitopuoti Paperinauha the variables influencing consumers' decision making are more individual differences than environmental influences or psychological processes. From these individual differences, especially knowledge and motivation influence on the decision making of Taitopuoti Paperinauha's customers. Although most of Taitopuoti Paperinauha's products are small products that everyone knows how to use, such as stamps, papers and ribbons, there are also small tools, such as die cutting machines. If a customer doesn't have knowledge on how to use the tool or what the tool is for, the customer won't buy it. In a store like Taitopuoti Paperinauha everything you see inspires you. Inspiration leads to motivation on buying products you didn't think of buying when entering the store.

### 2.3 E-commerce and consumer behavior

E-commerce is business activity that is conducted through some electronic medium. Many companies have taken the opportunity to conduct business on line by creating web sites. Company's web site can operate on three different ways. (1) A web site can be only a source of information for the consumers. It introduces the company, shows the products or services offered, and has the company's contact information. (2) Along with a physical store a company can also have an online store. Consumers can decide themselves whether to go to the physical store or whether to purchase the product or service online. (3) A company can also operate only online, in this case there are no physical stores and the products or services must be purchased online. (Aashwin 2006.)

### 2.3.1 Different types of e-commerce

As well as web sites having many ways to operate, there are also different types of e-commerce. Andam (2003, 9–13) introduces five types of e-commerce: business-to-business (B2B), business-to-consumer (B2C), business-to-government (B2G), consumer-to-consumer (C2C), and mobile-commerce (m-commerce).

**B2B e-commerce.** B2B e-commerce is e-commerce between companies. It is businesses serving the requirements of other companies. They are, for example, suppliers of machinery or equipment and services such as payroll and insurance.

**B2C e-commerce.** B2C e-commerce is commerce between a business and a customer. In B2C e-commerce businesses serve customers directly. It is the second largest form of e-commerce after B2B e-commerce. These companies are for example Amazon.com and Taitopuoti Paperinauha.

**B2G e-commerce.** Business-to-government e-commerce is commerce between companies and the public sector. It is the use of Internet in government-related operations, such as licensing procedures.

**C2C e-commerce.** C2C e-commerce is commerce between private individuals or consumers. Online auctions, such as Huuto.net, are one of the ways to use C2C e-commerce.

**M-commerce.** Mobile commerce is used in selling goods and services through wireless, handheld devices, such as a mobile phone.

### 2.3.2 The advantages of e-commerce to consumers

E-commerce has many advantages to consumers. Online shopping is usually the first thing that comes to mind when thinking of e-commerce. E-commerce however is much more than just online shopping. E-commerce includes all types of elec-

tronic communication, such as accessing your bank account online and using credit and debit card services. (Thomas, [Ref. 15 February 2011].)

Online stores are open 24 hours a day, every day, so consumers can shop whenever it is convenient for them. Price comparison is also easier online, since consumers don't have to walk from store to store to compare prices. There are even web sites comparing the prices of different stores, consumers just need to type in the product and they can see the prices of different stores. Another thing that can influence purchasing decision is the reviews posted by other customers about the products they have purchased from a particular e-commerce site (Bora, [Ref. 15 February 2011].)

Another advantage is that it is much easier for consumers to purchase products from each other online. When a consumer is selling his or her products on online auction there are much more potential customers than for example in a local flea market. It doesn't matter where the consumer lives, the internet provides the opportunity to buy whatever the consumer needs. Consumers can do everything at home, order the product, pay it, and wait for the product to arrive. Online shopping is also very convenient if something a consumer needs cannot be found in local stores. (Amin, 2009.)

### **2.3.3 Four competitive landscapes of e-commerce**

Nowadays there is huge number of companies having online stores. It is easy for the consumer to compare prices, since it doesn't involve walking from store to store anymore. Since finding many alternatives, customer loyalty is decreasing. This is why companies developing e-commerce strategies should pay a lot of attention to consumer behavior. When companies think about consumer behavior and their e-commerce strategy, there are two factors to consider: (1) how long does the relationship between seller and buyer last, and (2) what is the amount of goods and services consumer is purchasing from the seller. (Clemons & Row, 2000.)

Clemons & Row (2000) argue that when both of these factors are considered companies should find themselves in one or more of four competitive landscapes. These landscapes are: opportunistic spot, opportunistic store, loyal link, and loyal chain.

**Opportunistic spot.** Consumers that are buying goods or services that can be described as opportunistic spot purchases aren't loyal to stores. Every purchase they make can be from a different store. Since there is little loyalty to influence customers' decisions in opportunistic spot markets, competition is based on price. (Clemons & Row 2000.)

**Opportunistic store.** Like in opportunistic spot, customers exhibit no loyalty or relationship continuity to stores in opportunistic store markets. The difference is, however, that in opportunistic store markets consumer purchase bundles of goods and services. Since there is no customer loyalty in opportunistic store markets either, the competition is again based on price, unlike in the spot markets, consumers are attracted by the price of bundles rather than the price of individual items. (Clemons & Row 2000.)

**Loyal link.** Consumers that are buying in categories that may be described as loyal links show continuity when they are choosing vendors and service providers, but they are not interested in having bundles prepared for them. In loyal link markets competition is based on retaining the best customers through blend of service and pricing. (Clemons & Row 2000.)

**Loyal chain.** Consumers that are buying in categories that can be described as loyal chains have preferred providers. These customers seldom switch providers, because in loyal chain markets the service is usually effective and designed to customer's liking. Like in loyal link markets, the competition in loyal chain markets is also based on attracting and retaining the best customers. However, in chain markets, a bundle of goods and services affect on the pricing to individual customers and the value they receive. (Clemons & Row 2000.)

### **3 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

Customer satisfaction is the degree of how customer's expectations are met. If the performance doesn't meet the customer's expectations, the customer is dissatisfied. If customer's expectations are met, it results in satisfaction. If the performance exceeds expectations it results in highly satisfied customer. (Kotler 1997, 40.)

For a company to have satisfied customers, the customers need to feel like the company cares about them. It is not only the readiness to help and the empathy of the staff, but also the ability to apologize when needed, that makes the customers feel that they are appreciated. Customer satisfaction is important to companies, because satisfied customers buy their products and services again. Customers' positive experiences are shared with people close to them, thus creating more potential customers and regular customers. (Lahtinen & Isoviita 1999, 64.)

Customers' first purchase is usually based on their expectations. The next purchase is influenced by how satisfied the customers were on the company's customer service. With customers having experience with products or services the demand of better quality and service is raised. For companies to maintain regular customers, the customer service must meet the customers' expectations constantly. (Lahtinen & Isoviita 1999, 50.)

#### **3.1 Customer service as competition mean**

It is not easy to get customers to give feedback, whether it's positive or negative. If customers are not satisfied, they vote with their feet, they go to different store. A company that encourages their customers to give feedback and rectifies their mistakes gains a good reputation among the customers. If a company does something positive a customer hasn't expected, for example gives the customer a small gift in addition to the products or services the customer has purchased, the cus-

tomer is highly satisfied and usually tells about his or her positive experience to friends and family. (Lahtinen & Isoviita 1999, 48.)

Customer service is one of the most important means of competition. Customer service is a good and effective way to stand out from competitors. Even if competitors offer the exact same products at the exact same price, there is one thing that separates them, their customer service. Consumers are guaranteed to go to the store where the staff is more willing to serve the customers. (Lahtinen & Isoviita 1999, 51.)

According to Lahtinen & Isoviita (1999, 54–64) good customer service includes four things: service culture, service package, service delivery, and the quality of service.

**Service culture.** Service culture is everything the customer sees, experiences, and senses in the store. Service culture is the ambiance of the store that reflects the values of the store. In service culture that is customer oriented the employees in contact with customers are in highest place of the organization. The work of the employees in contact with the customers is rewarded by the customers sharing their experiences to others, using so called word-of-mouth marketing. Word-of-mouth marketing is one of the most important means of marketing, since (1) it is more believable, because people trust the opinions and experiences of people they know, and (2) because word-of-mouth marketing costs nothing. (Lahtinen & Isoviita 1999, 55–56.)

**Service package.** Company that offers services markets service packages, these packages includes different services that the customers are interested in. The company needs to know what kinds of service packages the customers are interested in, if they offer packages with no interest to the customers, they won't get sold. The service packages include a core service and the other services are built around it. Sometimes customers get interested in the core service after they hear about the other services available. For example in a hotel, the core service is the hotel room, a place to stay the night. Other services included are the hotel's res-

restaurant, bar, gym, and spa. Service packages are built so that the customers get positive experiences. (Lahtinen & Isoviita 1999, 57–58.)

**Service delivery.** There are four main roles of service delivery.

1. The customer that is served. How a customer behaves in a service situation depends on the customer. Some of the customers take actively part on the service delivery; they make suggestions and give positive or negative feedback. The customer also assesses the quality of the products or services and uses word-of-mouth marketing, either positive or negative.
2. Service environment. Companies in the service industry should also pay attention to their service environment. The service environment includes everything from the location of the store and opening hours to cleanliness and clarity of the store. With the help of these things the service environment should be effective and pleasant.
3. The staff in contact with the customers. The staff should be flexible and willing to serve the customers. They should have knowledge about the products or services offered.
4. Other customers. The staff in contact with the customers should also pay attention to the other customers. For some customers other customers present can create an unpleasant experience. Other customers might be loud or behave in ways that cause disapproval. The amount of other customers can also influence on the experience, customers can become frustrated if there are long lines or traffic. (Lahtinen & Isoviita 1999, 59–60.)

**The quality of service.** Customers assess the quality of service in every step of the service delivery process. The quality of service is the result of all the factors mentioned above: service culture, service packages, and service delivery. (Lahtinen & Isoviita 1999, 61–64.)

### **3.2 Customer satisfaction versus customer loyalty**

Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are often confused to be the same thing. Customer loyalty is seen simply as the highest level of satisfaction. Most of the executives and managers don't understand the difference between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, what are the requirements for measurement or the value to the business for actively improving these both. Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are two different metrics with different business implications. (Christensen 2006.)

Customer satisfaction is the degree to which customer's expectations are met, exceeded, or unmet (Bryen 2010). When measuring customer satisfaction, companies want to know that they are meeting or exceeding customers' expectations. Companies want to believe that their customers are satisfied, resulting in loyal customers and improved revenues. Customer satisfaction, however, has little to do with customer loyalty. (Christensen 2006.)

Christensen (2006) claims that satisfied customers stay only until there is a better alternative offered to them, it doesn't matter if in the past their expectations have been exceeded. Satisfied customers might not have any emotional investment or connection to the company; therefore, changing a company is easy for them.

Loyal customers, however, will stay with the company through good and bad. If a customer indicates a high level of satisfaction, it doesn't mean that the customer is loyal to the company. Loyal customers have emotional connection to the company. It doesn't matter if some of the prices are higher than in other stores, loyal customers will always return. (Christensen 2006.) Loyal customers do two things satisfied customers might not do, they return and they tell others. For a growing business, loyal customers is a requirement. (Bryen 2010.)

According to Christensen (2006) there are eight ways how companies can differentiate between a satisfied customer and a loyal customer:

1. *Pricing*: With a satisfied customer the prices are negotiated, with a loyal customer what is negotiated is the costs.
2. *Payment*: A satisfied customer pays when it is convenient; a loyal customer pays on time.
3. *Referrals*: A satisfied customer ends up recommending a competing company, a loyal customer happily recommends you.
4. *Turnover*: The turnover rates of satisfied customers are 15% or higher. With loyal customers, the turnover rate is less than 5%, and the loss of loyal customers is for reasons not to do with the company in question.
5. *Competitive data*: Competitive data is sought by satisfied customers, whereas competitive data is shared by loyal customers.
6. *Perception*: A satisfied customer sees the company just as a provider of goods and services. A loyal customer sees the company as a partner.
7. *Contract*: A contract is needed in keeping many satisfied customers in place. With loyal customers a company has a virtual lifetime contract.
8. *Difficult times*: When a company is facing difficult times, a satisfied customer will seek products and services elsewhere. A loyal customer will stay through thick and thin.

When looking at the eight points above, we can see that satisfied customers really are not the same as loyal customers. It doesn't matter if 98% of your customers are satisfied when your company hits a rough patch. Satisfied customers will immediately change their goods or service provider, it is the loyal customers you can depend on showing up.

### **3.3 Maintaining customer satisfaction**

Keeping a current customer happy is much cheaper than attracting new customers. Attracting new customers costs about five times more. Customer retention can be strengthened in two ways. A company can raise high switching barriers. Customers are less likely to change the supplier of goods and services, when it would involve higher costs, for example the loss of loyal-customer discounts. The other

way is to deliver high customer satisfaction. When customers are highly satisfied is difficult for competitors to lure customers with lower prices. (Kotler 1997, 47–48.)

Customers' expectations and standards of performance are changing all the time, because competitors are also trying to meet or exceed customers' expectations. The secret of companies maintaining customer satisfaction is continuous improvement. Improvements that are made consistently are a way for companies to show that customer satisfaction is a strategic business objective and not just a phase that passes when the company has established a reputation that it takes their customers' opinions into consideration. (Dutka 1994, 203–204.)

In order for companies to serve their customers better, they need to know their customers' needs. A good way to know what customers needs are, is to conduct surveys. Conducting surveys also helps a company to improve their image; customers see that the company really is interested in their opinion. Surveys also help the companies to realize what the factors that need improvement are.

Companies should also always be honest with their customers. When a company's reputation suffers, customers are not likely to purchase goods and services from a company that they think is questionable. (Fleming 2010.)

According to Lahtinen & Isoviita (1999, 5) US News and World magazine made a research that revealed reasons for the loss of customers for companies. The reasons for customer losses are:

- Customer's death or bankruptcy (1%)
- Customer moved to another city (3%)
- Customer's buying behavior has changed (5%)
- Too high prices of the products (9%)
- The poor quality of the products (14%)
- Poor customer service and poor treatment of the customer (68%)

As we can see from the previous page, poor customer service has its consequences. Customers receiving poor service will seek products and services elsewhere, thus becoming customers of your competitors.

### **3.4 Customer satisfaction research**

For businesses to survive in the service industry they need to be aware of their customers' needs and expectations. By doing a customer satisfaction research a company can find out how it has succeeded in meeting these expectations.

Customer satisfaction research, however, is only the first step companies have to take in order to improve their customers' satisfaction (Dutka 1994, 10). Customer satisfaction doesn't improve just by companies knowing the results of customer satisfaction research; they need to make changes where changes are needed.

According to Dutka (1994, 9–10) there are four major objectives that a customer satisfaction research has to achieve. If these four objectives are achieved the number of negative comments from the customers will reduce.

These four objectives are

1. The critical performance attributes that result in customer satisfaction have to be determined.
2. Performances of the company and the company's major competitors have to be assessed.
3. Priorities have to be established and corrective action has to be made.
4. The progress has to be monitored.

It is not enough to do a customer satisfaction research once. After the research is made and the results of the research are clear, the company needs to fix what needs to be fixed in order for the company to evolve and satisfy their customers. After the factors, that customers are not satisfied with, are improved and customers have experienced these changes for a reasonable amount of time, should a new customer satisfaction research be executed.

## **4 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION RESEARCH FOR TAITOPUOTI PAPERINAUHA**

### **4.1 Research methods**

In research, data can be collected through primary or secondary information. Sources for secondary information are those that already exist and were not developed for the subject of the research. For example, Statistics Finland can be used as a secondary information source. Sources of primary data are those that are developed for the subject of the research. (Winer 2007, 64.)

The research methods used in customer satisfaction research can be divided into qualitative and quantitative research methods. Qualitative research gives more detailed information from a few cases. With qualitative research we cannot get statistically reliable information of a larger population because of the small number of cases. Qualitative research is usually conducted through detailed interviews or focus groups. Interviews are usually done face-to-face and it resembles more of a conversation than an interview. In a focus group, there are usually about ten people that share some common characteristics. The group meets to offer their opinions or points of view on a specific topic. Focus groups are used, because usually they offer information that is not easy to get using other methods. (Dutka 1994, 25–28.)

Quantitative research method is used when wanting general information from larger population. It concentrates on numbers to represent population's opinion, by using quantitative research statistically reliable information can be gathered. The information in quantitative method is usually gathered by doing telephone or mail questionnaires. (Dutka, 1994, 34.)

## 4.2 Implementation of the research

I chose to implement the customer satisfaction survey by using quantitative research method, since I wanted the number of the people answering the questionnaire to be quite large so that the answers could be generalized to show the opinion of the whole customer base. By using a qualitative research method the amount of people answering would have been quite small and the answers couldn't have been generalized. The research material gathered through customer satisfaction survey was primary data, since the material was gathered for this particular research. The research was done by using a questionnaire that had questions about customers' opinions toward different aspects of the store. The paper version of the questionnaire had four pages; most of the questions were closed questions with three open-ended questions. (Appendix 1)

The population was the customers of Taitopuoti Paperinauha. I made the questionnaire in November 2010 and it was approved by my supervisor and Heli Aalto, the owner of Taitopuoti Paperinauha. The questionnaire was available for the customers of Taitopuoti Paperinauha online 25.11.–10.12. 2010 and a paper version of the questionnaire was available in the physical store 25.11.–15.12.2010. The questionnaire was available in both, online and in the physical store, because not all of the customers visit both. A raffle was held for those willing to leave their contact information in the end of the questionnaire. Three € 20 gift certificates provided by Taitopuoti Paperinauha were raffled off. The raffle was held in order to attract more people to answer the questionnaire. The goal was to get 200 answers and I was positively surprised that the total amount of answers was 267. 257 answers were gathered online and 10 respondents had answered the paper version of the questionnaire in the physical store. From the 257 respondents who answered the questionnaire online several have visited also the physical store and where able to answer also the questions about the physical store. The paper version of the questionnaire was done by using Excel. The online version was made by using Google docs.

### **4.3 The validity and reliability of the research**

The validity of the research means that the research measures what it was supposed to measure. The purpose of this research was to measure the level of satisfaction of Taitopuoti Paperinauha's customers. The questionnaire was quite long in order to get the opinions of the customers from each aspect of the company. Because of the large number of answers the research can be considered as valid. Only 3 of 267 respondents didn't leave their contact information for the raffle, so we can be sure that no-one answered the questionnaire more than once. This also affects positively on the validity of the research. The research showed what it was meant to show, the level of satisfaction of Taitopuoti Paperinauha's customers. What needs to be considered, however, is that most of the customers that answered the questionnaire were women. There could have been more men answering, but considering what kinds of products the company sells, the research is valid also in this matter.

The reliability of the research means the accuracy of the research results. If the research was implemented again, the results should be similar. The reliability of this research is good, because every step of the research was made with careful planning. The results would be similar if the research was done again. Another thing influencing positively on the reliability of this research is the amount of answers gathered.

### **4.4 The results of the research**

In this chapter the results of the customer satisfaction research are presented. Charts have been made from each question, except open-ended questions, to clarify the percentages. With each chart there is a short analysis of the answers. To help comparing the satisfaction of the respondents towards different aspects of the company tables were also made. Cross-tables weren't made, since they wouldn't have shown any useful information. The answers were quite similar between different respondent groups in different questions. When analyzing open-ended questions few answers are quoted about the most popular topics. Listing all an-

swers of the open-ended question would be useless, since the amount of answers to these questions vary from 60 to 150 and most of the answers were quite similar.

#### 4.4.1 Background information of the respondents

**Gender distribution.** From figure 1 it can be seen, that most of the respondents were women (98 %). Only 2 % of the respondents were men. The 2 % of male respondents is actually quite high, about one of 250 Taitopuoti Paperinauha's customers are men. The low number of male customers is because the products sold in the company in question are mainly for card making and scrapbooking, and these hobbies are more popular among women.

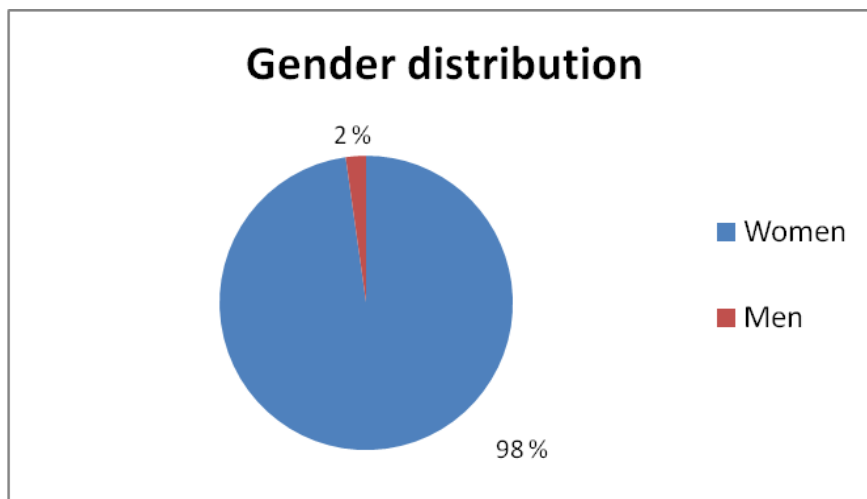


Figure 1. Gender distribution of the respondents (n=267).

**Age distribution.** 28 % of the respondents were under 30 years old. 62 % of the respondents were over 30 years old but under 50 years old. 10 % of the respondents were over 50 years old. The largest group with 41 % was the age group 31–40. (Figure 2)

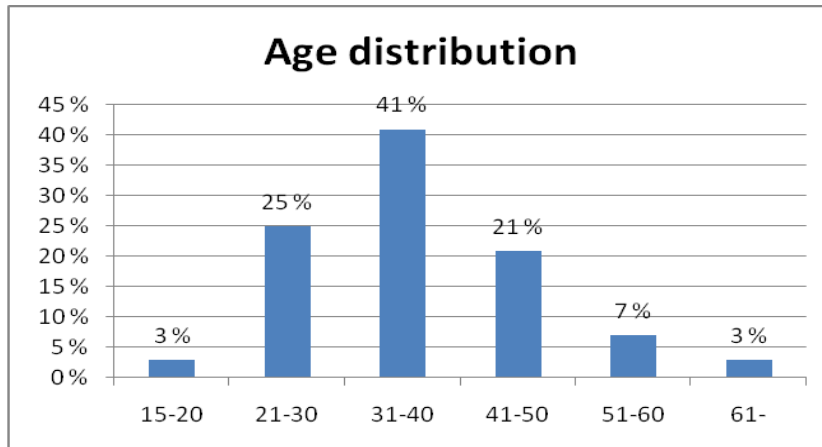


Figure 2. Age distribution of the respondents (n=267).

**Blogs among respondents.** 43 % of the respondents have blogs about card making or scrapbooking. 57 % of the respondents do not write blogs. This question was included in the questionnaire, because there is a huge amount of blogs on the internet about card making and scrapbooking, so it was interesting to know how many of the respondents have their own blog. (Figure 3)

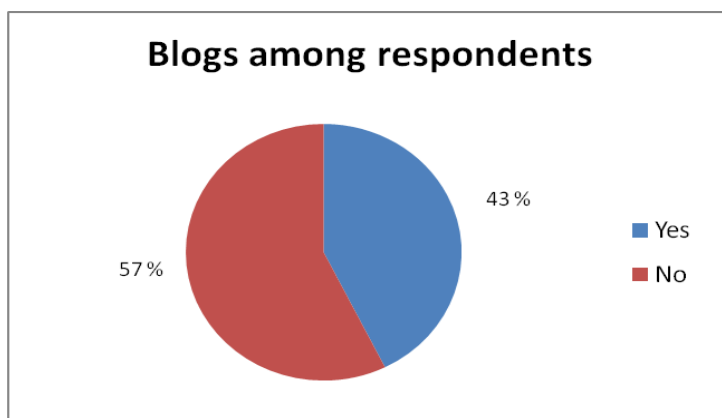


Figure 3. The percentage of blogs among respondents (n=267).

**Usage of products.** As it can be seen from figure 4 most of the respondents (96 %) use the products they purchase from Taitopuoti Paperinauha for making cards. 30 % of the respondents use the products for scrapbooking. Besides card making and scrapbooking, 18 % of the respondents use the products also on other crafts. The other crafts on what the respondents use the products were crafting with children, small interior decorations, doll house crafts, labels, decorating notebooks and gift wrappings.

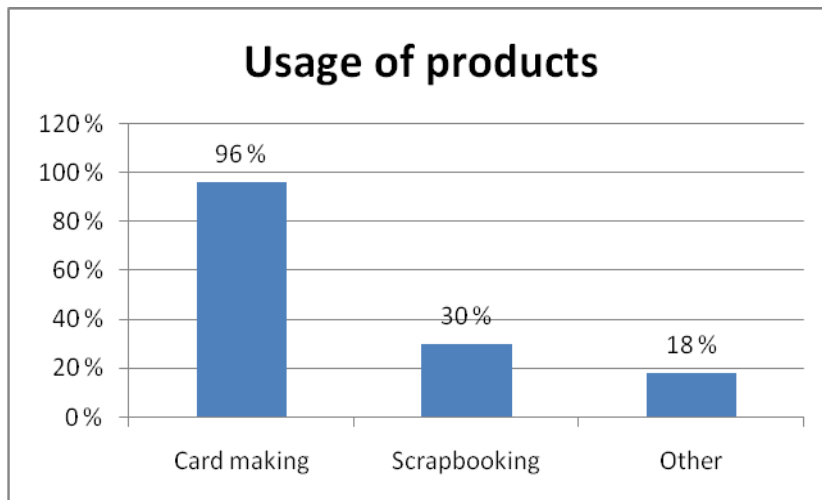


Figure 4. Respondents' answers on what they use the products (n=267).

**Selling handmade cards.** A little over half (52 %) of the respondents sell the cards they have made themselves. 47 % answered that they do not sell their handmade cards. 1 % of the respondents do not make cards. As mentioned previously, if selling handmade cards with stamped images, depending on the manufacturer of the stamp, permissions might be needed. Some companies use angel policy, which means for example, that you can sell cards with their stamped image on them if you mention the manufacturer of the stamp in the back of your card. (Figure 5)

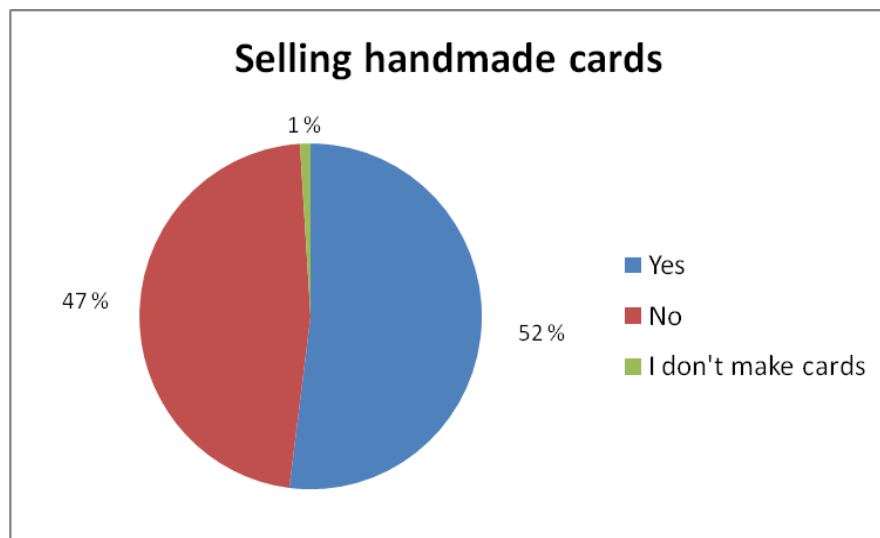


Figure 5. The amount of respondents selling handmade cards (n=267).

#### 4.4.2 Satisfaction towards the products

The next three questions were about satisfaction towards the products of Taitopu-oti Paperinauha. The answer options were as follows: 4=Very satisfied, 3=Quite satisfied, 2=Quite unsatisfied, 1=Very unsatisfied and 0=Can't say. Overall, the respondents were very satisfied towards the products.

**Quality of the products.** As can be seen from figure 6, the majority of the respondents (81 %) were very satisfied with the quality of the products. 18 % of the respondents were quite satisfied. 2 of the respondents answer that they can't say. There were no answers in the other answer options.

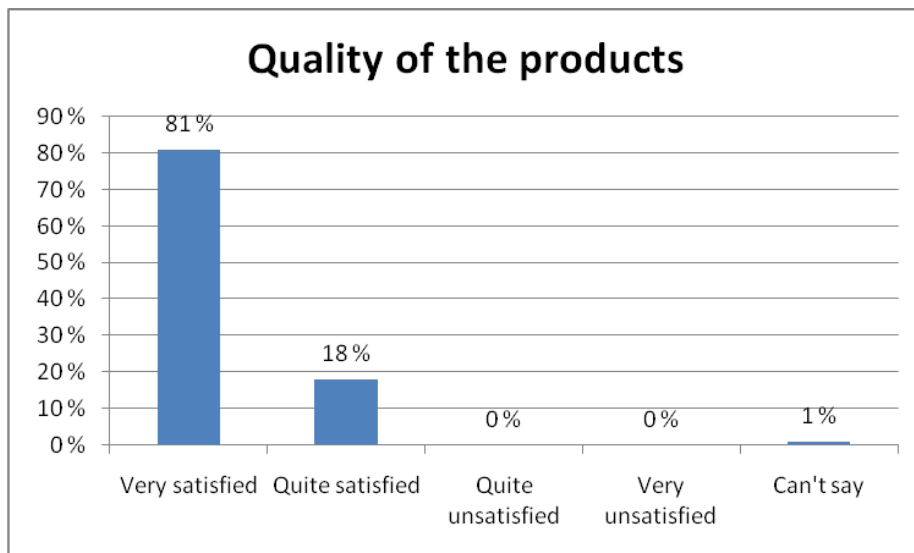


Figure 6. Respondents' satisfaction on the quality of the products (n=267).

**Range of products.** Almost all of the respondents (98 %) were satisfied with the range of products. Only 1 % of the respondents answered that they were quite unsatisfied on the range of the products. (Figure 7)

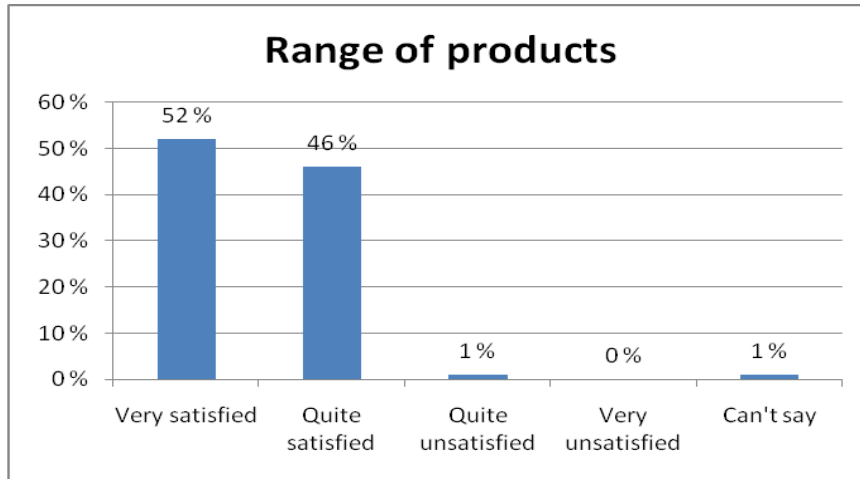


Figure 7. Respondents' satisfaction on the range of products (n=267).

**Price-quality ratio of the products.** 37 % of the respondents were very satisfied with the price-quality ratio of the products. The majority of the respondents (60 %) were quite satisfied. Only 2 % was quite unsatisfied. (Figure 8)

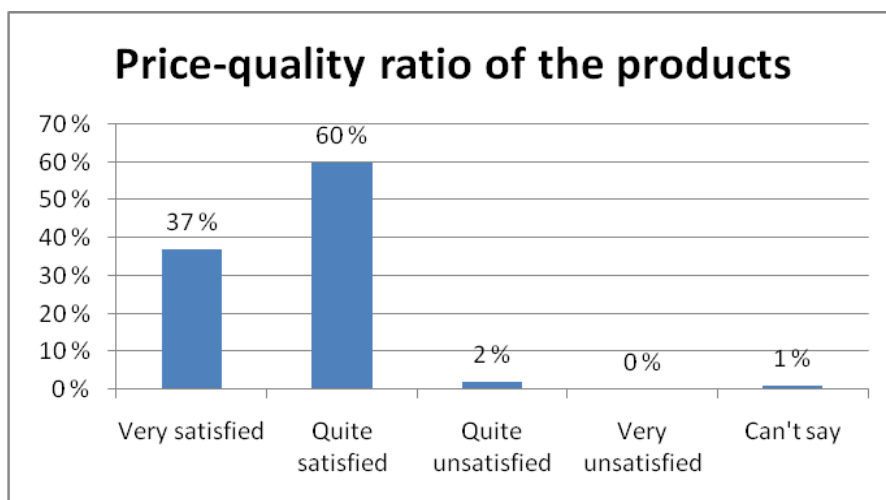


Figure 8. Respondents' satisfaction on the price-quality ratio of the products (n=267).

From table 1 it can be seen that with products the respondents were most satisfied with the quality of the products. The respondents were least satisfied with the price-quality ratio of the products; however, there were only 2 % of the respondents that were quite unsatisfied with the price-quality ratio. Because of the almost nonexistence of the unsatisfied respondents, it can be said that the respondents were satisfied with the products.

	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Quite unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Can't say
Quality of the products	81 %	18 %	0 %	0 %	1 %
Range of the products	52 %	46 %	1 %	0 %	1 %
Price-quality ratio of the products	37 %	60 %	2 %	0 %	1 %

Table 1. Satisfaction towards the products

**Respondents' suggestions on the range of products.** The respondents were asked whether they would like addition to some product groups and what kind of addition they were hoping for. There were 146 answers to this question. The main product groups the respondents were hoping addition were stamps with 47 respondents, papers with 34 respondents, small decorations with 26 respondents and punchers with 13 respondents. With stamps the respondents were mainly hoping for more stamps from different manufacturers, such as Penny Black, Tim Holtz, and Whipper Snapper. One respondent answered: *"I would like more stamps from Penny Black and Forever Friends. 😊"* another respondent wrote: *"More stamps that is hard to get in Finland, such as Whipper Snapper and High Hopes"*. The other popular suggestions for stamps were stamps more suitable for cards for men or boys. A respondent wrote: *"Stamps more suitable for boys and men, but I know that they are rare and really hard to find."* Also text stamps with short poetry or sayings were hoped: *"It would be nice to get text stamps with short poetry on them."* and another respondent answered: *"More text stamps in Swedish language."*

With papers the respondents were wishing papers from different manufacturers: *"The papers of MajaDesign are wonderful, and it would be nice if I could get them from you."* Papers of different sizes were also requested: *"Big and strong papers, for example 32\*32 centimeters to cover albums with."* More papers suitable for scrapbooking were also hoped for: *"More papers for scrapbooking from different manufacturers."*

26 respondents were hoping for addition in small decorations, such as flowers, brads and metal decorations. One respondent answered: *"Ribbons, laces, metal decorations, pearl stickers and flowers."* Another respondent wrote: *"I would like to have more variety in small decorations, such as metal decorations, flowers and beautiful laces."*

13 respondents wished more variety in punchers. *"Punchers by Martha Stewart"* was the answer of one of the respondents. 17 of the respondents thought the range of products was good as it is with comments, such as *"The current variety of products is good and new products are available fast"* and *"I've found everything I needed from this store"*.

#### 4.4.3 Taitopuoti Paperinauha's store in Seinäjoki

In this section the customers were asked questions about the physical store of Taitopuoti Paperinauha and about their satisfaction on the customer service. In this chapter, and in the next, the number of answers varies, because some of the customers are only the physical store's customers, and some are only customers of the online store and have never visited the store in Seinäjoki. Overall, the respondents were very satisfied with the store and the customer service.

**Frequency of visiting the store.** A little less than half (41 %) of the respondents visit the physical store once a month or more often. More rarely than once a month the store is visited by 42 % of the respondents. 17 % of the respondents have visited the store only once. (Figure 9)

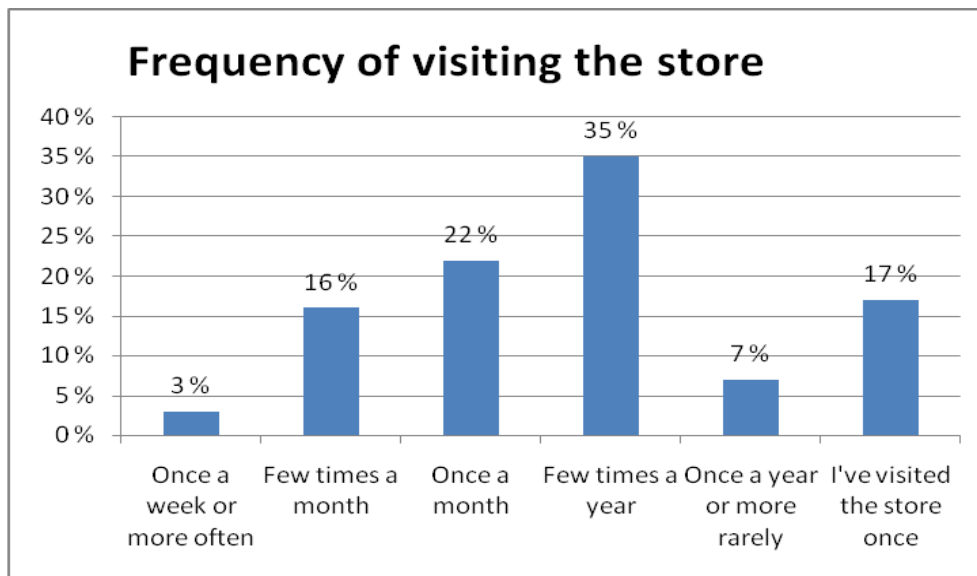


Figure 9. The frequency of respondents visiting the store (n=156).

**Acquaintance with the store.** As figure 10 demonstrates, the majority of the respondents (56 %) became acquainted with the company through the internet. Through a friend was the second most popular answer with 23 %. There were almost an equal amount of answers in the rest answer options. 6 respondents became acquainted with the store in some other way; these ways were for example card making courses and the fact that the owner of the company is a personal acquaintance.

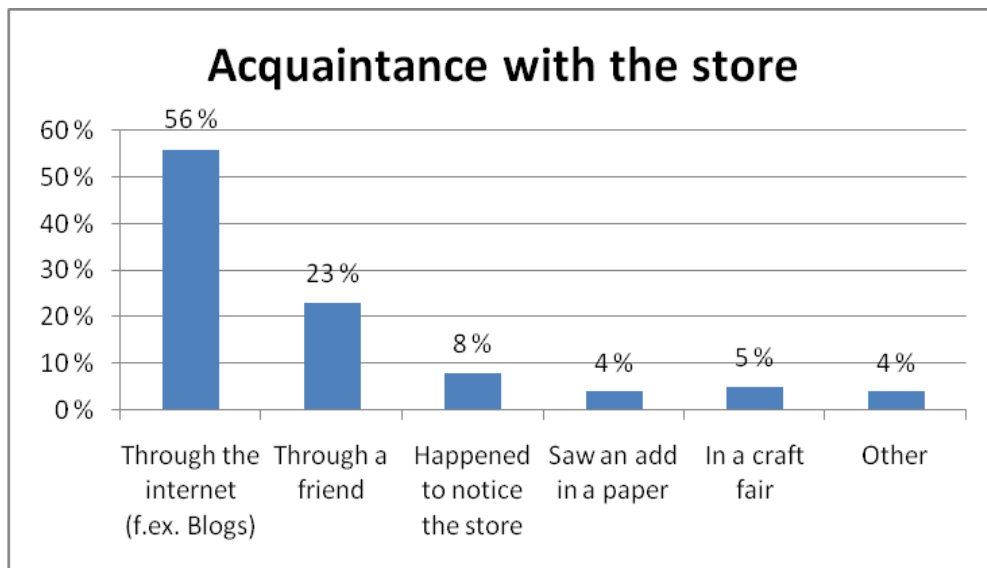


Figure 10. The answers of the respondents on how they became acquainted with the store (n=156).

**Location of the store.** With this question we wanted to know how satisfied the respondents were on the location of the store. 74 % of the respondents were satisfied with the location of the store. Respondents that were quite unsatisfied were 7 % and the percentage of respondents very unsatisfied with the location was only 2. (Figure 11)

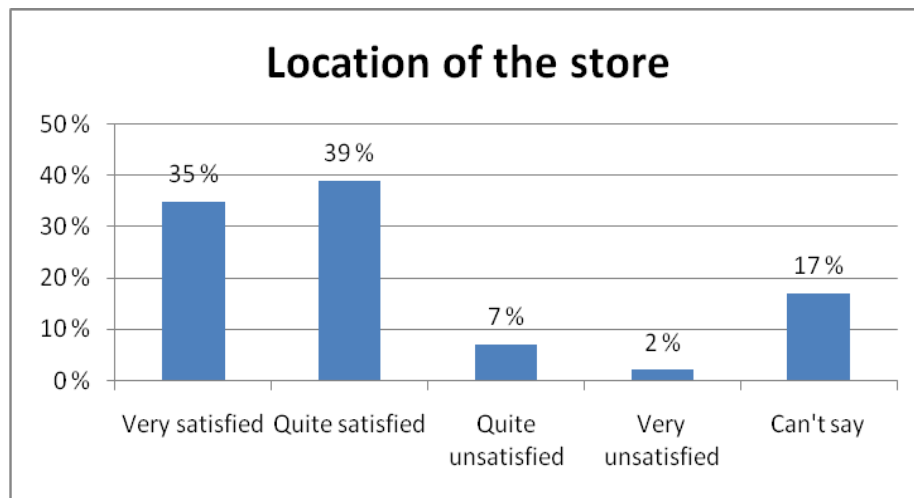


Figure 11. Respondents' satisfaction on the location of the store (n=149).

**Opening hours of the store.** Most of the respondents were satisfied with the opening hours, 31 % very satisfied and 48 % quite satisfied. 3 of the respondents were quite unsatisfied. (Figure 12)

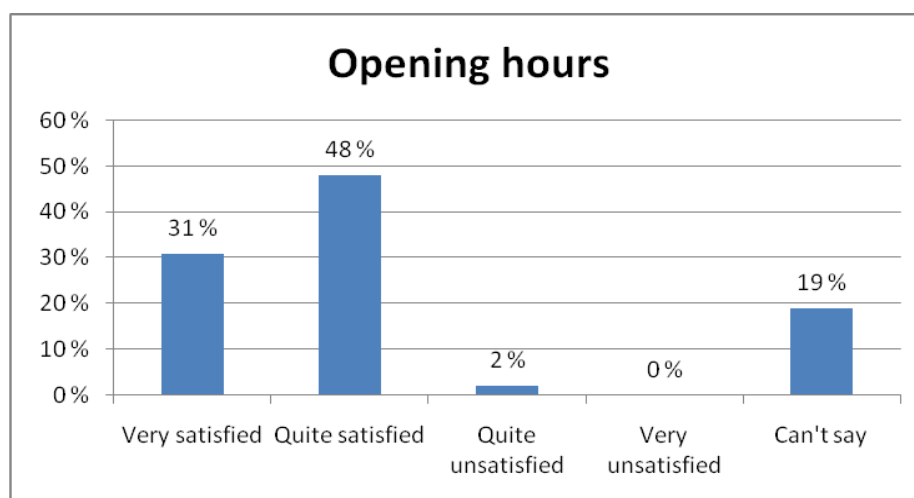


Figure 12. Respondents' satisfaction on the opening hours. (n=147)

**Cleanliness of the store.** Vast majority of the respondents (79 %) were very satisfied with the cleanliness of the store. Only 5 % of the respondents were quite satisfied. There were no unsatisfied respondents. (Figure 13)

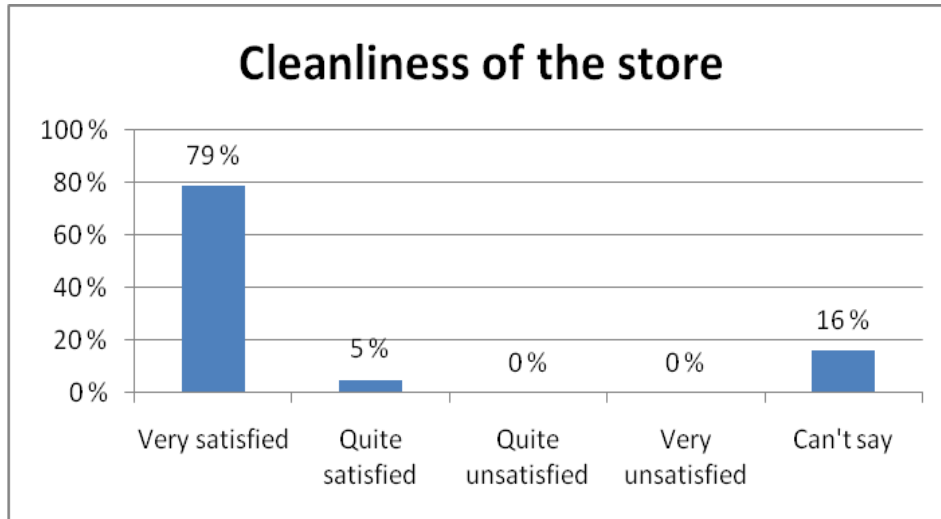


Figure 13. Satisfaction of the respondents on the cleanliness of the store (n=148).

Table 2 shows that with the physical store the respondents were most satisfied with the cleanliness of the store. The respondents were least satisfied with the location of the store.

	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Quite unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Can't say
Location of the store	35 %	39 %	7 %	2 %	17 %
Opening hours	31 %	48 %	2 %	0 %	19 %
Cleanliness of the store	79 %	5 %	0 %	0 %	16 %

Table 2. Satisfaction towards the physical store.

**Pleasantness of the customer service.** Overall, the respondents were very satisfied with the customer service of Taitopuoti Paperinauha. 88 % of the respondents were satisfied with the pleasantness of the customer service. There were no unsatisfied respondents. (Figure 14)

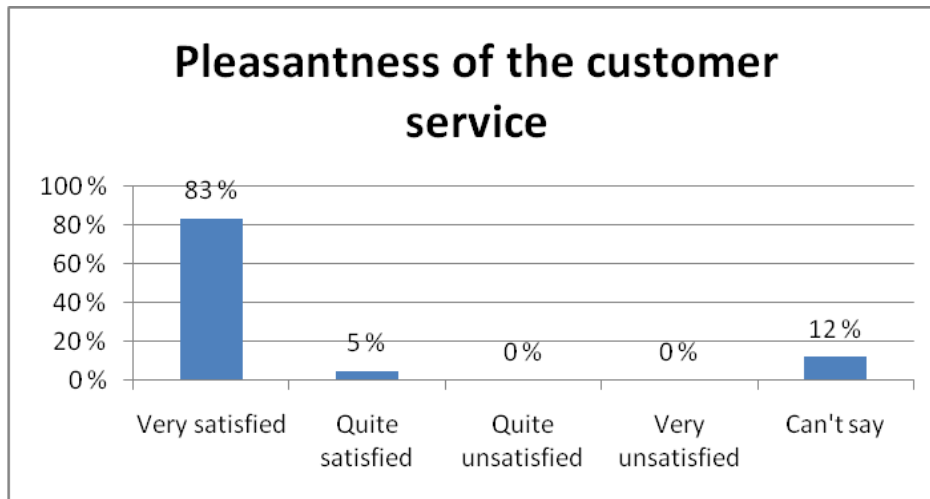


Figure 14. Satisfaction of the respondents on the pleasantness of customer service (n=149).

**Expertise of the customer service.** Vast majority of the respondents (83 %) were very satisfied with the expertise of the customer service. 5 of the respondents were quite satisfied. (Figure 15)

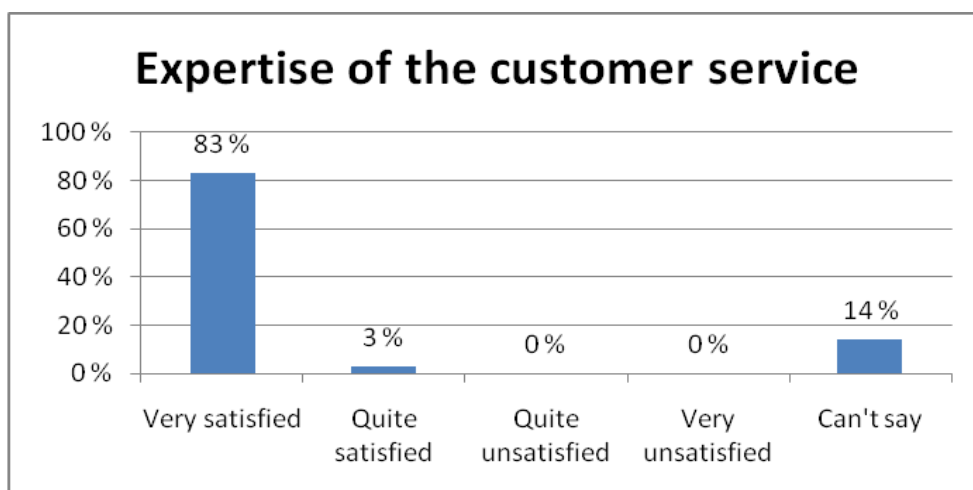


Figure 15. Satisfaction of the respondents on the expertise of customer service (n=149).

**Getting help if needed.** The majority (81 %) was very satisfied on getting help if it is needed. 5 % of the respondents were quite satisfied. None of the respondents were unsatisfied on getting help. (Figure 16)

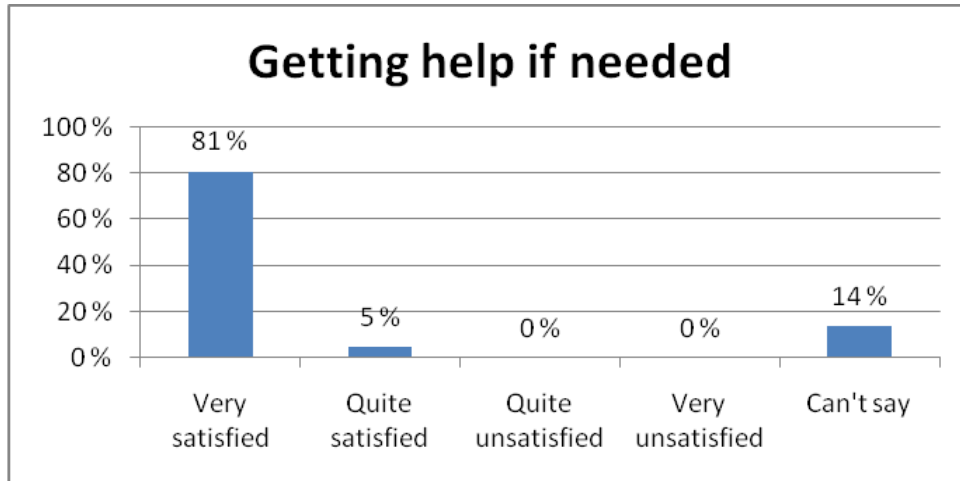


Figure 16. Satisfaction of the respondents on getting help if needed (n=148).

Table 3 shows that the respondents were satisfied with the customer service. Answers to the questions about customer service were almost similar.

	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Quite unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Can't say
Pleasantness of the customer service	83 %	5 %	0 %	0 %	12 %
Expertise of the customer service	83 %	3 %	0 %	0 %	14 %
Getting help if needed	81 %	5 %	0 %	0 %	14 %

Table 3. Respondents satisfaction towards customer service.

**Overall grade for the physical store.** The respondents were asked to give an overall grade for the physical store. The scale was from 4 to 10. The majority of respondents (63 %) gave the physical store the grade 9. Grade 10 was given from 28 % of the respondents. 9 % gave the grade 8 (Figure 17). The average of the grades given by respondents was 9,2.

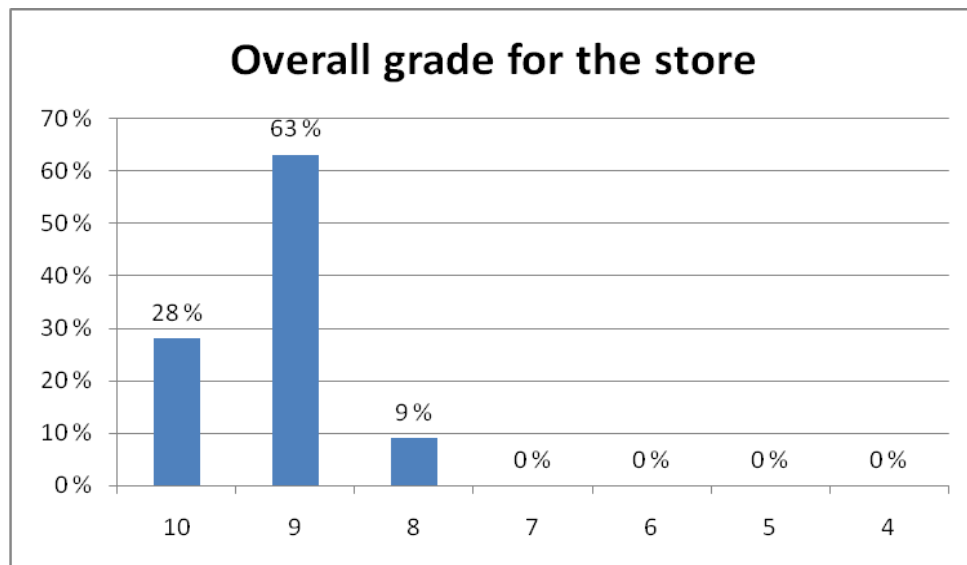


Figure 17. Respondents' overall grade for the physical store (n=267).

#### 4.4.4 The online store of Taitopuoti Paperinauha

In this section the respondents were asked question about the online store of Taitopuoti Paperinauha. Again, not all of the 267 respondents answered these questions about the online store, since not all of the respondents are its customers.

**Have you purchased something from the online store?** From figure 18 it can be seen that vast majority of the respondents (84 %) have purchased products from Taitopuoti Paperinauha's online store. 16 % have never purchased products from the online store and are only customers of the physical store.



Figure 18. The amount of customers of the online store (n=267).

**Acquaintance with the online store.** 57 % of the respondents became acquainted with the online store of Taitopuoti Paperinauha through different blogs. The second largest group of respondents (23 %) found the store through a search engine. 11 % became acquainted with the online store through a friend. 7 of the respondents got familiar with the online store in a craft fair and 3 of the respondents found out about the online store through an advertisement in a paper. 5 % of the respondents found out about the online store through different means (Figure 19). These other means were things, such as: through a web site called Koukussa Kortteihin, Taitopuoti Paperinauha was mentioned as a retailer for certain products, visiting in the physical store. One respondent answered: *“I heard and got a handout about the online store when I was visiting the store for the first time.”*

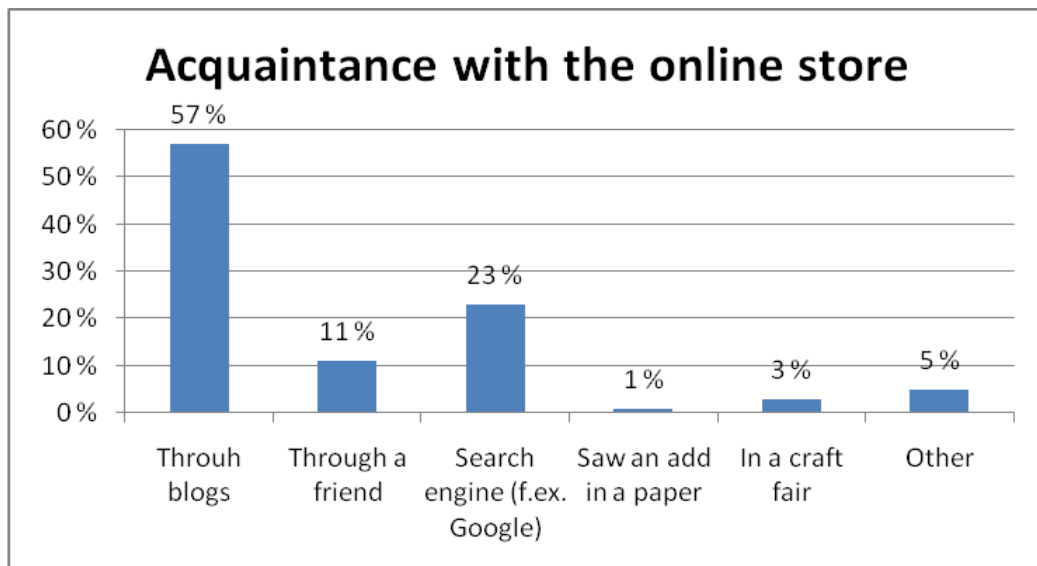


Figure 19. The answers of the respondents on how they became acquainted with the online store (n=237).

**Frequency of visiting the online store.** From figure 20 we can see the frequency of the respondents visiting the online store. 78 % of the respondents visit the online store once a month or more often. 19 % of the respondents visit the online store more rarely than once a month. 3 % have visited the online store only once.

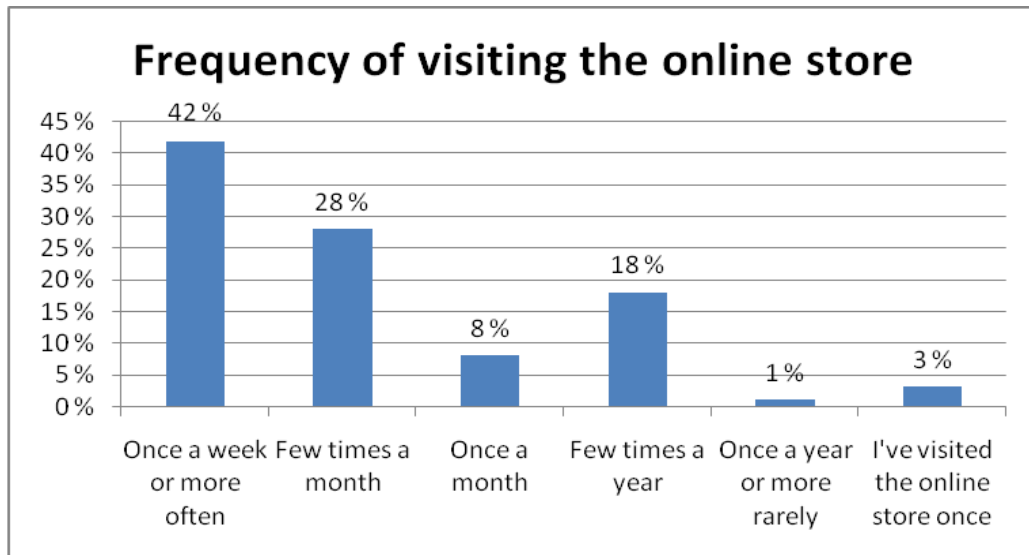


Figure 20. The frequency of respondents visiting the online store (n=236).

**Delivery time of the online store.** With this question we wanted to know how satisfied the respondents were on the delivery time of the online store. With this, and the next three question the answer option were, once again, 4=Very satisfied, 3=Quite satisfied, 2=Quite unsatisfied, 1=Very unsatisfied, and 0=Can't say. 95 % of the respondents were satisfied with the delivery time of the online store. There were no respondents unsatisfied with the delivery time. (Figure 21)

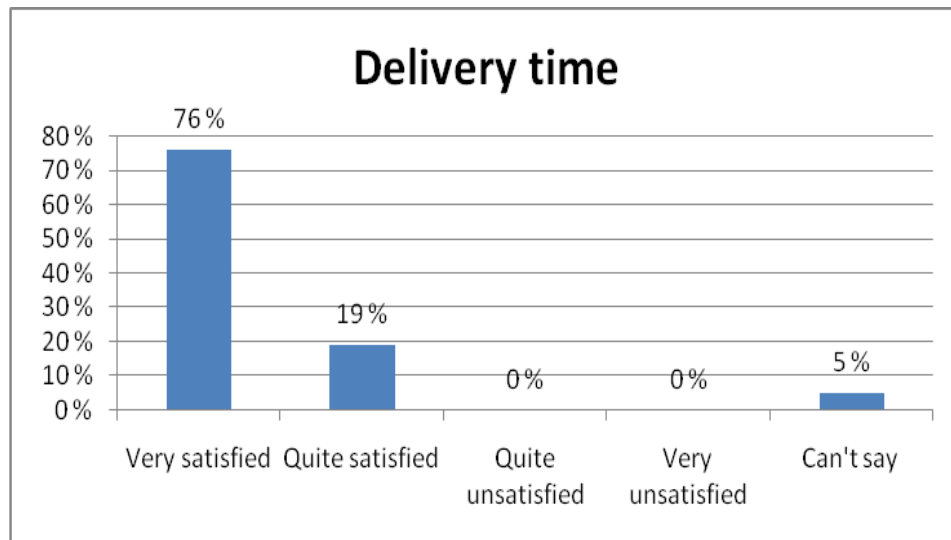


Figure 21. Satisfaction of the respondents on the delivery time of the online store (n=235).

**Ease of purchasing in the online store.** From figure 22 it can be seen that 85 % of the respondents were very satisfied with the ease of purchasing in the online store. Since there were no unsatisfied respondents and only 12 % were quite satisfied, it can be said, that the online store of Taitopuoti Paperinauha is easy and clear to use.

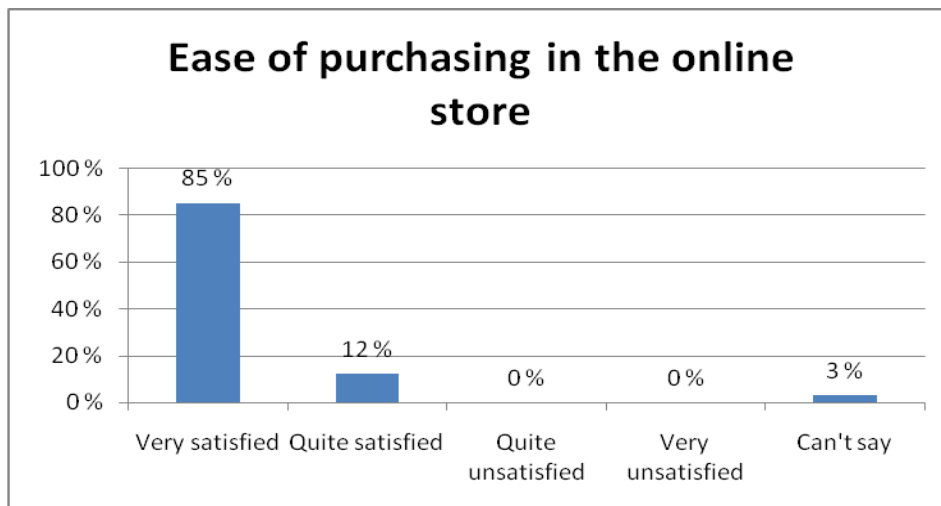


Figure 22. Satisfaction of the respondents on the ease of purchasing in the online store (n=234).

**Layout of the online store.** 97 % of the respondents were satisfied with the layout of the online store. With only 2 % quite unsatisfied, it can be generalized that the respondents were satisfied with the layout of the online store. (Figure 23)

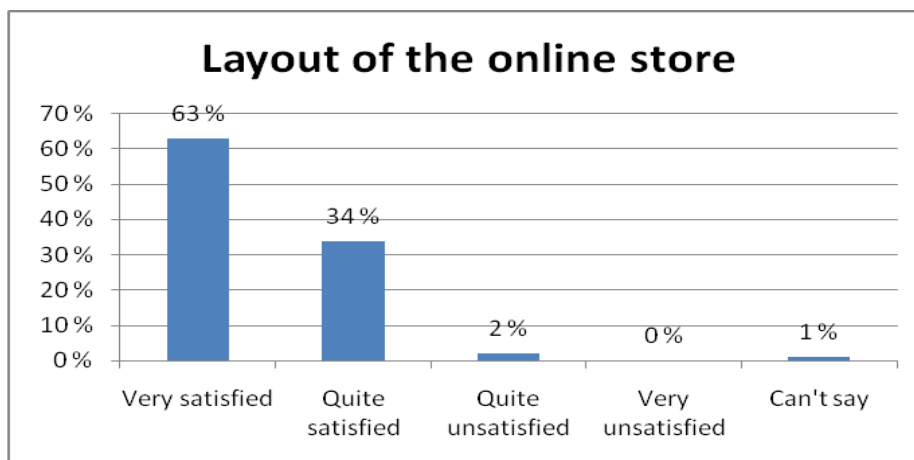


Figure 23. Respondents' satisfaction on the layout of the online store (n=234).

**Method of payment.** With this question we wanted to know how satisfied the respondents were to the current method of payment. 90 % of the respondents were satisfied with the current method of payment. Only 6 % were quite unsatisfied. (Figure 24)

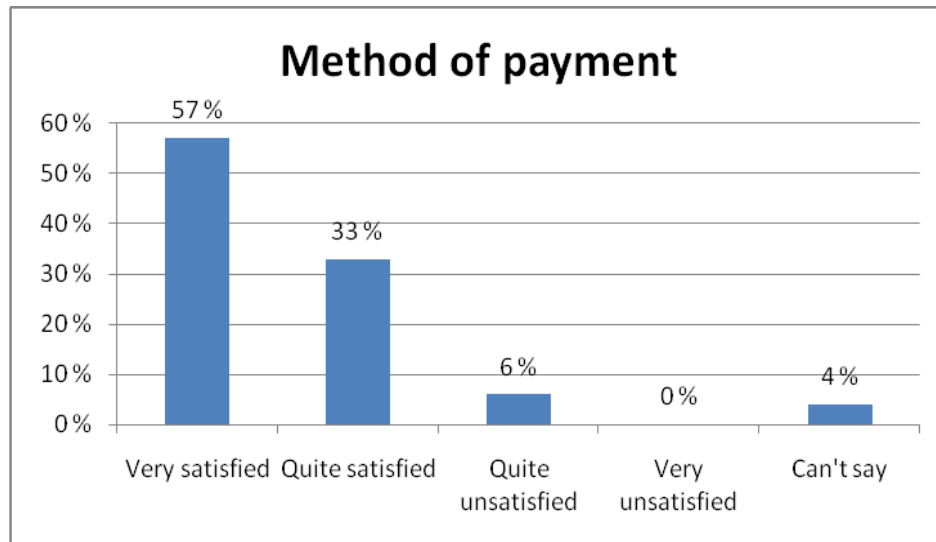


Figure 24. Respondents' satisfaction to the method of payment (n=234).

Table 4 shows that with the online store the respondents were most satisfied with the ease of purchasing in the online store. The respondents were least satisfied with the method of payment.

	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Quite unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Can't say
Delivery time	76 %	19 %	0 %	0 %	5 %
Ease of purchasing in the online store	85 %	12 %	0 %	0 %	3 %
Layout of the online store	63 %	34 %	2 %	0 %	1 %
Method of payment	57 %	33 %	6 %	0 %	4 %

Table 4. Satisfaction of the respondents towards the online store.

**Overall grade for the online store.** The respondents were asked to give an overall grade for Taitopuoti Paperinauha's online store. The majority of respondents (58 %) gave the grade 9. Grades 10 and 8 were given from almost the same amount of respondents, grade 10 from 24 % and grade 8 from 17 %. Only 2 respondents gave the grade 7. Grade 6 was given from one respondent (Figure 25). The average of the grades given by the respondents was 9.

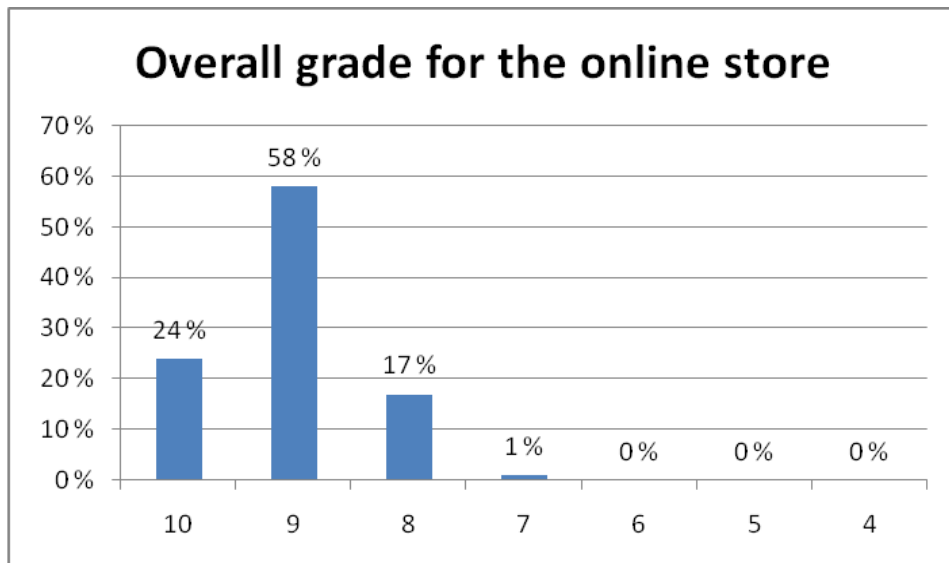


Figure 25. Respondents' overall grade for Taitopuoti Paperinauha's online store (n=267).

#### 4.4.5 Other questions

In this section the respondents were asked questions about future visits to the stores and whether they would recommend the store. There were also two open-ended questions.

**Visitation of the physical store in the future.** From the figure 26 it can be seen, that 46 % of the respondents answered that they were definitely going to visit the physical store in the future. 11 % of the respondent answered probably and the answer “maybe” was answered by 8 %. The percentage of 33 answering they couldn’t say is, again, because most of the respondents are only customers of the online store. 3 respondents said they weren’t going to visit the store in the future. The respondents answering “no” were asked to write why they weren’t going to visit the store. All of these 3 respondents answered, and also a few of the people answering “can’t say”. The only reason was that they live so far away, that visiting the store isn’t possible. In another words, the answers “no” had nothing negative to do with the store.

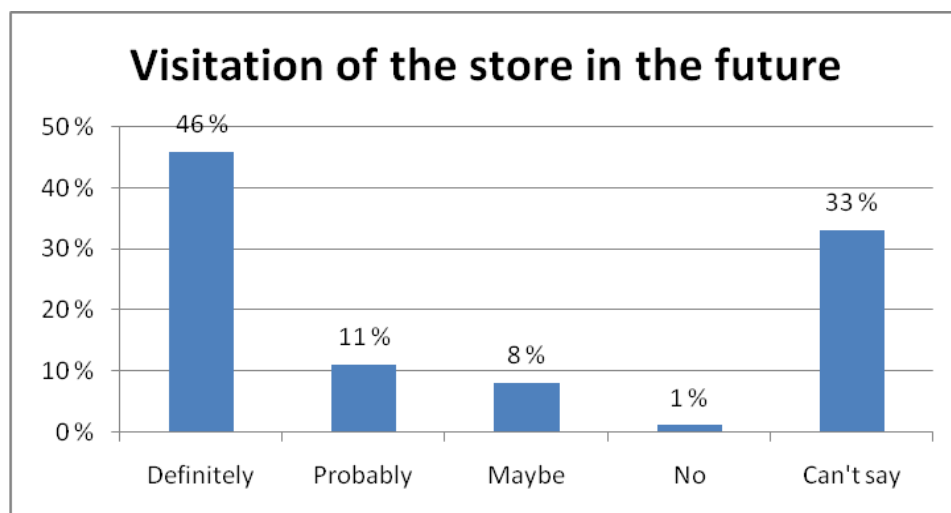


Figure 26. The answers of the respondents on visitation of the physical store in the future (n=267).

**Visitation of the online store in the future.** From figure 27 it can be seen, that 77 % of the respondents were definitely going to visit the online store in the future. 13 % answered “probably” and “maybe” was answered by 5 % of the respondents. Only 1 % weren’t going to visit the online store and 4 % answered “can’t say”. Again, the three respondents answering “no” and a few of the respondents answering “can’t say” wrote that they wouldn’t going to visit the online store simply because the physical store is near.

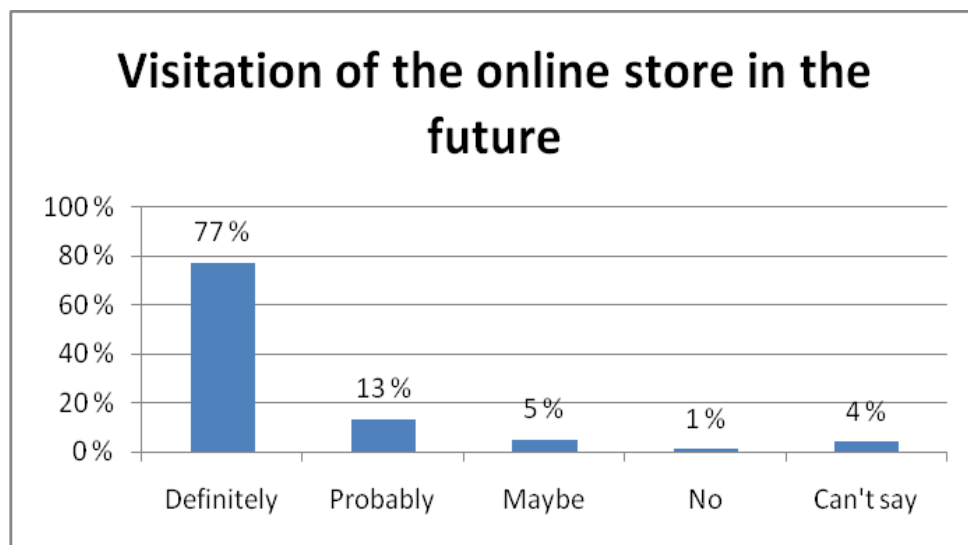


Figure 27. The answers of the respondents on visitation of the online store in the future (n=265).

**Recommendation of the physical store.** The majority of the respondents (66 %) would recommend the store to someone. 3 % answered “maybe”. No-one wouldn’t recommend the store (Figure 28). 31 % of the respondents answered “can’t say”, the large amount of answers in this answer option is, once again, explained by the fact that most of the respondents have never visited the physical store, and thus do not know whether they would recommend it.

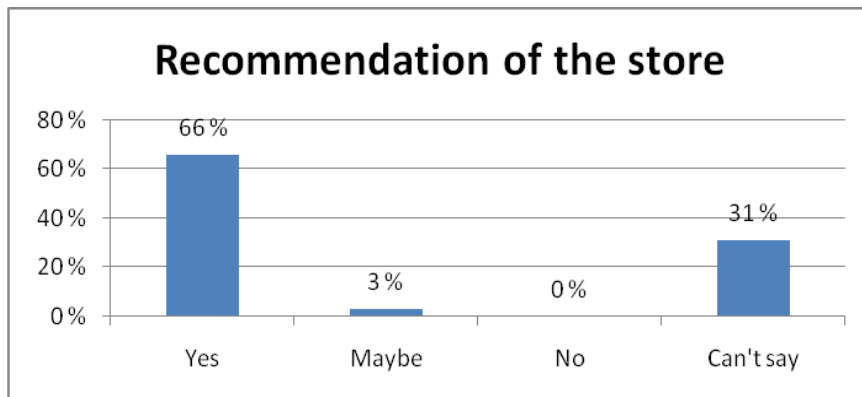


Figure 28. The answers of the respondents on recommending the physical store (n=267).

**Recommendation of the online store.** From figure 29 it can be seen that almost all of the respondents (93 %) would recommend the online store to someone. Only 4 % answered that they would maybe recommend it. 3 % couldn’t say. There were no respondents who wouldn’t recommend the online store.

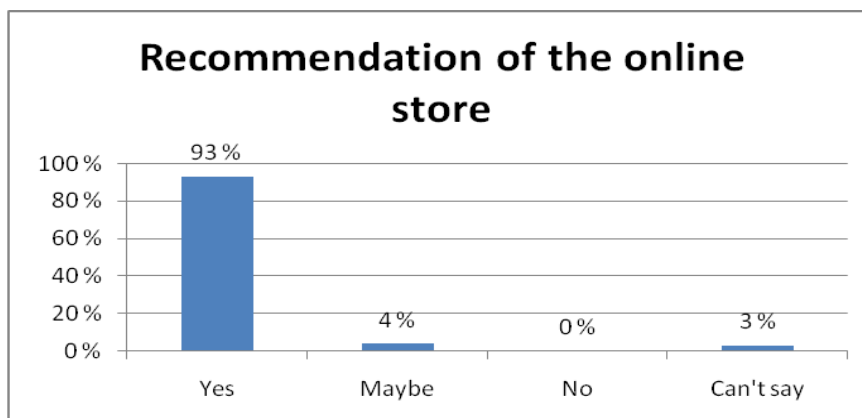


Figure 29. The answers of the respondents on recommending the online store (n=265).

**Suggestions for improvement.** The second to last question in the questionnaire was suggestions for improvement. We wanted to know what were the things that the respondents were missing from Taitopuoti Paperinauha. To this question 63 answers were gathered. The most popular topic that the respondents thought needed improvement was the method of payment with 20 answers. Currently Taitopuoti Paperinauha sends an e-mail to the customers that have ordered products with billing information. The respondents would like the payment to occur either with an online bank service or by invoice. One respondent wrote: *"I would like to pay immediately via internet by using my personal bank identification numbers."* another answered: *"PayPal as one option on methods of payment 😊"*

9 respondents were hoping additions on the products. One respondent wrote: *"There are all kinds of nice things available for card making in your store, but it would be nice to get for example a package of card pads and envelopes with matching colors."* 4 respondents were hoping that when browsing products in the online store, the pictures would become bigger by moving your mouse on the picture. 3 respondents wanted more craft courses, for different days of the week or about certain topics, such as coloring stamped images.

Other suggestions were things like, small gifts when buying with a large sum, opening hours should be longer on one day of the week, the amount of products on storage should be shown in the online store. Opening another stores to Vaasa and Turku were also suggested and own blog for Taitopuoti Paperinauha. There was also a good suggestion from one respondent to modify the display windows: *"The display windows are somehow very weak. When I saw the store for the first time it didn't attract me at all, but when I got familiar with your products on the craft fair in Seinäjoki I realized that it was your store and I was encouraged to come in, and what a wonderful world it was inside the store! So definitely more color and liveliness in the display windows to show what it's like inside the store and you will get much more customers!"* 7 respondents were happy with things how they are *"I've liked this online store very much, it would be nice to visit also in the physical store. Hopefully someday I find myself in Seinäjoki."*

**Other comments.** To this question the respondents could write whatever they wanted to say to about Taitopuoti Paperinauha. Overall there were 87 responses. One respondent was hoping for ideas and models of card in the online store. Respondents were quite happy with the layout of the online store: *“Paperinauha is the best store with web pages. The product menu is very clear, it’s easy to buy and the web site is very tempting!”* One respondent pointed out: *“If you haven’t been in the store before, you might not notice it.”*

Most of the respondents wrote that the customer service is excellent and fast in Taitopuoti Paperinauha. There were comments such as: *“The best thing is, that the customer service is good! It’s easy to approach by e-mail, and the e-mails get responded as well! The variety of products is also good, that’s important too.”* *“Excellent customer service!”* *“I’m really satisfied. Heli is so wonderful and friendly. Paperinauha is deffinitely the best craft shop in Finland 😊”* *“Heli and Krista, you are wonderful! I could come to the store just to meet you. It’s great to see smiling faces even though the purchases aren’t always so big 😊”* *“The best store in the whole country 😊”*

#### 4.4.6 Overview on the responds

From the responds of the questionnaire it can be seen that there really are people of all ages interested in card making and scrapbooking. A little less than half of the respondents had their own blog. Blogs are an easy way to show other people what they have done and to write their thoughts down and get the opinions of others. Also, if you are selling the cards you make, blogs are an easy way to show to potential customers what kinds of cards you are selling and the people interested in buying them can easily contact you. Blogs also played a huge role in advertising the stores of Taitopuoti Paperinauha. When asked how the respondents became acquainted with the stores, the majority in both cases, the physical store and the online store, answered through blogs.

Whilst almost all of Taitopuoti Paperinauha's customers use the products they purchase for card making and/or scrapbooking, there were many other ways the respondents use the products. For example you can get a nice gift box by covering some small old box with decorative paper and decorate it with some ribbons and flowers.

Overall, the respondents were satisfied with the products, especially with the quality of the products and with the price-quality ratio of the products. Some of the respondents were hoping additions to the products and then provided good suggestions for additions.

The respondents were satisfied also with the physical store and to the customer service of Taitopuoti Paperinauha. With the physical store the respondents were most satisfied with the cleanliness of the store. Cleanliness in a store like the one in question, where there is a huge amount of small products, is very important along with systematic and clear display of the products. From the questions about satisfaction towards the customer service and from the open-ended questions it can be generalized that the respondents were very satisfied. Not one of the respondents was unsatisfied with the customer service.

With the online store of Taitopuoti Paperinauha the respondents were most satisfied with the ease of purchasing from the online store and to the delivery time. As mentioned in the beginning of this thesis the delivery time of Taitopuoti Paperinauha's online store is 5 days in maximum. However, usually it takes them about 2 days to get the products to the customers after they have ordered them.

The averages of the grades were 9,2 for the physical store and precisely 9 for the online store. From these grades can be concluded that the respondents were very satisfied with both of the stores.

## 5 CONCLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Understanding consumer behavior is important for companies. Since Taitopuoti Paperinauha operates in a niche market it knows the needs and wants of their customers and how to reach them and how to market to the potential customers. As mentioned previously in the theoretical part of this thesis, there are many variables influencing customers' decision making. In Taitopuoti Paperinauha these variables are mainly individual differences and from those differences, especially knowledge influences Taitopuoti Paperinauha's customers' decision making. If a customer doesn't know how to use a product, he or she won't buy it. This is why Taitopuoti Paperinauha could perhaps add a section to their online store with short descriptions of some of the products that customers who are just starting to make cards or scrapbooks haven't yet used and don't know how to use.

Overall, the customers of Taitopuoti Paperinauha that answered the questionnaire were very satisfied with the company. Especially the customer service was much appreciated. The respondents were least satisfied with the location and opening hours of the physical store and with the method of payment in the online store. From these the location of the store had most unsatisfied respondents; however, the percentage of unsatisfied respondents was only 9.

The last question in the questionnaire was an open-ended one where respondents could write whatever they wanted about Taitopuoti Paperinauha. Over half of the 87 responses were about thanking for the customer service and praises of the company. Customer satisfaction is of huge importance to companies. Nowadays there are so many physical stores selling the same kinds of products, not to mention online stores that it's easy for the customers to change their products or services supplier if they are not satisfied with the customer service.

Although the current level of satisfaction of Taitopuoti Paperinauha's customers is good, it has to be remembered, that in order to keep the customers satisfied the company needs to improve continuously and keep up with the changing needs of their customers. Another thing to remember is that although the customers are

satisfied, it doesn't mean that they are all loyal to the company. Listening to the customers and giving the impression that the customers are being cared for influences positively on getting satisfied customers into loyal ones.

The second to last question was about improvement suggestions. There were many good suggestions from the respondents. The suggestions about adding options to payment methods and the suggestion of modifying the display windows to be more attracting were especially good in my opinion. By looking at the suggestions of the respondents the company can decide what changes or improvements it wants to implement.

Conducting this research was important for the company in order to get official information about the level of satisfaction of their customers on different aspects of the company. Another customer satisfaction research would be good to carry out in a reasonable amount of time in order to see what kind of influence modifications or changes have had on the level of their customers' satisfaction.

For me, doing this research was very interesting and I believe it is useful for the company in question. From the research the company can see what are the things that are going well and what areas need improving. The research was quite comprehensive and showed a good overview on the level of satisfaction of Taitopuoti Paperinauha's customers. I believe I managed to solve the research problem quite well and the goals of the thesis I had set were met. I think this thesis gives a good overview about consumer behavior and customer satisfaction. The research can be in many ways used in the current operations of the company in question and in the possible future researches.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1. Paper version of the customer satisfaction questionnaire

As my final thesis I am doing a customer satisfaction research for Tatitopuoti Paperinauha.  
I would really appreciate it if you could answer the following questions. Thank you!

### 1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 Gender

- 1 ☐ Woman  
2 ☐ Man

1.2 Age

- 1 ☐ 15-20  
2 ☐ 21-30  
3 ☐ 31-40  
4 ☐ 41-50  
5 ☐ 51-60  
6 ☐ 61-

1.3 Do you have a blog (about card making, scrapbooking, etc.)?

- 1 ☐ Yes  
2 ☐ No

1.4 What do you use the products for? (You can choose multiple options)

- 1 ☐ Card making  
2 ☐ Scrapbooking  
3 ☐ Other, what \_\_\_\_\_

1.5 Do you sell the cards you make?

- 1 ☐ Yes  
2 ☐ No  
3 ☐ I don't make cards

### 2 THE PRODUCTS

How satisfied are you with the products?

	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Quite unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Can't say
2.1 The quality of the products	4	3	2	1	0
2.2 The range of the products	4	3	2	1	0
2.3 The price-quality ratio of the products	4	3	2	1	0

2.4 To what product group would you like more range and what kind?  
(stamps, papers, etc.)

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### 3 THE PHYSICAL STORE OF TAITOPUOTI PAPERINAUHA ( IN SEINÄJOKI)

3.1 How often do you visit Taitopuoti Paperinauha's physical store?

- 1 ☐ Once a week or more often
- 2 ☐ Few times a month
- 3 ☐ Once a month
- 4 ☐ Few times a year
- 5 ☐ Once a year or more rarely
- 6 ☐ I'm visiting the store for the first time

3.2 How did you became acquainted with the physical store of Taitopuoti Paperinauha?

- 1 ☐ Through the internet (f.ex. Blogs)
- 2 ☐ Through a friend
- 3 ☐ Happened to notice the store
- 4 ☐ Saw an add in a paper
- 5 ☐ In a craft fair
- 6 ☐ Other, how \_\_\_\_\_

How satisfied are you with the following things?

	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Quite unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Can't say
3.3 Location of the store	4	3	2	1	0
3.4 Opening hours	4	3	2	1	0
3.5 Cleanliness of the store	4	3	2	1	0
3.6 Pleasantness of the customer service	4	3	2	1	0
3.7 Expertise of the customer service	4	3	2	1	0
3.8 Getting help if needed	4	3	2	1	0

3.9 What overall grade would you give to Taitopuoti Paperinauha's physical store?

10	9	8	7	6	5	4
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 4 TAITOPUOTI PAPERINAUHA'S ONLINE STORE (www.paperinauha.fi)

4.1 Have you purchased something from Taitopuoti Paperinauha's online store?

- 1 ☐ Yes
- 2 ☐ No

If you answered "no", you can go to part 5.

4.2 How did you become acquainted with the online store?

- 1 ☐ Through blogs
- 2 ☐ Through a friend
- 3 ☐ Through a search engine (f.ex. Google)
- 4 ☐ Saw an add in a paper
- 5 ☐ In a craft fair
- 6 ☐ Other, how \_\_\_\_\_

4.3 How often do you visit the online store?

- 1 ☐ Once a week or more often
- 2 ☐ Few times a month
- 3 ☐ Once a month
- 4 ☐ Few times a year
- 5 ☐ Once a year or more rarely
- 6 ☐ I have visited the online store once

How satisfied are you with the following things?

	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Quite unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Can't say
4.4 Delivery time of the products	4	3	2	1	0
4.5 Ease of purchasing	4	3	2	1	0
4.6 Layout of the online store	4	3	2	1	0
4.7 Current method of payment	4	3	2	1	0

4.8 What overall grade would you give to Taitopuoti Paperinauha's online store?

10 9 8 7 6 5 4

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

5 OTHER QUESTIONS

5.1 In the future, are you going to visit

1 the physical store?

- 1 ☐ Definitely
- 2 ☐ Probably
- 3 ☐ Maybe
- 4 ☐ No
- 5 ☐ Can't say

2 the online store?

- 1 ☐ Definitely
- 2 ☐ Probably
- 3 ☐ Maybe
- 4 ☐ No
- 5 ☐ Can't say

5.2 If you answered "no", why not?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5.3 Would you recommend to others

1 the store?

1	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maybe
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	No

2 the online store?

1	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maybe
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	No

5.4 Suggestions for improvement?

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5.5 Other comments?

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Among all respondents we are going to raffle off three € 20 gift certificates to Taitopuoti Paperinauha. You will take part in the raffle by leaving your contact information. Thank you!

---

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS/PHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_