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**BOOKING SYSTEMS OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED  
ENTREPRISES AND ORGANISATIONS**

Master Thesis

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# Content

<b>1 Hypothesis</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.1 Introduction to Master Thesis</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.2 Formulation of Hypothesis</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.3 Target Group</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.4 The Aim of the Study</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2 Introduction to the bookings</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3 Case Study 1: Tampere Maja</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3.1 Experiences with Booking Portals</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3.2 Home page</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>3.3 Other Marketing Channels</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>3.4 Managing of the bookings</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>3.5 Conclusion of the Case Study</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>4 Case Study 2: BookitButton</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>5 Research Methods and Reliability of the Responses</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>5.1 Research paradigms</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>5.2 Principles of addressees</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>5.3 Covering letter of the questionnaire</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>5.4 Structure of the questionnaire</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>5.5 Cultural dimensions between Finland and Estonia</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>5.6 Reliability of the Responses</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>5.7 Development of Tourism in Europe</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>6 Responses</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>6.1 Companies</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>6.2 Analysis of the Responses</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>6.3 Homepage</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>6.4 Tourism Portals</b>	<b>33</b>

<b>6.5 Booking Portals</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>6.6 Social Media</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>6.7 Traditional Marketing Channels</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>6.8 Conclusion of the Marketing Channels</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>6.9 Booking management</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>6.10 User Experience of the Booking Management Tools</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>6.11 Booking Management after a Booking has arrived</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>6.12 Conclusion of the Booking Management Tools</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>6.13 Billing System</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>6.14 Conclusion of the Bill Management</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>7 Discussion</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>7.1 Truth value of the Results</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>7.2 Character of the Target Group Companies</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>7.3 Booking Management</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>8 Conclusion</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>8.1 Other Available Booking Applications</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>8.2 Iteration for a new Generation Application</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>8.3 Answers to the Hypothesis</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>9 Resümee</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>10 Bibliography</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>11 Appendix</b>	<b>59</b>

# 1 Hypothesis

## **1.1 Introduction to Master Thesis**

My Master Thesis is about a booking process for lodging companies. I became inspired about the theme in two ways. First of all, I am an executive director of Foundation of Tampere Maja since 1999. This is a small guest-house and bookings have been a stumbling stone for years of activity. The background matters of this theme is explained in the Chapter 3, where Tampere Maja is used as a case study in this inquire.

The second way to the theme went through curriculum in Viljandi Culture Academy (DDVE). In spring 2012, we had a study-project in school. Thought first ideas were something else; the theme leaded us to the problem of renting rooms. This other case study is described in Chapter 4. Both case studies were taken as essential parts of my Master Thesis because curriculum emphasizes practicality and true-to-life approaching. Some time a practical case tells more than thousand theoretical words.

In Chapter 5, I describe the methodology of my inquire. In Chapter 6, there are results of a questionnaire I organized within this study. In Chapter 7, I discuss the result of the study and Chapter 8, there are some proposals how the bookings should be organized for the target group.

## **1.2 Formulation of Hypothesis**

After situation, I will describe in Chapters 2 an 3, me and my project members were quite convinced that many problems can be solved, if the companies would have a booking tool in their homepage. So, the formulation for my hypothesis is:

**For a small and a medium-sized enterprise, a booking system via own home page is more effective for processing bookings than to join with big booking portals!**

This study is a kind of customer inquire and market research for having an answer in the

argumentative question formulated in the sentence of the hypothesis.

### **1.3 Target Group**

Target group of this study is small and medium-sized lodging enterprises, and more precisely, the companies which have less than 50 rooms. Presumption is that the bigger companies are able to get professional help for managing their bookings or they have even hired employees, who are responsible for managing bookings. Bigger companies can afford expensive booking managing tools; meanwhile smaller have to be creative and have to invent own systems.

Generally, the lodging companies are<sup>1</sup>:

- 1) Hotel
- 2) Motel
- 3) Guest-house
- 4) Hostel
- 5) Holiday village, campsite
- 6) Holiday home
- 7) Apartment
- 8) Bed & Breakfast

A **hotel** is an establishment that provides lodging paid on a short-term basis with the ability to catering, and who has at least ten numbered rooms. A **motel** (motor hotel) is designed for motorists with the ability to catering and who also has at least ten numbered rooms. Usually motel are located beside bigger highways, and there should be a safe parking place for the clients' motor vehicles.

A **guest-house** should also have an ability to catering with at least five numbered rooms. A **hostel** is more budget oriented lodging provider than a hotel, there should be also an opportunity for catering or have a kitchen where clients can cook.

A **holiday village** or **campsite** is a lodging establishment where some limits on available services. There are places for camping or touring cars and caravans. A **holiday home** is a lodging establishment, where a house can be rented out as a whole. There should be also ability to cook.

An **apartment** is a lodging establishment where the unit (apartment with a kitchen) can be rented out as a whole. A **bed & breakfast** is a lodging establishment running by a self-employed person. Accommodation with a breakfast can be arranged in a farm, in a house or an apartment.

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<sup>1</sup> The subdivision of the lodging establishments is based on Viin, T., Villing, R. 2011. Hotellimajanduse alused, p. 137.

## **1.4 The Aim of the Study**

For having an answer to the sentence formulated in the hypothesis, it is essential to make next questions:

- 1) Which kind of clients does the target group have?
- 2) How do the lodging companies find the target group (marketing systems?)
- 3) What kind of booking, billing and payment tools do they use?

The purpose of the study is to find best practices to organize their booking system via the internet.

Surely there are enterprises who do not have any web based system. They may use a manual system on their Figure booking calendars or some electronic systems installed on computers. The aim of my study is to find also them a better system using possibilities the Internet could offer.

There can be seen two possibilities of the web based booking systems

- 1) own system (a plug-in) on the homepage made/installed by the entrepreneur or another company. They can have a system what can be load from Internet with or without fee. For examples open source CMS-s (content management system) like Joomla, Wordpress and Drupal. Some entrepreneurs use native systems (made for them).
- 2) Using external booking systems like Booking.com or Expedia.com

**The aim of the customer inquire is to learn the booking systems used by the target group!**

It is essential to clarify, how widely the on-line booking systems are used, how common they actually are. What kind of systems the companies use, do they have own application, how much the open source systems (i.e. Joomla) have been used. Do the companies prefer a system without fee (like Google calendar) or do they pay it somewhere?

It important also to know, what functionality is used with the booking systems? Is the organizations' booking system connected with the accounting system? Does the booking system connected with statistic information? There are so many questions that it was reasonable to compile a questionnaire (this process is described in Chapter 5).

When I have collected all that information, I am able to do some predictions, I suppose. I will find out the trends of the booking systems, and also I can make proposals to solve the problems the companies have with the existing systems. It is also important to decipher the premises of the technology for the future booking systems.

## 2 Introduction to the bookings

When someone wants to overnight somewhere, usually she has to **book** a place.<sup>2</sup> The booking is aimed to **future**, and it is a **reservation** or an occupation something and somewhere. It is like an option or possibility to use some rights.<sup>3</sup>

The booking can be made personally (Business-to-Client relationship) by telephone (also by fax) or via the internet in different ways. A booking can also arrive from another company like a travel agency (Business-to-Business relationship), this is called as a voucher.

There are two active parts which are called a client or a **customer** (having a wish or need to overnight) and a **provider** (having a place where to stay). Usually customers are divided as business travellers and leisure travellers.<sup>4</sup>

This kind of economic activity is called **hospitality industry**<sup>5</sup>. The term comprises all services connected with travelling from catering (food and beverage services) but also every kind of entertainment services like organizing trips, theatre tickets and so on. A general term for staying overnight is *accommodation*<sup>6</sup> or *lodging*<sup>7</sup>.

At the same time when booking is made, it brings also a **judicial** relationship or agreement into force between customer and provider. It causes some rights and responsibilities which are defined by some kind of agreement.

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2 Verb to *book* (old English *bocian*) means “to grant or assign by Figureer”, the background of the verb is a noun *book* (a written document). So the meaning is “to enter for a seat or place, issue (railway) tickets”, first time recorded use from 1841. <http://etymonline.com/?term=book>.

3 Of course, it could happen that there is no booking made in the past, the “booking” can be made in the office; this “occasional” or “coincidental” client is called a *walk-in customer*. Hotellimajanduse õpik, p. 52.

4 The clients can also be divided different ways, for example, VIP-customers (very important person), who get a unique treatment. They are important for the fame of the company, CIP-client (commercially important person) who make bookings regularly, Disabled/Handicapped customer, who have exceptional needs and Standard Customer, who usually make up the biggest revenue for the company.

5 Viin, T., Villing, R. 2011. Hotellimajanduse õpik, p. 8. Hospitality means “friendly and generous behaviour towards visitors and guests, intended to make them feel welcome” by Macmillan Dictionary (<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/hospitality>)

6 The noun means “room and provisions, lodging”, use from c. 1600, Latin word *accommodare* (ad + commodo) means “hang out something, readjust or co-ordinate something“, Ladina-Eesti Sõnaraamat, p. 62.

7 “Lodging” comes from old military term *encampment* from late 14 c., which means “temporary accommodation; place of residence”. [http://etymonline.com/index.php?allowed\\_in\\_frame=0&search=lodging&searchmode=none](http://etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=lodging&searchmode=none)

A booking announcement usually has two phases. The first phase is **anonymous**. The aim is just for checking whether there is any possibility to stay in that hotel or not. In that phase, the necessary data is 1) the arrival time (Check-in date) 2) the departure time (Check-out date) 3) the number of persons who will stay there. Usually this part is divided in to rooms and adults and children.

**Picture 1.1** A first phase of a booking form from [www.booking.com](http://www.booking.com)

If there is a possibility to book a room more information is needed, and this have to be **personal** information. Now the customer has to give his first and last name and information about his addresses (telephone, postal and email address and so on.). The last information is needed for communication between customer and provider.

In the provider point of view there are several other data what she wants to know and what are usually asked in the situation when booking will compile, they are i.e. a predicFigure arrival time by the clock.

Usually provider has booking rules where is set cancellation and payment conditions. From the client can be asked a deposit before he arrive and cancellation fee in the case of too late cancellation.

**Booking systems can be divided two categories. The first is the channel how the bookings are made (the booking channel). These channels could be a telephone call and a fax, an email, a message from homepage form of from booking portal. The second system is a method how the bookings are handled (the booking management). There are several tools for managing received bookings.**



### 3 Case Study 1: Tampere Maja



Picture 3.1 Façade on Tampere House.

Tampere Maja Foundation is a culture centre of twin cities Tartu (Estonia) and Tampere (Finland). It had been founded by the two cities in 1997. The task of the centre is to help cities with co-operation. Besides of that, the centre has also a little guest house. The centre gets about one of third of income from accommodation services; the rest of income is a subsidy of Tampere city council.

#### **Accommodation**

Tampere Maja is an old wooden house in the old town of Tartu city. The oldest part of the house is built in 1737. There are four floors. In the basement, there is seminar room with two separate rooms and a kitchen. The office, breakfast room, sauna and gallery are located on the first floor. Accommodation rooms are on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors.

The guest-house has six rooms with 18 beds. Two of rooms are quadruple apartments with two separated rooms. Two rooms are twin rooms, one double room and one bigger room with four beds. As an ancillary service, there is a sauna and a seminar room.

#### **Cultural activity**

Foundation has a gallery, where artists can have an exhibition free of charge, but the foundation ask one work from the artist as a present. Until now after 15 years of activity, on the collection of Tampere Maja foundation, there are more than 130 pieces of art work. The artists are selected by a team of the Tampere Maja; the selection is held once a year. Foundation wants to promote the artist who are in the beginning of his or her career. About half of exhibitions are from Finland.

Foundation has an exchange program for writers, poets, and artists. On out of the high season there have been worked several authors as residential quests. The culture program contains literature events and little concerts in the seminar room. In addition, the house is a meeting place for many organizations like the Estonian volunteer veterans who participated in Finland during the World War II or like Tartu-Finnish society.

There are a lot of non-commercial activities in the house. Information of these cultural activities is shown on the web page of the foundation; there is quite large archive with material of events. No

room or events are able to book from the web page. All organizational things of meetings and events have to agree with the personnel of the foundation.

### Booking system

The most of the bookings to the Tampere Maja guest-house come via the internet. There are three routes of the internet bookings. The main route is emails; the second is via portal of Booking.com and third is the online web form placed in foundation's own web page.

BOOKING CALENDER						
M	T	W	TH	F	S	SU
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		
« May 2013 »						

Picture 3.2 Booking calendar

The foundation has a **booking calendar** on the web page. On the calendar, the clients have a possibility to see the monthly situation of the reservations by every single room. This makes sense because there are quite limited numbers of the rooms (only six), and every room has own character. The rooms differ in design and size. It makes easier for clients to choose a room but also choose the staying period in the guest house. The clients can check the availability of rooms and plan the accommodation period before a contact. See also Picture 3.4.

Because of location in the middle of the Tartu city near by the main square, house got quite many so called **walk-in clients**, especially on the summer time.

### Clients

Generally the biggest segment of the visitors were Finns (60 %), the next were Estonians (18 %) and Germans (6 %). The summer is the high season, especially the July. Then, there is no problem to get almost 100 % utilization rate. The problem is how to get clients out of the high season. Different marketing methods have been tried, i.e. newspaper advertising, telephone catalogues, participating in tourism messes, but no “drug” found for a cure of the low season figures. See Figure 3.1 bellow.

The utilization rate of the rooms %

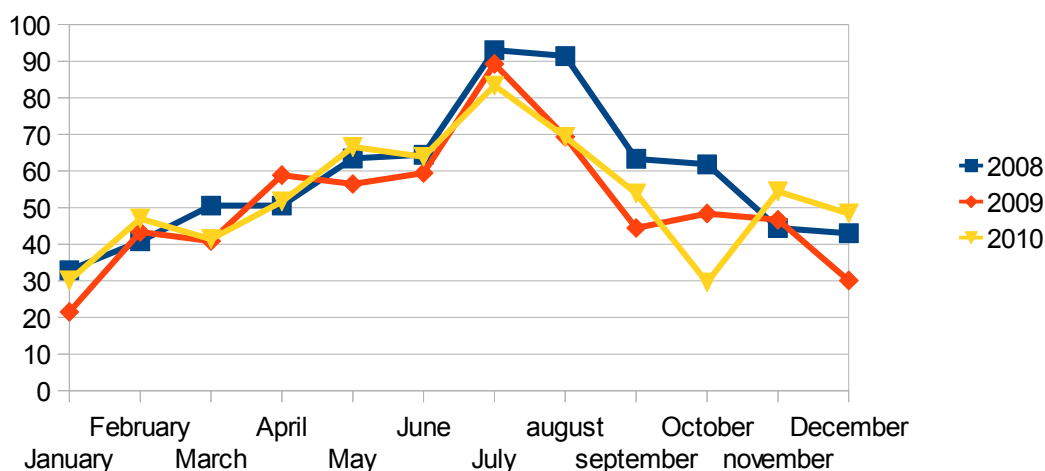


Figure 3.1.

### 3.1 Experiences with Booking Portals



<http://www.turismiweb.ee/et/bookit/>

Picture 3.3 Bookit.ee logo

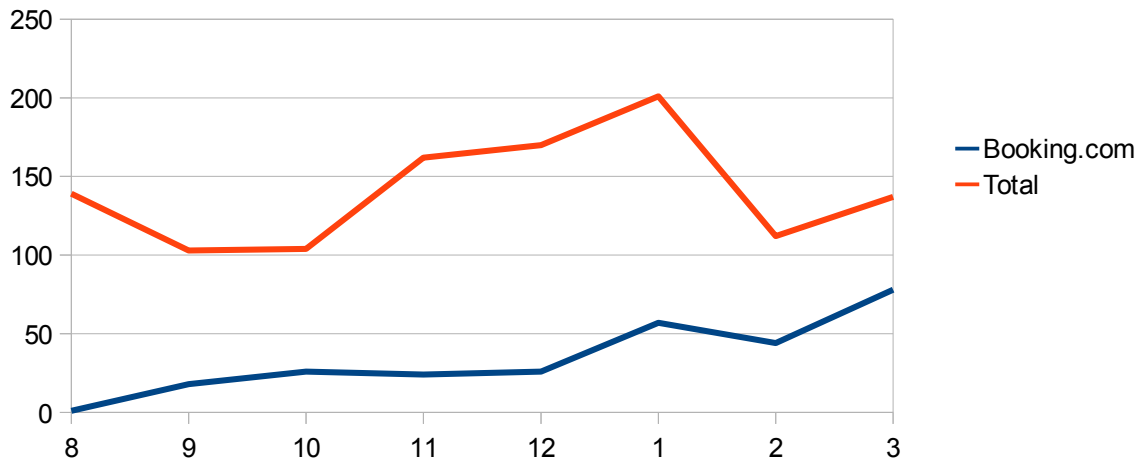
In the beginning of the 2012 Tampere Maja joined with [www.turismiweb.ee](http://www.turismiweb.ee). It is the largest tourism portal in Estonia. On the portal clients can find general tourism information, but they have developed an online booking tool called Bookit.ee.

During the trial period, foundation has not gotten any booking via that portal and at the moment clients cannot book Tampere Maja guest house via that portal.

So, Tampere Maja guest house's CEO was quite sceptical when another portal walked-in to the office and make an offer to join with the Booking.com portal. It happened on August of 2012. The result with Booking.com was total different. The first client came on the same month, and number of clients have been risen a month after a month. Up till now the share of the bookings via Booking.com have risen to about 60 per cent. See Figure 3.2 below.

## Stayed Room Nights

August 2012 - March 2013



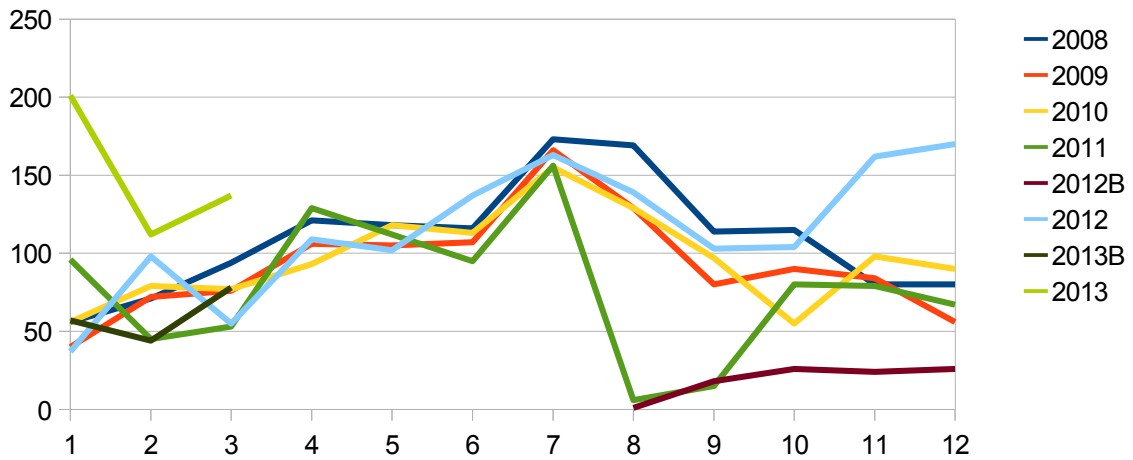
**Figure 3.2.**

A big change happened in also in segments of clients. Still the Finns are the biggest (37 %) and the Estonians are the second (28 %), but Russians (17 %) and Latvians (9 %) have risen as new important groups of clients. Now the order is the same as the TOP tourists in Tartu.

The number of low season clients has also risen. Usually high season lasts the midsummer. After joining Booking.com, the picture has changed a lot. The lower season is not so quiet anymore. Even the January 2013 was the best month per Stayed Room night ever! The colour of the line on the Figure for Booking.com clients in 2012 is brown, that why the line starts on August (label is 2012B). See Figure 3.3 bellow.

### Stayed Room Night

2008-2013



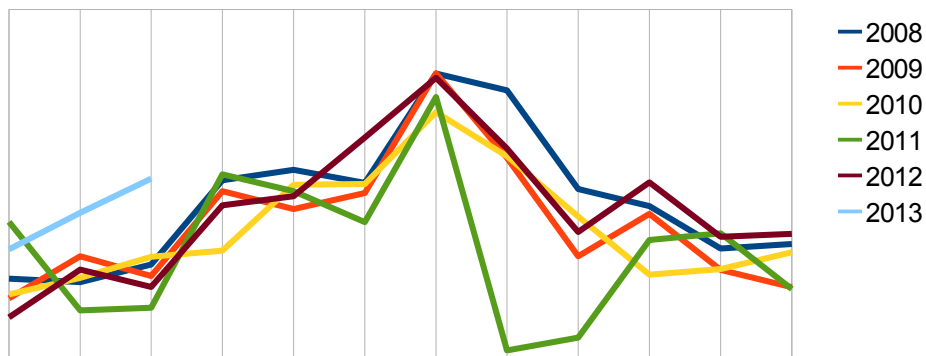
**Figure 3.3.**

Booking.com has brought new segment and larger amount of clients, but the change can be seen on the revenue. Booking.com will take an intermediating charge for every booking. The hotel can define the per cent in some limits, for Tampere Maja the agreement of the fee is 12 %. Despite of that the impact of Booking.com can be seen by the risen number of revenue.

In the year 2011, there was a large renovation work on the roof and the guest house was closed (green line on the Figure 3.4). That is why August and September in 2011 were very quiet, the impact of renovation can be seen as a downfall in the both statistic (Stayed Room nights and Revenue). See Figure 3.4 bellow.

### Revenue

2008 - 2013



**Figure 3.4.**

### 3.2 Home page

BOOK HERE or call +372 738 6300

M	T	W	TH	F	S	SU
1 1.Room X 2.Room X 3.Room V 4.Room X 5.Room V 6.Room V	2 1.Room V 2.Room V 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room V 6.Room X	3 1.Room X 2.Room V 3.Room V 4.Room X 5.Room V 6.Room X	4 1.Room X 2.Room X 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room X 6.Room V	5 1.Room V 2.Room V 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room V 6.Room V	6 1.Room X 2.Room X 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room X 6.Room X	7 1.Room V 2.Room V 3.Room V 4.Room V 5.Room V 6.Room V
8 1.Room V 2.Room V 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room V 6.Room V	9 1.Room V 2.Room V 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room V 6.Room V	10 1.Room X 2.Room V 3.Room V 4.Room X 5.Room V 6.Room X	11 1.Room X 2.Room X 3.Room V 4.Room X 5.Room X 6.Room V	12 1.Room X 2.Room V 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room V 6.Room V	13 1.Room X 2.Room V 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room X 6.Room X	14 1.Room V 2.Room V 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room V 6.Room V
15 1.Room V 2.Room V 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room X 6.Room V	16 1.Room V 2.Room X 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room X 6.Room X	17 1.Room X 2.Room X 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room X 6.Room X	18 1.Room X 2.Room X 3.Room V 4.Room X 5.Room X 6.Room X	19 1.Room X 2.Room X 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room X 6.Room X	20 1.Room X 2.Room X 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room X 6.Room X	21 1.Room X 2.Room X 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room X 6.Room X
22 1.Room X 2.Room X 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room X 6.Room V	23 1.Room X 2.Room X 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room X 6.Room X	24 1.Room X 2.Room X 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room V 6.Room X	25 1.Room X 2.Room X 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room X 6.Room X	26 1.Room X 2.Room X 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room X 6.Room X	27 1.Room X 2.Room X 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room X 6.Room X	28 1.Room X 2.Room X 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room X 6.Room X
29 1.Room X 2.Room X 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room X 6.Room X	30 1.Room X 2.Room X 3.Room X 4.Room X 5.Room X 6.Room X					

The own web page is a quite powerful channel of marketing. The home page is more than 10 years old, made by Meedia Disain OÜ. Then a booking calendar was a quite innovative application. Clients can see the whole booking situation in the guest-house room by room. Because the technology is old, there are no possibilities to update the booking information automatically. When checked the booking information in the web calendar, clients have three possibilities to contact us: by email, by homepage form or telephone. The good usability shows that we get quite lot calls: “I would like to book room number x, which seems to be free in your web calendar.”

Picture 3.4: A booking calendar of Tampere Maja, where clients can check the available rooms. [www.tamperemaja.ee](http://www.tamperemaja.ee)

Google analytics shows there are about 20-40 visitors per a day. Share of the returning visitors was 17 %. About 6 % of the visitors use mobile devices (half of these is Apple iPad and Apple iPhone). The most of the visitors came from Estonia (74 %), Finland (12 %), Latvia (4 %) and Russia (4 %). Most of the user have Firefox browser (34 %), Chrome (29,5 %), Internet Explorer (23,75 %). Most of the visit duration are under 30 seconds (80 %).

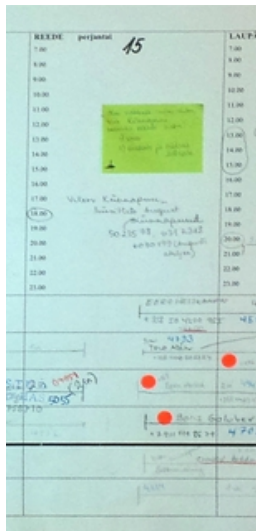
### 3.3 Other Marketing Channels

In Tampere Maja collects information of guests in hotel cards, there is a field “Where have you got the information about Tampere Maja”. The most common information channel was said to be “Internet” (it means Google and so on), the second was Booking.com. In order of importance the next are: Tartu Turismiinfokeskus, personal information (personal contacts), Estland Reisen a travel agency, Lonely Planet, walk-in clients, information have got from “working place” and the last in order was Tartu in Your Pocket tourism brochure.

Tampere Maja information is available in every biggest Estonian tourist portals. The culture centre has a Facebook page, but this channel is not for lodging marketing but information about

culture events. A Twitter account is also compiled, but it is not in use at all. Tampere Maja had earlier contact information in every biggest telephone catalogues, but all deals with them have been rejected since 2012.

### **3.4 Managing of the bookings**



The main booking management tool is a paper calendar made by us. There is all information about bookings (who is coming, when and how long he will stay, what time he will arrive and what time he wants to get a breakfast) and also all information about culture events (exhibition openings, literature meetings). There is a time Figure from 7.00 am to 11.00 pm. There is also fields for every room from 1 – 6. The size of the calendar is 2 x A3. It is large enough for all information needed. There can be added different kinds of posters.

**Picture 3.5** An example of handmade paper booking calendar.

The red dots mean bookings via Booking.com. It is essential to divide bookings that way, because if we do not inform Booking.com company for a cancellation in time, they have permission to charge us for that booking. These red dots are also insurance for not having over bookings.

After all information was write down in this paper calendar, the bookings have to update in electronic booking tool Hotis Express. It is quite old-fashioned and expensive tool, but the changing a tool asks for an extra endeavour.

Hotis is primarily used for billing management. Making a bill is based on orders made by reception administrator. The paper bills will print out and carry monthly to an accounting office.

### **3.5 Conclusion of the Case Study**

**The booking system of Tampere Maja is complicated and expired. There are three different calendars which have to update by hand. The main calendar is on a Figure, the second is a homepage calendar, and the third is Booking.com calendar. If there will come into view some mistakes with updated data and these calendars are not synchronized, this will cause big troubles for clients (i.e. over booking cases) and also it means lost of money for the company. The both accidents will also worsen the reputation of the guest-house. The only countermeasure for this is a good quality of employees. The reputation of Tampere Maja is very good, in comparison of Tartu hotels in Booking.com guest house is on the TOP 3.**

## 4 Case Study 2: BookitButton

The former case study Tampere Maja described booking problems inside of a lodging company. This case study describes a process how an “outsider” entrepreneur (or a start-up company) approaches the theme of bookings<sup>8</sup>, when entrepreneur wants to solve problems in the fields of bookings (this kind of attitude to problems is called as a “pain” in the start-up lexicon).

As I mentioned in the spring of 2012, we composed a group of Tartu students for the curriculum of DDVE. The team members were **Raul Kübarsepp** (he had a background in PlayTech, a game programming company in Tartu, and the praxis in graphical user interface) and **Pärt Ojamaa** (MA diploma in Tartu University in semiotics, with willing handle with marketing part in the project). I was a project manager.

I contacted with the Creative Centre of Tartu, and I informed them new curriculum. I asked if they were interested in cooperation with us. Recently in the newspaper was written, the centre has got a big funding (almost 100 000 Euros) for their information portal. We suggested that our project could be a part of that big plan for building the portal.



**Picture 4.1** Mapping the technical requirements of the information portal on the mirror of the class room.

We started surveying the needs of the information portal<sup>9</sup>. The most important fields arisen with this question were:

- 1) To promote the **fields of the Creative Industry** in Tartu (that means a portal in use of information and a calendar of the events)
- 2) To support the **activity of the Creative Industry** (direct sale and marketing via internet)
- 3) To support the **needs of Tartu city council** contributing the tourism activity and the cooperation over the borders (with Latvia and Russia)

<sup>8</sup> Ries, Eric. The Lean Startup, 2011 The book describes the most common reasons why startups fail (p. 17).

<sup>9</sup> The Creative Center of Tartu has a web site of their own: <http://www.lmk.ee>. They introduce their activity and projects via homepage; also you can find information about the companies operating in the center (incubators). We explored some incubators more detailed. Most of the home pages of the companies used the internet only for an advertisement purpose (there are pictures of the products and contact information). No more than one used the web for direct selling (no web shops).



In the feedback, we got from university was highlighted not to bustle with consulting work for public sector<sup>10</sup>! Instead of making the large portal, we decided to concentrate to the business and sales of the product of the creative industries. During many gatherings with the people of creative industries arose same question: how to sell and make marketing via the internet for:

**1) Products**

**2) Services**

**3) Rooms**

We tried to build up a tool where all these three segments were worked out. The first business plan is for supplying products and services provided in fields of creative industries. Our slogan staged: “Sales Tools for **Local Area Resources and Services**” and the product name from initials **LARS**.<sup>11</sup> Quite soon we found out that there are several web shops specialised in sells of crafts<sup>12</sup>.

**Picture 4.2** Logo for a service (made by Raul Kübarsepp)



**LARS**

Sales Tools for  
**Local Area**  
**Resources**  
and **Services**

So, if launching a new online shop, we should find a way to specialise and separate from others. Selling online services is the hard task because of character of the selling process – there should be a lot of discussion and negotiation for intermediate the services via the internet. Again we got feedback for focusing!

Besides of products and services, there was a problem how to rent rooms owned by the same institutions. Creative Centre of Tartu and Tartu city council have several rooms, which stay often unused. They preserve empty because the marketing and renting take a lot of labour resources<sup>13</sup>.

10 The idea of the DDVE programme is to develop rapidly growing companies for the global market (scalable startups), who have definitional products, which are easy to sell. The local consulting office is not for that purpose! Quite quickly, it was also pretty clear that the public sector is incapable for business making (their biggest ambition is to inform their own activities and to spread of the information in the fields they are responding. That's what we have brunt, how slowly the decision makers the they are! The Creative Center has got funding for building up a portal; the deadline will be in the end of the 2013. They implied the first procurement documents should be ready in the spring of 2012. We made an offer for the mapping of the needs of the project, creating the Personas (user cases); we were able to make wire frames and first clickable mock-up version and finally testing with real users, we asked for that 4000 Euros – but any response we have not gotten up till now!

11 Our clients are people who want to buy presents made by hands, but also company owners and event managers, concert producers and so on. The revenue is planned to come from intermediation of the sale (commissions) and public funding. The important key partners are companies of the creative industries (the marketing we would start from the incubators of the Creative Centre of Tartu).

12 The biggest one is Etsy (<http://www.etsy.com>), who is selling products all over the world. Some overseas portals are coming in Estonia like My craft land (<http://www.mycraftland.com>), originally it was built in Middle East (Dubai sic!), but a copy of that is launched in Estonia, see: (<http://www.craftland.eu>). The one of the oldest Estonian crafts web shop is Disainimaja (<http://www.disainimaja.ee>)

13 The Creative Centre of Tartu has 5 rooms for rent, but we found that there are several autonomous “indie” cultural

There are a lot of booking portals<sup>14</sup>. Usually the online reservation systems take 8-30 percent commission fee. The hotel should keep in mind the calendar updating if all reservations is not going through some booking portal (usually some part of reservations are made via telephone or email). The hotel owner should keep an account of bookings by some other systems. We saw a lot of possibilities how to make booking easier! Now keeping in mind the importance of focusing – we decided to cast the sight on smaller companies (the bigger have a lot of possibilities for purchasing systems they need).

So we thought to be enough far to compose a business model of our own:

<p><b>PROBLEM</b></p> <p>It's difficult for guest-houses to rent rooms via internet, because existing booking tools are expensive and complicated</p> <p><b>REASON:</b> There are no pre-made autonomous renting modules that could be easily supplemented right on the already existing webpages.</p>	<p><b>SOLUTION</b></p> <p>Simple and low-cost booking plug-in that could be easily integrated to any webpage.</p>	<p><b>UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION</b></p> <p>Affordable booking module that is as simple to add to your webpage as it is to add a Facebook social plugin.</p> <p>Clients don't have to buy a expensive booking system or use different booking portals. They can rent rooms via their own webpage.</p>	<p><b>UNFAIR ADVANTAGE</b></p> <p>By offering basic solution that suits to all existing webpages we can reach to millions of small entrepreneurs.</p>	<p><b>CUSTOMER SEGMENTS</b></p> <p>Small and medium organisations, who have rooms for rent (hostels and quest-houses, motels, bed and breakfast places, manor houses, holiday homes, etc).</p>
	<p><b>KEY METRICS</b></p> <p>Monthly paying clients Sales growth percentage Visitors rate Conversion rate</p>		<p><b>CHANNELS</b></p> <p>Direct sales Social media Online sales - web shop Google adwords Agent-sales (conferences, seminars, client days).</p>	
<p><b>COST STRUCTURE</b></p> <p>Server rent, support, marketing, development, salaries</p>			<p><b>REVENUE STREAMS</b></p> <p>Module sales, monthly revenues, percentage of sales 200 euros for module per year OR monthly 20 euros</p>	

**Table 4.1** A business model for the idea of renting portal.

The main idea was that clients were able to install the plug-in on their own page in a special internet frame (iframe). Via this kind of plug-in customers could book rooms. Installing a plug-in should be as easy as a **Facebook like-box** plug-in (See the code in the box bellow). The aim was that every client should cope with this by herself!

```
<fb:like-box header="true" stream="false" show_faces="true"
width="250"
href="http://www.facebook.com/tamperemaja">&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;</fb:like-box>
```

**Figure 4.2** The code for Facebook like-box.

organisations who have the same problem. This could be an additional cash flow making way for these organisations suffer in continuous lack of money.

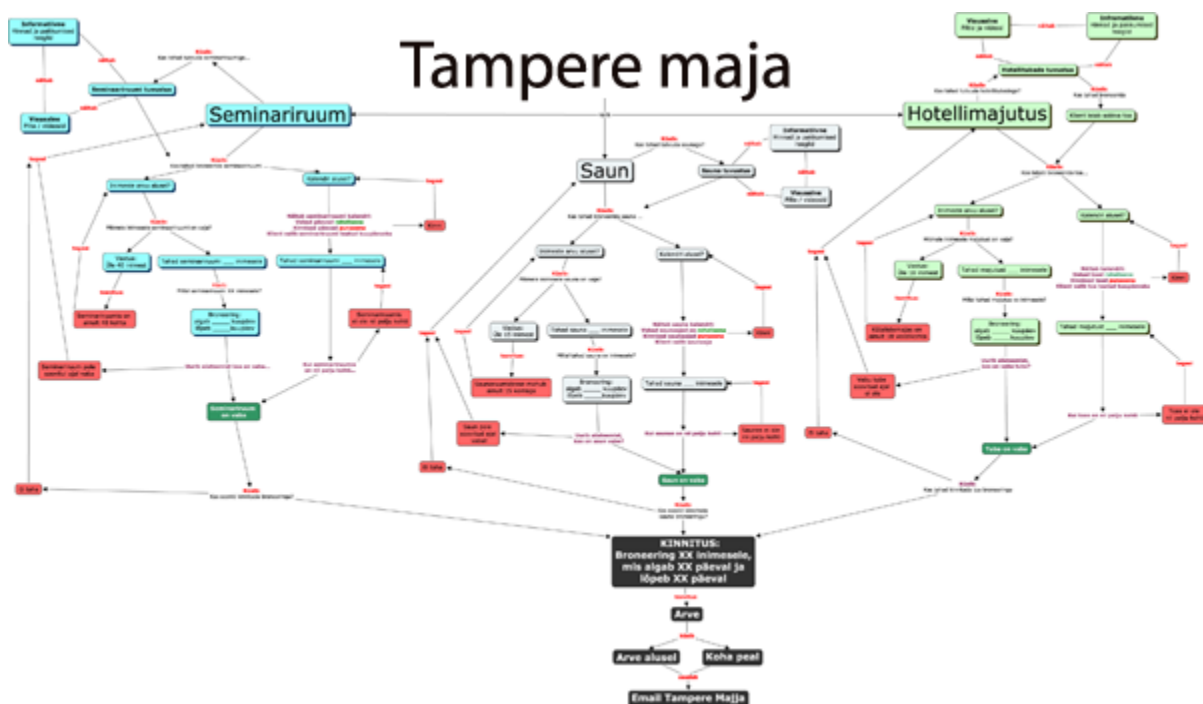
14 The leading online hotel reservations agency is Booking.com, established in 1996 (over 30 million unique visitors each month) Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priceline.com#Booking.com> (9.11.2012)



Picture 4.3. Logo made by Raul Kübarsepp

Now we were so far that we sat up a company, name is Netiket OÜ<sup>15</sup>. At the same time we launched our Facebook page<sup>16</sup> and a web page domain name ([www.netiket.net](http://www.netiket.net))

We notice that we will need an external help because we had not any programmer in our team. So we had to describe requirements for the product. After that, we send requirements to some IT-companies in Tartu<sup>17</sup>. For that we made a wire frame model of the booking system of Tampere Maja. The first discovery was the difference between rooms (daily based booking) and sauna and seminar room (hour based booking). This should take into consideration making database!



Scheme 4.1 A wire-frame model of the booking system for Tampere Maja.

The best offer came from Inditel Meedia OÜ. It implied a system installed in virtual server, where customers could do ordinary booking operations and use booking calendar. System will compile bills and send to the customers and to hotel owners. Technically it was made with javascript and based on AJAX. A big concern what we noticed at the very beginning was that they

15 The choosing the name of the company was a troubled puzzle! We had more than 250 suggestion for the right name. The procedure was so difficult and long-term greatly because we did not know exactly what was the mission of our company. We did not have even a clear product! We tried to choose a name undefined enough for future purposes. My own choice would have been NetshopBoys, but fortunately other co-partners remained their lucidity!

16 <http://www.facebook.com/LARStools>

17 . In our requirements is said, “LARS sales tools is a plug-in placed on the existing home page (like a module), it makes buying the local services and resources easier. It's like an online booking shop. Bookers could explore rooms and services and check if they are available. Technically it is like Facebook's Social Plugin – easy to install on the existing web page.

did not want to give us all rights for the code. We should be bound with the company for ever! And last – the price was 2000 Euros.<sup>18</sup>.

But in university was again highlighted we were not a proper Star Up without having all know-how in our team! We should have a programmer. Within a few weeks after active searching, we found an interested coder, he is Joel Arula from Tartu and working in PlayTech<sup>19</sup>.



**Picture 4.4** From left: Raul Kübarsepp, Joel Arula, Sakari Neuvonen and Pärt Ojamaa.

We liked the logo of LARS (an old and trustworthy man selling the products of the modern technology). In many feedbacks we heard the product name LARS do not describe anything, and moreover the slogan *Resources and services* is quite meaningless. We decided to launch a new product name – BookitButton! New logo should give an easygoing impression but tell exactly, what we are doing.



**Picture 4.5** The logo of our product.

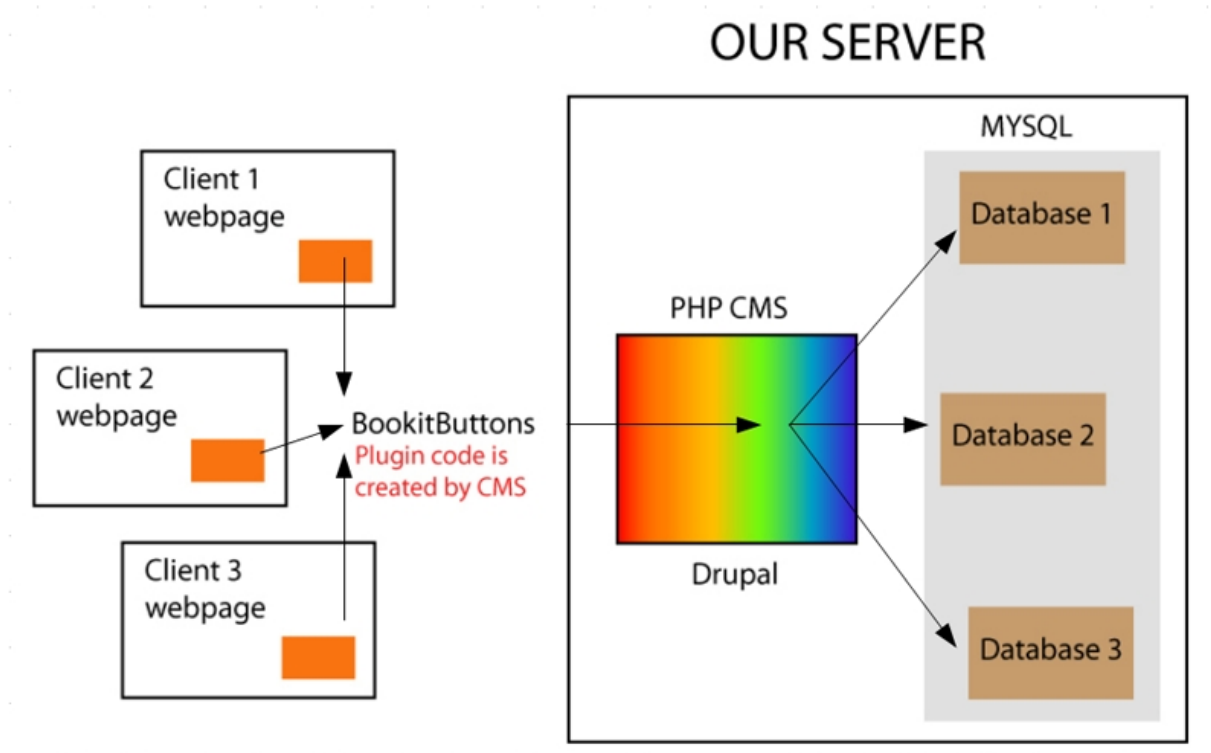
Same time we got an ambitious idea – because all booking information is in our server, we are going to get a general view of the booking market from a certain geographical area (on the level of the every city). We could utilize it for our clients advantages (marketing their rooms) and the same time we could have a central booking portal via it we could intermediate bookings and have revenue by this activity.<sup>20</sup>.

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18 . The price is almost OK because we calculated to get that much of funding from EAS (Enterprise Estonian: <http://www.eas.ee/en>)

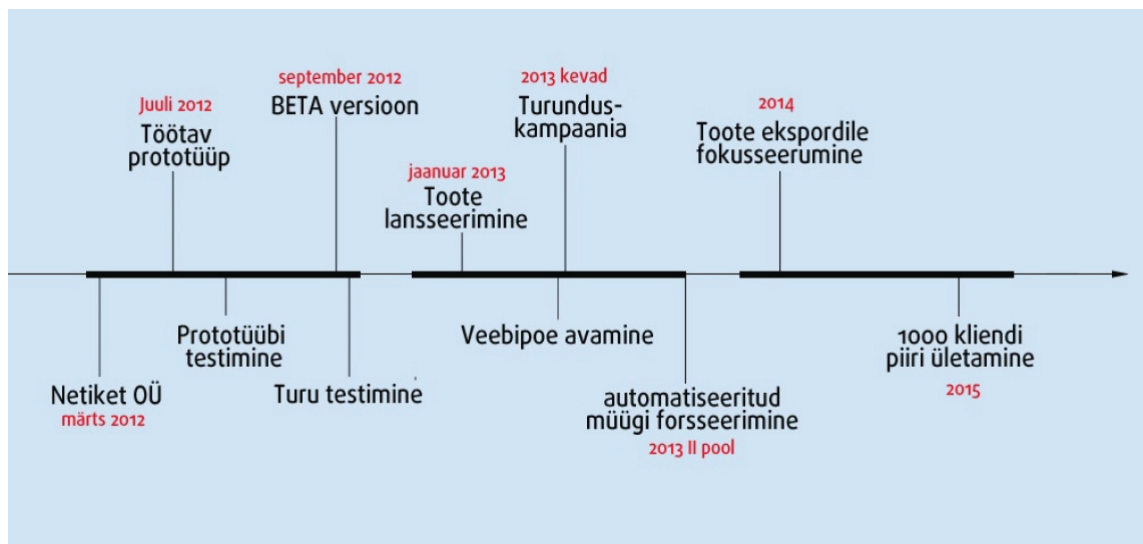
19 We send announcements to mailing lists and Facebook, but I met Joel accidentally in train coming back from Tallinn to Tartu. I just mentioned about the project, and he took contact afterwards wanting to join us because we have a real idea of the product and he saw a market for that.

20 . In a situation where we have thousands of clients, and we will cover a great part of market in a certain area, we could be as a “Google of rooms”. We could collect all information of rooms (like Google does with information placed in web) and use it in the central booking portal. We could effect on management of the big conferences and events (like governmental summits and Olympic games, etcetera.)



**Scheme 4.2 A Technical solution:** There are our plug-ins on the hotel web pages (orange rectangles) within an iFrame. Customers are able to use ordinary booking operations via the plug-in. The piece of information of the booking arrives to the database, and we so get a general view of the booking market.

We were quite excited about the idea. We even completed the business plan in a business model schooling organized by the Creative Centre of Tartu. In the end of the semester, we had to declare our thesis of the business model, and there were a commission, who gave feedback of our work! We used a business plan tool called iPlanner<sup>21</sup>. We made a road map, we promise that we had a beta version ready in the fall of 2012, and the launching of the product will happen in spring of 2013.



**Scheme 4.3:** milestones for our company

<sup>21</sup> [www.iplanner.net](http://www.iplanner.net)

We planned a rapid growth, till 2015 we should have 1000 clients and revenue in the end of 2017 is 7,6 million Euros! (See Scheme 4.4 bellow).



**Scheme 4.4** A hockey-stick model for the revenue of our company.

The members of the commission gave feedback of our business model.

- 1) our product can be copied easily;
- 2) product development is unfinished, but during the further development process “there are a lot of possibilities to improve booking tools in an unexpected direction”;
- 3) the team has all important know-how to work with the product;
- 4) there is too little communication with potential clients (no marketing research or customer inquire has made), though the importance of its is highlighted in the business plan. Members of commission recommended surveying the booking process in different target group companies. Do they really need for this kind of solution? Are they willingly to adopt new IT technology in booking? How big are the costs of the adopting the product and do the clients have any benefits to adopt our product? Can we find a way to show the benefit for customers by adopting our product (a measurement static for advantages)?
- 5) In case of exporting the product, they recommended surveying markets where this kind of product could be extremely desired, for example in Cuba, where exists a well working home accommodation net work, but not yet properly working internet system!

In summary, commission found a lot of shortages in our product, and they estimated our product as “moderate” degree. We did not get depressed. The next step was to have a click-able model (a working model) and the first prototype.<sup>22</sup> The programmer started his work, but very fast it got enough clear that we are not capable to finish it in the spring. There were hard to find an open-source-based ready-made booking calendar tools which would be suiFigure for us.

At the same time, we sent an application for **Summer Startup** event<sup>23</sup>. It would last all summer, there were many mentors and the aim was to have a working prototype till Autumn. We had a good feedback from the organizers of the event –, but it was extremely clear for the team that we had not any possibilities to spend all summer in Tallinn.

<sup>22</sup> . We started to build it up on Drupal platform and using open source code.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.startupgarage.eu/blog/summer-of-startups-program-takes-off>

Finally, we found a truly similar product as ours. There is a company called **eDream**<sup>24</sup> in Tallinn who has worked out also a booking module. Difference with us is that their product is meant to bigger hotels. The licence of their product costs 1475 Euros (+ purchase tax) and every month should be paid for technical support 50 Euros, moreover, they take 4 percent intermediate fee! This is much more than we had planned with our product, and it will cost more than a company like Tampere Maja is capable to pay.

In the Register of Companies (*Äriregister* in Estonian) have information about revenues of the companies. There are available their numbers on their first business period (September 18 2010 – December 31 2011). Regardless of quite big sales revenue (115 191 Euros) they had a lot costs: Goods and services for 41 380 Euros (that means code?), operation costs for 63 789 Euros, labour costs for 23 369 Euros and, so they balance sheet result was 7416 Euros negative!

## eDream Hotels BOOKING™ Hotel home page booking engine

*Good booking engine brings MORE SALES!*

### **eDream Hotels BOOKING™ Engine is JUST WHAT YOU NEED:**

- visually enjoyable and simple to use for the visitors
- speaks the customer's language
- sells rooms, packages and value added additional services
- easy to manage and with direct connection to hotel management system its always updated!

**Picture 4.4** A screen capture form the homepage of the eDream.

In that moment, we were at a point that we should produce a real working prototype and knocking on the first clients door. I felt we painted us into a corner. A basic marketing research will be the next step.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.edreamhotels.com/en/home>

## 5 Research Methods and Reliability of the Responses

### 5.1 Research paradigms

In the case studies, I used an **interpretive** research paradigm. These paradigms allow an autobiographical approach, where the researcher tells narratives about his own experimental immersion in the research. In that part, I used an **inductive** research approach. Because having experimental information based on 10 years working experience in Tampere Maja, I was able to compile basic questions for the questionnaire.

Of course in questionnaire part, there is used the old **positivism** paradigm. It holds that all collected information should be understood, through the employment of a scientific method and aims to create a theoretical neutral language of result by stripping hypotheses and theories of subjective content.<sup>25</sup> And in that part, the deductive approach came along when analysing the result of the questionnaire.

My Master Thesis contains also two research methods: **qualitative** (case studies and in the open questions of the questionnaire) and **quantitative** (in the closed questions). The first method has an introductory role. The Tampere Maja is quite typical proponent of its size chosen for this inquire. The problems (complicated booking management) and the advantages (possibilities to use modern technology) of the bookings came up clearly with this case study<sup>26</sup>.

The second case study emphasised the importance of market research and also it described the visions and attitudes of the “outsider” who are willing to solve “inside” problems. But with this case study, there was also described the hard-wired mechanisms in booking process<sup>27</sup>.

The second research method was quantitative. There were three compose phases<sup>28</sup>: 1) pre-testing 2) pilot survey and 3) the final questionnaire. In the pre-testing phase, I compiled the first main questions for an oral testing. The feedback was good (in the test group, there were two lodging entrepreneurs from Pärnu and Tartu). During the pre-testing phase, I got new ideas for supplementing the questions.

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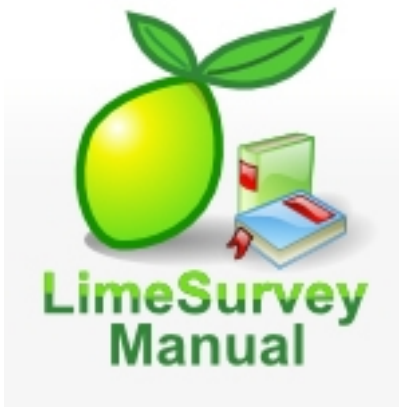
25 Collins, H. 2010. Creative Research, p. 40.

26 Hirsijärvi etc. 2010. Uuri ja kirjuta, p. 126. A case study should bring up the typical phenomena of the field of inquire. See also Carlson, Elizabet, D., Engerbretson, Joan, C., Chamberlain, M. 2005. The Evolution of Theory: A Case Study. International Journal of Qualitative Methods 4(3) September.

27 Collins, H. 2010. Creative Research, pp 146-153.

28 Collins, H. 2010. Creative Research, pp 128-131.





[www.limesurvey.org](http://www.limesurvey.org)

After tested the questions in pre-phase, I turned to Mr **Rein Murakas** a lector of University of Tartu. He gave me good pieces of the professional help. In co-operation with him, I compiled a pilot survey. The platform for the pilot survey was a Google form, and it was sent to six addressees in Tartu, Tallinn, Pärnu and Jõgeva. In this phase, I was assured the questions were understandable and accurate. After analysed the feedback and with the help of Mr Murakas, I finished the final questionnaire using a special open source survey tool (LimeSurvey)<sup>29</sup>.

## 5. 2 Principles of addressees

The first idea was to send the questionnaire as wide as possible because of a global approach of curriculum.<sup>30</sup> Very soon transpired it is more reasonable to concentrate in **one geographical area** by the time. The presumption was that the general situation, like practice of using of the internet and booking systems, will vary too much in different countries. By using too extensive base of addressees, it would be too hard to get enough adequate and comparable data.

This approach served also an exhortation for iteration which is highly emphasised in our curriculum. The idea is that the same act is repeated over and over again. Each repetition of the process is called an “iteration”, and the result of an iteration are used as the starting point for the next iteration.<sup>31</sup> This study can be seen as an iteration phase to marketing research of our Netiket company.

The Estonian email addresses were collected in the Register of Economic Activities<sup>32</sup>. There is a possibility to undertake a search by counties and area of activities (accommodation services in this case). The collection of the Finnish email addressees was picked in different places. The main was a Finnish companies' portal ([www.suomenyrikykset.fi](http://www.suomenyrikykset.fi)), it is owned by a publisher Alma Media.

The addresses were picked also in official tourism portals (i.e. [www.visitfinland.fi](http://www.visitfinland.fi)). Every email address was checked by trying to find the company's web page. In this phase is also checked to size of the company (for a reason of the target group control). The geographical deviation was also taken

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29 [www.limesurvey.org](http://www.limesurvey.org)

30 On the questionnaire planning phase, I and Mr Murakas thought to concern with some smaller European countries like Cyprus as a first target area. I collect 80 email addresses from the portal of official Cyprus Tourism Organisation (<http://www.visitcyprus.com/wps/portal>). That happened before the economic crises of Cyprus showed up. According our estimation, the political situation in Cyprus worsened quickly, so we decided to give up and took Estonia and Finland for piloting inquire country.

31 Bloom, Stephen, B., Esik, Zoltan. 1993. Iteration theories. New York.

32 <http://mtr.mkm.ee/default.aspx?s=otsiettevotja>

into consideration; the addresses were picked from the most northern parish of Finland till to the most southern parish of Estonia.

### **5.3 Covering letter of the questionnaire<sup>33</sup>**

Mrs **Tiina Viin**, a lecturer in University of Tartu and my mentor in the fields of tourism, was concerned about shortage of the responses (she asserted companies will get a lot requests for participating in different inquires especially in spring time). We decided to give a bait to the addressees, and promised to send back the results of the study. In the covering letter, we tried to convince the addressees by saying: if they will help in my study, they have better booking systems by taking into consideration the result of this inquire.

The other convincing method for increasing the response rate was openness. In the introduction part of the questionnaire, I described that the questionnaire is a part of my Master Thesis for the University of Tartu and Viljandi Culture Academy and its curriculum of Design and Development of Virtual Developments.<sup>34</sup> Then I precisely explained the intention of the study (to find out what booking systems are used).<sup>35</sup> Of course I promised to use confidentially information I gather via inquire.

### **5.4 The structure of the questionnaire**

There were seven sections of questions in the questionnaire. The order of the sections was abided by the logical arrangement of booking management.

- 1) Marketing;
- 2) Managing of bookings;
- 3) Managing of invoices;
- 4) Online booking channels;
- 5) Clients;
- 6) Information about lodging establishment;
- 7) Feedback

The total amount of the questions was 23; there were both closed (15) and open (8) questions. The aim of the questionnaire section of **marketing** (questions 1-4) was to get information about the channels used in marketing and the role of the company's own web site in marketing. A presumption was the booking management system could be part of the marketing strategy.

The next questionnaire section was about **booking management**. The aim of the questions (5-9)

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33 The questionnaire in Estonian: <https://www.ut.ee/survey/index.php?sid=26196&newtest=Y&lang=et> and the questionnaire in Finnish: <https://www.ut.ee/survey/index.php?sid=14737&newtest=Y&lang=fi>

34 [www.ddve.ee](http://www.ddve.ee)

35 Collins, Hilary, 2010. Creative research, p.128 about the appearance of questionnaire.

was to get know how companies have organized the managing process of the bookings. The whole system contains three phases: announcement – confirm – billing.

So, in the third questionnaire section was about **billing management** (questions 10 – 11). The purpose was to get information about clients billing habits and tools which was used in the process of compiling the bills. This factor is important for the requirements of the booking system (the bill forms and the tools they were made are an essential part of a booking management tool).

Fourth section was about **online tools**. In this section (questions 12 – 15), both tourism information portals and booking portals were taken into consideration. The aim was to get information how widely portals were used in practice, how important they were in the companies' point of view.

In the fifth section, there was a question about the share of inner and outer tourism (question 16). This is also important for getting know the characteristics of clients. The sixth section is about the **addressees** themselves (questions 17 – 21). There were questions about the type, size and amount of the beds of the addressees. By this question, it is possibility check if the addressee belongs to the target group or not (all addressees belonged).

The last section (questions 22-23) is about feedback. Mostly feedback was supportive: [Eid52] *“It's truly nice from you that you dare to work with this topic!”* and [Fid139] *“The structure of the questionnaire was nicely compiled. It was a pure joy to answer questions like this, and we are waiting for the results of the questionnaire”*. Of course, there were some negative feedback also [Fid106] *“I've answered in more stupid questionnaires, also”*.

## **5.5 Cultural dimensions between Finland and Estonia**

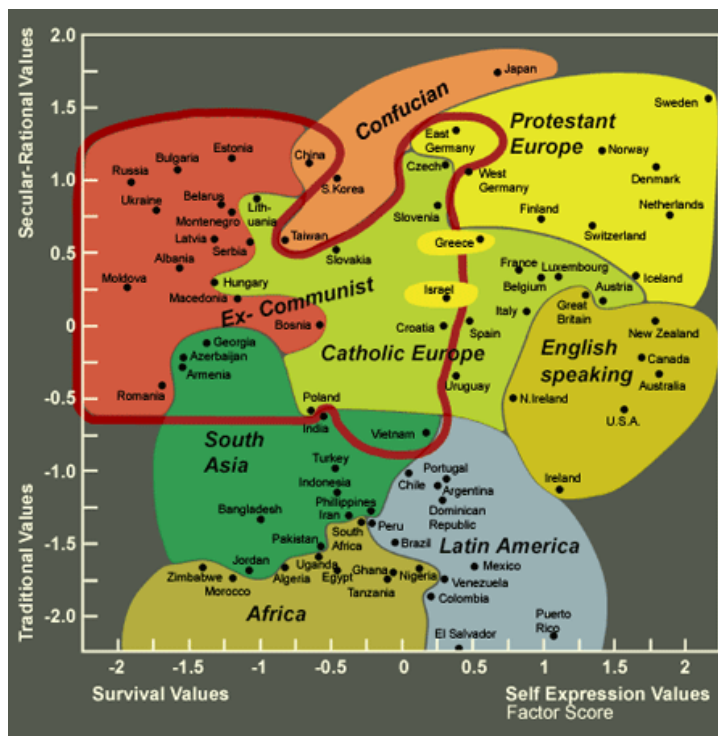
In every international customer return is essential to take account the background of the target countries. In general Estonia and Finland belong in the same zone of the civilization. (Samuel P. Huntington)<sup>36</sup>, though the big difference is in history of 21. century.

Inglehart place Estonia in the group of Ex-Communist countries<sup>37</sup>. In the level of Traditional Values, Estonia gets a higher score than Finland, it means that the common values in Estonia are a little bit more secular and rational than in Finland. But in the level of Survival – Self Expression Values Finland belongs clearly in the group of Protestant countries. It means that Finland is more tolerant, and there is more trust for other people. See Figure 5.1 bellow.

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36 Huntington. Samuel, P. 1997. The Clash of Civilizations. New York: Simon & Schuster.

37 Inglehard, R, Welzel, C. Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005: page 63.



**Figure 5.1:** The World Value Survey Cultural Map 1990-2004 (Source Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005: page 63.

Though Estonia is placed in the Ex-communistic group, there can be seen an obvious shift toward the Protestant European group. A general trend is that by the process of modernization and the growth of welfare, the values will shift to the self expression values.<sup>38</sup> So, it could be extremely obvious that in 2013, there cannot be found any big differences between Estonia and Finland in the general field of values. This is valid also for an environment where entrepreneurs of my inquire act.

## 5.6 Reliability of the Responses

As mentioned before, the questionnaire was sent in Estonia to the 656 actual email addresses. The number of full responses is 143. In the questionnaire tool, there is also able to check, how many addressees have been open the questionnaire. The number in Estonia is 355. So, 40 % of these who have open the questionnaire have also sent the full response back. In Finland, the questionnaire was sent to the 570 actual email addresses. The number of the opened questionnaire is 160, and the number of full responses is 83. In Finland, 55 % of those who have opened to the questionnaire have also sent it back as a full-filled response.

The percentage of the responses can be taken in stride (in Estonia 22% and in Finland 15%). A bait for getting response was a promise to send back the result of the inquire and convince that the result will help the target group for having a better booking system. In Estonia, 62 addressees gave

<sup>38</sup> Inglehard, R., Wezel, C. 2008. *Modernization, cultural change, and democracy*, Cambridge University Press.

an email address for that purpose (44 %). In Finland, the same number of the email addresses was 65 and so, the percentage of the companies who will like to have result, is 77. In Finland, the interest to have the result sent back, was almost twice as big as in Estonia. This activity can be seen also as one example of factor of the higher self expression values.

The addressees have two ways to send feedback. Some feedback was sent back by email. From Estonia, there were 14 email feedbacks was sent and 8 from Finland. In questionnaire, there was also a feedback form. From Estonia addressees have filled 30 feedback forms and from Finland 15 feedback forms. There were only few times sent feedback that were beside the point of the questionnaire (like “Oh, what of hell questions you are asking!”). The total number of open feedback is 67. The number of feedback where there are also some relevant content is 41. As a “content feedback” was counted like “This kind of questionnaire is aimed at hotels and motels who have numbered rooms”. For us as a tourism farm there was nothing!” Irrelevant feedback was counted also 26 forms where are the feedback like “I have sent the answers, yet” or “Thanks for you to making such questionnaire” or “Questions are compiled very well!”). There were much more irrelevant from Estonia than from Finland.

In summary, the sent answers can be regarded as valid and believable. The most of the addressees took up a favourable attitude to the questionnaire as a whole. If they started to answer they did it till to end, and all answers were able to understand.

## **5. 7 Development of Tourism in Europe**

The crisis of the world economy has also had an impact on companies in Estonia and Finland<sup>39</sup>. Usually is thought that this kind of crisis has the biggest impact on foreign tourism, but for example in 2011 in the European Union more than three of four of trips made by tourists are domestic<sup>40</sup>. In 2010 in Finland the share of domestic tourism was higher than average in European Union and the share of Estonia was lower especially the share of long domestic trips (See Appendix Figure 5.2)<sup>41</sup>. This fact can be found also in my questionnaire. Recently the development in tourism in Estonia and Finland started to grow<sup>42</sup>.

The biggest cliff in the tourism sector was in 2009. It seems that both countries have been able to climb from that cliff, especially Estonia has. See Appendix Figures 5.3 and 5.4 bellow.

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39 “The sparseness of clients, the fall of inner tourism. It's hard to get a living wage. You have to work hard, and try to enjoy your work. It's hard to get workers and pay for them. But still keep going hoping to retrieve country live.” Eid209.

40 Domestic tourism. Eurostat 2011.

41 See Figure: Share of domestic holiday trips, Eurostat 2011.

42 [https://www.tem.fi/files/27053/Matkailustrategia\\_020610.pdf](https://www.tem.fi/files/27053/Matkailustrategia_020610.pdf) and Maaturism Eestis

## **6 Responses**

The questionnaire requests have been sent both to Estonia and to Finland. In the first phase, 711 requests have been sent to Estonia. The sending time was between in 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of March. About 80 of addresses were inaccurate or not in use. So, the addresses of the returned emails were checked out and tried to find accurate ones. In the remainder phase, 656 requests were sent between in 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of April. Nine of the sent emails came back. The number of the succeeded transmission of emails to Estonia were 647.

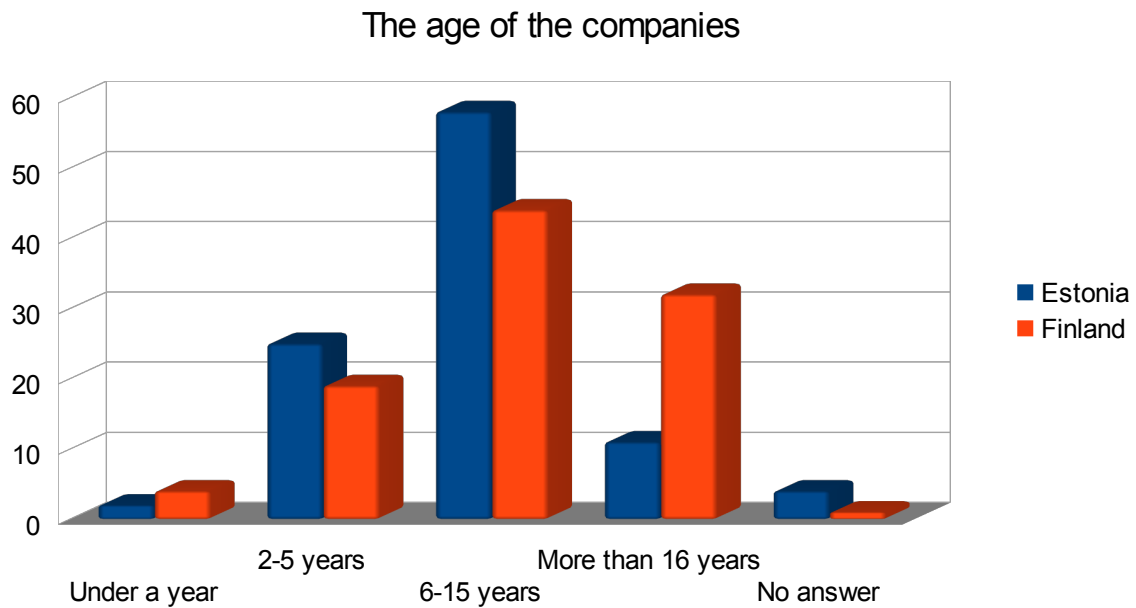
In the first phase of sending emails to Finland, there were 507 requests between in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of April. 38 of these came back. After checking and finding new Finnish companies, the total amount of emails were 570. Five of these came back. The final amount of the accurate emails in the remainder phase to Finland were 565 between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of April.

In Estonia 143 responses were sent back, it means 22 % of the sent emails. From Finland 83 responses were sent back, it means 15 % of the sent mails.

### **6.1 Companies**

The target group of the questionnaire is small and medium size companies in both countries. The size of the respondents' companies was almost the same. In Estonian material, the average number of the rooms was 18, and in Finland 14 (Median in Estonia is 8,5 and in Finland 10). In the numbers of beds, the picture was little bit different. In Estonia, the average number of beds was 35 but in Finland 59.

As is mentioned, there were 143 answers from Estonia and 82 answers from Finland. The most of the companies in Estonia were 6-15 years old (58 %), in Finland the dispersion were more regular because the share of older companies were larger (32 %) than in Estonia (11 %). The explanation is history, in Estonia de facto there is extremely few company older than 20 years. See Figure 6.1 bellow.



**Figure 6.1.**

## **6.2 Analysis of the Responses**

In the first analysis phase, the responses were analysed based on the plan of the questionnaire (See Chapter Method of the questionnaire – research paradigm). The basic method in this phase is quantitative. In this phase, data analysis is an ongoing activity, which not only answers my question but also gives me the direction for discussion in the next chapter.<sup>43</sup>

As I described in the earlier chapter, the questionnaire is divided sections. The first section of the questionnaire is **marketing**. The aim is to find out, what is the share of the virtual marketing channels (i.e. homepage, portals, Facebook and other social media) and how much the traditional marketing channels are used (i.e. newspaper advertising, own brochures and other paper publications).

At first there are questions about marketing tools. The respondents were asked to estimate each tool separately, the tools are:

- 1 ) homepage
- 2) Tourism portals
- 3) Booking portals
- 4) Facebook
- 5) Other social media
- 6) Email sales campaigns
- 7) Blog
- 8) Telephone sales

<sup>43</sup> Collins, Hilary. Creative Research. AVA Publishing 2010, p. 173.

- 9) Telephone catalogues
- 10) Advertising in newspapers
- 11) Advertising in other paper media and tourism publications
- 12) Own brochure
- 13) Personal contacts
- 14) Participating on tourism messes

### 6.3 Homepage

Homepage seems to be the most famous marketing channel in both countries. In Finland, 96 % of the respondents said they use the homepage as a marketing channel and in Estonia 93 %. In Finnish responses, 73 % estimated the homepage as the foremost important channel, and in Estonia 72 %. See Appendix Figure 6.1 Homepage.

In the questionnaire, there was a question about the age of the last version of the homepage. In both countries, the last version was quite young (less than 4 years). More than 50 % of Finnish respondents said their homepage was even younger than a year, in Estonia that percentage was 20. In Finland, only 2 % of the respondents' homepages were older than 7 years, in Estonia that percentage was 5. See Appendix Figure 6.2 Homepage age.

An interesting difference between target countries was also a fact that Estonian companies prefer to make the homepage by themselves. The question was: “Did you make the homepage by yourself or with your team of the company”. In Estonia, 63 % of the companies answered in the affirmative on this question, when in Finland only 32 % answered in the same way. See Figure 6.2 bellow.

Did you make the homepage by yourself or with your team of the company

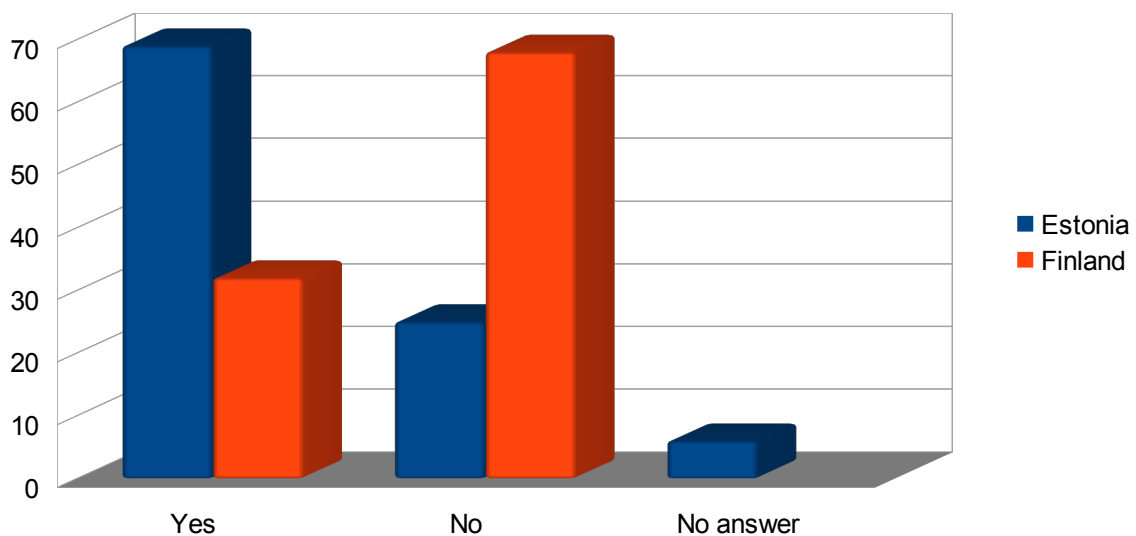


Figure 6.2.



It is also important to know how actively the companies update their homepage. It seems that in Finland companies update their homepage much more actively than in Estonia. The question was: “*Do you update the homepage materials (at least once a month)?*”. One of third Finnish respondents answered in affirmative on this question, but only 39 % of Estonian respondents did the same way. See Appendix Figure 6.3.

Some active attitude towards to own homepage can be illustrated by the question about how often respondents check of the user statistic of homepage. More than a half of the Finnish respondents said they tracked this kind of statistic. In Estonia, on the contrary, 51 % of the respondents said they don't track of the user statistic at all. See Appendix Figure 6.4.

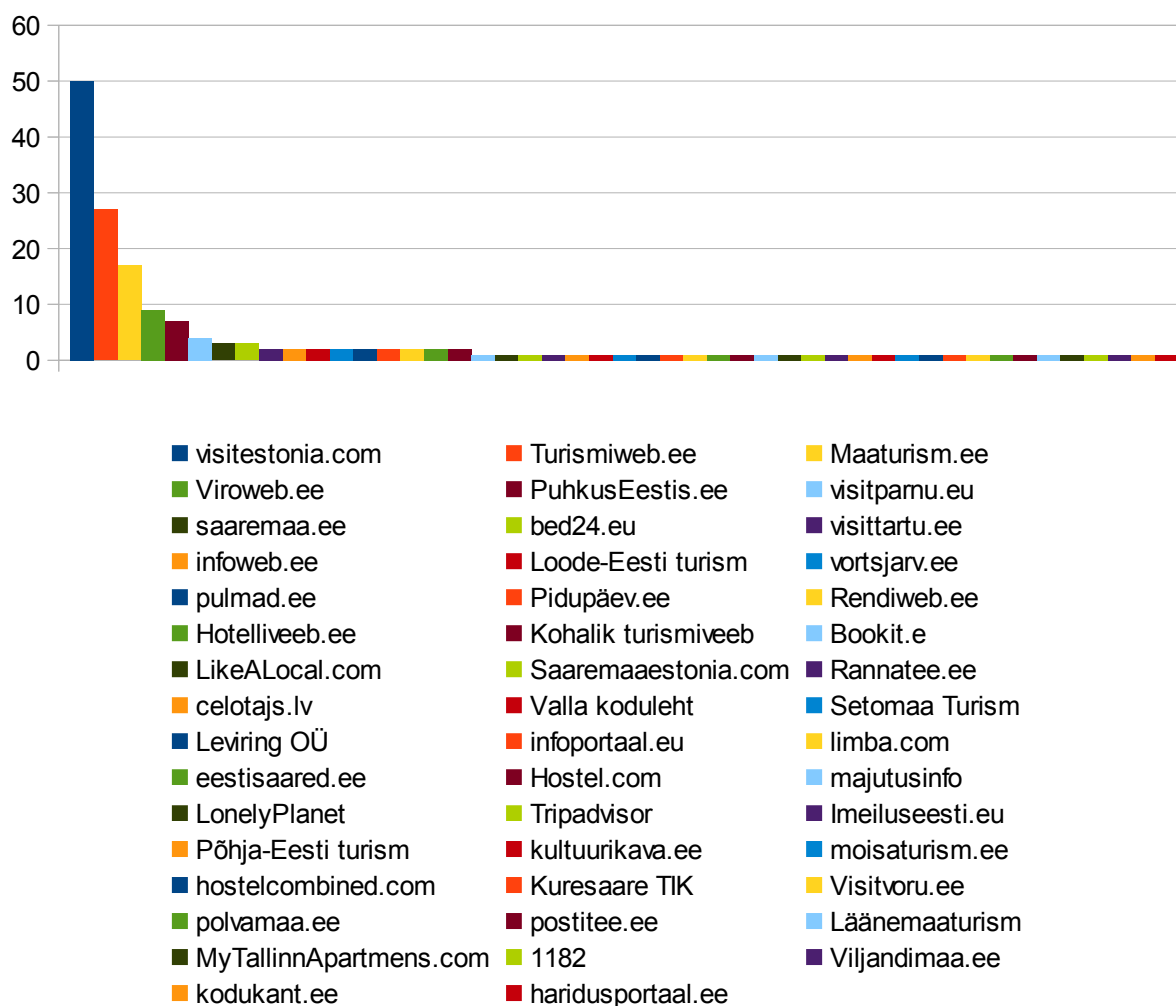
## **6.4 Tourism Portals**

With the tourism portals, the picture of the target groups was a little bit different. Tourism portals (i.e. [www.visitfinland.fi](http://www.visitfinland.fi) and [www.puhkaeestis.ee](http://www.puhkaeestis.ee)) are more relevant marketing channel in Estonia than in Finland. In Estonia, 37 % of the companies estimated tourism portals as the foremost marketing channel (together “foremost” and “also” the share was 89 %), but in Finland, even 37 % of the answerers said they do not use them at all! See Appendix Figure 6.5 about tourism portals.

There are several tourism portals, some of these are official and the their aim is a promoting tourism as a whole. Some are commercial like [www.turismiweb.ee](http://www.turismiweb.ee) or [www.huvila.net](http://www.huvila.net). They earn they money by presenting their materials, but via them it is not able to book the lodging objects, though, usually they have a booking form for sending booking request to the owner.

In the Estonian material, there were mentioned 48 different tourism information portals. The most popular was the official tourism portal Visitestonia/Puhkaeestis (50 times); the second in the popularity was [www.turismiweb.ee](http://www.turismiweb.ee) (27 times) and the third was [www.maaturism.ee](http://www.maaturism.ee) (17 times). Only two times were mentioned the company does not use any tourism portals. See Figure 6.3 bellow about the tourism portals in Estonia.

## Tourism portals in Estonia



**Figure 6.3.**

In Finnish material, there were mentioned 41 different tourism information portals. Also in Finland the most mentioned was the official tourism portal [www.visitfinland.fi](http://www.visitfinland.fi), but the share of its was more than 6 times smaller than in Estonia. The next mentioned were Lomaovi, nettimökki.com and visittampere (each was mentioned 4 times). An interesting fact was that four times were said that companies do not use any portals (as many time as was mentioned the most popular portal visitfinland.fi). See Figure 6.4 bellow about the tourism portals in Finland and the blue column in the end of the Figure.

## Tourism portals in Finland

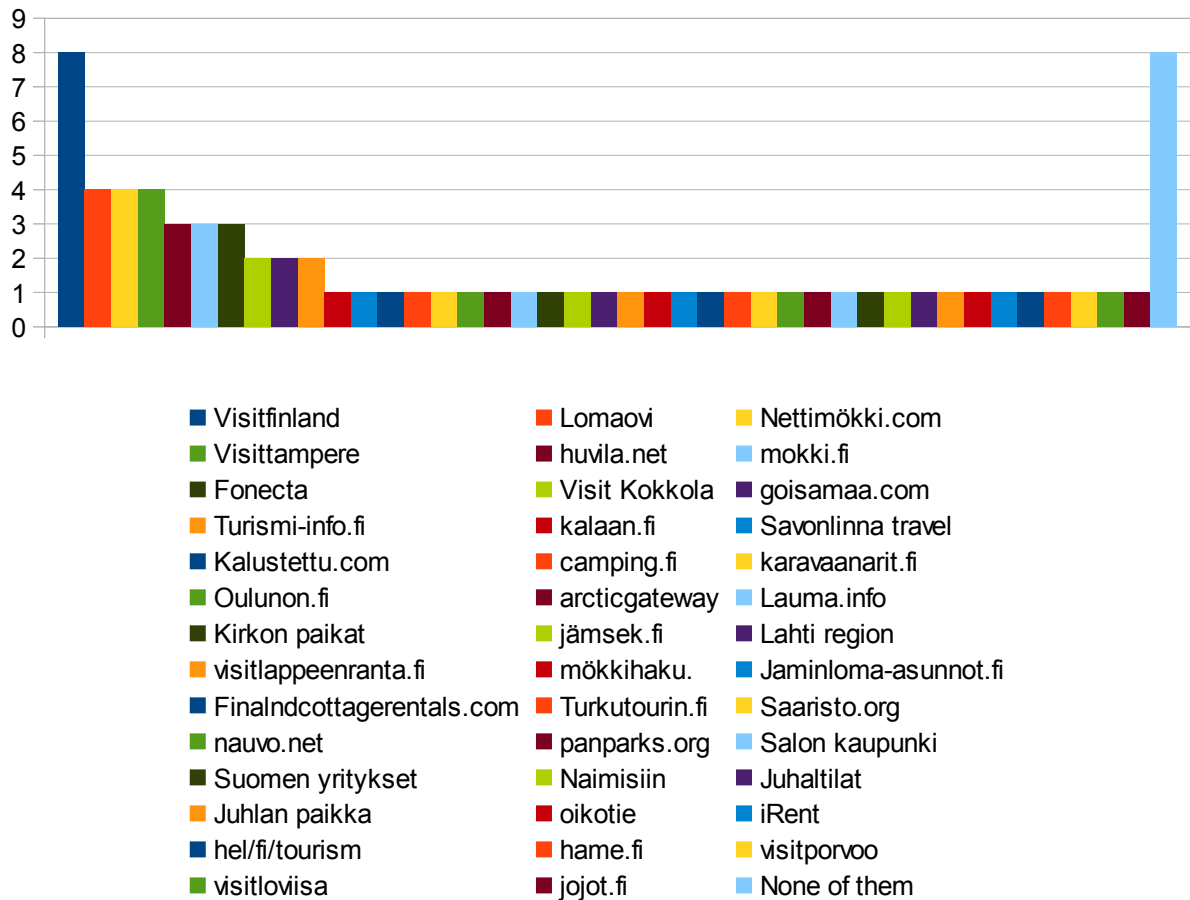


Figure 6.4.

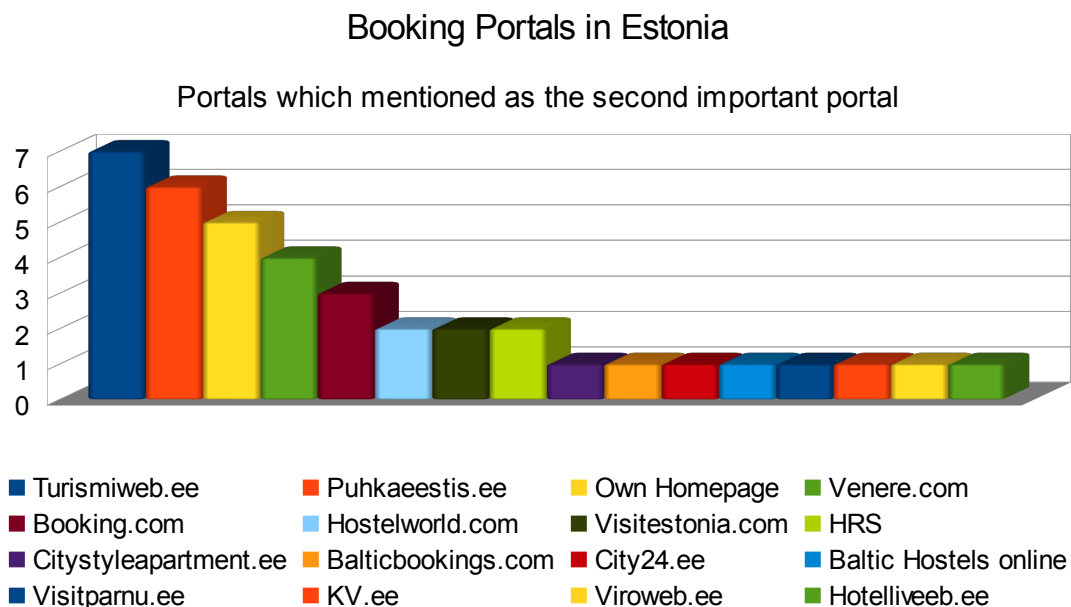
### 6.5 Booking Portals

Booking portals, on the contrary to the tourism portals, were a little bit more valuable for the Finnish companies than Estonian. In Finland, 57 % of the respondents said that they use booking portals. In Estonia, the same percentage is 47. On the other hand, a bigger percentage of Estonian respondents (45 %) said they do not use any booking portals, when the same percentage was 39 in Finland. See Appendix Figure 6.6.

The most popular booking portal both in Estonia and Finland is Booking.com. In the questionnaire was asked the five most essential portals and in both countries Booking.com got the first place of the popularity. The popularity of the Booking.com is very clear in Estonia. The total amount of the answers of this question were 47 and 41 of these brought up the Booking.com as the most influential portal. See Appendix Figure 6.7 about Booking portals in Estonia.

When asking a second important booking portal the dispersion will show up. The Turismiweb

was the second important, and in some answers it was also brought up as the third and fourth important portal. Generally the third popular portal in Estonia was Puhkaeesis.ee. See Figure bellow 6.5.

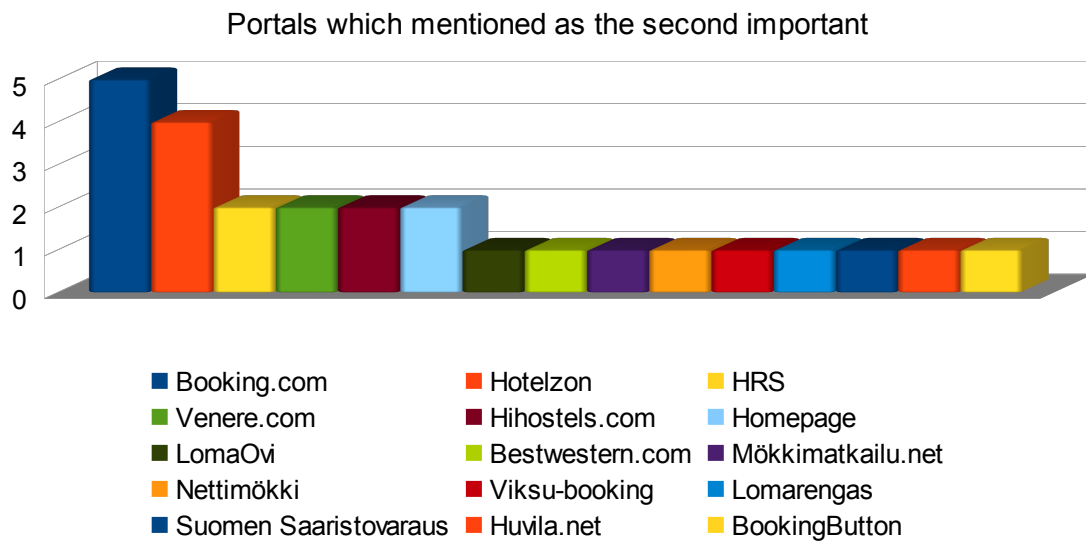


**Figure 6.5.**

In Finland, the first place of Booking.com was not so clear than in Estonia. Total amount of the respondents in this question were 43 and 26 of these brought up the Booking.com as the most important portal. See Appendix Figure 6.8.

Interesting is that in Finland three of answerers bring up the their homepage as a second important marketing channel, at the same time in Estonia no-one brings up the importance of their homepage. See Figure 6.6 bellow.

## Booning Portals in Finland

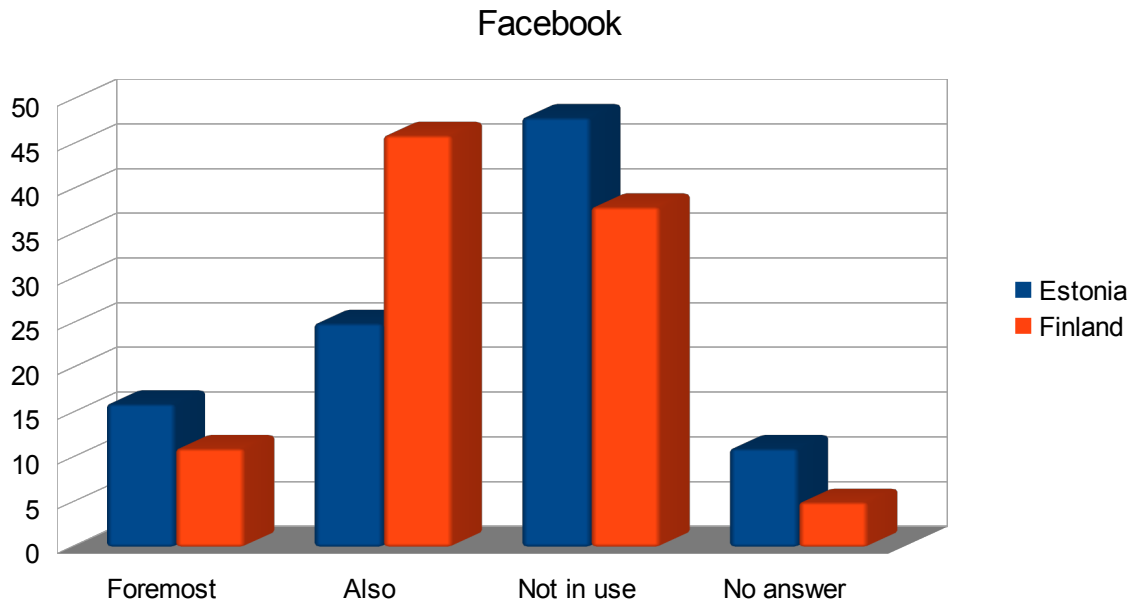


**Figure 6.6.**

The dispersion of the portals in Finland seemed to be larger than in Estonia. In Finland within 43 answers there were mentioned 30 different portals, at the same time in Estonia there were 47 answerers and mentioned 33 different portals.

### **6.6 Social Media**

Facebook has not yet risen as an important marketing channel neither in Estonia nor Finland. Although the use of Facebook is in Finland a little bigger. In Estonia Facebook is an important marketing channel for 41 % of the companies and in Finland 57 %. In Estonia, 48 % of the responses said they do not use Facebook in marketing at all, and in Finland 38 % of companies answered the same way. See Figure 6.7 bellow.



**Figure 6.7.**

Other **Social media**, like Twitter, LinkedIn and Blogs were not used in marketing. 82 % of the respondents in both countries said they did not use other social media at all in the marketing. Neither in Estonia nor in Finland the blogs are not used as a marketing channel. See Appendix Figure 6.9 and 6.10.

The picture was a little bit different when asking the use of the email campaigns as a marketing channel. In Finland, 49 % of companies have used emails in marketing, in Estonia only 21 %. In Estonia, 66 % of answerers said they do not use emails in marketing. See Figure 6.8 bellow.

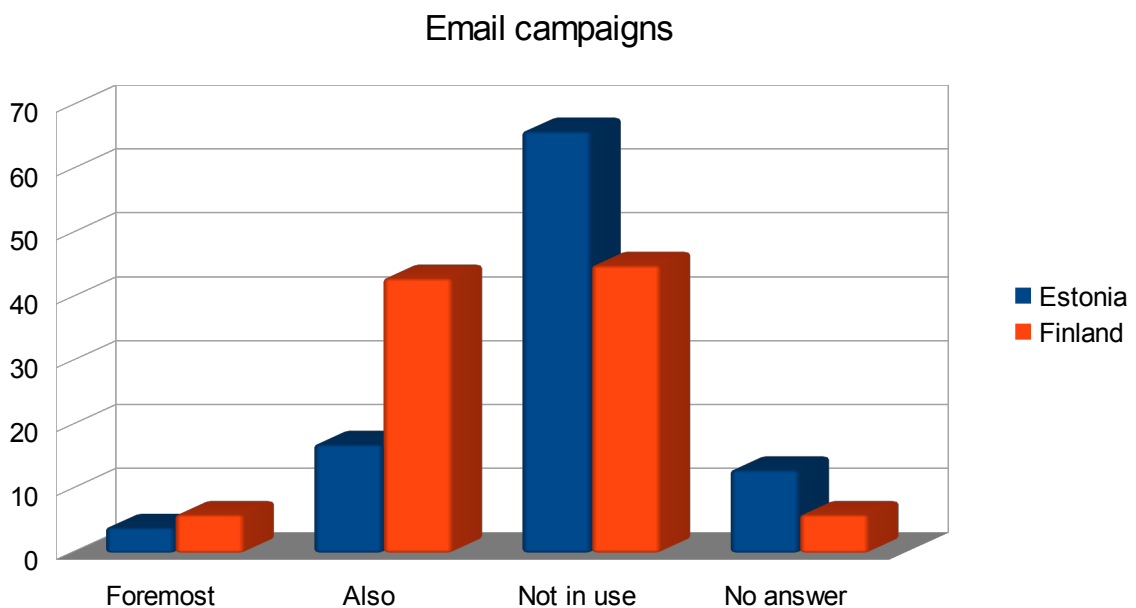


Figure 6.8.

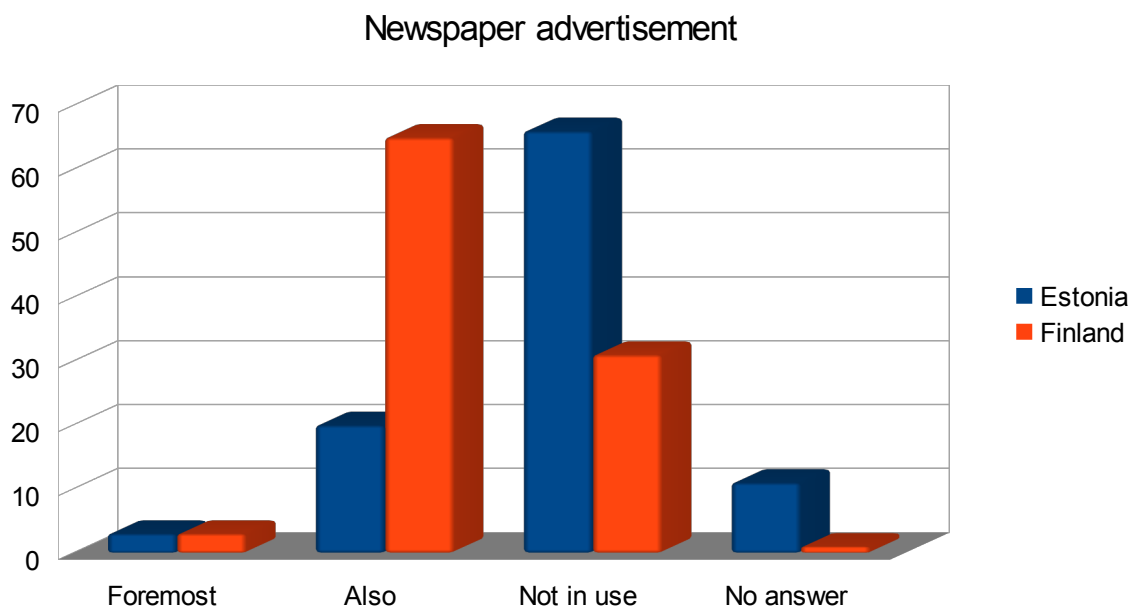
## 6.7 Traditional Marketing Channels

In this questionnaire, the channels like telephone sales, telephone catalogues and advertisement in newspapers were counted as the traditional marketing channels. For the essence of booking management system, it is important to inquire how many companies are able to use “new” channels and how much the “traditional” are still in use.

**Telephone** sales were not estimated as an important marketing channel neither in Finland nor Estonia as a marketing channel. Though, it was used a little bit more in Finland (25 %) than in Estonia (7 %). In Estonia, 82 % of answerers said they do not use telephone sales at all, when the same percentage was 67 in Finland. See Appendix Figure 6.11.

On the contrary in Estonia, the **telephone catalogues** were used a little bit more in marketing than in Finland. In Estonia, 41 % of answerers said they use them (48 % say they do not use them at all). In Finland, 66 % of respondents said they do not use catalogues at all. See Appendix Figure 6.12.

The picture was quite different with the traditional **newspaper** advertising. It was much more popular in Finland than in Estonia. In Finland, 65 % of answerers said they have advertisements sometimes in papers, on the contrary in Estonia 66 % say they use this channel at all. See Figure 6.9 below.



## Figure 6.9.

The picture of advertising in the professional **tourism media** was not so different between target countries. 77 % of the Finnish answerers said they had advertisements in tourism media. In Estonia, 70 % of companies do advertising. See Appendix Figure 6.13.

In Finland, own **brochure** of the company was more common than in Estonia. In Finland, 66 % of respondents said they use own brochure in marketing. In Estonia, 50 % said they have own brochure. See Appendix Figure 6.14.

The participating in **tourism mess** was not truly popular in both countries. In Estonia, 50 % of respondents said they do not participate in messes, and in Finland 48 % said the same. See Appendix Figure 6.15.

The answerers bring up the importance of the **personal contacts** in both countries. Even 39 % of respondents said, the contacts were the foremost marketing channel (in Finland 19 %). In Estonia, only 4 % of respondents said they do not use personal contacts in marketing and in Finland 5 %. See Appendix Figure 6.16.

In the questionnaire, there was also a possibility to mention “an other marketing” channel. One Estonian companies mentioned “*Our most important marketing channel is SEO [Search engine optimization]*” [Eid145]. Also Estonian respondents [Eid29] mentioned [www.cherry.ee](http://www.cherry.ee) as a marketing channel (it is a portal for daily offers, the aim is that clients gets a good price offers, and companies have a possibility to marketing themselves because there is a quite big daily traffic).

Finnish respondents added “*We tried to have newspaper articles about our events made by journalists*” [Fid41]. Another respondent added “*Advertising boards, adds on roadside, letters to regular customers sent by chain. Co-operation with the other local lodging companies, personal contacts of the employees*” [Fid47].

## 6.8 Conclusion of the Marketing Channels

All channels are used to some extent in both countries. Clearly the main marketing channels were own homepage. In Estonia, the tourism portals were also mentioned as an essential marketing channel and in Finland on the contrary, booking portals were mentioned as an important channel.

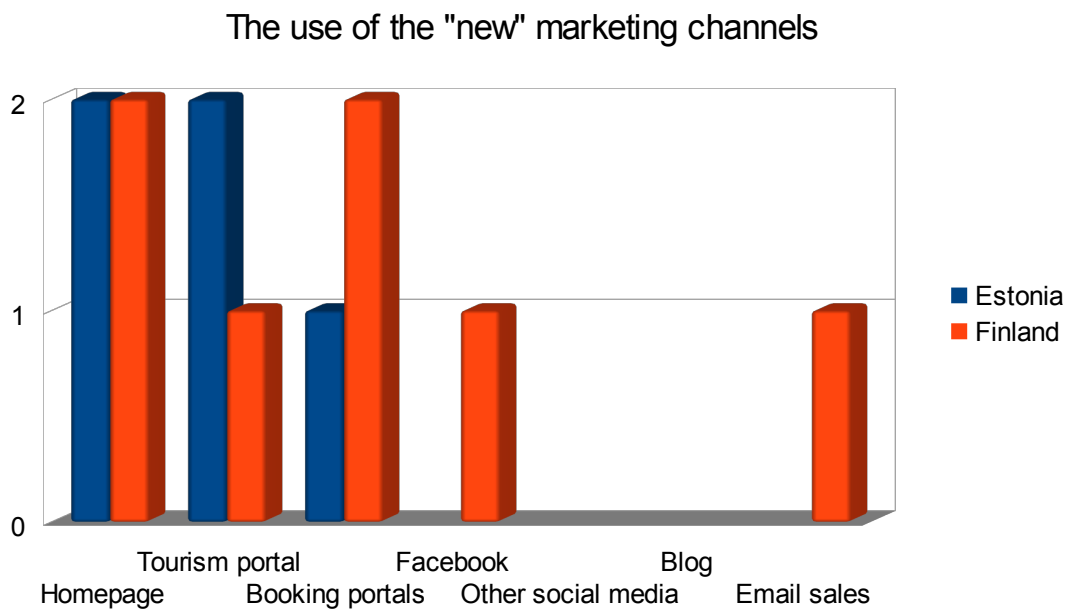
In both countries, personal contacts were mentioned as an essential marketing channel. Finnish respondents mentioned also an advertisement in newspapers and own brochure as an important marketing channels.

It is interesting that Estonian companies are more willingly to build up the homepage by themselves than in Finland. The reason could be thriftiness (economy reasons) or activeness (more



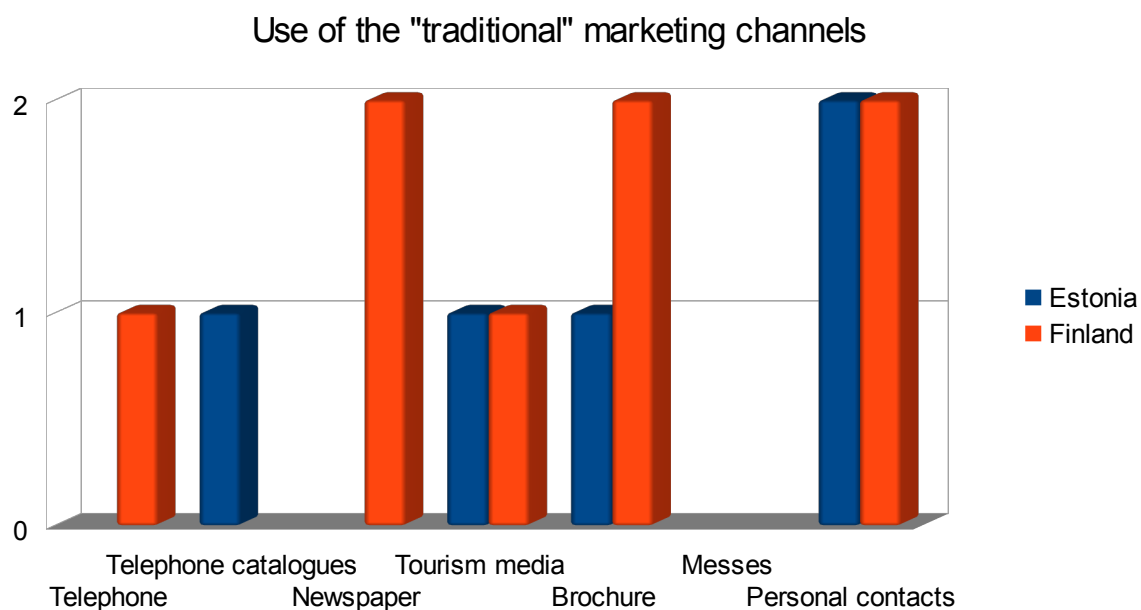
capable to use a modern technology). At the same time, Finnish respondents said they update their homepage information more actively than Estonian.

The uses of marketing channel can be estimated by giving different points for mentioned channel. If some channel is said to be as an essential channel, it will get 2 points. If it is just in use, the channel will get 1 points, and if it not in use, it will get zero points. Estimating the channels by this way, the use of the “new” marketing channels will get to the Estonian respondents 5 points, and Finnish respondents will get 7 points. See Figure 6.10 bellow. The differences will show up in the use of social media because in Finland, the Facebook and the email sales have been used a little bit more than in Estonia.



**Figure 6.10.**

Estimating the “traditional” channels by the same way, Estonian respondents will get also 5 points, but Finnish respondents will get 8 points. See Figure 6.11 bellow. Also, using the traditional marketing channels, Finland is little bit active because the Finnish respondents use the newspaper advertising and own brochure a little more actively.

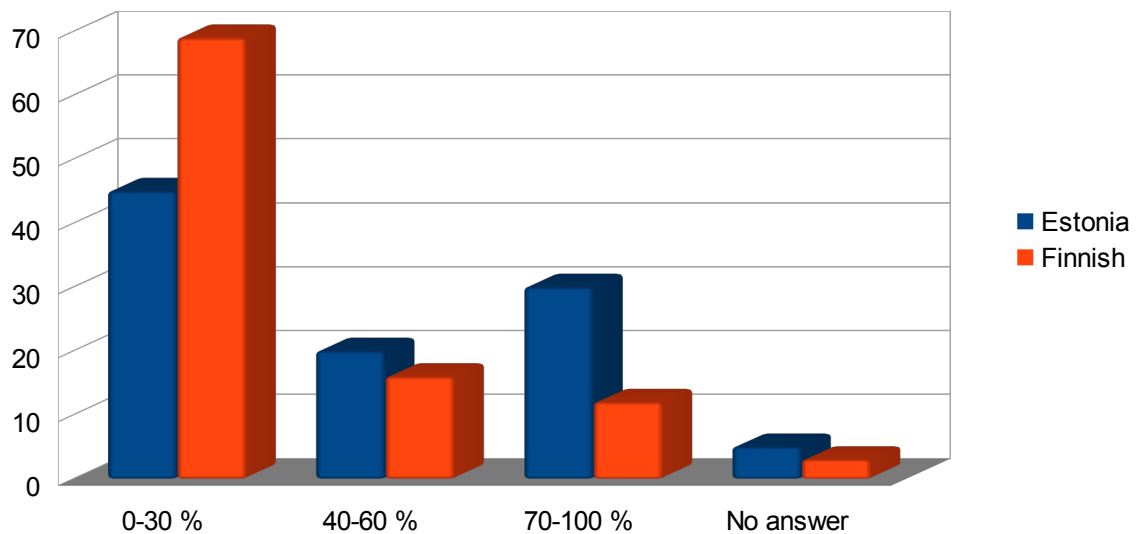


**Figure 6.11.**

## **6.9 Booking Management**

Every booking process begins by receiving an announcement for a room or a place. In the questionnaire, the process of booking management was inquired as a whole. At the first, it is important to know the share of the foreign clients – this information helps in the analysis of the booking management tools. The most of the clients of Finnish and Estonian companies were domestic. Though in Finland the share of the domestic clients was a little bit higher. 69 % of the Finnish companies said the share of the foreigners were under 40 %. In Estonia, the same share was 45 %. See Figure 6.12 bellow

### Foreign clients

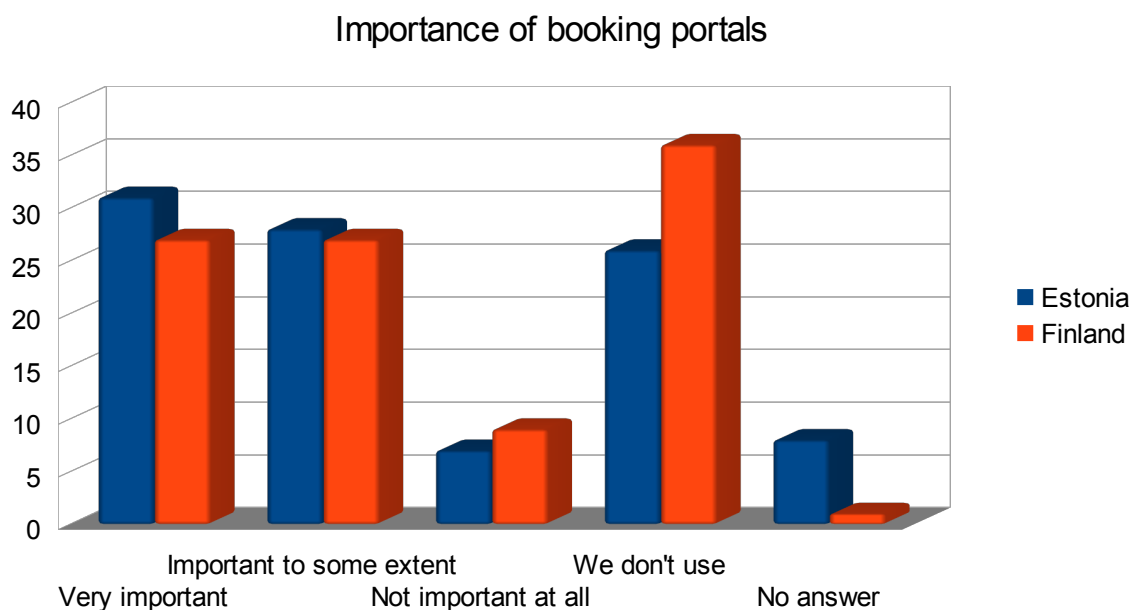


**Figure 6.12.**

The most common client for the target companies was a domestic tourist. What are the booking channels they use? More accurately, how will the bookings usually arrive to the entrepreneurs?

The most popular booking channels were **telephone calls** and **emails**. In Finland, 99 % of the respondents said the bookings come usually via telephone calls and in Estonia the same percentage was 92. In Estonia, on the contrary, emails are the most powerful booking channel, 99 % of respondents said the bookings will come also in that way. See Appendix Figures 6.17 and 6.18.

The **booking portals** are quite significant booking channel in both countries. In Estonia, 31 % of the respondents said that booking portals are a foremost important booking channel, in Finland the same percentage is 27. In Finland, 45 % of respondents said they do not use portals or booking portals are not important at all in marketing In Estonia, the same percentage was 33 %. As a conclusion, the booking portals were a little bit important booking tool in Estonia than in Finland. See Figure 6.13 bellow.



**Figure 6.13.**

### **6.10 User Experience of the Booking Management Tools**

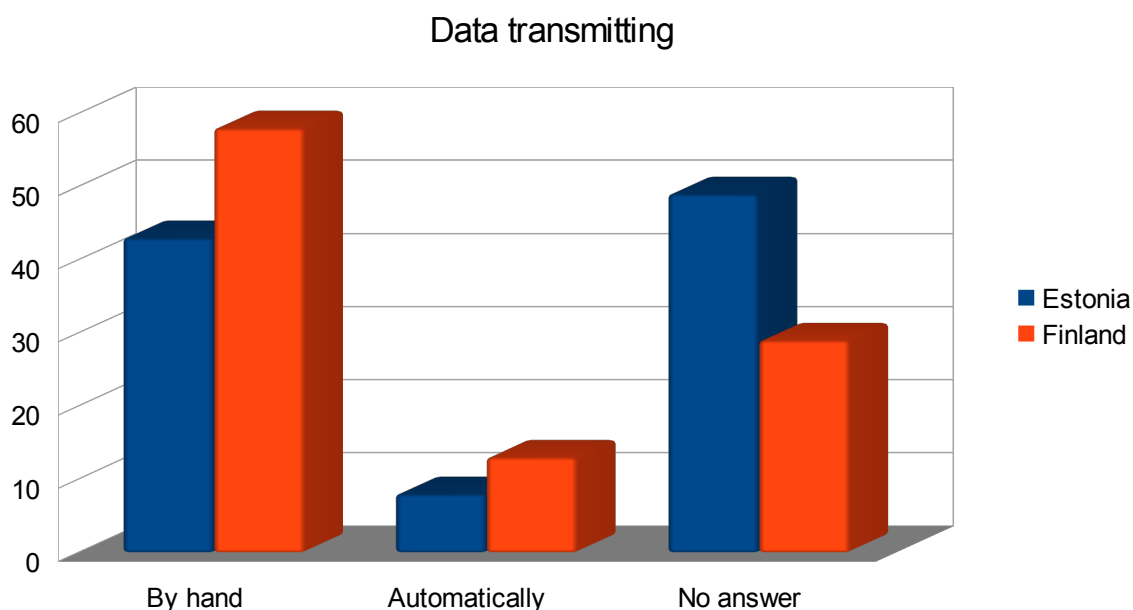
In the questionnaire, there was also inquired the user experience of the booking portals. In Estonia, 56 % of respondents did not answer in this question and with the Finnish respondents the same percentage was 48. This could mean that they do not use these tools at all. The share of rejected answerers was quite well in correlation with the result of the importance of booking portals in both countries.

In Finland, there were satisfied in every sense (19 %) or basically satisfied (31 %). In Estonian, 35 % of the respondents said to be satisfied (20 % satisfied in every sense and 15 % basically satisfied). In the questionnaire, there was more precise questions about client management experience, usability of the calendar, and room and tax management tools. The level of satisfaction varied between 22% - 46 %. See Appendix Figures 6.19 – 6.22.

The lowest satisfaction got the co-operation of the booking portals with the other systems. In both countries, only 5 % of the respondents were satisfied of the co-operation and in Estonian 22 % of the respondents said their system has not a possibility for co-operation. In Finland, the same percentage was 42. See Appendix Figure 6.24.

When in the questionnaire was asked: *do the information of the bookings arrive automatically or by hand to the booking management system*, 58 % of the Finnish respondents said the information transmitting has to carry out by hand (automatically only 13 %). In Estonia 43 % of the booking

data transmitting has to be carried out by hand (automatically only 8 %). See Figure 6.14 bellow.



**Figure 6.14.**

A **homepage form** is not a truly serious channel for arriving bookings. In Finland, 51 % of the respondents mentioned a homepage form as an important channel, in Estonia the same percentage is 46. See Appendix Figure 6.24.

Surprisingly, so called **walk-in clients** were significant in both countries. They are usually clients who accidentally drop in to the office and ask if there are available rooms. Estonian respondents said the importance of the walk-in clients as a booking channel was 70 %, and in Finland the same percentage was 73. Even 11 % of the Estonian respondents said the walk-in clients were the foremost important booking channel. See Appendix Figure 6.25.

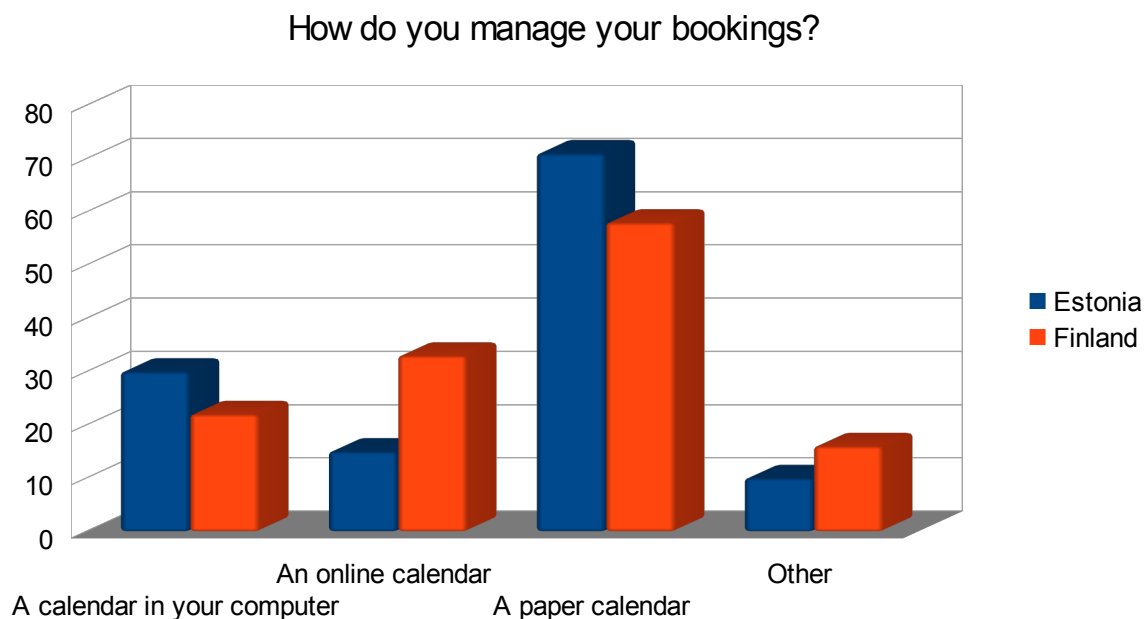
The **fax** was not an essential booking channel. In Finland, 65 % of the respondents said that they do not use fax as a booking channel, in Estonia the same percentage is 56. Some of the respondents said that some bookings via Booking.com will arrive still by fax. See Figure 6.26.

### **6.11 Booking Management after a Booking has arrived**

When a booking has arrived, the next step is to handle it some how. For the target groups, (small and medium size lodging entrepreneurs) the main booking management tool is a **paper calendar** or a paper notebook. The picture is almost alike in both countries. In the questionnaire, there was a

question about how the target groups manage bookings. In Estonia, 71 % of respondents said they use a paper calendar, in Finland the same percentage was 58.

**A calendar in the computer** was used by 30 % of the respondents in Estonia and 22 % of the respondents in Finland. An **online booking management calendar** was used 15 % of respondents in Estonia and 33 % of the respondents in Finland. See Figure 6.15 bellow.



**Figure 6.15.**

In the questionnaire, there was a possibility also to name the tools they use for managing bookings. In Estonian material, (76 respondents) a paper calendar / notebook was mentioned 31 times. A computer file is mentioned 6 times, Hotis 4 times. Opera (1), Lodgix (1) Fidelio (1), online / google calendar 4 times, extranet 4 times, Excel 3 times, homepage application 1 time and homepage calendar 1 time.

In Finland there were 48 respondents, 18 times a paper calendar / notebook was mention as a main booking management system. A booking computer application was mentioned 4 times, homepage application 3 times, homepage calendar 2 times, computer file 2 times, phone calendar 1 time, white board 1 time, Google Drive (1), Opera (1), Joomla Jomres (1).

In questionnaire, there was also a possibility to describe respondents' booking management process more precisely. In Estonian material common process is: “[We have] a doubled piece of information in separate calendars because I don't take a computer always with me.” [Eid85] or “I

*will write the booking down in my notebook because I don't trust in computers for the technical reasons.” [Eid89] or “At the moment we cope with a [paper] calendar, but I have thought out to go over an electronic version.” [Eid113]*

The picture in Finland is quite similar. *“We write down a booking note in a manual booking system made by my self and fill in a A5-size form with clients contact and booking information.” [Fid41]. “Some of The bookings will come automatically to booking system (Opera), and that's all. If a booking receive in some other ways, the booking system is updated. Paper versions will be put in a folder located in a safe (because of credit card numbers). An addition for the question number 9: Some of the bookings will come automatically some must be handled by hand. At the moment, the share of automatic booking is quite small, but in 2015, we hope, automatic bookings should be more.” [Fid47].* All open responses can be found in Appendix.

## **6.12 Conclusion of the Booking Management Tools**

The most of the booking information in both countries will arrive by **telephone calls** or **emails**. Share of the **booking portals** was started to grow also in small and medium size lodging companies. At the moment, roughly one third of the bookings arrived via booking portals and the Booking.com seemed to be the most popular tool for having bookings. Obviously booking portals are quite new, and the companies did not to adjust of using them – the user experience was not very satisfied, yet.

A big problem is that all kind of booking data has to handle by hand between different booking management tools. That could be an urgent reason why paper calendars are still used so widely. Other reasons for using paper calendar they feel convenient and safe. *“A paper calendar is a bombproof system. So far, all of the three workers use a pencil-based “system”. If they keep in their minds to write down **all** bookings, this will work - if the house will not burn down.” [Fid129].* Evidently one reason is also that the companies have still not found any handy electronic calendar.

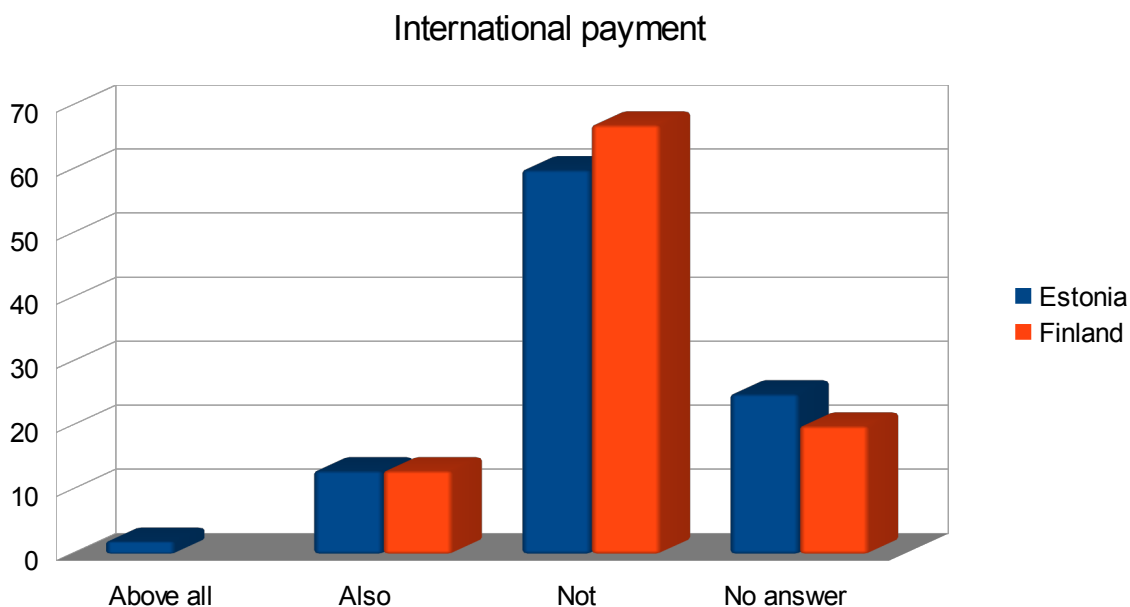
## **6.13 Billing System**

The end part of the booking management process is the billing. The ways how the companies usually make the bills should be take account in booking management system. For the target group of this inquire, the most common were paying by **cash** and **bank transfers**. See Appendix Figure 6.25 and 6.26. In Estonia, even 94 % of the respondents said their clients pay in both ways. In Finland, the picture was little more dispersed. 85 % of respondents said their clients will pay by

cash and 74 % said the clients use bank transfers. See Appendix Figures 6.27 and 6.28.

Billing via **voucher** was not common. See Appendix Figure 6.29. In Estonia, 32 % of the respondents said they clients do not use vouchers, and in Finland the same percentage was 29. **Debit cards** were used little more often in billing than **credit cards**. Generally, card payments were more popular in Finland than in Estonia. In Finland, 55 % of respondents said their clients use debit cards, in Estonia the same percentage was 41. In Finland, even 61 % of the respondents said their clients use credit cards, when the same percentage in Estonia is 39. See Appendix Figures 6.30 and 6.31.

The international payment system was not yet the way how the clients of the target group pay their bills. In Finland, 67 % of the respondents said that their clients do not use international payments, and in Estonia the same percentage was 60. See Figure 6.16 bellow.



**Figure 6.16.**

In the Estonian material, 110 responses described in the open question how the companies usually compile bills. The most common tool was **Excel** spreadsheet program, 42 % of the respondents mentioned Excel as a bill making tool. 12% of respondents mentioned they use accounting companies or an own bookkeeper for making their bills. In Estonian material, the most popular bill making tools were Hotis (6 times), Fidelio (2), Hotsoft (2), Hotellinx (2), Hansa (2), Merit (2), Lodgix (1), Noom (1), Boom (1), Rax (1), Erply (1). Own application was mentioned two times and an extranet application once.



In Finnish material, there were 68 responses. **Excel** mentioned only 3 times. The most popular was making bills “by hand” (16 times), second popular was a bank's accounting system (8 times) and bookkeeper (5 times). Hotellinx and Passeli were mentioned 4 times, Avistax (1 time), Hansa World (1), Archimedes (1). MicroSoft's Word program was mentioned 2 times, and Google spreadsheet once.

### ***6.14 Conclusion of the Bill Management***

The traditional ways of payments, paying by cash and bank transfers, were the most common. Surely the international payments will rise in the future. At the moment, 2 % of the respondents in Estonia said the international payments are a way of above all.

**A real problem is as mentioned earlier, the data transmission between the booking system to booking management system. Usually all booking management system have a possibility to compile bills. Because quite many companies do not use any electronic booking system, the majority of the bills were still made by hands (using some spreadsheet program).**

## **7 Discussion**

### **7.1 Truth value of the Results**

In the Finland, there were 888 hotels, 173 camping places and 1609 other lodging companies<sup>44</sup>. Some of hotels and other lodging companies are too big for my target group and some lodging companies are too small for that they even have an email address or a web page, or they are not active at the moment. The share of the real valid companies for my study is hard to estimate, but all of these 570 companies to whom a request were sent were active, and they had a homepage. Regardless of this, rate of Finnish responses (15 %) was too low for real statistic analysis.

In the Estonian Register of Economic Activities, there were 1590 different lodging companies. Also, there, it is hard to estimate the real amount of the active companies, but my intention was to find them all. So, all 647 addressees were accurate and belonged to active target group companies with homepage. The rate of the responses in Estonia was 22 %, and this can be considered as a satisfied result for having a truth-worth statistic analysis.

Even if, the statistic base, as a whole, was not statistic bombproof, the material (closed and open questions of the questionnaire and case studies together) was valid enough for having a clear picture how the booking management has been organized in the target group. Moreover, this study is on the degree of the MA, and its extension has strict limits.

### **7.2 Character of the Target Group Companies**

In the questionnaire was asked the type of the company (hotel, hostel, motel, camping, guest-house, bed and breakfasts, holiday house or village). Because of all respondents belonged in the target group (accommodation room number less than 50) and because of the limited amount of the respondents for making enough validated statistics analysis of the companies, the respondents have not been divided into the separate type of lodging company but have handled as entirety.

Tampere Maja was an example for a lodging company with many other activities (it is a culture centre with gallery, sauna, seminar room). Because the target group companies were all quite small in size, the accommodation service not need to be their only activity. This is highly true for tourism farms and other companies located in parishes (i.e. renting boats and bikes or having extra services

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<sup>44</sup> [www.suomenyrikykset.fi](http://www.suomenyrikykset.fi)

like hunting or other travel activities). This kind of by-products and services should be taken into consideration in booking management systems at least in some extent.

An other factor connected with the size of the target group companies is the meagreness of employees. In feedback often came up the matter that there is only one person who have to organize all activities of the company. *“It's no worth for me to answer in that long questionnaire. For me, all is very simple. We got a homepage, and that's enough. The correspondence goes by sending emails. I will make an offer, and if it is accepFigure on the client point of view, he will send me a confirmation email. Afterwards, he will pay by cash or debit card”* [From an Estonian email feedback].

Because the activities are so many and workers are so few, it is hard to find time to seek new solutions and change old habits. The advantages of a new system should be so apparent and measurable before an entrepreneur in a small company is willing to adopt a new one.

The costs of the booking management system are relevant issue for companies not having large reserves. A booking management system should be affordable and easy to use. An Estonian respondent crystallised: [Eid318] *“The cheapest and most comforFigure ways for an entrepreneur to handle his bookings are to do it via own home page application. For that, there should be a simple and working solution adapFigure for most of them. And the most important thing – the downloading should be free.”*]

Because of lack of employees, time and resources, many entrepreneurs have made systems by themselves. It contains a homepage, a booking management system and a billing tool. This kind of home-made applications can be found usually more in Estonia than in Finland (for example, 63 % of Estonian respondents said they have made their homepage by the force of the own company).

That is also a reason why spreadsheet programs (i.e. Excel, Google Drive) were so widely used. When entrepreneur knows a spreadsheet program enough well, he will get a feeling about **independence**. [Eid97] *“In a calendar notepad has all days marked there, so there is no possibility for double booking. 10 rooms + camping, it is enough for us, I suppose. If the client doesn't appear, I will drag the booking down and make a mark. If booking come through tourist offices, I'll print it out and keep it till the clients coming day. If they don't show up, I will heat an oven. I'll store up the correspondence of letters with clients in a computer till the day of the accommodation. So easy it is! At least, I don't have to check out some autonomous computer system which can fall and makes me nerve by trying to control the use of my time. Booking systems will require to update information every day. Who makes all work in here country side at the while.”*

### **7.3 Booking Management**

From the, all material arose a fact that the most widely used booking system is a paper calendar on the Figure or the wall. This is handy; it will work in every situation (i.e. within power cut or problems with the internet connection). This is a pure reliability reason for having so.

A good booking management should be a process within all phases of marketing, booking management and billing. At the moment, no of respondents have this kind of system. As many respondents complained, all information between systems has to carry out to another by hand. [Eid55] *“As we mentioned in question before, we wrote down the dates in the calendar by hand. We had a fail in computer called BOOKINGS, we make all by hand. Nothing works automatically.”*

A booking system should be related with habits of clients. Some entrepreneurs think they clients do not use online applications: [Fid99] *“We don't have any online booking system. Why? The reason is in the customer base. First of all, our clients are families with children. The other segments of clients are the regular customers and groups.”*

Also billing system should be part of the good booking management. The most common system is to compile bills by hands (spreadsheet) and carry them out to a bookkeeper. Some booking management system is able to connect to some accounting program, but this is quite rare practice for the target group of this inquire.

## 8 Conclusion

The most widely used booking management system is a paper calendar. The most popular marketing tool is own homepage of the company. Many entrepreneur is willingly to compile the homepage by himself especially in Estonia. Tourism portals are for guiding the clients to the companies' home pages, usually they do not have a go-in-action button (clients are not able to book a room via tourism portals). The popularity of them seemed to fall; they were replaced with Google.

The most widely used booking portal in both countries is Booking.com. It seems to get a market leader position in this geographical area. There are several other portals were used especially in Finland. Generally, the user experience of the booking portals is quite good.

The popularity of the other marketing tools is smaller. Facebook as a marketing tool was used relatively few. Entrepreneurs do not know the newest marketing features of Facebook. On the other hand, Facebook's potentially are too massive for small entrepreneurs. Other social media tools were not used at all. Also, the popularity of the traditional marketing channels like advertising in newspapers and having contact information in telephone catalogues are going down.

The biggest problem of the target group's booking management systems is the lack of co-operation possibilities with other booking and accounting systems. On the other hand, the most of respondents have a working system, and generally they are satisfied with their applications.

### **8.1 Other Available Booking Applications**

The applications outlined in Chapter 4 (Case study: BootitButton) were clearly premature in view of the results of the questionnaire. Additional, there are many open source web page applications (WordPress, Joomla and Drupal), they all have several booking system extensions, some are free of charge. A disadvantage of them is that the entrepreneur should know a little bit of web technology. If it is a hindrance, in the internet can be found also several cloud based<sup>45</sup> hotel booking services like Sirvoy<sup>46</sup> (costs per month \$ 24,99 - \$ 57,99 per month) depend on the needed features. These are made so that the user do not have to know anything about technology or platforms.

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45 Cloud-based means applications delivered over the Internet. End users access cloud-based applications through a web browser or a mobile device. Software and all user's data are stored on servers at a remote location. See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cloud\\_computing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cloud_computing)

46 <http://www.sirvoy.com/>



Picture 8.1 [www.thebookingbutton.com](http://www.thebookingbutton.com)

Actually, there are also a solution with almost with the same name and same features as we planned: The Booking Button<sup>47</sup>. At the moment the monthly fee is 19 – 129 Euros depends on a chosen package.

By the way, one of the Finnish respondent [Fid142] has mentioned it as a second important booking system!

## ***8.2 Iteration for the new Generation Applications***

One result of the questionnaire exists: yes, there are to be seen some need for an online booking management system. It can be placed in their own homepage. As the respondents have recommended, it should be easy to use and enough cheap for the target group in this inquire.

In a good booking system should have marketing solutions, booking management ability and billing tools. There is a significant contradiction. If the application should solve all task from marking to billing, it is hard to make it easy to use – and cheap enough!

Because of most bookings arrive by email or telephones calls, a new generation bookings system could be installed in a smart phone. It can have a speech recognition solution, so there would be no need to have a paper calendar at all.

The bills could also be compiled in cloud-based accounting system. Accounting offices will take hundreds or thousands of Euros per a year. If the accounting is organized simultaneously with booking management, there could be a possibility to save money, time and work load.

The tendency of the virtual world seems to compose bigger and bigger units. Some years ago there were several searching engines, social media platforms, online book shops – now there are Google, Facebook, Amazon and maybe in future Booking.com. There can be seen a big danger in this process: huge centralization. This threat menaces especially the small entrepreneurs.

## ***8.3 Answers to the Hypothesis***

In the hypothesis is asserted: **For a small and a medium-sized enterprise, a booking system via own home page is more effective for processing bookings than to join with big booking portals!** The formulation of the sentence was based on the case study experiences (See Chapters 3 and 4). Before of getting results of the questionnaire, the booking portals seemed to be a big problem for the small and medium-sized companies. The problem was deemed to hide in the

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.thebookingbutton.com/>

practise of booking portals. The intermediating fee was supposed to be too high (usually 8 – 30 %) for the companies. Actually none of the respondents mentioned this as a problem at all. When asking satisfaction about booking portals the level of dissatisfaction was not obvious. Maybe the companies were on the exploring phase with the booking portals and the market of these are on the forming level.

So the biggest problem were not the booking portals but the booking system as a whole. It seemed to be complicated and laborious. The reason is the lack of interaction between systems.

A valid idea in the hypothesis is in the beginning of the sentence. There seems to exist some need for a handy and advantageous online booking management tool like a Finnish respondent has emphasized: [Fid60] *“We have updated our virtual appearance within last few years. New home page will launch any day now. Next and the most valuable thing is to find some appropriable and enough cheap application for a dormitory accommodation.”*

After all data in this inquire, it is possible to have a new formulation:

**A homepage of the small and medium-sized companies is their main marketing tool, to have all advantages of using a homepage, there should be an online (cloud-based) application with features of marketing, booking and billing. The user experience should look like a paper calendar.**

## 9 Resüme

Selles töös uuritakse väikeste, alla 50 majutusruumiga majutusasutuste broneerimissüsteeme. Töö hüpoteesiks on, et majutusasutustel oleks broneeringute haldamisel efektiivsem kasutada oma kodulehte, kui liituda suurte broneerimisportaalidega. Töö põhines kahele juhtumiuurimusele (Tampere Maja ja BookitButton) ning elektroonilisele küsitlusele, mis saadeti sihtgrupi majutusasutustele Eestis ja Soomes.

Uuritud ettevõtetes oli oma koduleht selgelt üks tähtis turundamise ja broneeringute saamise kanal. Osal ettevõtetel olid olemas ka oma kodulehepõhised lahendused broneeringute haldamiseks.

Töös kerkiski esile broneeringute haldamise probleem laiemas tähenduses. Majutusasutuste broneeringud tulevad eri kanalitest ning uuritud ettevõtetel puudus ühtne elektrooniline süsteem nende haldamiseks. Efektiivne broneeringute haldamise süsteem hõlmab kogu protsessi alates turunduskanalitega ühildumisest ja lõpetades arvete väljastamise ning raamatupidamisega.

Uuringust selgus, et ettevõtjad ei ole leidnud lahendust, mis ühtselt töötleks kõiki andmeid. Selline elektrooniline, kodulehele liidetav ühtne broneerimis- ja haldussüsteem kergendaks majutusettevõtjate halduslikku tööd ning vähendaks turundus- ja raamatupidamiskulusid. Seega leidis töös esitatud hüpotees osaliselt kinnitust.



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GoSaimaa: <http://www.gosaimaa.com/>

HiHotels: <http://www.hihotels.net/>

HostelWorld: <http://www.hostelworld.com/>

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Directory services: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Directory\\_service](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Directory_service)

World Wide Web Consortium: <http://www.w3schools.com>

# 11 Appendix

Figure 1: Share of domestic holiday trips in all holiday trips (any duration ; only trips of 4 or more nights), 2010

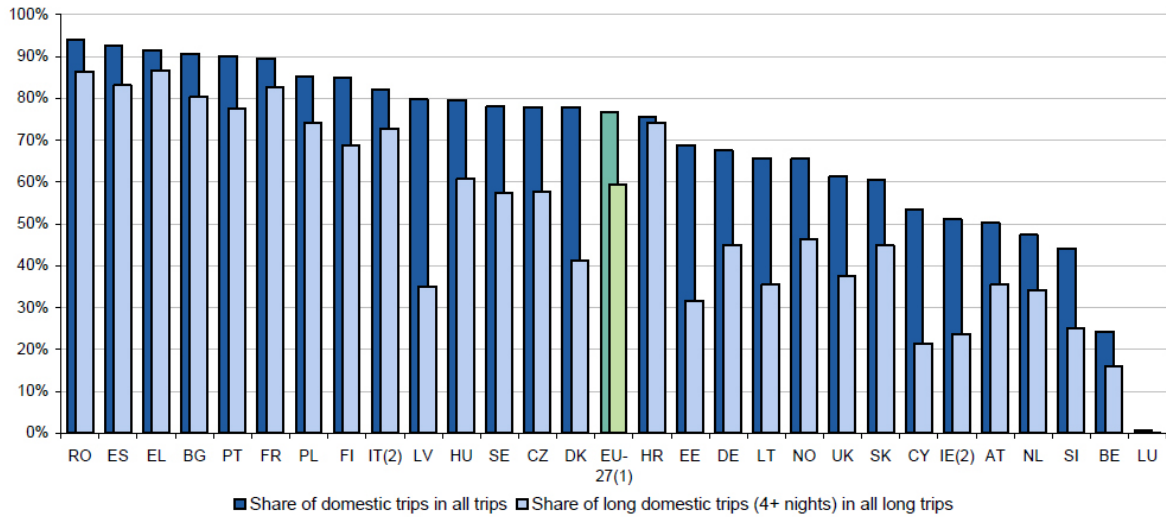


Figure 5.2

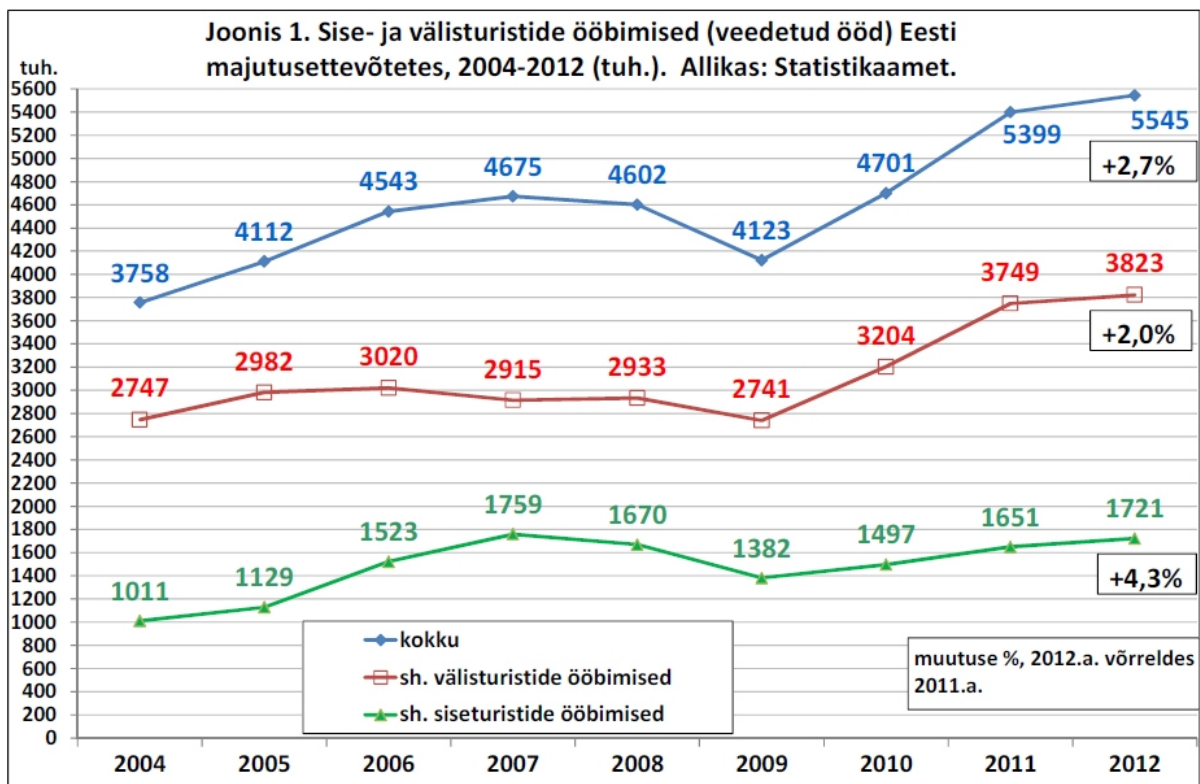


Figure 5.3 Tourism in Estonia 2004 – 2012

## Majoitusliikkeiden kapasiteetti ja sen käyttö

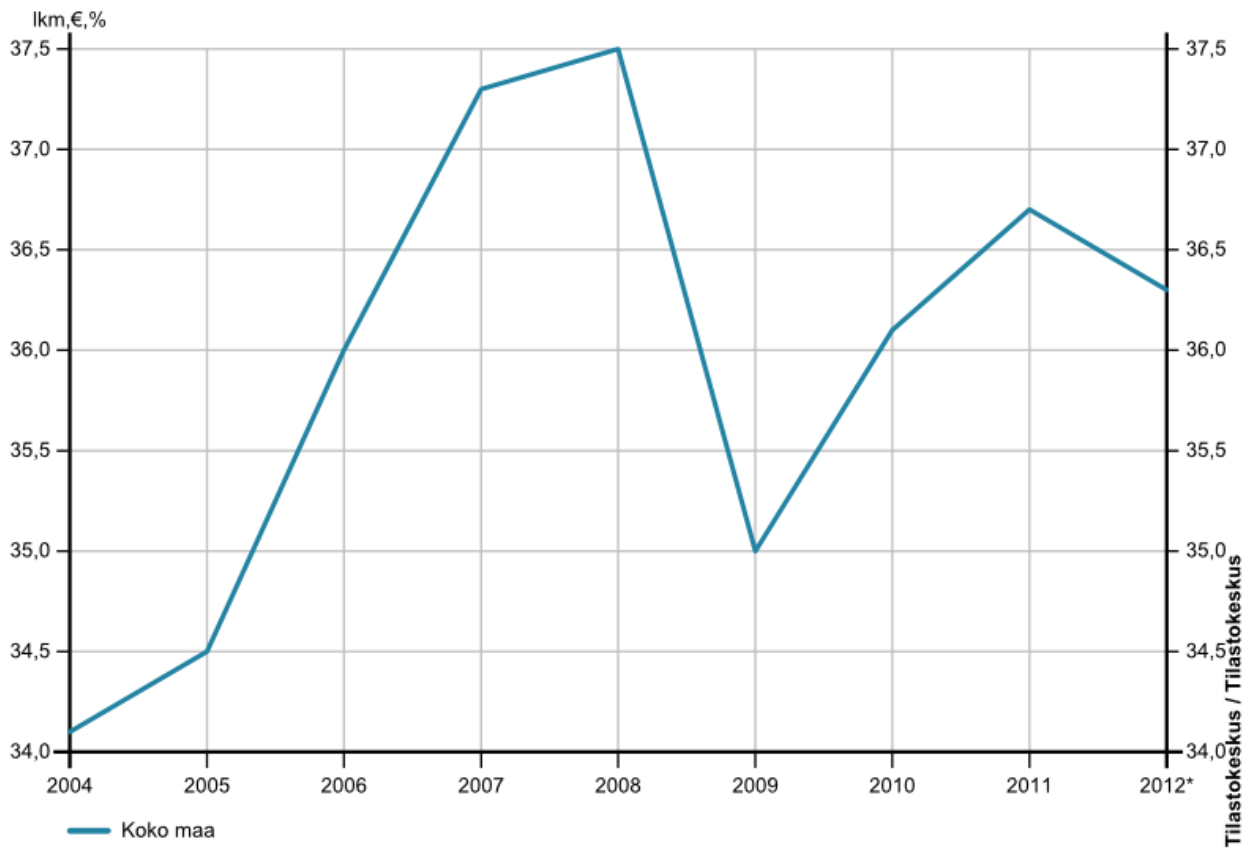
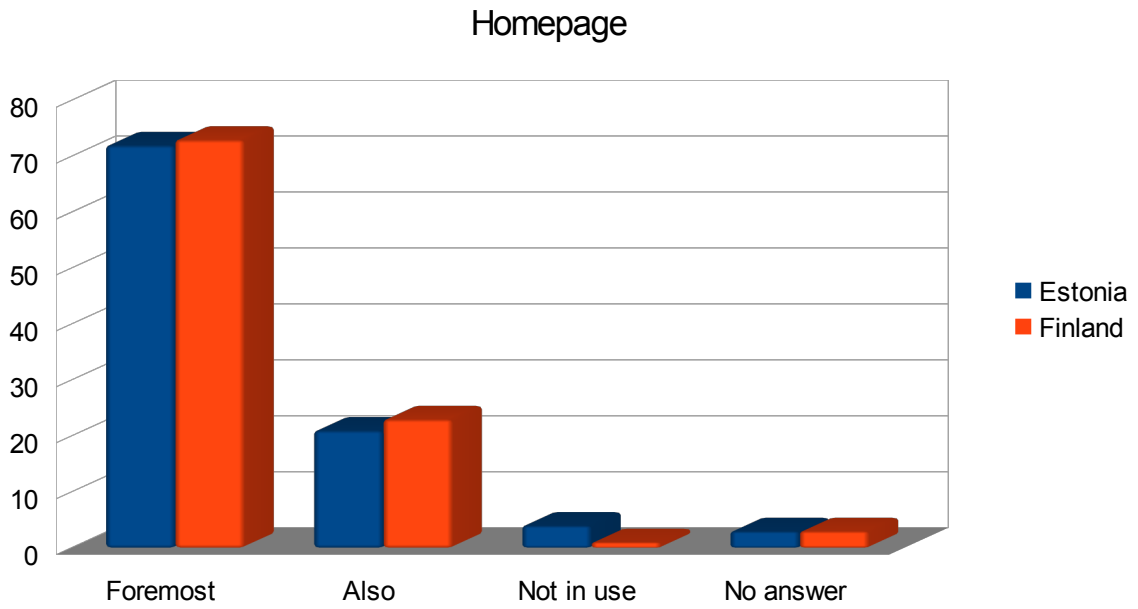
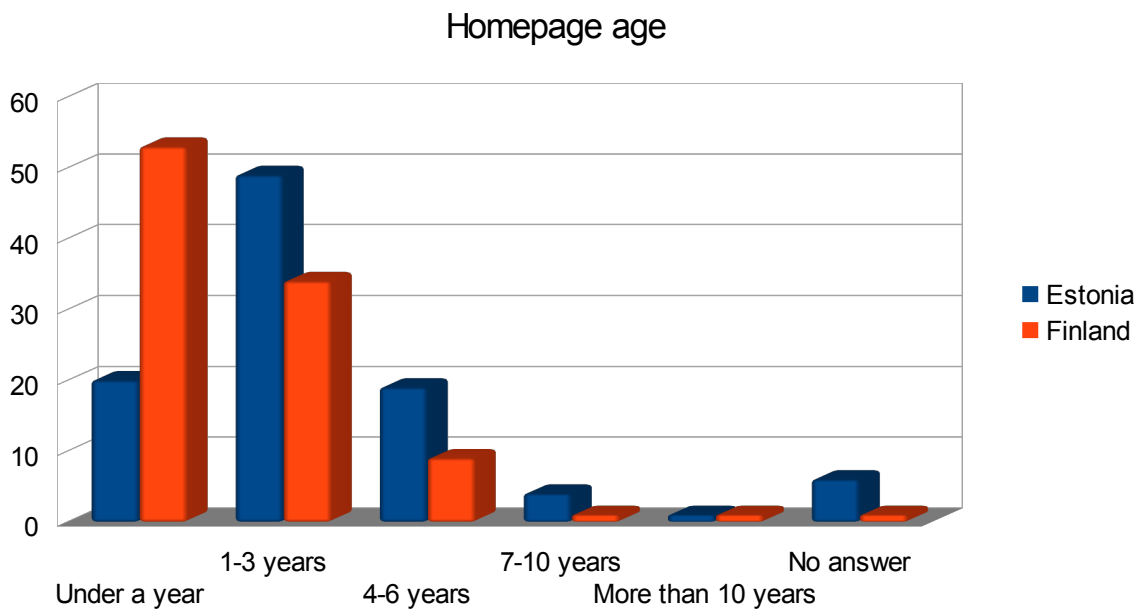


Figure 5.4. Tourism in Finland 2004 – 2012

Appendix Figures for Chapter: Responses

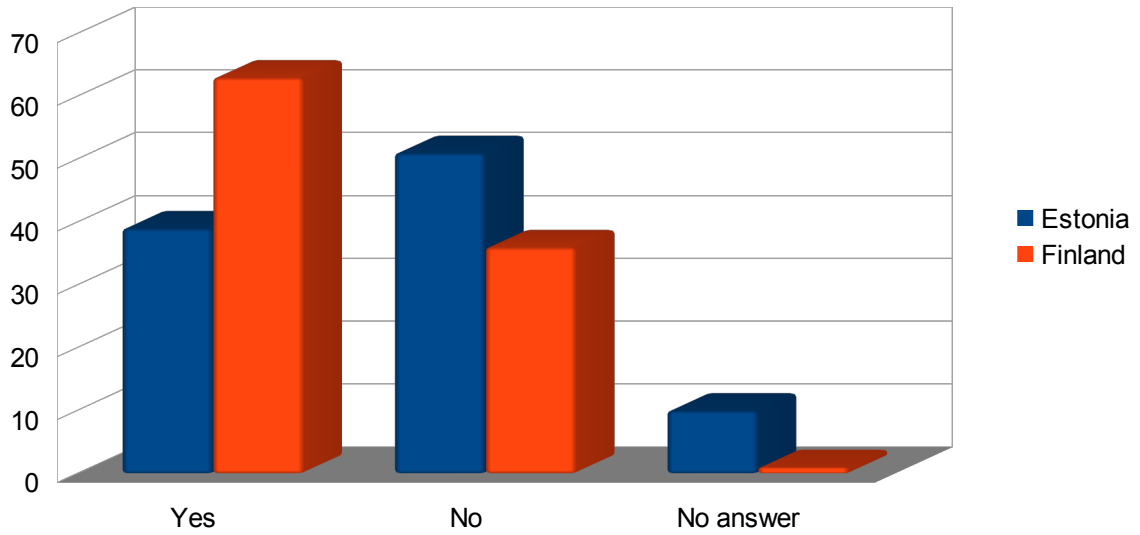


Appendix Figure 6.1



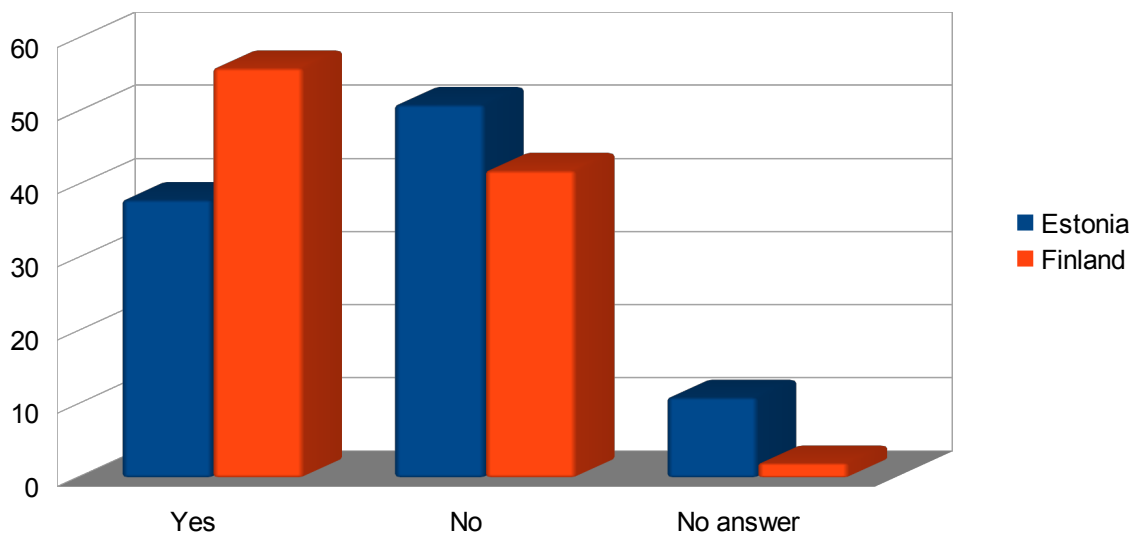
Appendix Figure 6.2.

Do you update actively the homepage materials (at least once a month)?

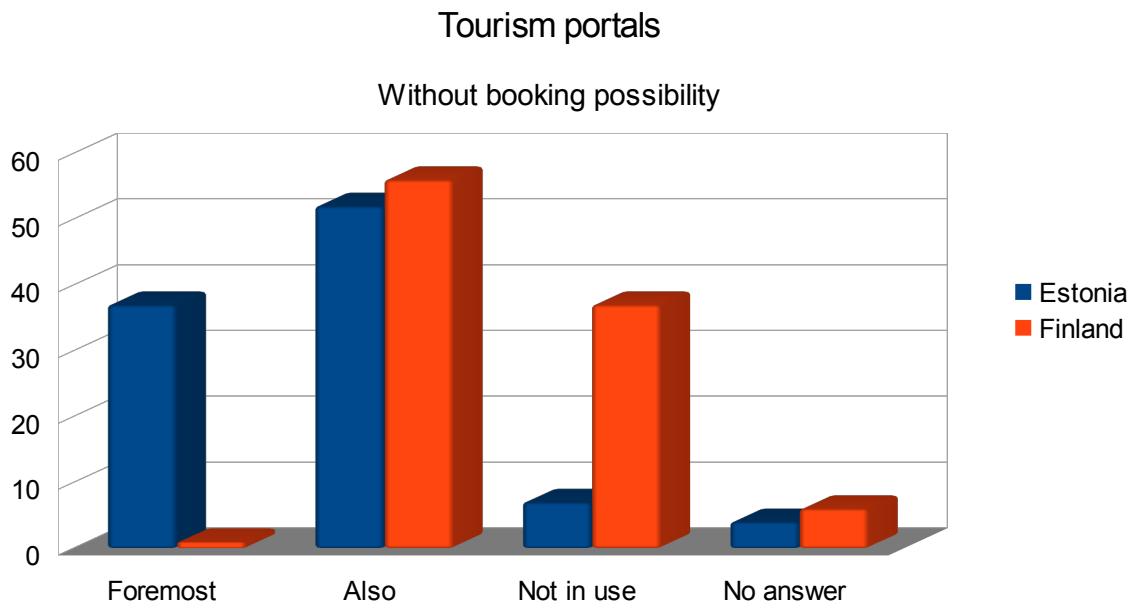


Appendix Figure 6.3.

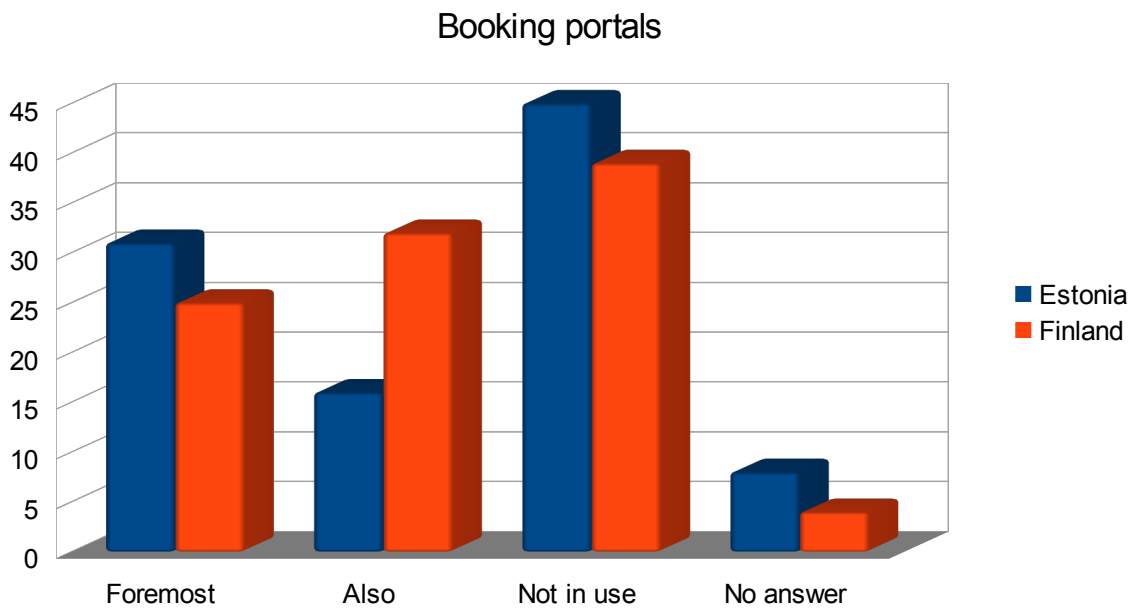
Do you track the using metric of your homepage (i.e. in Google Analytics)



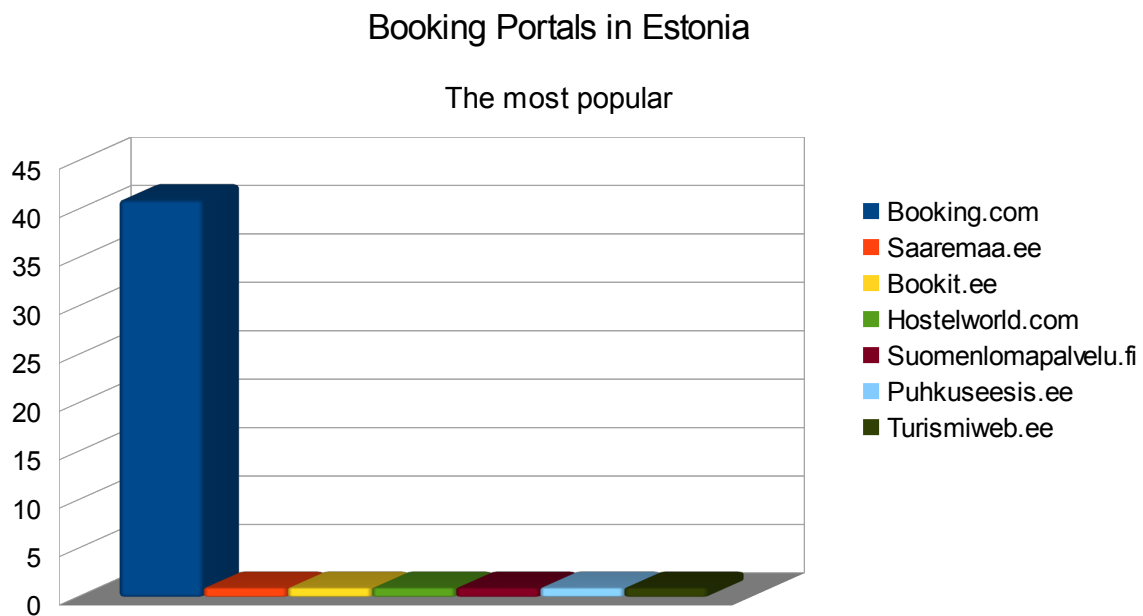
**Appendix Figure 6.4.**



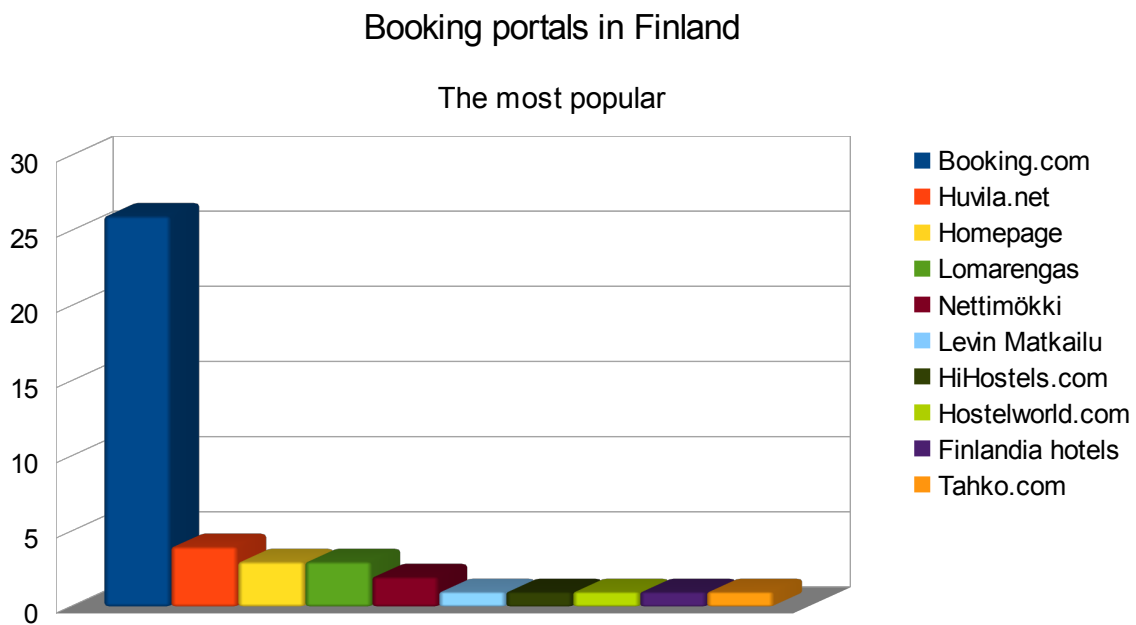
**Appendix Figure 6.5.**



Appendix Figure 6.6.

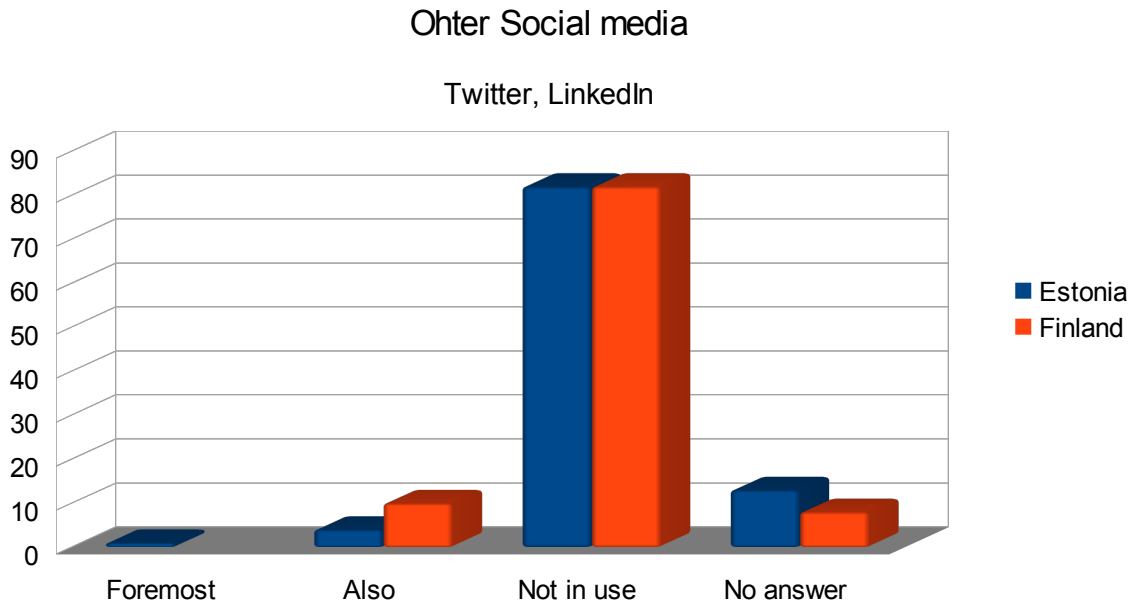


Appendix Figure 6.7.

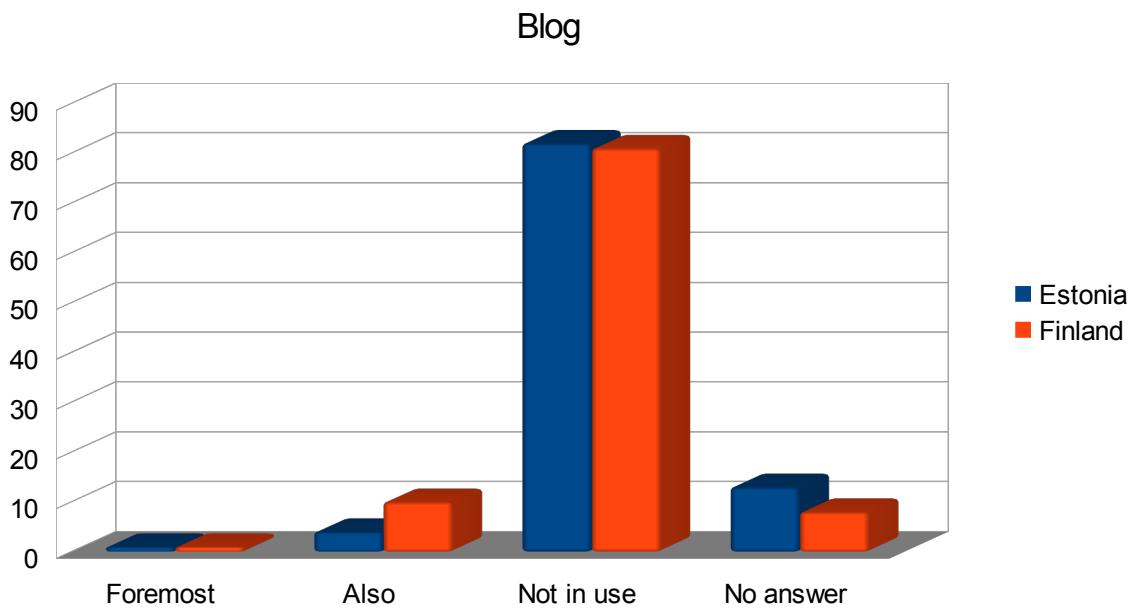


Appendix Figure 6.8.

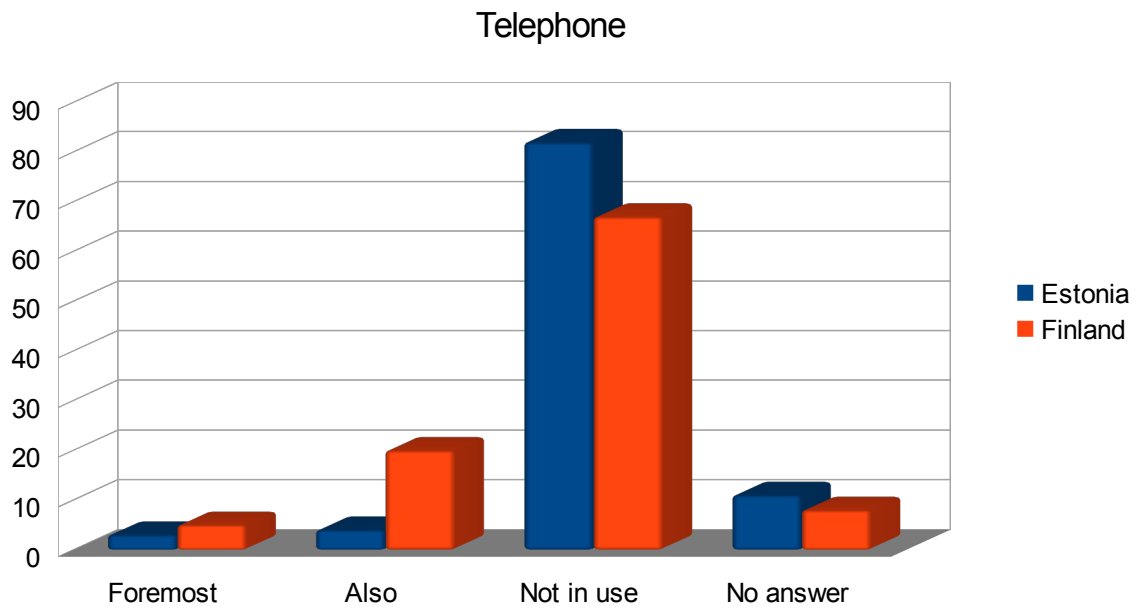




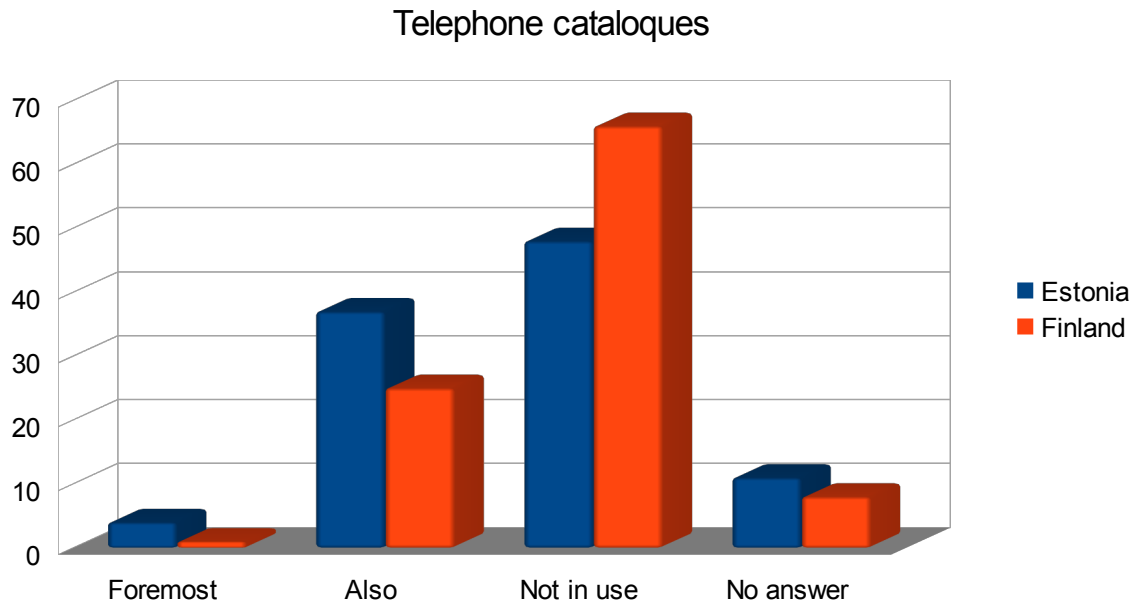
**Appendix Figure 6.9.**



**Appendix Figure 6.10.**

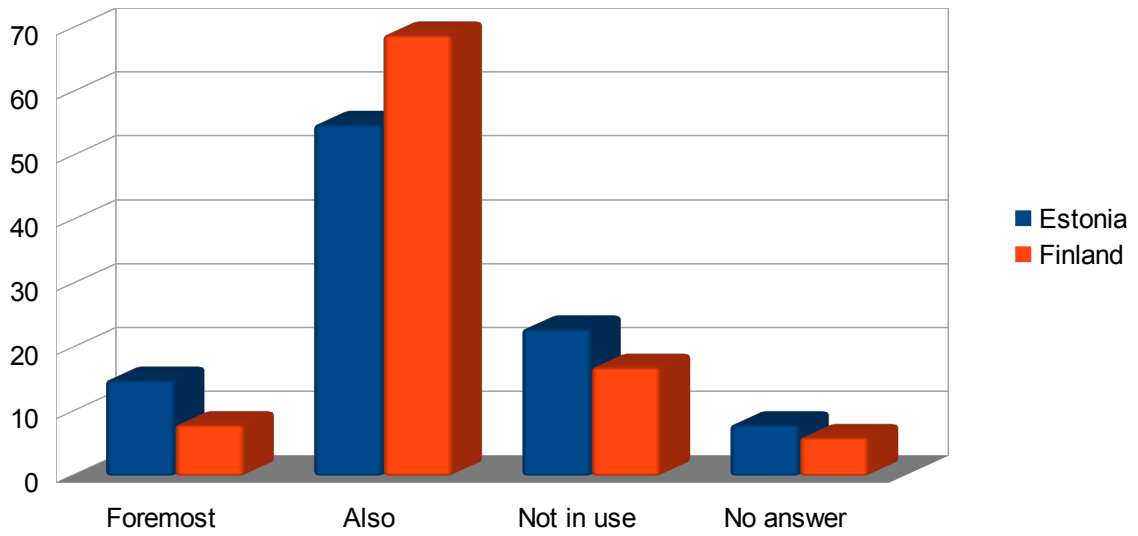


**Appendix Figure 6.11.**



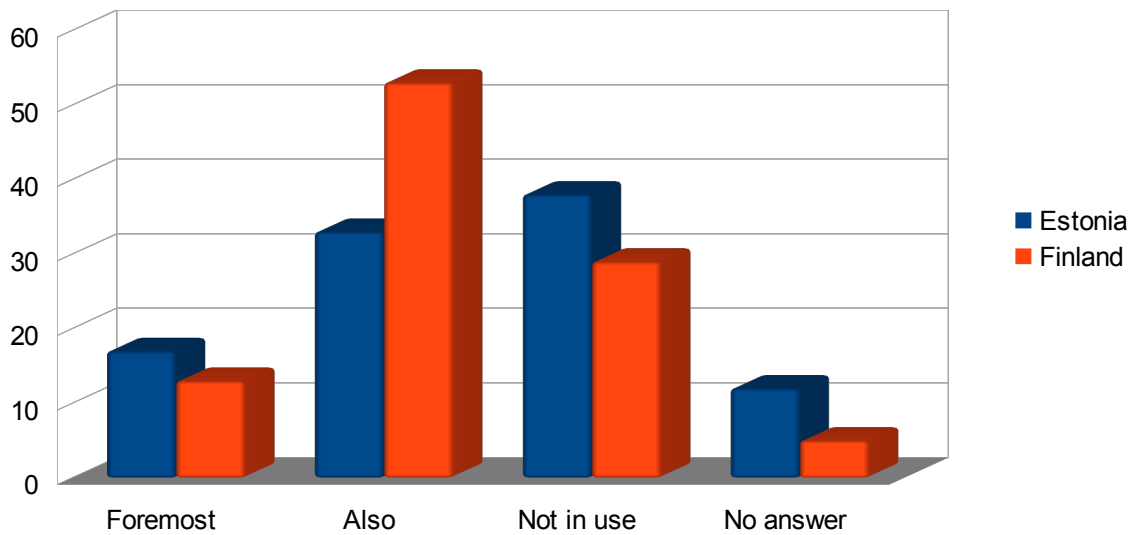
**Appendix Figure 6.12.**

Advertisement in Tourism paper media

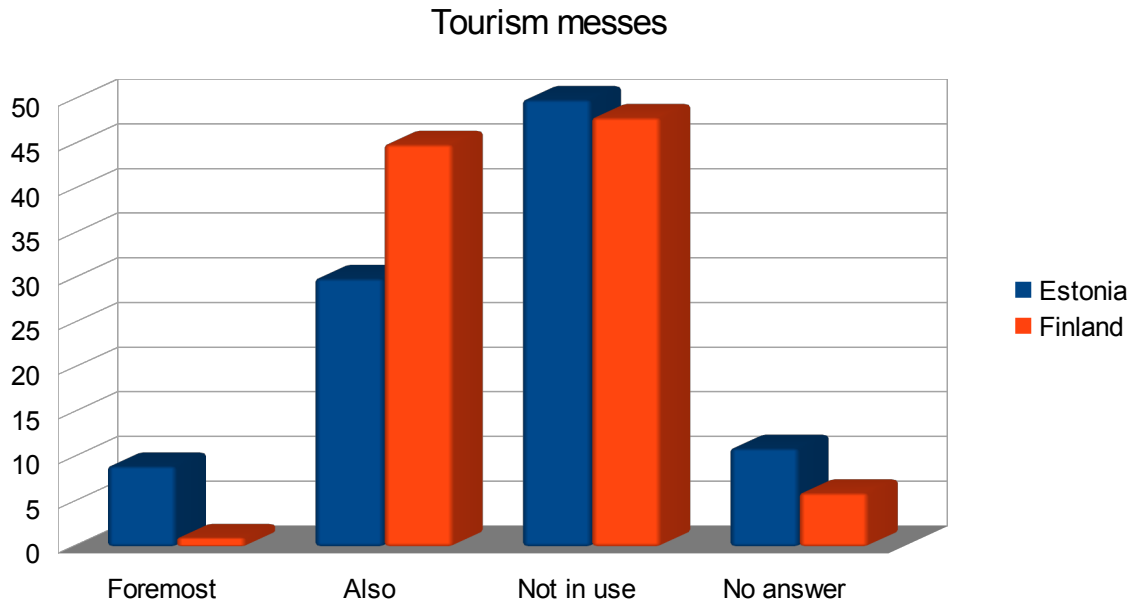


Appendix Figure 6.13.

Own brochure



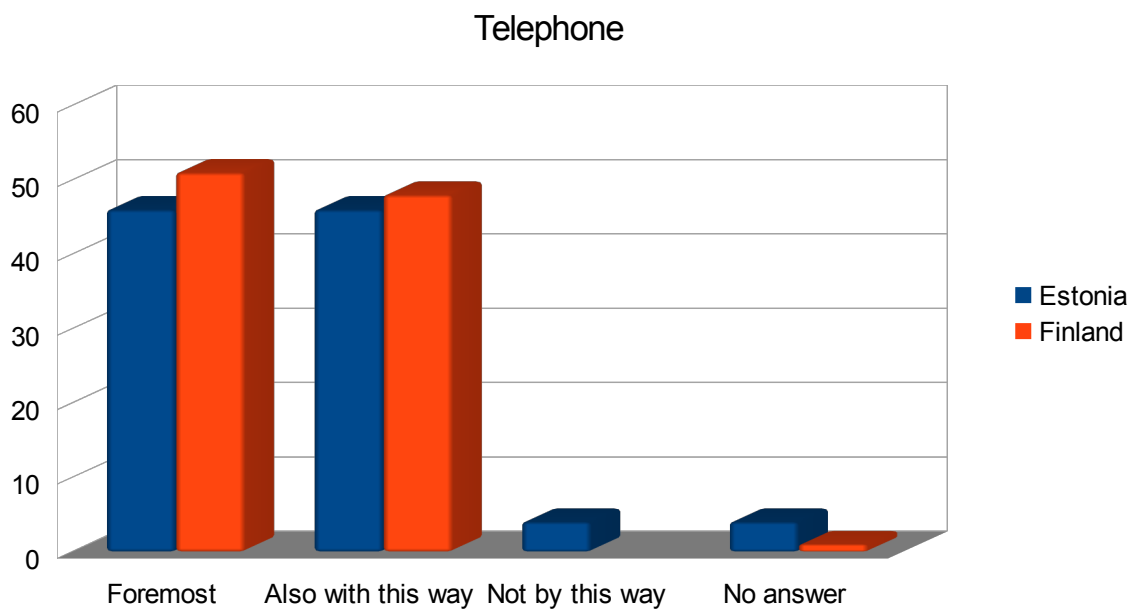
Appendix Figure 6.14.



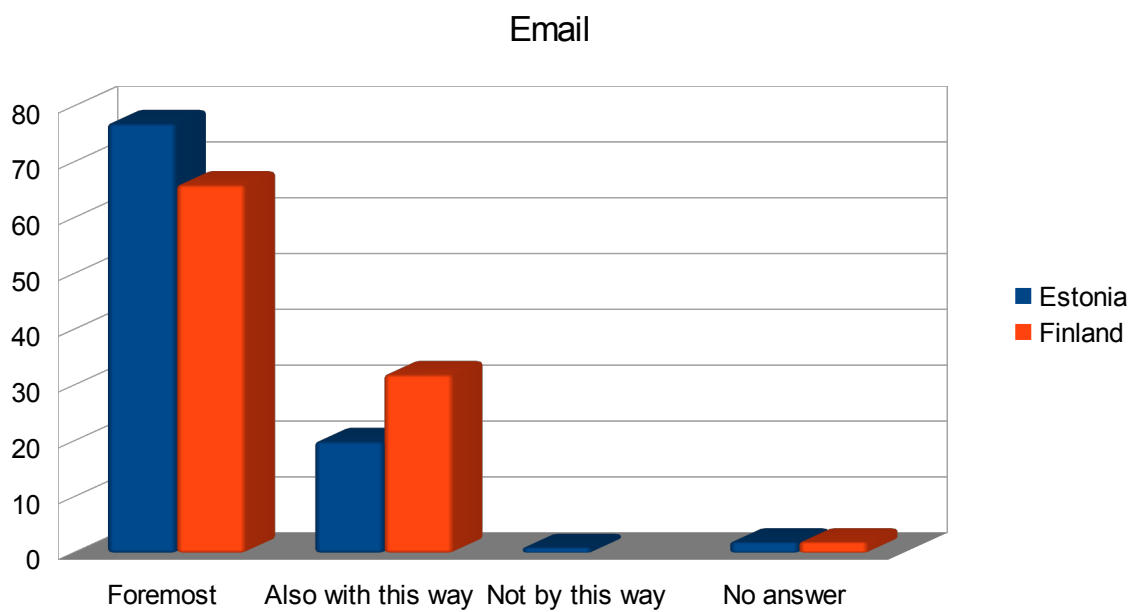
**Appendix Figure 6.15.**



**Appendix Figure 6.16.**



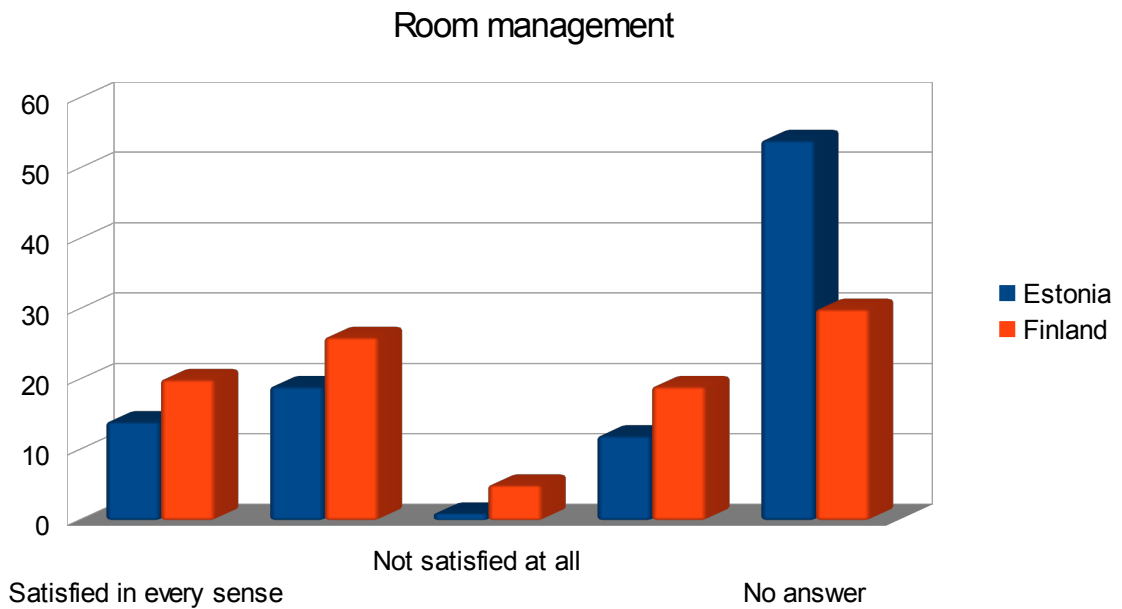
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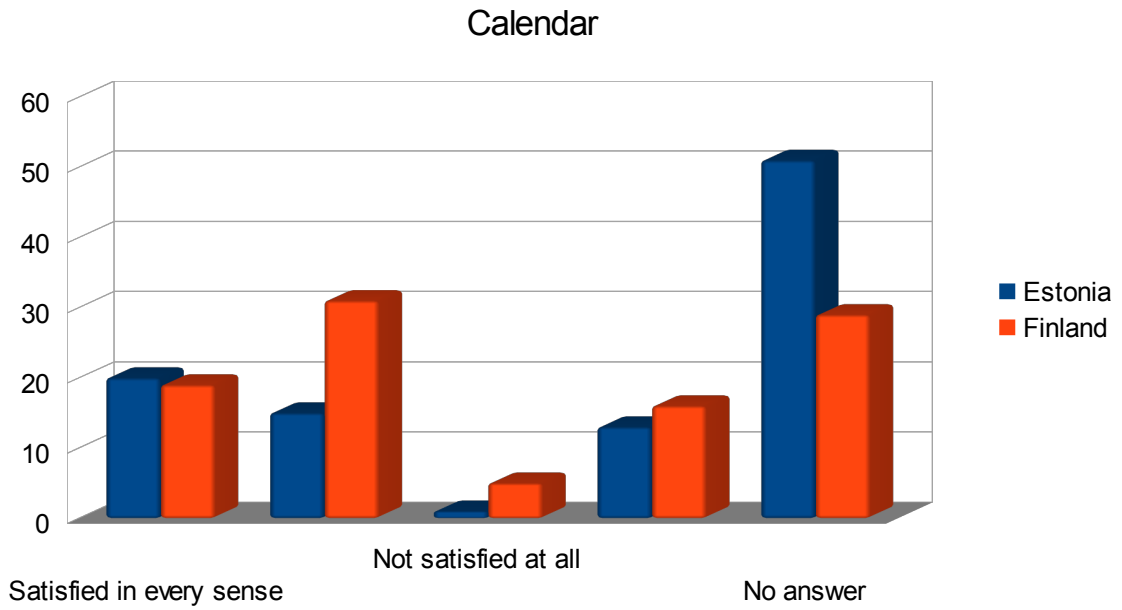
**Appendix Figure 6.18.**



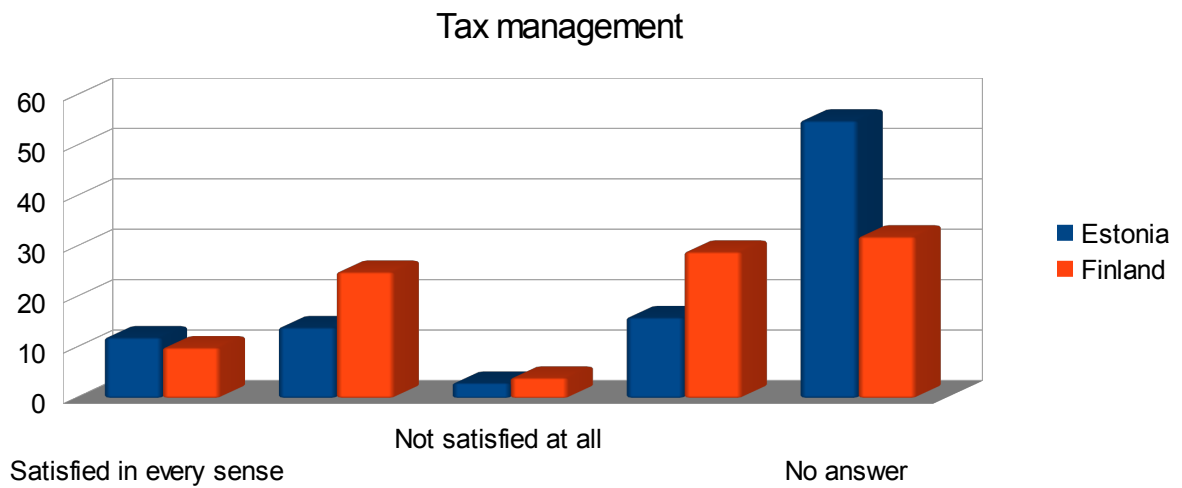
**Appendix Figure 6.19.** Estimation of the user experience about client management system of the booking portals.



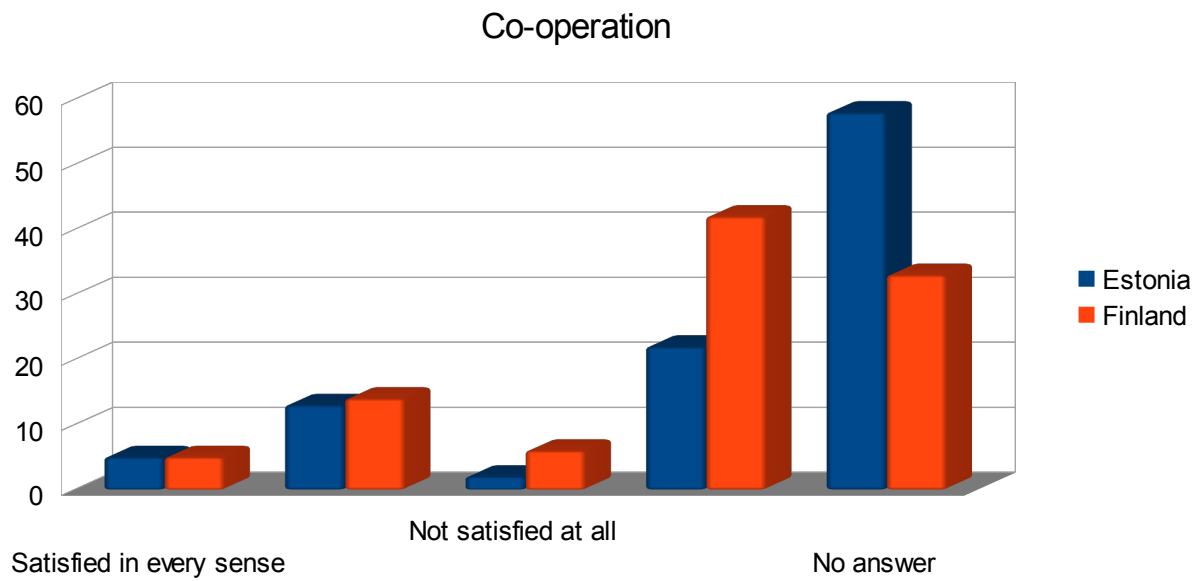
**Appendix Figure 6.20.** Estimation of the user experience about room management system of the booking portals.



**Appendix Figure 6.21.** Estimation of the user experience about calendar system of the booking portals.

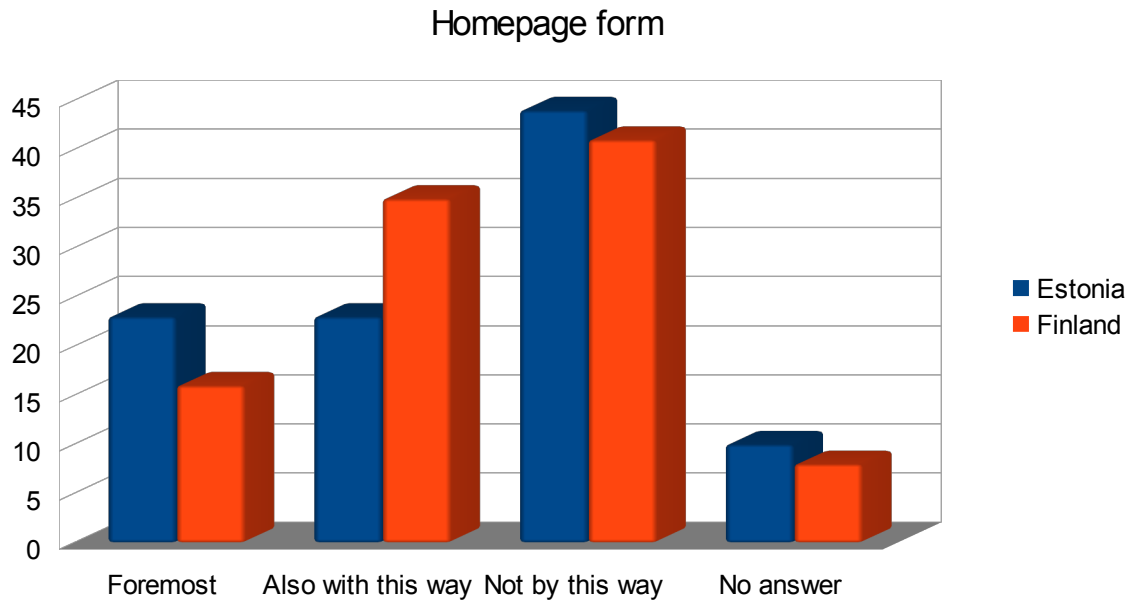


**Appendix Figure 6.22.** Estimation of the user experience about the tax management system of the booking portals.

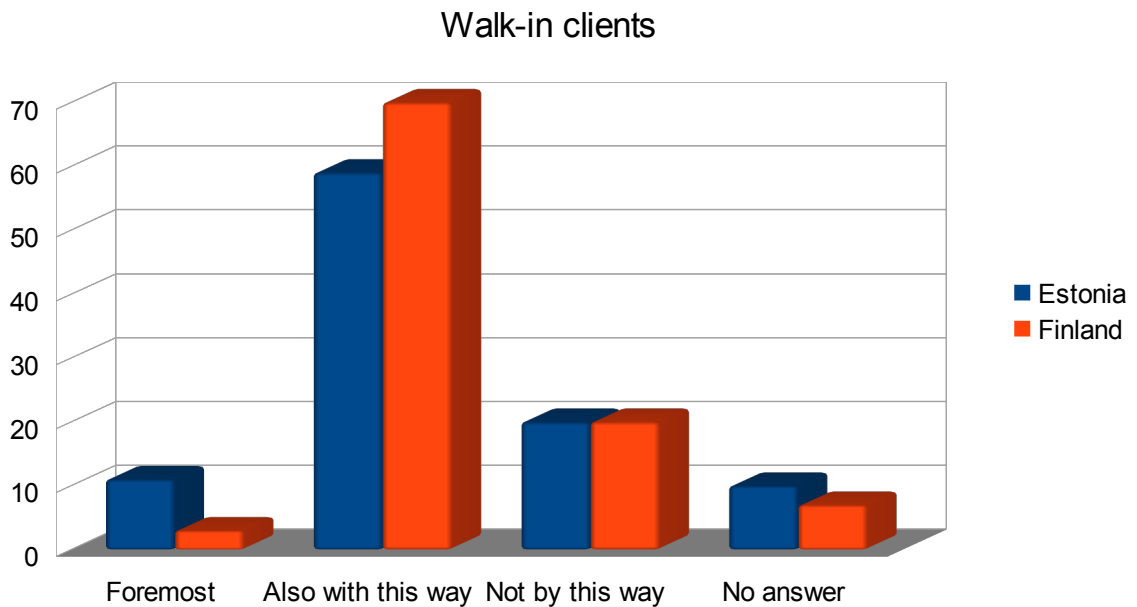


**Appendix Figure 6.23.** Estimation of the user experience about the co-operation of the booking portals with other systems.

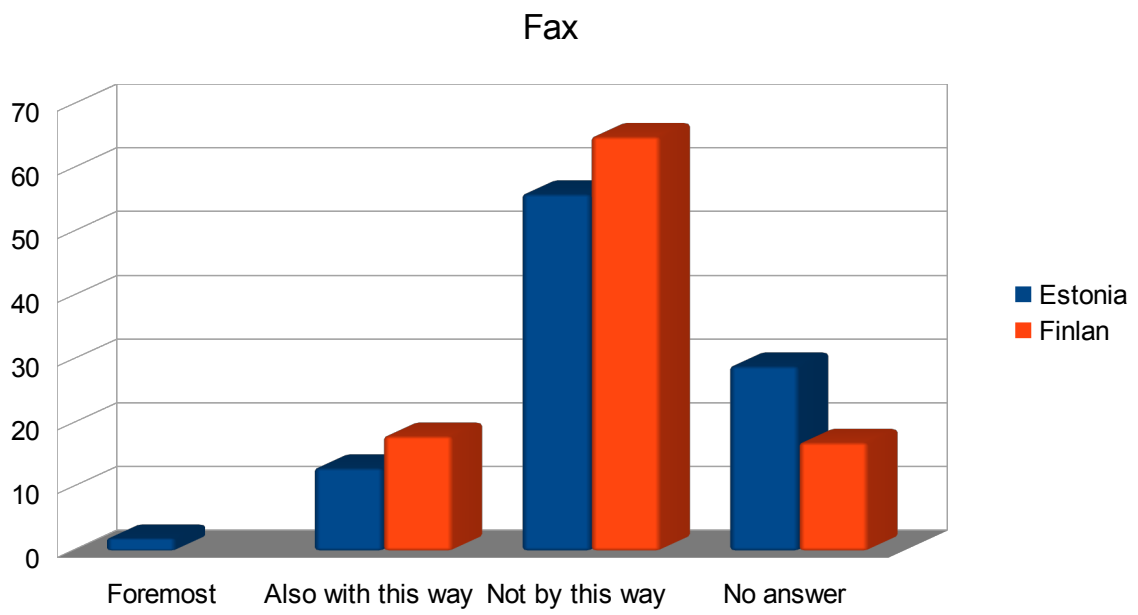




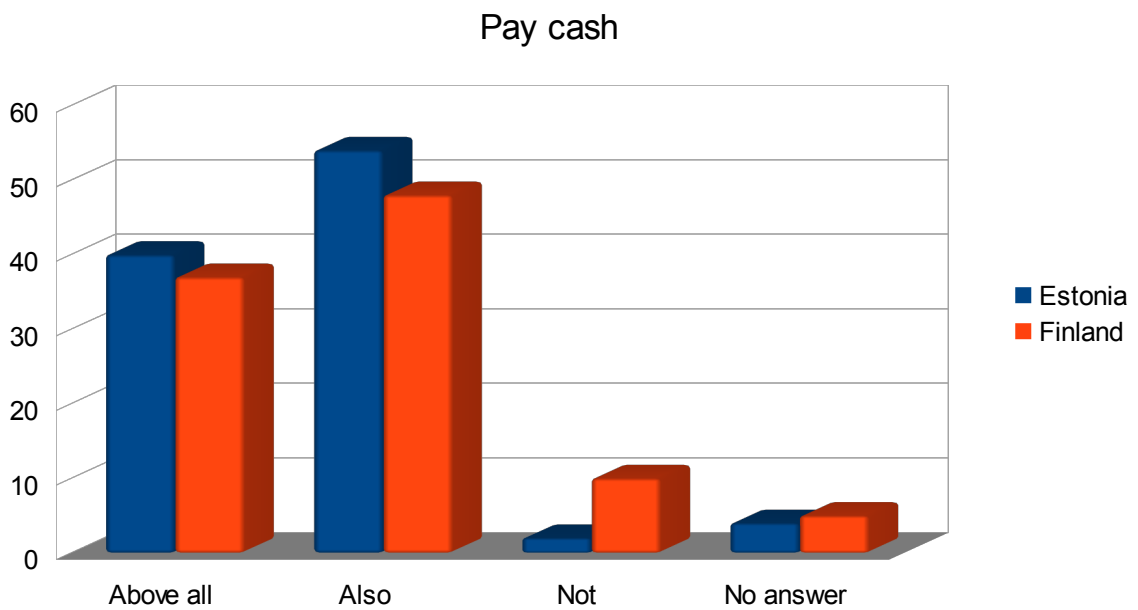
**Appendix Figure 6.24.** The importance of a homepage form as a channel of the arriving bookings.



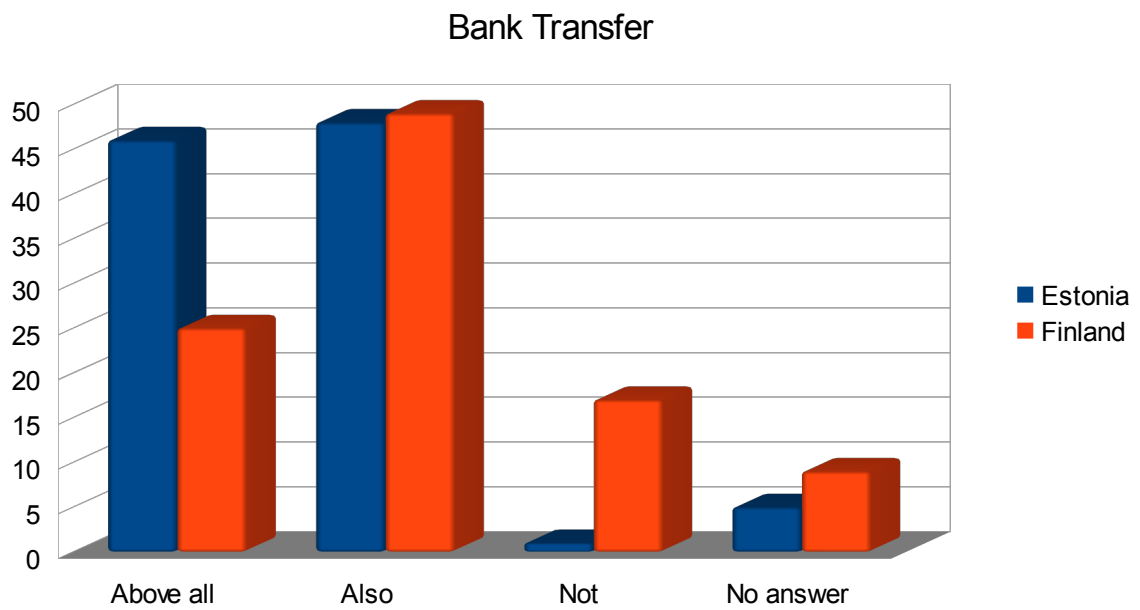
**Appendix Figure 6.25.** The importance of walk-in clients as a channel of the arriving bookings.



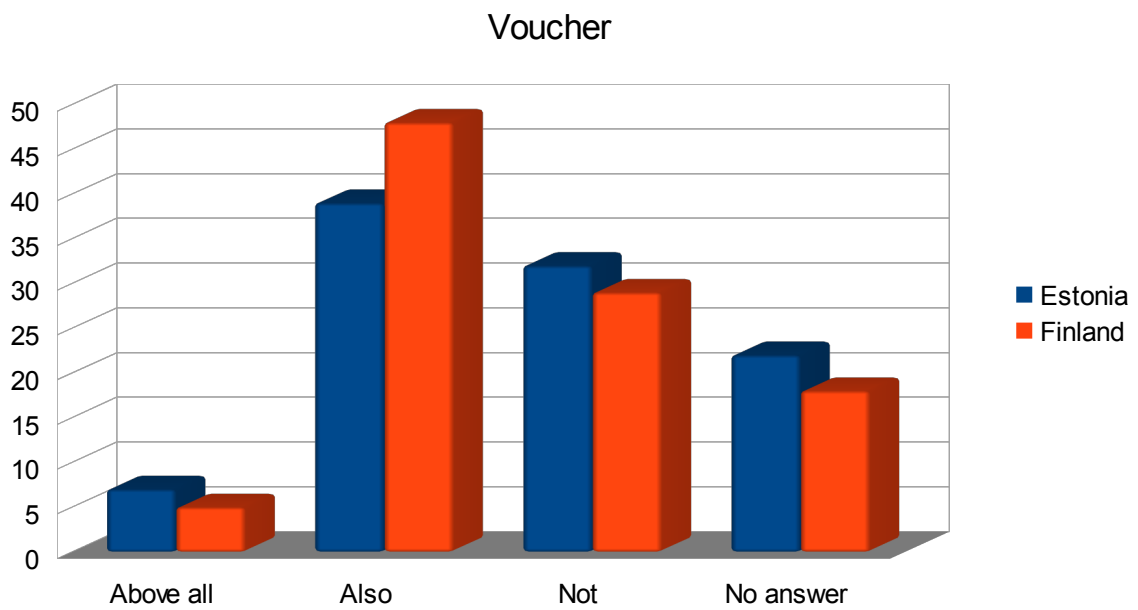
**Appendix Figure 6.26.** The importance of fax as a channel of the arriving bookings.



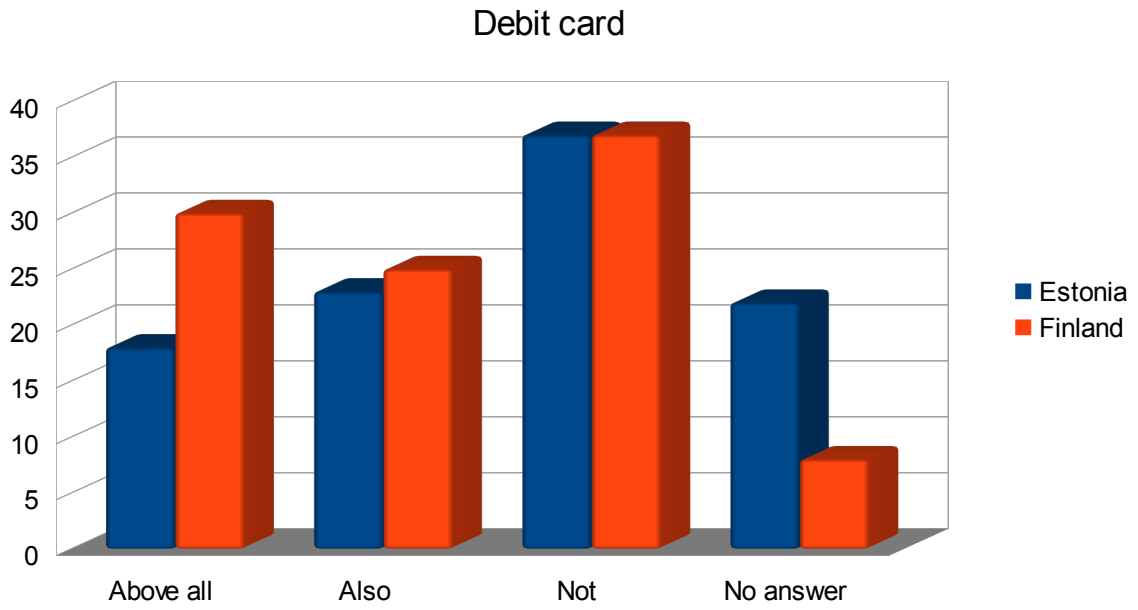
Appendix Figure 6.27.



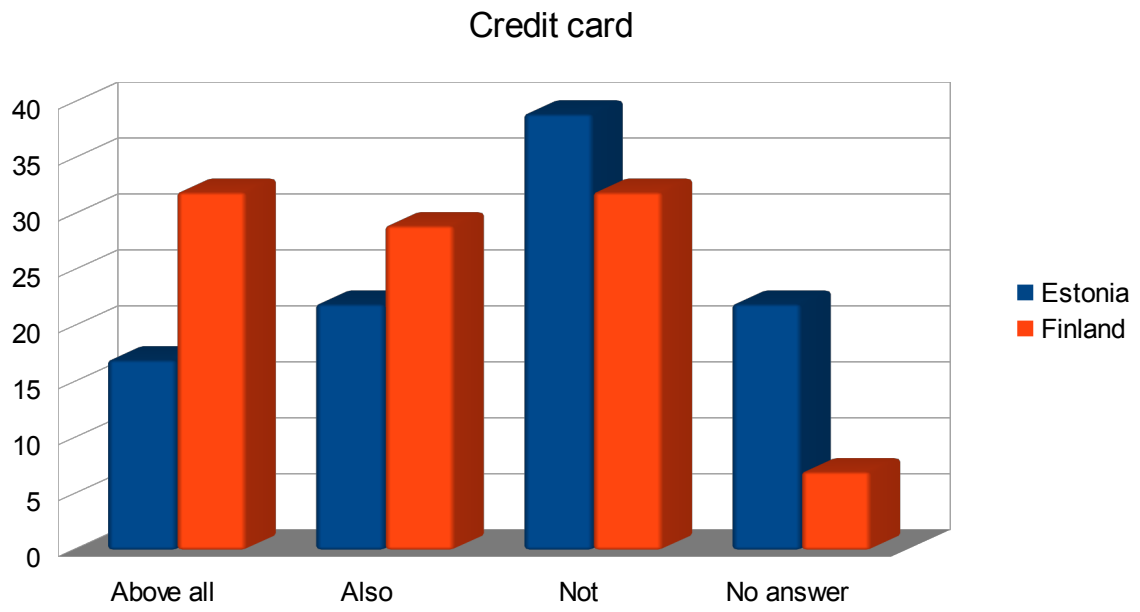
Appendix Figure 6.28.



**Appendix Figure 6.29.** Paying by voucher.



**Appendix Figure 6.30.** Paying by debit card.



**Appendix Figure 6.31.** Paying by credit card.

*Open question: Please, describe your booking managing process more precisely.*

Estonian answers: 54 %

Finnish answers: 59 %

Id	Comments
4	Client makes i.e. via telephone or email a booking, the information write down in Hotis Express program and also in Figure calendar by hand. After that update the booking information on the homepage (it's information for the clients)
21	We use Opera program
26	We use Google Calendar. First of all we write down requests, when the booking fee is transmitted to our bank account we make the final booking.
30	Calendar where we write down the information about the client
33	We write down the booking information in the online calendar by hand. Also, other booking portals we manage by hand.
38	It depend on type, but the procedure is the same as usual, request-offer-assurance by client-booking-assurance...
40	After having a request email, we send an offer. If it is accepFigure for the client, we inform the payment date. The usual rule is ten days before accommodation in weekends. If a family wants to come on week-day, then we have allowed also a cash pay.
46	As we have only one apartment, we use an Excel calendar, where we write down the booking information. This way all our employees do who take in requests via telephone or emails.
49	1. A booking come via telephone, or via email – we control the date and ask a confirm via email – how many people are coming, special needs and so on. 2. After first agreement, we confirm the date for accommodation. 3. After booking payment we fixate in final dates.
52	Every system has own extranet application with paroles. When logged in it's is possible to changes available rooms and prices. In the same way, it is possible to change the hotel info.
54	A booking sheet (written) is on the reception desk (24 h). In the reception, there is a worker 24 h. The administrator receives the bookings made in the homepage, and she will co-ordinate the bookings with the workers in the reception and send the confirm to the client (via email or by telephone).
55	As we mentioned in question before, we wrote down the date in the calendar by hand, and in the computer there is a fail called BOOKINGS, we make all by hand. Nothing works automatically.
58	Usually, we hire out one cottage at the time. Bookings are confirmed by a pre-payment or guaranty letter. When they have arrived, we make a confirmed booking in the calendar. More detail wishes of the clients we ask a week before the meeting.
68	A booking coming to the tourist farm is closed by the negotiations and the marks of the result will be made in the calendar at that date.
74	1) request phase 2) negotiations 3) booking based on payment
76	Marks with pencil in the book, so it is easier to make changes, printed guaranty letters of the

	companies in a special folder.
81	Bookings come automatically to the specific program, or we update them by hand.
85	Doubled information is in the calendar because I don't take a computer always with me.
89	I will write the booking down in my notebook because I don't trust in computers for the technical reasons.
92	I write bookings down in a notepad.
97	A calendar notepad has all days there, so there is no possibility for double booking. 10 rooms + camping, it is enough for us, I suppose. If the client doesn't come, I will drag the booking down and make a mark. If booking come through tourist offices, I'll print out the booking and keep it till the clients coming day. If they don't show up, I will heat an oven. I store up the exchange of letters with clients in a computer till the day of the accommodation. So easy it is! At least, I don't have to check out some autonomous computer system what can fall and makes me nerve by trying to control my timeFigure. Booking systems require to update information every day. Who makes all work in here country side in that moment?
98	Negotiations in telephone and via emails.
105	At first in own notepad. All data what I put in internet I write down in my notepad.
113	At the moment, we cope with a calendar, but I have thought out to go over an electronic version.
118	I write down via email came booking to the Excel spreadsheet Figure (made by myself)
119	Bookings via telephone, fax, booking system write down in the reception's computer in the moment of receiving of a booking or in the time of negotiations after that a confirm email will be sent to the client.
127	I have a notepad and a pencil.
130	Who, when, how many people
134	Booking come via email and will be saved in the extranet of booking.com.
137	Negotiations about the probable problems for that the both party will be satisfied.
139	With a booking from Booking.com, we get a fax and mark can be seen in booking admin page. We write down every booking by hand to the booking system and send out a confirm from the system.
140	For that, we have a notepad.
142	At first, I make a pre-booking, and if both parties are satisfied and if the pre-payment has done, the booking is valid.
145	Client can make a suiFigure booking via our homepage, they system send an email, we reply and send a bill.
146	I am responsible for bookings, I write down all bookings coming via telephone or via email.
148	Bookings will be write down in Figure general sheet of the month and separate sheets with the contact information and specifications placed in the folder of the bookings.
150	A booking will be saved in online booking system, where we print out a copy for to answer to the booker via telephone.
153	Everything is in a notebook. We should need an online booking system.

154	Having a request we check out from Hotis system, where are all bookings from every channel. Whether there is a possibility or not to make a booking, we are contact with the client by telephone or by email.
178	If booking coming via telephone or via email we will ask contact data (name, telephone) and write down by hand in a computer (program) and then we write down separately booking to the folder, we will print out the correspondence with email and put together with the bookings, so all correspondence with clients are in one place.
184	The administrators update the bookings in the system
191	Lodgix
194	In the calendar, we write the booking days and after confirm specifications
199	When booking has come, an employee writes it down in Google Doc Excel folder
203	Fast and more
206	When booking request has arrived we check out if there is a room for that. If there is we ask a confirm with booking days via email. We update the booking information in Fideolio.
207	I will write down booking information in the calendar notepad. From this month, we start a co-operation with booking.com, there the booking is marked online.
209	Getting to know with clients wishes. I decide are they OK with us specially with groups. I am very experienced, I notice what kind of clients they are by their character. If I want to make abandonment, I will do it very diplomatically. They can be hooligans.
210	Bookings write down in Hotis.
220	Write it down
229	Bookings and whole information update in Booking system as pre-booking. Marketing director or senior administrator is contact with clients via telephone or via email. If there is a longer booking or a larger groups, we will make an agreement.
233	A calendar notepad.
238	I have computer application
245	Name and contact information in calendar
246	I wrote down the important information in notepad (check in, check out time)
250	All bookings will be write down in calendar notebook, correspondence is in the computer
255	When there is a new booking I control twice if everything is correct (date, years or if there are rooms available). I will write down details in the computer and send a confirm-letter to the booker.
258	50 % pre-payment
262	Almost hand work. Client can make a booking in the lomapalvelu portal or Google advertising, send an email, I answer and if the client want to make a booking we send a bill. When bill is paid we make the final booking, and it can be seen in calendar.
266	Bookings coming via telephone or via email. I write it down in calendar notepad.
275	By hand in a booking book.
280	Booking.com send a booking via fax, their system works automatically. I put it down in calendar notepad and internet Google Calendar.



283	At first we write a booking down in Google Calendar, then we make a booking sheet in computer, print it out to the paper booking calendar. Also, we have a paper calendar on the wall, where we can see the whole booking situation.
284	When we get a phone call, we write the information down by hand, afterwards put it in the computer. If we get an email, we fixate it and take account his wishes.
288	Notes in booking book
298	Via email and paper notepad.
306	We have only one person who is responsible for the bookings, who works in office every day and be in touch with clients via telephone and via email. If someone else gets a request, it will send to the first person.
309	All procedure can be handle in Hotis Express (check in, check out, bookings, statistics and so on.
310	When having a contact request (via telephone, via email) we ask his wishes and make an offer.
318	What the accommodation dates are, number of people, what kind of rooms, do they wish breakfasts.
321	The information via email and via telephone I will write down in calendar notepad.
323	Big book for single bookings, for companies and groups there is a guarantee folder.
327	On winter time, bookings, we write down in notepad, on summer we had a big calendar.
328	I take contact with clients personally. I make an agreement about pre-payment or payment date. I will keep what we have closed with.
336	Booking information will be written down in a calendar on the wall.
340	The information will change all the time, and the easiest and fastest way are to keep in the notepad.

Finnish answers:

Id	Texts
5	We confirm a booking via email.
10	Don't kidding
14	A confirm will be sent and written down in the booklet at the day of booking and the cottage.
22	Day / month view in the screen. It is a possibility to check a whole week view at the moment.
29	A booking program with all functions (bookings and cash system in the same)
32	A mark in the calendar and contact with client afterwards
36	Request + offer + negotiations
38	If a client will book via telephone, via email or using other booking channels (i.e. booking.com), administrator will make a booking in the booking system. <u>Online bookings in our web page</u> will go automatically to our system.
41	We write down a booking note in a manual booking system made by my self, and fill in a A5-

	size form with clients contact and booking information.
42	I will call and send an email few days before booking and confirm the arrival.
47	Some of The bookings come automatically to booking system (Opera), and that's all. If a booking is received in some other ways, the booking system will be updated. Paper versions will be put in a folder located in a safe (because of credit card numbers). An addition for the question number 9: Some of the bookings will come automatically some must be handled by hand. At the moment, the share of automatic bookings is quite small, but in 2015, we hope they should be more.
48	At the moment, an online booking calendar is about to take into use.
53	We check the wishes of the clients and contact information, probably a pre-payment.
57	After an email request will start a negotiation phase, a booking will be marked in a calendar.
58	Via telephone or via email (from abroad)
60	Bookings will be write down and ask a confirm
63	A client makes a booking via email, via telephone or in our booking calendar. It is a pity so few of bookings are coming automatically. We confirm or write down a booking in the booking calendar in the homepage and writing also down in our Figure calendar.
64	Check the question before
66	A booking will be write down in mobile calendar and a calendar of huvila.net
67	The most of the bookings will come through the booking.com
77	The most of the bookings is in an electronic calendar, more complicated are in a paper calendar
78	?
80	The capacity of lodging is small, only four rooms, and I'll run the whole activity by my self.
83	I transmit a booking to the partners' systems, booking.com, Destination Laplands and to the own booking system. Luksusmatkat asks available bookings to their customers, and Russian tourism offices.
84	Accepting of bookings, billing
89	Basically, we write down all information in our booking calendar by hand. Huvila.net portal calendar it is only for clients to see the available rooms.
90	We are open 10 weeks on the summer, so the most of the bookings come via telephone on the spring and on the summer or as a pre-booking when they are leaving. We confirm all pre-bookings in the beginning of the summer. Homepage got ready in 1998, and we update it.
95	We write down the important information in a booking calendar (name, telephone number)
101	A manual system is enough for managing a hotel with 19 rooms.
103	When a client ask a room via telephone or via email we write it down in our calendar.
104	We answer email requests right away and send a confirm to client.
105	Jomres is a Joomla extension, where we update bookings via telephone or via email. A client can book a room by him self.
106	Booking – accommodation – billing
107	More than 90 % of our clients come through tourist offices, email. Domestic bookings via

	telephones or via email.
113	A client call or send an email and book. I am in charge of the booking calendar and confirm the bookings.
114	Bookings come via telephone or via email and online booking service via email. In both case, the bookings will be written down by hand in a paper calendar.
118	A client call or send an email. I will write it down in the phone calendar and a calendar in the homepage and additional in Figure calendar.
119	I will write down in calendar, print the emails. I write it down probably in “white board” where are the events and bookings on the week or two.
123	The bookings will be write down in a Figure calendar. The wishes will be checked in emails before coming of customers.
125	A clumsy but up till now working a piece of paper designed by my brother, where I can see all booking situation when I am out of the office.
129	A paper calendar is a bombproof system so far all three people who are using our pencil-based “system” and they will keep in their minds to write down all bookings. This will work - if the house will not burn down.
137	A browser based hotel booking system with various functions (bookings, client management, monitoring, statics, sales & catering, billing...)
139	A client will send a request and ask an offer. The offer will be sent via email.
141	Marketing portal has a calendar
142	We write a booking down in our system where are a profile of the client, and booking information (i.e. late check-in).
143	In computer, a Google Drive Excel spreadsheet is in use for all administrators.
147	I'll make an offer, or if only an accommodation I'll answer if it available.
153	A client calls and sends an email, I'll check in a calendar and answer if there are available rooms and the client will confirm the booking.