

BACHELOR THESIS

Acquisition of German Customers for the Start-Up Company *BimBimBikes*



BIKES

Rent a bike – anywhere, anytime

BimBimBikes will be the global booking platform that offers quality, transparency and ease of use for consumers when renting bikes, a "booking.com for bicycle rental".

2017

A graduation research into the needs of German clients who are
considering a bike rental with *BimBimBikes*

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Abstract

This graduation research presents findings on how the start-up organisation *BimBimBikes* can overcome its current difficulties with the acquisition of new German customers. Although this research uses the start-up company as a basis for the investigation, it might be applied to similar businesses that are facing the same issue. For this research, existing literature has been addressed to gain an in-depth overview of the already existing knowledge in the field of customer acquisition and customer satisfaction. Therefore, in the introduction general background theory regarding the current trends in European tourism, the European bicycle market and the global bike rental industry have been given. Moreover, the typical profile of a traveller in cycling tourism has been analysed.

The Theoretical Framework has been divided into the four concepts service, quality, trust and accessibility, as these are the main needs that need to be fulfilled in order to attract and acquire new clients. In this preliminary research it was established that a more personalised and fast customer service as well as the absence of friction and a reasonable price-performance ratio are crucial. Regarding the need for quality it has been discovered that the customer expectations here strongly depend on their level of involvement. The need for trust is met if customers do not fear risk when placing a booking on the website and the layout, structure and content appear trustworthy. Furthermore, the webpage should not appear chaotic or overloaded with information in order to be accessible.

The used method for this investigation is an exploratory, quantitative research in form of an online survey. The survey questions built on the information gathered from the literature review and are in balance with the four concepts. It has been established with Typeform and as a population served all 500 former German clients since *BimBimBikes* was founded. A confidence level of 75% could be achieved, which exceeds the set minimum confidence level of 70%. A total of 106 respondents filled in the questionnaire that has been distributed to all 500 e-mail addresses of the previous clients.

The questions of the survey aimed at finding out, in how far the customers have been satisfied with their booking and bike rental, what customer service expectations they have and which minimum quality they expect from their booked bicycles or tours. Furthermore, they targeted at finding out in how far the current website appears trustworthy and is easily accessible. It has been found that customers are indeed more demanding regarding the rapidity of a response to an inquiry. Moreover, they appreciate customer service via different channels as well as a well-functioning rental bicycle. Additionally, customers mainly find the layout, structure and content of the webpage trustworthy, however, many clients feel a functional and a time risk when considering a booking with *BimBimBikes*. Moreover, the website appears partly overloaded with information to the clients, which could cause a loss of customers. Lastly, it has been found that most customers found out about the organisation by researching bike rental possibilities on Google or referrals of acquaintances, but also through Facebook, Instagram and links from third webpages.

BimBimBikes is therefore recommended to link its Facebook page more visible to the website and consider a live-chat option. Moreover, a competition between customer service team members can be announced in order to rise motivation for a fast customer service. Also, the profiles of the rental partners should be updated with all available information to make the website appear more trustworthy and prevent issues. The bike rental partners should further be made aware of the importance of an acceptable quality of bikes and tours. Furthermore, the navigation bar of the website should be improved so that it matches with the content shown and small adaptations of the homepage regarding user comments and referrals could further lead to a more trustworthy appearance. Lastly, hashtag campaigns for videos and contests on YouTube and Facebook can be used in order to raise awareness for *BimBimBikes* in a creative way.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement.....	
Abstract	
Abbreviations	
List of Figures.....	
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Terms of Reference	1
1.2 Company Overview	1
1.3 Background Theory	2
1.3.1 Trends in European Tourism	2
1.3.2 Strong European Bicycle Market	3
1.3.4 Global Bike Rental Industry	3
1.3.5 Travellers Profile in Cycling Tourism	3
1.4 Problem Analysis	4
1.5 Research Question and Sub-Questions	5
1.4 Objective.....	6
1.5 Limitations	6
1.6 Reading Guide	7
2 Theoretical Framework	8
2.1 Customer Needs	8
2.1.1 Service	8
2.1.2 Quality	10
2.1.3 Trust.....	11
2.1.4 Accessibility	13
2.2 Conceptual Model	15
2.2.1 Model	15
2.2.2 Description	15
2.3 Findings.....	15
2.3.1 Service	15
2.3.2 Quality	15
2.3.3 Trust.....	16
2.3.4 Accessibility	16
3 Research Method	17
3.1 Research Design	17
3.2 Research Unit and Construct.....	17
3.3 Operationalisation	19

3.4 Ethics	20
3.5 Data Collection	20
3.7 Data Analysis	21
3.6 Validity.....	21
3.8 Reliability	21
4 Results	23
4.1 Demographic Factors.....	23
4.2 Customer Needs	23
4.2.1 Service	23
4.2.2 Quality	26
4.2.3 Trust.....	27
4.2.4 Accessibility	28
4.3 Summary.....	29
5 Discussion	31
5.1 Comparison between Theory and Results.....	31
5.2 Positive and Negative Effects of the Research	33
6 Conclusion	35
6.1 Sub-Questions	35
6.2 Research Question	37
7 Recommendations.....	39
8 References.....	43
9 Appendix.....	46
9.1 Online Survey	46
9.1.1 General Questions.....	46
9.1.2 Questions regarding the customers' need for service	46
9.1.3 Questions regarding the customers' need for quality	47
9.1.4 Questions regarding the customers' need for trust.....	48
9.1.5 Questions regarding the customers' need for accessibility	49
9.2 Survey Data.....	50
9.2.1 General Questions	50
9.2.2 Questions regarding the customers' need for service	51
9.2.3 Questions regarding the customers' need for quality	52
9.2.4 Questions regarding the customers' need for trust.....	54
9.2.5 Questions regarding the customers' need for accessibility	56

Abbreviations

Etc. – et cetera

E.g. – for example

A.I. - Artificial Intelligence

CTR – Click-Through Rate

List of Figures

Figure 1: Sample size 1	18
Figure 2: Communication channel preferences for customer service (n106).....	24
Figure 3: Customer service - expected response time (n106).....	25
Figure 4: The website appears overloaded with information	29

1 Introduction

The present document is a report for the Bachelor graduation research of Natalie Burau, 4th year student at the HZ University of Applied Sciences in Vlissingen, the Netherlands. The students study programme is International Business and Management Studies. The graduation for this programme includes a graduation internship with the purpose of doing an in-company research project. The present research is conducted within a 4.5 months internship at *BimBimBikes* in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. The main purpose of the project is an in-depth research into the acquisition of German customers.

1.1 Terms of Reference

The graduation report presents the findings of research into the difficulties with customer needs when intending to acquire new German clients and give recommendations on how to overcome them. The research will be conducted for the start-up company *BimBimBikes* and was requested by Michel Willems, co-founder of the organization, as the company currently lacks German bookings and aims at continuously expanding its business. The estimated time frame for this research will be the 01. February 2017 until the 31. May 2017. Within these four months, the execution of the main research as well as the composition of the research report will take place. The final document is to be presented to Mr. Willems on 31. May 2017.

1.2 Company Overview

The company, this research targets at is *BimBimBikes*, an online platform that intends to simplify the booking process of rental bikes for tourists in more than 73 countries at the present moment. Bike rental companies can sign up on the online platform www.bimbimbikes.com, where tourists can then decide to rent a bike with them, depending on their needs and the available offers in the desired booking destinations. The bike rental companies who decide on becoming partners of *BimBimBikes* can create their own profile and add all kind of relevant information, such as the number of bicycles they would like to offer, what types of bicycles they have, if they also organise tours, the financial statements etc. Once the profile has been set-up, customer service employees review the entered data and make the account visible on the platform. Clients can now book bicycles with the specific bike rental point.

BimBimBikes currently has more than 1500 rental points. The company itself was founded in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, in May 2015 and has ten employees. Therefore, the business is considered as being a start-up. The co-founder of the organization is Michel Willems who also functions as the CEO of the company.

According to Michel Willems, there are three general target groups, the organisation intends to attract with its business. The first and biggest target group are city trippers. This group consists out of tourists, who spend their holidays in a certain destination and like to explore the city or region by bicycle. Usually, they are only in a certain place for one or a few days, but not for a very long period.

The second target group, according to Willems, are the hobby cyclists. This target audience consists mainly out of males, who re-discover their passion for cycling and therefore often request special biking equipment, gears or sports bike in general. With this target group, *BimBimBikes* usually achieves a higher profit per booking, as the requested products commonly have a higher value. In addition to that, this target group often books longer trips for trekking and adventure purposes.

The third target group can be defined as people who are older than approximately 65 years. Same as the hobby cyclists, they re-discover their passion for cycling. Moreover, they usually have the free time and the financial means needed for exploring new destinations.

The company is highly technology-oriented and most of the business activities take place online. Next to the website, *BimBimBikes* works with several other platforms. In relation with the organisation's marketing, Google AdWords, WordPress, Facebook, Instagram and Mailchimp are being used. Through the platform WordPress, *BimBimBikes* regularly publishes blog posts in order to improve on its Google ranking. The website itself is available in five different languages: English, Dutch, German, French and Italian.

According to Willems, the vision of the company can be stated with the following script: *Rent a bike. Anywhere, Anytime*. When founding the organisation in May 2015, Willems set the goal to have partners in every country of the world, but the countries that are common war regions. Therefore, the organisation's mission is the continuous acquisition of rental point partners all over the world. Due to the company's status of a start-up, it has been growing rapidly and steady so far. Moreover, Willems states that it is *BimBimBikes'* mission to execute excellent customer service in order to guarantee customer satisfaction of both rental point partners as well as booking customers (BimBimBikes, 2016).

Furthermore, *BimBimBikes* has got some competitors on the market. Although the concept of the business, bringing bike rental points all over the world together with tourists, is still rather exceptional and innovative, there are some competitors already. One example is the organisation *BICILET*. The company was founded in the beginning of February 2017 and is a new player on the market. The company's concept equals the concept of *BimBimBikes* very much. A commission of 15% is kept from every booking that takes place through the platform, where bike rental points can create a profile free of charge and indicate what specific types of bikes or accessories they offer. Customers can then book a bike on the website with the bike rental company. Additionally, *BICILET* has a destination blog as well (Sutton, Cycling Industry News, 2017), (*BICILET*, 2017). Other than that, there are companies whose concepts are similar, but differ however in some parts. For example, there is *Spinlister*, a company that offers its clients a similar concept as car sharing – just with bikes instead of cars. Customers can rent bikes from private persons for a specific period of time and pay a certain amount of money to the owner of the bicycle (Spinlister, 2017). *BimBimBikes* therefore does have competitors, but the competition is not that intense yet, as to why bike rental platforms like *BimBimBikes* can be seen as a niche market.

1.3 Background Theory

In this chapter, a preliminary, general research into the main facts that form the basis for this research will be given. Therefore, the trends in European tourism industry will be presented. Moreover, some facts about the European bike rental industry in general and whether or not it is growing will be given. Afterwards, factors about the global bike rental industry will be exhibited and a traveller's profile that shows the main characteristics of a European cyclist will be shown.

1.3.1 Trends in European Tourism

Regarding the general trends in the tourism industry, the CBI published a report about tourism in June 2016. This report reveals that there is an increasing interest in exclusive and authentic tourism experiences. European travellers seek for unique travel experiences in order to get to know the real culture of the holiday destination they are visiting. Moreover, the trend goes towards a customised travel experience as tourists intend to be flexible in their way of travelling rather than being bound to a set-up package. The research also reveals an increasing concern for sustainability, which is advantageous for *BimBimBikes* as the services they offer are targeting at a more sustainable lifestyle (CBI Market Intelligence, 2016).

1.3.2 Strong European Bicycle Market

Also the European bicycle market in general is seen as being very strong. As the Confederation of the European Bicycle industry (CONEBI) revealed in their latest European bicycle market report, Europeans in general own more bicycles than any other object used for transportation (Sutton, Cycling Industry News, 2016). From this fact it can be concluded that biking in general can be seen as popular in European countries such as Germany and the Netherlands. Moreover, the report states that one out of eight bikes sold in Germany is an e-bike, with a volume of unit sales at 40% of the total volume sold and that the numbers are expected to rise in the future. Germany is therefore the largest market for e-biking within Europe, whereas the Netherlands is the second biggest market (Sutton, Cycling Industry News, 2016). Although the findings in this report concern e-bike sales and not rentals, the conclusion can be drawn that the e-biking trend is becoming more and more popular in Germany as well as the Netherlands. Therefore, the research should also consider the concept of e-biking when investigating the needs of German customers.

Also, the cycling tourism itself is an important niche market, as the CBI Ministry of Foreign Affairs revealed in their report about cycling tourism from November 2015. The Adventure Tourism Trade Association conducted a survey which revealed that in 2014, 46% of the total revenue of adventure tourism companies in Europe was gained through the sale of cycling tours or other cycling services. In addition to that, the survey disclosed that the demand for cycling tours in general is increasing, due to an increase in reservations and a rising interest in green tourism (CBI Market Intelligence, 2015).

1.3.4 Global Bike Rental Industry

Also, the bike rental industry in general is booming. Doug Stoddart, Manager of *Village Velo*, a software developer for the bike rental industry, states that there are several indicators that bike rentals are growing. According to him, more people are passionate about cycling than eight years ago (reference from 2014) and it is becoming more expensive to take a bike with you when travelling. Moreover, more and more people realise that renting bikes is easier and more efficient than taking their own bicycles with them when travelling (Harker, 2014). Also BIKE Europe forecasted in December 2016 similar to what Doug Stoddart has forecasted in 2014 already: the global bike market is expected to grow by 38€ up to 2024. Reasons for this are, according to the magazine, a general economic growth, a healthier lifestyle environmental as well as mobility reasons, the global warming process and the future lack of natural resources. However, the report also reveals that a lack of sufficient cycling lanes and an insufficient infrastructure for cyclists could hold the growth back from developing into its fullest (Oortwijn, 2016). A growing bike rental industry is favourable for *BimBimBikes'* business, as it will help the company to grow further and expand its network.

1.3.5 Travellers Profile in Cycling Tourism

Furthermore, the CBI presents in their 2015 product factsheet about "cycling tourism from Europe" the findings into the research about the profile of the typical European traveller who is interested in cycling tourism. According to the research, the typical target audience for cycling tourism in Europe is slightly more often male and mostly between 40 to 60 years old. Most often they are also higher educated and perceive a higher income. Additionally, this target group usually enjoys cycling itself as a form of physical exercise as well as being in the nature. Moreover, travellers interested in cycling tourism usually travel in smaller groups or at least couples and mainly arrange their holidays by themselves. Further, the CBI states that there are four main target groups. The first one concerns the "infrequent leisure cyclists". This target group describes people who do not cycle frequently and may not even possess a bicycle themselves. For them, cycling is something extraordinary as to why they are mainly interested in packaged biking holidays and low traffic cycling. These travellers mainly want to cycle in a moderate pace and get to know their holiday destination in that way. This target group is also expected to be the biggest of all four. The second group is called "occasional leisure cyclists".

Those people perform cycling activities occasionally throughout the year (preferably during summer) and are mainly interested in cycling day trips from distances between 30 to 40 kilometres. This target group is expected to be the second largest. The third party concerns the “frequent leisure cyclists”, who are likely to go on cycling trips a couple of times per year, also during the winter months. As a last group, the CBI mentions the “cycling enthusiasts”. This group consists out of passionate cyclists who go cycling about two times a week, regardless the current season and cycle tours up to 60 kilometres. Although this segment is the smallest, it offers great opportunities due to the fact that these people are particularly looking for cycling holidays (CBI Market Intelligence, 2015).

1.4 Problem Analysis

Being a start-up implicates several chances and opportunities, but also involves specific problems that need to be solved in order to guarantee sufficient growth and a stable market position of the young company.

Michel Willems states that one of the problems the organisation *BimBimBikes* faces at the moment are too little bookings by German customers. This is a problem, as according to Willems, about eleven percent of all clients are Germans, which implies that Germans form a crucial target audience for the service that is offered by the company. However, he strongly believes that with the right strategy, more German customers could be acquired, because according to him a higher potential lies in the customer acquisition of German tourists. By doing research into what specific needs potential German clients have, *BimBimBikes* can gain new knowledge that will be helpful in terms of how the organisation has to adjust its marketing strategy and its service offer in general, in order to meet these needs. In that way, the organisation can gain more German customers what will increase the turnover in general. The stated matter can be described as a problem, because the organisation currently lacks a big target group and therefore profit, which could be realized when doing research into what specific needs German tourists have when considering a bike rental.

This problem concerns mainly *BimBimBikes* itself, as the company is generating a loss considering the big and important target group it is partially missing out on at the moment. Moreover, it creates a problem for the partners of the organisation. Bike rental points that have created an account on the platform itself intend to generate a higher profit with *BimBimBikes* by acquiring more bookings outside their own sales methods. Due to the lack of bookings by German customers, these rental partners also lack an increase in turnover they could generate, when more German tourists place a booking through the website.

The issue did not become a problem at one specific moment, but was an ever present matter. Due to the young age of the company, there are many problems to solve in all kind of fields and dimensions, as to why the organisation has to focus on different issues at all times. Moreover, the organisation is dependent on its employees. Until 01 February 2017, *BimBimBikes* employed only five workforces in total, of whom three were Interns. Next to the conductor of this research, there have only been two previous German-speaking Interns who had the necessary language abilities to grow the company’s network in Germany. Therefore, the organisation noticed the problem and tasked a native German-speaker with the research into the acquisition of German clients.

Another problem the company is facing is the fact that the business has not reached its intended growth yet and that it needs to grow every year in order to develop into a well-established corporation. This can be described as a problem as it is important for a start-up business to grow steadily in order to succeed on the market. Moreover, *BimBimBikes* is currently still funded through *H1 One Stop Webshop*, its parental corporation, and does not act independently yet. In order to become an independent player on the market, it has to be able to finance its own activities.

This problem concerns the two co-founders Harm Wolterink and Michel Willems of *BimBimBikes* and *H1 One Stop Webshop*. Both founded the subsidiary enterprise in May 2015 and both intend to generate a turnover high enough to pay off all aroused cost from it, instead of having to pay for *BimBimBikes* with the money generated by the webshop developer. The problem aroused with the foundation of the company and is an ongoing issue.

Furthermore, Willems mentions that another problem the company is facing is that it is yet unknown whether or not the current service offer meets the exact needs of the German target audience. Germans, according to his previous work experience, maintain another culture and have different preferences than Dutch customers.

Therefore, it is yet unknown if adjustments in the current offer or the current marketing strategy have to be made in order to reach the German target group most efficiently. Knowing the needs of their clients is important for every kind of company in order to create a matching marketing strategy and adjust its service offer if necessary.

This problem affects *BimBimBikes* and their bike rental partners in terms of losses in turnover as well as the actual German clients that book bikes through the platform, because they maybe lack on the service they really need and could have a better overall experience, if adjustments are being made.

1.5 Research Question and Sub-Questions

The research report will be developed to answer the following main research question:

How can *BimBimBikes* overcome the current difficulties with customer needs when intending to acquire more German clients?

The main aim of this investigation is, to provide *BimBimBikes* with information, where current difficulties regarding the German customer acquisition lie and to give recommendations, how the organisation can acquire new German clients and in the same way increase its number of bookings.

In order to answer the above stated research question, four sub-questions have been established and categorized into the sub-sections service, quality, trust and accessibility:

Customer Needs

1. Concept: Service

- To what extent is the current service offer of *BimBimBikes* sufficient for *BimBimBikes*' clients when considering a bike rental?

2. Concept: Quality

- To what extent is the current quality offer of *BimBimBikes* sufficient for its customers when considering a bike rental?

3. Concept: Trust

- To what extent does *BimBimBikes* appear trustworthy to German clients who consider a bike rental?

4. Concept: Accessibility

- To what extent does the current accessibility of the website fulfil the needs of German clients who consider a bike rental?

In the first concept "service", it will be researched whether or not the current service offer of *BimBimBikes* meets the clients' needs. The second concept is classified as "quality". Here, it will be researched in how far the level of quality that is currently offered by *BimBimBikes* is sufficient for German clients who consider a bike rental. The third sub-section concerns the concept of "trust".

This question aims at answering whether or not the organisation appears trustworthy enough to the German target audience in order to make an actual booking happen and leave the customer satisfied. The last sub-section is “accessibility”. In this part of the research, the accessibility of the website and whether or not it is designed in a way that meets the customers’ needs will be established.

1.4 Objective

This research aims at answering the question of what the current difficulties for *BimBimBikes* are regarding the acquisition of new German clients and what possibilities the company has, to overcome them in order to increase their number of bookings.

Moreover, there are four sub-goals within this investigation. The first sub-goal is to indicate which specific needs German tourists that consider a bike rental have regarding the provided service. Secondly, a sub-goal is to achieve findings into what quality is desired by the clients when intending to rent a bike. In addition to that, a third sub-goal is to find out what the specific needs in terms of trust in the organisation are. The fourth and last sub-goal is to acquire information regarding what needs the organisation’s clients have in terms of website accessibility and to what extent the current offer meets those needs.

After answering the main research question as well as the sub-questions, recommendations on how the company can assess its current marketing strategy and/or its current service offer in order to increase their number in German bookings will be provided.

1.5 Limitations

The research is focussed on the start-up organisation *BimBimBikes*. Although other references are being used, the methodology mainly targets at *BimBimBikes*’ portfolio, target audience and desired business goals. Therefore, the findings, conclusion and recommendations also apply to the company that is being researched and may not relate to other businesses, even though they may form part of the same industry.

Furthermore, the research is limited to the given time frame from 01. February 2017 until 31. May 2017. The investigation is carried out as accurate and extensive as possible in a time period of four months. However, the findings into this matter are also determined by the limitation of time.

In addition to that, the financial resources of this research are limited to a given budget that is provided by *BimBimBikes*, the client of this research. Therefore, only a limited research that stays within this budget can be carried out. The exact budget is not defined as Willems, who is responsible for the finances of the company as well as the research project, stated that the budget can be adjusted according to the developments of the investigation.

Another limitation form the resources that are used for the analysis. Although the best available and most suitable references are being approached online, from books and company data, a certain limit of adequate resources is given, as the research cannot consider all existing literature regarding this research topic.

Moreover, the investigation primarily considers the customer acquisition through online marketing channels, as the company is rather online driven and co-founder Michel Willems stated that the start-up organisation does not dispose of a high marketing budget and that he favours marketing tools, which are measurable online. However, should the investigation show significant trends towards a usage of offline marketing tools, these tendencies will be considered as well.

1.6 Reading Guide

This reading guide serves as a basis for the reader of this research paper and shall give a broad overview over the following chapters and their purpose for the investigation.

The investigation starts with the preliminary research in the Theoretical Framework. Here, a conceptual model consisting out of the four concepts service, quality, trust and accessibility has been applied. These four factors form the four major needs that need to be fulfilled in order to be able to acquire new German clients. The conceptual framework also forms the basis for the practical research that follows the literature review. The Theoretical framework however presents theoretical findings of relevant literature that is related to the topic and where the practical research later built on. As a part of the Theoretical Framework, the conceptual model is visualised and described more detailed. As a last sub-section of this chapter, the findings of the preliminary research are presented in a sort of summary in order to give an overview.

As a next step, the Research Method is explained. Therefore, the design of the research, the unit of analysis and its construct are presented. Moreover, the operationalisation table is shown and information regarding the ethical background of the investigation are given. Also, it is stated which data collection method is used and how the acquired data is analysed. As a last step in this chapter, declarations about the validity and reliability of the data are made.

Afterwards, the results of the practical research are shown. Therefore, this chapter is divided into demographic factors, the results regarding the concept for service as well as the results for the concepts of quality, trust and accessibility. In the text itself only significant results and variances between age and gender groups are shown. All results in detail can be found in the appendix. In the end of the chapter, a summary with the main findings is presented.

The next chapter deals with the discussion of the research. Here, a comparison between the findings of the theoretical and the practical research is made and the positive and negative effects of the research are pointed out by mentioning what the limitations of the research are and which points worked out very well.

In the following section, a conclusion to all sub-questions as well as the main research question is given. Here, the questions are answered in relation to the findings of the theoretical and practical research.

Finally, recommendations that build on the conclusion of the research are given. The recommendations relate to all findings that differ from what can be seen as positive for the company, e.g. issues with the booking and rental procedure.

Afterwards, the appendix is attached. In the appendix, the translated questions of the online survey can be found as well as graphs that visualise all findings of the survey conducted.

2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework gives an insight into the literature that is used as a basis for the research. Therefore, this chapter is divided into four different concepts: service, quality, trust and accessibility. Each of these concepts represents a different area of a certain customer need. The researcher developed a literature analysis about past researches that have been done already into these four fields of customer needs.

2.1 Customer Needs

According to the Business Dictionary, customer needs are problems that customers intend to solve with the purchase of a good or service. The customer needs can also be described as customer expectation or customer requirements (Business Dictionary, 2017).

Next to the customer needs, the term “consumer behaviour” is an essential element of this research. According to the American Marketing Association, “consumer behaviour is the dynamic interaction of affect and cognition, behaviour and the environment by which human beings conduct the exchange aspects of their lives. In other words, consumer behaviour involves the thoughts and feelings people experience and the actions they perform in consumption processes.” (Peter & Jerry, 2008, p. 5). Moreover, it is stated that the evaluation of consumer behaviour is important, when intending to develop a marketing strategy as a marketing organization (Peter & Jerry, 2008, p. 11). Therefore, an investigation into customer needs will be made.

2.1.1 Service

Services are “intangible products such as accounting, banking, cleaning, consultancy, education, insurance, expertise, medical treatment, or transportation. Sometimes services are difficult to identify because they are closely associated with a good; such as the combination of a diagnosis with the administration of a medicine. No transfer of possession or ownership takes place when services are sold, and they cannot be stored or transported, are instantly perishable and come into existence at the time they are bought and consumed.” (Business Dictionary, 2017)

In the context of this research, the term “service” describes the activities that are undertaken by the organisation *BimBimBikes* with the goal to satisfy their customers’ needs. The following activities will be considered in the research:

- Customer service that is provided by *BimBimBikes*’ employees via telephone or e-mail
- Absence of friction from the moment when the booking is being made until the moment of the drop off of the bicycles
- Price-performance ratio

Forbes Magazine has published an article which reveals several trends in customer service for the year 2017. The article states that value and experience are usually more important to customers than the price, unless the organisation intends to act as a low-cost provider. Moreover, the article reveals that a personalised customer experience leads to a better overall service for the customers. Therefore, it is recommended to make the service as personal as possible with the aid of big data analysis. Furthermore, a trend is seen in the increased usage of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in customer service fields. According to John McCarthy from Stanford University, AI means the science of developing intelligent machines and computer systems (McCarthy, 2007). This science can be used for example in form of chatbots and answer regular customer requests independently. According to the article, the chatbots cannot replace human work completely. However, they are getting better and better. Additionally, customer success becomes increasingly important. Forbes Magazine reveals that the trend goes towards a higher overall customer success in the selling stage already. This

implies that companies intend to hand out all necessary information when selling the product or service in order to reduce the follow-up questions or customer questions in general. This concept is comparable to “proactive customer service”. This term describes another trend for 2017: companies are trying to fix problems that occurred before the consumers even notice that there has been a problem. Also, the phone is being used less and less. This trend emerged out of the many alternatives that exist nowadays, such as social media, chatbots or self-service installations. Consumers get more and more familiar with the usage of these different kind of programmes as well as the internet itself, as to why there are a lot more possibilities today. However, the telephone as a customer service source will most likely never disappear at all, but simply being used for different purposes. Another trend is a customer that has higher demands in terms of the accepted waiting time for responses. Clients tend to be less patient when waiting for replies and have higher demands. The last trend which is mentioned in the article concerns the overall convenience of an organisation. It is mentioned that it is crucial for a company to be convenient through for example modern technology on the website that makes booking and ordering processes easier and faster. Companies continuously have to be a step ahead of their competition (Hyken, 2017).

Matthew Brown from Business2Community has done research into this topic as well. He published an article about customer support trends in the year 2017 on 21 November 2016 and reveals similar trends as the Forbes Magazine has established. For example, Brown mentions that self-service is becoming more popular and personalisation more important for a business. Moreover, he states that mobile support is becoming a new trend additionally to the internet which serves as a research base for clients. The article also agrees with the Forbes Magazine that customers are more and more expecting faster support from customer service departments and that Omni channel is getting more precise than ever before. Due to the article, it is now possible to install different systems that can track back from what specific type of device one is sending a customer request. These systems can also send automatic and customised replies (Brown, 2016).

As shown above, different sources state similar customer service trends for the year 2017. This implies that the present research in terms of the concept “service” should focus in detail on: In how far the current self-service offer is sufficient for acquiring more German customers and in how far the current customer service is fast enough. And in general, although not specifically mentioned as a trend, in how far the customer service is seen as being helpful for the customers.

The absence of friction during the entire service from *BimBimBikes* and the actual bike rental period will be measured by doing research into whether or not there have been difficulties with the booking or any other step when former customers have rented a bicycle through the platform.

Regarding the price-performance-ratio, Hitesh Bhasin, web designer, search engine optimizer and e-commerce seller has published an article on Marketing91 on 29 November 2016. In his article, he explains that pricing is a very strong psychological component which has an effect on the client’s decision making process. According to Bhasin, a high price indicates a better quality, whereas a low prices leads the consumer automatically to the assumption that the quality is low. The article reveals that customers always intend to receive the highest value for the lowest input of money. Moreover, it is mentioned that when prices increase, the organisation needs to add value to the product or service offered. When offering a service or product at a higher price, the first purchase is important, as to why the company has to invest more in marketing, advertising and communications than they would need to when offering low price goods or services. Additionally, the article reveals that when operating the market penetration strategy, it is crucial to keep a sufficient quality of the low cost products in mind (Bhasin, 2016). In relation to *BimBimBikes* the product would be the bike itself. Although the organisation only acts as an application agent, the quality of the actual product (the

bike that is being rented) will determine whether or not the clients had a positive experience with *BimBimBikes*.

Furthermore, the American Marketing Association has published an article that shows the findings of research into the quality of the relationship between a salesperson (in this case a *BimBimBikes* customer service employee) and the customer. The research reveals that the relationship between the company and the consumer will determine whether or not the customer is likely to interact with the organisation again in future. Just as Bhasin, the American Marketing Association revealed that there is a relation between price and quality perception. Therefore, it is important to examine whether or not the quality of the service that is being offered is mainly perceived positively as otherwise the company would have to implement different or new strategies to control the services or bikes offered by its rental partners. Moreover, *BimBimBikes*' current strategy can be seen as market penetration. The organisation is operating in the service sector but its current mission is still to gain as many partners as possible in countries all over the world. This can be seen as a penetration strategy and according to the reviewed literature, it is therefore necessary to establish if the organisation has to take the bike rentals' quality offer better into account when creating partnerships.

At this point it should be mentioned that *BimBimBikes* usually does not set the prices. The company's only determination is a commission of 15% on every booking that takes place through the website. The prices are being decided on by the rental point partners. They can choose whether to add the commission value of 15% to their regular renting prices and let the customer pay the additional cost or to pay the cost themselves. However, the price-performance ratio plays still a crucial role for the research, as *BimBimBikes* has the power to give rental partners advice based on their experience and knowledge. Furthermore, the price-performance ratio is crucial to consider for the research as the organisation is operating in more than 70 countries worldwide with different pricing strategies and the network is still to be expanded. Therefore, it is necessary to adapt the wishes of the customers to the offer of the rental point. If a family is for example looking for city bikes simply to explore their current holiday destination, expensive exclusive hybrid bikes would assumedly be inadequate here. Therefore, it needs to be established if the current price-performance ratio has been matching with the expectations of former German customers or if changes within the service offer have to be made.

2.1.2 Quality

The American Society for Quality Control has defined the term "quality" as "the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs." It is crucial to separate the terms conformance and performance quality (Mercedes for example will always have a better performance quality than Hyundai, however, the conformance quality of both is good) (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman, & Hansen, 2009).

In the context of this research, the scope of the concept of quality is the following:

- The quality, German customers expect from the bike they rent
- The quality of the tours they book

This concept does in contrary not concentrate on the quality of the service offered by *BimBimBikes*, as this falls under the concept of service. The price-performance ratio is not listed in this chapter as well, because it is rather connected to the service of the organisation and whether or not it is sufficient for German target clients.

Research has already been done into how far quality and satisfaction influence each other. The researchers Ruth N. Bolton and James H. Drew argue that quality is a result of customer satisfaction

or dissatisfaction as well as the prior expectations they had for the specific product or service. In their work “A Multi-Stage Model of Customers’ Assessments of Service Quality and Value” they state that both terms, quality and satisfaction or dissatisfaction are identical (Bolton & Drew, 1991). In contrary, the Quality Digest reveals that other researchers see both terms as separate constructs. Still, they believe that both terms are related and that quality does indeed have an influence on customer satisfaction. According to the researchers, quality is a more consistent element with specific referents and satisfaction is a broader concept that, next to quality matters, also includes several other elements (Pyzdek, 2008). Nevertheless, both sources regard quality as being connected to customer satisfaction, as to why this term needs to be considered in this research.

Next to the above mentioned matter, additional research has been done into the concept of quality. According to Richard Petty and John Cacioppo, the quality that is being expected by the consumer depends on the consumer involvement, when purchasing a product or service. Therefore, the two scientists have developed the “elaboration likelihood model”. This is “an influential model of attitude formation and change. [It] describes how consumers make evaluations in both, low- and high involvement circumstances.” The two ways a customer can go are the central route, where there is a high elaboration with the product or service or the peripheral route, where there is a low elaboration. High elaboration with the product implies that the quality of the product is more important for the client, because the product has a high personal value for the individual. Whereas for example purchasing milk does usually not involve a high elaboration as people under normal circumstances do not care that much about what actual brand they buy their milk from (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman, & Hansen, 2009, p. 255).

Based on the literature that has been reviewed it is therefore important to analyse whether *BimBimBikes’* German target clients commonly have a high involvement with renting bikes or not. In general and next to the intentions above, the research targets at evolving the overall quality perception that German customers get from *BimBimBikes’* service offer, as the literature review shows that quality is connected to customer satisfaction.

2.1.3 Trust

The Cambridge Dictionary defines trust as a mental state that takes place when you “believe that someone is good and honest and will not harm you, or that something is safe and reliable” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2014).

In this investigation, the scope for the concept of trust can be defined as the following:

- How trustful *BimBimBikes’* website appears to German customers that consider a booking
 - ➔ Layout of the website
 - ➔ Structure of the website
 - ➔ Content of the website
- What specific risks they fear when considering a bike rental

Scientists from the University of Basel have done research into how a website should be designed to appear trustful to a potential customer. Therefore, the researchers have collected website users’ reports about crucial occurrences and a survey has been conducted with the intention to gain information about what makes a website seem trustworthy. The research reveals that distrust is mainly caused by graphical or structural issues on the website itself. Moreover, trust evolves mainly out of social factors such as recommendations from acquaintances or positive user comments. The actual content which is shown on the platform also has an effect on whether or not the organisation is perceived as being trustworthy. For instance, a lack of privacy as well as negative shared experience of former users cause increasing distrusts, whereas honesty and security measures build

trust (Seckler, Heinz, Forde, Tuch, & Opwis, 2015). In addition to the researchers of the University of Basel, the three scientists Zhou, Lu and Wang have examined online consumers' initial trust building from an elaboration likelihood model perspective in the year 2014. Just as the elaboration likelihood model that has been mentioned in the chapter about quality, this model assumes that trust develops either the central route which is based on quality or the peripheral route, which is based on credibility. A report reveals that about 52.8% of internet users feel uncertain when doing online transactions. Especially people who are not familiar with online shopping feel this risk. Other factors that affect the initial trust are similar to the indicators stated above: the ease one feels with the usage of a website (accessibility), a good structure as well as the quality of the information that is shown on the website (Zhou, Lu, & Wang, 2014). Furthermore, Cor Molenaar has done research into the building of customer relationships. In his book "Why customers would rather have a smartphone than a car" from 2015, he describes the same current trend as the researchers from the University of Basel. According to him, there is a great demand for sufficient privacy when placing a booking online. Molenaar explains that users are often unsure about what will happen with the collected data and whether or not it will be kept private. Clients nowadays know about the "big data" analysis which are being made by companies. However, it is not completely clear for them what exactly their data is being used for as to why distrust is being created. Most of the times, consumers find it rather difficult to decide which data can be entered and what the benefits and consequences of a registration of data will be (Molenaar, Communication: the basis of customer relationships, 2015).

Considering those three references, it is noticeable that an easy and well-structured website as well as qualitative content and security make a website seem trustworthy. Therefore, these factors definitely form a part of the active research that is to be executed.

According to Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman and Hansen, a consumer perceives different types of risk when purchasing a product or service. Applied to *BimBimBikes*, the functional risk concerns the problem that the customer thinks, the booking on the website or the actual delivery of the service (the renting of the bike) will not work out. The physical risk referred to the organisation means that riding the rented bike could cause problems to the physical well-being of the person, because either the individual is scared of riding bikes in general or because it is assumed that the rented bike lacks on safety. Moreover, there is the possibility of a financial risk, which implies that the customer is afraid that the rented bikes will not be worth their prices. The social risk refers to the clients concern that riding or renting the bike could result into a social embarrassment from others. Furthermore, a psychological risk is possible, when the purchased bicycle does not conform to the client's perceived self-image. For example, the consumer rents a mountain bike that was shown differently in the photos on the *BimBimBikes* platform and is then disappointed, as he or she expected another design or look of the bike, as to why they do not feel that comfortable with the rented bike. The last risk that has been defined is the time risk. This risk concerns the possibility that a customer could find another, better bike to rent within a given time frame (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman, & Hansen, 2009, p. 125). Next to Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman and Hansen, several different other researchers and scientists relate to these risks as well. For instance, Laura Lake from "the balance" recently published an article that names the same risks as mentioned above. Moreover, this article reveals how these different types of risks can be identified. According to Lake, a type of security such as a cancellation period in case of *BimBimBikes* will increase the customer's trust for the organisation. Furthermore, hidden costs create a risk for the trustworthiness of the company, as they make customers believe that the organisation is trying to hide valuable information from them. As a last indicator, the article names the reputation or the brand name. It is expected that the better the company is ranking for these two factors, the higher is the possibility that the customer will purchase the good or service (Lake, 2016).

The research that has been done into the correlation between trust and risk when considering a purchase is limited to general background knowledge. So far, no specific investigation regarding the risk reduction in general and the trustworthiness of the website for German clients has been conducted at *BimBimBikes*. According to the literature review in this chapter, an investigation into how trustful the company's website seems as well as what particular risks *BimBimBikes* is facing can therefore be seen as necessary.

2.1.4 Accessibility

The Business Dictionary shows different definitions for the term "accessibility". The most suitable explanation in the scope of this research is the following: Accessibility means the "authorization, opportunity, or right to access records or retrieve information from an archive, computer system, or website (Business Dictionary, 2017)".

In clarify of what is meant by accessibility, the scope of the term in combination with this research will be defined. As *BimBimBikes* is an online platform, the company's website plays a crucial role in their business. Through the website, customers can book the products and services the organization offers. Therefore, the accessibility, e.g. how easy and adequate target groups consider its usability, will be determined.

The following variables will be used in the research in order to determine, whether or not the current accessibility of the website is sufficient:

- Legerity of finding the desired information on the website
- Ranking of the website in the search engine Google

According to researcher Cor Molenaar, technology has a great influence on businesses nowadays. This can be seen in the customers' behaviour. Today, it is very easy to find required information online, as there is a so called information overload available on the internet. Customers can therefore quickly respond to the information needed. However, the books shows that it is crucial for companies to carefully select the information presented on their websites and use the right tools such as adequate search engines, social media platforms and blogs. Otherwise, information can appear chaotic or it takes too much time to find the required information and the client will for example proceed to a different webpage. These days, humans have more possibilities than ever before and gather all information needed from any kind of source at any point of time. That makes consumers very powerful, yet dependent on the information they have acquired. As already established in chapter 2.1.1 Service, customers are more demanding and require faster replies than ever. Consumers are critical and their need for attention and reputation is rather high. Clients export more and more from their suppliers. They demand prompt explanations and answers to all their questions within a short time period (Molenaar, Why customers would rather have a smartphone than a car - Relationship retailing as an opportunity, 2015, pp. 129-130).

Further, the researchers Perdue, Xiang and Fesenmaier have executed an investigation into the ease of use of websites. The term "ease of use" has been exerted by various scientists so far when doing research into key factors in tourism website evaluation (Perdue, 2001), (Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2004). The term "ease of use" includes several different factors such as usability, navigation, accessibility, consistency and a logical structure. Just as Molenaar, the researchers state that users of the internet expect information to be available immediately and easy to find. Therefore, according to the article, the website must be easily navigable and "free of effort" (Park Young, Ulrike, & Ercan, 2007). Additionally, the research shows similar findings as Molenaar when arguing that tourists will spend more time on an easily accessible website and access information more conveniently. This can

further lead to a repetition of website visits from clients due to the positive experience he or she had with the ease of use (Miyoun, Haemoon, & Mary, 2005).

Regarding the second websites' ranking on the search engine Google, Molenaar presents the findings of research of Professor Kit Yarrow in his book "Why customers would rather have a smartphone than a car". Here, Yarrow states that today's "technological support has changed the way we are, we read and search in headings, search terms and short one-liners. We also want to be rewarded immediately with a solution or an answer" (Molenaar, Why customers would rather have a smartphone than a car - Relationship retailing as an opportunity, 2015, p. 133). From this quote it can be deviated that a high ranking of a webpage is crucial for an enterprise as users do not spend much time with scrolling down on Google, they want to find the information they are looking for in a short amount of time.

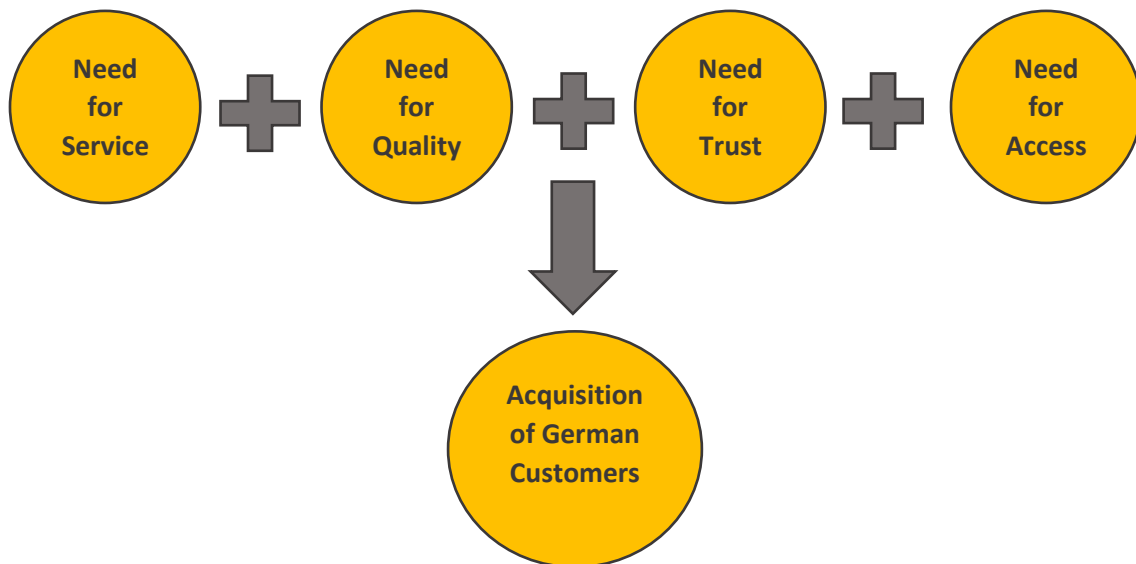
Besides Molenaar and Yarrow, several other researchers have executed an investigation into the importance of the ranking of a webpage and how it affects user choice in online search. The scientists Glick, Richards, Sapozhnikov and Seabright, who are active in economic research in the USA and France, state in their research paper that a high ranking website indeed results into a higher click rate. Moreover, the article reveals that rank influences the Click-Through Rate (CTR) by replacing the reputational capital of Google by the reputation of other, individual webpages. Furthermore, evidence has been found that conspicuousness is relevant here as well, which means that search engines deploy access to users' attention (Glick, Richards, Sapozhnikov, & Seabright, 2014).

As the above presented literature shows, a certain legerity is important for clients that intend to find specific information, as internet users become more and more demanding and impatient due to the present information overload. The above mentioned literature shows the importance of a well-structured and easily accessible website which enables consumers to easily find the required information. Further, the ease of use of a website has been defined under the factors usability, navigation, accessibility, consistency and a logical structure. However, no research has been done so far into how accessible *BimBimBikes'* website appears to its German clients. Therefore, it is necessary within this investigation to establish in how far the website's design is sufficient for the goal of acquiring more German customers. Moreover, it has been proofed that rank influences the CTR of a webpage and what factors influence the ranking. This proves the necessity of a research into how far the ranking of *BimBimBikes'* platform is sufficient on the German search engine Google.

2.2 Conceptual Model

The conceptual model represents the four different concepts the research is built on. The fulfilment of these four needs will then possibly lead to the final goal, the acquisition of German clients for the start-up organisation *BimBimBikes*.

2.2.1 Model



2.2.2 Description

The conceptual model of the present research is divided into five parts. The main target the research is aiming at, is the acquisition of German customers. This objective can be achieved by investigating into the four different concepts “service”, “quality”, “trust” and “access”. Assuming that there is a certain population of potential German customers that are interested in renting a bicycle, these four needs should preferably be satisfied to form the base for a booking through the company’s website.

2.3 Findings

This chapter will present the findings of the previous literature review. It will serve as a basis for the active research that will follow once the already existing literature has been investigated.

2.3.1 Service

Regarding the customer service, it has been found that customers expect a fast, personalized service and that AI becomes more and more important regarding the website design. Applied to the present research this means that it needs to be investigated, if the current service offer on the website is being considered as fast and personal enough by its customers and whether or not the channels that are being used for the customer service are the right choice or if different channels could lead to a better service.

2.3.2 Quality

It has been found that quality and customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction are connected to each other. This implies that quality influences whether or not clients are satisfied with a provided good or service. Therefore it is important for this research to determine, whether or not the quality of the current service offer is sufficient for the clients and whether or not adjustments need to be made.

2.3.3 Trust

After analysing the literature, it can be stated that the research should focus on identifying in how far the current state of the website in terms of graphics and structure is sufficient for the clients. Furthermore, it must be evaluated whether or not the content on the website seems trustworthy and if the clients feel comfortable with entering personal data on the organisation's website.

2.3.4 Accessibility

According to the literature, it needs to be analysed if the information which is provided on *BimBimBikes'* platform is valuable or if there is an information overload, for example. Moreover, the literature review revealed that a research into whether or not the correct tools in terms of social media, search engines and blogs are being used by the company. The literature has shown that the factors usability, navigation, accessibility, consistency and a logical structure can be used for the survey in order to measure the current level of the overall accessibility.

3 Research Method

The following chapter presents the method of the research. It shows, what design the research study had, what research units have been analysed in order to collect the required data as well as what specific characteristics these research units had. Furthermore, the operationalisation is presented in order to state, how exactly the required information has been gathered.

3.1 Research Design

According to Baarda, the research design can also be described as research strategy. The main objective of a research design is to design the research study. Herewith, three main questions are intended to be answered:

- What type of research design does the study have?
- What units of analysis does the research require (population or sample)?
- How can the constructs be measured? (Baarda, 2014, p. 44)


The chosen research method for the present investigation has been a descriptive research in form of a survey. The objective of a survey in general is the collection of information from one or more units of analysis (Baarda, 2014, p. 46). Moreover, the present investigation could also be described as an exploratory research. According to Baarda, this is a form of research, which explores frequencies, associations and differences in order to develop a certain theory (Baarda, 2014, p. 35). Since for this research it was essential to analyse the different preferences of *BimBimBikes*' target group, also variables such as age and whether or not there are different expectations and preferences between the different age groups had to be compared and set in relation with each other. The method of data collection was a questionnaire, which is further explained in chapter 3.3 Operationalisation. The survey used for the research targeted at determining the current customer satisfaction of prior German clients of *BimBimBikes* as well as establishing their major needs for booking a bike on the online platform.

3.2 Research Unit and Construct

This chapter focusses on the population of the research, how to acquire a correct sample size as well as what the expected response rate was.

The unit of analysis were former German clients that have placed a booking through the platform *BimBimBikes*. The total population size was 500. This number equals all bookings by German clients that the organisation got since the website got visible on the internet. The population register has been exported on the 16/03/2017.

According to Baarda, a sufficient sample size must be determined in case of a large population of the units of analysis (Baarda, 2014, pp. 63-74). All required data (e-mail addresses) of the entire first population was available and the distribution of the questionnaire via e-mail did not imply any further costs. Therefore, the survey has not only been distributed to a specific sample, but to all 500 e-mail addresses of former German clients in order to acquire the highest response rate possible. The desired sample (minimum number of responses that is required in order to achieve a valid and reliable research result) is shown in the figure below (Baarda, 2014, pp. 63-74).



Raosoft®

What margin of error can you accept? %
5% is a common choice

What confidence level do you need? %
Typical choices are 90%, 95%, or 99%

What is the population size?
If you don't know, use 20000

What is the response distribution? %
Leave this as 50%

Your recommended sample size is **89**

Figure 1 Sample size 1

For the calculation of the sample size, the webpage Raosoft has been used. As shown in the figure, the desired sample size required a total of 89 respondents, when considering a margin error of 5% and a total population of 500 units of analysis (Raosoft, 2004). Moreover, the non-response rate has been taken into account. As the survey was anonymous and to be sent to prior clients of *BimBimBikes*, there was only a limited maximum amount of e-mail addresses the questionnaire could be distributed to (500). As the researcher expected a relatively high non-response rate, a survey incentive had been offered to all participants. Therefore, the survey will state that a monetary reward of 100€ as well as *BimBimBikes* vouchers could be won, when filling out the survey. The confidence level has been lowered to 70%, because of the expected high non-response rate. It has been decided that the research would require a minimum of 89 respondents in order to be considered as being reliable and valid. Of course, a higher response rate was desirable, however, the lowest confidence level that was accepted for this research amounted 70%.

Moreover, the construct of the research unit stated above is presented. The following characteristics of the unit of analysis have been used for the analysis:

- Their age
- Their gender
- Their travel partners
- Their needs in terms of service at the point of time when they have placed a booking with *BimBimBikes*
- Their needs in terms of quality at the point of time when they have placed a booking with *BimBimBikes*
- Their needs in terms of trust at the point of time when they have placed a booking with *BimBimBikes*
- Their desired elements of the website at the point of time when they have placed a booking with *BimBimBikes*
- Their overall experience with *BimBimBikes*

3.3 Operationalisation

This chapter presents how exactly the data has been collected. In the following table, the different constructs have been abstracted into measurable terms. The survey has been carried out with the aid of a questionnaire that was sent to the above mentioned units of analysis (Baarda, 2014, pp. 79-84).

Construct	Dimensions	Possible sub dimensions	Indicators
Age			18 to 25 26 to 45 45+
Gender			Female Male
Travel partners	Partner		The demand for bike rentals from couples
	Alone		The demand for bike rentals from single travellers
	Family		The demand for bike rentals from families
	Friends		The demand for bike rentals from friend groups
	Colleagues		The demand for bike rentals from business travellers
Need for service	Customer service	Personalised service (through e-mail, telephone, Facebook, live-chat)	The specific channels through which the research units communicate favourably
		Fast service	Rapidity of a response to be acceptable
		Self-service (through FAQ and chatbots)	Self-service opportunities on the website
	Absence of friction		Frequency of trouble during the booking and/or renting process
	Price-performance ratio		Reasonability of the price
Need for quality			The quality of the bike(s)
			The quality of the tour(s)
Need for trust	Trust in website	Layout	Trustworthiness in the layout of the website
		Structure	Reputability of the structure of the website
		Content	Qualitative appearance of the content

	Type of risks	Functional	Trust that e.g. the delivery will take place
		Physical	Fear that the rented bike lacks on safety
		Financial	Worthiness of the bike or tour
		Social	Feeling of social responsibility for the bike rental
		Psychological	Possibility of disappointment over malfunction of the bike
		Time	Fear of possibility to find another, better or cheaper rental bike
Need for accessibility	Ease of website		Appearance of information on the website
	Importance of Google ranking and channels		Channels, through which customers get aware of <i>BimBimBikes</i>

3.4 Ethics

The questionnaires have been distributed to the German clients that have previously booked bikes or tours with *BimBimBikes*. The results of the questionnaire served as a basis to answer the research question as well as the sub-questions. The survey was anonymous and no personal questions have been asked. Moreover, all content of the survey was relevant for the present investigation. All possible measures have been taken to conduct the survey in an honest and objective way.

Furthermore, the respondents of the research answered the questions due to their free will and all answers were given voluntarily. No measures have been taken that could have given the participants of the research the feeling that they were forced to give certain answers. In addition to that, there were no negative consequences or threats that would have concerned the participants. The units of analysis were informed of why they have been chosen to participate, what the actual purpose of the research was and how the information was handled. The researcher was the only person who dealt with the questionnaires and processed the information. Other than that, all data was handled confidential.

3.5 Data Collection

The research method was a web survey. This implies that the questionnaires have been designed online via the platform <https://www.typeform.com/>. This had several advantages for the investigation. Firstly, it was respondent-friendly, as the recipients could fill it in easily with not much effort. Secondly, the researcher was able to keep an overview over the answering process. Although the system did not allow to see who exactly did not respond to the survey, it could be set that participants can for example only proceed to the next question once they have answered the previous etc. Furthermore a web survey like this had the advantage that the units of analysis have not been influenced by the interviewer, as the answers were given anonymously. In addition to that, an advantage was seen in limited administration and processing time, as the survey has been send via e-mail and of course, besides the time that has been spent preparing the survey, no additional cost emerged.

The questions have been formulated in a clear and concrete way, so that the recipients could easily understand what was needed from them. Moreover, the format of the questions was closed. There were mainly multiple response possibilities from which the respondents could choose.

Moreover, the questionnaire was pilot tested before it had been sent out to the real recipients. This way, it should be made certain that everything was in order and all functions were available to the respondents.

The survey has finally been sent to the population of this research via e-mail. Therefore, the online programme MailChimp has been used. The researcher created a campaign with the aid of the programme and customised a German e-mail that appeared in a professional way, but was still personal. The online programme also allowed to automatically address each recipient of the questionnaire with their name, which personalised the e-mail further and therefore raise the possibility to achieve a higher respondents rate.

3.7 Data Analysis

The analytical tools of Typeform have further been used to analyse the data that has been collected.

Furthermore, next to the options on Typeform, Excel was used for the final analysis of the collected data as well as for giving an overview and presenting the actual results. Therefore, the raw data that is retrieved from the research and needed further analysis besides the available methods on Typeform, were entered into a data matrix. The measurement level of the variables were then – according to the specific construct - classified and analysed either on a nominal, ordinal or interval measurement level. Furthermore, the quantitative data has been described in form of graphs and summary statistics, according to the construct.

3.6 Validity

The term “validity” describes whether or not it is measured what was initially intended to be measured (Baarda, 2014, p. 87). The researcher made sure that the present research is valid due to a clear coding as shown in chapter 3.3 Operationalization. Before actually conducting the survey, a code was set for each specific question. In that way, the researcher ensured that each question was actually valid and has a meaning for the research. Each possible answer indicated a certain tendency, which was in turn a necessary mean to answer the research questions. Therefore, each construct had several indicators and dimensions that can clearly be seen in relation with each other. Each measurement was directly connected with the construct and can therefore be seen as a valid indicator for the specific characteristic (Baarda, 2014, pp. 87-91).

The highest validity possible under the in this document mentioned limitations was also guaranteed due to the fact that the researcher was fully aware of the knowledge and meanings of the data that has been used. All unknown terms have been researched beforehand and chosen consciously.

3.8 Reliability

The reliability describes in how far the measurements of the constructs are independent of chance (Baarda, 2014, p. 89). The researcher could not guarantee a 100% reliable response rate, due to the fact that the survey has been distributed anonymously and via the internet to respondents that are not personally known by the researcher. However, it was intended to achieve the highest reliability that is possible under these circumstances.

The measurement instrument used was an online questionnaire which has been distributed to all former German clients that have booked a product on the company's website since the platform has been made visible. This questionnaire contained a paragraph which explained the purpose of the research and the necessity of reliable answers. Before starting the actual answering process of the service, the respondents were asked for their confirmation with the importance of giving true and reliable answers. Furthermore, sufficient reliability of the research was given due to the cultural and personal background of the research units who the survey has been distributed to. As *BimBimBikes'*

customers are mainly middle or older aged people with a higher educational background, it was assumed that the meaning of this research had been taken serious and mainly true answers were given.

As explained above, a monetary reward had been given in form of a lottery as a type of incentive. As the participants were aware that there was a chance on winning, but the probability of a prize was still low, it could be seen as a type of incentive but it was most likely not the only and initial reason for a contribution. Therefore, the incentive was not seen as influencing the reliability of the research. And although the detailed circumstances of the participants at the point of time when they filled in the survey was unknown due to the anonymity of the investigation, they were asked to confirm that they were aware of the importance of true answers. This way, it has been made as sure as possible that respondents would reply in a reliable way.

Additionally, as mentioned earlier, the researcher did not have any influence on the answers as the survey has been distributed via the internet (Baarda, 2014, pp. 87-91).

4 Results

In this chapter, the most significant results in terms of the demographic factors as well as the need for service, quality, trust and accessibility are presented. Results, which give a certain, but not very striking information that is relevant for the present research, are listed in the appendix in an overall overview. Moreover, percentages are rounded to a full number in order to give a better impression of the meaning for the research. In sub-section 4.6 a summary of the main findings is presented.

4.1 Demographic Factors

This sub-section presents the results regarding the demographic factors of the survey. The demographic aspects contain general information about the respondents such as their gender, their age and who they have booked the bicycle(s) and/or tour(s) for. The results from these questions can, seen either individually or in combination with other questions, give further information about that is relevant for this investigation.

In total, 106 people have filled in the online questionnaire. This implies a confidence level of 75%, which means that the research is being considered as valid, because a minimum confidence level of 70% was desired.

Question 1: Which gender are you?

56 of these 106 people are female and 50 respondents are male. 53% (n56) of the total respondents are therefore female and 47% (n50) are male. Compare appendix 9.2.1.

Question 2: How old are you?

In total, 23 respondents have been between 18 and 25 years old, 42 respondents had an age between 26 and 45 years and a total of 41 respondents was 46 years old or older. This means that around 22% (n23) of the total sample were between 18 and 25, around 39% (n42) of the entire sample has an age between 26 and 45 years and around 39% (n41) are 46 years old or older. An average age category can therefore hardly be determined, but it is noticeable that the majority of respondents (n83) were 26 or older. Compare appendix 9.2.1.

Question 3: Who have you booked the bicycle(s) and/or tour(s) for?

Moreover, a total of 26 respondents have booked a bicycle for their friends and themselves, whereas 41 respondents have booked a service for their partner and themselves. A total of 17 people have booked bikes for their families and 20 respondents rented bikes or bike tours for themselves. Only 2 respondents used *BimBimBikes'* service in order to reserve bikes or spots for a tour for their colleagues or in connection with their work. The percentages for the different dimensions of travel partners are therefore the following: 24% (n26) have rented bicycles or tours for their friends and themselves, 39% (n41) have travelled with their partner, 16% (n17) booked a bike for their families and themselves, a total of 19% (n20) booked a bike or service for themselves only and around 2% (n2) used *BimBimBikes'* services for work purposes. Compare appendix 9.2.1.

4.2 Customer Needs

4.2.1 Service

In this sub-section, the most significant results for the customers' need for service are presented, therefore the general result from all respondents will be shown. As a second step, significant variances between the different age groups and/or genders will be revealed.

In the operationalisation, the construct "need for service" is divided into the three dimensions "personalised service", "fast service" and "self-service".

Question 4: Which communication channels would you prefer in case of simple questions or problems with an online booking platform (e.g. which payment methods are possible)? The place of business is in The Netherlands.

With this question, the need for personalised service was intended to analyse. For this question multiple reply options could be chosen. Customer service via e-mail has achieved the highest response rate with 45% (n92), whereas the reply option chatbots got the lowest response rate with 3% (n6). The option of customer service via the telephone acquired 21% (n44) and a total of 20% (n42) have chosen for a live-chat on the website. Customer service through Facebook is preferred by 11% (n22) of the entire sample size. Compare appendix 9.2.2.

With reference to the graph below, it is striking that regardless the age group and whether the respondents were female or male, all of them prefer customer service via e-mail the most. Moreover it is noticeable that Facebook gained a high voting among the youngest age group, males and females between 18 and 25 years old. In total, 50% (n6) of the female and 64% (n7) of the male respondents would prefer a customer service via Facebook. A live-chat on the website also received a high voting from the age groups of 18 to 45 years old. The response rate for females from 18 to 25 and from 26 to 45 as well as males from 26 to 45 is 50% for the category live-chat. A total of 64% of the males from 18 to 25 years has also voted for a live-chat on the website. Furthermore, when looking at the graph it can be mentioned that the older generations of customers still prefer customer service via e-mail or telephone over the more modern channels such as Facebook, a live-chat or chatbots.

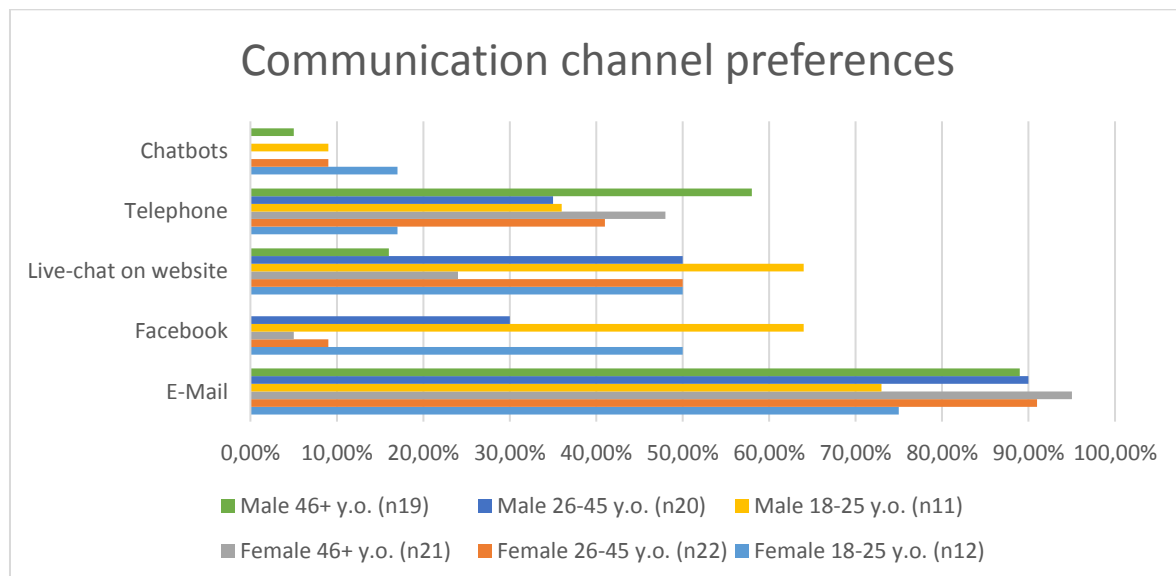


Figure 2 Communication channel preferences for customer service (n106)

Question 5: When would you like to receive a response the latest before starting to look for alternative booking options?

This question targeted at answering how fast customer service should be or respectively how fast a response is expected by the customers on average. For this question, only one reply could be chosen per respondent. A total of 43% (n46) would wait for a response for up to two days, before starting to look for alternative booking options. 31% (n33) of the sample size would only await an answer until the next morning. 8% (n9) would prefer a reply until four days after sending an inquiry and again around 8% (n8) would expect an answer up to eight hours after the inquiry. The reply options “up to

three hours” and “up to seven days” achieved a 5% (n5) response rate each. Compare appendix 9.2.2.

The figure below presents the different age groups per gender and the variances in their chosen options. It is noticeable that especially males who are 46 years old or older expect a response until the next morning, the response rate here acquired 47% (n9). Also the sample group of female respondents who are 46 years old or older acquired a rate of 29% (n6) for this reply option. Moreover, it is striking that young females between 18 and 25 years old expect an earlier reply than males of the same age. 42% (n5) of the young females expect a reply until the next morning and 25% (n3) expect a reply up to two days, whereas only 18% (n2) of all young males expect a reply until the next morning and 64% (n7) would wait up to two days. However, it has to be taken into account that the percentages seem more striking due to the fact that the age group of female respondents only had 12 and the age group of young male respondents only 11 respondents. One or two more respondents could already show a significant difference in the results. With a higher number of respondents, a more reliable and specific result could be given. According to the graph, the lowest response rates were achieved by the options “up to three hours” and “up to seven days”.

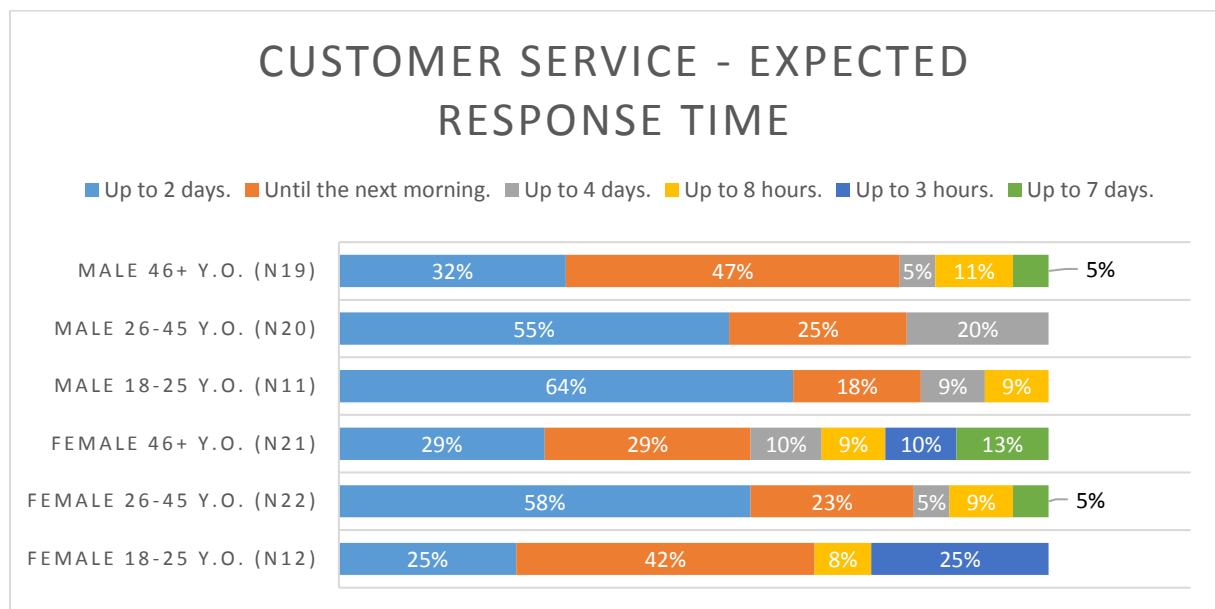


Figure 3 Customer service - expected response time (n106)

Question 6: Have you experienced any difficulties from the point of time of your booking until the return of the booked bikes/tours?

With this question, the absence of friction in the whole booking procedure of *BimBimBikes* was intended to be analysed. A total of 84% (n89) has not experienced any difficulties with their booking process or bike rental in general, whereas 16% (n17) of the respondents replied that they had troubles during their booking and renting period. Compare appendix 9.2.2. The division of the number of occurrences of problems between the different age groups and genders is percental even.

Question 7: If yes, what kind of problem?

With this question, the researcher intended to investigate if there are certain problems that occur with a higher frequency than others. Therefore, various problems were given in a drop down menu from which the respondents could choose the most suitable answer. If there were significant differences between the problem that has occurred and the problems mentioned, the respondents had the options to enter their specific problem manually. However, no respondent entered a

different problem manually. A total of 5 respondents experienced that a refund after cancellation did not take place. The problems “lack of quality of the bikes/tours” and “rented bike was not available” achieved four responses each, whereas the problems “unclear or incomplete information on website” and “rental point was closed” acquired 2 clicks each. Compare appendix 9.2.2.

Question 8: I was very pleased with the price-performance ratio of my booking.

The intention of this question was, to measure the degree to which previous clients have been satisfied with the price-performance ratio. Therefore, they could rate the above mentioned statement with “I strongly agree”, “I agree”, “I only agree partly”, “I disagree” or “I strongly disagree”. A majority of 51% (n54) replied with “I strongly agree”, followed by a total of 41% (n44) of respondents who chose the option “I agree”. 6% (n6) only partly agreed with the statement and 2% (n2) disagreed. None of the respondents disagreed strongly. Compare appendix 9.2.2. There are no significant variances in the chosen ratings between the different age groups and genders.

4.2.2 Quality

In this sub-chapter, the results of the survey that indicate the desired need for quality of the organisation’s customers will be stated. As indicators for the need of quality, the customers have been asked to rate the quality of their bikes or tours, depending on what service they have booked with *BimBimBikes*.

Question 9: Have you booked a bicycle or a tour with *BimBimBikes*?

For this question, respondents could simply chose between the two reply options “bicycle” and “tour”. A total of 85% (n90) have booked a bicycle, whereas 15% (n16) have booked a tour. Compare appendix 9.2.3.

Question 10: I was very pleased with the quality of the rented bike.

All respondents that have chosen the option “bicycle” in question number 9 where re-directed to this question. Here again, they could rate the above mentioned statements in five different options from “I strongly agree” to “I strongly disagree”. A majority of 54% (n49) strongly agreed with the statement. 38% (n34) agreed, 7% (n6) only partly agreed and 1% (n1) disagreed. Compare appendix 9.2.3.

Question 11: Which defects did you rented bicycle(s) have?

All respondents who stated that they were only partly or not satisfied with the quality of their rented bikes, got re-directed to this question. Here, they were asked to rate the significance of their problem. The following options could have been chosen: small defects, e.g. scratches; defects such as a poor light or a broken bell; bigger defects, e.g. a broken light or broken gears; big defects, e.g. a broken brake or a flat tire; I do not want to state the problem. Four out of seven respondents rated the defects of their bikes as bigger defects, whereas the reply options “small defects”, “defects such as a poor light or a broken bell” and “I do not want to state the problem” achieved one click each. Compare appendix 9.2.3.

Question 12: I was very pleased with my booked tour.

All 16 respondents that have booked a tour with *BimBimBikes* got re-directed to this question. Again, the statement could be rated from “I strongly agree” to “I strongly disagree”. A total of ten respondents were very pleased with their booked tour and six respondents were at least pleased with their tour. Compare appendix 9.2.3.

4.2.3 Trust

In this sub-section, the results of the survey that apply to the customers' need for trust will be evaluated. Therefore, the customers have been asked to look at the organisation's website and rate the trustworthiness of the site. Further, the customers were asked whether or not they feared or would fear certain risks that have been established in the Theoretical Framework as being significant for a potential customer's decision to place a booking on a website.

Question 13: The website seems trustworthy.

The respondents were asked to which extent they agree with the statement. The majority (53%; n56) stated that they strongly agree with the above mentioned declaration. A total of 45% (n48) agreed with the statement, whereas 3% (n3) only partly agreed. Compare appendix 9.2.4. The three respondents that only partly agreed with the statement are one female between 18 and 25 years old and two males who are 46 years old or older. However, since only three respondents rated the website as either not, not at all or only partly trustworthy, the sample size of the different age groups and genders is too small in order to state any significant differences here.

Question 14: What does not seem trustworthy about the website?

This question aimed at answering whether the layout, structure or content of the website did not seem trustworthy to those, who rated the website as either not, not at all or only partly trustworthy. Therefore, the three respondents could choose between these three reply options what they did not find trustworthy about *BimBimBikes'* website. Two respondents rated that the structure does not seem trustworthy, whereas one respondent chose that the content does not appear trustworthy. Compare appendix 9.2.4.

Question 15: If I booked a bicycle on the website, I would fear a functional risk, e.g. that the agreed delivery won't take place.

The entire sample group was here again asked to rate the statement with a simple yes or no. A total of 77% (n82) disagreed with the statement, whereas in contrary 23% (n24) agreed. Compare appendix 9.2.4. The division of the respondents who would fear a functional risk when booking via the organisation's website is even between the different age groups and genders and does not show any significant variances.

Question 16: If I booked a bicycle on the website, I would fear a physical risk, e.g. that the bike lacks on safety.

Also for this statement, the respondents had to rate to which degree they agree with it. 87% (n92) disagreed and 13% (n14) agreed. Compare appendix 9.2.4. Also here, no significant difference between the replies given from the different age and gender groups can be drawn.

Question 17: If I booked a bicycle on the website, I would fear a financial risk, e.g. that the bike is not worth its price.

A total of 89% (n94) disagreed with this statement, whereas a total of 11% (n12) answered the declaration with yes. Compare appendix 9.2.4. Again, there is an even distribution of the respondents who replied with yes between the different age and gender groups.

Question 18: If I booked a bicycle on the website, I would fear a social risk, e.g. that I would feel responsible for possible grievances adverse my friends, family, colleagues or partner.

92% (n98) of all respondents answered this statement with no. In contrary, a total of 8% (n8) replied that they would indeed fear a social risk when placing a booking on the website of the company. Compare appendix 9.2.4. The distribution of the respondents who agreed with the above stated declaration does not show any significant differences between the different ages or genders.

Question 19: If I booked a bicycle on the website, I would fear a psychological risk, e.g. that I will be disappointed, because the bike does not have the functions I was hoping for.

This testimony has been rated with no by 87% (n92) of the total number of respondents, whereas 13% (n14) agreed with it. Compare appendix 9.2.4. Also here, there are no noteworthy variances between the different groups of respondents.

Question 20: If I booked a bicycle on the website, I would fear a time risk, e.g. that I would find a better or cheaper bike if I had more time for researching.

A total of 81% (n86) answered this statement with no. In contrary, a total of 19% (n20) replied with yes. Compare appendix 9.2.4. Eight of the respondents who replied with yes are segmented in the group of females between 26 and 45 years old, whereas the remaining 12 replies are distributed rather even between the other five age and gender groups.

4.2.4 Accessibility

In this sub-section, the research results for the customers' need for website accessibility from the survey will be shown. In order to establish their need for accessibility, questions regarding the ease of the *BimBimBikes* website and the importance of the Google ranking as well as other channels in relation with the actual placement of a booking have been asked.

Question 21: the website appears chaotic.

With this question, it was intended to define whether or not the website appears structured and easy to use for customers, as this has been found important in the Theoretical Framework in order to achieve a higher number of bookings. In general, 56% (n59) of all respondents disagreed with the statement. A total of 31% (n33) even strongly disagreed. 10% (n11) only partly agreed with the declaration, whereas 2% (n2) strongly agreed and 1% (n1) agreed. Compare appendix 9.2.5. This means that a total of 13% (n14) of respondents does (partly) think that the website appears chaotic. These 14 respondents cannot be tracked back to a certain age group or gender though, as the distribution is even within the different groups of respondents.

Question 22: The website appears overloaded with information.

This statement has been presented to the respondents in order to find out, whether or not the website appears in a structured and easily usable way, too. Here, 48% (n51) responded with "I disagree" and 23% (n25) replied with "I strongly disagree". A total of 20% (n21) only partly agrees, whereas 6% (n6) agrees with the statement and 3% (n3) even strongly agrees. This implies that a total of 29% (n30) of all respondents thinks or at least partly thinks that the website contains too much information and appears therefore as overloaded. Compare appendix 9.2.5.

When comparing the results between the different age groups it is noticeable that especially the young generations are more critical concerning the website, because 52% (n12) out of 100% (n23) of the respondents between 18 to 25 years old have rated the website as (partly) overloaded with

information. In contrary, only 22% (n18) out of the total number of respondents from the age group 26 and older (n82) find the website overloaded with information.

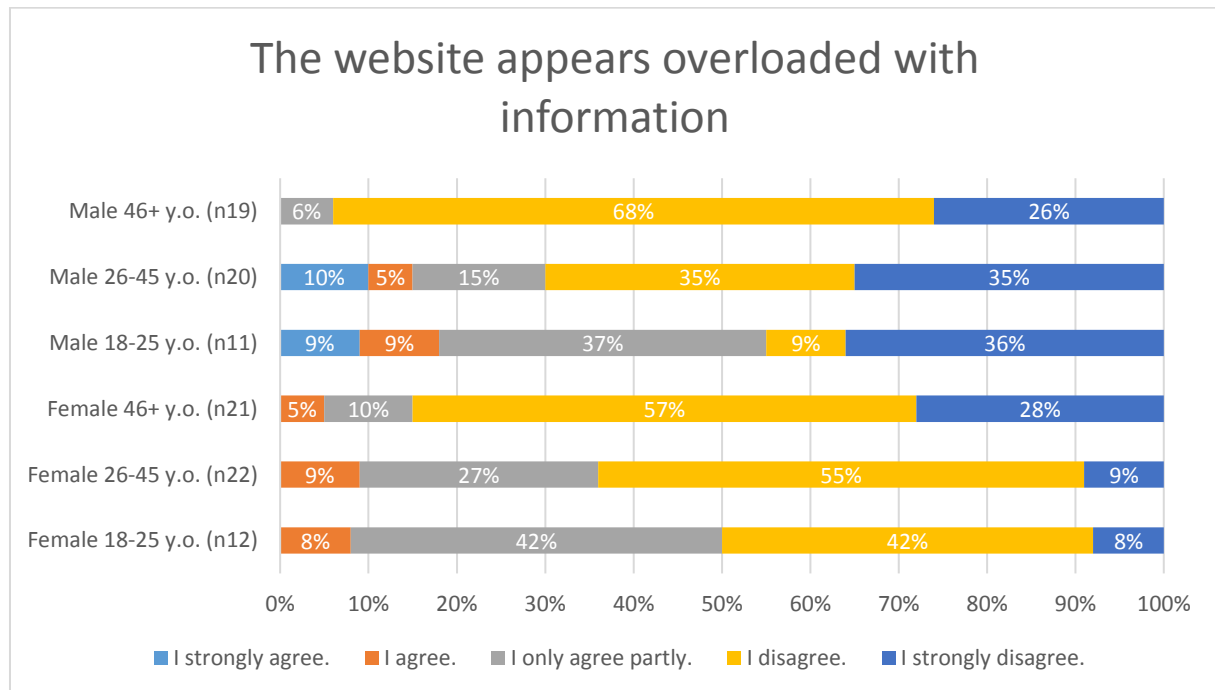


Figure 4 The website appears overloaded with information

Question 23: How did you find out about our booking platform?

With this question, the importance of the ranking on Google as well as other channels was intended to be analysed in relation with where *BimBimBikes*' clients find out about the organisation. With these results the research intends to find out, which channels have to be pushed more and which channels are used the most by the average customer. The great majority of 71% (n75) found out about the platform on Google. 12% (n13) of the respondents got referred to the website by friends or relatives, 8% (n8) found the website on Facebook or Instagram, 7% (n7) got re-directed to the website via a link from a third website, 2% (n2) got aware of the webpage because of *BimBimBikes*' blog and 1% (n1) did not state how he or she found out about the platform. Compare appendix 9.2.5.

When comparing the different age groups with each other, the division of the replies is mostly even. However, none of the previous *BimBimBikes* clients who are 46 years old or older got aware of the booking platform via Facebook or Instagram. Nevertheless, the response rates for the different age groups are too small to make out a significant difference here.

4.3 Summary

In this summary, the main findings are presented in order to give a broader overview of the main results. In total, the survey has been filled in by 106 previous clients of *BimBimBikes*. Most of them have booked either bikes or tours for themselves and their partner or their friend group. However, clients have also booked bikes for themselves or their families.

Regarding the customers' need for service, e-mails are still preferred the most as a customer service communication channel, followed by telephone calls and a live-chat on the website. Younger generations also favour a communication via Facebook. Moreover, a reply is partly expected until the next morning or up to two days after the inquiry took place. About a fifth of the clients who have filled in the survey experienced difficulties either with their booking or bike rental in general. In most

of the cases, a refund after cancellation did not take place, the bikes lacked of quality or were not available at the rental place. Nevertheless, a majority of 91% was pleased with the price-performance ratio.

The results for the investigation regarding the clients' need for quality are a total of 92% of satisfied customers who rented a bike. Clients, who had defected bikes, mostly experienced bigger defects such as a broken light or broken gears. Furthermore, all 16 people that have booked a tour via the platform were pleased with it.

With regards to the customers' need for trust it can be stated that 97% of all respondents find the website trustworthy. The other three respondents have doubts with the content and structure of the website. In addition, almost a quarter of the sample group fears a functional risk, e.g. that the agreed delivery won't take place, when placing a booking on the website. About a fifth of the respondents would fear a time risk, e.g. that they could find better or cheaper bikes when they would keep on researching.

Furthermore, the accessibility of the website has been investigated and a total of 13% find the website to appear chaotic. Moreover, almost a third of the sample group (29%) find that the website appears overloaded with information. The great majority (71%) has found the website via the search engine Google. However, about 12% got referred to *BimBimBikes* by their friends or relatives. 8% found the website also via Facebook or Instagram and 7% got re-directed to the platform via a link from another website.

5 Discussion

In this chapter, the results of the online survey will be linked to the theory that has been listed in the Theoretical Framework. Therefore, a comparison between the different findings will take place and it will be mentioned, in how far the results of the survey comply with the findings that resulted out of the desk research. As a second step, this chapter will present the positive and negative effects of the research. Here, it is intended to give a reflection on the research in general, but especially the online survey. Therefore, limitations will be stated as well as what improvements are recommended for future investigations into this topic.

5.1 Comparison between Theory and Results

The concept of service has been divided into the three sub-sections “customer service”, “absence of friction” and “price-performance ratio”. Regarding the customer service, the desk research has shown that a personalised customer experience leads to a better overall service for the customers (compare chapter 2.1.1). Therefore, the sample group of this research has been asked, what specific communication channels they prefer, in order to personalize the customer service further. Indeed, the different clients preferred different communication channels. This was not necessarily related to their age or gender, but however the result mentioned above of the Theoretical Framework can be confirmed, because according to the survey, a broader communication channel offer could evolve into reaching more potential clients. Additional literature stated that the phone is being used less and less, since there are many alternatives such as social media, chatbots and self-service installations nowadays. However, it was also mentioned that the phone will most likely never entirely leave the customer service (compare chapter 2.1.1) and the survey evolved that the phone is indeed still preferred by especially, but not only, older customers, next to communication via e-mail and a live-chat.

Regarding the self-service opportunities, the literature review in chapter 2.1.1 revealed that self-service is becoming more popular and that there is an increasing trend seen in the usage of Artificial Intelligence, such as chatbots. However, the online survey resulted in a relatively low desire for chatbots. Nevertheless, this could also be due to the reason that the respondents associated chatbots with the former version of chatbots, which have been used by companies in the past. These chatbots were, according to Michel Willems, less accurate with the problem solving process and could therefore be considered as being annoying or not helpful. According to Willems, there are now more specific and developed version of chatbots that can be indeed helpful for customers. Due to this limitation of the survey, it might still be good to implement a chatbot trial version on the organisation’s website.

Additionally, a result from the preliminary research phase is that companies should work towards a pro-active customer service, which implies the absence of questions and friction in the first place due to giving sufficient and especially the right information on the website (compare chapter 2.1.1). Therefore, the respondents of the survey have been asked whether or not they experiences any difficulties during the booking and renting period. It turned out that about a fifth of the entire sample group experienced problems, which is not too bad but still shows that problems occur on a regularly basis and that *BimBimBikes* needs to work on those.

Another result from the literature review is the increasing impatience of clients when awaiting a reply for an inquiry (compare chapter 2.1.1). According to the results of the survey, a response should be given most favourably until the next morning or the latest up to two days after the inquiry has been received. Therefore, the sample group is confirming the results of the addressed literature and there is an increasing demand for fast service.

Moreover, in the research phase in chapter 2.1.1 it has been found that the expected quality strongly depends on the customers' involvement with the good or service and that customers usually aim for the highest quality for the lowest price. In the questionnaire the customers were asked to rate the price-performance ratio of their experience with *BimBimBikes* and it has been found that the great majority was pleased or even very pleased with the price-performance ratio of their booking.

In relation with the concept of quality in chapter 2.1.2, it has been stated in the Theoretical Framework that both terms, quality and satisfaction are related to each other. Therefore, the sample group has been asked to rate the quality of their booked bikes or tours in order to establish whether or not the quality needs to be improved to achieve a higher customer satisfaction. Only 16 respondents have booked tours with the organisation, although all 16 people claimed to be satisfied with their booked tours, the sample size is too small to make a trustworthy statement here. For the respondents who have rented a bike, a satisfaction rate of 92% is the outcome of the survey. However, a total of 8% was not or only partly satisfied with their bicycles. 92% quality satisfaction can be seen as a success, nevertheless *BimBimBikes* can use the knowledge that quality is related to customer satisfaction and try resolve the, from the clients defined problems as good as possible.

In addition, the preliminary research found that the expectation of the quality depends on the involvement of the customer with the good or service (compare chapter 2.1.2). In order to establish which damages define a "bad quality" for the customers, the ones that mentioned they indeed experiences difficulties with the quality of their rented bikes were asked, to state the grade of the damage on their rented bicycles. Here, it is noticeable that for four out of seven individuals a bad quality was perceived when the bike lacked on functions such as a broken light or broken gears. Only one out of seven respondents defined a "bad quality" as a bike that shows scratches. Therefore, the theoretical research can be applied on the actual case by knowing that customers do tolerant small defects, but wish the bike to function in terms of light, gears and driveability.

Regarding the concept of trust in chapter 2.1.3, the theoretical research revealed that distrust is mainly caused by graphical or structural issues on the website and that the actual content that is presented on the platform must appear trustworthy as well in order to create a website that is seen as being trustworthy by the clients. The survey has built on these findings and the respondents were asked to rate how they estimated the trustworthiness of the webpage. This has resulted in a 97% group who sees the website as being trustworthy and a 3% group who does not entirely agree with it. In a follow-up question, these three candidates were then asked to rate whether the content, structure or layout does not appear trustworthy for them and indeed, they related either one of these three reasons to the website as being not entirely trustworthy. Therefore, it can be stated that theory and survey results comply in this matter as well.

Furthermore, the literature review revealed five types of risk that can be perceived by the clients when intending to book a good or service on an online platform. This includes the functional risk, a physical risk, a social risk, a psychological risk as well as a time risk (compare chapter 2.1.3). The survey built on this information by asking the customer concrete whether they perceive these types of risks when looking on the organisation's website or not. In order to be clear, each risk has been describes by giving an example so that all respondents were rating the same statement. Indeed, certain types of risks were perceived by the respondents in relation with the booking platform. For example, there is a certain tendency for customers feeling a functional or a time risk when considering a booking on the webpage.

In relation with the concept of accessibility in chapter 2.1.4, certain findings evolved out of the literature review. Firstly, it has been found that the average online customer nowadays is impatient and demanding when looking for information online. Therefore, companies have to carefully select

the information they present on their websites, so that the website appears easy to use and customers do not have to search for a long time in order to find the desired information. In the survey, the appearance of information on the website has been measured in order to define whether the current state of the website in terms of its ease of use. Therefore, the customers have been asked to rate whether or not the website appears chaotic or overloaded with information and indeed almost a third of the respondents rated the website as being overloaded with information.

A further finding of the desk research is the importance of a high Google ranking in relation with a higher booking number (chapter 2.1.4). In the online survey, the sample group has been asked how they found out about *BimBimBikes* in order to figure out, how important the search engine Google is for the company's booking success. In fact, the vast majority of the respondents found the organisation's platform on Google, as to why the ranking in this search engine can indeed be described as important. Moreover, the theoretical research revealed in chapter 2.1.4 that the usage of the right channels regarding the customer acquisition is of importance, too, what is why the respondents have been asked to state the different kind of channels through which they found *BimBimBikes*. Here, the results have indeed shown that not only the company's presence on Google, but also its appearance on social media platforms as well as the referrals of former *BimBimBikes* clients play a role in the organisation's customer acquisition.

5.2 Positive and Negative Effects of the Research

In this chapter, the researcher will outline the positive and negative points of the questionnaire as well as the general limitations of the research, which have occurred throughout the whole research phase. This should help future researchers who intend to build their investigation on the present document.

Regarding the survey that has been carried out, it can be mentioned that the research phase could have been shortened up by sending out the questionnaire earlier. However, the researcher feared a high non-response rate due to the anonymity of the survey and the limited population size of 500 previous German *BimBimBikes* clients. Therefore, a second survey has been taken into account that was intended to be sent to a random sample group that represents all German inhabitants in general. Finally, the initial survey for previous German customers has been sent out and a sufficient sample group responded. For future research, it is therefore recommended to stick to the initial plan as long as it is working out before planning ahead and wasting crucial time.

A confidence level of 75% can therefore be seen as a positive effect of the research. Initially, a confidence level of 70% was defined as the minimum in order to be accepted. Normally, the researcher would have aimed for a confidence level of at least 85%, but due to the expected high non-response rate, the level has been lowered to 70%. In the end, the stated levels has been exceeded by 5%.

However, the research has been hold up due to the fact, that the excel sheet which has been extracted from the back-hand of the company and which contained all required data of the previous German clients has not been read correctly by the researcher. Therefore, the desired sample size and other information had to be updated and re-written, which hold up the research process further. Therefore, it is recommended to make sure that all information is read und understood correctly by the researcher, in case further research will be made.

Another positive effect of the research is the high level of compatibility between theoretical desk research and active research in form of the online survey. Most of the findings from the literature review comply with the results of the questionnaire, which makes these results more reliable when considering an implementation into the company's working environment.

However, a negative effect can be seen in the varied results that have been presented for the different age groups. These can only limitedly be taken into account, because sometimes the number of respondents for a certain age group is very low, e.g. the age group females from 18 to 25 years old is only presented by 12 total respondents, which is not sufficient in order to make a reliable statement. The results can in fact not be seen as a result for this research, but only as a sort of indication that *BimBimBikes* can use when taking new strategic steps into account and thinking of new business solutions. In order to consider the results as a reliable source and be able to base important decisions on the information gathered, a minimum confidence level of 70% for each of the age/gender group is required. The exact confidence level that was reached in the age/gender groups that got as little respondents as stated above is unknown, because there is no information available of the age of all previous German customers. However, 12 or 11 respondents is a fairly small sample size group, as to why these results can only be considered as indications, but no important decisions should be made based on this information alone. After all, the survey was conducted as an exploratory research and a characteristic of exploratory research is to explore and to experiment. Therefore, a high confidence level is not necessarily needed in order to come up with findings. Exploratory research implies that

Furthermore, it could be considered to divide the middle age group from 26 to 45 further, because then a more precise conclusion and recommendations could be stated. However, this would again imply less respondents for each specific age group and therefore less reliable results. A more specific division of the age groups can be taken into account, should the population size be bigger than a database of 500 e-mail addresses. In that way, more specific answers could be given to the research questions.

An additional positive effect of the research lies in the free and independently answers that were given by the sample group. The survey has been sent via e-mail to the entire population of the research, which implies that none of the respondents knew the researcher personally nor that the researcher had any influence on the answers that have been given by the sample group. Therefore, it can be assumed that all given answers were given out of the free will of the respondents, which makes them valid and reliable.

A point that can be improved during future investigations is the way of achieving the required information from the customers with the help of the questions asked in the questionnaire. The population of 500 total individuals was small enough to evaluate more precise answers and suggestions that could be asked from the respondents. For instance, one question targeted at finding out whether or not the layout, content and structure of the website appear trustworthy to the respondents. However, instead of only letting the respondents choose whether layout, structure or content do not appear trustworthy to them, they could have been asked to give an even more precise answer by adding additional reasons or mention, what part of the website precisely does not appear trustworthy. In that way, a more precise answer to the research question could have been gained.

Positively is nevertheless the amount of reliable and valid answers that have been given to the questions asked in the survey. The gained information can help the organisation to improve their current strategy for customer acquisition or even develop new ideas.

Moreover, only 16 people have booked tours, as to why the results regarding the tours cannot be taken into account for the research and for the elaboration of a reliable response to the research question. The results regarding the current tour offer of *BimBimBikes* are only giving an indication of the actual situation, but it cannot be seen as reliable and valid information that could be applied to the entire population of all former clients who have booked tours with *BimBimBikes*.

6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the research question will be answered. To do so, firstly an answer to all four all sub-questions will be given, because these build up to the answer to the main research question.

6.1 Sub-Questions

1) To what extent is the current service offer of *BimBimBikes* sufficient for *BimBimBikes*' clients when considering a bike rental?

This sub-question focusses on the concept of service and to which extent *BimBimBikes*' current service offer is sufficient for its clients.

BimBimBikes provides its clients customer service via a broad range of communication channels, which provides a more personalised service, because customers can choose which channel they prefer to communicate problems or general inquiries through. Currently, the customer service team members are available for customers via e-mail, telephone, Facebook and Instagram. However, the research also revealed that there is a great demand for a live-chat option on the website and currently, *BimBimBikes* does not supply this option.

Moreover, currently, the organisation intends to resolve all customer requests as soon as possible, however, sometimes mails are left open, because a certain information is missing or a response from a specific bike rental partner is being awaited. In those cases, the desired rapidity of a reply by the average customer is not given and the current customer service offer does not comply with the wishes of the clients.

Due to the difficulties customers currently still experience during their rental period and the fact that the problems they have mentioned do not only concern the bike rental partners, but also *BimBimBikes* itself, leads to a certain lack of pro-active-service and customer service in general.

Concluding further, it can be mentioned that *BimBimBikes* mainly meets the price expectations of the customers and that prices are mostly set according to what customers are willing to spend.

As a conclusion it can therefore be stated that *BimBimBikes*' current service offer is in favour of its German customers and works towards the desired sufficiency. However, there are certain improvements the organisation can consider in order to advance its current service offer even further and meet the customers' demands even better.

2) To what extent is the current quality offer of *BimBimBikes* sufficient for its customers when considering a bike rental?

This sub-question targets at answering in how far the current quality offer of *BimBimBikes* is sufficient for its clients.

Quality has an influence on whether or not the customers are satisfied with their rental experience or not, which is why *BimBimBikes* should always aim for the highest quality possible, regardless if it concerns the quality of the tours and tour guides or the quality of the bikes itself.

The current quality offer is sufficient on a high level for the organisation's clients, nevertheless, problems do still occur and customers perceive the term "sufficient quality" differently, as this always depends on how high their elaboration with the rental is. Therefore, the company should aim for the highest satisfaction level possible at all times by ensuring the best possible quality of all the bikes and tours of their bike rental partners.

Due to the small number of respondents that have booked a tour with the organisation, a statement whether or not the quality of the current tour offer is sufficient or not can hardly be made. However, an indication is a rather sufficient quality offer concerning the tours that are shown on the online booking platform. Nevertheless, a valid and reliable statement besides this indication cannot be made by the researcher.

As a conclusion it can therefore be mentioned that quality contributes to the extent, customers are satisfied with the overall rental experience and that therefore, the organisation can improve certain areas of its current quality management that will in fact improve the overall customer satisfaction with the bike rental experience at *BimBimBikes*.

3) To what extent does *BimBimBikes* appear trustworthy to German clients who consider a bike rental?

With this sub-question it is intended to establish, in how far the organisation that has been researched meets its customers' needs for trust.

The current webpage indeed appears trustworthy to German clients. Furthermore, there is currently an option on the company's homepage where clients can leave a review and rate the bike rental partner they have booked a bike with. However, there are more options how user comments can be used in order to create a higher level of trust for potential customers that consider a bike rental. Moreover, *BimBimBikes* does not involve recommendations by acquaintances in their marketing strategy at the moment, which could cause a lack of bookings by German customers. Concluding, it can therefore be stated that *BimBimBikes* could appear even trust worthier than it does at the moment, would it adapt certain strategies using user comments in a more effective way and involving recommendations from acquaintances in their current marketing strategy.

Further, it can be concluded, that within the six types of risk (functional, physical, financial, social, psychological and time risk), *BimBimBikes'* clients trust the organisation regarding the safety measures of their bikes, the worthiness of its price, the social worthiness as well as that they will be accordingly satisfied with the different functions of the bike. However, the webpage does not appear trustworthy enough to make a clear majority of customers feel comfortable with the compliance of agreements as well as a guaranteed price-ratio advantage compared with other bike rental platforms and bike rental points.

To answer this sub-question, it can therefore be said that the organisation's clients indeed rate the overall appearance of the website as trustworthy in its structure, layout and content. However, *BimBimBikes* does not yet involve user comments and recommendations by acquaintances in their current marketing strategy and the website does not appear trustworthy in all its features, because a noteworthy part of customers nevertheless experience a feeling of risk when considering a bike rental on the platform.

4) To what extent does the current accessibility of the website fulfil the needs of German clients who consider a bike rental?

Within this sub-question the extent to which the current accessibility of the website meets the customers' needs should be established.

In order to achieve a higher CTR, it is crucial for modern online businesses to design their webpages as simple and easily usable as possible. It appears that the webpage of *BimBimBikes* seems overloaded with information for a noteworthy part of its current clients, which increases the danger of losing valuable and potential clients that do not want to make the effort to navigate through the webpage in order to find the desired information for a long time. The current state of the website is

sufficient for most of its clients, but nevertheless potential customers that come across the website may find the page too overloaded with information, which implies that the website does not entirely fulfil the needs of its German clients.

Further, the search engine Google is an important tool for *BimBimBikes* in order to guarantee a successful online sales rate. Since the company is active on WordPress and Google AdWords and tries to initiate link exchange when possibilities come up, measures are indeed taken in order to further improve its ranking on Google. Additionally, customers get to know about *BimBimBikes* through the social media platforms Facebook and Instagram as well as referrals of former clients. The organisation is currently active on both, Facebook and Instagram and is regularly posting news and updates about the company but also interesting and fun facts or holiday related content. Concluding it can be said that the organisation is on a regularly basis very active in order to meet its clients' needs for website accessibility, however there are more steps that can be taken to further increase customer satisfaction and gain new German clients in the same way. For instance, the point that a notable percentage of former clients placed a booking with *BimBimBikes* due to recommendations from acquaintances shows again that referrals play an important role in relation with the customer acquisition of German clients.

Answering the sub-question, it has been identified that *BimBimBikes'* website appears overloaded with information to a certain percentage of customers, which could stagnate the desired increase of bookings by German customers. Moreover, the company is aware of the importance of improving its ranking on Google as well as how crucial other customer acquisition channels such as social media platforms are. Nevertheless, there are more strategic steps the organisation can undertake in order to meet the needs of their German clients in terms of website accessibility even better.

6.2 Research Question

How can *BimBimBikes* overcome the current difficulties with customer needs when intending to acquire more German clients?

BimBimBikes can overcome its current difficulties with customer needs of German clients in terms of the acquisition of new customers by making certain adaptations in its current marketing strategy.

In general, the organisation is using modern tools such as the publication of articles on WordPress or Google AdWords, the new *BimBimBikes* App and others, in order to continuously improve its business results and enhance the growth of the start-up organisation. However, in the research phase it has been established that there are indeed certain difficulties the company is facing with its current strategy.

The acquisition of new customers in general can take place when certain needs of potential clients are fulfilled. This includes the need for service, quality, trust and accessibility. When the company meets all these needs of the customers on an acceptable level, customers are more likely to place a booking with the start-up organisation.

Regarding the need for service, *BimBimBikes* should focus its customer service on the communication channels that are preferred by the clients. It has been found that customer service via e-mail and telephone is appreciated by most of the customers. However, a live-chat on the website and Facebook for the younger generations also achieved attention. Responses to customer inquiries should be given fast and the latest up to two days after the request has been made, in order to better meet the clients' needs. Also a more pro-active customer service will help the organisation in future to overcome its current difficulties with the customer acquisition, because in that way, more problems are obviated in the first place. If specific steps are taken by the start-up company, the

current customer service can be significantly improved, which will most likely lead to an increase in bookings by German clients.

Moreover, there is a relation between the need for quality and the acquisition of new customers, because either a high credibility or a good quality will finally lead to satisfaction and satisfied customers result into a growth of the customer base, for example by referring the service to their acquaintances or a better reputation due to an acceptable quality of bikes and tours in general.

In relation with the customers' needs in terms of trust in the company, *BimBimBikes* currently faces the difficulty of paying too little attention to the importance of user comments and referrals by former clients. Setting a focus on these social factors could result into a higher number of bookings by German customers as well. Another difficulty the organisation is facing at the moment is that customers experience the fear that *BimBimBikes* may does not comply with the agreements that have been made when considering a bike rental on the online platform and that other booking platforms or bike rental points are likely to have cheaper or more qualitative bikes and tours at service. This difficulty can be overcome too, in case that the organisation improves specific features on the website and implements certain tactics in the everyday working processes.

In order to acquire more German clients, also the need for accessibility must be fulfilled. This describes firstly the need for website accessibility and secondly the need for accessibility via different acquisition channels. A major problem for the organisation is here that its website seems to appear overloaded with information to its (potential) clients. This could be overcome by re-designing and restructuring the company webpage in a way that it appears less overloaded and clients would be able to identify their desired information easier and quicker. Furthermore, different approaches and steps could be undertaken in order to experiment new strategies regarding a higher position on Google and the acquisition of customers via the different social media platforms to further enhance the acquisition of new German clients. Also in relation with the need of accessibility, the company should implement strategies that include referrals by former customers in order to acquire new clients through different ways and strategies.

As a general conclusion and in order to answer the main research question of the present investigation it can be said that *BimBimBikes* is a modern and determined young start-up company, which is experimenting a lot and using modern and innovative tools in order to continuously achieve a growth in its customer base. However, the start-up is too young to be established enough to already have the perfect solution for the acquisition of new customers in Germany. Moreover, the company is facing a lot of problems of different nature, which has been mentioned as a general characteristic for start-up companies as well. Therefore, a continuous research that involves all modern and environmental factors is crucial and necessary in order to guarantee continuous growth and business success. By working on the above mentioned difficulties, the company will most likely face an increase in bookings by new German customers.

7 Recommendations

This chapter shows practical recommendations for *BimBimBikes* that evolved out of the research. When taking certain measures, the organisation will mostly likely increase its number of booking by new German customers.

Firstly, the company is recommended to endorse certain customer service communication channels in order to ease up the whole booking and renting process for its clients. For instance, customer service via Facebook for the younger generations should be made more popular. Therefore, the organisation could add a link which leads to its Facebook page with a short note on its website that states how inquiries via Facebook could be sent as well. Younger customers between the ages of approximately 18 to 25 might find this option more convenient as it is easier for them and Facebook is a big part of their everyday life anyway. Moreover, the organisation is recommended to install a live-chat option on the website, as some (potential) customers might prefer sending a quick message via the live-chat and getting an immediate reply instead of waiting for an e-mail to be answered. However, installing a live-chat option means that either more personnel is required or that, for the beginning, one of the current employees would need to focus his or her main customer activities only on the live-chat, depending on how many inquiries will be sent. Due to the fact that the start-up can currently only employ a specific amount of interns and especially during high season in summer, the customer requests in general rise. Having one employee who is only responsible for the live-chat means that requests via e-mail need to be distributed over the remaining interns. This implies that in general all employees would have less time. Besides the 250€ that an intern who is working five days per week for *BimBimBikes* gets, there are no further costs involved, because WordPress offers a free live-chat option in its system. Also, presumably no additional intern would be needed, because a very high number of inquiries is not to be expected. However, there is a certain chance that due to the fact that a live-chat is easily usable and more comfortable, people would ask a lot of questions, although they could easily find the answers themselves on the websites. This would take away time for customer service that could be used more efficiently in other ways. However, the best way to establish whether or not a live-chat on the website is improving the overall business result is by simply implementing it for a certain time period as a trial. The cost-efficiency of this option based on assumptions can be seen in the following calculation:

Step 1: Expected time investment for a live-chat option per day

Expected maximum number of inquiries through the live-chat per day: 15

Average time needed per inquiry: 10 minutes

10 minutes x 15 inquiries = 150 minutes (2,5 hours)

Step 2: Expected decrease of time needed for other customer service channels per day

Presumed number of inquiries that would have been asked via a different channel: 5/15 inquiries

10 minutes x 5 inquiries = 50 minutes

Additional time investment for chat: 150 minutes – 50 minutes = 100 minutes (1 hour, 40 minutes)

Total number of additional inquiries due to live-chat: 10

Step 3: Expected revenues of live-chat per day

Expected number of inquiries that result into actual orders: 3/10 inquiries

Expected average order value: 15€

15% commission (= revenues for *BimBimBikes*) from 15€: 2,25€

2,25€ x 3 positive inquiries = 6,75€

Total additional revenues = 6,75€

Step 4: Expected cost of live-chat option per day

Number of interns needed for live-chat: 1

Monthly salary for 1 intern: 250€

250€ / 30 days = 8,33€

24 hours = 1440 minutes

8,33€ / 1440 minutes = 0.005787€

0.005787€ x 100 minutes = 0,58€

Total cost of live-chat option per day = 0,58€

Turnover = 6,75€ revenues – 0,58€ cost = 6,17€ (per day) gross margin

Increase in annual turnover = 365 days x 6,17€ = 2.252,05€

Positive scenario

However, this calculation is based on pure assumptions, as to why a trial period with a live-chat on the website is recommended in any case.

Secondly, *BimBimBikes* should focus on fasten up its customer service in certain cases, so that replies are given until two days after an inquiry has been sent from a client the latest. In order to make this happen, service team members could be motivated by rewarding them with an announcement of the “customer service team member of the month” or a small treat for the team member who has resolved the most cases within the shortest time.

Thirdly, the absence of friction by providing a more pro-active customer service in the first place should be endorsed. Therefore, the company should invest time to re-check profiles of all rental partners regarding the information that is provided there for the customers. Often, customers call to for example ask if a delivery is possible or request other simple information that could be added on the profile by the rental partners. This would decrease the time customer service team members need to invest when solving these kind of inquiries. The time that will be won by improving the profiles of the rental partners can be invested for other important tasks that need to be done, which rises the overall productivity of the company. In order to convince rental partners to update their

profiles and simplify the booking process for the customers like that, it should be pointed out for them how this will most likely increase their number of bookings and their profit, because clients will probably rather place a booking with them if they have a clear overview and all information available at the first glance. Also, customers have complained that in many cases a refund after cancellation did not take place. *BimBimBikes* should prevent these issues by checking its current automatic refunding system and reminding the service team members of the importance of a fast refund service.

Fourthly, *BimBimBikes* is recommended to work closely together with the bike rental points and point out for them how important an acceptable quality of the bikes is. An acceptable quality of a rental bike is a bicycle, which can have small scratches, but should dispose of all necessary functions, such as fully working lights, gears and breaks as well as stable and well-functioning wheels, as this is the expectation of the average customer. In order to guarantee a good quality in the first place, the quality of the bikes and tours should be included as a topic to talk about when agreeing on a partnership with a new bike rental partner. The topic of the quality should be mentioned during the first or second contact with an interested bike rental partner, so that future problems can be decreased or avoided in the first place. Due to the fact that only 16 respondents of the survey have booked a tour with *BimBimBikes*, further research should be done in this field to achieve reliable and valid information on how to improve the current tour offer. Moreover, also a rental company of the month can be announced, based on positive user comments. This would have the advantages of a free marketing for the rental companies, a Facebook post does not involve further costs and rental partners are more ambitious to provide qualitative bikes and tours.

Fifthly, *BimBimBikes* should make small improvements regarding the structure and content that is presented on the website. The result of the survey revealed that the website appear trustworthy for the vast majority of respondents, however there were small issues mentioned with the structure and content of the webpage. Therefore, the organisation is recommended to for example adjust the navigation bar on the website. Currently, the colours of the button that is being clicked on does not change accordingly and as it should. When for instance clicking on the button "Questions" in the navigation bar, the page changes to FAQ, but in the navigation bar the button "Destination Tips" is highlighted. This can cause confusion and distrust in the website. A better structure of the online platform will make it seem even more trustworthy and may increase the chance of additional bookings. A further suggestion is to re-check the articles that are published under destination tips, because wrong content, spelling mistakes and poor language can cause distrust as well. Therefore, team members with a good command of the written English language should re-check the English articles and all team members should be reminded of the importance of qualitative articles once in a while.

As a sixth measure, user comments and referrals by acquaintances could be involved in a strategy to acquire and attract more German customers. For instance, *BimBimBikes* could encourage its former and present clients to refer the organisation to their friends and families, by introducing a campaign with the message "Refer us to a friend and get a 10% discount on your next booking" or "Refer us to a friend and win a free bike rental for your next holiday". Additionally, user comments could be used more effectively, as at the moment customers can rate the rental partner, but not *BimBimBikes* itself. For instance, former clients that had a good experience with their bike rental could be asked to write a brief text about it and attach a photo of themselves and/or their friends and families together with the rental bikes. These texts could be displayed on the homepage right underneath the actual search bar for the destination and type of bike, as it would eventually encourage potential customers to book a bike with the organisation. This could be firstly adapted as a sort of experiment in order to test if it really increases the bookings or not.

The seventh suggestion is related to the fact that many customers feel a functional and time risk when considering a booking on the website. In many cases, customers fear that an agreed delivery of a bike would not take place. This fear can be decreased when, as mentioned earlier, updating the profiles of the rental points accordingly and adding all necessary information that is related to a possible delivery. Moreover, according to the research some (potential) customers are afraid that they could find better or cheaper rental bikes on other bike rental websites. This fear could be decreased by adding a text box or widget on the homepage that stands out and shows in one or two sentences the advantages of booking a bike with *BimBimBikes*. This could be a statement that contains the following message: “When booking a bicycle with us, we guarantee you the best possibilities of comparing many different bike rental points worldwide with the same prices that you can find on the websites of the bike rental points”.

The eighth recommendation is related to the finding that the company’s website appears overloaded with information. In order to increase the ease of use of the webpage, it could be simply re-structured a bit instead of deleting interesting information. In that way, the website will appear more logical and it is easier to find the desired information. The following suggestions could be considered:

- Re-structure the navigation bar as mentioned above
- Only presenting the most important information on the homepage, such as: the search bar for the desired destination and desired type of bike, a user comment with photo as described above, a statement that shows that *BimBimBikes* is the best booking option as shown above
- The travel inspiration gallery can be shown more down on the website with a scrolling function so that they are not directly visible at the first sight

A ninth suggestion relates to the company’s position on Google and new ideas on how to improve it as well as recommendations for new Facebook and Instagram campaigns. For instance, especially the attention of potential customers that are not considering a bike rental yet can be caught by marketing cycling and bike rental itself. Cycling tourism is more popular in The Netherlands than in Germany, as to why more German clients can be acquired by catching their interest for exploring a new holiday destination by bike. Therefore, short YouTube video ads could be developed that contain the message that cycling is an innovative way to explore different holiday destinations. The message behind those videos should be that cycling makes happy, is an adventure for the whole family or group, makes independent of tram and train schedules and is environmentally friendly. The message behind the video should be one of the mentioned or a similar statement. A hashtag can help carrying bringing out the message better and being remembered for this ad. Other than that, a photo contest on Facebook and Instagram can raise awareness and spread the word about *BimBimBikes*. For example, a hashtag campaign can be shared on both social media platforms, encouraging participants to share a funny photo of themselves cycling or their most astonishing holiday photo unrelated to cycling and inserting a specific hashtag that tracks back to *BimBimBikes* with the possibility to win a price.

Regarding the recommendations for further research, *BimBimBikes* could conduct an experiment by adding the above mentioned features to the main homepage and see, whether or not the CTR will rise or the number of bookings increases due to the adaptations. Moreover, the start-up organisation should conduct further research about their current offer, because only 16 respondents of the online survey have booked a tour and the results are therefore not reliable enough to make trustworthy statements.

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9 Appendix

9.1 Online Survey

The online survey has been translated into English by the researcher, as it originally has been sent in German to *BimBimBikes*' German clients.

9.1.1 General Questions



You are kindly asked to participate in this online survey, because you have previously rented a bike or a tour with BimBimBikes. This will take **5-10 min.** All answers will be handled **confidential** and cannot be traced back to particular respondents. The **objective of this survey** is to **discover your interests and desires** and to work on them in the longer term after the data has been evaluated.

Among all respondents, a reward of **100€** as well as several **10% discount vouchers** will be raffled off.

Start survey

press ENTER

Question 1: What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Question 2: How old are you?

- Between 18 and 25.
- Between 26 and 45.
- Older than 46.

Question 3: Who have you booked the bicycle(s) and/or tour(s) for?

- I booked a bicycle for myself.
- I booked bicycles for my family and myself.
- I booked bicycles for my friends and myself.
- I booked bicycles for my partner and myself.
- I booked bicycles for work purposes.

9.1.2 Questions regarding the customers' need for service

Question 4: Which communication channels would you prefer in case of simple questions or problems with an online booking platform (e.g. which payment methods are possible)? The place of business is in The Netherlands.

- E-Mail
- Facebook
- Live-chat on website
- Telephone
- Chatbots

Question 5: When would you like to receive a response at the latest before starting to look for alternative booking options?

- Up to 3 hours.
- Up to 8 hours.
- Until the next morning.
- Up to 2 days.
- Up to 4 days.
- Up to 7 days.

Question 6: Have you experienced any difficulties from the point of time of your booking until the return of the booked bikes/tours?

- Yes
- No

Question 7: If yes, what kind of problem?

- Unclear or incomplete information on website
- Refund after cancellation did not take place
- Language barrier with BimBimBikes
- Language barrier with rental point
- Lack of quality of the bikes/tours
- Agreements have been reneged on
- No reply from BimBimBikes on inquiry
- Insufficient reply from BimBimBikes on inquiry
- Unfriendly customer service
- Rented bike was not available
- Participation in booked tour was not possible
- Rental point was closed
- I do not want to state the problem
- Other

Question 8: I was very pleased with the price-performance ratio of my booking.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I only agree partly.
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

9.1.3 Questions regarding the customers' need for quality

Question 9: Have you booked a bicycle or a tour with BimBimBikes?

- Bicycle
- Tour

Question 10: I was very pleased with the quality of the rented bike.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I only agree partly.
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

Question 11: Which defects did your rented bicycle(s) have?

- Small defects, e.g. scratches.
- Defects such as a poor light or a broken bell.
- Bigger defects, e.g. a broken light or broken gears.
- Big defects, e.g. a broken brake or a flat tire.
- I do not want to state the problem.

Question 12: I was very pleased with my booked tour.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I only agree partly.
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

9.1.4 Questions regarding the customers' need for trust

Question 13: The website seems trustworthy.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I only agree partly.
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

Question 14: What does not seem trustworthy about the website?

- Layout
- Content
- Structure

Question 15: If I booked a bicycle on the website, I would fear a functional risk, e.g. that the agreed delivery won't take place.

- Yes
- No

Question 16: If I booked a bicycle on the website, I would fear a physical risk, e.g. that the bike lacks on safety.

- Yes
- No

Question 17: If I booked a bicycle on the website, I would fear a financial risk, e.g. that the bike is not worth its price.

- Yes
- No

Question 18: If I booked a bicycle on the website, I would fear a social risk, e.g. that I would feel responsible for possible grievances adverse my friends, family, colleagues or partner.

- Yes
- No

Question 19: If I booked a bicycle on the website, I would fear a psychological risk, e.g. that I will be disappointed, because the bike does not have the functions I was hoping for.

- Yes

- No

Question 20: If I booked a bicycle on the website, I would fear a time risk, e.g. that I would find a better or cheaper bike if I had more time for researching.

- Yes
- No

9.1.5 Questions regarding the customers' need for accessibility

Question 21: The website appears chaotic.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I only agree partly.
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

Question 22: The website appears overloaded with information.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I only agree partly.
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

Question 23: How did you find out about our booking platform?

- Google
- Friends/relatives
- Facebook/Instagram
- Link from third website
- BimBimBikes Blog
- Other



Thank you very much for filling in this survey. If you would like to participate in our lottery, please send an e-mail with the subject **BimBimBikes Lottery** to

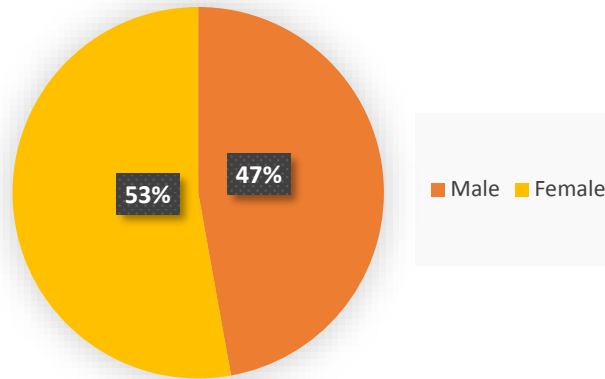
natalie@bimbimbikes.com

9.2 Survey Data

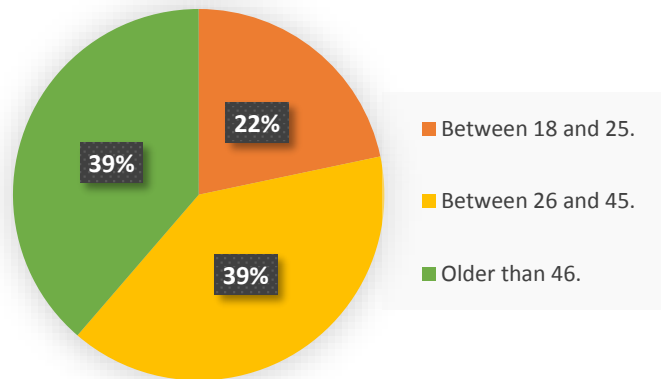
In this chapter, the survey data is presented. Therefore, a figure will present the results of each question. The total number of respondents is 106. Percentages are rounded to the full number.

9.2.1 General Questions

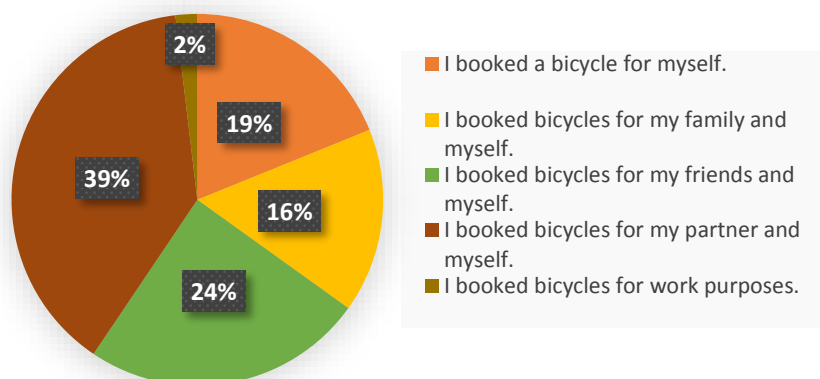
Question 1: What is your gender?



Question 2: How old are you?



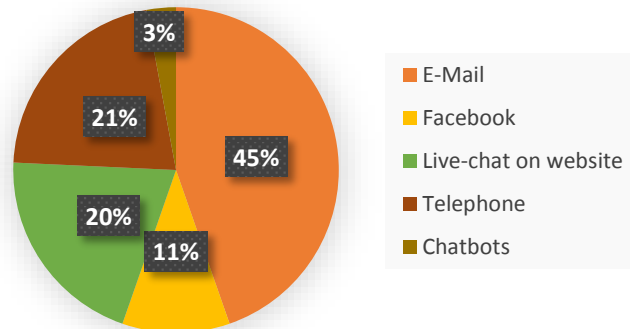
Question 3: Who have you booked the bicycle(s) and/or tour(s) for?



9.2.2 Questions regarding the customers' need for service

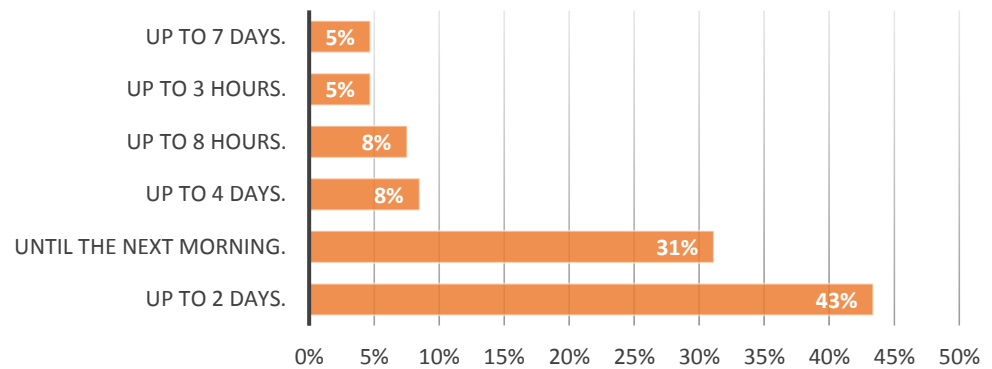
Question 4:

Which communication channels would you prefer in case of simple questions or problems with an online booking platform (e.g. which payment methods are possible)? The place of business is in The Netherlands.



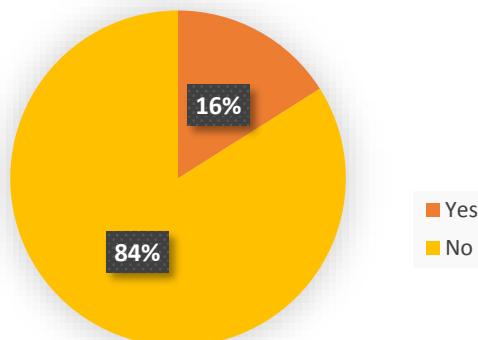
Question 5:

When would you like to receive a response at the latest before starting to look for alternative booking options?



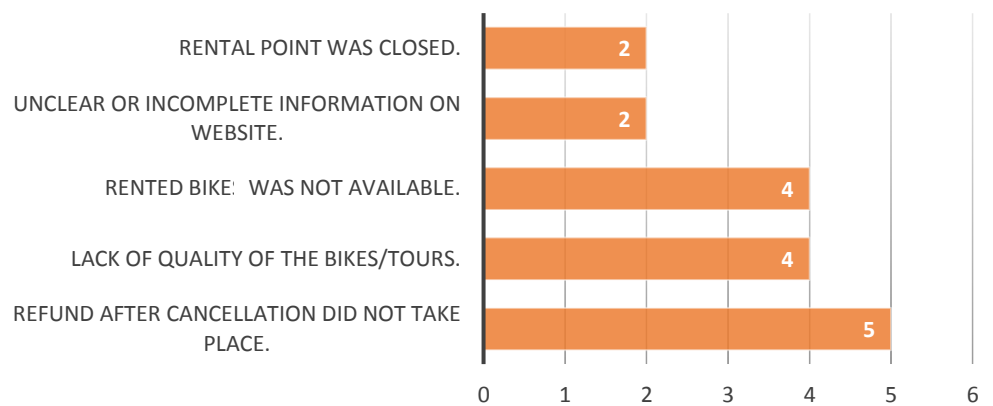
Question 6:

Have you experienced any difficulties from the point of time of your booking until the return of the booked bikes/tours?

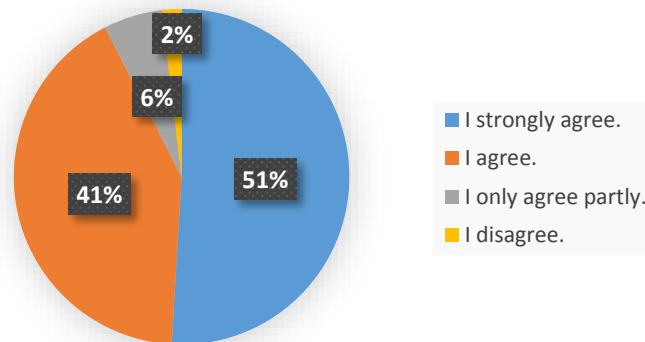


Question 7:

If yes, what kind of problem?

**Question 8:**

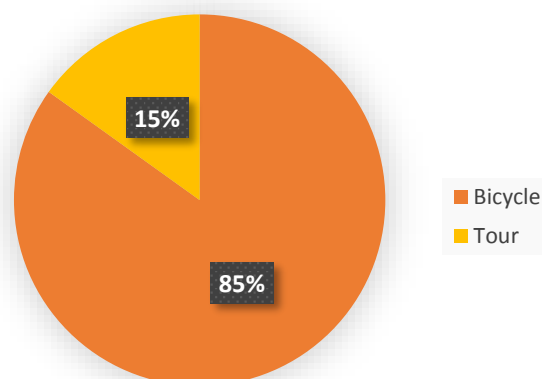
I was very pleased with the price-performance ratio of my booking.



9.2.3 Questions regarding the customers' need for quality

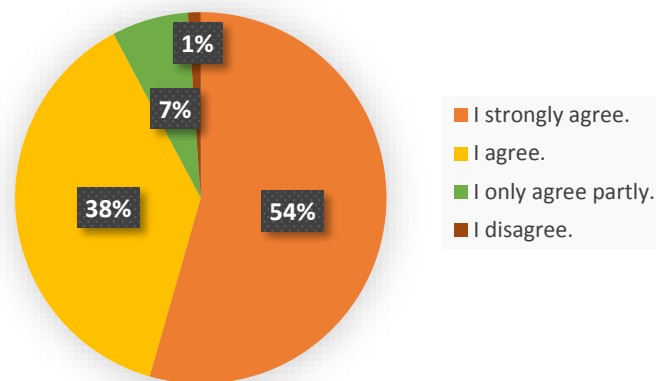
Question 9:

Have you booked a bicycle or a tour with BimBimBikes?



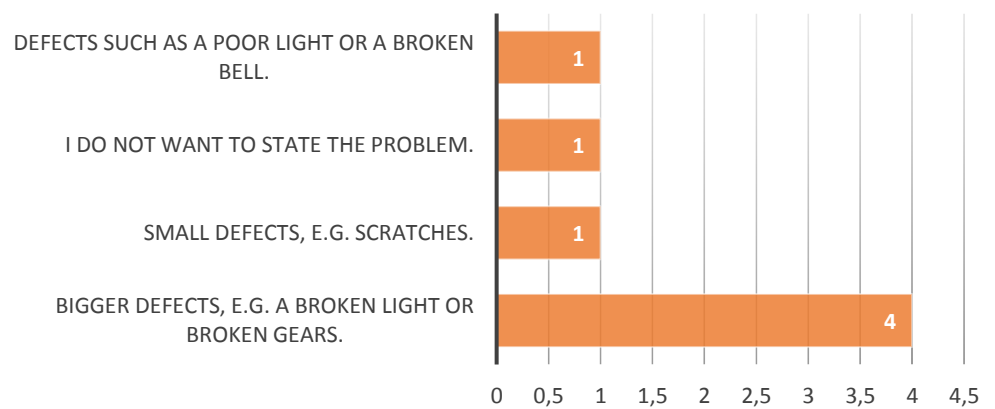
Question 10:

I was very pleased with the quality of the rented bike.



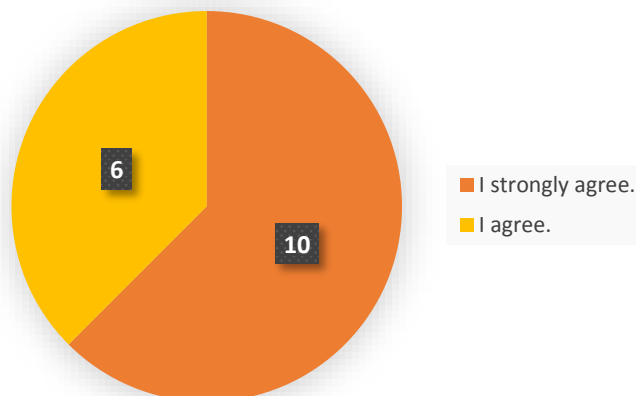
Question 11:

Which defects did your rented bicycle(s) have?



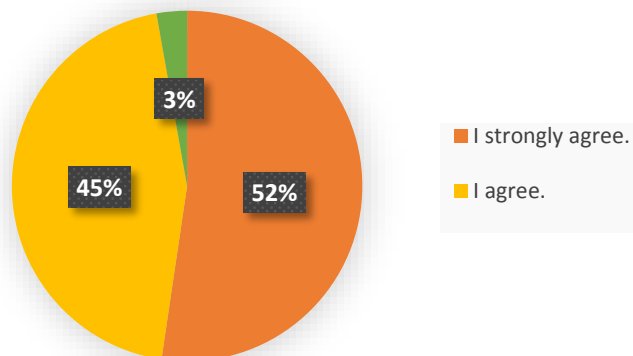
Question 12:

I was very pleased with my booked tour.

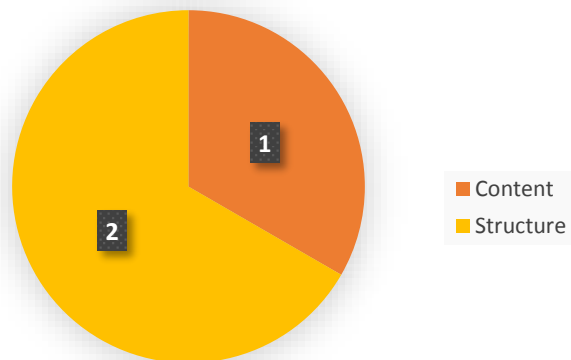


9.2.4 Questions regarding the customers' need for trust

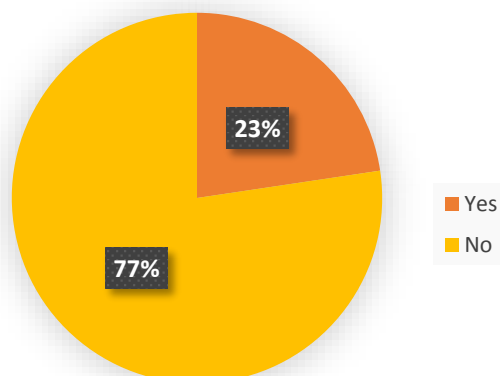
Question 13: The website seems trustworthy.



Question 14: What does not seem trustworthy about the website?

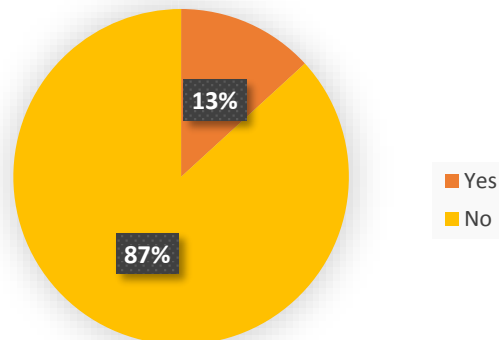


Question 15: If I booked a bicycle on the website, I would fear a functional risk, e.g. that the agreed delivery won't take place.



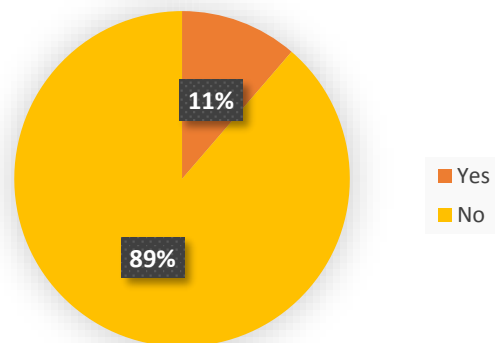
Question 16:

If I booked a bicycle on the website, I would fear a physical risk, e.g. that the bike lacks on safety.



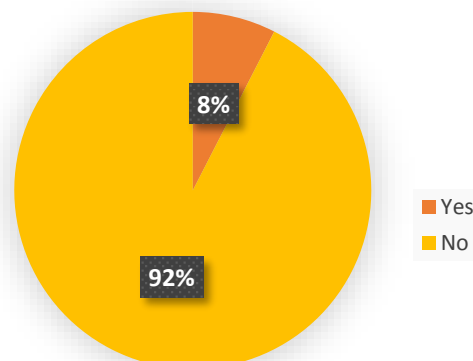
Question 17:

If I booked a bicycle on the website, I would fear a financial risk, e.g. that the bike is not worth its price.



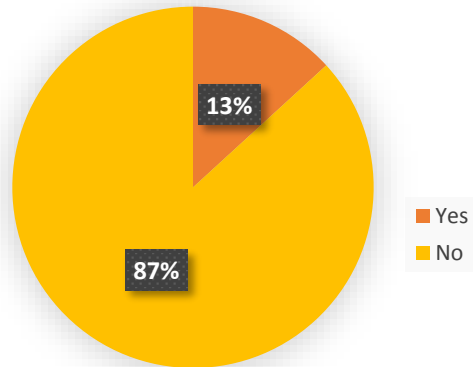
Question 18:

If I booked a bicycle on the website, I would fear a social risk, e.g. that I would feel responsible for possible grievances adverse my friends, family, colleagues or partner.



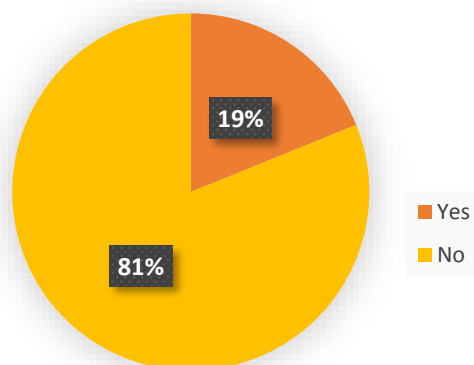
Question 19:

If I booked a bicycle on the website, I would fear a psychological risk, e.g. that I will be disappointed, because the bike does not have the functions I was hoping for.



Question 20:

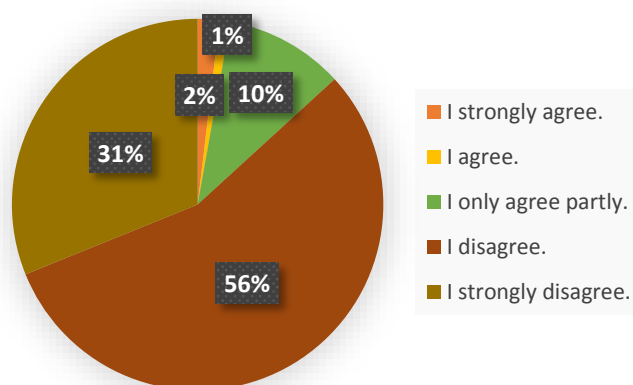
If I booked a bicycle on the website, I would fear a time risk, e.g. that I would find a better or cheaper bike if I had more time for researching.



9.2.5 Questions regarding the customers' need for accessibility

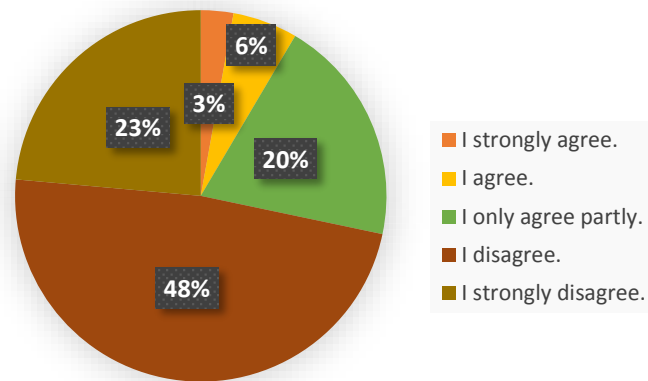
Question 21:

The website appears chaotic.



Question 22:

The website appears overloaded with information.



Question 23:

How did you find out about our booking platform?

