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# Researching consumer behaviour of Chinese scuba divers

Case company Suunto

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<p>This thesis is a consumer behaviour research study. The research topic was discovered as an assignment for Suunto Diving department. Target group consists of Chinese scuba divers who already have a license to dive. Consumer behaviour, purchasing process and segmentation form the basis for literature framework in this work.</p> <p>The purpose of this research was to find out what kind of consumer characteristics would be discovered through a survey about status, brand, gear and technology. Data is being analysed by comparing genders and trying to identify similarities and differences between them.</p> <p>The motivation was to discover more consumer data from Chinese market. Data would provide information for the marketing and sales departments trying to understand target group better and, to implement marketing tactics in the future. According to Suunto, segment of female scuba divers is growing fast, and for this reason a deeper knowledge of gender differences is researched as well.</p> <p>The main findings describe how the consumer characteristics lean towards technology oriented, brand positive and gear conscious way of thinking. There are slight differences between responses from males and females. However, males seem to have somewhat stronger interest towards the topics, especially technology. Further studies with a larger sample will provide continuing data for use.</p>	
Keywords	Suunto, scuba diving, consumer behaviour, purchasing process, segmentation

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## 1 Introduction

The goal for this thesis is to research consumer behaviour of Chinese scuba divers as a co-operation with Suunto. Exploring the primary research question “*What kind of consumer characteristics do Chinese scuba divers have?*” and secondary question “*How do consumers profiles between genders differ from each other?*” will provide a closer understanding on what sort of needs, motives and attitudes do they possess. The research will focus on finding out attitudes towards diving gear and technology. Research findings are analysed both by comparing the genders and as a whole.

Both research questions complement each other. Primary question explores both genders as one segment whereas the secondary question divides the segment into two sub-groups using consumer profiling. Consumer behaviour data is collected as a survey. Being able to understand important principles require learning essential theory of consumer behaviour, consumer purchasing process, segmentation and consumer profiling, these will be covered in chapter three: Literature review.

### 1.1 Choosing the research question

An original motivation for the research topic and this study was created after discovering a personal passion towards scuba diving. A meeting was arranged with Suunto’s Global Brand Manager Anna De Torres and a product manager Jukka Saarikorpi at their headquarter in Vantaa, after finding a mutual interest for a research to take place in Southeast Asia for their Diving department.

I had managed to find a job as a dive assistant in Thailand, which led to a Divemaster profession outside the work. Few meetings later a mutual interest was detected, and research topics became clear. The company has a need to discover more information about Chinese scuba divers consumer profiles. The idea is to provide supportive information for the dive computer sales department. Suunto’s dive computers have a very strong market hold around the world. However, their share of market in China has a lot of potential to improve. (Interview with Anna De Torres, Global Brand Manager, Suunto, 2014)

In addition to researching consumer behaviour, Suunto expressed an interest towards female divers. In one of the meetings, Jukka Saarikorpi from Suunto explained how the segment of female divers has kept growing and therefore, would be worth exploring in more details. For this reason, I decided to study data results also from gender perspective. This thesis and research questions have a strong influence from Suunto. However, the thesis is not an assignment but a co-operative work since the company only desired to have an access to the data findings, but had no requirements for the written report.

## 1.2 Background information and goals

The data collection was implemented during the time period of 11/2014-03/2015 in Racha (sometimes written as Raya) Yai Island, Thailand. Data was collected both in-person interviews and as an online survey. Racha Island is located 25 kilometers south from a popular holiday destination Phuket and has hundreds of European and Asian visitors each day during the high season. (Raya Divers website 2015.)

During five months, I worked as a dive assistant at a dive company called Raya Divers. Work included completing a Divemaster course, which is a profession in scuba diving industry. Alongside the work, I collected replies to the survey for this thesis while interacting with customers from all over the world, also from China. Divemaster is a professional who works in scuba industry mostly by leading divers in local dive sites, working at the dive shop and by taking care of gear maintenance. As a Divemaster candidate, I could interact with many Chinese customers who came to discover scuba diving or to dive local dive sites as certified divers. Having a Chinese Divemaster working as a part of the team at Raya Divers was a great help, since majority of the Chinese customer spoke only Chinese. Crystal Qin provided essential help by translating some parts of the interviews and online surveys for the research.

Chinese tourists visit Racha Island frequently. The popularity of diving has kept growing in China, and people are willing to challenge themselves in exchange of having the diving experience and having their photos taken by a divemaster underwater as a nice memory. Many of our Raya Diver's Chinese customers enrolling to discover scuba diving -program were not confident with water as an element. (Crystal Qin, Divemaster, Raya Divers 2014)

The goal of this research is to find out consumer profile characteristics of Chinese scuba divers and to compare gender differences with the help of segmentation and consumer profiling. In order to do so, a sufficient amount of data needed to be collected. Expanding the data collection from in person interviews to online surveys ensured achieving the goals, hence the number of Chinese scuba certified visitors was not as large as expected. As an incentive, Suunto agreed on giving away one D4i Novo dive computer as a price for one of the respondents.

## 2 Overview of Suunto, Raya Divers and scuba diving

Following chapters introduce two essential companies for this research Suunto and Raya Divers and present an overview of scuba diving.

1. Suunto (from where the research questions had a strong influence from) and
2. Raya Divers (where the research was implemented at while working in their Racha Yai Island location in Thailand).

### 2.1 Suunto

Suunto is a Finnish company established in 1936. The company designs and manufactures dive computers, sport watches and instruments. Since 1999, Suunto has been as a subsidiary of Amer Sports Oyj. Everything started over 80 years ago, when Tuomas Vohlonen invented mass production method for liquid compass, which became their first product.

At 1965, Suunto Diving was launched when they introduced the world's first diving compass SK-4. Over 20 years later in 1987, company became the world leader in the manufacture of diving instruments. A dive computer, Suunto SME-ML, was launched and the industry was completely revolutionized. Traditionally, calculations regarding dive time and depth had to be done manually using diving tables. The new dive computer allowed more fun, safer and easier dives.

Some other achievements include: the worlds first watch sized dive computer Suunto Spyder, the world's first wrist sized all-in-one dive computer with advanced features such as digital compass and wireless air integration Suunto D9 and the world's first rebreather compatible wrist-sized dive computer Suunto DX. Today Suunto is still based in Finland where most of the products are designed, and hand crafted in their flagship factory just outside Helsinki. (Suunto website, 2017).

### 2.2 Raya Divers

Raya Divers is a Finnish dive company operating in five different locations in Thailand. The company holds a five star ranking from PADI and acts according to PADI regulations and rules. The main office is located in Phuket, and others can be found from

Racha Yai Island, Khao Lak, Krabi and Koh Lanta. Services include diving and snorkeling trips, liveaboard safaris, PADI diving courses, SUP (stand up paddling) safaris, fishing trips and island excursions. Depending on customer's nationality, trips and courses are available in Finnish, Scandinavian or Russian languages.

Company operations started unofficially 1996 after founders of the company decided to teach their friends to scuba dive in Racha Yai Island. Official year of establishing the company was 2000 when the headquarters was opened in Phuket. High season for tourist visits is between November and April. Legally, the company is Thai, obeying Thai legislation and practices and has Finnish owners. (Raya diver's website, 2015).

### 2.3 Scuba diving

Scuba diving is a way to explore the underwater world. The word SCUBA stands for Self-contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus which diver uses as air supply instead of breathing from surface supply. (Dorling Kindersley, Atlas of exploration pp. 95) Recreational diving literally means fun diving. Besides fun diving, recreational refers to having certain limits, training and equipment requirements before being able to dive as a certified diver. Scuba Instructors are diving professionals who teach recreational scuba diving. They are engaged in their profession and are able to certify students as scuba divers after successfully passing the course and a final written test.

According to The Encyclopaedia of Recreational Diving "Recreational diving is defined as diving no deeper than 40 meters within the no-stop limits of recognized dive tables or dive computers." Being able to dive without immediate professional supervision means having at least an entry-level certification such as PADI Open Water certification. (The Encyclopaedia of Recreational Diving, 2008.)

According to the *Global Scuba Diving Equipment Market Report 2016 - Forecasts to 2020*, interest towards water sports is growing fast. Water sports, including scuba diving are becoming a natural part of recreational activities among soft adventure sports enthusiasts. Many government bodies have realized the value of water sports and are trying to increase the revenue generated by the tourism industry across the globe.

Further, the Global Scuba Diving Equipment market report explains how a challenge restricting the market growth is the high cost of equipment. The average cost of good

quality scuba diving equipment and certification is more than \$1,000. Emphasizing the high equipment cost is relevant considering this thesis concentrates on consumer behaviour. Dive computers can be very expensive, and they tend to form a large part of the total cost of equipment.

(Research and Markets, 2016. *Global Scuba Diving Equipment Market Report 2016 - Forecasts to 2020*).

### 3 Literature review

The purpose of literature review is to relate the study to larger, on-going dialogue in the literature, filling in gaps and extending prior studies (Creswell, J. 2013). Before being able to process data findings it is necessary to explore relevant information of consumer behaviour with the help of competent literature, concentrating on marketing perspective. Analysis of the case will take place after presenting theoretical framework consisting of consumer behaviour, research buyer decision-making process and segmentation. The theoretical framework was chosen as a combination of important authors from the field of marketing.

#### 3.1 Consumer behaviour

Webster defines consumer behaviour as “behaviour that is all psychological, social and physical behaviour of potential customers as they become aware of, evaluate, purchase, consume and tell other people about products and services”. In order to understand consumer behaviour it is necessary to study all the aspects of consuming. Behaviour is not easy to predict, even for the professionals. (Webster, 1974, p.19 & Armstrong, 1991, pp.251-256).

Assumptions of consumer behaviour are mostly based on experiences and previous studies. The purpose is to study how customers decide on what to buy and how do they use their products. O'Shaughnessy (2012, pp.1) wrote, “Experience is like history in providing lessons or analogies to justify certain hypotheses or understanding a set of events but experience supplemented by social science perspectives, concepts and findings is likely to lead to greater consumer understanding”. By studying previous experiences supplemented by chosen theories provide means to understand behaviour, especially consumer behaviour.

Consumer is a key factor for marketing. Being able to analyse consumer behaviour is an essential step towards effective marketing and successful sales operations. It is important to understand on what basis consumer decisions are made, and also what, where and how products and services are bought. Individual needs and motives together create the basis for consumer behaviour. These can be divided into three different categories: demographic, psychological and social factors. Various personal fea-

tures and external factors such as marketing, culture and purchasing power affect on needs and motives. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 101)

Financial ability of purchasing goods, purchasing power, restricts individual's needs and sets limits on what can be bought and what not. Purchasing power consists of current assets, loans and debt but is also affected by time and price trends. The final purchasing decision is a result influenced by all the mentioned factors: personal features (needs and motives), purchasing power and price trends. Consumer behaviour is the foundation for market segmentation, which will be described in more details later in this chapter. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 101-102).

### 3.1.1 Demographic factors

Consumer's demographic factors are qualities that are easy to find out, measurable and possible to analyse. The most common factors are variables such as age, gender, family size, occupation, income and nationality. Each factor will provide valuable information when analysing consumer behaviour and segment groups. For example, age and gender will have an effect on the needs and motives when purchasing the scuba diving gear, but will not guarantee the final selection of the product. Psychological and social factors should be studied in order to find out the final reasons behind choosing the final product, for example scuba diving gear. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 102-104).

### 3.1.2 Psychological factors

Psychological factors are built from individual's personal characteristics, needs, habits, skills and other abilities that reflect to the consumer behaviour. Factors can be divided into five different sections: needs, motives, learning, values and the spirit of innovation. It is not possible to separate psychological and social factors from each other, since human behaviour is modified and influenced by other people during interaction with each other all the time. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 102-105.)

## Needs

Needs and feelings have a strong effect on buyer decision-making process. The challenge is to find out segment specific needs, how is the current market satisfying these needs and is there a possibility of creating profitable business operations around them? Basically, the needs are endless. However, some external limits will occur eventually. Purchasing power sets limitations prioritizing what to purchase and consume. Some needs are more primary than the others. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 105.)

Table one presents Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (1954), a classical interpretation of the structure of human needs. O'Shaughnessy (2012, pp. 404) has an updated view of Maslow's traditional definition of individuals needs: "Maslow is perhaps the most noted name in the area of motivation and marketing. It is difficult to pin down him as he was influenced by Freudian psychology and anthropology as well as mainstream social psychology. There is no generally accepted set of needs or motives. Maslow's hierarchy of needs, dating back to the ancient Greeks, is a combination of 'needs' in the sense of absolute physiological needs and important social desires." Even though Maslow's theory does still apply, it is important to remember to look back to the past experiences, accept new theories and acknowledge the tendency for human needs to evolve and change.

Physiological human needs such as food, breathing and sleep, have to be satisfied before higher levels can be achieved. Table one shows how the upper needs can be achieved only after the basic needs are satisfied. Needs for safety include a feeling of stability and health, followed by need for love and belonging. This level involves sensing social connections and intimacy. Satisfying the last two groups of needs, self-esteem and self-actualization, will increase the comfort of life, adding adventure, refreshing and achieving new experiences like learning to scuba dive. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 105.)

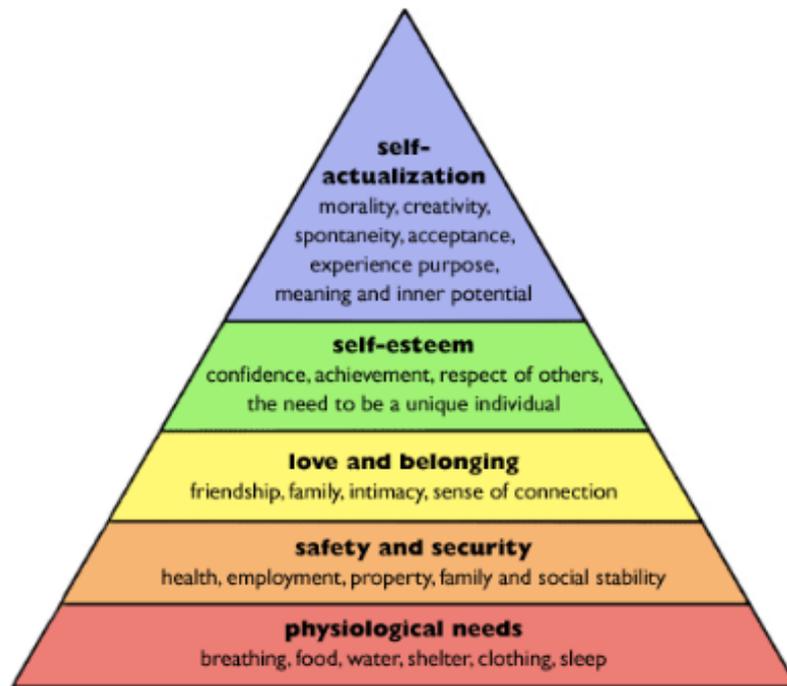


Figure 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs 1943

## Motives

Motives are primary reasons behind actions. Needs lead people towards activity, but motives are needed for the actual action to happen. Modern human being isn't only seen as a creature satisfying one's needs, but as a decision maker achieving goals. A term "buying motive" explains why a consumer will purchase specific products, and it is affected by needs, personality, available assets and surrounding marketing operations. Exploring motives explain the reasons behind purchasing decision. Studying them helps understanding consumer motives, for example choosing between dive computer brands and considering between renting or buying one. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp 109.)

Bergström & Leppänen explain how it is possible to break buying motives into two sections: rational and emotional motives. For example, reliability, price and ease of use are rational motives affecting decision process. In addition emotional motives, such as acceptance from other people, fashionable design and colour of a dive computer are factors that differentiate computers from the competitors without the need for technological or software changes. The final purchasing decision consists of both rational and emotional motives. However, rational motives tend to have stronger influence after all.

Yrjö Engerström explains the three different types of motivation:

1. **Situational motivation** takes place when the consumer is affected by external factors, for example, discount campaigns, trying on new dive computers in a dive shop during a scuba holiday or recommendations from friends.
2. **Instrumental motivation** occurs when social rewards and punishments control the decision-making. The true features of products have only secondary role since the acceptance and admiration of other people have more value.
3. **Intrinsic motivation** can be seen as brand loyalty. In this case consumer chooses the product based on the value in use and usefulness. As an example, Divemaster Crystal pointed out that Suunto dive computers have an excellent reputation among her customers, scuba consumers, because of advanced technology, software and design. Intrinsic motivation prevents loyal users from choosing another brand. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 109-110.)

## Values

Values are objectives that guide thinking, choices and actions. A set of values is individual for each person, it is formed since early childhood and is affected by external factors. Decisions, thinking and actions are mainly based on the values and can be detected from person's attitude. Attitudes mean a person's tendency to deal situations with a specific way. They are affected by knowledge, emotions and actions, which are important factors when discussing buyer behaviour and purchasing process. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 111-112.)

## Innovation and learning

In this research, the spirit of innovation refers to an interest towards new experiences such as scuba diving and purchasing new scuba gear like dive computers. According to Solomon (2013) people can be divided into five different categories when adopting an innovation, which are: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. Table two will demonstrate how only 2.5% of the people are adopting the innovations right in the beginning. These innovators are keen on trying new things and eager to test models and technology, for example, new models of dive computers entering the market. Early adopters 13.5% act on a similar way as innovators, but they still like to have a chance on affecting their environment. This is a critical group for

companies since after successfully ensuring the early adopters the product is likely to stay on the market. Early and late majority 68% consist of individuals who are affected by others, but they are not likely to adopt new changes fast. Very often these groups seek advice from early adopters and spread word of mouth information from their own experience. The product will achieve a stable share of the market if it achieves popularity among early and late majority. The last group laggards 16% adopt the product last after it has been on the market for a while and can be even already out of fashion. This last group does not observe new changes on the market or trends. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 114-115.)

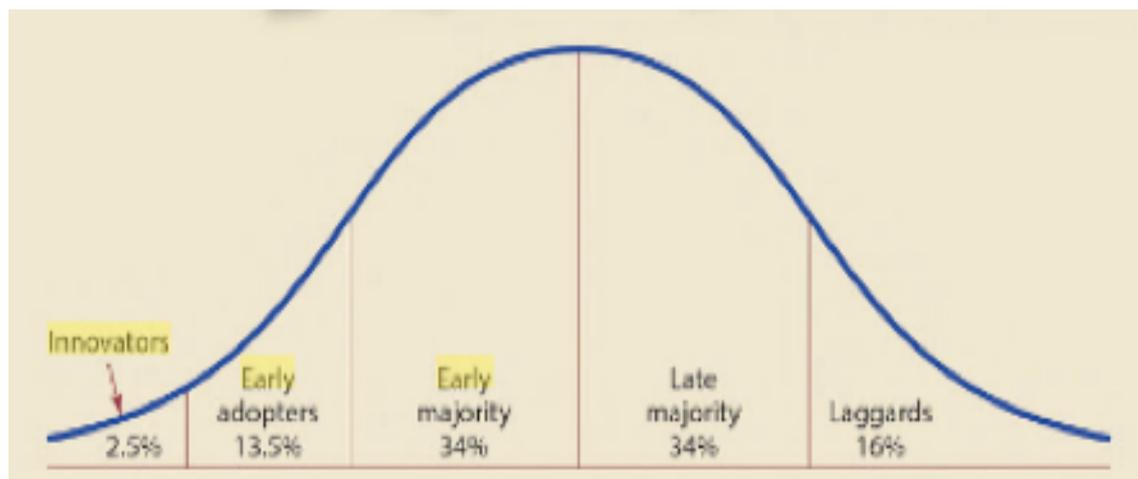


Figure 2: Categories of innovation adopters 2011

Learning refers to a permanent change in behaviour that happens after gaining experiences. Process can take place either consciously by following others or unconsciously without trying to particularly learn something new, for example, when being exposed to advertising. Behavioural science theories state that learning occur as a response to external actions; marketing and previous experiences will have an affect on consumer.

Likelihood for additional purchases, or recommending a product like a dive computer, is very low in case of a bad experience. Companies have to acknowledge the importance of learning from marketing perspective; the marketed product can become irrelevant in case of marketing operations failing affecting on opinions and needs of the target group. The user experience created by a dive computer has to be positive in order to convince the customer to use the product in the future as well. (Solomon 2011, pp. 120-121).

### 3.1.3 Social factors

Consumer is a social human being influenced by other human beings. Observing social factors involve exploring consumer within social groups and how these groups affect the decision-making process. Some of the most influential groups are family, friends and other social communities that can be found, for example, from the Internet. For a scuba diver considering purchasing new gear, other people's opinions matter: senior divers, instructors and Divemasters have a strong influence to the final decision. Information about social factors can be spread into hard knowledge and soft knowledge. Hard knowledge consists of information such as what kind of groups does one belong into and social class. More complicated soft knowledge explains how these groups affect on the individual behaviour and purchasing decisions. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 116-127.)

Different groups have their own norms. Acting according to the norms will result in acceptance and violation of norms is disapproved. Generally, these groups have leaders, seniors with experience and knowledge, acting as an example for the rest of the group. Usually individual belongs to several groups simultaneously. However, roles might differ in each group, therefore behaviour changes as well. For example, role as a family member would be very different compared to the role among colleagues at work. These groups might present a powerful influence on the purchasing behaviour; opinion about various dive computers among scuba diving friends does matter but non-diving work colleagues would not have as much influence on the decision. However, the level of influence to the decision depends on each individual. Some are more prone to be persuaded whereas others have their own strong opinions and are not so easily affected by others. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 116-127.)

Other important factors affecting individual's character and behaviour besides the influence of groups are culture and social class. Primary cultural factors include values, history, beliefs, religions, the way of living and relations. Secondary factors are, for example symbols, traditions, rituals and historical heroes that are meaningful as shaping the culture. Culture is under a constant change. Members of population affect on the surrounding culture at the same time when population affects back to the culture. Social class is defined based on demographic factors such as education, profession and income. Different social classes can have dissimilar interests and buyer behaviour. For example, young students might not have as much income as working middle class;

therefore, these students would not be able to purchase as much scuba gear compared to the older working class. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 119-121.)

### 3.2 Purchasing process

Understanding the steps of purchasing process will provide important data for the researcher and companies. Reasons behind the purchasing decision and attitudes towards purchasing scuba gear are essential for many departments: product development, marketing and sales operations. Different kinds of buyer behaviour can be identified depending on the customer segment, and each individual has numerous causes influencing their characters. Values, attitudes, observations, motives and opinions each will affect to the final decision.

According to O'Shaughnessy the decision process leading up to buying is generally viewed as a process that starts from the initial problem leading to want recognition. Buyer searches for alternatives and finds out information available to support the decision based on wants. Buyer is ready for the final decision after considering a set of options and evaluating alternatives. (O'Shaughnessy 2012, pp. 190)

#### 3.2.1 Recognizing needs and searching for information

Purchasing process starts from the recognition of a buying problem, a need or a problem that has not been fulfilled. Customer might feel unsatisfied and unsafe using only a rental dive computer instead of buying his or her own. Diving with a rental computer demonstrates how useful and reliable would it be to purchase one, especially since senior divers and professionals would rarely dive without their own computer. Purchasing the computer might also satisfy new needs such as improving customer's status, image and professionalism. The decision is not easy to make, since dives could still be easily done with a rental computer at lower price. Generally, customer can doubt new needs since there might be more risks of failing instead of choosing a familiar and reliable option. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 140-142.)

In case the problem or need becomes too large individual needs to make a decision. This requires searching information from different sources, comparing alternatives and making the decision. The most helpful sources are generally previous user experiences

(own and other's), commercial sources and non-commercial sources. Collecting information can be a time-consuming process, especially when considering buying a valuable product such as a dive computer, but on the other hand, the decision might be done very fast and impulsively. Buyer aims to avoid as many purchase-related risks as possible by researching information and comparing alternatives. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 140-142.)

### 3.2.2 Comparing the options, evaluation and decision making

There are different kinds of purchasing decisions. Sometimes decisions require a longer information search and comparison of alternatives. Decision could also be made instantly as a result for an impulsive desire or based on a routine or a habit, which requires very little effort or time to evaluate. (Belch & Belch 2012, pp. 124.)

The buyer is ready to make a decision after finding out enough information about various options. Options can be set in an order based on pleasantness when comparing different dive computer models or sometimes none of the options satisfy the needs. Buyer will choose the best option based on personal preferences when having a feeling of achieving most value, for example, a cheap computer having all the basic features but not the best design compared to an expensive computer with newest features and superior design. The criteria for choosing the product vary based on personal preferences, valuation and features. Salespeople have a chance of interpreting buyer and trying to influence their decision by guiding a buyer towards purchasing more valuable products. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 142.)

The decision can be made individually but also as a group, such as household or a family. For example father wanting to buy a dive computer for his son: Father will take his son to a reliable dive shop equipped with well-known brands. Other family members might give their opinion of the available options, but the son has the final decision power. If a group is involved in a decision-making there are different roles for the members: (Rossiter, Percy 1985, pp. 510-524)

1. The initiator: the person who proposes the product as an alternative
2. The influencer: the one who gives positive feedback about the product based on experience or information
3. The Decider: the person making the final decision

4. The Purchaser: the one who physically buys the product
5. The User: the final end user of the product

Final buying decision is made as a conclusion resulting from comparing different options and ending up with the most suitable one. Availability effects to the last decision; purchasing process might break in case of the salesman not being able to guarantee product availability. Nonetheless, the purchase decision will take place if all the conditions please the buyer. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 142.)

### 3.3 Market segmentation and customer profiling

Segmentation means searching for different customer groups and choosing one of them as a target for marketing. The purpose is to find out how to satisfy values and needs better than competitors are able to but on a profitable manner. A group of customers is called a segment when all the members of the group have at least one mutual character related to purchasing. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 150.)

Customers can be profiled into different groups based upon their buyer behaviour. Interviews and questionnaires provide information about the behaviour for further purposes whereas purchase situations can be also evaluated based on demographic information such as age or sex. Before starting customer profiling it is necessary to decide on what basis the profiling is going to be carried out and what qualities will best describe the behaviour in purchase situation. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 467-471.)

Questionnaires and interviews provide data about consumer behaviour and enable dividing customers into different groups based on their choices and background information. Generated data from customer database and sales statistics will provide such information as loyalty customer behaviour that will help companies to improve their operations. Data helps creating accurate customer segments, which enable sending various targeted advertisements for each segment based upon their buyer behaviour.

In the beginning of the process company has to decide the basis for creating segments, what features best describe the behaviour and how is this data recorded. Basis for creating a segment could be, for example, timing of the last purchase, frequency of purchases, the amount of purchases or the objects of purchases. Traditionally, con-

sumers have been split into four categories; potential buyers considering buying the product, occasional buyers purchasing a product every now and then, loyalty customers purchasing often and regularly and former customers that have stopped buying due to a bad experience or some other reason. Each category can be divided into smaller sub-groups based on more accurate features if needed. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 467-471.)

## 4 Methodology

The purpose of this study is to understand consumer behaviour of the Chinese scuba divers and trying to analyse their way of thinking. Target is going to be achieved by asking their attitudes about the importance of scuba gear features and technology. The results are analysed especially from the gender perspective.

Research topic is strongly influenced by Suunto, and it has been developed from my personal interest towards marketing and scuba diving. Results of the questionnaire provided useful data for Suunto since one of their goals is to find out more consumer behavioural information about Chinese scuba divers and to strengthen their market status in China's dive computer market.

Questionnaire questions cover the following information:

- Finding out what kind of product features do respondents value when purchasing scuba gear.
- How important is the scuba gear bought for diving.
- Do respondents already own a dive computer
- If they do own a computer, which brand.
- Attitudes towards technology.
- Age and gender.

### 4.1 Research methods

The process of choosing the methods will determine what sort of practices and research will be used in the study. Research can be either quantitative or qualitative: quantitative research is based on quantity, and it will answer to the questions how many, how much, how often and how important a matter is. Qualitative research deepens the topic and helps understanding consumer behaviour. This method helps understanding questions why and how. Qualitative research limits cases into a small amount and is followed by a written report describing consumer behaviour and thoughts. (Lotti 1994, pp. 42, Creswell 2014)

In the beginning of the research project, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used as a way of data collection, however, only quantitative data was used in this thesis. Limiting the findings was necessary in order to keep the topic focused.

#### 4.2 Sampling plan

Kotler & Armstrong (2010) explained the meaning of sampling as follows: “Marketing researchers usually draw a conclusion about large groups of consumers by studying a small sample of the total consumer population. A sample is a segment of the population selected for marketing research to represent the population as a whole.” Choosing the group of people means an actual selection of a sample meeting the requirements for the topic. Selection has to be done carefully on a way that group members match with originally set criteria. This will enable making valid conclusions of the values, needs and behaviour of wider population. Designing the process requires making three important decisions: who are being surveyed, how many people need to be surveyed and how are the people chosen for the sample. (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, pp. 140)

The interest of this study is to find out more information about Chinese scuba divers consumer behaviour, which means the sampling plan consists of Chinese citizens who have performed a scuba certification. Secondly, the decision about sample size was determined together with Suunto. The data collection was planned being carried out primarily as in person interviews and secondarily by sharing the questionnaire link on social media.

The expectations of the number of responses were not very high because of the profile and location for the data collection and target of approximately 30-50 responses were set. Eventually most of the replies originated from the online link shared in Chinese social media channel Weibo owned by Raya Diver’s Chinese Divemaster Crystal Qin and target was fulfilled with 42 qualified replies. Finally, the last decision, how were the people chosen for sample, was executed as nonprobability sampling hence using probability sampling where each population member having a chance of being included was not possible to carry out. As a downside of nonprobability sampling, the error cannot be calculated. All the Chinese customers visiting Raya Divers office that held a scuba certificate were qualified for the research. Most of the customer did not yet hold a certificate and wanted only to try scuba diving; therefore, the focus of the research method changed from in person interviews to online surveys in order to reach more

replies. Crystal had a network consisting of approximately 500 Chinese divers in her social media channel. By sharing a link in her site the goal was fulfilled successfully. (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, pp. 140-141)

#### 4.3 Creating the questionnaire

The questionnaire form should be as simple as possible to fill out, consistent and have a clear appearance. Any error in these requirements may occur as a low response rate. The extensive length of the form or number of pages will not necessary increase the amount of inadequate responses but might affect negatively to the total number of responses. Other factors affecting the response rate include:

- What type of questions are and how they are phrased
- The number of questions
- How the respondents are motivated in the cover letter
- Is there a reward or a possibility to win a reward for the respondent

(Lotti 1994, pp. 45-50.)

The target of data collection was successfully achieved since the goal amount of responses was reached. Questionnaire consists of six questions written in Chinese, including five close-ended scale questions and one open-ended question. Open-ended questions provide an opportunity to answer freely to the question, and close-ended scale questions require ranking the specific question topic. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012 pp. 142.) Crystal included a message translated in Chinese explaining my purposes for the study and how it was possible to win a new Suunto Dive computer by answering the survey. Suunto sponsored the price, which was a D4i Novo dive computer.

Online questionnaire questions are in exact same order for everyone, and the character of the interviewer will not affect on the respondents. This is an affordable and fast way of collecting data, but as a disadvantage there cannot be a certainty of knowing who really has filled the form. (Lotti 1994, pp. 48.) Questionnaire is created on a way that it can provide data for both Suunto and for the research. The purpose is to provide useful information about consumer behaviour and to discover gender differences among respondents. Questionnaire aims to find out values and opinions towards purchasing gear and technology and how many of the respondents already own a dive computer.

#### 4.4 Reliability and validity

Reliability means the stability of the results, favouring as fewer coincidences as possible. This can be observed through a question “Will a repetitive inquiry provide the same results as the previous one?” Factors affecting on the success of the research are such as the size of the sample, falling off and knowledge of the sample. Debilitating factors include undersized sample, indistinct design and wrongly timed implementation. (Lotti 1994, pp. 33, 117.)

The sample size for the research was hard to estimate beforehand. Preliminary information before arriving to Racha Island stated that the island had hundreds of Chinese daily visitors. Most of them came to the island only to snorkel or to enjoy the island environment away from a busy Phuket city nearby. After arriving to the island, I discovered Raya Divers had 0-15 weekly Chinese visitors and majority of them did not hold a dive certificate, they arrived to the island for the discover scuba diving experience. Hence the incorrect assumptions data collection process was changed more towards to online survey shared in Weibo. Fortunately, the target of 30-50 responses was achieved after all with 42 qualified replies. A larger sample would have provided more reliable results.

In person interviews were carried out with the help of Crystal as a translator since only few of the customers spoke enough English. Interviewee’s and translator’s personalities might have had some effect to the responses while in person interviewing, even though trying to keep the situation as neutral as possible. The online questionnaire had less influence to the responses, besides the fact that it was shared on a social media channel. In case of repeating the research, there would not be significant differences in the results.

The qualification of the results, validity, examines if the research was done as originally planned and was there any failure in measuring the research. The survey questions were created and chosen as a collaboration with Suunto. Questions needed to be very specific and carefully designed in order to provide the desired data. Consumer behaviour as a topic is very broad; hence questions were limited to very specific areas to find out desired results. Attention is focused to finding out gear related preferences, importance of the dive gear, and attitudes towards technology and ownership of a dive

computer. Secondly, the study examines the results, especially from gender perspective: are there differences between replies of male and female, if yes how do they differ from each other?

Choosing a quantitative method for the research was effective and successful. Questions were clear and simple and there was a low possibility for error interpreting the results. Open-ended qualitative method would not have provided as accurate and objective results. However, a larger sample size would have provided more reliable results, and the findings might slightly differ in case a broader repetitive study will be carried out in the future.

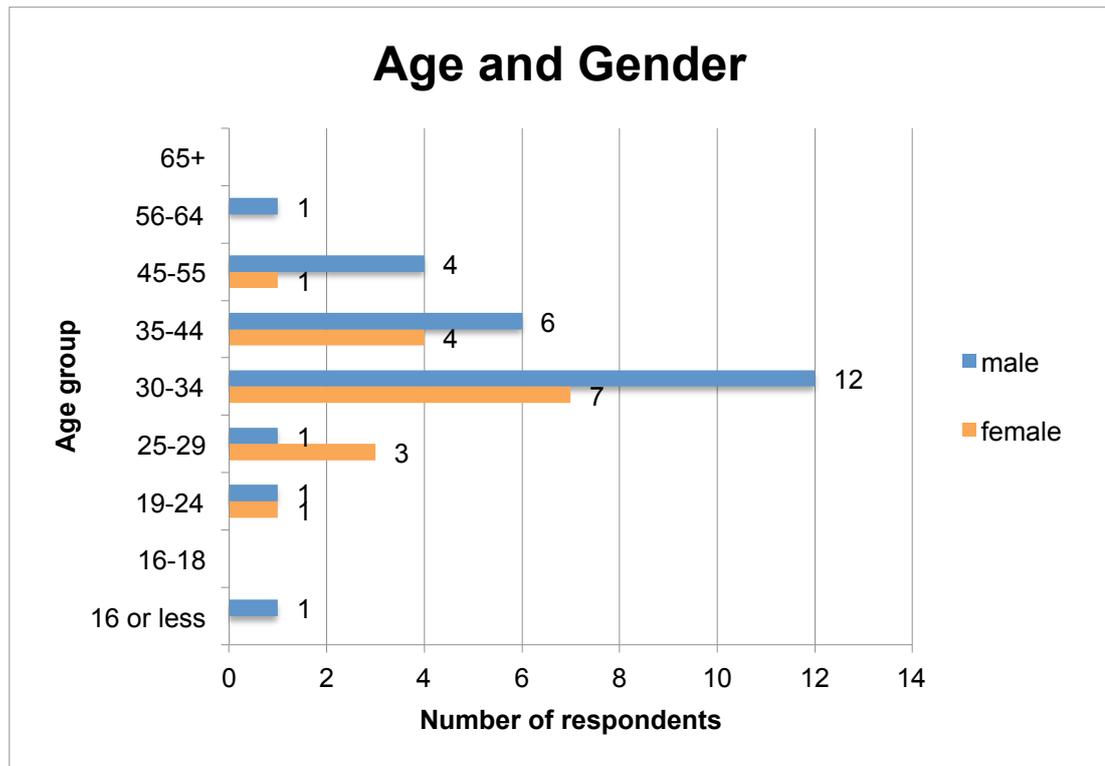
## 5 Research findings

Chapter 5 in this report focuses on analysing responses of the questionnaire, especially from the gender perspective. Chapter 5.7 presents findings profiled by gender. The data was collected in two ways: part of the questions were collected when interacting in person with the customers visiting the dive shop (10 replies) and majority of the data came as online replies (35 replies). The online link was shared in the Chinese social media Weibo of Raya Diver's Chinese divemaster Crystal. She had approximately 500 people in her network consisting of friends, old customers and acquaintances. Questionnaire achieved 45 replies from which 42 were qualified to the study. The target was to achieve minimum 30 replies. Data was analysed with Microsoft Excel for Mac 2011 using bar- and pie charts. The results are divided into two areas:

- Demographic questions explaining age and gender distribution
- Psychological & Social data question: ownership of a dive computer, whether the status/brand of the gear or the trustworthiness will matter more, the importance of the bought gear for diving, attitudes towards technology

### 5.1 Age and Gender

Finding out answers to demographic questions about respondents age and gender provide fundamental consumer behaviour data. Table three demonstrates how age is divided into smaller groups between 16 and 65+; additionally, each group presents the gender distribution.



**Table 1: Age and Gender distribution**

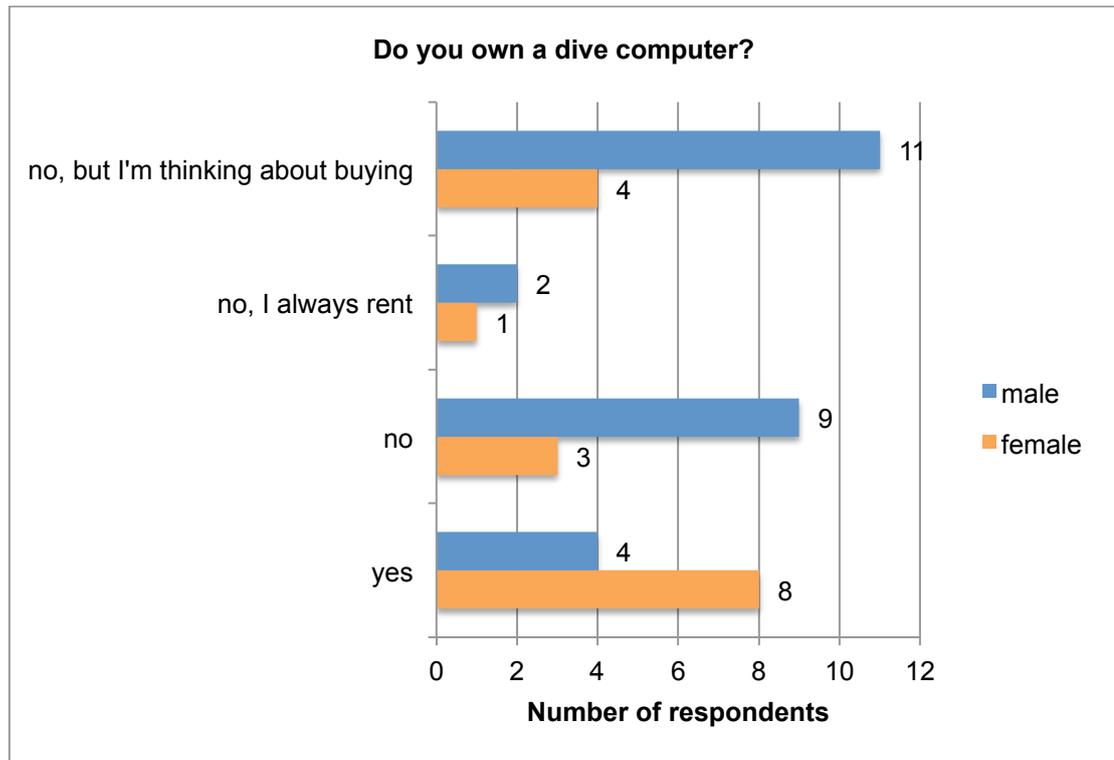
Table one presents the distribution of gender in each age group. Slightly more than half of the responses 62% (26 responses) are from men, and 38% (16 responses) are from women. Most of the responses came from the ages between 30-34: 45.2% (19) and 35-44: 23.8% (10). Second most of the responses arrived from groups 45-55: 11.9% (5) and 25-29: 9.5% (4). The least of the responses arrived from the groups as follows 19-24: 4.8% (2), 16 or less: 2.4% (1), 56-64: 2.4% (1), 16-18: 0% and 65+: 0%.

#### Gender perspective

Age groups 30-34 and 35-44 together cover most of the responses 69.0% (29). The largest group 30-34 contains 43.8% (7) of all the female responses. As a comparison, male results carry out a very similar, result covering 46.2% (12) of all the male responses. A small change was detected in the second largest group 35-44 where female respondents 25.0% (4) slightly exceeded the portion of male 23.1% (6). Other smaller categories will not be further analysed because of the small sizes.

## 5.2 Do you own a dive computer?

Table two presents the results for question “Do you own a dive computer?” A follow-up question is provided for the respondents answering, “yes” to this question “Which brand is your dive computer?” Information will help placing respondents into the right phases of the buyer purchasing process. There are four alternatives answering the follow-up question.



**Table 2: Ownership of a dive computer**

The answer “yes” accumulated 28.6% (12) of the responses, second answer “no” accumulated the same result 28.6% (12), third group “No, I always rent” consist of 7.1% of the respondents and the final answer “No, but I’m thinking about buying” is the largest group accumulating 35.7% (15) of the responses.

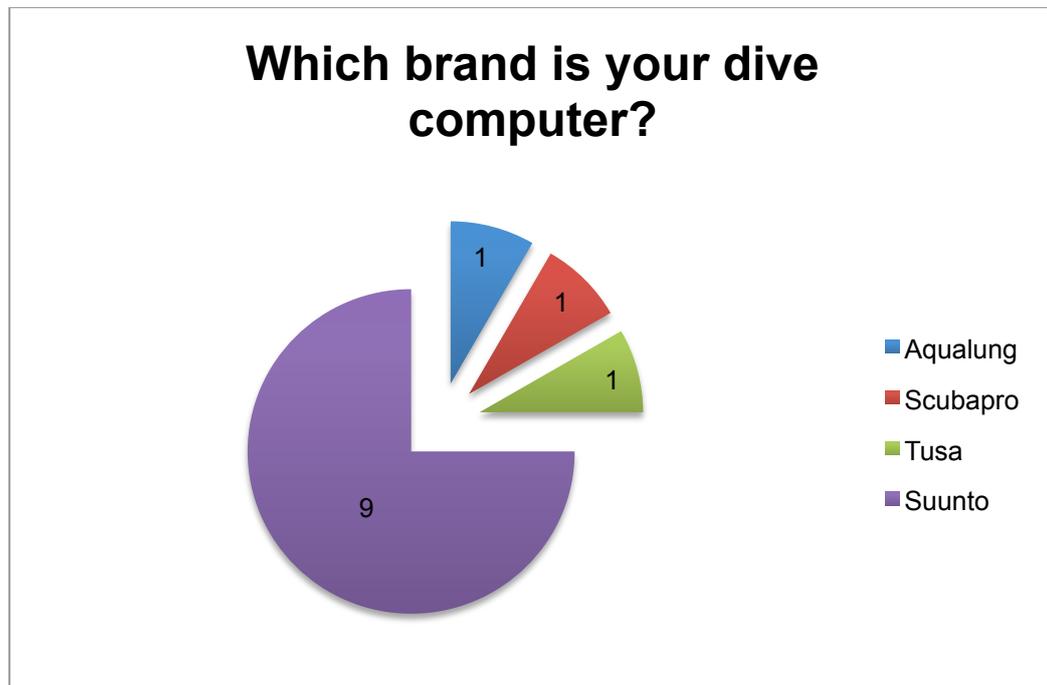
### Gender perspective and analysis

Category “yes” includes 50.0% (8) of all the female responses and only 15.3%(4) of men. Half of the female participants have purchased a computer, which is an interesting fact for the study. They are either current customers or not. Persuasion towards

Suunto might be difficult if a strong brand loyalty exists towards a competitor or very easy if they see Suunto as more attractive option. Category “no” has only 18.8% (3) of the female replies and 34.6% (9) of male. Consumers in this group might borrow a computer from a friend or rent one. They are potential new customers and likely receptive for the idea of buying a new computer. The most challenging group would be the respondents replying, “No, I always rent”, they are used to renting a computer and therefore, harder to persuade and not as potential groups as the others. This group is also the smallest consisting of only 6.3% (1) female and 8.0% (2) male respondents. The final answer “No, but I’m thinking about buying” is the largest group consisting of 25.0% (4) of the females and a large amount 42.3% (11) of males. This group possesses the most potential, and they will most likely purchase new products because the idea already exists on their mind.

A follow-up question: Which brand is your dive computer?

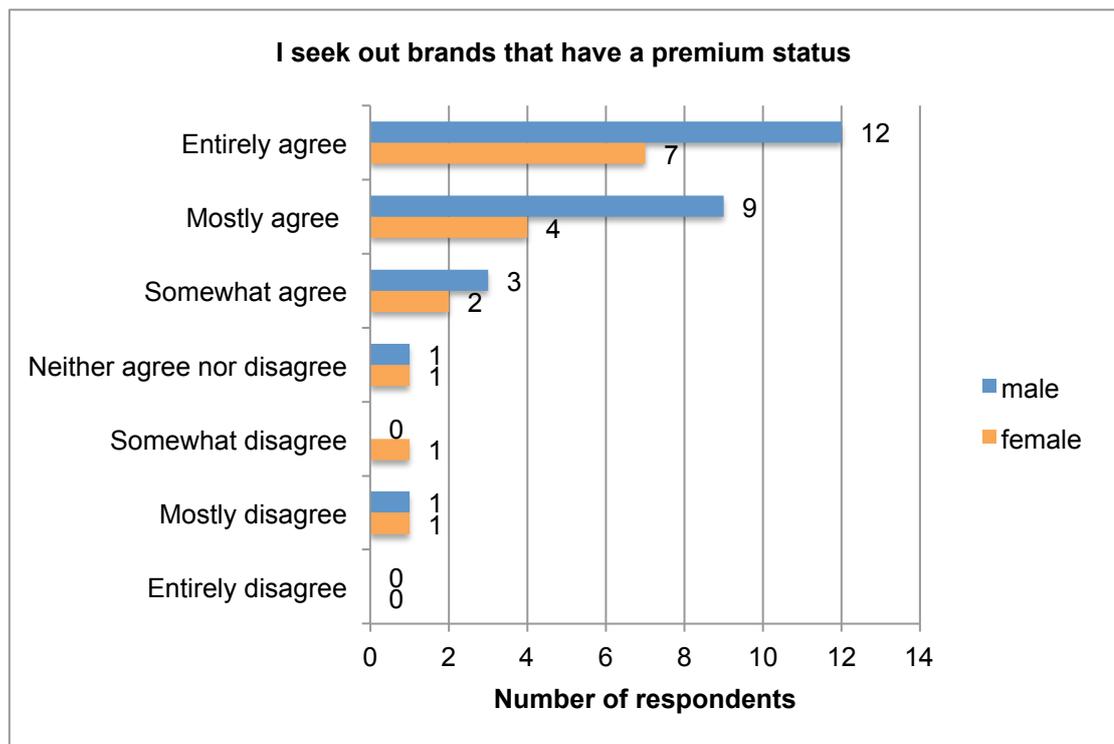
Table three presents the variation of dive computer brands that respondents currently own. Majority 75% (9) already own a Suunto dive computer. Competitors Aqualung, Scubapro and Tusa each had only one response. The result is positive for Suunto and does not express a strong presence of another competitor in this sample. However, the number of responses (12) is not large enough for making a fundamental conclusion.



**Table 3: Brand of the dive computer**

### 5.3 Statement: I seek out brands that have a premium status

Table four discovers how important is the premium status for a scuba diving brand. Groups “Entirely agree” 45.2% (19) and “Mostly agree” 31.0% (13) strongly indicate how majority acknowledge the importance of brand premium status. Third largest group, “Somewhat agree”, consisted of 11.9% (5) of the responses. Rest of the groups had low results of 0-2 replies: “Neither agree nor disagree” 4.8% (2), “Somewhat disagree” 2.4% (1), “Mostly disagree” 4.8% (2) and “Entirely disagree” 0%.



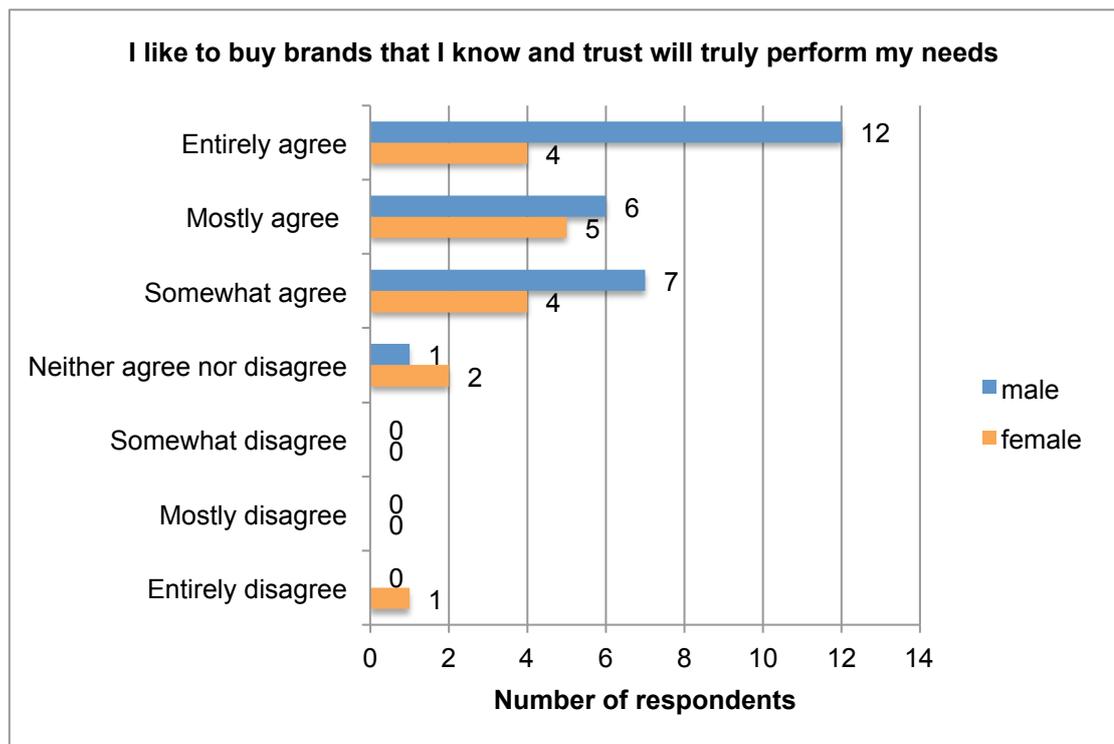
**Table 4: Seeking out brands with a premium status**

#### Gender perspective and analysis

Two of the largest groups “Entirely agree” and “Mostly agree” cover 76.2% (32) of the responses proving the importance of the premium status. Strong majority of the male respondents 87.5% (21) either entirely or mostly agree on seeking brands having a premium status whereas 68.8% (11) of female thought the same. Male seem to have somewhat stronger need for high brand status gear.

#### 5.4 Statement: I like to buy brands that I know and trust will truly perform my needs

Table 5 measures the importance of knowing and trusting the brand when purchasing scuba gear. The largest group “Entirely agree” forms 38.1% (16) of the respondents, second largest group “Mostly agree” forms 26.2% (11) and third largest group, “Somewhat agree”, consist of 26.2% (11) of the responses. Rest of the groups accumulated low response rates of 0-3 replies: “Neither agree nor disagree” 7.1% (3), “Somewhat disagree” 0%, “Mostly disagree” 0% and “Entirely disagree” 2.4% (1).



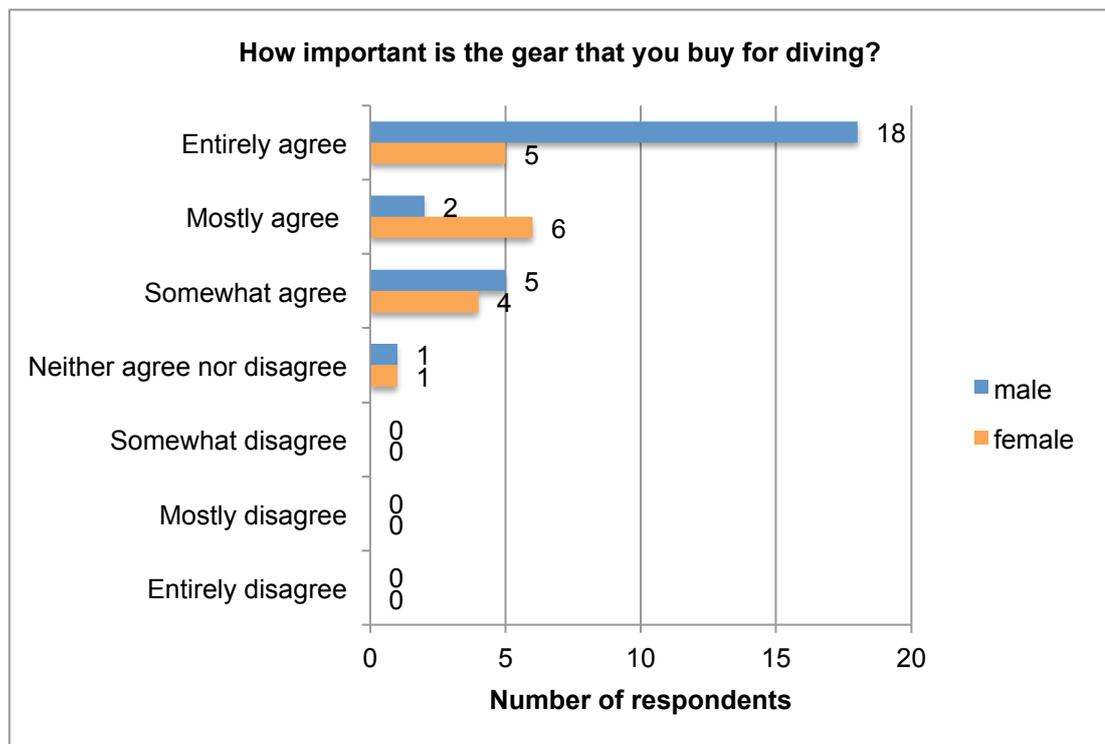
**Table 5: Buying trustworthy and reliable brands**

#### Gender perspective and analysis

Most of the responses agreed on the importance of on buying brands that they know and trust. Three of these groups “Entirely agree, Mostly agree and Somewhat agree” consist of 90.1% (38) of responses. There is a small difference between the responses between female 81.3% (13) and male 96.2% (25). Both genders acknowledge the importance of the trust and reliability of gear. However, male responses have 14.9% higher reading compared to female. Trusted and well performing brands seem to play slightly stronger motive for male respondents according to the data.

### 5.5 The importance of the gear bought for diving

Table 6 studies the importance of the gear bought for diving. Loaning or renting gear is an option for purchasing own equipment. The largest group “Entirely agree” form 54.8% (23) of the respondents, second group “Mostly agree” form 19.0% (8) and third group, “Somewhat agree”, consist of 21.4% (9) of the responses. Rest of the groups only includes one response: “Neither agree nor disagree” 2.4% (1), “Somewhat disagree” 0%, “Mostly disagree” 0% and “Entirely disagree” 0%.



**Table 6: importance of the gear bought for diving**

#### Gender perspective and analysis

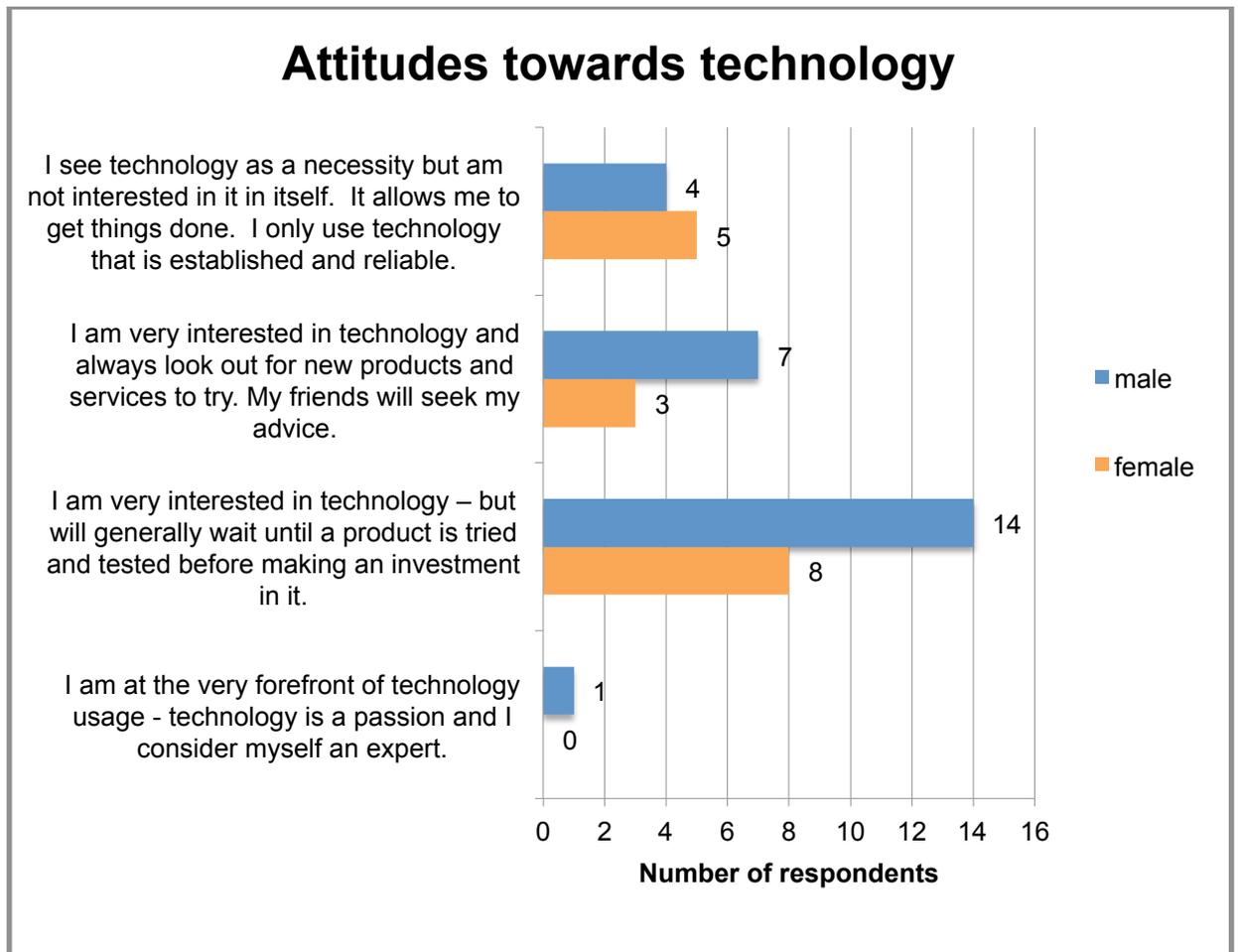
Almost all the respondents replied they agree on some level about the importance of the gear “Entirely agree - somewhat agree” 95.2% (40) as only two respondents could not neither agree nor disagree 4.8%. The largest group “Entirely agree” consist of 69.2% (18) male and 31.3% (5) female, “Mostly agree” consist of 37.5% (6) female and 7.7% (2) male, and the last group “Somewhat agree” having 25% (4) of the female and 19.2% (5) male responses.

Male respondents have strong needs and attitudes about purchasing reliable and functioning gear whereas females do consider them important, but not as strongly as male in this sample. However, all the respondents agree more or less of the gear importance.

## 5.6 Attitudes towards technology

Table 7 measures the respondent's attitudes towards technology. Replies are divided into four different alternatives. The largest category "I am very interested in technology – but will generally wait until a product is tried and tested before making an investment in it." generated most of the replies 52.4% (22). Second-largest category "I am very interested in technology and always look out for new products and services to try. My friends will seek my advice." collected 23.8% (10) of the responses.

The third largest category "I see technology as a necessity but am not interested in it in itself. It allows me to get things done. I only use technology that is established and reliable." accumulated 21.4% (9) of the responses and the smallest category "I am at the very forefront of technology usage – technology is a passion and I consider myself an expert." had only one response 2.4% (1).



**Table 7: Attitudes towards technology**

#### Gender perspective and analysis

The first category has quite even gender distribution; “I am very interested in technology – but will generally wait until a product is tried and tested before making an investment in it.” consist of 50% (8) the female responses and 53.8% (14) male responses. Second-largest category “I am very interested in technology and always look out for new products and services to try. My friends will seek my advice.” collected 18.9% (3) of female and 26.9% (7) male responses.

The third category presents: “I see technology as a necessity but am not interested in it in itself. It allows me to get things done. I only use technology that is established and reliable.” consist of 31.3% (5) female and 15.4% (4) male responses. The smallest category “I am at the very forefront of technology usage – technology is a passion and I

consider myself an expert.” had only one male response 2.4% (1). The results point out that female respondents are not valuing technology as highly as male.

## 6 Profiling based on gender

Deeper research of consumer behaviour enables the creation of segments; a group of consumers can be called a segment when there is at least one mutual character related to purchasing. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, pp. 150.) In this case, study chose individuals who are Chinese and they hold a scuba diving certificate. The idea is to find out differences and similarities between male and female buyer behaviour, which can be done by profiling the chosen segment into two sub groups as "Male" and "Female". Themes revolve around technical and gear oriented topics. It is interesting to explore both female and male attitudes towards these topics and compare the differences between genders.

### 6.1 Female scuba diver's consumer profile

Female respondents form 38% (16) of the sample size of 42 responses. Most of the replies are from people between ages 30 and 34 years old, as 43.8% (7) of them belong to this group. The most remarkable data finding concerning females is found from the question, whether respondent owns a dive computer: half of the replies, 50% (8), replied owning a computer and 25%(4) are currently thinking about buying one, 18.8% (3) do not yet own a computer and only 6.3% (1) do not own one and agree on always renting a computer.

The next question deals with the attitudes towards brand and status when purchasing scuba diving gear. Majority, 68.8% (11), either entirely or mostly agree on seeking brands having a premium status. Brand and status seem to play a somewhat important role among this segment. A question about importance of buying brands that are known and trusted has a stronger result: 81.3% (13) of the respondents either entirely agree, mostly agree and somewhat agree on that brand awareness and reliability are important.

Another gear-related question sorts out the importance of the gear for diving. A strong majority of the female respondents 93.8% (15) agree on some level that importance of

gear is relevant, as the results consist of 31.3% (5) “Entirely agree”, 37.5% (6), “Mostly agree” and “Somewhat agree” 25% (4). The result is expected since gear plays a significant role regarding safety and comfort in diving.

Female respondents attitudes towards technology are being research by asking how interested they are about the topic. Half of the replies, 50% (8), stated being “very interested in technology – but wanting to wait until a product is tried and tested before making an investment in”. Only 18.9% (3) replied more technology-oriented answer of being “very interested in technology and always looking out for new products and services to try. Friends will seek for their advice.” Second most replies 31.3% (5) accumulated from the least technology-oriented answer “technology is seen as a necessity but there is no interested in it in itself. It allows getting things done favouring only technology that is established and reliable.”

## 6.2 Male scuba diver’s consumer profile

Survey data include 62% (26) of male responses. Most of the replies come from people between ages 30 and 34 years old, as 46.2% (12) response belonging into this group. Most of the participants, 42.3% (11), are thinking about buying a dive computer and quite many, 34.6% (9) do not yet own their own computer. Only 15.3% (4) of male respondents already own a computer and 8.0% (2) do not own one, and they always rent. There are a lot of potential buyers in this segment since majority does not own a computer, and many of them are thinking about purchasing one.

Clear majority consisting of 87.5% (21) either entirely or mostly agree on seeking brands having a premium status. Brand and status are important matters for the segment when purchasing new products. Male seem to have stronger need for high brand status gear compared to female. The question handling trust performance discloses very strong results. 96.2% (25) of the respondents either entirely agree, mostly agree and somewhat agree that brand awareness and reliability are important.

Another gear-related question figures out the importance of the gear for diving for respondents. Results indicate that respondents value highly gear importance. Everyone except one respondent agreed with the importance in some level as 69.2% (18) responded “Entirely agree”, 19.2% (5), “Mostly agree” and only 7.7% (2) “Somewhat agree”.

The last question examines attitudes towards technology. Slightly more than half of the respondents, 53.8% (14), replied the alternative of “very interested in technology – but wanting to wait until a product is tried and tested before making an investment in”. Secondly largest group of 26.9% (7) replied being “very interested in technology and always looking out for new products and services to try. Friends will seek for their advice.” The least technology-oriented group consists of 15.4% (4) of male respondents “I see technology as a necessity but am not interested in it in itself. It allows me to get things done. I only use technology that is established and reliable.” And finally only one (2.4%) replied recognizing himself as a pioneer in technology by choosing the alternative “I am at the very forefront of technology usage – technology is a passion and I consider myself an expert.”

## 7 Research Conclusion and future suggestions

A personal interest towards scuba diving and co-operation together with Suunto and Raya Divers enabled creating this research project. Data findings provide useful information about Chinese scuba divers consumer behaviour and characteristics, which supports the sales of Suunto dive computers, specifically in Chinese market and help to predict future buyer behaviour. When profiling the segment by gender it has been possible to identify differences between female and male scuba divers.

Studying the consumer is the basis for marketing and sales. Being able to analyse consumer behaviour and purchasing process provide opportunities to increase market shares and better results in general. By exploring demographic, psychological and social factors it is possible to get to know the consumer and to predict their behaviour.

The original intention for data collection was to collect data by in person interviews at Racha Yai Island while working at Raya Divers. Target group consist of only certified Chinese scuba divers, which is the backbone for the whole research. Even though Racha Island has a lot of Chinese daily visitors, only a small percentage of those were certified scuba divers, and few of them visited the dive shop. The number of expected visitors was much lower than the actual number. For this reason, the plan needed to be changed, and most of the data was successfully collected as an online questionnaire.

Target group, both males and females, value brands with a premium status. Males seem to have slightly more interest towards purchasing products with a higher status than females. Importance of brand to perform their needs and gear for diving are also highly valued, by both genders. However, responses from males indicate they somewhat agree more on this topic than females. Results to the question regarding general attitudes towards technology describe how both genders express somewhat interest to the topic. However, males seem to consider their selves more technology oriented compared to the results by females.

From 42 responses, 16 belong to females and 26 to male scuba divers. The number of female responses is not very large, but the study is still able to provide informative data between genders. Most of the respondents 69% (29) are between 30-44 years old. Half of the female respondents (8) own a dive computer, whereas only 15.3% (4) male respondents replied the same answer. Deeper motives for owning a dive computer in-

stead of renting one would make an interesting follow-up study for this research. Different factors, such as safety, convenience, functions, design, price and brand image most likely affect to the decision process. A positive finding for Suunto is that 75% (9) already own a Suunto dive computer. However, a stronger conclusion would be possible with a bigger sample.

The research has successfully fulfilled its purpose. Questionnaire provided satisfactory level information about consumer characteristics of Chinese scuba divers and an analysis of both genders. Nonetheless, by achieving a larger number of responses the findings would have a stronger validity. With a longer time period and different location with more Chinese scuba divers there could have been more replies. More specific studies could be performed as a future recommendation for this research. Deeper understanding of reasons behind renting instead of buying a dive computer and specifying which features and what kind of appearance will attract the consumers most would provide useful information.

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## Interviews

Anna De Torres, Global Brand Manager, Suunto

Jukka Saarikorpi, Product Manager, Suunto

Cristal Qin, Divemaster, Raya Divers, Racha Yai

Jiri Wikström, CEO, Raya Divers

## 9 Appendix 1; Research questionnaire, Suunto

What is your gender?

- Male  
 Female

How old are you?

- Less than 16  
 16 - 18  
 19 - 24  
 25 - 29  
 30 - 34  
 35 - 44  
 45 - 55  
 56 - 64  
 65 +

Thinking about how you purchase gear for diving, please indicate how closely you agree with each statement.  
 Please use scale from 1 to 7 (1= I don't agree at all, 7 = I agree totally)

- |  | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I seek out brands that have a premium status                           | <input type="radio"/> |
| I like to buy brands that I know and trust will truly perform my needs | <input type="radio"/> |

How important is the gear that you buy for diving?

Please use scoring from 1 to 7 (1 = not at all important, 7 = extremely important)

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do you own a dive computer?

- Yes, please specify which brand: \_\_\_\_\_  
 No, I don't own a dive computer, I always rent.  
 No, I don't own a dive computer.  
 No, but I am thinking of buying one later.

Which of the following statements best reflects your own personal attitudes to technology?

- I am at the very forefront of technology usage - technology is a passion and I consider myself an expert.
- I am very interested in technology and always look out for new products and services to try. My friends will seek my advice.
- X I am very interested in technology – but will generally wait until a product is tried and tested before making an investment in it.
- I see technology as a necessity but am not interested in it in itself. It allows me to get things done. I only use technology that is established and reliable.
- I am not at all interested in technology. I'd rather do things in a more traditional way, but that is not always possible.

One of the respondents will win a D4i Novo dive computer, what color would you prefer?

- White
- Black
- Blue
- Green
- Pink



Email address

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Thank you for you time!