STOCKHOLM SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS
BSc Thesis in Marketing
Spring 2018

Do Pictures of Hotel Service Employees Sell?

A Quantitative Study of The Presence of Service Employees in Hotels' Pictures

ABSTRACT
The hotel industry is facing a digital disruption with a change in consumer booking pattern and increased competition from companies such as Airbnb. More consumers use digital channels such as online travel agencies and travel aggregators, and can easily compare multiple hotels prior to booking. Consequently, it is crucial for hotels to adapt their digital marketing strategy and market themselves online to stay competitive. Additionally, the changed booking pattern decreases the interaction between the consumer and the hotels. Therefore, one can question what importance the service employees have to consumers. To help hotels market themselves online this thesis aims to examine whether the presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will affect intentions as well as the effect on emotions and attitudes. To test the research questions the authors performed a quantitative study asking questions about the respondents' intentions, emotions and attitudes. The results showed no significant differences between the groups regarding intentions, emotions or attitudes, and the authors could not draw any statistical inferences from the results. However, conducting a Bayes factor test showed moderate support for the null hypothesis, i.e. that there is no difference in intentions, emotions and attitudes. Finally, the authors discuss alternative explanations to the results, for example digitalization and Millennial's changed choice criteria when traveling.

AUTHORS
Klara Lönnemark (23545) and Louise Renman (23552)

KEYWORDS
Decision-making process, service employee, hotel industry, leisure traveling, service, human interaction, picture-based marketing, online marketing, digitalization

TUTOR
Magnus Söderlund

EXAMINER
Anna Nyberg

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, we would like to thank our tutor Magnus Söderlund, Professor at the Department of Marketing and Strategy at Stockholm School of Economics. Thank you for guiding us through the thesis process, for all your valuable insights and feedback. Thank you for your patience all the times we have showed up at your office unannounced, and for replying to our emails, not only during office hours, but also during late evenings and weekends.

We would also like to thank Per-Olov Edlund, Associate Professor, and Håkan Lyckeborg, Lecturer, at the Center of Economic Statistics at Stockholm School of Economics. Thank you both for helping us remember what we learned about statistics during our first year at SSE and for reminding us that statistics can be fun.

Thank you, Freys Hotel in Stockholm, and especially Nathalie, for letting us use your reception and employees in our study.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to thank our family and friends. Thank you for constructive criticism, infinite support and patience, and for always believing in us.

Klara and Louise
Stockholm, May 2018

TABLE OF CONTENT

1. INTRODUCTION 5

1.1 BACKGROUND 6
1.2 PROBLEM AREA 6
1.3 PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS 7
1.4 DELIMITATION 8

2. THEORY 9

2.1 INTENTIONS 9
2.1.1 Hotel Decision- Making Process 9
2.1.2 The SOR-Model 10
2.2 EMOTIONS AND SATISFACTION 11
2.2.1 The Social Presence Theory 11
2.2.2 Humans in Advertising Linked to Positive Emotions 12
2.3 SERVICE QUALITY 13
2.4 PERCEIVED MARKETING EFFORT 14
2.5 TRUST 14
2.5.1 Identity and trust 15
2.6 HYPOTHESIS 17

3. METHOD 19

3.1 CHOICE OF SCIENTIFIC APPROACH AND METHOD 19
3.2 PRE-STUDY 19
3.3 MAIN STUDY 20
3.3.1 Stimuli development main study 20
3.3.2 Survey design 22
3.3.3 Implementation 23
3.3.4 Sample 23
3.3.5 Analysis tools 24
3.4 VARIABLES: 24
3.5 DATA QUALITY 26
3.5.1 Reliability 26
3.5.2 Validity 26

4. RESULT AND ANALYSIS 28

4.1 DESCRIPTIVES OF THE RESPONDENTS 28
4.2 INTENTIONS 28
4.3 EMOTIONS AND SATISFACTION 29
4.4 SERVICE QUALITY 31
4.5 PERCEIVED MARKETING EFFORT 32
4.6 TRUST 33
4.7 DISCUSSION OF NON-SIGNIFICANT RESULTS 34
4.7.1 Bayes Factor 34
4.7.2 Insensitive data 35

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION 37

5.1 DISCUSSION 37
5.2 CONCLUSION 39
5.3 CRITIQUE AND LIMITATIONS 40
5.4 FUTURE RESEARCH 41

6. REFERENCES 42

7. APPENDICES 47

DEFINITIONS

Stimulus: The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines stimulus as "something that rouses or incites to activity" (2018). Stimulus, as used in the thesis, refers to a picture of a hotel reception.

Service employee: Is in this thesis used to describe a person employed to perform some type of service, and is mostly used to describe a person employed at a hotel.

Positive emotions: Can be described as a reaction in the receiver's mind that is pleasant or desirable (Cohn, Fredrickson 2009).

Service quality: Is used to describe how well a service provider is delivering what they have offered compared to the consumer's expectations.

Marketing effort: Is used to describe to what extent the receiver of marketing content perceives that the producer has put effort into the marketing in terms of for example creativity and money.

Trust: as defined by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman is "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the action of another party..." (1995, p. 712). Trust in the context of a hotel service is used to describe how safe the consumer feels when staying at the hotel and how reliable the consumer perceives the hotel to be in terms of delivering what they have promised.

Satisfaction: Can describe the feeling that a consumer has after receiving a service. It is in this thesis used to describe how well a consumer thinks the hotel has delivered the service they expected to receive.

Intentions: Is in this thesis used to describe human actions.

Presence: Is in this thesis used to describe the proximity of a human.

Leisure travel: Describes any traveling with the intention to go on a holiday, and excludes traveling with business purposes.

Identifiable: When a person can be named or recognized (Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, 2017).

1. INTRODUCTION

Mr. Parker has operated a successful hotel, targeting leisure consumers, for many years. However, the last year he has experienced a decline in bookings and he has noticed an increased competition from other actors such as Airbnb. He has also heard that competitors have started with self-check-in and unmanned receptions. There have even been discussions about hotels enabling the consumer to open the room with their mobile device, without needing a room key. Mr. Parker can see that the hotel industry is changing but he is sceptic towards the decline in personal interaction with the consumers.

Mr. Parker believes that service is one of the most crucial factors when choosing a hotel and as his hotel has excellent service he wants this to be conveyed to potential guests. He starts to think about how to design the marketing in the best possible way. One specific thing he has thought about is which photos to include in the online photo album as well as what the photos should picture. One idea he has is to include an employee in the pictures of the hotel on the website, and in this way convey their good service to the consumers.

With the digitalization and the increased competition from new innovative accommodation providers, Mr. Parker is not alone wondering how to market a hotel in the most effective way. How should hotels develop their marketing to attract potential guests that have more and more options to choose from? Does including a service employee in a hotel's pictures help conveying the service offered by the hotel? These are just a few of the questions that hotels are facing when planning their marketing. As it has already been shown by other researchers that the presence of an employee in a physical setting has a positive effect on consumers, it is of great interest to further investigate this in an online setting as a response to the digitalization.

The two authors of this thesis realize that the changing hotel industry has led to multiple decisions for hotels about how to create a competitive marketing strategy, and that hotels' pictures are a part of this that are easily changeable. Besides from having a passion for traveling, they know quite little about the hotel industry, so they start to do research about the subject...

1.1 Background

Booking a hotel is something that historically has been done mainly through travel agencies or through a phone call. With the introduction of the Internet, this is a purchase process that has changed over the past years. In 2017, 57 percent of all travel bookings were made online (Statisticbrain 2017). From 2014 to 2017, digital travel sales grew from 471 billion USD to 630 billion USD, which is an increase of almost 43 percent. This increase in online sales is expected to last, and expected sales in 2020 is 818 billion USD (eMarketer 2016b). Today, consumers can book a hotel online through many different channels. There are for example websites run by the hotels, who manage and distribute the hotel reservations themselves, and there are travel aggregators and online travel agencies (booking.com, hotels.com, Expedia etc.) that give consumers the opportunity to compare different hotels and prices (LittleHotelier 2016).

The many channels, choices and possibilities for consumers to easily compare and evaluate hotels creates intense competition. This along with the birth of new innovative accommodation providers have increased the competition for hotels even more. Airbnb and similar services can offer cheaper accommodation and a more local experience as the consumer often gets to interact with the host (McCarthy 2018). The intense competition makes it extremely important for hotels to market themselves and create awareness in the consumers' minds, especially online.

1.2 Problem Area

The hotel industry is a part of the hospitality industry where service is the core of the operations. Traditionally, service is characterized by humans serving other humans in different ways, and the personal interaction is in focus. However, the meaning of service is in some ways changing.

The hotel industry is, as many other industries, affected by the digitalization and more and more hotels adapt their digital strategy to this. With the digital transformation, the personal interaction between buyer and seller becomes more rare and distant. One can therefore question if the consumers will demand the personal interaction with employees or if the hotel industry is facing a future business with mainly digital interaction and no human interaction. Nowadays,

the consumers can interact with their mobile devices to get access to customized service offerings without having to interact with the hotel employee (Langord 2018). One example of a hotel chain that has adapted to the technological development is Hilton. With Hilton's app the consumer can choose their room before arrival, check-in, open the room door, order room-service and access to other hotel amenities without having to interact with the hotel employees (Hilton 2014).

Another trend, that affects how hotels market themselves, is the more picture-based communication which takes up more space at the expense of text. Research show that pictures attract more attention than text-based advertisement and that pictures generally are more effective than text (Pieters, Wedel 2004). One practical issue for decision makers is therefore what to include in hotels' pictures, such as humans or not, in order to optimize the effect. The digital transformation, the re-definition of service and the importance of picture-based communication all culminate into the important questions for decision makers: What should we include in our pictures of the hotel? What are the implications of having our service employees in the pictures? Do consumers still value the human service?

Finally, the thesis relates to a yet fairly unexplored research area. Research on the effectiveness of text relative to pictures in communication (Pieters, Wedel 2004) already exists, as well as the effect of displaying humans in pictures (Cyr et al. 2009). Additionally, there is research on the effect of the mere presence of employees in physical stores (Söderlund 1998). However, there is a lack of research on the effects of the presence of employees in an online setting and also the effects of having the service employee identifiable. This makes it interesting to investigate the potential effects of making the human in the picture identifiable.

1.3 Purpose and Research Questions

The formulations of research questions are mainly based on the changing hotel industry and the essential need for decision makers to decide on what to include in the hotels' pictures. This thesis will therefore focus on studying first, if the presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures affect consumer intentions, as well as a number of emotions and attitudes. The thesis will also study if the presence of an identifiable service employee will have any effect on intentions, as well as through which mediators that the intentions are affected.

The thesis aims to answer the main research question:

1. *Will the presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures improve consumers' intentions and will it have any effect on positive emotions, expected hotel satisfaction, perceived service quality, perceived marketing effort, and trust?*

The thesis will also examine the following secondary research question:

2. *Will the presence of an **identifiable** service employee in hotels' pictures improve consumers' intentions?*

If the above research questions are affirmative, an additional research question will be studied:

3. *Are positive emotions, expected hotel satisfaction, perceived service quality, perceived marketing effort, and trust **mediating** factors improving consumer intentions?*

The formulations of research questions form the basis of the framework for the research method and will be the core of this thesis.

1.4 Delimitation

Firstly, the thesis is limited to only analyze the setting of leisure trips and does not include business trips. The reasons for this is mainly because the decision-making process and the decisions criteria for choosing hotels differ. The two different travel segments have different demands and travel patterns. For example, location and price are generally the most important factors that business travelers value. Also, the personal interaction between consumers and employees seem to be of less importance to business travelers compared to leisure travelers (Yavas, Babakus 2005). So far, mainly leisure hotels are exposed to the increased competition from Airbnb and equivalent actors (Jet 2017). Additionally, business travelers are more likely to stay loyal to hotel chains, whereas leisure travelers often tend to change hotels. Indeed, 65 percent of business travelers are members of a hotel loyalty program (Hoang 2014). This indicates that pictures might be of less importance to business travelers as the majority already have a hotel chain top of mind.

Secondly, the thesis is limited to analyze pictures on hotels' websites and does not analyze in the context of other communication channels such as outside advertisement and catalogue photos. This is because of the increased trend in booking hotels online (Statisticbrain 2017).

Finally, the thesis does not take the gender of the service employee into account, nor the physical qualities and nationality of the service employee.

2. THEORY

This chapter will present relevant theories and research on the research questions, which will then result in the thesis' hypotheses.

2.1 Intentions

2.1.1 Decision- Making Process for Hotel Bookings

To get a better understanding of the minds of travelers, the theory chapter will start off by introducing the general decision-making process for hotel bookings.

The decision- making process of booking hotels has changed during past years. Traditionally, consumers mainly searched for information through physical travel agencies and by looking in brochures. Today, the consumer can easily search for information about different hotels online and compare different options before booking.

The Rossiter & Percy grid (Rossiter, Donovan & Percy 1989) is a framework for advertisers to understand how to categorize their product or service based on the two dimensions: type of decision; low- and high involvement, and type of motivation; informational and transformational. Based on this model, the authors have categorized booking a hotel as a **high involvement, transformational purchase decision**. Firstly, this is motivated by the fact that the consumers generally search for information and compare options prior to booking since it is a relatively expensive and risky purchase, making it a high-involvement purchase. Secondly, booking a leisure trip aims to create positive emotions and not solely fulfill a basic need, which indicate that it is a transformational purchase.

Attitudes resulting from a high-involvement, transformational purchase decision are mainly based on emotional processing, affective response and the attitude toward the add. To affect a high involvement, transformational purchase hotels can create advertisement that evoke affective response and involvement and the photo should have an emotional appeal (Rossiter, Donovan & Percy 1989). In other words, when choosing pictures for hotel advertisement, hotels should aim to elicit positive emotions. Furthermore, how well the person in the advertisement match the product or service, plays an important role (Rossiter, Donovan & Percy 1989). This reasoning indicates that humans in hotels' pictures should be authentic and relevant to the service offered.

As mentioned above, prior to booking hotels, the consumers compare and analyze different options based on the information gathered during search (Baron et al. 2013). The decision-making process for booking a hotel is complex due to the fact that hotel service is intangible (Levitt 1981). Important choice criteria when booking a hotel are security, personal interactions (Chow, Garretson & Kurtz 1995), and service (Yavas, Babakus 2005). One source that has importance to the consumer when deciding a hotel is word-of-mouth, especially from friends and family (Baruca, Civre 2012).

2.1.2 The SOR-Model

The above conclusion that booking a hotel is a high-involvement, transformational purchase decision makes it important to find a suitable model that describes the process for how hotels' marketing effort can affect consumers' intentions.

The SOR-model (Stimulus, Organism, Response) as shown in Figure 1, can be used as a framework to conceptualize the effect of stimuli. The SOR-model describes the process of how stimuli lead to a human behavior, i.e. a response in form of an action, reaction or similar, through an organismic component. The organism component can be for example an emotion (such as pleasure, arousal and dominance), a judgement, a perception or a motivation (Donovan et al. 1994). Since the authors of this thesis aims to see the effect in emotions, attitudes (organism) and intentions (response) from different stimulus in hotels' pictures this model is suitable to lay as a base for the thesis.

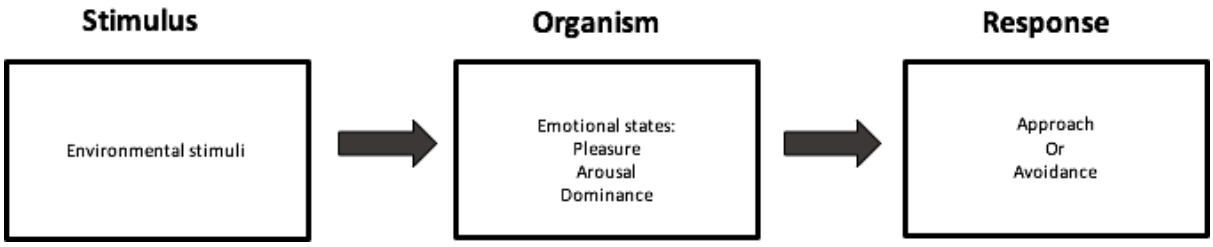


Figure 1. The SOR-Model

Based on the above research on the hotel decision-making process and the SOR-model, the authors found it likely that displaying a service employee in hotel's pictures would have a positive effect on intentions. This resulted in the following hypothesis:

H1. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on intentions

---

2.2 Emotions and Satisfaction

2.2.1 The Social Presence Theory

The human behavior is biologically hardwired, and the human is a social creature that is sensitive to the presence of other humans. Humans are shaped to have social relationships, connect with other humans and build social organizations (Nicholson 1998). Research show that the mere presence of another human evokes emotional reactions such as arousal and pleasure. Also, information communicated by a human medium has a higher level of positive emotion than if the medium is a nonhuman (Campbell 2007). In fact, humans are sensitive to human cues and they give more attention to other humans more than any other object (Lee 2004).

One theory that deals with the presence of human is the Social Presence Theory. The theory was originally founded by Short, Williams, and Christie, who defined it as "*the degree of salience of the other person in the interaction and the consequent salience of the interpersonal relationships...*" (1976, p. 65) in other words, how "real" the other person in the communication is perceived to be by the other party.

The degree of social presence depends a great deal on the characteristics of the medium of the communication, such as facial expressions and nonverbal cues. The highest level of social presence is face-to face communication and the lowest level of social presence is written communication (Short, Williams & Christie 1976). Later years, the interest for the social presence online has increased, as it has low social presence due to few social cues. The communicator can increase the social presence in an online context by including social cues such as pictures and videos and by communicating the parties' identities (Gunawardena 1995). Research show that the social presence in an online context has a positive effect on satisfaction (Gunawardena, Zittle 1997).

Other research spins off from findings from the social presence theory and investigate the effect of the mere presence of another human, and much relevant for this thesis; the presence of an employee. The mere presence of an employee has been researched in a physical setting but there is less research on the presence of an employee in an online setting. Research show that the mere presence of an employee in a physical retailer has a positive effect on consumer satisfaction. Humans are more positive to shopping environments where an employee is present (Söderlund 2016).

2.2.2 Humans in Advertising Linked to Positive Emotions

Images has been a natural part of marketing for a long time. In recent years, the importance of online marketing has increased significantly (eMarketer 2016a). There are many strategies and theories for how to create successful online marketing, for example to include images (Pieters, Wedel 2004). However, there is still a need for more research focusing on whether images online should feature humans or not. A study has examined how humans in pictures on websites can induce positive reactions (Cyr et al. 2009). The researchers showed that image appeal and perceived social presence were highest when images showed a human, and especially images including facial features. The study showed a correlation between image appeal, perceived social presence and trust. High image appeal was shown to have a positive effect on trust, and the same was shown for perceived social presence.

Based on the above research on social presence theory and the effects of humans in picture, the authors found it likely that displaying a service employee in hotels' pictures would have a positive effect on positive emotions and satisfaction. This resulted in the following hypotheses:

H2. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on positive emotions

H3. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on intentions mediating through positive emotions

H4. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on expected hotel satisfaction

H5. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on intentions mediating through expected hotel satisfaction

2.3 Service Quality

48 percent of travelers say that they are willing to pay more for a hotel if it has more or better service (Statista 2017b). This indicates that the service quality at hotels is an important choice criteria and that is has an impact on consumer intentions. Services are special in that way that the service employee generally must be present in order to provide the service to the consumer. This indicate that the presence of a service employee is most highly important and that the presence is a signal that the consumer will get the expected service (Söderlund 2015).

However, service is something intangible, which can create an uncertainty if you will actually get what you have booked (Pleger Bebko 2000). Therefore, it is important for hotels to make the intangible more tangible. One way to do this is by using pictures so that the consumer more easily can imagine what to expect during their stay (Arlt 2006). Findings from another study suggest that hotels should include tangible cues of the service in the pictures of the hotel (Arlt 2006).

Based on the above research on service quality, the authors found it likely that displaying a service employee in hotel's pictures would have a positive effect on perceived service quality as it creates tangible cues that mediates service. This resulted in the following hypothesis:

H6. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on perceived service quality

H7. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on intentions mediating through perceived service quality

2.4 Perceived Marketing Effort

Research show that the perceived marketing effort by the communicator has a positive impact on brand attitudes. Marketing effort can have a positive effect on perceived quality. Advertising that the consumer perceives to have high expense and high effort have more positive effects on the brand attitudes, the interest for the brand and the word-of-mouth. Creativity is an indicator of the effort behind the advertising. Furthermore, the perceived advertising creativity has a positive correlation with brand attitude and word-of-mouth (Modig, Dahlén & Colliander 2014). Regarding a later stage of the process, research shows that a positive brand attitude most likely leads to consumer behavior such as brand choice. Also, high levels of positive brand image increase marketing communication effectiveness (Keller 1993).

Based on the above research on marketing effort, the authors found it likely that displaying a service employee in hotel's pictures would have a positive effect on perceived marketing effort. This resulted in the following hypothesis:

H8. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on perceived marketing effort

H9. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on intentions mediating through perceived marketing effort

2.5 Trust

Without human interaction, building trust online can be challenging. This creates a barrier for online sales as trust is an important factor when building seller-buyer relationships. Trust is necessary for consumers when making purchase decisions, especially when buying online as the consumer cannot verify the quality of the product or service before making the purchase (Reichheld, Schefter 2000).

There are many definitions of trust and its implications on the seller-buyer relationship. One definition by Mayer et al. is "*Trust is the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the action*

of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective to the ability to monitor or control that other party" (1995, p. 712).

For a purchase made in a physical store, trust is only a part of the total evaluation of a product, service or solution, before making the purchase decision. For a purchase online, the consumer has to evaluate how trustworthy the supplier is prior to making the decision, and will not know how good the quality of the product or service is until after the decision. With a few clicks, the consumer can find another provider of the product or service and compare their findings before making a decision. This means that trust is an even more important part of the purchase decision process when making online purchases (Yenneti 2016).

One reason for the lack of trust online may be the absence of social cues and social presence that build trust in physical stores. It has been found that there is a positive link between social presence and trust (Cyr et al. 2007). When media cues, such as pictures and video clips, showing a sales person are used on a website, the consumer experiences greater trust in that online shop (Aldiri, Hobbs & Qahwaji 2008).

2.5.1 Identity and trust

One social cue that trust is positively linked to is identity. The relation between identity and trust has been studied in the context of an online bank. In the study, the respondents were exposed to three pictures: the first picture showed a person with a label saying that the person was a consumer service agent employed by the vendor, the next picture showed the same person, but without any information about who the person was, and the last version did not have a picture, only text. The researchers showed that the consumers' trust was highest for the identified person, and lowest for the text-only version (Mayer, Sims 1994). Another study showed that when photos of employees were displayed on a website, the credibility for that website increased (Fogg et al. 2001). This indicates that building trust between seller and buyer is done more effectively, not only when a person is displayed in the pictures, but also when the identities are known.

In physical stores, someone's identity can be shown through visual cues or identification, while it online can be more challenging. However, identity can be shown through for example

"authentication and tokens". Furthermore, trust is also dependent on information, meaning trust is easier built between two parties when they can access information about each other. This indicates that displaying an "identifiable employee" in hotel advertising is an important factor for building trust (Aljazzaf, Perry & Capretz 2010).

Additionally, research show that stock photos decrease the degree of trust and authenticity. The same research show that the purchase intention increases by 35 percent when displaying an authentic photo compared to a stock photo (McCraw 2011). Furthermore, stock photos are more likely to be ignored on a webpage. Real employees that actually work for the company are more effective than stock photos (Nielsen 2010). This research point at the fact that people trust and like authentic photos more than "fake" photos.

Based on the above research on trust and identity, the authors found it likely that displaying a service employee in hotel's pictures would have a positive effect on trust. This research also touches upon the possibility that displaying an identifiable service employee has a positive effect on intentions. This resulted in the following hypothesis:

H10. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on trust

H11. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on intentions mediating through trust

H12. The presence of an identifiable service employee in hotels' pictures will have a greater effect on intentions than an anonymous service employee.

2.6 Hypotheses

Below one can find a list of all hypotheses that are tested in the thesis:

Summary of Hypotheses

H1. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on **intentions**

H2. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on **positive emotions**

H3. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on **intentions mediating through positive emotions**

H4. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on **expected hotel satisfaction**

H5. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on **intentions mediating through expected hotel satisfaction**

H6. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on **perceived service quality**

H7. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on **intentions mediating through perceived service quality**

H8. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on **perceived marketing effort**

H9. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on i**ntentions mediating through perceived marketing effort**

H10. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on **trust**

H11. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on **intentions mediating through trust**

H12. The presence of an **identifiable service employee in hotels' pictures will have a greater effect on intentions than an anonymous service employee**

To summarize, past research indicates that humans are sensitive to other humans, and that humans in pictures seem to have a positive effect on a number of emotions and attitudes (organisms) and intentions (responses). Based on past research and the development of the hypothesis, the authors have used the SOR-model as a base for examining both organism and response, as shown in the model below.



Figure 2. The SOR-model applied to the research questions

3. METHOD

This chapter will explain and motivate for the choice of approach and provide a detailed presentation of the research process. Finally, a discussion of the data quality in terms of reliability and validity will be presented.

3.1 Choice of Scientific Approach and Method

The authors chose a deductive approach and the hypotheses were based on existing theories and studies, which were then tested in the study (Bryman 2011).

To examine the thesis questions, a quantitative method was used. There are mainly three reasons for choosing a quantitative research for this thesis. Firstly, a quantitative study is superior when describing detailed differences in the sample. Hence, the quantitative study can distinguish the three groups' intentions, emotions and attitudes more detailed in order to answer the research questions. Secondly, it aims to create a more consistent data and to generalize the results. Thirdly, the thesis aimed to examine the relationship between different variables, which is most easily done through a quantitative research method. For example, by conducting a correlation analysis to see the relation between the different stimulus and intentions (Bryman 2011).

Finally, due to limited resources a quantitative study enables to collect a bigger sample of respondents during a short period of time.

3.2 Pre-study

After choosing the scientific method the authors conducted a pre-study. The purpose of the pre-study was to control that the stimuli would have the intended effect and that the respondents would understand the questions correctly.

As the pre-study was intended to test the main study questions, the questions that were used were developed with the intention to be used also in the main study, which they also were. Four different surveys, two showing an empty hotel reception, and two showing the same hotel receptions but with a receptionist, were randomly sent out to in total 26 respondents.

In order to present the exact same picture in the surveys, but with a service employee in two of them, pictures from Google were manipulated in Photoshop for the pre-study. Pictures from two different hotels were edited to examine if the distance of the reception and the person had any effect on the responses. The persons that were photoshopped into the hotels' pictures were chosen by the authors after looking at several photos to find someone that looked like a "typical" service employee. This was done in order to make the pictures look as authentic as possible and mediate the service offered by the hotels.

After feedback from the respondents that participated in the pre-study, it was obvious that the pictures used in the pre-study had to be changed. The pre-study showed that perceived *photo quality* was lower for the pictures that were photoshopped compared to the pictures that were not. The mean for the variable *photo quality* was M=4.29 for the pictures were the service employee had been photoshopped, and M=5.25 for the picture that had not been photoshopped. Since it was visually obvious that the pictures with the service employees were photoshopped the authors decided to not use these pictures in the main study.

3.3 Main Study

The purpose of the main study was to test the hypotheses and answer the research questions. Three surveys were designed in order to examine what different intentions, emotions and attitudes that arise depending on the different stimulus.

3.3.1 Stimuli development main study

After the results and feedback from the pre-study, the authors decided to take photos of a real hotel themselves. This is also in line with research showing that authentic photos are more efficient than stock photos as mentioned in the theory chapter (McCraw 2011, Nielsen 2010). In order to get pictures showing the exact same things but with and without a service employee, the authors visited Freys Hotel to take photos of their reception and receptionist. To prevent biased answers because of respondent's potential established attitudes to a certain hotel, the authors chose to take the photos at a smaller hotel, i.e. not at a well known hotel chain. The hotel's receptionist Natalie was asked to model in the photos as she had the "typical" service employee look, i.e. she was wearing her hotel uniform, a name tag, and looked proper.

Stimulus 1 showed a hotel reception, which was unmanned. **Stimulus 2** showed the same hotel reception but with a service employee behind the reception desk. This difference was intended to make it possible to measure any differences in people's attitudes to the hotel because of the appearance of a person in the pictures. **Stimulus 3** was the exact same picture as **Stimulus 2,** but the service employee was here given an identity as she was presented as "the receptionist Natalie" in the text below the picture. This change was intended to make it possible to measure any differences in people's attitudes to the hotel because of a person's identity.

Hotels' pictures have shown to be of great importance when booking a hotel. In fact, hotel websites that have more than one picture on their website increase bookings by 225 percent compared to hotel websites with no pictures (TripAdvisor, TravelDailyNews 2014). Therefore, to show the picture in a natural context, where the respondents could imagine booking a hotel, the pictures were inserted into Hotel Freys' own website. A text was added below the picture describing what could be seen in the picture. Below **Stimulus 1**, which showed an unmanned hotel reception: *"Welcome to our reception",* below **Stimulus 2**, which showed the same reception but with a service employee: *"Welcome to our reception"*, and below **Stimulus 3**, the exact same picture as **Stimulus 2,** but with different text: *"Welcome to our reception. This is our receptionist Natalie who will be at your service"*. The text was used both to clarify what could be seen in the photos, and in **Stimulus 3**, to introduce the respondent to the receptionist and give her an identity by telling the respondent her name and occupation.

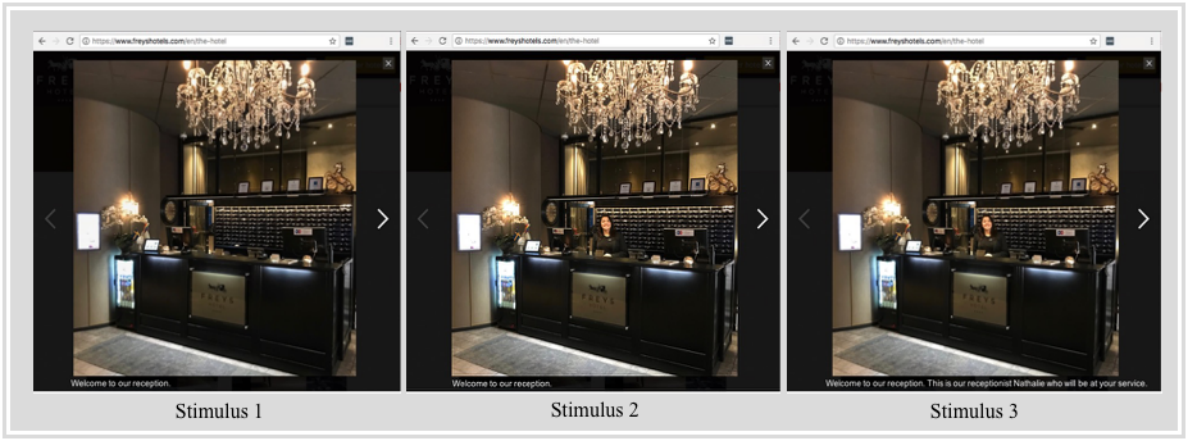


Figure 3. Stimuli used in the survey

3.3.2 Survey design

The authors spent time making sure that the questions could relate well to the research question. The questions of the survey were developed with the aim to answer the research questions according to the general rule of thumb (Bryman 2015).

Three different surveys were conducted in order to measure any differences the three stimuli could lead to. The surveys contained mainly the exact same questions, with the exception for a few questions in **Survey 2** and **Survey 3** that asked the respondents about their attitudes to the receptionist in the pictures. The purpose of these questions was to examine if the service employee's look could influence the respondent's answers. **Survey 1** had 28 questions, including questions about age, gender, nationality and email address, while **Survey 2** and **Survey 3** consisted of 31 questions.

The survey consisted of a short introduction, followed by a first "warm up" question, a trap question, to ensure the respondent's focus when participating in the survey. The trap question is discussed further below. In the next step the respondents were exposed to the picture of the hotel reception, together with a short text with instructions to the respondents. The instructions told the respondent to imagine the following scenario: *Imagine that you are going to book a hotel online for a leisure trip. You search for different options and enter this hotel's website. When looking through their images, this is the first photo you see.* After seeing the picture, the respondents were asked to answer questions about their intentions, emotions, and attitudes to the hotel and the ad.

The survey ended with a control question and questions about the respondents age, nationality and gender. The purpose of the control question was to control that the respondent had understood what was pictured and had answered the questions with the right picture in mind (Bryman 2012). The whole survey was written in English as respondents with different nationalities were invited to take the survey.

To examine the respondents' attitudes, the answers to these questions were based on the Likert Scale. This scale is favorable when asking questions on attitudes (Bryman 2015). The

respondents got to answer the question on a 7-point scale (1-7, strongly disagree-strongly agree). In this way, the respondents were able to fill in a neutral response: the middle point on the scale (4).

3.3.3 Implementation

The survey was developed in the online survey tool Qualtrics and distributed through anonymous links. The link was distributed through social media and directly to family, friends, colleagues and fellow students. As mentioned, research show that humans are sensitive to other humans (Lee 2004). As there was no reason to believe that people are affected differently by seeing another human, because of age or other demographic factors, the authors enabled anyone to enter the survey. The survey was open for respondents to enter between 18th of April and 24th of April. By using a randomizer in Qualtrics, the three different surveys were evenly distributed to the respondents.

In order to increase the response rate of the survey, the authors gave out a 200 SEK gift card at Babel Deli to a randomly selected respondent, as this can be an effective method to incentives people to answer the survey (Bryman 2015).

3.3.4 Sample

In total 204 respondents entered the survey, although not all answers could be used. To ensure the quality of the responses, observations that did not fulfill the requirements were deleted from the database. The data that was eliminated was: 1) any observations where the respondent had not completed the whole survey, 2) observations where the respondent failed to answer the trap question at the beginning of the survey and 3) observations where the respondents had failed the control question at the end of the survey were eliminated from the database.

Elimination 1) 54 respondents entered the survey without completing all questions and had to be deleted from the database. From **Survey 1**, 22 observations were dropped, from **Survey 2**, 18 observations were dropped and from **Survey 3**, 14 observations were dropped due to incomplete answers.

Elimination 2) From the remaining data, in total five observations had to be dropped because the respondents had failed the trap question in the beginning of the survey. From **Survey 1**, no respondents failed the trap question. From **Survey 2** three observations were dropped, and from **Survey 3** two observations were dropped.

Elimination 3) Out of the remaining data, in total 21 observations had to be dropped because the respondents had failed the control question at the end of the survey: one had to be deleted from **Survey 1** and 20 from **Survey 3.**

After eliminating data that did not fulfill the requirements, in total 124 observations were left. 44 from **Survey 1**, 52 from **Survey 2,** and 28 from **Survey 3**.

Also, an ANOVA test was performed in order to test for any significant differences between the groups in terms of gender or age. As the result showed no significant differences in gender between the groups ($p=0.752$) and no significant differences in age between the groups ($p=0.197$), the groups could be compared although the sample sizes were different.

3.3.5 Analysis tools

The data collected in Qualtrics was directly exported into the analysis tool SPSS statistics 25. This program was used to analyze all the data, and a significance level of 5 % was used for the analysis. Any results above 5 % significance were considered as not significant, i.e. did not support the hypotheses empirically.

A Cronbach's alpha reliability test was done to determine if any of the variables could be merged together to create new variables. Any questions that were considered similar enough to individually not add any extra value were tested, and if those variables had a Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.8, they were merged together (Bryman 2011).

3.4 Variables

This section will present the variables tested in the study.

Intentions:

- *Information search:* As for the variables measuring intentions, most were left as individual variables as they measure different activities that were intended to be analyzed separately. However, the two questions asking if the respondent would search for more information or ask for a price suggestion were tested. The Cronbach's alpha of 0.833 showed that these could be transformed into a new variable, which was named "information search".
- *Recommend to a friend:* Research show that recommendations from friends and family are the single most important source of information when booking a hotel (Statista 2017a). Therefore, it was of interest to measure this variable separately.
- *Book the hotel:* The authors decided to keep this as a single measure and not aggregate it with other intention variables. This was motivated by the fact that booking a hotel is the final step in the decision-making process and is an intention that is quite hard to evoke by solely looking at the stimuli.

Positive emotions: As the Cronbach's alpha for the three questions regarding the respondent's emotions when seeing the picture was 0.95, these were merged together to a new variable, "positive emotions".

Expected hotel satisfaction: For the variables measuring expectations of satisfaction when staying at the hotel the Cronbach's alpha was 0.904. A new variable was created called "Expected hotel satisfaction".

Perceived service quality: The variables measuring perceived service were also combined as the Cronbach's alpha was 0.92. The new variable was named "perceived service quality".

Perceived marketing effort: The three questions regarding the respondent's attitude towards the picture in terms of creativity, expense and effort, were also tested. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.892, which lead to the creation of the new variable "perceived marketing effort".

Trust: For the variables measuring trust, Cronbach's alpha was 0.992, and these were therefore combined into a new variable called "trust".

3.5 Data quality

In a quantitative method, it is crucial to ensure that the measures have high reliability and validity (Bryman 2011). The authors therefore did a number of actions aiming to increase the reliability and validity. However, due to limited time and resources there arose some drawbacks in manner of reliability and validity.

3.5.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to whether the results are consistent and whether one can repeat the same results if doing the study. In other words, how stable the measures are (Bryman 2011).

To test the internal reliability and consistency, the authors performed a Cronbach's alpha test on those variables that were intended to measure the same phenomenon. The test showed that the variables correlated and had a Cronbach's alpha above 0.8 which is the general rule. In this way, these variables were aggregates into one variable (Bryman 2011).

Moreover, to increase the reliability, the survey included a control question that intended to make sure that the respondent's perceived stimulus was the same as what they actually had been showed. This control question was put in the end of the survey before questions about age, nationality and gender. Additionally, Qualtrics randomly assigned the respondents to one of the three pictures.

However, due to limited time the authors did not have the resources to do a so-called test-retest, where the survey is tested more than one time on different occasions, to test the consistency (Bryman 2011). The authors acknowledge that this might have increased the reliability, and if done again, this would be favorable.

3.5.2 Validity

Validity refers to making sure that the measure of a concept actually measures that same concept (Bryman 2011). To strengthen the validity of the quantitative study, the authors consulted with their tutor to ask for expertise before sending out the survey. This is also referred

to as face validity, which aims to control that the measures actually measures the intended concepts (Bryman 2011).

The external validity relates to whether the results of the study can be generalized over the population (Bryman 2011). To examine this, descriptive statistics of the three respondent groups were conducted which showed no significant differences between the groups in manner of gender and age. It also showed that the age spread in the groups were quite large, including ages from 15-79. However, the majority of the sample group was within the age of 20-30 years old. The authors acknowledge that this is a drawback in the data and the authors could not generalize the results as intended. It would have been favorable if the sample group would have been larger, and if the sample consisted of respondents distributed more equally on different ages and gender in improve the external validity. Furthermore, in order to increase the external validity (Bryman 2011), the hotels' pictures (stimuli) used in the survey were photos of a real hotel (Freys Hotel in Stockholm) with a real employee, i.e. the respondents were exposed to real hotel photos.

Finally, the warm up question at the start of the survey was a "trap question", also referred to as "red herring questions", and was intended to increase the quality of the collected data (Miller 2006, Miller, Officer & Baker-Prewitt 2009). Inattentive and fallacious respondents can pose a threat to the validity of data, and a study has shown that between 8-25 percent of the total sample can be affected (Miller 2006). It has also been shown that respondents that fail a trap question are more likely to be inattentive throughout the whole survey and therefore provide data with lower quality compared to the data collected from respondents who passed the trap question (Jones, House & Gao 2015). If excluding the respondents who failed the trap question, the data will be more reliable (Jones, House & Gao 2015). To place the trap question at the start of the survey was a strategic decision, made based on research suggesting that this is the most effective way to increase the validity. A trap questions does not only make it possible to exclude respondents who fail answering the questions, it also makes the people who read the question carefully aware that their presence and focus on the survey is observed, which will make them more attentive throughout the rest of the survey (Miller, Officer & Baker-Prewitt 2009).

4. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the results from the survey will be presented and analyzed, culminating into whether the hypotheses are empirically supported or not.

4.1 Descriptives of the Respondents

In Table 1 below, the descriptives of the respondents are presented. The table shows a quite skew gender distribution, with a majority of women in all groups. However, the one-way ANOVA test showed no significant differences in gender between the groups. This means that the groups can be compared. Furthermore, the table shows that the mean age for the three respondent groups are very similar, which was also confirmed when conducting the one-way ANOVA test that showed that there were no significant differences in age between the groups.

Table 1. Descriptives of the Respondents

	Sample population (N=124)	**Respondent Group 1 (n_1=44)**	**Respondent Group 2 (n_2=52)**	**Respondent Group 3 (n_3=28)**
Gender				
Men	**51 (41.1%)**	15 (34.1%)	25 (48.1%)	11 (39.3%)
Women	**71 (57.3%)**	27 (61.4%)	27 (51.9%)	17 (60.7%)
Other	**2 (1.6%)**	2 (4.5%)		
Total	**124**	**44 (35.5%)**	**52 (41.9%)**	**28 (22.6%)**
Age				
Mean	**25.6**	24.3	27.6	23.7
Max	**79**	44	79	49
Min	**15**	15	20	16

4.2 Intentions

According to the Rossiter & Percy grid (Rossiter, Donovan & Percy 1989), booking a hotel can be characterized as a high involvement, transformational purchase decision where the consumer search for information and compare different options prior to booking to create positive emotions. Research show that the most influential source of information when looking

for a hotel is recommendation from friends and family (Baruca, Civre 2012). To capture three important steps in the decision-making process, i.e. intentions, the authors decided to use three different variables for intentions: *information search, recommend to a friend* and *book the hotel*.

Table 2. Mean Comparison of the Variables Related to Intentions

	Respondent Group 1 (n_1=44)	**Respondent Group 2 (n_2=52)**	**Respondent Group 3 (n_3=28)**	
Variable	**M (SD)**	**M (SD)**	**M (SD)**	**Significance**
Information search	5.03 (1.57)	5.34 (1.20)	4.98 (1.60)	0.41
Recommend to a friend	4.05 (1.54)	4.32 (1.37)	4.32 (1.54)	0.61
Book the hotel	4.77 (1.68)	5.04 (1.29)	5.07 (1.61)	0.62

To test the hypotheses and see if there were any significant differences in the mean of the intentions between the groups, a one-way ANOVA test was performed. The test showed no significant differences in mean for *information search* (p=0.41), *recommend to a friend* (p=0.61), and *book the hotel* (p=0.62), i.e. no significant differences in intention mean. Hence, no empirical evidence was found that showed that displaying a service employee in hotels' pictures will lead to positive effect on intentions.

The result led to the following:

H1. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on intentions **– No empirical evidence found**

4.3 Emotions and Hotel Satisfaction

Research show that social cues such as pictures can increase the social presence online and that this will have a positive effect on satisfaction (Gunawardena 1995). It has also been shown that the mere presence of an employee has a positive effect on satisfaction (Söderlund 2016), and the presence of a human has a positive effect on emotions (Campbell 2007). Therefore, the

authors investigated how the presence of a human would affect positive emotions and perceived hotel satisfaction.

Table 3. Mean Comparison of the Variable Positive Emotions

	Respondent Group 1 (n_1=44)	**Respondent Group 2 (n_2=52)**	**Respondent Group 3 (n_3=28)**	
Variable	**M (SD)**	**M (SD)**	**M (SD)**	**Significance**
Positive emotions	5.01 (1.31)	5.17 (1.25)	5.00 (1.50)	0.79

Table 4. Mean Comparison of the Variable Hotel Satisfaction

	Respondent Group 1 (n_1=44)	**Respondent Group 2 (n_2=52)**	**Respondent Group 3 (n_3=28)**	
Variable	**M (SD)**	**M (SD)**	**M (SD)**	**Significance**
Hotel satisfaction	5.23 (1.12)	5.06 (1.19)	5.19 (1.22)	0.77

The test was done through a one-way ANOVA. The result showed small differences in mean values, however there were no significant differences in neither *positive emotions* or *hotel satisfaction* (p=0.79 and p=0.77). As no empirical evidence was found, it is not possible to say that the presence of a service employee in the photos will have a positive effect on emotions or hotel satisfaction. As a consequence of the non-significant results, there was no reason testing H3 and H5.

The result led to the following:

H2. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on positive emotions **– No empirical evidence found**

H3. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on intentions mediating through positive emotions **– Not tested**

H4. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on expected hotel satisfaction **– No empirical evidence found**

H5. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on intentions mediating through expected hotel satisfaction **– Not tested**

4.4 Service Quality

The service quality of hotels is an important factor for consumer, in fact 48 percent say that they are willing to pay more for a hotel if it has more or better service (Statista 2017b). However, service is something intangible which creates an importance for hotels to make the intangible tangible. This can be done through photos showing what to expect when staying at the hotel, in this case, displaying a service employee which can be incorporated as a tangible cue for service (Mills, Law 2004).

Table 5. Mean Comparison of the Variable Service Quality

	Respondent Group 1 (n_1=44)	Respondent Group 2 (n_2=52)	Respondent Group 3 (n_3=28)	
Variable	**M (SD)**	**M (SD)**	**M (SD)**	**Significance**
Service quality	5.31 (1.27)	5.42 (1.13)	5.64 (0.67)	0.47

To test the hypotheses and see if there were any significant differences in the mean of the perceived service quality between the groups, a one-way ANOVA test was performed. The test showed no significant differences in mean for *service quality* (p=0.47), meaning that no empirical evidence was found that show that displaying a service employee in hotels' pictures will lead to higher perceived service quality. Since no significant results of the mean were found, there was no reason testing if *service quality* is a mediating factor to intentions.

The result led to the following:

H6. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on perceived service quality **– No empirical evidence found**

H7. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on intentions mediating through perceived service quality **– Not tested**

4.5 Perceived Marketing Effort

As perceived marketing effort can have a positive effect on brand attitudes and interest for the brand (Modig, Dahlén & Colliander 2014), it is likely to believe that pictures displaying a service employee, which can be perceived as more creative and has had more effort put into it, will lead to a positive effect on intentions.

Table 6. Mean Comparison of the Variable Perceived Marketing Effort

	Respondent Group 1 (n_1=44)	**Respondent Group 2 (n_2=52)**	**Respondent Group 3 (n_3=28)**	
Variables	**M (SD)**	**M (SD)**	**M (SD)**	**Significance**
Perceived marketing effort	3.61 (1.56)	3.32 (1.43)	3.17 (1.68)	0.56

To test the hypothesis, a one-way ANOVA test was performed. This showed no significant differences between the three groups (p=0.56), which means that no empirical evidence was found that the different stimuli would be perceived different in terms of marketing effort. Since no significant differences in means were found, there was no reason testing if *perceived marketing effort* was a mediating factor to intentions.

The result led to the following:

H8. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on perceived marketing effort **– No empirical evidence found**

H9. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on intentions mediating through perceived marketing effort **– Not tested**

4.6 Trust

Trust is an important aspect when making online purchases. However, there is a certain lack of trust online, which can be explained by the absence of social cues and social presence that build trust in physical stores. Research show that adding social cues in online shopping context is linked to *positive emotions* (Jones 1999). In fact, when showing pictures with a sales employee on a website, the consumer experiences greater trust for that online vendor (Aldiri, Hobbs & Qahwaji 2008).

Table 7. Mean Comparison of the Variable Trust

	Respondent Group 1 (n_1=44)	**Respondent Group 2 (n_2=52)**	**Respondent Group 3 (n_3=28)**	
Variable	**M (SD)**	**M (SD)**	**M (SD)**	**Significance**
Trust	5.30 (0.97)	5.30 (1.10)	5.56 (0.71)	0.45

To test the hypotheses and see if there were any significant differences in the mean of trust between the groups, a one-way ANOVA test was performed. The test showed no significant differences in mean for *trust* (p=0.45), meaning that no empirical evidence was found that show that displaying a service employee in hotels' pictures will lead to higher trust. Since no significant results of the mean were found, there was reason testing if *trust* was a mediating factor to intentions.

The result led to the following:

H10. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on trust **– No empirical evidence found**

H11. The presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures will have a positive effect on intentions mediating through trust **– Not tested**

To summarize, the analysis showed no significant results in any of the test which mean that none of the hypotheses can be empirically supported and the null-hypothesis cannot be rejected. As the results showed no significant values for the tested variables, the authors decided that

there was no point in testing the variables regarding the attitudes towards the receptionist in the picture not the potential mediating variables.

4.7 Discussion of Non-Significant Results

There are various reasons that can explain why the null-hypothesis, H0, ie. that people are indifferent between seeing a service employee in a picture and no service employee cannot be rejected. One explanation may be that the null-hypothesis is true, meaning that people are indifferent between seeing a picture where an employee is present versus seeing a picture without an employee. Another explanation may be that the data is insensitive resulting in that no scientific conclusion can be taken from the data. The section below will examine these reasons aiming to explain the non-significant results.

4.7.1 Bayes Factor

In order to examine the evidence and likelihood of support for the null-hypothesis and the alternative hypotheses, a Bayes factor independent sample test was performed. The Bayes factor ratio provides a comparison of the probability of H0 relative to the alternative hypotheses and makes it possible to see which hypothesis, the null or the alternative, that is most likely. (Dienes 2014, Jarosz, Wiley 2014)

A Bayes factor independent sample test was performed in SPSS to compare **Stimulus 1** (picture without service employee) and **Stimulus 2** (picture with service employee) in order to find potential support for H0.

The Bayes factor derive from the following calculation:
B=likelihood of data given H0 / likelihood of data given H1

The result from the Bayes factor independent sample test can be found in the table below.

Table 8. Bayes Factor Independent Sample Test for Stimulus 1 and Stimulus 2

Variables	Bayes Factor
Information search	2.82
Recommend to a friend	3.70
Book the hotel	3.47
Positive emotions	3.72
Hotel satisfaction	5.62
Service quality	3.59
Perceived marketing effort	5.01
Trust	5.13

A Bayes factor larger than 1 indicates evidence of support for H0 (SPSS 2017), i.e. the null hypothesis is more likely than the alternative hypothesis. The larger the factor is, the more evidence for H0. As all variables had a Bayes factor larger than 1, the likelihood of H0 is larger than the alternative hypotheses. For all variables except for *Information search*, the factor was between 3-10, meaning that there is moderate evidence for H0 (SPSS 2017).

Although there is no strong evidence for H0, the result provides added evidence that H0 cannot be rejected, which indicates that the sample in question is likely to be indifferent between **Stimulus 1** and **Stimulus 2**, i.e. indifferent between seeing pictures where a service employee is present versus not present.

4.7.2 Insensitive data

Even though the authors performed a Bayes factor independent sample test, it is not possible to neglect the possibility that the data collected is insensitive, and the non-significant results can derive from drawbacks in the data.

The size of the sample group has an impact when achieving significant results. By increasing the sample group, one can increase the likelihood of achieving significant results (Jarosz, Wiley 2014). One drawback is that the sample group only contains 124 respondents. Also, there is a difference in the number of respondents in each group (n_1=44, n_2=52, n_3=28). The sample group mainly contains younger people (M=25.6), also referred to as Millennials (people born between 1981-1996) (Baron et al. 2013). and it is likely that young people do not value hotel service employee as much as older people or that they are limited by lower income and therefore choose to stay at low-cost hotels with little focus on service. The difference in travel patterns of Millennials and non-Millennials is discussed further under chapter 5.

The non-significant results may also be affected by the drawbacks in the stimuli produced for the survey. Research show that image appeal and perceived social presence on websites are strongest when there is a presence of a human in picture, and especially images with humans with evident facial features and expressions (Cyr et al. 2009). Consequently, one possible issue with the stimulus is that the human in the picture is not very evident to the respondents as the picture is taken from far away. The respondent may not see the details of the service employee's face from where the picture is taken, and this could harm the positive effect that the authors believed would be found based on past research. This relates to the Social Presence Theory that says that the social presence depends mainly on the characteristics of the medium of the communication, especially facial expressions and non-verbal cues (Cyr et al. 2009, Short, Williams & Christie 1976). It is possible that the stimuli did not succeed to achieve a high perceived social presence and did consequently not lead to the expected results.

Moving forward, the authors chose to do a multi-way ANOVA test to examine if gender is a moderating factor to intentions. However, neither this showed any significant differences in gender between the three respondent groups. The authors could therefore neglect the possibility that gender interact with the manipulated variables.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter will summarize the results of the thesis and analyze these in relation to past research and the thesis questions. Also, additional research will be presented to try to provide alternative explanations to the results. The chapter will end with a discussion of the limitations of this thesis and suggestions for further research.

5.1 Discussion

Based on the non-significant results from the mean comparison, and the result from the Bayes factor independent sample test, the authors can conclude that H0 cannot be rejected. This means that it is not possible to conclude that people are affected differently by pictures where service employees are present and when they are not. Neither is it possible to say that people are *not* indifferent between seeing a picture of a hotel reception and a picture where a service employee is present, as H0 cannot be rejected. The Bayes factor even shows that there is moderate evidence for H0, meaning that the selected sample are more likely to be indifferent between **Stimulus 1** and **Stimulus 2** than the contrary. This result contradicts theory and research saying that humans react more favorable to other humans.

The fact that the respondents seem indifferent between the picture with and without a service employee can have various explanations. One explanation might be the current technical development that the world is going through, which has resulted in the usage of more machines and self-service. Travelers are nowadays used to checking in to a flight online or at the self-service check-in machine at the airport. Getting help from an employee is almost more an exception than a rule, and travelers are not expecting the human interaction as much as before. Also, many hotels offer self-service where the guest can check in and get keys from a machine. This might have resulted in less importance of human interaction, and consequently, the respondents are indifferent between seeing a photo of an empty hotel reception and one with the presence of an employee.

Even though the authors found it likely that humans, indifferent of age, would react alike when being exposed to another human in pictures, there may be other factors affecting. As the majority of the respondents are Millennials, other explanations might be that Millennials,

compared to other generations, have different travel patterns, a different booking process and value other things when choosing a hotel.

Millennials travel less than non-Millennials due to factors such as lower income and less vacation days. In fact, 50 percent of Millennials take more than four overnight leisure trips a year compared to 75 percent of non-Millennials. The amount of previous travel experience might affect their attitudes to different hotels' pictures.

Additionally, Millennials search for more information prior to booking and compare more alternatives. Also, they use online travel agencies and travel aggregator to a greater extent, especially on their mobile device (Baron et al. 2013). Millennials much rather interact with bots than with real travel agents and want to access as much service as they can from their mobile device instead of communicating with service employees (Baron et al. 2013). This shows that Millennials, especially, are adapting to the new technology used in the travel industry and do not request the same personal service from service employees.

Millennials do not only plan and book differently, they also travel for different reasons. Millennials are almost two times as likely to travel because of hobbies such as food and wine, outdoor activities and shopping, than non-Millennials (Baron et al. 2013). When booking a hotel, they might look for other things than the hotel's service and will base their choice on for example location and what kind of activities, restaurants and shopping that can be found nearby.

Another explanation to why no significant differences could be found might be the importance of recommendations from friends and the growing importance of online customer reviews, which may mean that the importance of pictures of the hotel has decreased. With the possibility to "check-in" to different locations online, post comments, share stories, reviews and experiences online, it is easier than ever for consumers to recommend, or not recommend, a hotel to family and friends. It is today possible to take part of both friends' and complete strangers' recommendations thanks to social media and services such as TripAdvisor and Google Maps. All travel aggregators and also most hotels' own websites offer consumers to share their experiences and leave a review for other consumers to read. Recent research shows that people trust online reviews as much as a friend, in fact 87 percent of consumers have stated that they find online reviews to be as trustworthy (Bright Local 2017). The same study also

showed that positive reviews have a significant positive effect on trust, and that 68 percent of consumers will be more likely to choose a business if the review is positive. Even more interesting, a comparison between 2016 and 2017 showed that people are now more likely to make a decision right after reading a positive review instead of continuing to look for other options (Bright Local 2017). This shows that reviews are extremely important. Many consumers do not even feel the need to enter a business' website after reading several positive reviews. Instead, they make a decision based on the reviews. Although pictures are still important, consumers can get a service, at a hotel for example, described in words by someone who has already experienced it, and do not only have to rely on tangible cues such as a receptionist in a picture.

Even though much research point at the fact that consumers care about reading reviews to a great extent, describing text displayed in combination with hotel photos may not be as important. The large number of failing respondents from **Survey 3** shows that a lot of the respondents did not read the text under the picture carefully as they all answered that they had seen a hotel reception and a receptionist. This was partly true as they had been exposed to a reception with a receptionist, however, they missed reading, or forgot, that the receptionist's name was Natalie. This supports the development of marketing where picture-based communication takes up more and more space at the expense of text, as pictures are shown to be more efficient than text and draw more attention from the consumer (Pieters, Wedel 2004).

5.2 Conclusion

To conclude, the study did not find any empirical support that the presence of a service employee in hotel's photos improve consumers' intentions, and neither when the service employee is identifiable. Furthermore, the authors could not find any empirical evidence for the tested variables: *positive emotions, expected hotel satisfaction, perceived service quality, perceived marketing effort,* and *trust.*

However, the results from the Bayes factor showed moderate support for the null hypothesis, i.e. that the selected sample are more likely to be indifferent between **Stimulus 1** and **Stimulus 2**. The authors therefore find it possible that consumers are indifferent between the lack of service employees in hotels' pictures versus the presence of service employees in hotels' pictures.

The results led to the following answer to the main research questions:

1. *Will the presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures improve consumers' intentions and will it have any effect on positive emotions, expected hotel satisfaction, perceived service quality, perceived marketing effort, and trust?* ***No empirical evidence found***

The results led to the following answer to the secondary research questions:

2. *Will the presence of an* ***identifiable*** *service employee in hotel's photos improve consumers' intentions?* ***No empirical evidence found***

Since the two first research questions are negative there was no point in testing the third research question:

3. *Are positive emotions, expected hotel satisfaction, perceived service quality, perceived marketing effort, and trust mediating factors improving consumer intentions?* ***Since no empirical evidence from question one and two was found this question was not tested***

As the authors could not find any support for the effect of the presence of a service employee in hotels' pictures, they suggest that hotels should not focus too much on this question. However, they did find some other interesting facts from their research, and they recommend hotels to further discuss the service aspect in combination with their digital strategies. The authors exhort to research more about enabling online friendly service interaction including features such as self-check in and on-demand service via the mobile device to meet the new demands of Millennials.

5.3 Critique and Limitations

As the study showed no significant results, no statistical inference can be drawn from the results. The authors acknowledge that the results of this thesis should be consumed with caution

and that there are drawbacks in the generalization of the results. As a consequence of these limitations, the results of this thesis are better suited to lay as a base for future research and to test the implications of service employees in hotels' pictures further. If replicating the study, the authors suggest adding descriptive variables about the respondent's travel pattern such as how frequently the respondent travel and whether the respondent book trips themselves. By doing so, the researcher can detect differences in respondent descriptives that may interfere with the results.

If doing the survey again, it would be superior to send out the survey to a larger sample group. The authors also suggest defining a narrower target group such as Millennials to test for this specific group, as their travel patterns differ from non-Millennials.

5.4 Future Research

Due to limitations the authors were not able to test the hypotheses in different online settings. As the world is facing a rise in mobile device users, with approximately 5,135 billions of unique mobile users, and the fact that 31 percent of leisure travelers book hotels on mobile devices (Think With Google 2016), this makes the mobile device an interesting setting for further research. Also, as Millennials increasingly use online travel agencies and travel aggregators this setting on mobile devices would be relevant to use when testing. The authors therefore suggest other researchers to test the effects of the presence of service employees in a mobile context.

6. REFERENCES

Aldiri, K., Hobbs, D. & Qahwaji, R. 2008, "The human face of e-business: Engendering consumer initial trust through the use of images of sales personnel on e-commerce web sites", *International Journal of E-Business Research,* vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 58.

Aljazzaf, Z.M., Perry, M. & Capretz, M.A. 2010, "Online trust: Definition and principles", *Computing in the Global Information Technology (ICCGI), 2010 Fifth International Multi-Conference on*IEEE, pp. 163.

Arlt, W.G. 2006, "Handbook of consumer behavior, tourism, and the internet, by Juline E. Mills and Rob Law (eds). Haworth Hospitality Press, Binghamton, NY, 2004. No. of pages: 314 XVI ISBN 0-7890-2599-X. Co-published as Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing, Vol. 17, Nos. 2/3, 2004", *International Journal of Tourism Research,* vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 149-150.

Baron, C., Haywood, J., Jhunjhunwala, P. & Bhatia, V. 2013, *Traveling with millenials*, Boston Consulting Group.

Baruca, P.Z. & Civre, Z. 2012, "How do guests choose a hotel", *Academica Turistica,* vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 75-84.

Bright Local,, 2017-last update, *Local consumer review survey* [Homepage of Bright Local], [Online]. Available at: https://www.brightlocal.com/learn/local-consumer-review-survey/ [Accessed May 6, 2018].

Bryman, A. (ed) 2012, *Social Research Methods*, 4th edition edn, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Bryman, A.,Emma (ed) 2015, *Business Research Methods*, 4th edn, Oxford University Press Inc., United States.

Bryman, A.,Emma (ed) 2011, *Business Research Methods*, 3rd edn, Oxford University Press Inc., New York.

Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, 2017-last update, *Identifiable* [Homepage of Cambridge University Press], [Online]. Available at: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/identifiable [Accessed May 5, 2018].

Campbell, M.C. 2007, ""Says who?!" How the source of price information and affect influence perceived price (un) fairness", *Journal of Marketing Research,* vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 261-271.

Chow, K.E., Garretson, J.A. & Kurtz, D.L. 1995, "An exploratory study into the purchase decision process used by leisure travelers in hotel selection", *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing,* vol. 2, no. 4, pp. 53-72.

Cohn, M.A. & Fredrickson, B.L. 2009, "Positive emotions", *Oxford handbook of positive psychology,* vol. 2, pp. 13-24.

Cyr, D., Hassanein, K., Head, M. & Ivanov, A. 2007, "The role of social presence in establishing loyalty in e-service environments", *Interacting with Computers,* vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 43-56.

Cyr, D., Head, M., Larios, H. & Pan, B. 2009, "Exploring human images in website design: a multi-method approach", *MIS quarterly,* , pp. 539-566.

Dienes, Z. 2014, "Using Bayes to get the most out of non-significant results", *Frontiers in psychology,* vol. 5, pp. 781.

Donovan, R.J., Rossiter, J.R., Marcoolyn, G. & Nesdale, A. 1994, "Store atmosphere and purchasing behavior", *Journal of Retailing,* vol. 70, no. 3, pp. 283-294.

Hoang, A. 2014, October 6-last update, *Understanding the Differences Between Business and Leisure Travelers* [Homepage of E-market Associates], [Online]. Available at: https://www.e-marketingassociates.com/blog/understanding-differences-business-vs-leisure-travelers [Accessed April 23, 2018].

eMarketer 2016a, October, 2016-last update*, Digital advertising spending worldwide from 2015 to 2020* [Homepage of eMarketer], [Online]. Available at: https://www-statista-com.ez.hhs.se/statistics/237974/online-advertising-spending-worldwide/ [Accessed May 7, 2018].

eMarketer, T. 2016b, July 2016-last update*, Digital travel sales worldwide from 2014 to 2020* [Homepage of eMarketer,Tnooz], [Online]. Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/499694/forecast-of-online-travel-sales-worldwide/ [Accessed May 5, 2018].

Fogg, B., Marshall, J., Laraki, O., Osipovich, A., Varma, C., Fang, N., Paul, J., Rangnekar, A., Shon, J. & Swani, P. 2001, "What makes Web sites credible?: a report on a large quantitative study", *Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on Human factors in computing systems*ACM, , pp. 61.

Gunawardena, C.N. 1995, "Social presence theory and implications for interaction and collaborative learning in computer conferences", *International journal of educational telecommunications,* vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 147-166.

Gunawardena, C.N. & Zittle, F.J. 1997, "Social presence as a predictor of satisfaction within a computer-mediated conferencing environment", *American journal of distance education,* vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 8-26.

Hilton 2014, July 28-last update*, Hilton revolutionizes hotel experience with digital check-in, room selection and customization, and check-out across 650-000-plus rooms at more than 4,000 properties worldwide* [Homepage of Hilton], [Online]. Available at: http://newsroom.hilton.com/index.cfm/news/hilton-revolutionizes-hotel-experience-with-digital-checkin-room-selection-and-customization-and-checkout-across-650000plus-rooms-at-more-than-4000-properties-worldwide [Accessed May 5, 2018].

Jarosz, A.F. & Wiley, J. 2014, "What are the odds? A practical guide to computing and reporting Bayes factors", *The Journal of Problem Solving,* vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 2.

Jet, J. 2017, August 22-last update, *Are business travelers using Airbnb*? [Homepage of Forbes], [Online]. Available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnnyjet/2017/08/22/are-business-travelers-using-airbnb/#26ccd0df4ddf [Accessed May 6, 2018].

Jones, M.S., House, L.A. & Gao, Z. 2015, "Respondent screening and revealed preference axioms: testing quarantining methods for enhanced data quality in Web panel surveys", *Public opinion quarterly,* vol. 79, no. 3, pp. 687-709.

Jones, M.A. 1999, "Entertaining shopping experiences: an exploratory investigation", *Journal of retailing and consumer services,* vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 129-139.

Keller, K.L. 1993, "Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity", *the Journal of Marketing,* , pp. 1-22.

Langord, G.W., Adam 2018, *2018 Travel and hospitality industry outlook*, Deloitte Center for Industry Insights, Deloitte Development LLC.

Lee, K.M. 2004, "Presence, explicated", *Communication theory,* vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 27-50.

Levitt, T. 1981, "Marketing intangible products and product intangibles", *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly,* vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 37-44.

LittleHotelier 2016, October 6, 2016-last update, *Metasearch engines and OTAs; what's the difference*? [Homepage of LittleHotelier], [Online]. Available at: https://www.littlehotelier.com/r/distribution/metasearch-engines-otas-whats-difference/ [Accessed April 22, 2018].

Mayer, R.E. & Sims, V.K. 1994, "For whom is a picture worth a thousand words? Extensions of a dual-coding theory of multimedia learning.", *Journal of educational psychology,* vol. 86, no. 3, pp. 389.

Mayer, R.C., Davis, J.H. & Schoorman, F.D. 1995, "An integrative model of organizational trust", *Academy of management review,* vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 709-734.

McCarthy, N. 2018, January, 24, 2018-last update, *Is Airbnb Really Cheaper Than A Hotel Room?* [Homepage of Statista], [Online]. Available at: https://www.statista.com/chart/12655/is-airbnb-really-cheaper-than-a-hotel-room/ [Accessed May 6, 2018].

McCraw, A. 2011, April 8-last update, *This just tested: stock images or real people* [Homepage of Marketing Experiments], [Online]. Available at: https://marketingexperiments.com/digital-advertising/stock-images-tested [Accessed April 24, 2018].

Merriam-Webster 2018, May 4, 2018-last update, *stimulus* [Homepage of Merriam-Webster], [Online]. Available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stimulus [Accessed May 5, 2018].

Miller, J. 2006, "Research reveals alarming incidence of ‘undesirable’online panelists", *Research Conference Report, September-October 2006, RFL Communications. Synthesized from presentation at Research Industry Summit: Improving Respondent Cooperation, Chicago, IL, USA Sept 2*8, pp. 2006.

Miller, J., Officer, C.O. & Baker-Prewitt, J. 2009, "Beyond ‘trapping’the undesirable panelist: The use of red herrings to reduce satisficing", *CASRO Panel Quality Conference, New Orleans, LA, Februar*y.

Mills, J.E. & Law, R. 2004, *Handbook of consumer behavior, tourism, and the Internet,* Psychology Press.

Modig, E., Dahlén, M. & Colliander, J. 2014, "Consumer-perceived signals of 'creative' versus 'efficient' advertising", *International Journal of Advertising,* vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 137-154.

Nicholson, N. 1998, "How hardwired is human behavior?", *Harvard business review,* vol. 76, pp. 134-147.

Nielsen, J. 2010, November 1-last updat*e, Photos as web conten*t [Homepage of Nielsen Norman Group], [Online]. Available at: https://www.nngroup.com/articles/photos-as-web-content/ [Accessed April 24, 2018].

Pieters, R. & Wedel, M. 2004, "Attention capture and transfer in advertising: Brand, pictorial, and text-size effects", *Journal of Marketing,* vol. 68, no. 2, pp. 36-50.

Pleger Bebko, C. 2000, "Service intangibility and its impact on consumer expectations of service quality", *Journal of Services Marketing,* vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 9-26.

Reichheld, F.F. & Schefter, P. 2000, "E-loyalty: your secret weapon on the web", *Harvard business review,* vol. 78, no. 4, pp. 105-113.

Rossiter, J.R., Donovan, R.J. & Percy, L. 1989, *A Better Advertising Planning Grid,* Australian Graduate School of Management, University of New South Wales.

Short, J., Williams, E. & Christie, B. 1976, "The social psychology of telecommunications", .

Söderlund, M. 2016, "Employee mere presence and its impact on customer satisfaction", *Psychology & Marketing,* vol. 33, no. 6, pp. 449-464.

Söderlund, M. 2015, February 14-last update [Homepage of Söderlund, Magnus], [Online]. Available at: https://kundmotet.wordpress.com/ [Accessed May 5, 2018].

Söderlund, M. 1998, "Customer satisfaction and its consequences on customer behaviour revisited: The impact of different levels of satisfaction on word-of-mouth, feedback to the supplier and loyalty", *International Journal of Service Industry Management,* vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 169-188.

SPSS, 2017- last update, *Bayesian Independent - Sample inference* [Homepage of IBM Knowledge Centre], [Online]. Available at:

https://www.ibm.com/support/knowledgecenter/en/SSLVMB_25.0.0/statistics_mainhelp_ddita/idh_bayesian_independent_sample_inference.html [Accessed May 7, 2018].

Statista 2017a, *Digital travel planning in the United Kingdom (UK)*, Statista.

Statista 2017b, April, 2017-last update, *Under what circumstances would you be willing to pay more for a vacation?* [Homepage of Statista Survey], [Online]. Available at: https://www-statista-com.ez.hhs.se/statistics/707460/circumstances-us-travelers-would-pay-more-for-a-vacation/ [Accessed May 6, 2018].

Statisticbrain 2017, May 18, 2017-last update, *Internet Travel & Hotel Booking Statistics* [Homepage of Statistic Brain Research Institute], [Online]. Available at: https://www.statisticbrain.com/internet-travel-hotel-booking-statistics/ [Accessed February 24, 2018].

Think With Google 2016, *Travel booking trends revealed in let's book it moment*, Google.

TripAdvisor & TravelDailyNews 2014, September, 2014-last update, *Impact of accommodation website photos on the likelihood of booking enquiries worldwide as of September 2014* [Homepage of TravelDailyNews], [Online]. Available at: https://www-statista-com.ez.hhs.se/statistics/321401/impact-of-accommodation-website-photos-on-booking-enquiries/ [Accessed May 5, 2018].

Yavas, U. & Babakus, E. 2005, "Dimensions of hotel choice criteria: congruence between business and leisure travelers", *International Journal of Hospitality Management,* vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 359-367.

Yenneti, S. 2016, February 19 2016-last update, *The customer buying process and how to use online marketing at each stage* [Homepage of Huffington Post], [Online]. Available at: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/siva-yenneti/the-customer-buying-process_b_9276432.html [Accessed April 22, 2018].

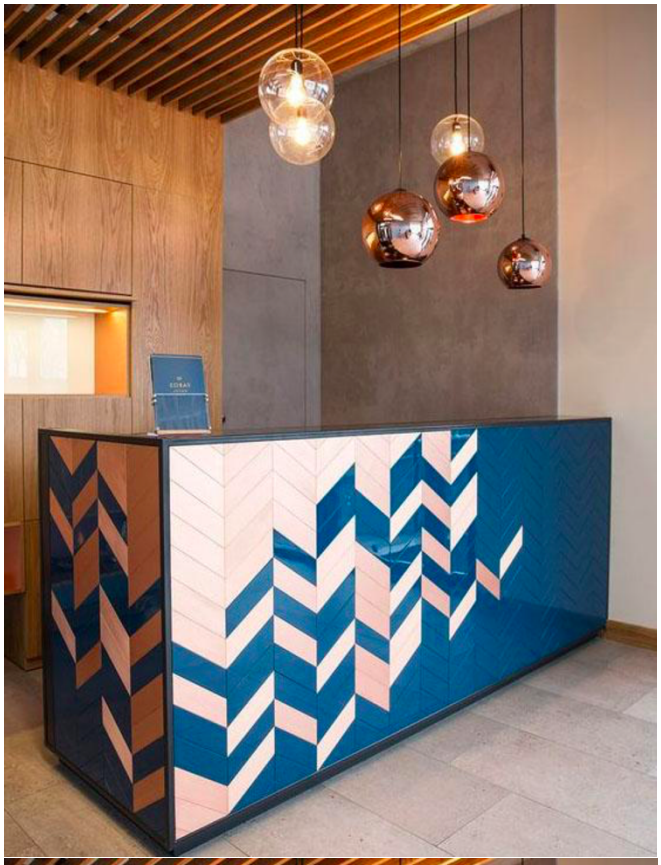
7. APPENDICES

7.1 Pre-Study: Stimuli

7.1.1 Stimuli with and without a photoshopped receptionist



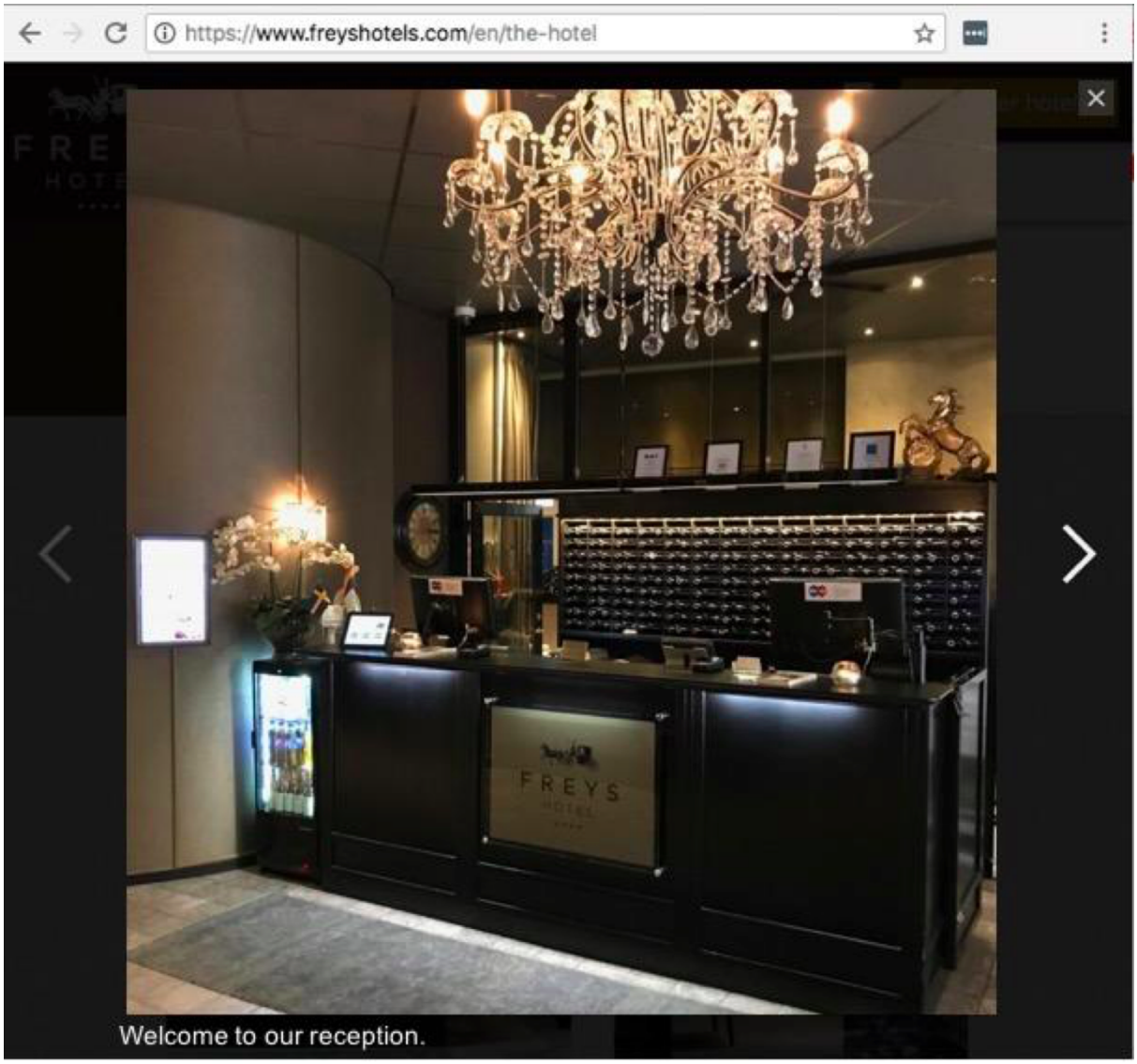




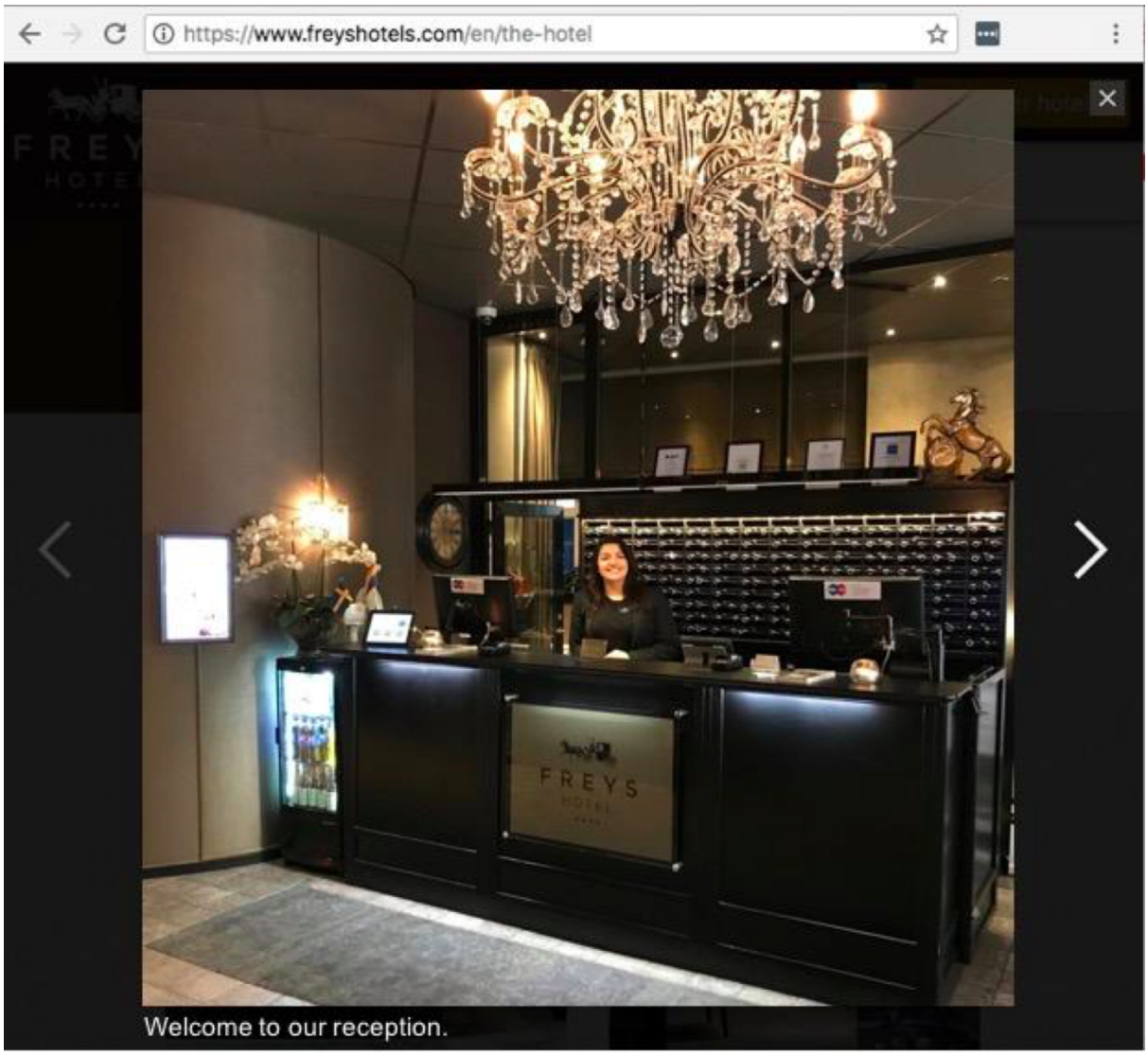


7.2 Main Study: Stimuli

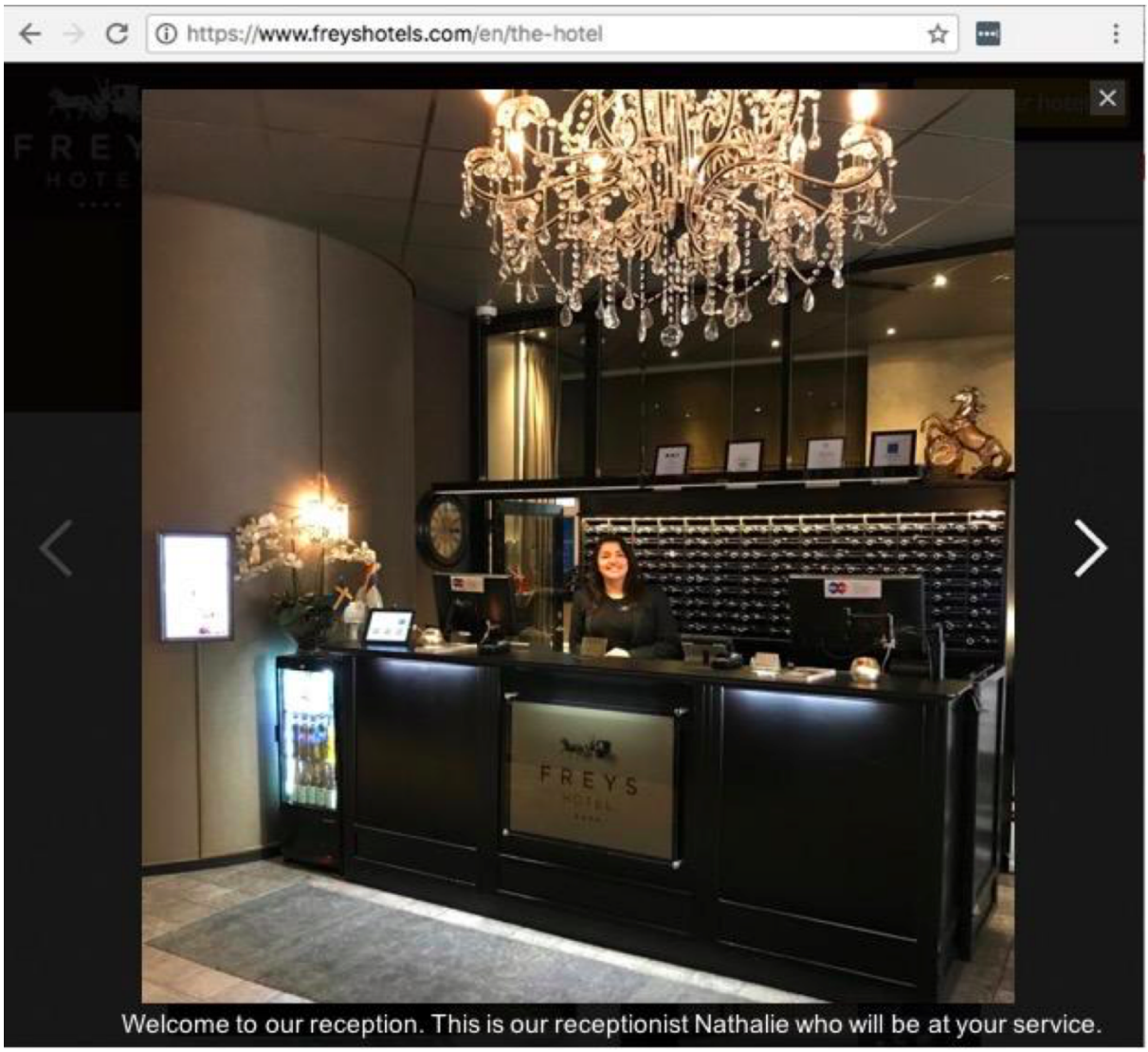
7.2.1 Stimuli 1



7.2.2 Stimuli 2



7.2.3 Stimuli 3



7.3 Main Study: Survey

Note that questions11,12 and 13 were only sent out to group 2 and group 3, which are the groups that were exposed to pictures with a receptionist.

Hi,
This is a survey conducted by two bachelor students at Stockholm School of Economics. Our bachelor thesis in marketing will be based on the answers in this survey, so please answer the questions carefully. The survey is anonymous and will only take approximately 3-5 minutes. Enter your email adress at the end of the survey and you will have the chance to win a lunch from Babel Deli worth 200 SEK!

If you have any questions about our survey or your participation please feel free to contact us at 23545@student.hhs.se

Thank you for taking your time, we really appreciate your participation.
Sincerely, Klara Lönnemark and Louise Renman

2 To warm up, here is a test question. Please fill in number 8 below. Thank you for reading this survey carefully.

- ○ 1 (1)
- ○ 2 (2)
- ○ 3 (3)
- ○ 4 (4)
- ○ 5 (5)
- ○ 6 (6)
- ○ 7 (7)
- ○ 8 (8)

3 Imagine that you are going to book a hotel online for a leisure trip. You search for different options and enter this hotel's website. When looking through their images, this is the first photo you see. Please take a good look at the photo. We will now ask you some questions about your impressions of this photo and this hotel. You will be able to see the photo throughout the whole survey.

4 Please answer the questions below

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)

My overall impression of this **photo** is good (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I like this **photo** (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I get positive feelings when looking at this **photo** (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

5

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither disagree nor agree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I perceive the effort behind this **photo** as high (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I perceive the expense behind this **photo** as high (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I find this **photo** creative (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

6

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
My overall impression of this **hotel** is good (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would enjoy staying at this **hotel** (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would have a good experience staying at this **hotel** (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

7

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)

The overall expected value of staying at this **hotel** is high (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I perceive the service at this **hotel** to be of good quality (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I believe that I would get good service when staying at this **hotel** (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would feel safe staying at this **hotel** (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

8

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither disagree nor agree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I believe this **hotel** will deliver what they have promised (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I believe that what this **hotel** says about their service is true (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This **hotel** seems reliable (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

9 How many stars do you think this hotel has?

- ○ 1 (1)
- ○ 2 (2)
- ○ 3 (3)
- ○ 4 (4)
- ○ 5 (5)

10

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither disagree nor agree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
It is likely that I would search for more information about this **hotel** (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is likely that I would consider booking this **hotel** (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

It is likely that I would recommend this **hotel** to a friend (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is likely that I would save this **hotel** as an option for the future (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is likely that I would ask for a price suggestion for this **hotel** (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

11 I think the **person** in this photo is attractive

- ○ Strongly disagree (1)
- ○ Disagree (2)
- ○ Somewhat disagree (3)
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- ○ Somewhat agree (5)
- ○ Agree (6)
- ○ Strongly agree (7)

12 This **person** looks like a "typical" service personnel

- ○ Strongly disagree (1)
- ○ Disagree (2)
- ○ Somewhat disagree (3)
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- ○ Somewhat agree (5)
- ○ Agree (6)
- ○ Strongly agree (7)

13 Do you think this **person** works at this hotel?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)
- ○ Can't tell (3)

14 To control your answers, please confirm what you saw in the **photo.**

- ○ A hotel lobby (1)
- ○ A hotel lobby and a receptionist (2)
- • A hotel lobby and a receptionist named Nathalie (3)

15 What is your gender?

- ○ Female (1)
- ○ Male (2)
- ○ Other (3)
- ○ Prefer not to answer (4)

16 Age

_____

17 What is your nationality?

_____

18 Enter your email adress and you will have the chance to win a lunch from Babel Deli! Your email adress will only be used to contact you if you win.

_____