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**CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN HOTEL  
BUSINESS IN FINLAND  
- VIEWPOINT OF THE RECEPTIONISTS**

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## TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tämä opinnäytetyö käsittelee kriisinhallintaa ja turvallisuutta Suomen hotelleissa vastaanottovirkailijoiden näkökulmasta. Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli tutkia miten paljon vastaanottovirkailijat tietävät yleisesti kriisinhallinnasta, ovatko he saaneet riittävästi turvallisuuskoulutusta ja kokevatko he osaavansa toimia erilaisissa uhkaavissa tilanteissa tai kriisitilanteissa.

Tutkimus koostuu kahdesta osiosta; teoreettisesta viitekehyksestä ja empiirisestä osiosta. Teoreettinen osio käsittelee erilaisia elementtejä henkilöstöhallintoon, kriisinhallintaan ja kommunikointiin sekä kriisitilanteissa käyttäytymiseen liittyen. Lisäksi teoriaosuudessa käsitellään vastaanottovirkailijoiden työtä ja hotellien toimintaa yleisesti Suomessa. Tutkimuksen kannalta tärkeitä elementtejä teoriaosuudessa ovat muun muassa turvallisuus, perehdytys ja koulutus, yrityksen viestintä, kriisinhallintaprosessi sekä kriisin vaiheet. Kvalitatiivista tutkimusmenetelmää hyödyntämällä tutkimuksesta saatiin syvempää ja yksityiskohtaisempaa tietoa aiheesta. Yhteensä seitsemää vastaanottovirkailijaa haastateltiin.

Tulokset osoittivat, että vastaanottovirkailijat tuntevat satunnaisesti epävarmuutta ja turvattomuutta yksin työskennellessään, erityisesti yöaikaan. Turvallisuusasioiden hallinnassa oli puutteita johtuen epäsäännöllisestä, heikosta tai puuttuvasta koulutuksesta. Siitä huolimatta vastaanottovirkailijat kokevat pystyvänsä toimimaan erilaisissa tilanteissa tavalla tai toisella.

Avainsanat kriisi, kriisitilanne, kriisinhallinta

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## ABSTRACT

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This research discusses crisis management and safety related issues in Finnish hotels from the receptionists' point of view. The aim was to investigate whether the hotel receptionists have enough knowledge about crisis management procedures, if they receive enough safety training and how confident they feel about their capabilities to handle threatening or crisis situations.

The thesis consists of two sections; the theoretical study and the empirical study. The theoretical study investigates the different elements of human resource management, crisis management and communication as well as crisis behavior. In addition, general information about hotel business in Finland and the nature of the receptionists work are considered. In terms of the research, important elements in the theoretical study are for instance safety and security, orientation and training, organizational communication, crisis management process and phases of a crisis. The research was implemented by using a qualitative method in order to obtain deeper detailed information about the topic. Seven hotel receptionists were interviewed in total.

The results indicated that the receptionists do occasionally have uncertainty and insecure emotions when working alone, specifically during the night shifts. There are defects in their knowledge of safety issues because of the irregular, poor or missing training. Nevertheless, the receptionists consider themselves to be capable of handling different situations in some way or another.

Key words                      crisis, crisis situation, crisis management

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Safety is one of the most important basic needs in life. In order to live a full life, to be happy and satisfied, people need to feel safe. An American psychologist, Abraham Maslow, developed a theory of the needs of human beings. According to the theory there are basic needs that have to be fulfilled in order to achieve more needs. Safety is the second most important of these needs.

In today's world, the relationships between countries and nations have become more critical and the threat of terrorism actions has increased. Climate change has disturbed the balance of the nature that leads directly to the threat of natural disasters around the world. In addition, the economic situation of the world has created pressure on both in individual and the whole society level. People have lost or are in danger of losing their jobs and have big mortgages. Uncertainty increases the threat of different crises such as accidents, violence and incidents. According to Glaesser (2003, Preface) negative events challenge the tourism industry, as an economic sector, more than any other.

Finland is perceived as a safe, peaceful and pure country with honest people (Iivari 2012, 37). However, it does not mean that neither accidents nor crises can occur. When, or if, different crises occur, they may lead to a catastrophe if there have not been precautions taken. U.S. Department of State (Travel.State.Gov) declares the following about Finland: "Finland remains largely free of terrorist incidents. However, like other countries in the Schengen area, Finland's open borders with its Western European neighbors allow the possibility of terrorist groups anonymously entering/exiting the country. Elements of organized crime groups operating in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe are present in Finland..." The open EU-borders of Finland are considered as a provider of terrorism to spread (Iivari 2012, 44).

Due to a wide range of phenomena that have already been mentioned the threats of criminality, terrorism and other crises have increased globally. Safety is a trend



issue according to which people choose their destinations (Iivari, 2012, Prologue). It is also the key factor in hotel business (Huhtala 1997, 48). Discussing about safety and crises and paying regard to their management is vital and relevant. Therefore, choosing a research topic was easy.

### **1.1 Research problem**

The main focus of the research is on the hotel receptionists who, in most cases, play the main role in all kinds of situations. The aim is to investigate whether the receptionists have enough knowledge about crisis management procedures, if they receive enough safety training and how confident they feel about their capabilities to manage different situations. Generally people tend to think that the clerks at the reception know everything that is happening inside the hotel (Dix & Baird 1887, 36). For this reason it is natural to focus on the receptionists' point of view in the research.

The research should answer the following questions:

- Do hotel receptionists feel safe in their working environment?
- Do the receptionists think they are capable of managing crisis situations?
- Have the receptionists had enough education and training for the possible crisis situations? Do the amount and quality of the training affect the receptionists' feelings and capabilities to act in different situations?

The benefit of the research is to help management level of Finnish hotels to recognize possible faults in their safety and security protocols and implementations. Based on this research the management level could be able to improve or change their procedures in planning and acting in crisis situations. The other benefit is that due to the research the receptionists might get a better overall view of the crisis management process in the hotel business. They could also get ideas on how to modify their behavior in threatening situations or crises and how to manage the

situations mentally and physically. Additionally, due to the limited amount of relevant literature all of the people working in hospitality and tourism field could possibly get new ideas about safety issues and develop crisis management in their own working environments. Altogether, this research may be beneficial for all the employees working in different organizations as well.

## **1.2 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis consists of three sections; introduction, theoretical study and empirical study. The introduction leads the reader to the topic and provides a general view by introducing the goals of the thesis, research problem, restrictions and the structure. The second section of the thesis focuses on the theoretical study. In the beginning of the theoretical study general information about the hotel business in Finland and the nature of the hotel receptionists' work are examined. The theoretical study also includes two main subjects that are human resource management and crisis management. In addition, there is a third compact part on crisis behavior, which is conducted by interviewing a crisis instructor of Finnish Red Cross (SPR).

The last section of the thesis is the empirical study. In the beginning of this section the chosen research method, interview process and the description of the respondents are presented. The qualitative research method was conducted by interviewing hotel receptionists from different parts in Finland. Finally, the results of the research are analyzed and based on those the conclusions are drawn and also the suggestions for further researches are presented.

## **1.3 Restrictions of the thesis**

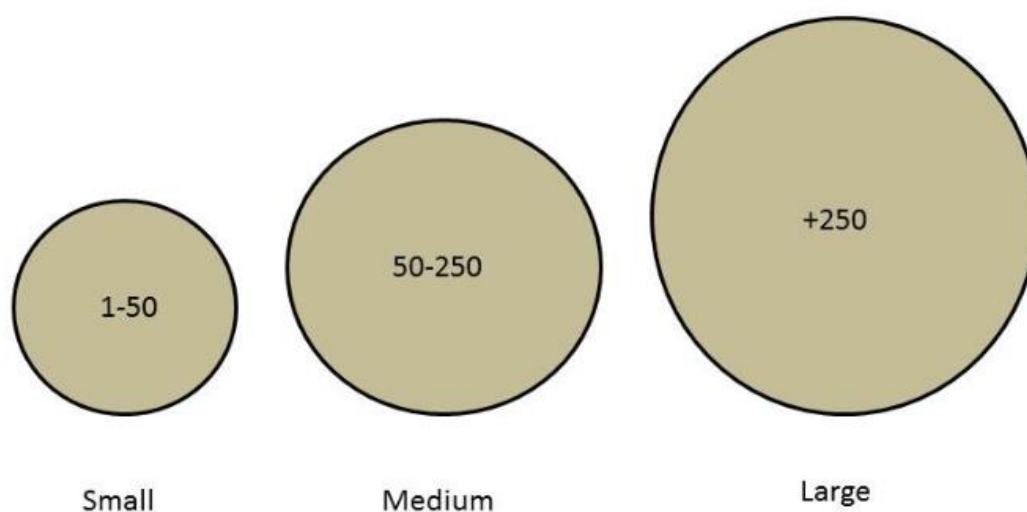
Due to the wide topic the main focus of the research is on the viewpoint of hotel receptionists, not other employees working in hotels. In addition, the research does not cover the whole area of Finland but only a part of Finland. Therefore, the results do not take into consideration regional differences between the cities even though it covers most of the counties in Finland. In the research the sampling is

also too narrow for making any generalized conclusions about how the crisis management is taken into account in Finnish hotels at the moment. The samples are individual cases and experiences of hotel receptionists and thus, cannot be generalized to cover all the hotels and their receptionists in Finland.

## 2 HOTEL BUSINESS IN FINLAND

According to Hayes and Ninemeier (2004, 4-5) most people define the word hotel as “a building containing guest rooms for sleeping”. However, the authors argue that even if the definition can be correct, in today’s world it may also include additional services such as food and beverage and recreational alternatives (Hayes & Ninemeier 2004, 4-5.)

According to Dix and Baird (1998, 6) hotels can be categorized into three groups based on their size: small, medium and large. However, the classification is subjective since individuals base their knowledge on own experiences. Figure 1 shows the classification model of the UK that is also generally accepted around the world. (Dix & Baird 1998, 5-6.)



**Figure 1** Hotel classification according to the number of rooms

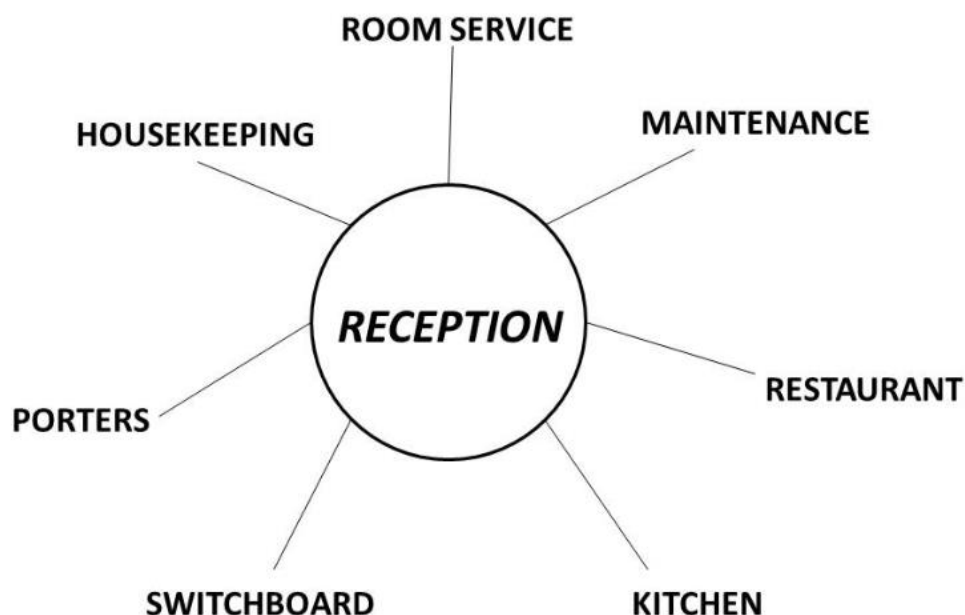
(Dix & Baird 1998, 6)

According to the Statistics Center of Finland there are 628 hotels in Finland in June 2015. In the year of 2014 there were 15,660,777 hotel nights in Finland in total. The decrease was two percent compared to the previous year, 2013. The amount of Finnish hotel guests’ nights was 10,928,168 and foreigners’ 4,732,609

in 2014. This indicates that more than half of the nights spent in hotels were domestic. (Suomen virallinen tilasto, Majoitustilasto.)

## 2.1 Nature of the receptionists' work

Dix and Baird (1998, 36) define the reception as “the hub of the wheel”. All the departments need to be connected to the center piece (reception) in order the hotel to function properly. If one or more of the departments do not work, there will be a malfunction in communication within the hotel. That is to say, the reception is the center of communication, which is demonstrated in Figure 2.



**Figure 2** Reception - the center piece of communication

(Dix & Baird 1998, 36)

The personnel at the reception are the key factor to the failure or success of serving and caring the customers. The role of the reception is significant for many reasons. One reason is that the first impression of the hotel is made already in the booking process. The first impression must be made good and the staff at the re-

ception needs to provide an impression of efficiency in order to get the customer to come back. The personnel at the reception should be sensitive to different requests and unusual situations. (Dix & Baird 1998, 34-35.)

Front office covers much more activities than those occurring at the front desk. Smaller and bigger hotels differ in their functions but still the key tasks and the responsibility areas need to be organized in order to manage the front office. There is a great variety of the tasks that receptionists are completing every day and in every shift. The tasks include, for example, making reservations, doing check-ins (arrival) and check-outs and billing. The front office is responsible for the hotel guests during their stay at the premises. Also, being the information channel is a part of the work of the receptionists, for instance answering directly to the questions of the customers or guiding them to the appropriate department. (Hayes 2004, 176-178; Dix & Baird 1998, 6.) Most hotels earn their profits and revenue from selling hotel rooms, which makes it important to keep the reception department organized and have enough staff in order to maximize the sales. (Dix & Baird 1998, 6.)

Reception is not an isolated section in a hotel but the receptionists need to have awareness of the functions of other departments in the hotel. The reception is like the heart of the hotel. (Dix & Baird 1998, 13.)

## **2.2 Safety and security**

*"Safety is not setting a fence but opening the doors" (Urho Kekkonen).*

The accidents and terrorism attacks in the past few years have caused insecurity among the people. People are more concerned about the security related issues and are aware of the risks. This is why the need of feeling safe has increased tremendously. 9/11 terrorism attack, SARS epidemic and Southeast Asia Tsunami have evoked people. (Iivari 2012, 13.) According to Iivari (2012) an individual is the most important target of safety. Safety is also the selling point in hotel business that differentiates it from the competitors (Huhtala 1997, 48).

Every employee in the hotel wants to work in a safe working environment. There are various facts that have an effect on the general security level of the hotel. Receptionists can control them in many ways focusing on the care of, for example, keys, equipment, lost and found property, cash handling and security incidents. (Dix & Baird 1998, 19.) Also, the company can enhance the comprehensive safety of the organization by maintaining the premises and equipment. (Iivari 2012, 94-96.)

Naturally it is possible that a receptionist does not face any threats or crisis situations during his/her entire career. However, working alone and specifically during night shifts has significant risk factors, especially from the viewpoint of personal safety. The factors causing threats are increase of violence among hotel guests, shortage/lack of eye witnesses and safety training, failures in safety techniques and prohibition of leaving the reception in any situation. (Huhtala 1997, 140-141.)

### **2.2.1 Laws and regulations**

The personnel in the hotel have a significant role in preserving the safety. This is, for example, informing about the endangering safety issues to other employees, management and customers immediately. (Iivari 2012, 81.) The safety aspect must be displayed in a diverse way in the procedures of the companies and the safety training of employees (Iivari 2012, 38). Every employee in the organization acts as a safety expert while working. (Iivari 2012, 145.)

The law exists in a purpose of protection of everyone (Dix & Baird 1998, 29). Work Safety Act 45 § requires that a work place must be equipped with appropriate alarm systems, fire safety, lifesaving and rescue devices. According to the law the employer is liable in taking care of the physical and mental safety of the employees. The 29 § of the Work Safety Act obligates that in the work which nature includes obvious disadvantage or danger to his/her safety or health, an employee, who works alone, must be protected or minimized from the disadvantage/danger

by the employer. The employer must also ensure that the employee has a possibility to get help.

In addition, Rescue Act 15 § requires that all the lodging establishments, that have over ten beds, must have a safety plan. The plan should include the following issues:

- 1) Predicted dangerous situations and their impacts
- 2) Actions to prevent dangerous situations
- 3) Instructions for accidents and dangerous situations
- 4) Locations of the exits and arrangements for firefighting and rescue
- 5) Educating the safety personnel and other employees
- 6) Location of the air-raid shelter
- 7) Information spreading

The safety plan must be kept up to date and it needs to be informed to the employees regularly. (Pelastuslaki 8§ & 9§; Valtioneuvoston asetus)



### **3 HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN HOTEL BUSINESS**

According to Go, Monachello & Baum (1996, 1) human resource management practices are the key factors in successful tourism and hospitality companies and organizations. Many companies have to build competitive advantage with the help of employees in order to implement improved service processes in comparison to other similar companies. When formulating and implementing business plans and objectives, management should take into account employees' potential as a key competitive weapon and focus on human resource issues. This ensures content employees and customers who will come back. (Go et al. 1996, 2-3.)

#### **3.1 Recruiting and selecting of employees**

Even though recruiting and selecting employees are relatively high cost processes, they are still less expensive in the long run than recruiting and selecting unqualified staff. The human resource plan is crucial for the hotel business in order to recruit the right persons with the right skills, attitudes and knowledge to the right positions and the correct amount of people to work at the hotel. (Nieto 2014, 38.)

There are three critical steps to take into consideration when planning the process of human resources: recognizing the people who would be potential employees, encouraging them to apply the specific position and choosing the right applicants for different positions. If these steps are not completed, the employee selection will be left to chance and may fail. (Woods 2006, 87; Go et al. 1996, 269.) The goal of the selection and recruitment processes is to find the most suitable person for the chosen job. (Nieto 2014, 38.)

Many successful companies know that errors in the recruitment process lead to high staff turnover and are very costly. Thus, those companies search to decrease the turnover and other related costs by investing remarkable resources to ensure that proper employees are selected (Go et al. 1996, 269).

### **3.2 Orientation and training**

Orientation is defined by Hayes and Ninemeier (2004, 114) as “the process of providing basic information about the hotel which must be known by all of its employees.” Bernardin (1998, 172) defines training as “any attempt to improve employee performance on a currently held job or one related to it” whereas Go et al. (1996, 198) define it as “a systematic process through which an organization’s human resources gain knowledge and develop skills by instruction and practical activities that result in improved corporate performance”.

It is important to organize efficient orientation because of its help of establishing long-lasting relationships among the hotel and its employees and also creating a safe environment for both employees and customers. The aims of an efficient orientation program include several aspects that need to be taken into consideration. One goal is to reduce the staff turnover; studies have shown that the quality of the orientation has an influence directly on the turnover. Another goal is to provide consistency; an effective orientation will provide important information of how to deal with different situations, for example fire and evacuation. Also developing realistic expectations is important in order to ensure that new employees will know what the management personnel expect from them. (Hayes 2004, 114-115.)

Each department must have their own specific orientation programs regarding their nature of work since there is no sense of teaching front desk clerks to clean the kitchen in a safe way. However, all the employees regardless of the position and department must know about guest security and safety. Orientation programs should also include topics such as a hotel overview, the importance of effective guest service, guest safety and security concerns, a tour of all hotel areas and any special topics that are related to the specific hotel. (Hayes 2004, 114-115.)

Training of the (new) employees is crucial in order to get the best possible working results and the success of the hospitality and tourism industry depends on the effective training. In the working environment, that constantly changes, training is

an ongoing process that is seen in the management's commitment towards the employees. Training is also an investment in the employees throughout their careers in the company rather than only being able to accomplish specific tasks. When the employees are well-trained, the quality of work and the service are also higher and the security level stays in a higher position. It is essential that the current employees are trained regularly also. There is always new equipment and procedures that need to be updated but also older procedures are good to revise for current employees. Even though the experienced employees already have the basic knowledge of functions and procedures, they need to be trained as well as the new employees. (Hayes 2004, 114-117; Go et al. 1996, 195-218).

The training can be implemented in groups or in individual level (Dittmer 2002, 309). Companies organize different kinds of courses and orientation/training programs for their employees that are completed in groups. (Bernardin 1998, 197.) Group training as a method can be effective when more employees have to learn the same issues. Sometimes training needs an external expert to assist with the training process, for example the head of the fire department training about fire safety. Individualized training is one-to-one training method that includes for example instructing how to use the new equipment. (Hayes 2004, 116.)

### **3.2.1 Seasonality**

One of the disadvantages in hospitality industry is seasonality. There are specific peak and low seasons in the industry, which affect directly the functions of the hotels. More employees are needed during the peak seasons whereas low seasons require less staff. Because of this phenomenon, there are always people working only part-time or during the specific time of period. This creates challenges to the training because it is a continuous necessity and to organize the training for the seasonal employees requires many resources such as time and money. (Go et al. 1996, 275-276.) The training about safety issues may fluctuate within the company depending on whether the target group is permanent, seasonal or leased employees. In any case, the quality of the training and the know-how cannot be com-

promised (Iivari 2012, 145-146). Nevertheless, it is vital to organize training also to the part-time employees in order to insure the safety in the hotel (Go et al. 1996, 275-276).

It is important for the company/employer to motivate its employees because motivation is directly linked to the satisfaction of the employees. It also increases the service quality of the company. If the training is not organized properly, the employees may not feel committed to the company, which decreases the level of motivation and increases the staff turnover. (Go et al. 1996, 79-84).

### **3.3 Communication**

Communication is defined by Anssi Siukosaari (1988, 11) as “transmitting information between the transmitter and the receiver”. It plays a vital role in all hospitality and tourism organizations since it is most used of all skills. (Go et al. 1996, 21)

Communication is one of the key skills of the receptionists in order to run the hotel smoothly and it can be found in some form or another in almost every step of the work. There are different kinds of communication methods that are verbal, non-verbal or written. Verbal communication is for instance face to face interaction or communication by telephone. Receptionists use verbal communication when serving customers at the front desk or when handling reservations by phone. Non-verbal communication includes facial impressions, gestures and all the signals a person delivers without expressing the actual words verbally. In the work of the receptionists it is essential to spread a good image of the company for example by dressing properly according to the image of the organization and acting in an appropriate way while working. Written communication, on the contrary, involves handwritten and typewritten text which can be formed as emails, letters, enquiries, information boards etc. The personnel at the reception interact by e-mail with customers and cooperation partners and send messages between different depart-

ments within the company or to the customers using the internal channels, for instance messages that show on the screens in the rooms. (Dix et al. 1998, 37-65).

### **3.3.1 Internal communication**

Internal communication includes internal information (sisäinen tiedotus), which purpose is to deliver messages, and intercommunication (sisäinen yhteydenpito), which is cooperation between the management and the personnel. Internal information gives a good impression for the personnel about the business, products, goals, results and resources which help to reach the goals. (Siukosaari 1988, 50-88.) One example of internal information is for example a housekeeper informing the reception about the cleaned rooms (Dix & Baird 1998, 47). In the internal information it is also important to notify about the changes and future planning. The information clarifies the image of the company and gives both motivation and sensibleness for the employees. There are plenty of channels to use internal information such as meetings, information boards, announcements, staff magazines or intranet and briefings. (Siukosaari 1988, 50-88.)

Intercommunication is a tool for management to keep contact with the employees (Siukosaari 2002, 65). It contains all the internal communication of the company which deliver neither written and oral messages nor announcements but it is simply planned cooperation, for example recreation days within the company. The aims of the intercommunication are interaction between the management and the personnel as well as among the personnel, increasing social cohesion in the whole company and creating “we-spirit”. Together with internal information these two lead to a motivated, sensible and productive working environment. (Siukosaari 1988, 50-88.)

### **3.3.2 External communication**

Communication in some way or another outside the company is inevitable since no company is alone in this society. Every company has to have at least one client in order to function and make business. External communication is informing

about the business of the company to the outside world and keeping contact with its stakeholders. (Siukosaari 1988, 97.) One example of external communication is a confirmation of the reservation to a customer (Dix & Baird 1998, 47). People get a certain image of the company through external communication. The nature of the image, either negative or positive, is dependable on how well the external communication is conducted. Thus, it is extremely important to be able to successfully execute information and communication. (Siukosaari 1988, 97.)

External communication includes external information (ulkoinen tiedotus) and external intercommunication (ulkoinen yhteydenpito). External information delivers news and permanent information about the company to the stakeholders (for instance customers and cooperating companies). It involves for example press releases, press conferences and press interviews as well as normal interviews. External intercommunication, on the contrary, is to keep in contact with cooperation partners. The main idea is to develop personal connection between individuals and this is the key factor when creating positive atmosphere and good relationships between the cooperation partners. This kind of atmosphere ensures an easy and balanced base for working. (Siukosaari 1988, 102-148.)

## 4 CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

The word *crisis* comes from the Greek's 'krisis'. (Glaesser 2003, 1.) Glaesser (2003, 8) defines a crisis as an "unwanted unusual situation for an organization, which, due to the seriousness of the event, demands an immediate entrepreneurial response". The author also highlights a crisis to be hazardous and uncommon situation which requires fast decisions under certain time pressure. (Glaesser 2003, 2.) Moreover, everyone has their own ideas about what is meant by crisis; there is no standard definition for the word. Different people will interpret the word *crisis* in a way they experience it based on their knowledge. According to Henderson (2007, 12) crisis is "a situation in which an individual or organization is faced with the prospect of fundamental change, usually sudden and unforeseen, which threatens to disrupt and overturn prevailing philosophies and practices". On the other hand, Iivari (2012, 184), suggests that, in any case, crisis is always a change after which the world and individuals around it are different in comparison to the time before the crisis occurred.

What does a crisis mean? Various situations may lead a company, office, organization or an individual to a crisis (and possibly the headings of news), regardless they are not crises as such (Kriisikeskus Mobile Seinäjoki; Henriksson et al. 2002, 14-17). Occasionally the events are simply accidents or incidents but often they are consequences of negligence, immorality or crime. Regularly these kinds of events result in compromising the safety or health of people. (Henriksson et al. 2002, 14-17.)

What is then crisis management? According to Henriksson & Karhu (2002, 14-17) crisis is spontaneous, unpredictable and scaring, crippling or panicking incident which can be managed only with the specific crisis management. The know-how of predicting crisis situations and managing them does not exclude the threat of the situations but they help to reduce the physical and psychological consequences in many ways. Nevertheless, traumatic experiences occur. (Huhtala 1997, 16.) Henderson (2007, 12) defines the crisis management as following: "preparing for

and managing the process of crisis from inception to resolution with the primary objectives of minimizing damage”. In addition to Henderson, Glaesser (2003, 11) defines the concept as “a function refers to changes of tasks and processes when a crisis occurs”.

Crisis management creates challenges to every organization which many of them fail. Communication has a significant role in crisis management process. Coombs (2015, Preface) argues that “crisis communication is the life blood of crisis management”.

#### **4.1 Different crises**

Crises can be divided into two categories: development crises or so called life crises and traumatic crises. Life crises can be a result of the events that belong to a normal life but for some reason are experienced overwhelming. The reasons can be caused for instance by a birth of a child, children moving away from home or retirement. In addition to those, unemployment, illnesses or divorce can lead to a crisis. Traumatic crises usually arise suddenly and they often are unpredicted. Traumatic crises are results of for instance accident, severe illness, the sudden death of a relative or a beloved one, suicide or violence. (Kriisikeskus Mobile Seinäjoki, 2014.) In traumatic crises there are three different elements that need to be presented: triggering occasion causing tremendous change or having a possibility to cause tremendous change, perceived inability to cope with this change and a threat to the existence of the organization. (Henderson 2007, 3.)

The following gives an impression about different crises or events that can lead to a crisis and are possible to occur in every organization. *Accidents* are usually developing relatively fast compared to other crises. They are sudden and have surprising elements. Examples of these types of crises are fire, explosion, contaminant emission, poison disaster, death (traffic or sudden illness), suicide and natural disasters (such as flood, storm, snow, tsunami and earthquake). Accidents complicate service providing and are immediate threat to employees, guests and envi-



ronment. **Violence** actions are targeted intentionally towards a company, its properties, personnel and customers. The intention is to damage the premises and/or people. Examples of violence are bomb or bomb threat, murder, terrorism, mutilation, robbery, invasion, vandalism and extortion. **Epidemics** are diseases that are contagious. These diseases appear in exceptional amount of people of the certain population. Epidemics can burst as a consequence of a catastrophe or a disaster such as tropical storm, flood, earthquake or drought. Also animals can be infected, whereupon the performance of the community decreases even more. Examples of epidemics are Sars, Hiv/Aids and swine flu. **Personnel related crises** occur usually due to the problems in management culture. They can develop from resignation, layoff, occupational accident, revelations of the employees about sensitive issues concerning the business/company, neglect of the occupational safety and health directives as well as racism. **Economic crises** can arise from defective products, shortages of raw material, boycotting, malpractices, crime and unethical behavior, withdrawal of a products as well as recession. **Publicity crises** (so called “reputation crises”) start often from inaccurate news, scandal publicity, incorrect rumors, reckless statements, unskilled communication and secrecy accusations. **Industry crises** can arise from accidents or neglects within the industry but not necessarily inside the company, crises created by competitors or boycotting of the branch. Finally, **Technological crises** occur when technology fails in some way or another. Those are for example computer systems failure, mechanical failure and transport accidents. (Henriksson 2002, 25-28; Henderson 2007, 5, 104, 110; Iivari 2012, 13, 185-188; Red Cross.)

#### **4.2 Importance of crisis management**

Crisis surprises nearly every time (Iivari 2012, 185). There are crises that are possible to prevent or predict but also crises which nature cannot be predicted or prevented (Henriksson 2007, 3; 170; Iivari 2012, 187). In case a crisis occur, the only possibility is to make sure that preparations have been made. It is essential for companies and organizations to completely understand the importance of planning

and preventing the crisis situations and training the employees according to the plan. (Henderson 2007.) The image of a good company that has been built up for decades can be destroyed by an unlucky incident if the crisis management fails (Glaesser 2003, 7).

Huhtala (1997) highlights the importance of crisis management. In the book the author mentions different crises or situations that can lead to a crisis in hotels in Finland. Those are for instance fire, robbery, burglary, violence and bomb threat. All of these had happened once or more already in the 1990's in Finland. (Huhtala 1997, 306.) According to Huhtala (1997, 205-206) the main problem concerning safety issues is the attitudes of the people. The author discusses in the book about a research in which Finnish people were interviewed about the likelihood of a fire near the neighborhood area. 90 % of the respondents considered it likely to happen whereas only 16 % of them considered it could happen at their own houses. Hence, Huhtala (1997, 206) highlights that

*“an accident, a criminal activity or other threat can be targeted to any company, shift or person, anywhere and anytime in the world”.*

Huhtala (1997, 205) illustrates this with an example of the robbery in the spa hotel in the 90th century that occurred in a remote area in the western side of Finland. Also Tunturi (2015) relates to the same example of a crisis with personal experience about the case as working in the same hotel at the time. “It was a Monday morning, quarter to eight, when a dark suited person walked straight through to the back office of the reception. The robber insisted money with the gun from the night worker. The situation moved ahead to a battle which resulted in the gun to trigger and kill the receptionist.” Tunturi describes about another employee who was injured by the robber due to the escaping attempt. Both of the employees reacted incorrectly regardless of the instructions to give the money. The robber tried to rob two different gas stations before with no luck due to the crowded environment until finally arrived at the hotel. Both Huhtala (1997, 206) and Tunturi

(2015) highlight that the target of the robbery was a pure coincidence. The robber had no motive to target the robbery specifically to this hotel.

Another example is the shooting that happened in Hyvinkää 26.5.2012. The shooter did not have a clear motive to the shootings but he simply shot people randomly. The only motive was a lost “wrestling match” which did not explain his actions. (Yle Uutiset.) Unfortunately people do not invest or pay attention to the safety issues if they do not consider it necessary or believe its likelihood. Huhtala (1997, 206) argues that the possibility of facing a traumatic experience or incident is better to believe before it happens.

According to Iivari (2012, 187) the level of safety plannings and preparations is generally higher inside the larger organizations than in smaller companies. Many small companies consider themselves as small-scale operatives. Thus, the formulation of a crisis management plan is perceived to be formed by public sectors such as municipality, tourism marketing organizations and specific tourism region organizations. However, ultimately the responsibility of the safety issues is in every company but expert knowledge can be utilized. (Iivari 2012, 187-200.)

A survey about crisis management and security issues was conducted by the American Management Association (AMA) in the year of 2004. The main purpose was to compare how the 9/11 attack affected crisis management of different companies in the United States after the crisis. 174 people of different companies responded to the survey of which only 61% had the crisis management plan after two years from the attack. In addition, only a half of those companies had undertaken some form of training in the previous year. Therefore, Coombs (2015, 77) suggests that even if organizations do have a crisis management plan, without a proper training they are not prepared to manage a crisis.

One example of well performed actions and communication in a demanding crisis situation is a case Tylenol. An American medical company Johnson & Johnson was the target of sabotage in 1982 when a criminal had used cyanide as a weapon

to poison packages of medicine and within a couple of days seven people died. It became massive news all around the United States. After the murder of John F Kennedy it was the most known scandal. The medical company reacted fast and pulled the medicine off the markets immediately. It also invited the media to follow the action and actively informed it about the development of the process. The investigation about the scandal was conducted by several impartial experts. The company kept no secrets but openly wanted to inform and investigate what had happened. The whole process was worth of millions of dollars but the company was able to recover the loss with a good strategy. The key factors of a successful crisis management were openness, caring of the consumers and taking responsibility with good internal and external communication. (Henriksson 2002, 84-86; Regester 1990, 13-16.)

### **4.3 Crisis management and communication process**

According to Coombs (2015, 5-6) there are four factors belonging to crisis management process: prevention, preparation, response and revision. The process is illustrated in Figure 3. For efficient crisis communication it is a necessity to understand the crisis management process and also to operate according to it (Coombs 2015, 5-6). Management of the hotel should be able to evaluate the likelihood of different crises, form different methods in preventing them and in addition devise strategies for coping the crises when they occur. Thus, the main goals of the crisis management are to diminish risks, get ready for them, react and recover. (Henderson 2007, 10.)



**Figure 3** Crisis management and communication process

#### 4.3.1 Prevention

The core of crisis management is to prevent it (Regester 1990, 133). Prevention is trying to avoid the crisis to happen by completing specific actions (Coombs 2015, 5). Prevention of the crises should be taken into account before they occur. During this stage of process it is important to realize that everything can happen and an organization should be prepared for anything in the worst possible way. It does not make the hotel safe if no crises nor incidents have happened before. It has been a matter of a good luck rather than an indicator of safety. (Huhtala 1997, 20; Regester 1990, 64.)

The prevention stage contains identifying the sources that are needed to examine, collecting the information and finally analyzing it. The sources used to examine can be for example trends, events, changes in environment as well as social, political and health issues. These factors can lead to risks and furthermore to crises. By taking these factors into account, the organization can easier identify the warning signs of possible threats. (Coombs 2015, 44-55.) The so called “close call situations” are significant from the prevention point of view. These situations are unfortunate but at the same time they provide valuable information for companies to improve or adjust their functions before the severe incident takes place. (Iivari 2012, 175.)

A risk assessment is created in the prevention stage. It includes researching possible risks and their severeness and greatness as well as predicting their likelihood to happen concerning the business (Regester 1990, 56-57). Recognizing possible risks at the working environment is the responsibility of every employee (e.g. possible risks for fire) (Iivari 2012, 100-101). The greatness of the risks can be assessed by using different models. An example model below (Figure 4) shows the likelihood of various risks and their harmfulness. The model can be used as a tool for estimating possible consequences, getting a general view about the situation and acquiring information of the actions that are needed in crisis solving. (Työturvallisuuskeskus, 2009.) In the risk assessment the effects of fire, water damage, bomb threat, bout of illness or external activity should be analyzed and recognized to the business of the organization. Each company is individual and the risk types are different. Consequently, it is vital that the people working in a specific company take part in the planning process where the risk assessment is formed and the activities to prevent them are taken into consideration as well as the actions in case of the crisis arises. (Suomen Hotelli- ja Ravintolaliitto SHR ry, 2004, 8).

Occurance	Consequences		
	1 Trivial	2 Harmfull	3 Serious
1 Unlikely	Low risk	Minor risk	Moderate risk
2 Potential	Minor risk	Moderate risk	Significant risk
3 Likely	Moderate risk	Significant risk	Unbearable risk

**Figure 4** Risk assessment model

(Työturvallisuuskeskus, 2009)

### 4.3.2 Preparation/planning

Preparation stage includes the following actions: assessing crisis types, selecting and training crisis management team, preparing crisis management plan, organizing simulated practices and developing communication system for crisis situations (Coombs 2015, 5, 68). Crisis management team (CMT) is a group of people in the company who have been selected to work in crisis situations (Coombs 2015, 68-69). If the team is effective, it reduces the possibility of the risks to arise, helps to control and manage the crisis and minimize the damage concerning the reputation of the company (Regester 1990, 58). The main task of the crisis management team is to ensure that a crisis never arises (Regester 1990, 62).

Crisis management plan (CMP) is a written, detailed document that consists of all the information needed to manage crisis situations. It is neither a step-by-step nor too long and complicated directive but the main purpose is to provide certain guidelines and advice that can help to handle crises. (Coombs 2015, 90). Crisis management plan includes for example the risk assessment and the responsibilities of the crisis management team members as well as their contact details for crisis situations. It should also include guidelines of how to act in different crisis situations (Regester 1990, 67-68.) However, preparing a crisis management plan for every single crisis is impossible. Instead, the crisis management plan can be made for major types of crises and those can be adjusted in different crisis situations. (Coombs 2015, 68.)

Crisis management plan cannot be overemphasized. The plan should be available for every employee, not only for the managers. A lack of the CMP can lead to hours of wasted work in crisis situations where time management is extremely important. Without the CMP employees do not remember or are not aware of how to act in crisis situations. (Regester 1990, 67-68.) On the other hand, the companies with a CMP they have never tested are no better off than companies without a CMP at all (Coombs 2015, 90).

When the CMP is ready, it needs to be updated and revised regularly. By testing and practicing the plan the employees are up to date and prepared for handling the crises as well. (Regester 1990, 67-71.) Everyone at the work place have to know the content of the safety plan/crisis management plan. Nevertheless, the knowhow of the plan is not enough but a concrete exercise is also required. It can be for instance a security walking in which the premises are walked through and all the relevant equipment and for example the locations of fire exits, meeting point, bomb shelter and alarm buttons are examined. All the activities should be performed according to the safety plan/crisis management plan of the organization. (Iivari 2012, 100-101.)

One of the most important factors when organizing the safety training/drills is to recognize possible defects during the process that need to be altered. For getting the best possible results the exact dates and times should not be revealed and thus the training experiment is most realistic. When the personnel is not aware of the state of the situation, whether it is real or fake, they have to act according to the plan and their signed roles. To maximize all the benefits of the drills it is good to have professional observers who monitor the entire rehearsal from the beginning to the end. (Regester 1990, 67-71). Iivari also suggests (2012, 200) that in the future there is a growing need to organize smaller-scales safety trainings with the help of the professionals in addition to the trainings organized by the authorities. At the end of the drill conclusions are drawn with the help of the professionals (Regester 1990, 67-71).

When planning the ways of reaction in crisis situations, it is always crucial to keep in mind the worst case scenarios. However, overreaction is a risk in this situation because not all the crises require as wide scale reaction. (Regester 1990, 64.) Certainty can be developed only with an adequate planning (Regester 1990, 37).



### 4.3.3 Response

People perceive all the crises as easily noticeable and large-scale events. Some crises are relatively easy to recognize but not all the crises are that obvious. Therefore, some companies occasionally do not recognize to be in a crisis situation and in addition to that, people have different opinions of whether the situation is a crisis or not. An actual crisis, in any case, puts crisis preparation of the company to the test. (Coombs 2015, 109).

The main goals of the response stage are to prevent or minimize the damage, maintain the organization's operations and repair reputational damage. Clear communication is necessary to these goals. (Coombs 2015, 139.) Response includes the actions and communication systems that are needed to manage the crisis and those are instructing information, adjusting information and reputational management. When instructing and adjusting information are handled properly, the reputation management is not necessarily needed. (Coombs 2015, 131, 139.)

In response the actual crisis does occur and the focus is to respond it quickly, openly and honestly. These three are the main principles of crisis communication. Furthermore, other important principles are initiative, responsibility and humanity that are significant from the company's point of view. (Henriksson 2002, 18-19.)

The following step of the crisis management team is collecting and combining the information as soon as possible. The team/the company should also be the first party to inform the stakeholders about the situation. This ensures that the information is correct and accurate. In case a company fails to be the first source, media will find the information in any case. In this kind of situation the information may be inaccurate or even false, affecting negatively the image of the company and even harming the company's reputation. (Coombs 2015, 131-132; Regester 1990, 110; Henriksson 2002, 60.) It is crucial to understand that the media tend to exaggerate the event (Henriksson 2002, 92).

When the crisis is on, a crisis room, where the representatives of the management can gather, has to be set up. The meaning of the crisis room is a peaceful place for preparing press releases and organizing the information. (Regester 1990, 115-116.) The crisis room includes different communication channels such as phone, printer, TV and computer. In addition to the crisis room, a media center can be set up if needed as well. In the media center possible press conferences are held and it limits the movement of the media. (Nykiel 2005, 312.)

As already mentioned, it is vital to be quick in giving information. Still, fast informing may create risks. These risks arise from the organization's lack of proper information or the information may be misleading due to human errors. (Coombs 2015, 131.) Openness and honesty are the two other principles in crisis communication (Henriksson 2002, 18). To be able to create trust it is important for the company to tell all the information that is available (Regester 1990, 109-110). However, the company needs to take into consideration trade secrets and privacy policies. (Henriksson 2002, 60.)

The information about the crisis situation must be consistent, along with honesty and quickness. All the spokespersons from the company must be well prepared for giving the information in a consistent manner in order to stay in-line with the rest of the group. (Coombs 2015, 133-134.)

Sometimes it can take time to acquire all the necessary information regarding the situation since there are limits to respond quickly. Hence it is acceptable for the representative of the company to say that the information will be given later and immediately when it is available. It is always better to give some information rather than refuse to give any. Silence or saying "no comments" is the worst possible way to interact with media, which encourages the stakeholders to presume the company has a reason to hide something. Many times it even implies that "I am guilty". It also expresses uncertainty and passivity and suggests that the company does not try to take control over the situation. A successful communication management is as relevant issue as successful crisis management itself. The stake-

holders' understanding about the crisis is based on what they hear, see and read. (Regester 1990, 90; Coombs 2015, 131-132; Henriksson 2002, 59.) Coombs (2015, 132-133) illustrates this with an example of Sierra Chemical dynamite manufacturing facility explosion. The crisis took place in Nevada, United States in the year of 1998. The representatives of the company did not have enough information in order to be able to give a full statement regarding the accident. Instead, the company decided to wait with the statement until it had gathered all the necessary information. Consequently, the other sources provided the media with false information about how the accident occurred due to the mismanagement of the company. Therefore, it is always better to inform the stakeholders that the situation is under the investigation rather than let them receive false information from the other sources. Another example is the Sago mine tragedy that occurred in West Virginia in 2006. The relatives were informed that all the miners were alive, when in reality only one of the workers survived. This fateful mistake increased tremendously the suffering of the families. (Coombs 2015, 132-133.)

Sometimes response may even lead to an improved organization when the possible pitfalls are taken into consideration. (Coombs 2015, 5; Henriksson 2002, 59.) One example of a well performed crisis management is the case Tylenol, which exponentially improved the reputation of the organization (Regester 1990, 13-16).

#### **4.3.4 Revision**

None of the crises lasts forever. The crisis comes to an end when its immediate consequences are passed and the media is no longer interested in the event. Subsequently, the company should remember that the crisis work continues after the crisis. (Henriksson 2002, 70; Coombs 2015, 162.) Every crisis is an opportunity for the company to learn something new about the business and the crisis management process itself (Henriksson 2002, 70).

The revision stage includes evaluation and learning. (Henriksson 2002, 70; Coombs 2015, 162). The first step is to collect data for the evaluation process. It is

collected as a feedback from the employees and the stakeholders. There are three main issues that are evaluated: performance of the organization and the crisis management team, effectiveness of the CMP and its execution and the damages of the crisis. The performance is evaluated in its entirety and the interaction with the media is also important to be analyzed (Coombs 2015, 167).

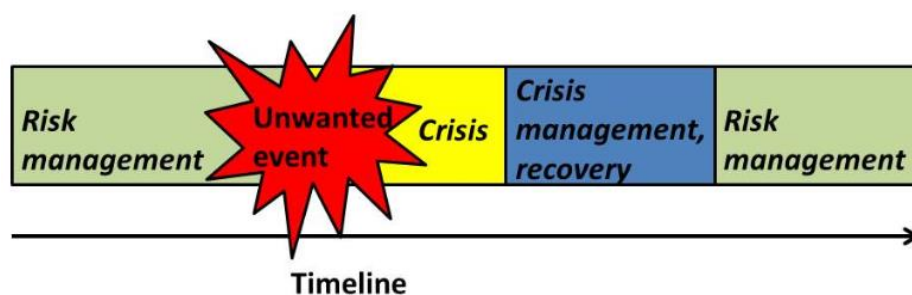
In the evaluation there are several factors that should also be analyzed. First, the reason for why the crisis arose is important to clarify. Then, reaction for the crisis should be evaluated. It is important to analyze if the crisis was recognized early enough, how the crisis management team was able to begin with the work and whether the briefing started quickly enough. Also communication and the interaction with the media are essential to be analyzed. How did the media receive the information and did the information distort during the event? Were there misleading or incorrect information and was it repaired? What other faults were recognized in the communication? These questions help the organization to recognize whether communication was successful during the crisis situation. The last part of the evaluation is to analyze if the crisis affected the image and the reputation of the organization and which actions are needed to conduct in order to recover the reputation. (Henriksson 2002, 70.).

Based on the results of the total evaluation, conclusions about the severity of the damages are estimated. If the crisis management has been successful, the actual damages should be lower than the expected damages. The core idea of the evaluation is to measure the weaknesses and the strengths of the CMP and the crisis management itself and based on those improvements and corrections can be executed. (Coombs 2015, 163-164.) They are implemented by taking into consideration the possible faults that occurred in the crisis management before. Unfortunately, the improvements and corrections may be forgotten over time. The company returns to the old routines and does not take into account the new improvement actions and safety issues in further plannings and implementations. This is a common phenomenon for example in the situation when the employees and the

employer change. (Tunturi 2015.) On the other hand, Iivari argues (2012, 196) that in many cases the companies which have previously faced a crisis still do not learn from them. The importance of the crisis management and communication may be comprehended but the planning and the training have not been implemented (Iivari 2012, 196).

In case the crisis is managed poorly, the likelihood of a new crisis appearance arises (Nykiel 2005, 515). On the contrary, crises bring a possibility to acquire a reputation of the successful company (Coombs 2015, 144-160). Experienced crises are not necessarily negative since they are learning experiences. In case a company has successfully managed the crisis situation (such as analyzed it, developed the management and made corrections and improvements in the process), it has an advantage when comparing to other companies. (Iivari 2012, 187.)

Crisis management process is ongoing, which is illustrated in Figure 5. It does not end after the end of the previous crisis. Instead, after evaluation and possible improvements and corrections new procedures and training methods are implemented in the organization. These are rehearsed regularly and it ensures that the organization is ready for the next crisis. Hence, the crisis management never ends - it is an ongoing process. (Coombs 2015, 175.)



**Figure 5** Crisis management is an ongoing process

(Iivari 2012, 186)

## 5 CRISIS BEHAVIOR

Many different abnormal situations may trigger a crisis. A crisis encounters many parties; company, individuals and the society. The crisis of the company affects directly to its management, employees and customers as well as indirectly stakeholders and the society around the company. The occurrence is perceived as an own and personal matter even if an individual has not been an immediate party of the crisis. (Iivari 2012, 186.) A crisis of an individual is always a crisis of a work community as well (Iivari 2012, 199).

### 5.1 Phases of the crisis

Tunturi (2015) defines the word crisis as following:

*“a situation in which previous experiences and knowledge no longer applies to the unexpected and sudden event and which an individual does not comprehend”.*

There are four phases in the crisis management process of an individual: shock, reaction, coping and reorientation (Iivari 2012, 190). The phases of the process are demonstrated below in Figure 6. The first phase, shock, involves denial and stagnation. An individual experiences symptoms of denial emotions such as “this cannot be happening”. In this phase heroic deeds are committed in case people’s lives are in danger. However, in a situation that does not require heroic deeds an individual is often paralyzed before taking actions. (Tunturi 2015.)

After the shock phase the realization of the event is unraveled. Thus, the individual considers possible actions needed to prevent to minimize the damage and the consequences of the event – what it means personally to him. Strong emotions are typical part of this phase. (Tunturi 2015; Iivari 2012, 190.)

The phase of copying includes the analyzation of the event and its consequences. The individual often withdraws from the personal contacts and is unwilling to discuss about the event. The traumatic occurrence is no longer disturbing constantly and strong emotions decreases gradually. (Iivari 2012, 191; Tunturi 2015.) Final-

ly, the last phase is reorientation. The acceptance of the event becomes a part of the life and self-esteem returns slowly. (Iivari 2012, 191.)

The Phases of an Individual's Personal Crisis Management	
1. Shock	Short time - a couple of days
2. Reaction	4-6 weeks
3. Coping	½- 1 year
4. Reorientation	The event has become part of the person's history and the self-esteem is gradually attained

**Figure 6** The phases of an individual's personal crisis management

(Iivari 2012, 190)

## 5.2 Preparation and actions

According to Tunturi (2015) it is important that receptionists possess “a sense of security-thinking”. This means to always consider safety issues while working, instead of ignoring them and thinking “whatever”. This kind of attitude helps the employees to understand that anything can happen. Therefore, the safety issues are taken into account more precisely in personal level. (Tunturi 2015.)

Tunturi (2015) emphasizes the importance of visualization exercise. According to her it is the most important tool for preparation. The exercise ensures that the individual can be mentally prepared to face a crisis and has a clearer vision of the actions needed to perform. Personal realization is needed in order to be mentally prepared and to act according to the safety plan/crisis management plan. (Tunturi 2015.)

There are countless ways to react and respond to a crisis. Those are for example paralyzing/getting a shock, running away, hysteria/panic, taking responsibility of the actions needed, hyperventilating, over activity, lack of feelings and peaceful acting. (Tunturi 2015; Iivari 2012, 190.) The ways of reaction cannot be generalized; everyone reacts in his own way depending on the place and time. Also gender, background, education, experience and age have an effect on one's behavior in crisis situations. (Tunturi 2015.)

### **5.3 Training**

It is not enough to arrange a training that involves only oral or written instructions but a concrete training together with the visualization exercise is the key element of the successful individual preparation. Concrete training involves "hands on" rehearsal in which different steps of the entire process are reviewed. Every participant needs to have an opportunity to "try out" the equipment and the procedures in order to manage a crisis. (Tunturi 2015.)

A regular and concrete training about safety and security issues guarantee better preparedness for the individuals to respond to a crisis since the participants confront various situations while working. An important part of the training is to participate and discuss together with a group or an individual. The core idea is to evoke thoughts among the participants – it is everyone's own responsibility to consider the safety issues properly. (Tunturi 2015.)

Every employee should have a right to participate in the safety training regardless of the length of the employment contract or the nature of it (whether it is part-time or full-time). A crisis requires neither time or place nor the employee who is working during the specific work shift. Everyone should be prepared to face a crisis anytime and anywhere. (Tunturi 2015.)



#### **5.4 After the crisis**

As already mentioned, individuals are reacting differently in crisis situations. Similarly, they have numerous ways of coping (Tunturi 2015). Tunturi (2015) suggests that individuals tend to utilize the same kinds of coping methods that they use in relaxation – something that creates positive and restful emotions. For example, some listen to classical music or go for a walk or a run and the others paint or draw to feel better. Tunturi (2015) argues that one of the most effective ways is often to discuss about the situation, especially with peer support.

In case an individual fails to decode the emotions and process the event, there is a potential risk that it will disturb and “haunt” one’s life for a very long time. It is crucial to handle the event properly. (Tunturi 2015.) Therefore, it is important for the company to organize debriefing for its employees after the crisis. The meaning of the debriefing is to decode emotions, thoughts and experiences of the occurrence together with the coworkers and especially with those who have been involved in the situation as well. Well-managed crisis support including sufficient debriefing with a proper timing has long-term influences on the competitiveness and the cohesion of the organization. (Iivari 2012, 199.)

## **6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Because the aim of the research was to gain information about crisis management in Finnish hotels from the receptionists' point of view, the qualitative method for conducting the research was chosen. This approach was fulfilled by utilizing in-depth interviews. The qualitative method, in this case, gives more benefits for the study than a quantitative method. First, the interviews enable the interviewees to ask additional questions if necessary. Secondly, the interviewers have a possibility to give deeper answers and information. Finally, the interviews ensure mutual comprehension.

### **6.1 The respondents**

The respondents were chosen by utilizing friends, family and acquaintances. All the respondents are hotel receptionists working either part-time or full-time. One of them is also a trainee and a summer worker at the hotel. Seven respondents in total were interviewed based on their location, the nature of the employment contract and whether the hotel is a private or chain hotel. The purpose was to find interviewees from different parts of Finland. Half of the respondents are working full-time and the other half part-time. Two of the respondents are working in private hotels whereas the rest work in different chain hotels in Finland. Six of the interviewees are women and one is a man. The study wants to investigate whether the employment relationship type, location of the work place or the differences between the chain and a private hotel affect the results. In the theoretical study hotels are defined according to their size as small (1-50 rooms), medium-sized (50-250 rooms) and large (+250 rooms). Two of the interviewees work in a small hotel, five in a medium-sized one and one in a large hotel.

### **6.2 The interview process**

Most of the interviews were conducted face to face but one of them was a phone interview due to the location related problems. The interviews were held either at

the respondents' or the interviewers' homes. This was because of the sensitiveness of the subject and the respondents felt more comfortable to answer to the questions in a private area. The interviews were conducted between the end of September and the beginning of October. The language used in the interviews was Finnish.

The interview included nineteen open-ended questions of which some had additional questions as well. The questions were tested by two individuals before the actual interviews to ensure the structure and the clarity of the questions. All the questions were based on the theory in the theoretical framework. With the help of the questions the goal was to gather as much information about hotel safety related issues as possible focusing especially on crisis management.

In the beginning of the interviews the respondents were asked background information in order to gain deeper information about their work experiences and the information needed to get started. A benefit of conducting "small talk" at the beginning of the discussions was that the respondents felt more comfortable with the interview. All the interviewees accepted that the interviews were recorded for making the analysis of the results. After conducting the interviews they were transcribed and analyzed.

### **6.3 Validity and reliability**

Validity addresses the problem of whether a measure indeed measures or predicts what it is supposed to measure or predict (Zikmund 2000, 376; Woods 2006, 124). Reliability, on the contrary, refers to the degree of consistency. If the measure has strong reliability, there should be similar results in every time it is conducted. In other words, measuring instrument should be able to provide consistent results in repeated uses. (Bui 2014, 150.)

In the research most of the results are based on the individual subjective experiences and emotions. Therefore, the objective observation may suffer. Any of the possible misunderstandings in a question formulation can have an effect on the

validity in case the respondents do not understand the questions in an intended way. The other influences affecting the results and thus the validity are interviewers' own possible additional comments and questions, subject leadings and other activity that may have influenced the respondents answers. In addition, due to the sensitiveness of the subject there is a chance that the respondents do not want or dare to reveal all the information they possess. Another influencing factor may be the translations that were needed since the interviews were conducted in Finnish.

The liability of the interviewees' answers may have an effect on the validity as well. The receptionists might not have answered what they really think because of the fear of consequences. They might not dare to criticize the company they represent or denigrate the image of the company they are working for. In addition, the receptionists may feel ashamed to reveal that they do not have adequate knowledge about the safety issues at their working places or have not realized the importance of it. Asking questions on issues that they have inadequate or no knowledge at all can be deficiency to the validity of the research. People tend to answer to questions even if they do not have the knowledge that the researcher is seeking. This is usually the case when the respondent does not want to ignore the questions nor disappoint the researcher.

However, the names of the interviewees, the companies or even the locations are not revealed during any stages of the research process. In order to make the respondents to feel more comfortable to discuss about sensitive issues, the interviews were conducted in quiet environments either at the interviewer's or respondent's home. Also, when conducting in-depth interviews the personal contact between the interviewers and the interviewees supports the validity and reliability of the research.

## **7 RESULTS**

The first two questions were asked in order to get the information about the receptionists' overall feelings of safety and security regarding the work place and in addition about the nature of their work (whether the receptionists work alone and/or in night shifts). According to Iivari (2012) people are more concerned about the safety issues and the need of feeling safe has increased due to the accidents and terrorism attacks in the past few years.

As Huhtala mentions (1997) there are significant risk factors when working alone and specifically during night shifts. Therefore, it was also asked in which situations the receptionists feel unsafe. The questions were formed in a way that they could not be leading the respondents. That is why the question about feeling safe was asked first and after that the question about the nature of the work.

Six of the respondents are working all shifts and only one is not working during the nights. Most of the receptionists answered that they do not always feel comfortable or safe while working whereas two of the respondents stated that they feel safe always or most of the time. The reasons mentioned for feeling unsafe were working alone and especially during night shifts. Some of the respondents also said they feel unsafe while working in the evening, specifically during different events in the city. The emotions of fear and uncertainty were emphasized due to the respondents' awareness of having to solve all the problems alone while working.

### **7.1 Recruiting and orientation questions**

The purpose of the questions related to recruiting and orientation was to investigate whether the receptionists have received the orientation in the recruitment process and the quality of orientation if it has been organized. Another reason for the questions was to find out if the training has been organized when the equip-

ment or systems have changed and if the training has an influence on the working motivation.

As Go et al. (1996) argue, the security level stays higher if the orientation and the training are organized properly. The results show that most of the respondents had received some sort of orientation, of which two mentioned it to be very good. Two receptionists said to have read through the orientation manual without physical orientation. However, nobody checked if the orientation manual had been read. Some of the interviewees told they had had a hotel tour with the other employee or supervisor before the actual work began.

According to Hayes (2004) the experienced staff needs the training as well when the new equipment is purchased, for example. Two of the respondents mentioned they have not got any training regarding the changes of the equipment or procedures. The rest mentioned that they have been given written information about the changes except one who mentioned to have received a proper training.

When asking about the orientation and training's effects on the working satisfaction or motivation, two receptionists who had received a good orientation answered that it has affected in a positive way whereas the rest stated that the lack of proper orientation or not having the orientation at all has affected negatively on their working. Hayes (2004) highlights the importance of organizing an efficient orientation because of its help of establishing long-lasting relationships among the hotel and its employees.

## **7.2 Communication questions**

The purpose of the following questions was to learn about communication tools at the receptionists' work places and the functionality of both internal and external communication. Dix et al. (1998) claim that one of the key skills of the receptionists is communication. It also plays a vital role in all the hospitality industry since it is most used of all skills, as Go et al. (1996) suggest. Coombs (2015), on the contrary, highlights the importance of communication in crisis management. Ac-

cording to the author it is necessary in order to manage the crisis situation successfully.

The base for these questions was to investigate how communication functions at the receptionists' work places. All the interviewees mentioned they have e-mail and one or more phones as a communication tool as well as having some form of information flyers or information board in both external and internal communication uses. Most of them mentioned they have a diary (either electronic or paper version) for internal communication to keep the reception colleagues up to date about general information and the recent events as well as upcoming news and offers. The diary was also mentioned to be a good source of information about reservations and customers coming to stay at the hotel. Nevertheless, the diary system was considered functional only in the places where it was kept up to date. Two of the interviewees mentioned that they have a possibility to take a phone with them when for instance visiting upper floors.

Most of the respondents answered that overall internal communication does not work the way it should or it only occasionally works as it should. A few mentioned it works as long as the employees are active themselves and one considered it working well as it is. Many of the interviewees mentioned that internal communication works rather well inside the reception department whereas communication between the other departments can be problematic, which has affected negatively on the customer service at the front desk. On the chain hotel level some mentioned that the communication problems arise already from the management level because of too many middlemen in different positions inside the organization. This can lead to several problems due to the information overload and the piles of work that managers are individually responsible for. The messages inside the company get lost on the way and never reach all the people intended to or the management simply forgets to inform the employees about relevant issues regarding the hotel and its operations. One mentioned that the grass-roots level employees are not taken into consideration in decision making. Therefore, in many cases

the employees know in advance that the specific procedure will not work in the long run the way the management has planned. In one case the relationship between the employees and the employer is poor for many reasons. One reason is that the employer only gives negative feedback and never thanks or praises the employees. Another reason is that the employer often gets angry whenever the employees ask for help. This is why the employees, because of the fear, do not dare to bother the employer. The interviewee told the following: “At one time when the fire alarm went off, my colleague called me and asked me what she should do”. They would rather call the other employees in order to get the information than ask the employer.

Also external communication was mentioned by all the respondents as not working properly. However, not all the interviewees seemed to have a clear vision about the external communication and its functionality since it is partly managed by the upper levels. A few respondents highlighted the lack of resources. Due to the financial problems the equipment at the front desk should have been updated years ago. This affects negatively everything and especially the communication with customers. According to one respondent, external communication works in an appropriate way in the hotel level but not in the chain level. E-mail was mentioned to be the only external communication tool to work properly in all of the respondents' places at work. In one case external communication was mentioned not to work with the cooperation partners because of the manager's errors. All in all, most of the interviewees thought that both internal and external communication in the hotel should be improved.

### **7.3 Questions about safety plan and crisis management plan**

According to Rescue Act 15 § all the hotels in Finland exceeding ten beds must have a safety plan whereas a crisis management plan is not required by law. However, Tunturi (2015) emphasizes the importance of the crisis management plan and insists it should be a part of safety and security planning. In the next questions



the receptionists were asked whether the safety plan and crisis management plan exist at their working places.

All the respondents said that they have a safety plan at their places of working. Some of them are separate written manuals, some are a part of the orientation manual and some are different files on the computer. Most of the respondents stated that they had been told to independently read the plan by themselves without anybody to check whether the employees actually read the folder. Two interviewees were not told about the safety issues or even the existence of the safety plan. Only one respondent mentioned they have gone through the safety plan with the supervisor. The same respondent was the only one having the crisis management plan at the working place. The rest were not aware of the existence of the crisis management plan or they were uncertain whether the crisis management plan exists at their working places. A few had never heard about the plan before.

In addition, the respondents were asked whether they have become familiar with the safety issues independently at their working places. Tunturi (2015) underlines that visualization exercises are extremely important. According to her they are the most important tool for personal preparation. The exercises ensure that the individual can be mentally prepared to face a crisis and has more clear vision of the actions needed to perform. Personal realization is needed in order to be mentally prepared and to act according to the safety plan/crisis management plan.

All the interviewees except one answered that they have gone through the safety and security issues individually, for example, by reading the safety plan. One respondent said: "I have gone through them a hard way since I did not know clearly what to do when we last had a fire alarm. Actually all of us (employees) at the hotel got poor feedback from the fire department about the handling of the situation." Many mentioned to have read the safety issues occasionally from the manual during the quiet moments, for example during night time or on Sunday evenings. Some of the respondents said that they regularly read the manual whereas the others admitted that they occasionally read it.

#### 7.4 Questions about safety training

The following questions of the interview were asked concerning the safety training. The aim of the questions was to clarify whether the respondents have had the training, how often the training was organized and whether working alone or night shifts have been taken into account, how satisfied the receptionists are with the training they have received and if the training has affected their working motivation. In addition, the respondents were asked their hopes regarding to the training and whether the respondents think they are able to adjust their behavior due to the training.

Surprisingly, not everyone had received the safety training at their places of working. Four respondents mentioned to have received some form of training by either the employer or external authority (such as a fire department). Two said not to have received any kind of training and two mentioned to have participated to the training that was provided by the hotel chain. Almost everyone had different experiences regarding the training when it was organized by the employer: hotel tour from the safety point of view, lecture, concrete training in which a fake situation was played step-by-step and personal lecture by the supervisor. Working alone and night shifts was not taken into consideration especially in the majority's safety training. However, all the respondents considered the safety training to be better when organized in a concrete way, using "hands-on" method. This is linked to the theoretical study where Iivari (2012) argues that the know-how of the safety plan is not enough but a concrete exercise is also needed and all the receptionists act as a safety expert while working. One respondent, who had not received any training, expressed that when asking about the safety issues from the employer the answer was; "We have such thick doors and walls that they will hold up the fire for three hours. You can inform the guests to stay there and wait."

Only one respondent mentioned to have the safety training organized annually. A few mentioned that they have received the training once during a couple of years and the rest had not received it at all. The majority of the respondents had never

participated in evacuation drills even though they had received the training in some form. One respondent mentioned not to have had a possibility to participate in the drills due to the fact of working part-time. All the interviewees agreed that the safety training was not organized regularly enough and most of them added that the regular training would increase the certainty and give tools in preparing to handle threatening situations or crises. The theoretical study supports this by suggesting that individual employees are guaranteed by the regular and concrete safety training to be better prepared to face various situations (Tunturi 2015).

The receptionists, who mentioned to have received the training, were satisfied with the way it was organized. However, one respondent argued that all the employees from every department should have participated in the training instead of that only some of the receptionists take part. One interviewee suggested that every second year large-scale drills should be organized in which the whole company, including the management, participate in and the help of the public authorities such as fire department should be utilized. In addition to that, smaller-scale trainings should be implemented annually within the hotel in which every department would go through their specific tasks regarding the threatening situation or crisis.

According to Regester (1990) recognizing possible defects in safety related issues is one of the most important factors when organizing the training. One receptionist, who told about the situation when the fire alarm went off and which was managed poorly by the employees, added that neither corrections were made nor further instructions were given afterwards although the fire department gave notice about handling of the situation.

Regarding the safety training the respondents were asked whether the seasonality has an influence on the amount and the quality of the training. Those respondents mentioning to have received safety training said that seasonality has not affected the training. In two cases it has had negative impacts. During the peak seasons more employees need to be recruited in order to keep the system working. Nonetheless, one respondent said that the lack of resources and the rush disallows the

new employees to receive safety training or even proper orientation. Also Go et al. (1996) claim that there are always people working only part-time during peak seasons. This creates challenges to the training due to the lack of resources such as time and money. However, Go et al. (1996) insist that it is essential to organize the training for the part-time employees as well in order to ensure the safety in the hotel.

### **7.5 Questions about crisis situations and experiences**

The next questions discuss crises and threatening experiences of the respondents as well as their possible reactions or behavior towards crisis situations. The respondents were asked how they assume to react in crisis situations, if any crises or threatening situations have occurred during their work shifts and whether they think that they would have reacted differently five years ago compared to today. In addition, also the opinions about visualization exercises were asked from the respondents. The questions about behaving in crisis situations are linked to the theory of crisis behavior and the factors that affect the behavior by Tunturi (2015). According to the theoretical study there are numerous ways to react and behave in crisis situations and gender, background, education, experience and age influence on the way of reacting in different situations.

None of the respondents had experienced crises during their work experiences at their working places. Nevertheless, the majority of them said to have faced threatening situations which could have led to a crisis or serious danger. A situation when the fire alarm goes off was mentioned to be the most common among the receptionists. Four out of seven interviewees had experienced this kind of a situation once or more and one respondent even tens of times. However, none of the occasions have included an actual fire. Some of the respondents told about the experiences with threatening people and one respondent told about a situation which included a knife. One interviewee mentioned about a technical failure occurring at the hotel which had affected the whole functionality of the hotel. In this case the event could have affected directly the hotel's reputation if it had been managed

poorly. One respondent also shared an experience of a theft situation which was not discovered until the next day. The nature of the situation was exceptional due to the fact that the thief managed to enter the hotel through an unexpected entrance without anyone noticing and after observing the functioning of the doors for a longer time he was able to get inside. Another threatening situation occurred in the hotel room in which a hotel guest attacked a colleague of one of the respondent. The hotel guest was dissatisfied and had many requests. The respondent said the following: “The first time when I entered the hotel room the guest behaved just normally but the second time when my colleague went to the same room she was attacked by the guest.”

In some of the cases the respondents told that they had at least discussed or gone through the occasions with their coworkers. Nevertheless, the management levels of all the hotels were mentioned not to have organized any processing after the events together or separately with the employees. The only case when the procedures have been improved after a threatening situation is the “attack case”. A new rule was that no one is to enter the hotel room alone while the guest is inside. Unfortunately, the rule was forgotten soon. According to Tunturi (2015) it is a common phenomenon to forget the improvement actions over time (the ones that have been implemented after the crisis) and return to the old routines.

The interviewees had various thoughts and feelings about their possible reactions towards the crisis situations based on their previous experiences or presumptions. Two respondents assumed to paralyze when recognizing a possible crisis situation and one of them imagined to be running around pointlessly trying to manage everything at the same time. One interviewee said to be certain about handling crisis situations based on the previous negative events that had occurred in the personal life and two respondents believed they could handle the situations, the other mentioning that while demonstrating shaking hands. One receptionist also wished to be able to act calmly in a possible situation referring to the fact of being a calm person by nature. All in all, every one of the respondents said that they believe in

their capabilities of handling possible crisis situations in one way or another. When asked whether the respondents have used visualization exercises as a tool for preparing to face crises, most of them mentioned that they have gone mentally through some situations either before or after the threatening situation. However, the exercises were not utilized very often and the respondents considered them useless. One added that together with the safety training the exercises could be more beneficial for a larger audience. The other mentioned that if an individual likes to play with images, it would be possible to benefit from the exercises.

All the respondents agreed that both age and experience have a direct influence on the way of reacting and previous experiences tend to teach something new. However, one of the respondents mentioned that “due to the frequent fire alarms that were occurring at my previous place of work I feel like I could have reacted even better.” Repetitive alarms created a sense of routine for the receptionist to act and be better prepared and this is why the respondent considered the experience to be a more effective factor of behavior compared to the age itself. In addition, a few respondents mentioned that personality and education affect the ways of reacting as well. One of the interviewees crystallized that all life experience has an impact on the individual's crisis behavior. Because of the reasons mentioned before all the respondents agreed that they would have behaved in a different way five years ago than today.

## **7.6 Questions about likelihood of crises**

The last two questions are linked to Huhtala's theory about the attitude towards the likelihood of different crises to occur. Based on the survey conducted in the 1990's Huhtala proposes that most of the Finnish people considered it likely that some form of crisis or accident can happen in their neighborhood area. However, the likelihood of the same occurrence to happen when considering themselves was viewed unlikely. The purpose of the questions was to investigate if the theory, after two decades, is still valid.

All the respondents considered it possible that some threatening situation or crisis may happen in Finland or their working places. A few of the interviewees mentioned that they do not consider bigger crises likely to happen but smaller-scale crises would be possible to occur, for example a fire. According to one interviewee “this is because in Finland many different issues are taken into consideration properly and we have anticipation skills towards different situations”. One respondent reasoned that crises in Finnish hotels are not that likely but “it gives no justification to a company to neglect its responsibility to provide safety training”. The rest of the interviewees agreed that any crisis is likely to occur in Finnish hotels. When asked about the likelihood of crises occurring within their own working environment and during specifically the respondent’s work shifts when compared to Finnish hotels in general, the answers varied. According to four respondents the likelihood of a crisis to occur is greater in Finnish hotels generally than at their own working places. One of the reasons why the respondents considered that the likelihood is smaller at the own working place than in Finland in general was the remote location of the hotel where two of the respondents are working. On the contrary, three respondents considered that the likelihood in both occasions is equal. One interviewee clearly stated that “anyone can come to anywhere at any time”.

## 8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the research was to investigate whether the employees have enough knowledge about crisis management procedures, if they receive enough safety training and how confident they feel about their capabilities to manage different situations. When gathering the information for the theoretical study, finding the relevant material was a challenge to certain extent. There is not any material available concerning directly the crisis management of Finnish hotels. Therefore, the material had to be gathered from various resources. For the same reason the third part of the theoretical framework was partly conducted by interviewing the professional crisis instructor of Finnish Red Cross (SPR) who has a career of working as the hotel receptionist for sixteen years.

The results of the interviews gave useful and valuable information which was expected. One of the questions did not provide any information and for that reason it was deleted from the results (has the amount and quality of the safety training affected your work motivation?). The formation of the interview questions caused some misunderstandings because some of the questions were ambiguous. Therefore, those questions needed to be clarified to the respondents. In some of the cases this was intended to ensure not to lead the respondents to any specific answers. However, because of the chosen method this did not cause bigger problems since the interviews enabled open discussions between the interviewers and respondents.

Different terms created difficulties during the theory writing process and in the interview question formation. Because of the great deal of resources the clarity of the terms used in the sources was confusing; different sources used different terms even though the meaning was the same. The problem arose with the terms such as rescue plan, security plan and crisis management plan.



There was a clear correlation between the emotions of insecurity and working alone specifically during a night. Surprisingly, this has not been taken into consideration in any of the safety trainings of the respondents. The results also suggest that the amount and regularity of the safety training have a clear effect on the emotion of insecurity among the respondents. According to the respondents, regular and concrete training sessions would give a base for the know-how of handling different situations and thus would increase the certainty and confidence level of the receptionists while working. In other words, Iivari (2012) argues that the training gives good preparedness for acting as a safety expert. It also helps to notify possible defects and correct them as Regester (1990) suggests.

In the results the fact of the defects or the lack of safety training emerged among all of the respondents. None of them were satisfied with the amount and regularity of these trainings. Also the concrete part of the training was desired and required by all of the interviewees. According to the respondents it is not enough to go through the safety issues only orally in the form of a lecture but the physical activity is necessary in order to be able to remember them in a real action.

Both internal and external communication have problems to some extent in all of the respondents places of work. Poor communication indicates that there are gaps in the safety and security issues as well. When the messages do not reach all the employees within the company, it creates risks and threats and if communication does not work in general, the crisis management cannot function either since it is one of the most vital elements in crisis management. Moreover, the majority of the respondents were not satisfied with the orientation before starting the work. The lack of proper orientation has an effect on the working in a negative way and it decreases the working motivation among the respondents. The results also show that seasonality does not increase the amount or quality of the safety training. Conversely, there is a chance that seasonal employers in some of the respondents' working places do not receive any orientation. The question arises whether this is a common problem in different hotels in Finland.

It was obvious among the respondents that there is no knowledge about crisis management either as a term or what it actually is. The term had not been encountered at their places of work or elsewhere and therefore the problem in the interviews was that some of the respondents, for this reason, were not sure whether the crisis management plan exists as a part of the security plan at their working places or not. Human resource management, communication and safety training should be in balance in order a company to achieve a proper safety level and crisis management. These three factors working together are the foundation pillars for the successful crisis management.

In this research the results indicate that there is a clear difference between the chain hotels and private hotels when it comes to the safety issues. As Iivari (2012) argues, larger organizations tend to have a higher level in safety planning and preparations whereas smaller companies assume public sectors to have a responsibility to form the crisis management plan. The results of the research support this theory. Private hotels seem to have major defects in their security implementations that can cause threats. For example, in two cases there are not any panic buttons in the reception area. In fact, the security issues are taken very little into account in these hotels. The question arises if the safety and security issues are generally taken into account more precisely in chain hotels than in private hotels in Finland. Luckily, all the respondents mentioned to have a security plan in some form or another at their working places. That is also required by the Finnish law. However, some of the respondents stated that they have never been asked to become familiar with the material and in some cases the security plan included only a few references about safety issues.

The results about the likelihood of crises to occur support the theory that is suggested by Huhtala (1997). The majority of the interviewees considered that the likelihood of crisis to occur is greater in other Finnish hotels than in their own. Large-scale crises were not considered likely but all the respondents admitted that smaller-scale crises such as a minor fire may occur. On the contrary, the respond-

ents disagreed to some extent with the theory of the visualization exercises which Tunturi (2015) highlights to be important. The respondents did not consider them beneficial alone but together with the proper training the visualization exercises would potentially be useful.

None of the respondents had experienced serious crises. However, all of them mentioned to have faced threatening situations which could have resulted in a crisis. The situations that were faced most often were false fire alarms and threatening behavior by customers or passers-by. The assumption is that crises are not likely to occur in Finland. However, there is always a possibility that anything can happen anytime and anywhere, which is also highlighted by Huhtala (1997). No wonder if the importance of crisis management/crisis management plan is not clearly realized in Finnish hotels when in the United States, where crises occur regularly, only 61% of the American companies had the crisis management plan after two years of the 9/11 attack. This was indicated in the survey by the American Management Association (2004). In this research only one respondent out of seven mentioned to have some form of a crisis management plan attached to the security plan.

The research shows that the receptionists occasionally have emotions of uncertainty and insecurity while working alone. They have deficiencies in their knowledge of the safety issues or crisis management procedures due to the irregular, poor or missing safety training/training in general. However, regardless of these factors the receptionists feel that they are capable of handling different situations in some way or another.

All in all, it seems that the crisis management is not taken into account sufficiently enough in the hotels of this research. A question arises of how the crisis management is executed in all the other Finnish hotels.

Working on the research has been educational experience for us. During the process we have understood the importance and the relevance of the subject. It will

help us to try to be prepared both mentally and physically to face different kinds of situations in personal life as well as in our working environments. The research will also help us to notice and take into consideration the safety issues more properly in the future.

### **8.1 Suggestions for further researchers**

The topic of the research is important and relevant in today's world. Different kinds of events, accidents and crises happen regularly globally but also in Finland. The emotions of uncertainty and unsafety are on an increase among the people and create instability and possibilities of threats. Therefore, every individual and organization should be prepared to face and deal with different situations and it is important to research the topic from different viewpoints as well.

During the process of writing the thesis a few suggestions arose. One possibility is to investigate the differences and development actions in safety and security issues when comparing the 1990's to the present time. In the 90's the safety and security issues were still in their infancy and many individuals and organizations had only started to realize that the safety factors need to be taken in account. The other suggestion is to provide a model of a crisis management plan since they do not exist in many companies. Providing the model would help companies in creating their own crisis management plans and would give preparedness to handle and recognize different crises. Also, developing safety training and providing a model of different exercises would be beneficial to create. This could be implemented by investigating the already existing training models and comparing them with the interviews of employees in different organizations based on their expectations and wishes regarding safety training.

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## **Interviews**

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1.

#### Haastattelukysymykset SPR:n valmiuskouluttajalle

Taustatiedot: koulutus, työkokemus

1. Miten määrittelet *kriisin*?
2. Mitkä ovat kriisin/kriisinhallinnan vaiheet?
3. Millä tavalla ihminen voi henkisesti valmistautua kohtaamaan kriisitilanteen?
4. Millaisia reagoititapoja ihmisillä on kriisitilanteisiin?
5. Mitkä tekijät vaikuttavat ihmisen käyttäytymiseen kriisitilanteessa?
6. Onko
  - a. sukupuolella
  - b. iällä
  - c. koulutuksellavaikutusta kriisitilanteessa käyttäytymiseen/siihen reagoimiseen?
7. Kun ihminen joutuu kriisitilanteeseen, miten se vaikuttaa hänen elämäänsä kriisin jälkeen?
8. Millaisia selviytymistapoja ihmisillä on kriisin jälkeen?
9. Onko sinulla henkilökohtaista kokemusta kriiseistä, jotka ovat tapahtuneet hotelleissa?



10. Kuinka usein tai millaista koulutusta työntekijöille pitäisi järjestää, jotta heillä olisi riittävät valmiudet kriisitilanteessa toimimiseen?

### **Interview questions for the “preparation instructor” of SPR**

Background information: education, work experience

1. How do you define the word *crisis*?
2. What are the phases of a crisis/crisis management?
3. In what ways can an individual be prepared mentally for facing a crisis situation?
4. What kinds of reaction manners does an individual have in crisis situations?
5. Which factors do affect individual’s behavior in a crisis situation?
6. Do
  - a. a gender
  - b. an age
  - c. an educationhave an effect on how individuals react/behave in a crisis situation?
7. When an individual faces a crisis situation, how does it affect his life after the crisis?
8. What kinds of coping mechanisms do people have after the crisis?
9. Do you have any personal experiences of crises occurred in hotels?

10. How often and what kind of training should be organized to employees in order them to have sufficient capabilities to act in a crisis situation?

## Appendix. 2

### Haastattelukysymykset vastaanottovirkailijoille

Taustatiedot: sukupuoli, ikä, koulutus, työkokemus, hotellin koko, ketjuhotelli/yksityinen hotelli.

1. Tunnetko olosi aina turvalliseksi työvuorossa? Missä tilanteissa tunnet turvattomuutta?
2. Teetkö työvuoroja yksin? Entä yövuoroja?  
Millaiseksi tunnet olosi yksin ollessa?
3. Kun sinut rekrytoitiin, annettiinko sinulle perehdytystä?  
Jos annettiin, niin millaista?
4. Onko työpaikallasi järjestetty aina perehdytystä käytäntöjen tai laitteiden muuttuessa?
5. Onko perehdytyksen ja koulutuksen määrä vaikuttanut työviihtyvyyteesi?  
Miksi?
6. Millaisia viestintävälineitä työpaikallasi käytetään?
7. Toimiiko sisäinen viestintä työpaikallasi?  
Entä ulkoinen?
8. Onko työpaikallasi turvallisuussuunnitelma?  
Entä kriisinhallintasuunnitelma?
9. Oletko perehtynyt itsenäisesti työpaikan turvallisuustekijöihin, esim. turvallisuussuunnitelmaan?
10. Onko työpaikallasi järjestetty turvallisuuskoulutusta/koulutusta kriisitilanteiden kohtaamiseen?

- a. Millaista koulutus on ollut? Otetaanko yksintyöskentely siinä huomioon? Entä yötyö?
  - b. Kuinka usein sitä on järjestetty?  
Onko se ollut tarpeeksi?
  - c. Oletko tyytyväinen koulutukseen?  
Koetko sen tarpeelliseksi?
  - d. Onko turvallisuuskoulutuksen määrä vaikuttanut työmotivaatioosi?
11. Luuletko pystyväsi muuttamaan käyttäytymistäsi turvallisuuskoulutuksen ansiosta?
12. Oletko tehnyt mielikuvaharjoituksia kriisitilanteessa käyttäytymisessä? Luuletko että ne auttavat?
13. Onko jokin tietty tapa (esim. ryhmä- tai yksilökoulutus) tai asia, jolla haluaisit että turvallisuuskoulutusta järjestetään?
14. Onko kausiluonteisuudella (esim. kesä- tai jouluseasonki) vaikutusta turvallisuuskoulutuksen/perehdytyksen määrään ja laatuun?
15. Miten luulet reagoivasi kriisitilanteeseen (esim. lamaantuminen, pelko, shokkitilassa toimiminen ripeästi)?  
Mistä syystä luulet reagoivasi näin?
16. Oletko joutunut työvuorosi aikana kriisitilanteeseen?  
Entä tilanteeseen, josta olisi voinut syntyä kriisi?
- a. Millä tavoin toimit tilanteessa?  
Mistä syystä luulet että käyttäydyit tällä tavoin?
  - b. Miltä sinusta tuntui ko. tilanteessa?
  - c. Miten kriisitilanne hoidettiin työpaikallasi? Oliko jälkipuintia?

d. Oletko päässyt kriisitilanteesta yli?

Mitkä asiat ovat tähän vaikuttaneet?

17. Luuletko, että olisit toiminut kriisitilanteessa 5 vuotta sitten eri tavalla kuin tänä päivänä?
18. Pidätkö todennäköisenä, että Suomessa hotellissa voi tapahtua jokin uhkaava tilanne/kriisi?
19. Pidätkö todennäköisenä, että työpaikallasi ja työvuorosi aikana voi tapahtua jokin uhkaava tilanne/kriisi?  
Miksi?

### **Interview questions for the hotel receptionists**

Background information: gender, age, education, work experience, size of the hotel, private/chain hotel

1. Do you always feel safe during your work shift?  
In which situations do you feel unsafe?
2. Do you work alone? How about night shifts?  
How do you feel when being alone at work?
3. When you were recruited, did you receive orientation?  
If yes, what kind?
4. Has your work place/employer provided you with an orientation/training when the equipment or systems have changed?
5. Has the amount of orientation and training influenced your working motivation? Why?
6. What kinds of communication tools are in use in your working environment?

7. Does the internal communication function at your working place?  
How about external communication?
8. Does your working place have a safety plan?  
How about a crisis management plan?
9. Have you independently become familiar with the safety issues of your working place for example the safety plan?
10. Has your employer provided you with a safety training/training to face crisis situations?
  - a. What kind of training? Has working alone been taken into account?  
How about night work?
  - b. How often it has been organized?  
Has it been enough?
  - c. Are you satisfied with the training?  
Do you consider having the training necessary?
  - d. Has the amount of safety training affected your work motivation?
11. Do you think that you could adapt your behavior in crisis situation due to the safety training?
12. Have you ever used visualization exercises as a tool for preparing to face a crisis situation? Do you consider it helpful?
13. Is there a specific method (such as individual or group training) that you would prefer the safety training to be organized?
14. Does the seasonality (for example summer or Christmas season) influence the amount and the quality of the safety training organized at your work place?

15. How do you think you would react to a crisis situation (e.g. paralyzing, fear, acting rapidly)?  
For what reasons?
16. Have you faced a crisis situation during your work shift?  
How about the situation that could have led to a crisis?
- a. How did you react in the situation?  
For what reasons do you think that you reacted this way?
  - b. How did you feel in this situation?
  - c. How was the crisis situation handled in your working place? Did you go through the situation afterwards at your work place?
  - d. Have you got over the crisis situation?  
What factors have had an effect?
17. Do you think you would have behaved in a different way in a crisis situation 5 years ago compared to today?
18. Do you consider a crisis/threatening situation likely to happen in hotels in Finland?
19. Do you consider a crisis/threatening situation likely to happen during your work shift at your working place?