VAASAN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
VASA YRKESHÖGSKOLA
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Elina Soitu

IMAGE VS. REALITY IN A RECEPTIONIST'S JOB

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ABSTRACT

Author	Elina Soitu
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The aim of this thesis was to find out what is the image people have about a receptionist's job before having any experience of it, and how does it correspond to reality when they have worked as a receptionist. In addition, the aim was also to find out possible factors that lead people to study hospitality field, what motivates them to work in reception and what do those people who work in a reception think about the job now. Similar questions were also presented to students who yet had no experience of receptionist's job, so that the image and reality could be compared with each other.

The theory part begins with introducing hospitality industry and more precisely the development of the field in Finland. The more relevant part, receptionist's profession and job description regarding the work shifts, salaries and qualifications are handled right after in the theory part. Also the customer service regarding the field will be introduced. Finally, the theory part will take a deeper look at people's thoughts and actions concerning career choice, images, motivation, and objectives.

In this thesis qualitative research method was used and the data was collected by doing semi-structured interviews in February and March 2013. All in all ten interviews were done, half of the interviewees were working in a reception and half of them had no experience but they had plans to work in a reception in future. The results show that the image that those without any experience have, does not differ much from what those who work in reception tell what the job really is. Parents' career choice was found to have small connection with the career choice; at least one parent of almost all the interviewees worked in the field of customer service. Internal motivators were clearly more important than external motivators. All in all receptionists were more or less happy with their current situation but some of them were planning to continue studying and move on to other tasks.

VAASAN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
Matkailun koulutusohjelma

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tekijä	Elina Soitu
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Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli saada selville ihmisten mielikuva vastaanottovirkailijan työstä ennen minkäänlaista kokemusta alalta, ja miten tämä mielikuva vastasi todellisuutta työkokemuksen jälkeen. Tavoitteena oli myös saada selville mahdolliset vaikuttavat tekijät alan valintaan, mikä heitä motivoi tähän työhön ja mitä he ajattelevat työstään nyt. Samankaltaisia kysymyksiä esitettiin myös opiskelijoille joilla ei ollut minkäänlaista kokemusta vastaanottovirkailijan työstä, jolloin mielikuvaa ja todellisuutta voitiin vertailla keskenään.

Opinnäytetyön teoreettinen osuus alkaa kertomalla yleisesti matkailu- ja ravintola-alasta, sekä alan kehityksestä ja tilanteesta Suomessa. Oleellisempi osio teoriaosassa käsittää vastaanottavirkailijan ammattia ja työnkuvaa, koskien mm. työvuoroja, palkkoja ja koulutusta. Myös alaa koskevaa asiakaspalvelua käydään läpi. Lopulta teoriaosuus tarkastelee syvemmin ihmisten ajatuksia ja tekoja liittyen ammatinvalintaan, mielikuvien luomiseen, motivaatioon ja tavoitteisiin.

Tässä opinnäytetyössä käytettiin kvalitatiivista, eli laadullista tutkimusmenetelmää. Aineisto kerättiin teemahaastattelujen avulla helmikuussa ja maaliskuussa 2013, ja haastatteluja suoritettiin yhteensä kymmenen kappaletta. Puolet haastateltavista työskentelivät vastaanotossa ja puolilla ei ollut mitään kokemusta vastaanottovirkailijan työstä, mutta he olivat halukkaita kokeilemaan työtä tulevaisuudessa. Tutkimus osoitti, ettei heidän, joilla ei ollu kokemusta, mielikuva eronnut paljoakaan siitä, mitä kokemuksen omaavat kertoivat työn olevan. Vanhempien alan valinnalla todettiin olevan vain hiukan yhteyksiä alan valintaan; melkein kaikilla haastateltavilla ainakin toinen vanhemmista työskenteli asiakaspalvelualalla. Sisäisesti motivoivat tekijät olivat selvästi ulkoisia tekijöitä tärkeämpiä. Kaiken kaikkiaan vastaanottovrikailijat olivat enemmän tai vähemmän tyytyväisiä tähän hetkiseen tilanteeseensa, mutta muutamat heistä myös halusivat jatkaa opintojaan ja edetä muihin tehtäviin.

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1   INTRODUCTION

Occasionally, when talking with people about life after school and interests towards different professions, the receptionist's work comes up. Usually those people have no specific reason for this way of thinking, but they probably say they have had some level of interest towards receptionist's job for some years without having any experience of it.

Often people think it seems like a nice job; well-dressed receptionists with tied up hair and silky scarfs or with a tidy suit and tie. Of course, the way of dressing depends on the hotel but most probably the first thoughts the word "hotel" brings up in people's minds are words such as class, clean and sophisticated.

1.1   Research problem and the aims of the research

This thesis tries to find out what are the real thoughts people have about the job before any experience and what motivates them to work in reception. This thesis will focus on two different groups; those who already have worked as receptionists and those who have no experience of receptionist's job but are willing to try it.

The research will find out some background information of the receptionist; when and how they ended up working in reception, in which positions they have been in the hotel field and if they really had set a goal to work there or is it just one stage to get in a higher position. Also do they have the education of this field, has the job corresponded to what they expected before the job, or has their image of receptionist's job changed after they started to work, and how? Finally the reality of the job will be discussed.

This thesis could be helpful to those who are thinking about working in the hotel industry as a receptionist as this thesis gives information about the education, employment and the work itself in reality.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into theoretical and empirical part. The theory part starts by introducing the hospitality industry, certain things about the history of it and today's situation regarding the industry. In this part, the term hospitality and certain conceptions which consider hospitality industry are also defined. In the end of this section the reader is acquainted more specifically with the receptionist's job. This section will handle such things as qualities, tasks, education, work times, compensation and further education of receptionist. Further in the theory part, the reader gets acquainted with choosing the career, customer service, development of an image, motivation and objectives regarding the work life.

In the empirical part the thesis will take a look at the possible research methods and the method which was chosen for this thesis. Finally, the research will be analyzed and the researcher's own conclusions are made.

1.3 Restrictions

As this thesis comprises the image and reality of receptionist's job, the research is targeted to people who have experience of receptionist's job and to people who do not have experience but are interested in this job. To make the research clearer for the reader, those who have no experience from the reception are called as inexperienced and those who have worked in reception are called as experienced. The experienced ones in this research are first year students from a tourism degree programme. The receptionists' interviews are done in their own working environment, as the students' interviews at school. The reason this thesis was implemented, is the researcher's own interest which came up during a conversation with the supervisor of this thesis.

2   INTRODUCTION TO HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

In general, the hospitality industry is understood to include restaurants and hotels, but the Oxford English Dictionary gives it the following definition: "*Reception and entertainment of guests, visitors or strangers with liberality and goodwill*". Hospitality industry does not only mean well known, big hotels but also smaller businesses which provide accommodation and services to people away from home for a longer or for a shorter period of time. (Baker, Huyton & Bradley 2000; 2.)

2.1 Hospitality industry in Finland

The first accommodation businesses are found from the 1100's, where monasteries were accommodating and feeding everyone who was in need for it. Later in 1279 a rule was set in Finland that everyone had to pay for the food, which also caused the accommodation to become paid service in the late 1500's. This is where the money came in to the operation. Between 1600's and 1700's the accommodation business rose significantly, but in the beginning of 1900's it decreased as the cars and trains were developed. Turku, Helsinki and Viipuri were the first cities having hotels. Because of many economic turnouts in the history, the hotel industry has been increasing and decreasing several times. As certain prohibitions (ingredients, alcohol) regarding the war were finally removed, the hotel industry started it is growing in the middle of 1900's. Still, the recession of the beginning of 1990's and the upswing in the end of 1990's can still be seen in today's hotel industry. (Koppinen, Kumpulainen, Lehto, Manninen, Mustonen, Niskanen, Pettilä, Salmi & Viitala 2002; 17-19.)

In the year of 2000 the hotel and restaurant field employed in average 75 000 people, and the sales were in average 47 000 000 €, from which an accommodation industry comprises 6 000 000 €. The most profitable business in the accommodation industry was hotel business. Nowadays the restaurant and tourism business is a growing and international industry which employs more than 130 000 people in all over Finland. From hospitality industry, many young people

get their first jobs because of the diverse employment possibilities. For young students it is quite easy to get a job in a small café or fast-food restaurant and the chances to progress are good. (MaRa 2013)

2.2 Hotel

Hotel is an accommodation establishment where people can rent furnished rooms. In Finland, the way of classification is not officially defined and each hotel classifies itself, and this is done mostly in the capital city only. Classification of the hotel is described by stars, numbers or letters. Hotels have different departments which include hotel department, floor department, sales and marketing department, management department, restaurant department, kitchen department, conference department and maintenance department. Smaller hotels do not have that many different departments. The main organization consists of owners, board, chief executive officer and hotel manager. (Koppinen et al. 2002; 240.)

Accommodation businesses are divided into hotels (incl. motels), other accommodation businesses, guest houses, hostels and resorts. A hotel often shares its premises with a restaurant, conference premises, sauna and gym, hairdresser and some special small enterprises. (Brännare, Kairamo, Kulusjärvi & Matero 2005; 11.)

2.2.1 Front office operations

The front office consists of several different parts where different duties are done. Some of the duties are usually conducted only in the largest hotels, as in smaller hotels one employee may take care of several things in the whole front office. First there is a reservations office, where usually the reservation manager and the reservation clerks are taking care of the reservations in the hotel. The managers take final decisions in case of fully-booked and overbooked evenings, and the clerks receive all the bookings and keep records about all the check-ins and check-outs. (Baker et al. 2000; 51.)

The front office also consists of reception staff which may consist of the reception manager, reception supervisor, and senior receptionists and receptionists. The manager is the one who is assuring generally that the hotel runs profitably, which means that the room occupancy is as high as possible and that the hotel gets the maximum revenue. The manager also takes care that the staff is motivated and that guests are getting high level service. The supervisor is a bit closer to the receptionists than the manager. The supervisor is taking care of the front desk's operations, duty rotas, complaints and difficult guests. In the front office there are also porters, who take care of the guest's needs; they may take messages and send them forward, arrange a car to the guest or even book theatre or flight tickets. All the members of porter's department are uniformed, and there are three different levels of staff; head hall porter (bell captain/lobby services manager), doorman, porter/page (bellboy). As normal, the head hall porter is the one in charge of all the other porter staff, and normally has his own desk in the front office. Head hall porters greet new arrivals and make phone calls for them. Doormen handle luggage and open car doors for the guests. Porters take and deliver messages from the guests and the hotel, carry bags and keep the lobby clean. (Baker et al. 2000; 52-53.)

There is also mail and information desk which is normally only in biggest hotels and in smaller hotels the porters are taking care of this section. The staff of the mail and information counter is the one taking care of customers' mail and their visitors, and giving customers information about the city. Usually hotels have business centers with all the office equipment including fax and computers for the guests. Some front offices also have telephone operators which take care of all the phone calls going through the switchboard. Telephone operators and supervisors can give any information through the phone from the weather and time to wake-up calls. Also, in case of emergency, these operators are relevant source of sharing information. In some very large hotels, there are GROs (Guest Relations Officers) who take care that the guests feel welcome while their stay. Very often, the receptionists and porters are only ones from the hotel staff the guests will

communicate with and for this reason some customers may feel very distant with the hotel staff. The GROs also take care of the guest's possible problems, VIP guests and regular guests. (Baker et al. 2000; 54-57.)

In the front office there are also front office cashiers who have all the liability to take care of the cash and payment methods. All preparations before opening, handling customers' accounts, additional charges of customers and safe deposits are things that front office cashiers must take care of. During the night, when the front office is quiet, all audit duties are taken care of. These duties are done by a special team of staff or staff who are planned to work during nights and these duties include paperwork, checking accounts, balancing revenue figures, and making statistics and summaries for management. Nowadays, since lots of duties are computerized, the need of night staff is smaller as most revenue information can be only printed out from the computer. Probably the most important thing the night audit must do is to make a back-up of all the computer information in case the system would crash. (Baker et al. 2000; 54-57.)

2.3 Receptionist

Receptionists are often the only ones who interact with the guests; either by telephone, via the Internet or face to face. They are in charge of the guest's arrival, greeting them, making their check-in, giving them suitable room and finding out their payment method. The receptionist must also be aware of all the rooms and their situations, whether they are free, occupied, clean, dirty or out of order. (Baker et al. 2000; 52)

2.3.1 Requirements

As Receptionist's job is very much about customer service, the ability to get along with and to work with different kinds of people is very important. The person who is working as a receptionist must tolerate all the difficult and busy situations, not to mention the grumpy customers. The situations may vary very quickly in the reception; there may become some problems with the rooms or overbooking, and

the receptionist must be ready to find a solution for the quests. As the reception is the heart of the hotel and many things are handled there, the receptionist must be well organized and able to take care of many things at the same time. Also a good memory is an advantage. If something is not working in the reception, the quest will notice and remember it. As also in a contrary, all good things will also stay in the quest's memory, so what happens in the reception, affects largely the image of the hotel. It is required that in addition to the receptionist's own mother tongue the receptionist should also be able to speak English and at least one other foreign language. (Koppinen et al. 2002; 31.)

Since working in a hotel can be very unpredictable, it is important that the employee is flexible, co-operative, tolerant to pressure and persistent. Also speed, reliability, responsibility, common sense, patience, diligence and creativeness are advantages as for all kinds of jobs. As the receptionist's job is much about serving quests, the employee must be very customer oriented and courageous to serve the quest. Eye contact and greeting should never be forgotten. The employee should be genuinely interested to serve the quest; forced smile usually doesn't impress the quest. The receptionist's behavior is essential for the image of the hotel, meaning that good manners and good external appearance are important. (Koppinen et al. 2002; 34.)

The skills that the person working in a hotel or restaurant business needs to have can be divided in different categories; *productive-technical skills, technological skills, communication skills, social skills, financial skills, aesthetical skills, ethical skills* and *ecological skills*. *Productive-technical* skills are more required from the restaurant worker, which are the knowledge of food and beverages. *Skills of technology* comprise the ability to use and maintain machines, booking systems and cash register systems. *Communication skills* mean that the employee is able to communicate with people in certain situations as conferences or with foreigners. *Social skills* are good customer service, sense of empathy, good manners, ability of team work, tolerance and giving or asking for help if needed. *Financial skills*

show that the person is aware of how dependent the business is of customers and how the profitability can be improved. *Aesthetical skills* comprise all the knowledge of hygiene and quality of work, as when *ethical skills* mean righteousness, trustworthiness, loyalty and commitment to work. *Ecological skills* show that the employee is aware of ways to work as ecologically and sustainably as possible. (Koppinen et al. 2002; 35.)

2.3.2 Work shifts

As hotels are open all year round, there also needs to be staff all the time. Usually the work is three-shift work, meaning that the person works either in the morning, in the evening or at night. Some of the receptionists may work only during the mornings and the evenings, as some may work only during the nights. Very often the shifts in the hotel industry are so that the morning shift is from 7 a.m. until 3 p.m., the evening shift is from 3 p.m. until 11 p.m., and the night shift begins at 11 p.m. and ends at 7 a.m. Of course, these working hours depend on the hotel. During the morning shift, lot of check outs are done, and usually the rule is that the room has to be empty at 12 a.m. During weekdays, most of the check outs are done between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. In the morning, the receptionist's job is to settle customers' bills, handle the complaints and take care of phone calls and bookings. (Koppinen et al. 2002; 255).

Usually between 4.30 p.m. and 6 p.m. most of the customers check in, which makes it the busiest time during the evening shift. Other tasks during this shift are taking the phone calls, charging customers who want to pay beforehand, modify reservations, making cancellations and taking wake up orders. Some guests, who travel from far, arrive late to the hotel. During the night shift the person working must do a backup of all the information and take care of all the things related to accounts and bills. These transactions end the day, gather all the sales information of departments and clarify the occupancy in the hotel. When the receptionist ends the shift, there must not be any unfinished things from the shift that the next employee should take care of. The work space must be clean and clear so that the

next one coming to the shift can start working easily. In the end of every shift, a report must be done and handed out. The report has to include all things about happenings during the shift, things quests left to the hotel, tickets, wakeups, rooms, and other things related to quests. (Koppinen et al. 2002; 255,256).

2.3.3 Wage

The hotel and restaurant industry's collective agreement is followed in salary payments. In addition to the salary determined by the salary table, the employee is entitled to get extra fees during evenings, nights and Sunday nights. (Työ- ja elinkeinotoimisto 2013.) The salary is paid either monthly our hourly. The salary is determined by the previous experience, the salary group and the city where the work is done. The last factor, though, will be removed in June 2013, and after that same salary scales apply to all municipalities in Finland. (Palvelualojen ammattiliitto PAM ry ja Matkailu- ja Ravintolapalvelut MaRa ry 2012; 81-87).

According to the salaries from the beginning of June 2013, a person working in the reception with less than two years of experience, would have a monthly salary of 1785 € and hourly salary of 11,23 €. After 2, 5 & 10 years the salary will rise. (Palvelualojen ammattiliitto PAM ry ja Matkailu- Ja Ravintolapalvelut MaRa ry 2012; 81-87.)

2.3.4 Education

A person possessing the competence of a receptionist is permitted to work in hotels, spa hotels, camping sites, apartment hotels, guesthouses, passenger and holiday hotels, and motels. The qualification of receptionist may be achieved by taking the degree program in the hotel, restaurant and catering field in vocational school. Later on it is possible to specialize in hotel business. In these studies the student will specialize in taking care of all the tasks in the reception. The studies give competence to sell and give services to customers in the hotel industry. (Studentum 2013).

With the basic education of Hotel and restaurant field, a wide range of professional preparedness into different tasks are gained, as also specialized skills for either hotel service, restaurant's food production or restaurant service. All these three degrees have an extent of three years, which refers to 120 study weeks. One study week comprises 40h of work and one study year comprises 40 study weeks. (Koppinen et al. 2002; 52.) The basic examination of hotel and restaurant field can also be completed by taking the competence test and apprenticeship training. (Studentum 2013)

2.3.5 Further education of receptionist

When three years of basic studies either in Vocational school or in High school are done, the student is allowed apply for Universities or Universities of Applied Sciences. In the University of Applied Sciences it is possible to get a degree in tourism and restaurant field, which includes food, nutrition, environment, household, and tourism and congress service knowledge. The degree has an extent of 140 study weeks lasting from 3,5 years to 4 years and in some cases the student's courses from previous school can be accredited to proceed the graduation. Most of the degrees can be done in English. After this degree, the student will be a bachelor of hospitality management. Also, it is possible to take some studies in the University, where the extent is either 120 weeks (bachelor) or 160 weeks (master). Some universities have a faculty of agriculture and forestry, which offers a possibility to study food economics and business and to specialize in Hotel and restaurant industry. (Koppinen et al. 2002; 58.)

2.3.6 Employment in the hospitality industry in Finland

Hotel and restaurant industry is one of the most employing industries. The industry seems to have a very bright future since the development of technology cannot displace the employment because of the high amount of employees. One of the most popular ways to work in the field is to do it through a personnel rental

business. The salary for the employee is same through the rental business as it would be in the working place's own salary list. (Koppinen et al. 2002; 56.)

In the year of 2011, hotel and restaurant businesses have employed close to 80 000 people, from which restaurant businesses employ most of the people. As the business is very dependent on seasons, this industry has many part-time and temporary employees. The world's economic situation affects critically on hospitality business, meaning when the situation is bad, people spend less money because going to a restaurant or to a hotel is not always a necessary thing to do. At the same time, the employment gets down. In 2011 the employment was moderate in all hospitality industries. The profit has begun to increase after recession, but the future will also be very dependent on the changes in economic situation. (Työ- ja elinkeinotoimisto 2013).

3   GUEST CYCLE IN THE FRONT DESK

In the book "Introduction to the Hospitality Industry" it is told service to be "all actions and reactions that customers perceive they have purchased". The service in the hospitality industry is executed by people (a waitress) or systems (hotel software), so in other words it can be said that the performance of the staff is the service to the guests. (Powers & Barrows 1999; 451,452.)

Usually when a person goes to a shop and buys shoes, he just takes the product with him without caring about who made the product or how. In hospitality industry, the customer takes nothing tangible with him and uses the service at the same time as when it is produced. The experience is important, because the guest will be unhappy if the server is not making any effort. The hospitality product includes tangible and intangible matters, and they both are needed to make the product good for the guest. Even if a receptionist would be an excellent customer server it will not make up the dirty room for the customer. This is why both of the products should be good in order to give the customer the best possible product. Also, the customer server and the customer himself are affecting the product in case where they both may have a bad day and they are not able to make all the effort. Like this the customer can be unsatisfied despite the good service he gets. (Powers et al. 1999; 451,452.)

The main purpose for the front desk department is to make the guest transactions easy and comfortable. All doings depend on the amount and type of the guests. A hotel stay can be divided into four phases forming the guest cycle: pre-arrival, arrival, occupancy, departure. (Baker et al. 2000; 46.)
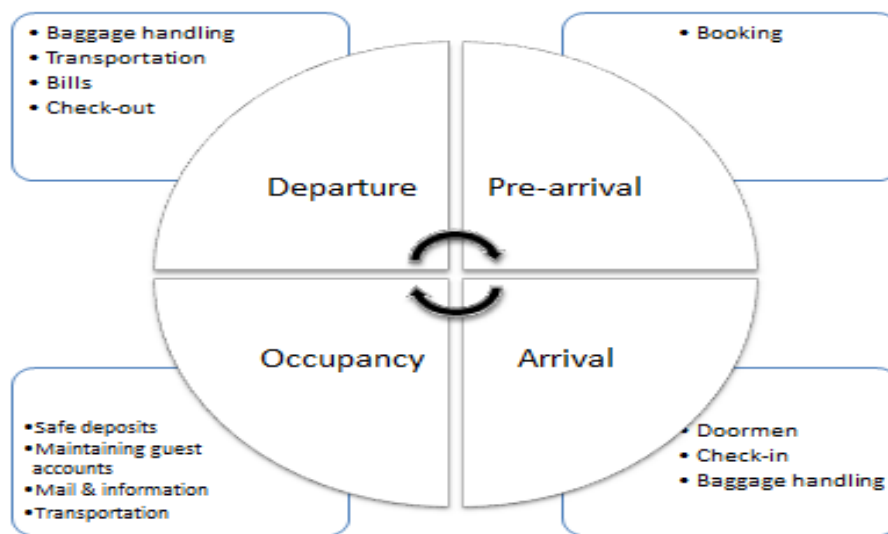
Figure 1. Interactions between guest and the front office (Baker et al. 2000; 50).

As can be seen from the Figure 1., each of these phases has a certain operation between the guest and the hotel, or more precisely, the front desk; reservations, check-in and registration, mail and information, uniformed service and baggage handling, telephone calls and messages, handling guest accounts, and check-out and bill settlement. Different kinds of services, handled mostly by the front office, regarding the guests are part of the guest cycle; reservations, check-in and registration, mail and information, uniformed service and baggage handling, telephone calls and messages, handling guest accounts, check-out and bill settlement. (Baker et al. 2000; 46.)

3.1 Types of service in hotel industry

The type of service given depends on the one needing the service and also on the organization giving the service. The quality of the business affects radically the needs of the consumer. As an example, a business person in a luxurious hotel is expecting much higher quality of service than a student in a small hostel. Therefore, it is very important for the staff of the business to identify the needs of every customer. (Baker et al. 2000; 2.)

Service can be divided in three different types; electronic-mechanical, indirect personal and face-to-face transactions. In hospitality industry electronic-mechanical transactions are vending machines, automated check-in and check-out systems, in-room refrigerators and hotel's automatic-dial phone system. These systems save a lot of employees' work and are also very beneficial for customers. Still, it may happen that the systems crash and the solution must be found quickly without making any trouble or inconvenience for the customer. Employees who are taking the reservations for hotels, restaurants or room services are defined as indirect personal transactions. Usually employees in these sections are precisely trained to say specific sentences in certain cases. The most powerful way of serving customers is face-to-face transaction where the customer has a visual contact to the server. This kind of server must be effective in representing the organization and ready to handle customers' negative thoughts about automated systems. (Powers et al. 1999; 453, 454.)

4   CAREER CHOICE

Career is a sum of all the choices done and experiences gained in earlier life regarding the working life. Finding a job which person feels to be interested in is very important for the well-being and satisfaction. There are many things affecting how to prosper in the job. The individual's own knowledge and skills define the interests and factors that have been guiding to make certain decisions in a working life. (Santasalo & Palviainen 1998; 13).

Before, the vocational guidance has been based on the person's skills and interest, which has defined the possible professions where to build a career. Nowadays, persons' values and wishes are evaluated first and after that starts the planning of further education and working occasions which help the person to get towards his dreams. Most relevant is that the direction is chosen according to a person's own will. (Lampikoski 1998; 13).

According to psychologist Charlotte Bühler, the person's life has been divided in different parts which each of those part has its own task, and which are reflected by professional tasks in different stages of life. From Bühler's theory, professor Donald E. Super has got some ideas to divide the person's life in five parts which focus on adolescence and early adulthood stages. According to Super, professional desire develops between the age of 14 and 18, and the differentiation of professional desire between the age of 18 and 21. The implementation of professional desire happens between the age of 18 and 25, as settling to the profession from the age of 21 to 30. Later on, the person tries to hold the career stable and to proceed in it. (Hautamäki, A., Wahsltröm, J., Wahlström & R., Sinisalo, P. 1980; 131,132.)

4.1 Life course research

Career selections have been studied with two different models; development principle model and natural science model. In development principle model, the

change of society and individual's career history are researched as an ensemble where psychological and societal factors connect to each other. The model of natural science is highlighting the human nature which does not change even though the society changes. There is also one close model to the previous two ones, free-market theory, which means that each individual decides their career by their own interests and independently, without letting anyone else affect their decision. (Lyytinen, Korkiakangas & Lyytinen 1998; 368.)

Life course research has two perspectives; career viewpoint and key points. The first one, career perspective, is where the researcher focuses on all the stages of life, choices and starting points from earlier life while studying the individual's current stage of life. In other words, career perspective studies the stages the individual passed to get to the current stage. Each increase and decrease in the career is very essential to see how different experiences affected life course. In the other perspective the study has been done by investigating the key points where the social situation and the individual's development interact with each other. These are for example starting the studies, choosing the work place and retiring. (Lyytinen et al. 1998; 369-370.)

According to an organization theorist John van Maanen, everyone has a career, either miserable or successful. Still, all professions have social differences which adjust power and welfare relationships between groups of people. There are three different systems which partly effect on choosing the career; gender, (meaning that some jobs are only meant for men and some for women), the social order of professions and the obsessive ideas of differences between mental and physical work. (Lyytinen et al. 1998; 372)

4.2 Career choice among young people

Since 2006, youngsters' career choice has been studied yearly by Taloudellinen tiedotustoimisto. The sample group consisted of primary schools' seventh, eighth and ninth graders, and of high schools' first and second graders. In the latest

research from the year of 2011, 1559 students answered the questions regarding the career choice. According to the research, the most important things affecting choosing the career were the time left for friends and family, and free-time. Work colleagues, interesting job and environment are the next most important factors. Young people also wanted the job to be challenging and well paid. The less important thing affecting was the development of techonolgy. (Taloudellinen tiedotustoimisto 2011; 2,6.)

Most of the information of different careers young people experience to get from TET-periods. TET-period is a week where students from junior high school have a change to try work life instead of studying. Second best places to get information are study counselor, internet, friends and family. They also hope to get more information about careers from other teachers and visits to different working places. The research also found out the interest towards different jobs in young people's mind. In girls' opinion, social, health and tourism and restaurant industries are most interesting fields, as boys prefer IT, electrical and electronic and construction industries. The less interesting field for girls was metal industry, as textile and clothing industry was not very popular among boys. (Taloudellinen tiedotustoimisto 2011; 10.)

5   IMAGE IN CHOOSING THE CAREER

The image is subjective, meaning that each individual has their personal image about certain things. It is the way an individual sees something, and it has nothing to do with what it is in reality. Image has always something to do with emotions and liking. Some people are fans of certain ice hockey team as others support another team and hate the other one. These "likings" drive people to certain actions. (Mether & Rope 2001; 13, 14).

5.1   Formation of the image

Young people have certain kinds of images in their mind about different careers. These images can affect decision making regarding the future career. Images are usually divided in different groups by stereotype, career and inner thoughts about the profession. Studies have showed that women classify the job because of the contents of the job while men focus on status, accomplishments and incomes. Very often the image comes through the family. If an individual's parents have an academic education, the individual is probably most familiar with professions such as psychiatric, architect, art designer or literary researcher. Farmers' child would not even consider these professions because it would feel unnatural, even though this child would have all required skills for this profession. These social impacts are hard to break even with professional help, but not impossible. According to French researcher Jean Guichard, students should be encouraged to get familiar with such professions they never thought to be interested in. With this method students could get rid of the possible wrong images. (Lyytinen et al. 1995; 378,379.)

There are two parties in forming the image; the one of which the image is formed by someone, and the one who forms the image. These two parties are in connection in a certain way to build the image between. Say, person number 1, spreads intentional or unintentional information to person number 2, which gives the base for number 2 to build a certain image in his mind. This cognitive data

structure is formed by the experiences in to the human memory and it functions as a prejudice in the future. Person number 1 produces information even if he would not do anything, already the existence is enough and he cannot hide from it. (Karvonen 1999; 51, 52.)

5.2 Personality and image

The personality explains why some people are fans of something that others may not stand. Physical and psychological characteristics and identity make the individual's personality. Environment and heredity give grounds for the personality. Environment gives the attitude, experiences and images, as when heredity gives intelligence, needs and physiology. The person will be more aware of himself and people around. Personal objectives, skills, behavior, values, attitudes, believe, environment and background firm the personality, and this explains why everyone sees things differently. (Mether et al. 2001; 46-47.)

Because of different perspectives people also react in different ways. Observation is a process, where the person evaluates the world and reality, and tries to see it in a reasonable form. Observation is both about knowledge-based and mental process and it contains four different phases. First of all, external stimuli are observed by person's inner factors. These factors also include some information about hisown personality and this information is moved into memory after interpretation and classification. Finally the information will affect the person's following decisions and reactions. After this, in the second stage, the information is simplified and modified to own cognitive structures. In this case cognitive means all the images and thoughts regarding certain things. The third phase means saving the information to a long-term memory which will consist of different information about people and happenings, both either negative or positive things. The fourth phase is about the reactions when, for example, answers to certain questions are searched from the memories. (Mether et al. 2001; 52, 53.)

5.3 Conceptual levels of the image

The conceptual levels of the image are built hierarchically from the clean image, permanent image and from the inner truth. Clean image is defined more precisely as the sum of thoughts and value-free opinions and understandings. As an example of this is the fact that everyone has different image about how the person speaking on the radio looks like is based only on the voice. Things affecting this image can be age, gender and history of life. The only thing in common is that no one has either negative or positive image regarding the radio person. (Mether et al. 2001; 67, 68.)

When someone meets a new person, already after 15-20 seconds he has either negative or positive image about the new person. During the next minutes the person is trying to find more information about the new person which support the negative or positive image already gained. If the image is positive, the person will not look for any negative sides because it would not go hand in hand with the image already built. Emotions are finally the ones solving the first image about someone or something. When the attitude, which gives the emotional element to the image, is attached to the clean image, the result is permanent image. (Mether et al. 2001; 68, 69.)

The image can be turned into a belief, when the clean image turns into a permanent image. To make the image to be the inner truth, the person must believe in the image. In other words, the inner truth is a sum of the permanent image and belief in it. (Mether et al. 2001; 69.)

6   OBJECTIVES

To have something to reach is as important to people as other relevant things considering breathing, thinking, making decisions and feel. If people do not have objectives, they feel anxious and frustrated. Objectives organize the everyday life and people automatically search meaning for the action. (Turunen 1992; 230.)

Objectives tell what is supposed to be reached in certain era. Before the objective can be called as an objective, there are certain requirements it has to fill. First of all, the objective must be specific, which means that the range of the objective and all the effects of it are clear and obvious. The objective must also be measurable so that it does not require making too much effort. Also a certain date when the objective is supposed to be reached must be set in order to say it is an objective. Realistic objective means it must be challenging but still reachable at the same time. Finally, in order to be able to call certain thing as an objective, it must be recognized, which means that it has to be understandable and approval of the ones who will execute it must be gained. (Karlöf & Lövingsson 2004; 283, 284.)

6.1   Setting the objectives

It is difficult for people to know what they want to do in their work life, but it is easy to know what they do not want to do. Usually the instructions come from higher party and the factors are easy to criticize. After this it is difficult for the person to find out his own objectives when there are no limits. The objectives must be reachable and person's own believes of reaching them are more important than others' thoughts about them. Sometimes the objectives cannot be implemented because of certain reasons. Some think that optimistic way of thinking about objectives is too unrealistic, as when too negative or realistic way of thinking may prevent reaching the objective. To proceed in analyzing the work objectives, all ideas and wishes should first be brought out and after this the evaluating can be done. After listing out all the objectives wanted without any criticism, the realistic points of view of each objective are gone through. The

fulfillment of objectives is easier to follow when they are concrete and easy to verify. If the objective is to get better relationships at the working place, it is more difficult to follow it than if the objective would be to listen to others while they speak because the first one is too general and it can be executed only by many different actions. (Moilanen & Varis 2001; 20).

6.2 Reaching the objectives

Reaching person's own objectives makes the person feel proud and good about himself. It is also important that those objectives are in harmony with the person's own basic values of life and with hopes that affect own development. When the objectives are reached the person feels efficiency, independency and belongingness. This is the situation when the person tells about having a good day. Some people may set objectives impulsively or because of pressure, which means they do not act according to their own values and objectives. By doing this, the person cannot feel satisfaction about the achievements, no matter how greatly the achievements would be externally evaluated. The less there is person's own will, the less there is satisfaction and the more there are troubles. (Moilanen et al. 2001; 13, 14.)
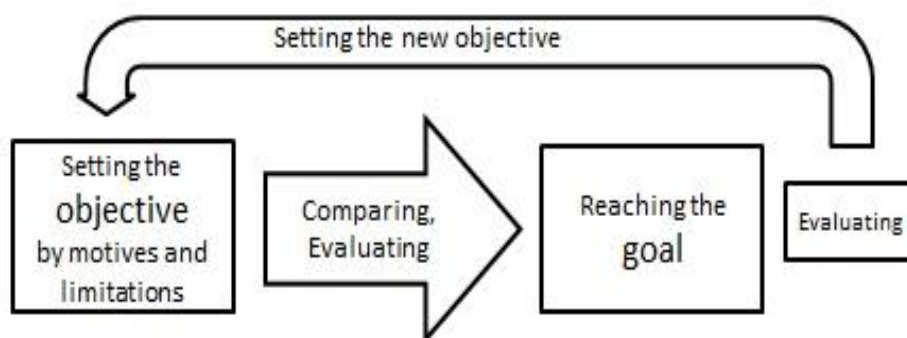
Figure 2. Oriented action (Moilanen et al. 2001; 7.)

Since people always try to reach something, there must be a plan for how to reach it. The person compares objectives to chances which are reachable at the moment

and to environmental limitations, and after that the person starts to reach the goal until finally he gets there. After that, the achievement will be evaluated and thoughts related to person's own abilities and accomplishments are brought up, which affect setting next objectives. (Moilanen et al. 2001; 6, 7.)

7 MOTIVATION

The word motivation comes from the word "motive". All desires, needs, rewards and wills are motives which keep up the individual's general way of acting. These motives, either conscious or unconscious, are goal-orientated. Motivation is a psychic and changing condition caused by motivations which effect on the activity and direction of the individual. If the individual has no motivation, there is no real effort put in the work, while the individual who has good motivation will make the same work in much shorter time and with all effort. (Peltonen & Ruohotie 1987; 22.)

The profit of the organization is dependent on many things around it, but one affecting much is the staff. The staff can be very skillful, but if they have no motivation, those skills are never properly used. Motivation defines what the person really wants to do, not what he can do. To get the person motivated, the employer must support the person well and have certain rewards to those people who work well. Good professional skills and motivation are the most important things which are needed from the employee. These both two things are walking hand in hand and are both very important. If the person's skills are improved, it does not mean that the motivation is any better. Also, if the motivation is high it does not mean that the person will succeed if he doesn't have the required skills. Still, the motivation has more significance than skills because skills can be improved only by learning, and motivation encourages learning. (Peltonen & Ruohotie 1987; 9.)

7.1 Work motivation

Work motivation has been studied for a long time to understand the employees and their motivation, and many studies have showed that individual differences have big part in motivation. (Peltonen et al. 1987; 23.)

According to the individual's interest, this individual sets the target where the attention is put. Each employee has different level of interest towards their job, and those who are not so pleased with their job do not get any inner reward or pleasure and they would easily change their job if better paid job is offered. As the employee who feels good in his job, cares more about the inner reward than the external reward, money. Studies have showed that the motivation is highly dependent on compatibility of interest and qualities of the job. An employee, who is not satisfied with the job, cannot have a good attitude. It has been studied, that the individual prefers to act in a way which corresponds his self-image. If the employee feels he is a failure, his self-image gets also negative. (Peltonen et al. 1987; 23,24.)

To get the employee motivated to work with all the effort, certain requirements should be fulfilled. First of all, if the work is too simple so that the employee cannot use all his skills or too complicated so that the employee gets frustrated, it will not motivate the employee. Convenient thing would be also that the employee is allowed to take care of one whole task from the start until the end with visible results. Taking care of only some part of the task is not giving the employee all freedom for self-fulfillment. The employee gets more satisfied regardless the salary if there are visible proofs that his job affects other people's work, life or general well-being. This will raise the significance of the job in the employee's eyes. A chance for independent work should be allowed for every employee, when he can plan schedules and methods by himself. After the work is done, the employee is more rewarded as he has done all the work by himself, from the beginning until the end. Feedback is one very relevant part in getting motivated, so that the employee feels succeeded and that there will be a good level of motivation for the next task. (Peltonen & Ruohotie 1987; 75, 76.)

7.2 Internal and external motivation

Motivations can be divided in two different categories according to different motives. The motives are internal, when the person has inner rewards because of

what the work brings him. This kind of inner reward can be joy of working. The external motive is the case when the person would work only to please, for example, his parents. These internal and external rewards are often defined in different ways because of many researchers, but there are some general thoughts about them. In general aspect, inner rewards are individual's own feelings and thoughts. External rewards are dependent on the working environment, salary and feedback. According to the researcher called Wernimont, inner rewards are subjective which means that they appear emotionally. External rewards are objective, meaning that they usually are tangible things or happenings. Even though these rewards can be divided into different groups, it can also be very difficult to recognize some of them since sometimes inner and external rewards may appear at the same time. If a person will be rewarded with money because of succeeding excellently, the money also measures the success which means the reward is also inner, not only external. Students with higher inner motivation set higher demands to themselves. Also students, who study voluntarily so that they study what they are really interested in, get more rewarded by inner rewards. (Peltonen & Ruohotie 1992; 18-20.)

7.3 Maslow's theory of motivation

The most known theory of motivation and needs is defined by Abraham Maslow. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is based on two different main arguments. According to the first one, each person has certain kinds of needs, which can be put in hierarchical order. This order shows the needs in the order of importance.

1. physiological needs
2. safety needs
3. belongingness needs
4. esteem needs
5. self-actualization needs

Maslow has also added two other needs, cognitive needs and aesthetical needs. These two needs are not included in Maslow's model and they are only brought up in discussions regarding the model. The hierarchy is built on needs which the person has experienced personally, not so much in actions. Still, if the needs are not satisfied, it leads the person to certain actions to get the balance. When the need is reached, it will not motivate again until next time the need will appear. According to the second argument, the person moves up from the lowest level of the hierarchy every time the need is fulfilled. After this, the previous need will not vanish, but it stops directing the person's actions. The needs are not tied to another and one does not have to be completely fulfilled to get to the next step. (Peltonen et al. 1992; 53, 54.)
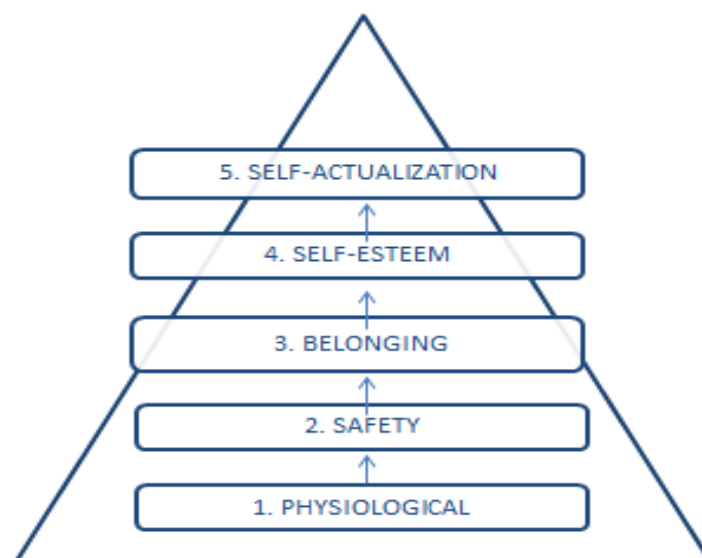
Figure 3. Maslow's hierarchy of Needs (Saul McLeod 2007).

As the figure by Saul McLeod shows, physiological needs, as the daily need of nutrition, are on the lowest level of hierarchy because they steer all the other actions. These are for example the need of food which is asy to fulfill and will repeat often. When the physiological needs are fulfilled for a while, the need of safety appears. These needs are emotional, and may appear as a need of stable

work, insurance or strong authority. Need of belonging means that the person tries to behave in a socially acceptable way and looks for belongingness among others, for example family or work colleagues. Still, only belonging somewhere is not enough and the person needs to feel appreciated and perceptible. After getting appreciation, self-esteem will rise. If this level is ignored, the feeling of vanity and weakness will rise, which can finally lead to depression. People are never fully satisfied, and there will always be new needs to fulfill. The person will feel there is still so much to carry out, and this self-actualization is the highest level in the hierarchy. (Peltonen et al. 1992; 54, 55.)

8   RESEARCH METHODS

When doing an empirical research, it is done by using a quantitative or qualitative method. Quantitative method is a numeric research method, where exact statistics, scales and numbers are used. In quantitative method, the target group is carefully restricted, it may have a large reliability if large target group is used, it measures exactly what was planned and it tests the theory. (Teirilä & Jyväsjärvi 2001; 14)

In qualitative method, respondents are permitted to tell the answer in their own words. Usually in-depth interviews and field studies are used in a qualitative method. In a qualitative method, the analysis must be possible for the reader to evaluate, it must be repeatable, and it should develop the theory. (Teirilä & Jyväsjärvi 2001; 14, 15.)

8.1   Choosing research method

After comparing the methods, the researcher decided to use qualitative research method. As this thesis is trying to find out reasons for people's decision to work in a reception and to find out different sides of the work, the qualitative method will allow the people to explain their point of views freely, by using their own words.

8.2   Preparing the interviews

As the research method of this thesis is semi-structured interview, the researcher prepared herself for the interviews by making guiding questions on the paper which were discussed with the interviewee. The questions were done based on the topics of the theory part of the thesis.

8.3   Sample group

The respondents are divided in two different groups; the ones who work in a reception and the ones who have no experience of receptionist's job but they are interested to try it.

For the first part, five people working in a reception were interviewed; four of them were full time employees and one part time employee. Three of the interviewed ones were receptionists and two of them were shift managers but also mainly working in the reception. Two of the receptionists had had some shift manager experience. The researcher wanted to leave out all extra workers. The respondents consisted of four female and one male. As the thesis discusses about receptionists in generally, the researcher did not think it would be important in this case to choose equal number of men and women. The youngest interviewees were 28 years old and the oldest one was 40 years old.

For the second part, five first year students from tourism programme without any experience from reception were interviewed. All the respondents were between 19 and 21 years old and all respondents were female, since the field is obviously more preferred by female.

8.4 Semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interview is like any other interview, but it is more open. The interviewer has not done any precise questions, but rather a list of topics which should be discussed. The interviewer follows the topics, but may ask more questions which can come up during the interview and the interviewee can answer more by own words. In case it is possible to do the interview only once or when several interviewers are collecting the data, semi-structured interview is the best option. One of the benefits of semi-structured interview is that the questions can be prepared beforehand for the interview. The semi-structured interview gives the freedom to tell opinions and the data can be very reliable and comparable. (Cohen & Crabtree 2006).

The interview is usually conducted with the help of a paper and pen, but since the questions are very open-ended and they may lead to longer conversations, it may be the best to record the interviews so that later on analyzing the answers would be easier. It is almost impossible for the interviewer to follow the conversation

properly and to get the connection with the interviewee if there is an obligation to write everything down. The interviewer must make the notes very quickly in order to follow the interviewee, and this may lead to deficient notes which are difficult to analyze. (Cohen & Crabtree 2006).

8.5 Implementation of the research

The interviews of receptionists were done at the respondents' work place so that the researcher walked in to the hotels and asked from the reception if some of them would have time and willingness to be interviewed. Some interviews were conducted immediately, as with some respondents a better time for an interview was scheduled. All the interviews for the receptionists were conducted during daytime or afternoon between the days of 14th and 18th of February. Lengths of the interviews were 7 to 17 minutes. The students for the interviews were found from the university so that the researcher went to one of the first year students' class and asked for people who were not having any experience of receptionist's job but would be interested try the job. After finding the volunteers, the interviews were conducted between 11th and 13th of march, during students' lunch break. Lengths of these interviews were only 3 to 5 minutes.

As the people interviewed were all Finnish, the interviews were done in Finnish as it was most convenient. All the interviews were recorded so that the analyzing would be easier later on and the interviewer could pay more attention to the discussion instead of writing everything down. Still, in addition to the recording, the researcher made some small notes to back up the recording.

8.6 Reliability and validity

Reliability means that the test would produce the same kinds of results in all occasions. It is possible that if the same questions are performed to the same group and in the same environment after a while, the group may possibly have changed their mind due to circumstances. It may be that the respondent got angry or pleased after having some experience. This means the procedure is unreliable.

So the researcher should think beforehand while doing the questionnaire, if he would get similar result when using the procedure on another occasion. (Bell 1993; 64,65). The writer of this thesis considers the thesis to be reliable because if the interviews were done again for students between age of 19 and 21, most of the answers would probably be similar. Also with the receptionists (age between 28 and 40) similar answers as in this research could be expected. Also the amount of respondents was enough because with most of the questions the answers of different respondents were repeating each other.

Validity clarifies if the procedure shows what it was supposed to show. If the procedure is not reliable, it cannot be valid, but if it is reliable it does not mean it is valid (Bell 1993; 65). In this thesis the questions were done as much as possible based on the theory part, but during analyzing the answers the researcher noticed the questions could have included more specified questions in order to get more answers to test the theory part and to gain validity.

9 THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

In this chapter, the results of the research are discussed. To clarify the research results, the respondents are divided in two groups; experienced ones and inexperienced ones, meaning that the experienced ones are those who are working as receptionists and inexperienced ones those who are still planning to work as a receptionist. The semi-structured questions are appended in the end of this thesis (Appendices 1 & 2).

9.1 Experienced

In this thesis the word experienced comprises those who are working in a reception and already have experience of the job. Two out of five respondents were shift managers, two of them were full time receptionists with some earlier shift manager experience, and one of them was a part-time receptionist while doing master studies. All of them had years of experience in a reception. The professions of the interviewees were such as receptionist, travel counselor, bachelor of hospitality management and child minder.

9.1.1 Career choice

After finding out the age, educational background and position now, things related to career choice were discussed. First of all, the researcher wanted to find out the first job the interviewee had ever had. Only one of the interviewees had worked in a hotel reception as others mainly had worked in other customer service jobs. The interviewees had all had different amount of working experience in a reception, the years were from 4 years up to 14 years. As some of the respondents had worked for years in a reception, there was one who did not remember exactly how he got to work in a reception, but as could be assumed, many of the respondents had started to work in a reception after doing an internship in a reception.

Most of the respondents said they didn't plan exactly to work in a reception. Mostly it was because of the interest that rose because of some summer job in the

same field, or because it was the most interesting field they had been introduced to in previous schools.

The interviewer also wanted to find out the professions of the respondents' parents to see, if there is any connection between the parents jobs and the child's career choice. None of the respondent's parents were working in the reception or in the hotel industry and only one receptionist's family member was working in travel industry. Most of the respondents' parents one or the other was working in customer service sector. The professions mentioned were engineer, vendor, customer server, farmer, entrepreneur and nurse.

9.1.2   Image

The interviewees were asked about the image they had about the receptionist's job before they had any work experience as a receptionist. According to most of the interviewees they thought that it would be slightly easier than it is and one of the respondents mentioned an image from childhood that working as a receptionist looks like a fine job. Dealing with different customers and using languages daily were also part of the image almost everyone had about the job.

> *"Having this kind of childish image in high school that when you study tourism you think you get to travel, which will vanish by time because in small number of tourism industry's jobs you get to travel."*

> *"I had an image that the job would be international so that many languages should be used and that's what I really love."*

> *"Probably the job is more demanding than I first imagined. I had no idea about all the things going on in reception."*

> *"Probably it was a childhood image that it's a really fancy job, scarves around the neck and suits on."*

Barely anyone had any specific idea where these images came from, but some factors as hotel stays in childhood or visiting hotels with a school group were mentioned.

The interviewees were also asked what their opinion is now about the job as a receptionist, and if they could mention some good and bad sides about the job. All the 5 interviewees had similar answers; the work is more demanding than they thought since there are so many things to remember and the work is a lot about handling many things at the same time. The job is much more than doing check-outs and check-ins. Also, each day is different and good sides about the job are customers, coworkers, meeting new people, possibility to keep up language skills and versatility of the job.

> *"Good sides are variability, meeting a lot of people and keeping up the language skills even though the vocabulary needed is really narrow. Best in this job are the colleagues. This is one of the reasons why I still want to do this."*

Bad side which everyone mentioned first is the salary which rises very rarely and very few amounts at a time. Also, no matter how much or properly the work is done, the salary will not change. Also, the respondents mentioned bad working hours, stress and pressure, and physical hardships as the job requires a lot of standing during a shift.

> *"I would say bad things to be rush and pressure which are not equal to the salary in my opinion. In this job you need to control so many things and it can't be seen in the salary. Also the shift work is harder when you get older."*

9.1.3 Motivation

The researcher wanted to find out what motivates people to work in a reception and are the motivators more inner or external. As the previous chapter's final

question declared, no one was happy about the receptionist's salary, so it can be seen that money is not the thing that motivates them most. The biggest motivators in this field are much more inner motivators, for example different customers daily and the feeling when you succeed well with a customer so that both parties are happy, are the biggest motivators for the interviewees. External motivators come after, since these receptionists have not chosen their jobs because of the salary, even though it is important.

> *"Economically this field can't be a big motivator. Biggest motivator is customer service, or that each day is different and there is variability. And I must say that similar kinds of people seek in to this field, at least we have a great work group here. Without this kind of group it probably wouldn't be so nice to work."*

All in all the respondents were both happy and not happy about their decision to work in a reception, some of them were not sure if they would choose this field again if they could go back in time.

9.1.4 Objectives

More than half of the respondents had plans for further studies, some already studying and some planning to study in close future. Those who had plans for further education wanted to expand their education to economics or human resource sector.

> *"If I would think now that my career was here, I probably wouldn't be satisfied. But right now I am happy that I am able to do what I like."*

The interviewees were finally asked about their possible objectives in their working life, and if they see themselves in the same job or field still after several years. As half of the respondents had already been or are shift managers, they had no thoughts about changing their position in few years. Still, a couple of them had plans to proceed in their career, most of them in the hotel industry and one of

them in other field possibly. Still, everyone saw themselves more or less in the same field still for a couple of years more, but not sure in which tasks they would be working in.

9.2 Inexperienced

In this thesis, inexperienced people are those who have no experience about working in a reception, but they would be interested to try it. None of the interviewees had acquired any earlier education in addition to the Finnish matriculation examination. Four of the students were studying in English and one in Finnish and Swedish.

9.2.1 Career choice

When asking their very first jobs the students differed a lot from each other and there was no connection between them. The first jobs were vendor in a cosmetology business, employee for a municipality and church, receptionist in a camping area and beach supervisor.

The students were also asked why they chose to study this field. The most common answer was that they were interested to work with customers. Other reasons were the growing industry of tourism and willingness to work abroad. Some of the respondents also said they chose the field because they felt it was the only field they were interested in after high school.

> *"In the future I want to work in a place where I can work with different people and I'm interested in hospitality industry because it's a growing field. Also studying in English gives me an opportunity to go abroad."*

> *"This was the only field which interested me after high school, I like to work with people and I especially like different languages which why I also study in English."*

The interviewer also wanted to find out the respondents' parents' professions in order to see if there was any change that the parents' professions would affect their children's career choice. The professions the parents have are engineer, cosmetologist, salesmanship, nurse, farmer, teacher, chef and entrepreneur. As can be seen, the professions are very different and only about half of them were even customer service. Only one of the parents was working in Hospitality industry.

9.2.2 Image

After the background information regarding the career, the students were asked about their image of receptionist's job. All the respondents had same thoughts about what the job could be. The most used adjectives were challenging, varied, busy, responsible and customer oriented.

> *"I believe the job is very variable since you meet a lot of different kinds of people during one day."*

> *"..busy, distressing, full of different situations."*

> *"Receptionist's job seems busy and responsible work with lot of customer service. It also has a bit of luxury in it with all the fancy clothes etc."*

The interviewer also asked each of the interviewee if they were interested about the receptionist's job because it would look nice and sophisticated. Surprisingly only one of the respondents said she was having the image that the job seems to have a bit of luxury in it and it affects slightly her decision to try the receptionist's job. The images the students had mostly came from their friends who are working as receptionists or from their own stays in hotels.

9.2.3 Motivation

The students were asked what their biggest motivator for the receptionist's job was and the answers were all similar with each other. The students said that the variability and different people motivate them to work in this job.

> *"Most important is that the job is so interesting that there is no need to watch the clock while working."*

> *"During my stays in hotels I have seen some busy and stressed receptionists trying to handle difficult situations. This made me think how would I manage in that work."*

The researcher asked if the students still felt they had made right decision by choosing to study this field, even though the researcher was aware that after only one year of studying in tourism field and with no experience of the receptionist's job it is almost impossible to know yet if the decision was right. Still, all the interviewees answered that so far they were happy about their decision to study this field and they showed big interest towards hotel industry.

9.2.4 Objectives

Regarding the beginning of the interviewees' studies and their young age it is a bit difficult to ask their objectives in their lives as they will still probably change and some of them are not even sure what they want to do, so asking their objectives was a bit questionable. Still, the researcher formed the question so that if the interviewees had some objectives yet or if they had any idea what they would want to do next in their lives. 80% of the interviewees said their objective to be going abroad and either stay there or just work there for a while. No one said their objective to be to work in a reception only; they were considering it more as a one stage to get to higher positions. One of the respondents thought that in tourism industry receptionist's job is something that many people can/must do for a while. Also one of the respondents said she would like to try many different jobs and not to only stay in one job. Three of the respondents wanted to work specifically in the hotel industry.

> *"I want to work on abroad and to try as many different things as possible. I also want to proceed in my job, not just to stay in the reception."*

10 CONCLUSIONS

From the results of this research it can be seen that the differences between the thoughts of those people who do have experience from the receptionist's job and those people who do not have experience from the receptionist's job are not as big as the researcher expected. The receptionists interviewed had quite a lot of experience so we can trust that they know what the job is in reality. First the researcher interviewed only the receptionists, but when it came out that they were not sure about their images before, the researcher decided to interview also students who would for sure have a fresh image about what they think the job would be about. When asking from the receptionists about the image, it was not guaranteed that the image would not have changed during the years of working.

One of the first questions the researcher asked was the first job they had ever had in order to see if they already then were going towards the hotel industry. Later on the researcher realized that the question cannot have straight connection to the later career because usually people have their first jobs as summer jobs in the age of 15-17. The first job is usually quite an easy job and people cannot decide much what they want to do exactly. The first job is also often acquired only because of money and it is the first time the young will gain independence related to work. At this time the young still does not have any education either. In this question I could have probably asked all the previous job experiences and see if or when they started to head towards hotel or tourism industry. This question would have also helped me with the question if the interviewees had planned to work in a reception or was that job always somehow in their minds.

What was interesting was that the professions of the parents between those who had experience and those who did not have experience were similar. Similar professions were farmer, nurse, vendor, engineer and entrepreneur. The researcher drew a conclusion that if the parents are working in these earlier mentioned fields, the child will end up working in the tourism industry or at least in customer

service job. Also the researcher thinks that those professions are quite common in Finland, meaning probably quite many people are in one of those professions. Also, there was not seen one specific profession which repeated often in order to say it would effect on child's career choice. What can also be seen is that there are not many academic professions among parents and mostly one of the interviewees' parents were working with customers. So I would say there may be a small effect on child's career choice with which profession their parents have.

Professor Donald E. Super's (Hautamäki, A., Wahsltröm, J., Wahlström & R., Sinisalo, P. 1980; 131,132.) theory where each person's life has been divided in five parts base can in a way be supported by this research. Most of the respondents told their desire towards hotel industry came up while they were in high school or while they were having their first summer job, when they were between the age of 14 and 18. After that they started to implement their desire by applying to school and later getting a job from a hotel, either through internship or other way. Receptionists who were more than 30 years old had settled to the profession and had no other plans than to continue their career, but those who were less than 30 years old had still some thoughts about continuing studying, or one of them was already studying at the moment.

When the researcher asked about the image the experienced ones had before they had any experience of the receptionist's job, she was waiting for most of the respondents to tell that it seems like a fancy job since many times she had heard this comment while talking with other people. Surprisingly, only one from both groups told they had that image in some part of their lives. As only one of the receptionists gave that answer, and others did not have any clear memory of what their image was, the researcher decided to interview also students who still could tell her their image right now before any experience. As the researcher was sure about getting some comments about how nice the receptionist's job looks like, she got surprised again as only one told me to have that image. This made the researcher think though, if they really did not have this fancy image in their minds

or if they just did not want to say it. To try to find out, the researcher asked the students straight if they had the image that the job would be nice, and would nice costumes and sophisticated look tempt them to work in a hotel. 80% of the answerers in both groups denied this image or that it would have affected them at all.

Both of the groups had the common image that the job is international and customer oriented. Still, from the answers it is seen that those who work now as receptionist, have clearly thought the job would have been easier than it is in reality. Still, many of the interviewees could not tell really exact images they had since it was many years ago. A couple of the experienced respondents mentioned the thought about the job being light interior job. The inexperienced ones were using more negative and realistic words such as busy, responsible and tough. It seemed during the interview that the inexperienced ones were well aware the job would not be easy, and those things were the first ones they mentioned. Sometimes even the only ones. It's hard to say though, if the level of difficulty what the experienced thought the work would be, would be the same level of difficulty as what the inexperienced ones have now. It may be that after these inexperienced ones get to try the job, it is even harder than they think. This would mean they had the same image as the experienced ones before. Still, the experienced ones did not clearly stated they thought the job would be very stressful and hard before any experience as the experienced did, so it can be assumed that the experienced ones have quite realistic image about the receptionist's job.

The reasons why these two groups came to this field were quite similar; all of them liked customer service, languages and variability, as can be assumed when a person comes to tourism industry. Also one of the common reasons was that it was the only interesting field after high school. Almost all of the inexperienced ones said they want to go abroad, which also made them choose this field. These

answers didn't surprise the researcher; while she was doing the interviews, she already waited for those same answers to be told.

The research done by Entonen and Lyytinen (Peltonen & Ruohotie 1992; 18-20) that students in vocational school are more affected because of external expectations, and students in higher institutes because of real interest towards the field, cannot be supported in this research, as more than half of the respondents had only vocational education and all of the respondents were saying that internal rewards have affected more than external rewards.

The interviews left the researcher a bit negative image of the work in hotel industry because even though the receptionists were telling how rewarding their job is with good colleagues and new daily customers, they were also telling how salary, working hours and difficult situations with customers made most of them ask themselves why they keep doing this job, and why they didn't choose to study something else. Then again, as in the theory part it was mentioned that people often express more easily what they don't like than what they do like.

The main point of this thesis was to find out what do people think receptionist's job would be like, and what it is in reality according to those who have been working as receptionists. The final conclusion is that people who have no experience of this job have quite realistic image of what the job is in reality. According to those who work in reception, the job is challenging but internally rewarding. This is what also those who have no experience thought it would be. Reasons why people seek into this field were that it was most interesting option found after high school and because of changing customers and use of language. For students going abroad was clearly one motivator.

For further research, it could be an idea to find out the deeper reasons which affect people's decision to work in a reception by focusing more on those people's childhood. It would be also nice to make a research where the same group is interviewed. The interview would be done before any experience, and after those

same people gain experience they would be interviewed again so that it would be properly seen if there was any big difference between the image and reality. This kind of research though requires a lot of time and bonding with the interviewees so that it would work out. One similar option would be also to continue this thesis by interviewing these same students again five to ten years after they would possibly have experience of the receptionist's job.

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APPENDIX 1

Semi strukturoidut kysymykset kokeneille

TAUSTATIETOJA

Ikä

Sukupuoli

Koulutus

Työnkuva

URAVALINTA

Ensimmäinen työpaikka

Kauanko työskennellyt vastaanotossa

Miten päädyit työskentelemään vastaanotossa

Oliko suunniteltua työskennellä vastaanotossa

Millä alalla vanhemmat työskentelevät/Onko suvussa samalla alalla olevia

MIELIKUVA

Mielikuva ennen työntekoa

Mistä luulet mielikuvan muodostuneen/osaatko nimetä tekijöitä

Mikä on mielipide työstä nyt (hyviä ja huonoja puolia?)

MOTIVAATIO

Mikä motivoi alalla (sisäiset ja ulkoiset palkkiot)

Tuntuuko päätös oikealta

TAVOITTEET

Onko tiettyjä tavoitteita

Näetkö itsesi samassa työssä vielä vuosien kuluttua

APPENDIX 2

Semi strukturoidut kysymykset kokemattomille

TAUSTATIETOJA

Ikä

Sukupuoli

Edelliset koulutukset

Onko kokemusta vastaanotosta

URAVALINTA

Ensimmäinen työpaikka

Miksi opiskelet tätä alaa

Millä alalla vanhemmat työskentelevät

MIELIKUVA

Mielikuva vastaanottovirkailijan työstä

Mistä luulet mielikuvan muodostuneen

MOTIVAATIO

Mikä motivoi alalle

Tuntuuko päätös oikealta

TAVOITTEET

Onko asetettu tavoitteita? Mitä? Haaveeura?

APPENDIX 1

Semi-structured questions for experienced

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Age

Gender

Education

Job description

CAREER CHOICE

First job

How long have you been working in a reception

How did you end up working in reception?

Did you plan to work in a reception?

In which industry do parents work/anyone from the family in hotel industry

IMAGE

Image before work

Where do you think the image comes from/can you name any factors?

What is the image now? (Good and bad sides)

MOTIVATION

What is motivating (internal and external rewards)

APPENDIX 2

Semi-structured questions for inexperienced

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Age

Gender

Former educations

Experience in reception

CAREER CHOICE

First job

Why studying this field

Parents' job

IMAGE

Image of receptionist's job

Possible factors affecting on forming the image

MOTIVATION

What motivates to this job

Does the decision feel right

OBJECTIVES

Are there any objectives? what?