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Sexual Harassment in the Hospitality Industry – Employees’ Coping Strategies and Employers’ Prevention Strategies
A Case Study of Two Chain Hotels.

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY – EMPLOYEES’ COPING STRATEGIES AND EMPLOYERS’ PREVENTION STRATEGIES.
A CASE STUDY OF TWO CHAIN HOTELS.

A Master’s Thesis
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In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science, Human Geography

By
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ABSTRACT

Sexual harassment in the hospitality industry is a rather uncovered area within the science community. This explorative study looked at the employee and the manager perspective on sexual harassments in the hotel industry. Front-of-the-house workers are considered as an exposed group for sexual harassment as their work has certain expectations on them to please both the customers and their supervisors. The status of the worker in the lower end of the industry is considered relatively low, and they are working in an environment characterized by deeply rooted structures. How the management is working with the issues around sexual harassment has not been a prevalent perspective so far and is therefore of high relevance. This has been a qualitative research using semi-structured interview as a method. The data sampling was made at two hotel chains located in the municipality of Östersund, in northern Sweden. The problem is considered as a serious issue in Swedish law context; however there is a lack of research in the area. The findings in the research were that workers have a naturalized subservient relationship to customers making them accept certain behavior from customers. Furthermore, customers were also the group that was considered as the most potential harasser towards the employees. This research has also contributed with further coping strategies, that worker develop to deal with situations in work where sexual harassment may occur. The study additionally reveals that the case hotels do not work actively with the issue of sexual harassment. There is a need for both prevention and policy against sexual harassment and the discussing of sexual harassment needs to be implemented in the industry.

KEYWORDS: sexual harassment, hospitality industry, hotels, employees’ coping strategies, management prevention strategies
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1 INTRODUCTION

The worker leaned over the table to serve the food to the guest when suddenly feeling a hand on the breast. It might be a misplaced hand on the workers body, a whistling of appreciation when passing the table, jokes or comments with invitations to accompany guests to the hotel rooms. “My body is not on the menu” is a very describing slogan within the hospitality industry.

Looking in the society today sexual harassment is a much debated topic. For example, female politicians in France have recently gained media attention (Chrisafis, 2016, 13 May) when they raised their voices to highlight the sexism climate in the politics. Although cases like Straus-Kahn, there still exists a narrowed view on females they claim (Willsher, 2016, 15 May). Or in a Swedish context, there was quite some turbulence in the media after a newspaper (Wierup & Bouvin, 2016, 10 January) revealed that numerous females been sexually harassed at a festival in Stockholm but that the assaults were never reported.

Coming back to hospitality, sexual harassment may have its origin from a social structure, however, the industry has further characteristics that complicate the question. This report will explore the presence and perspectives on sexual harassment in the hospitality industry. To begin with the problem statement that the study bases on and why this is a relevant topic to study will be discussed. This is followed by the research questions that the study aims at answering. The theoretical framework and the literature review focus on previous research in the area and gives a background to why sexual harassments might be a problem in the industry and further gives theoretical meaning to the issue. These parts are followed by a presentation of the study area and a method chapter that explains in depth the process that this research has followed. Finally, a chapter with the results of the empirical findings is given, followed by the discussion where conclusions are drawn based on the findings according to the theoretical framework.
1.1 Problem Statement

The research community have not been studying sexual harassment (hereafter SH) at work for a long time, the first academic paper published on the topic date back to late 1970s (MacKinnon 1979; Tangri et al., 1982; Gutek & Morasch, 1982) and the interest has increased since. SH within the hospitality industry is however still a rather uncovered area (Figueroa-Domecq et al., 2015; Ram, 2015). In a Swedish context, reports show that the issue is not spoken about enough and workers are not even aware of their rights (Bergold, & Vedin, 2015; del Sante & Schwarzenberger, 2013). A big issue with SH is that the one being harassed does not know if it is classified as harassment, or may very well be aware of that they are being sexually harassed, but do not know how they can or should react to the incident (Gilbert et al., 1998; Worsfold & McCann, 2000). Furthermore few employers and employees act immediately in an incident of SH (Ram, 2015). Other issues related are that the one harassing is not aware of that he/she is harassing and simply consider it to be flirting. SH may also cause negative impacts for the victims and lead to the worker quitting their job, which in the end may lead to an economic loss for the company (del Sante & Schwarzenberger, 2013). The psychosocial working environment is also suffering if SH occurs (Arbetsmiljöverket, 2014), as it is not just affecting the harasser and the victim, but also the people around the incident, for instance, the colleagues at the workplace.

SH at the workplace is considered a problem for both men and women and may occur independently of gender (Ineson et al., 2013), however due to the high proportion of female workers within the tourism industry (Kinnaird & Hall, 1994; UNWTO & UN WOMEN, 2011) the number of women that have experienced sexism or sexual harassment at work clearly has been prevalent (Bergold & Vedin, 2015; Nordic Union – HRCT, 2015). Leaving out hospitality for a moment, young women represent a group that is considered to be an especially exposed group for SH in Sweden in the working life (Arbetsmiljöverket, 2014; Bergold & Vedin, 2015). Furthermore, a recent survey in the European Union member countries reports a high number of females have experienced SH in a working context (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014).

One contradictory issue within the hospitality industry is that the work atmosphere in the hospitality industry actually may encourage SH. Williams (1999) put this fact in the following words: “Sexual behavior that would scandalize and
result in sexual harassment lawsuits in one context could be part of the job description in another.” (Williams et al., 1999, p. 91). In Weber’s et al. (2002) study they similarly found that restaurant employees’ view on what is considered as SH differs from restaurant industry to other industries. Are the workers in an industry, like the hospitality where “the customer is always right”, supposed to accept the behavior?

1.2 Relevance of Study

Hospitality workers are seen as a specially vulnerable group in risk of SH due to the low status the workers may have compared with other industries (Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Ram, 2015). Research has shown that workers in hospitality is assumed to accept inappropriate behavior from customers and are too ashamed or afraid to be seen as naïve to complain to the management (Handy, 2006). One reason for not reporting SH is the fear of being mocked at work by other colleagues or their supervisors (Worsfold, & McCann, 2000; White & Hardemo, 2002). Furthermore, the uncertainty and lack of experience among the workers may be additional reasons to why very few seem to be reporting the issue (Ineson et al., 2013). Due to these facts, it is important that companies establish some sort of plan or policy in how they deal with SH at the workplace. Being the victim you need to feel that you can do something about the situation. Del Sante and Schwarzenberger (2013) refer this to ‘breaking the silence’ (translated from Swedish by the author) meaning the employees needs to feel that they have a support from their employers and do not feel ashamed when reporting certain incidents. This can also be seen as a need for opening the discussion about SH at the workplace. For these reasons the employees in the industry is a vital group of people to study. Furthermore, the perspective of the employees and their attitudes and thoughts around the issue contributes to the understanding of their personal perceptions.

The agenda of my small scale research is to contribute with findings regarding SH in the hospitality industry in a Swedish context, as to date there is a lack of previous research in this area. The contemporary Sweden is a modern country actively working with equal rights and supporting good working environments (Arbetsmiljöverket, 2015). Although, still SH at the workplace in Sweden is an issue (del Sante, & Schwarzenberger, 2013; Bergold & Vedin, 2015). Moreover, the
management perspective and how they are working with the issue is still relatively uncovered (Kensbrock et al., 2015, Ram, 2015). The victim and the harasser perspective are more common perspectives, with the former more examined (Ram, 2015). Thus, the role of the management is highly relevant to include in the study. The strategies in former research have partly been developed in response to deviant customers not particularly SH. Therefore, I have developed coping strategies based on my empirical findings and previous research to further increase an awareness of the strategies that employees develop.

1.3 Objectives and Research Questions

This master thesis will investigate SH towards employees in the hospitality industry and how or if they have ways to tackle this. It also aims at exploring the employers’ view of working with the issue. The hospitality industry is represented in the study by two chain hotels located in the municipality of Östersund. The aim of the study is to find out what the employees class as SH and show upon how they cope with potential situations of SH at work. I include the employer perspective in my study to gain an understanding in how the management is working with preventing SH and how the issue is dealt with, if dealt with at all. Sexual harassment does not have an internationally agreed definition and limiting oneself to one definition is impossible because people perceive SH differently. Thus, I will not limit myself to one definition but follow a combination of already existing theoretical understandings. I will in chapter 2.1 go into depth on the meaning of and what is generally considered to be a sexual harassment. This study is an explorative study, as the topic has relative limited earlier contributions.

The research questions that this study will try to answer are:

1. What sort of sexual harassment have workers in the hospitality industry experienced?
2. What strategies do the employees develop to handle sexual harassment or to avoid being harassed?
3. What strategies do the employers in the hospitality industry use to prevent sexual harassment at the workplace?
4. Are workers within the hospitality industry informed about sexual harassments?
2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In this second chapter, the theoretical framework and literature review is presented. The focus of the literature review is on previous research on the worker in the hospitality industry, the customer-worker relationship, coping strategies of the worker and finally the role of the management. But first the meaning of sexual harassment is discussed from both a theoretical and legal standpoint.

2.1 Sexual Harassment – Theoretical Understandings

The term sexual harassment is argued to be developed in the mid-1970s and first expressed in the United States by feminist researchers (Pina et al., 2009; O’Connor, 2010). Catharine MacKinnon was one of the first ones to define the term. MacKinnon’s (1979) groundbreaking book reflected on SH and women in the workforce, and she defined SH as “the unwanted imposition of sexual requirements in the context of a relationship of unequal power” (MacKinnon, 1979, p.1). MacKinnon herself admit it is a quite broad definition, although ‘unwanted’ and ‘unequal power’ captures the main elements of what SH is.

Researchers have also argued that the power imbalance between people is one of the main issues causing SH (Vaux, 1993; Chan et al., 1999; McDowell, 2009). However, it cannot be argued to be the only factor for the occurrence of SH, for instance, the organizational structure and social norms are other influential factors contributing to issues of SH (Kensbrock et al., 2015). Ram’s (2015) review of earlier studies on SH, among other things, in the hospitality industry, reveals that organizational structures, poor management and assumptions of industry are the main reasons that SH occur.

The overall definition of SH is that the actual action can come in different forms, some easier to interpret than others. Physical harassment can be a form of touching, a misplaced hand on another body, pinching and hugging for instance. Verbal harassment can be defined as words that are offending the victim, for instance, inappropriate comments about the appearance or the clothing of a person. Non-verbal harassment corresponds to gestures, for instance whistling or staring inappropriately. The important similarities between these forms and what makes
them an SH is that the action is UNWANTED by the victim (Lu & Kleiner, 2001; Carstensen, 2004; del Sante & Schwarzenberger, 2013). And one more extreme type of SH is what MacKinnon (1979) called Quid pro-Quo, an exchange of a favor; a situation where the employee is asked to do a sexual favor in return for a benefit in the working place.

2.1.1 Sexual Harassment - Legal Perspectives

Looking at regulations and laws, the definition of sexual harassment is defined differently in each European country and the degree of how seriously it is taken varies. Most European countries have implemented regulations against SH, mainly after directions from the European Union (Numhauser-Henning & Laulom for European Commission, 2012). In Directive 2006/54/EC about equal treatment of men and women in employment, the European Union defines sexual harassment as follows:

‘Sexual harassment: where any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature occurs, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment’ (2006/54/EC, Article 2(1)(d).

The European Union member states have implemented the Directive in national legislation, but variation and modifications between different countries are to be found (Numhauser-Henning & Laulom for European Commission, 2012).

Sweden regulates SH by the Discrimination Act (hereafter DA) which is based on the EU Directive that was implemented in 2009. Swedish law defines sexual harassment as follow: “Sexual harassment: conduct of a sexual nature that violates someone’s dignity” (SFS 2008:567, Chapter 1 Section 4(5).

The aim of the DA is to work against discrimination, promote equal rights and possibilities for everyone, meaning that all sorts of discrimination that might occur due to sex, ethnicity, religion, age et cetera needs to be dealt with. The Equality Ombudsman (EO) works on behalf of the Swedish Government to maintain that the DA is followed and that any form of discrimination shall be reported to the EO. However, the DA specifically regards discrimination and SH, which occur in institutions or environments such as universities or workplaces. If SH occurs outside one of these contexts it is called sexual assault, which refers to something else. Furthermore, the DA states that the harassment have to be unwanted and the one
harassing has to have a somewhat understanding of that he/she is harassing. Whether or not the behavior is unpleasant is up to the one being harassed, the victim, to decide. According to Swedish law and the DA, if an employee feels sexually harassed and the harasser is working in the same working place, the employer has an obligation to investigate. The employer needs to start an investigation if the harassment occurs in any environment that can be connected to work, meaning also for example on parties that the employer arranged or travels within work duties. If an employer does not investigate he/she need to compensate the victim (Gabinus Göransson et al. 2013). The law also applies to cases of SH when the victim happens to be an intern or part-time worker, which is especially important in the hospitality industry as these two job categories make up a lot of the workforce (Riley, 2002). However, important to note is that the DA does not regard SH from a person that is not a supervisor or co-worker, for example a guest.

If there is a suspicion that SH has happened at the workplace, according to the DA, the employer should investigate and get both employees’ perspectives and further document the process. Employers also have a responsibility in preventing that the SH incident will be repeated. Companies should have a strategy plan that describes how to investigate SH and who is in charge for such an investigation at a workplace. (Gabinus Göransson et al. 2013). Additionally, it is very important that everyone at the workplace is aware of these regulations, however, a report for the Swedish Trade Union Confederation shows that there are very few that inform their employees of the strategy plan (Bergold & Vedin, 2015).

The Swedish Work Environment Authority has in March 2016 implied new directives for better working environments. The aim is to prevent bad working conditions and build acceptable working environments. It is up to the management that the directives are followed. One of the directives for a better working environment is preventing victimization and bad behavior towards one or more employees. The regulations need to be shared and communicated to the management and employees at all levels. The recommendations are to include the regulations in a policy (Arbetsmiljöverket, 2015).

In summary, both researchers and law regulations agree that SH is an unwanted action that is of sexual nature and it should be regarded as a serious problem. In the following chapters, I will go into depth on the worker in the hospitality industry in order to map out an understanding to why the worker is an exposed group to SH. I
will especially focus on the customer-worker relationship because the relationship generally is characterized by an imbalance, in which the worker is the servant to the customers (Hall, 1993; Sherman, 2007; McDowell, 2009). This further implies that the worker is an exposed group and more at risk of SH and it is, therefore, a need to understand the nature of the relationship when discussing SH (Guerrier & Adib, 2000). But before debating this, a short presentation on theoretical models of SH that have been developed by the science community is presented.

### 2.2 Theoretical Models

The issue of what causes SH at workplaces has been studied by academic scholars to some extent. To date a few models/theories have been developed by the research community. This section will start with presenting the models that are most accepted by the community and those that have been tested by more than one researcher and further argue for which models that are applicable for my research.

The most common models are; the socio-cultural, the organizational, the biological and the sex-role spillover (O’Hare & O’Donohue, 1998; Pina et al., 2009; Ineson et al., 2013 & Kensbock et al., 2015). Beyond these models the science community has also developed the four-factor model (O’Hare & O’Donohue, 1998), however, this model examines both the victim and harasser perspective and since this study will not take the perspective of the harasser it is not suitable for the study. The socio-cultural model assumes that especially men use SH as a power tool over women to gain dominance at the workplace, and the model supposes a stereotypical relationship where women are subservient to men (McKinnon, 1979; O’Hare & O’Donohue, 1998). The socio-cultural model could be included in this study as the societal status of the work in the hospitality industry is examined, however, there is a weakness in this model as most men do not harass (Pina et al., 2009) and I am not restricting myself to the idea that only females can be sexually harassed. According to the biological model SH is not an actual harassment as there is a difference between men and women’s sexual urges and therefore it would be in men’s nature to harass (O’Hare & O’Donohue, 1998). The biological model was developed in 1982 by Tangri (cited in O’Hare & O’Donohue, 1998) and it would be relatively safe to say that this theory is out of date.
The organizational model refers to the organizational structures within the workplace. Similarly with the socio-cultural model, the model acknowledges a power imbalance; however the sex of the person is irrelevant as it recognize inequalities among different job positions between individuals. The offender may be of any gender, the model simply assumes that a person uses their higher power or status to SH a person in a lower position (Tangri et al., 1982; O’Hare & O’Donohue, 1998; Pina et al., 2009). This organizational model first developed by Tangri et al. in 1982 is still used. According to this model, the group at risk of SH is the hospitality worker at the lower end of the labor market, as they have a poorer status in the work context and are therefore more vulnerable (Poulston, 2008; Kensbock et al. 2015, Ram, 2015). The organizational model in the hospitality context is also used to examining the customer as the harasser, as this group is using a form of power. This fits into the idea that the customer-worker relationship is unequal in status in the hospitality industry (Hall, 1993; Sherman, 2007; McDowell, 2009). However it might as well be a co-worker or supervisor that uses their power over a worker with less power.

Then there is the sex-role spillover model that assumes that there are certain gendered expectations at work and that SH occurs more often at a workplace that is gender segregated. An explanation of the model would be that a person working in a gender stereotypical industry runs a higher risk of getting sexually harassed in cases when his or her gender does not correspond to the stereotypical gender expectations. Likewise, the model also implies that for instance females working in a female-dominated workplace have gendered expectations because the work role and sex role are closely met (Gutke & Morasch, 1982; O’Hare & O’Donohue, 1998; Kensbrock et al., 2015). The sex-role spillover model is suitable for this study due to the gender expectations that have been proven to exist in the hospitality industry. The tourism industry in its whole is additionally seen as one of the most gender segregated industries (Aitchison, 2001; Kinnaird and Hall, 1994) and the model is therefore applicable. The idea of the sex-role spillover, supplements the idea of ‘the body at work’, which refers to the embodied meeting between two persons which characterizes the interactive service work that hospitality is (McDowell, 2009). Furthermore the notion of ‘doing gender’ (West & Zimmerman, 1987) also suits with the sex-role spillover model, as gender is suggested to be something we exercise and not something we have.
Using only one of the models to describe the cause for SH is a bit vague, instead, a combination of the causes could give a more credible result (O’Hare & O’Donohue, 1998; Pina et al., 2009; Kens Brock et al., 2015). The models that I have found to be the most appropriate for my research are the organizational and sex-role spillover models. In the following chapters, the meaning of these concepts will be explained and the importance of them in this given context.

### 2.3 The Worker in the Hospitality Industry and Sexual Harassment

This part is a brief discussion of the meaning and characteristics of the hospitality industry in order to give a short introduction. The hospitality industry is a service sector mainly consisting of a provider and a receiver of a service. Compared with other industries the product of the tourism industry differs from others since it is a service. It is an intangible product that is shaped as for instance an experience. Scholars describe the product as something that is consumed and produced at the same location; this is called inseparability, which is very much the case in hotels. The service also has variability, meaning all experiences differ from each other and every interaction between producer and consumer are unique. What the interactions look like cannot be predicted, as there are numerous factors contributing to this. Certain insecurity is also connected to the industry as the product cannot be stored and one cannot precisely predict the amount of products needed, e.g. a hotel can only estimate the number of guests (Reisinger, 2001; Kotler et al., 2006; Weaver & Lawton, 2014). Hospitality is about taking care of the customer’s needs; eating, sleeping, drinking. The industry tends to suffer from an overall negative image, as the industry is characterized by poor working conditions, low-status, low-paid jobs, irregular working hours and long shifts. Compared with many other industries the hospitality industry demands the worker to be more flexible towards these conditions (Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Ram, 2015). The work in the industry, especially in the lower end of the labor market, does not, in general, require a high level of education or skills (Riley et al., 2002, Marchante et al. 2005; Centre for Economics and Business Research, 2014) and is in general seen as an easy entry to the labor market (Riley, 2002; Jordhus-Lier & Underthun, 2015). These facts make the worker in the hospitality a rather ‘vulnerable’ group (Lucas, 2004).
In the hospitality context where the victim is the worker, SH can occur from three parties; a supervisor, co-worker or the customer/guest (Gabinus Göransson et al. 2013). In a Swedish context, a recent report shows that SH occurs more often by a third party, meaning not by the supervisors or co-workers. The labor markets where harassments occur most often by a person that is not your boss or co-worker are in health and social care, followed by hospitality and trade (Bergold & Vedin, 2015). Looking at the customer as the harasser in the hospitality context is a rather recent perspective (Hughes & Tadic, 1998; Yagil, 2008).

The workers at the lower end of the hospitality industry are most exposed and in risk of power abuse against them (Ram, 2015; Kensbock et al. 2015) from both the customers and managers as the worker shall please both (Poulston, 2008). The industry employs several seasonal and part-time workers (Riley, 2002) for example, students working alongside with their studies to get an extra income. Part-timers and employees with temporary contracts, including young students, are seen as vulnerable groups and running a higher risk than others of getting exposed to SH (Worsfold, & McCann, 2000) Women within this group are even more in risk (Gilbert et al., 1998). Poulston (2008) implies that the personality of a person could be one reason that SH occurs a lot within this industry. The personality of the worker, generally speaking, is a social, outgoing person who enjoys the contact with people and this personality may lead a customer to believe something else than intended (ibid.). It might be true that a certain type of people is drawn to the industry, however, this perspective could also be called a typical ‘victim blaming’ situation. In the next section, I will go more in-depth with the role of the worker in front-of-the-house and also look at the relationship between the customer and the worker in order to proof the importance of it when discussing SH.

2.4 Customer-Employee Relationship

The customer-worker relationship often comes with unspoken rules on how both parts are expected to behave and especially what the worker is supposed to accept. The expectations come from both customers and managers (Kensbock et al., 2015). The service product given in the hospitality industry by a host to a guest is an interaction between the two (Hepple et al., 1990). The guest is paying for a service and the employee make sure that the customer is satisfied with the service. Normann
(2000) refers to this service encounter as the “moment of truth”, when the customer’s first impression of the service is made. This moment counts on the performance of the employee, who is representing the company’s image. The service expected differs if it is classed as a fine dining restaurant, a luxury hotel compared to if the service is made in, for example, a café or a hostel. Sherman (2007) studied the organization of luxury hotels and the class inequalities among workers and customers. In these settings the employees are expected to give excellent service, it is required that they have knowledge about their customer and take care of their every need. However the status of the customer is also important; the higher status the more one could assume that the worker tries to give a good service (ibid.). Evidently the customer expects different service the more deluxe a hotel is, meaning the performance of the worker differs depending on the environment of the work.

There is an imbalance between the customer and the worker; one could say that the worker is subservient to the customer (Hall, 1993; Sherman, 2007; McDowell, 2009). Though for instance Bolton and Houlihan (2005) have argued that there is no clear sovereignty of customers because the customers also are aware of their expected roles but do not feel comfortable in them. However, the relationship is much more complex and is very individualized from person to person (Ivarsson & Larsson, 2009). Sherman (2007) argues that a person that has a job where there is an interaction between the worker and e.g. customer, have to some extent accept and naturalize the subservient attitude, which might be the case for many workers in the hospitality industry. Kensbock et al. (2015) argue similarly with Sherman in their study on hotel room attendants and their experiences of SH. Many of the room attendants accepted their status and considered SH to some degree as something that comes with their job position.

The employees in the hospitality industry are to some extent expected to accept inappropriate behavior from guests (Bergold & Vedin, 2015). Being friendly and having an inviting personality is a very important “rule of the game” and this act is rewarded (McDowell, 2009) in the form of e.g. tips. Many employees in the service sector are working for tip, for instance waiting staff, it works as a reward for the worker for doing a good job. However, tips might also contribute to workers accepting SH because the person knows that the certain way of acting will be rewarded in the end. The employee might even feel encouraged to use sexuality in order to gain more income (ibid). In the service sector where the workers are
expected to have a “the customer is always right” mindset, the feeling of workers being a class below customers increases. This mentality where the workers act for pleasing the customer contributes to a greater risk of SH and Ram (2015), therefore, suggest that one should question the principle of the “the customer is always right”.

Hochschild’s (2003) study on flight attendants shows how their interaction with customers is very similar to the work in hospitality. The quality of the service depends a lot on the performance of the employees. Scholars suggest an image of the hospitality worker as a non-person, meaning the customers do not see the worker as having a personality. The worker would be nearly an invisible person working in the scenery of a service (Hall, 1993; Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Poulston, 2008). Working in hospitality that is a service sector, you could even see the work tasks as a form of acting as the worker pretends to like the customer although the worker may have no specific interest in the person (Ivarsson & Larsson, 2009). Sherman (2007) even uses the metaphor “service theater”, comparing an actual theater with a hotel. The two venues, which both have a front and backstage, and both are dependent on reviews and the level of the performance is crucial (ibid.).

The use of drugs and alcohol are clearly factors that additionally increase the risk of SH, as it makes people act in a way they usually would not do. During evenings and nights, the use of alcohol and drugs are usual ingredients in the hospitality atmosphere. It is also seen by some people as an excuse for behaving more vulgar. Poulston’s (2008) research on SH, makes an interesting point when talking about the guests in the hospitality industry. Poulston argues that customers do not behave the same way as they would in their everyday life. There is a greater feeling of freedom and less feeling of caring for being responsible, which in turn could trigger SH (Poulston, 2008; Lashley, 2000). This is important when discussing SH in the hospitality industry because the harassers take on a form of freedom to abuse another person. This would then mean that a customer or guest feel obligated to SH and might not even consider it at something wrong.

This fact can also be connected with John Urry (2002) and the tourists gaze; how tourists are behaving differently when on holiday as they are out of their ordinary everyday context. Another important part of the gaze, that Urry mentions, is how bodies might be the focus of the gaze, for instance tourists gazing the locals. Looking at the interaction between the customer and the worker as an embodied
meeting is an important perspective when discussing SH. Therefore, I will in the following chapter further develop the concept of ‘the body in hospitality’.

### 2.5 The Hospitable Body at Work

Looking at the ‘body’ as an object in tourism studies was first acknowledged by Veijola and Jokinen (1994), and has since grown of interest. Wolkowitz (2012) have implied the term ‘body work’; work that is done from one body to other bodies, for instance treating another body within work. This sort of work is especially seen in health and social care; a nurse or doctor, where there is direct contact between the bodies (Twigg et al., 2011). However the concept of ‘body work’ also applies to the hospitality area, only the body contact is not directly touching but an emotional touching with one body taking care/helping another body (McDowell, 2009). An example of this within a hotel is how a receptionist; one body, helps the customer to check in; the second body. The receptionist will most probably perform the task with a smile, give comments and ask questions in order to make the customer feel appreciated and comfortable. These actions are a form of caring that the worker does for the customer.

Much like the flight attendants that Hochschild (2003) studied, the hospitality workers also do ‘emotional’ labor. Hochschild defines ‘emotional labor’ as “the management of a feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value” (Hochschild, 2003, p.7). The managing of feelings is likewise the control over the self in order to fit into the expectations that hospitality workers have on them. Furthermore, doing ‘emotional labor’ also connects with that the worker relies on his/her personality and is ‘selling their personality’ in order to give good service; the ‘hospitable body’. Flirting can be seen as a part of the emotional labor by the worker and hence accepted (Ivarsson & Larsson, 2009). Warhurst & Nickson (2009) suggest that the term emotional labor can be further developed by also looking at ‘aesthetic labor’. In contrast to the behavior of the worker, aesthetic labor refers to the looks and sounds of the worker. The aesthetic appearance also has an exchange value for the worker and can be used to his/hers advantage in the interaction with customers. Both the emotional and the aesthetical are factors that the workers at hotels also may adapt (Zampoukos, 2013).
‘Doing gender’ is the idea of West and Zimmerman (1987), where they argued that gender is a behavior we do due to social requirements and not something we have. ‘Doing gender’ is creating differences between the sexes. The idea of looking at the gender perspectives within research is to look at the masculine and the feminine, as people are born to be male or female but are raised to be men and women. How a woman and a man should behave or act are deeply rooted within the society and culture (Connell & Pearse, 2015; Bradley, 2013). Hall (1993) suggests that both employer and employees are doing gender in the hospitality industry. The reason for this is that both parties are following three scripts to give “good service”; friendliness, subservience and flirting. Employees are according to Hall doing gender by following the scripts in order to please the customer. Management is doing gender by expecting these qualities among their workers (ibid).

Warhurst and Nickson (2009) also argue that companies in the industry are doing gender by employing people that contribute to the right image for their brand. The behavior; what clothes the employee should wear and language; what they expect the employee to say to the customer. Scholars claim that the clothes that the employees are wearing as a part of their job uniform might be of relevance when dealing with the causes of SH. For example, Ivarsson and Larsson (2009) found that employees in interactions services are aware of the ‘power of looks’, as many respondents believed their looks contributed to getting hired. Zampoukos (2013) find similar results regarding job uniforms when studying workers at hotels. The clothes of the workers functioned as a way to separate both employees from guests, but also female from male employees. These factors are differentiated for different job positions and in that way contributing to making a separation between workers (ibid.). Kensbock et al. (2015) revealed that a majority of the room attendants in her study found their uniform as uncomfortable and exploiting. The environment that the room attendants worked in; the guest’s bedrooms, were seen as a sexualized environment which caused guests to see the worker more as an object than a professional employee. The customer (harasser) felt as if they were justified to behave in a certain way and drop inappropriate comments (ibid.). The hospitable body and the environment it works in can further be seen as a place with special features, which is discussed next.
2.5.1 The Body in the Workplace

The place is keystone within the human geography (Gregory et al., 2009), however the place is more than just a physical location (Rose, 1993; Massey, 1994; McDowell, 2009). As McDowell puts it: “Place is not a box or container, but rather a set of social relations.” (McDowell, 2009, p. 221). The hotel as a workplace is the arena where the social relations between the individual worker, supervisors, co-workers and consumers are acted out (McDowell, 2009). The workplace as a place, where social and economic relations are expressed, have a significant meaning from geographers’ perspective (Rose, 1993).

The hospitality industry is often linked with reproductive work tasks, e.g. the caring for the customer. These work tasks are associated with femininity and the female body. This might cause problems for men in the industry, or men wanting to enter the industry, as they do not have the “right” body. Nixon (2009) studied the masculinity among working class men and their attitudes to service labor that can be argued to have certain emotional labor characteristics. The study revealed that interactive service jobs are seen as unattractive to the men as they are too much challenging their masculinity (ibid.). This is additionally problematic for the industry and contributes to the fact that job positions in the hospitality industry are seen as unattractive. The different expectations of employees’ appearance may cause inequalities (Mears, 2014).

Looking beyond the workplace as the arena and instead focusing on the embodied work, the body itself can be viewed as a geographical entity (Massey, 1994; McDowell, 2009). The body as a ‘physical location’ is the personal identity and personal space of an individual, where the proximity of others is a part of the social (McDowell, 1999). Orzeck (2007) argues here that even though bodies can be separated from each other based on for instance gender, race or class, they are also differentiated in that certain bodies have certain expectations on them. This as the employee is working under the capitalist mode of production. Orzeck says: “Just as capital must designate certain spaces for certain purposes, so too must it designate certain bodies for certain tasks.” (Orzeck, 2007, p. 501). This would mean that where the body is considered to be a geographical entity in its own right, the body has a ‘spatial fix’, as certain bodies are considered to belong to certain places and/or work tasks (Massey, 1994, McDowell, 1999). For example, Zampoukos and Ioannides (2015) argue that within a hotel the division of labor follows certain expectations on
gender. Because expectations on certain bodies at certain places exist, it might be argued that bodies, work and the spaces in which they work are closely linked.

Towards an even deeper understanding of the body as a place, the corporeal space could additionally be seen as a territory. Within human geography the word ‘territory’ is defined as a space that is managed by individuals or groups to control access to people and places (Gregory et al., 2009). In a similar way as we perceive the body as a geographical entity, so too could it be conceptualized as a territory. Seeing the body as a territory, the individual may have to defend her body and control her emotions to not reveal the true emotions or to display a emotion most suited for the situation. To put this in a hospitality context, looking at the employees bodies as a territory the worker can control and defend themselves towards potential cases of SH, this by using different strategies to handle certain situations (employees’ coping strategies are further developed in chapter 2.6). This is an idea that workers negotiate with and/or protest against customers’ in order to maintain control over their own bodies.

This chapter has shown how scholars argue that the hospitality work is highly embodied. The arguments presented support the idea of where SH may have its origin. In the following chapter I will move on from the causes of SH and develop the ideas of what happens if SH occurs, more precisely, the strategies of employees and employers.

### 2.6 Employees’ Coping Strategies towards Sexual Harassment

To deal with situations at work for instance SH or troublesome customers, it has been proven that employees develop different strategies to cope with these issues. The strategies that are presented here have been found in the literature, however, most of them are connected with how the employee react to customer abuse. Although the strategies might also be adapted if SH occurs from a co-worker or supervisor, how the employee participants in this study do that will be presented in chapter 7.

Similar what Sherman (2007) discuss; that the workers take on a form of acting role, Hochschild (2003) agrees. Hochschild divides the managing of feelings to ‘surface acting’ and ‘deep acting’. ‘Surface acting’ refers to when a person approch a situation by controlling the emotions shown, although the person does not feel that
specific emotion, for instance a fake smile. ‘Deep acting’ can according to Hochschild be expressed in two ways; either a person actually makes true emotional changes by admonishing an emotion or the person ignores the feeling. For instance one flight attendant in Hochschild’s study showed deep acting when she was asked how she deals with rude customer “Don’t let him get to you, don’t let him get to you...after a while the anger goes away”. The workers develop these types of acting to cope with their personal self but also the act is in favor for the company because it is seen as better service (ibid.).

Yagil (2008) developed three main coping strategies that service workers use to deal with troublesome customers. 1) Problem-solving 2) Escape-avoidance and 3) Support seeking. In the problem-solving strategy the employee finds different ways to decrease the risk of exploitation by the customer. In the ‘escape-avoidance’ strategy the worker denies or takes distance from personal emotions in order to cope with the situation. Ivarsson and Larsson (2009) also studied the interaction between customers and workers in the service sector and developed strategies that the workers adapt, based on their own and other researcher’s findings. One strategy Ivarsson and Larsson mention is ‘depersonalization’ strategy; i.e. when the worker is getting immune to bad behavior and simply does not take things personally. The opposite of depersonalization is when the worker tries to show the customer that he/she are a human being with feelings as well (Ivarsson & Larsson, 2009). Hochschild (2003) further explains that a person that has not developed a ‘depersonalization’ strategy takes criticism like complaints from customers personal. Not taking it personal is showed to be a way for workers to exclude the action of being sexually harassed (Quinn, 2000). The ‘escape-avoidance’ strategy by Yagil (2008) and ‘depersonalization’ are rather similar as they both explain how a worker is distancing oneself to a situation. The third and the last strategy that Yagil (2008) presents is the ‘support-seeking’ strategy. In this strategy the worker searches for support from for instance a co-worker by telling about the experience or ask the college to deal with the customer.

‘Invisible revenge’ is another strategy that Ivarsson and Larsson (2009) developed. This is when the worker is taking their revenge on the customer by giving worse service for instance smaller portions of food, but still with a smile. ‘Accidental clumsiness’ is a similar strategy where the worker pretends to give good service while enjoying the revenge feeling, for instance dropping hot soup in the lap of the
customer. In Chan, Tang and Chan (1999) research on SH in workplace and academia life, the victims of SH reported that they did not tolerate the harasser, however, coped with them by simply trying to avoid or ignore the person. About fifty per cent of the respondents spoke about the incident with friends and colleagues; nevertheless, the number of respondents that reported the incident to supervisors was very low. Similarly Hughes and Tadic (1998) participants revealed that ignoring the SH from a customer or telling colleagues or friends as a strategy were most common. The strategy to cope with the situation by talking about it to someone else is similar to the ‘support-seeking’ strategy by Yagil (2008). Humor is another strategy that for instance the room attendants in Kensbock et al. (2015) used and also the respondents in the study of Hughes and Tadic (1998).

Although Reynolds and Harris (2006) study did not consider SH, but irregular customer behavior in general, their findings revealed different tactics that front-of-house workers develop. They categorized the strategies into three stages; pre-incident, during the incident and after the incident. If combining these stages with the strategies mentioned above, one could for example say that ‘depersonalization’ is during the incident strategy and ‘support-seeking’ is after the incident strategy. A pre-incident strategy could be, a strategy the worker takes on in order to prevent a situation to escalate to SH.

The strategies that employees develop differ from situations and personalities, however as discussed above, workers develop these in order to manage situations at work that might be problematic. In the following chapter strategies and role of the management is presented.

2.7 Management Strategies

In the agenda of decreasing the issues with SH in the hospitality industry, the management has a crucial role (Handy, 2006). If the managements’ attitude is to accept or ignore SH, the harasser might feel even more equitable to act. This is especially the case if the customer is the harasser, as it can be a denied group of harassers in the industry (Yagil, 2008). The workers acceptance is one of the things that Poulston (2008) argues need to be changed in the hospitality industry, which Ram (2015) agrees with and further says that there is a need in “changing these very deep-rooted norms” (Ram, 2015, p.10) such as “the customer is always right” and
other cultural traditions in the hospitality working environment. Similarly, Mathisen et al. (2008) found that the attitude in the industry needs to be challenged as the general acceptance towards an issue like SH is a big problem in the work culture. Furthermore the employees should be informed of their legal rights and even demand education in the area (Ineson et al., 2013; Kensbrock et al., 2015).

The research community highlights the crucial role that the managers at a workplace have in working actively with and against SH, as they all found an enormous lack of policies and plans (Gilbert et al., 1998; Worsfold & McCann, 2000; White & Hardemo, 2002; Puolston, 2008; Mkono, 2010; Daunt & Harris, 2011). The future recommendations were, for example, first of all that there is a need for prevention and strategy. Secondly, the management should implement education and training regarding the company policy towards SH. Handy (2006) makes the point that SH from coworkers or supervisors has higher chances to be dealt with than harassment from customers, which can be true especially with front-of-house workers that are in daily contact with the customers. For this reason, it can also be argued that it is important to include alternative strategies for who in the organizations is in charge of dealing with SH, as the supervisor might as well be the harasser (Aaron & Dry, 1992). Yagil (2008) argues that the lack of policy or active work is a form of acceptance of SH by managers, meaning managers might not be aware of the statement they make, but they do. Another aspect of the importance of giving education to the workers is to already during for instance hospitality studies inform the students about their rights regarding discrimination in the industry and their rights to be involved in a company’s policy towards dealing with discrimination harassments (Lin, 2006; Ineson et al., 2013).

Ram (2015) additionally noticed how tourism organizations, such as United Nations World Tourism Organization or World Travel and Tourism Council, have not acknowledged a policy or action plan for the hospitality industry in how to deal with SH. The organizations admit the problem, for instance UNWTO in their global report on women in tourism (2011), however implementing regulations on what the industry could do to prevent SH are crucial for those in a power position. Different labor unions carry a responsibility in preventing SH and in setting guidelines, currently, few unions do this in Sweden (Bergold & Vedin, 2015). One example of a union highlighting the issue is The Nordic Union for Hotel, Restaurant, Catering and Tourism. They are working with the issue under the slogan “Not on the Menu!”.

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slogan refers to the sexual harassment employees might face when working within the hospitality industry, implementing that the body of the worker is not for sale. Among their directives is that unions and partners within the industry should form joint guidelines (Nordic Union – HRCT, 2015). For restaurants and hotels it is additionally very important to have an alcohol and drug policy, it is especially important to include instructions on how to deal with customers that are intoxicated (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2013; Nordic Union – HRCT, 2015) as it might be contributing factors to why SH occur more often in the hospitality industry.

To conclude, the managers have a great responsibility in preventing and informing their employers about SH. Although as already stated, it seems as if the manager perspective is a neglected area within the research community. The management perspective is one part of this study and the findings on both employer and employees’ perspectives is presented in chapter 6, although first the study area will be presented, followed by the method chapter.
3 STUDY AREA

Sweden is an interesting area of study for this topic because of the long traditions that all the Nordic countries have in the policy areas of both equity and equality. There is an active work on reducing discrimination and creating an equal working environment for all despite a person’s gender, race, age et cetera. For example, the new directives from the Swedish Work Environment Authority are working with exactly these issues (Arbetsmiljöverket, 2015). The study area of this master thesis took place in Östersund municipality, which is the capital of Jämtland county. My master studies took place in Östersund and was therefore the first area in Sweden I investigated the possibility to do the empirical sampling for my study. Furthermore the area was proven to be an interesting location to gather the data, the reasons for this I will discuss next.

Jämtland is located in northern Sweden, and consists of large peripheral area, Östersund is considered to be the only city in Jämtland by Swedish measurements (Jämtland Härjedalen Turism, n.d.). The number of inhabitants is very low when looking at the total area of Jämtland, meaning although the municipality is considered as the biggest, it can be argued to still be considered as a ‘small town’, there are only 2,6 inhabitants/ square km2 in Jämtland (Jämtland Härjedalen Turism, n.d.). Around 60 000 inhabitants were registered in Östersund municipality in 2015 (SCB, 2015) and the city of Östersund had 44 327 people in 2010 (Östersund Kommun, 2016). Forsberg (1997) refers to Jämtland as an “autonomous” region in that its populations have a very strong cultural identity. Due to the small town mentality, the occurrence of SH is interesting to study, because there might be a situation of ‘everyone knows each other’ and might even be a more sensitive topic.

In Forsberg’s (1997) report on equality in the counties of Sweden, Jämtland showed to be one of the regions that have high equality between men and women. For example, Jämtland had less gender segregation in the labor market and the number of men and women working in public and private sector are quite alike. The report shows that Jämtland differs from the rest of the nearby northern counties. Although the report is a few years old, what Forsberg present is still an interesting fact in the consideration of the study area. Furthermore Jämtland have recently published an equality strategy for the region (Länsstyrelsen Jämtlands län, 2014). This shows that inequality is acknowledged and dealt with in the area.
After public health and care, hospitality is one of the industries that employ a large number of people in Östersund, therefore making it an important industry for the whole municipality. In Jämtland several young people enter the hospitality industry as their first entry into labor market (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015). The primary tourism season in Östersund is the summer, but it is also a known destination for winter activities and often referred to as “the Wintercity”. The municipality offers a range of outdoor activities and is the host of many sports activities, for example, the biathlon world cup is a central annual event in the city. Östersund city center offers different accommodation possibilities, such as hotels, hostels and bed and breakfasts. In 2014, Östersund had 1 166 000 guests nights (Visit Östersund, 2014). The tourism industry is very important for the Jämtland region and naturally hospitality is equally important, which further proves that issues concerning SH might exist in the region and hence making it an interesting study area.
4 METHOD

4.1 Research design

This is a qualitative research and the method is semi-structured interviews. In research where the sense of the self and personal stories is regarded as central elements, the qualitative techniques are a suitable approach (Heimtun, 2007). In qualitative research, the researcher is usually the instrument for data sampling, as he/she are sampling the data through observations, interviews or by analyzing document material. The data is interpretive dependent, as the outcome of the research bases on the researchers’ perceptions of the empiric (Creswell, 2009). The people are consequently a vital part of a qualitative research.

The interview technique is also appropriate as it gives the researcher the possibility to ask questions that might not have come to mind before, for example if a respondent enlighten a new angle to the topic. Interviews in qualitative research are looking for an understanding of the interviewees’ perceptions of reality; the interviewer wants deeper answers and understandings (Bryman, 2004). Many researchers that studied causes and occurrence of SH have used a quantitative method (Worsfold, & McCann, 2000; Weber et al. 2002; White & Hardemo, 2002; Poulston, 2008; Mathiesen, 2008). However this study is not an attempt to show that SH exist; that is already a given fact. The study aims at getting a deeper understanding from the perspective of the employee and employer, hence qualitative method can be held as the proper research design for this study.

4.2 Data Collection

My first intention in the beginning of this research process was to compare the work perspectives of back-of-house and front-of-house workers at hotels. However as I started the data sampling the aim took another angle, as the interviewees were based on random selecting. To find participants for my study I started with contacting the managers of three bigger hotel chains in Östersund in order to ask them if they were willing to be interviewed by me as a part of my master thesis. I started with contacting the hotel managers as SH might be considered as a sensitive topic and so I found it more suitable to start with approaching the managers. By contacting them I was also hoping that I would get contact with their employees,
which both managers agreed to. Creswell (2009) argue that it may be important to find gatekeepers approval in the data sampling process. Gatekeepers are in this setting the people that give you access to the field. The hotel managers worked as gatekeepers in my sampling that further approved me getting the access to their employees. Because it was out of my power to select the interviewees, the representatives of the employee respondents became in this moment restricted to only front-of-house workers. As already stated, SH that occurs at work, where an employee is the victim, can be divided into three different categories; harassment caused by a supervisor; co-worker; or someone that you meet when working, such as the guest for instance in a hotel or restaurant. Consequently, the empirical findings now consist of interviews with employees that have a daily contact with all these three categories in their work.

In the first contact with the managers I introduced myself and the topic of my thesis over phone and email. Out of the three, two of the managers agreed in meeting me. The third manager declined participation due to not being in town for a month. This then restricted my study area to two hotels located in Östersund.

Due to ethical considerations, I will use pseudonyms for both hotels. From here on out I will refer to them as hotel Blue and hotel Orange. Both hotels are part of bigger international hotel chains, although not the same one. I have chosen to examine hotel chains in Östersund, instead of private hotels, because my first thought was that the management should have more experience of SH and policies regarding it. Hotel Blue has around 15 full-time employees and Hotel Orange around 25 full-time employees, counting all departments. Both hotels also employ many part-time workers during weekends, special events and in the summer. During this time the number of employees increases.

Because the data sampling method was semi-structured interviews I developed a guide with questions that worked as a support during the interview. The interview guide is usually used in semi-structured interviews and it covers topics that are to be asked to the participants. However, the interviewer might ask questions in addition to the guide questions, depending on what the interviewee says, and it is not necessarily to be followed scrupulously (Flick, 2014). I started with introduction questions to warm up the conversations, followed by direct and indirect questions to gain a view of the respondent’s experiences of SH and what they class as SH. For the managers, I asked about the management perspective and how they are dealing with SH. For the
employees I asked about the work situation and how/if the management is giving directions on how to work with SH. Depending on the answers of the respondents I also asked follow-up questions and asked respondents to specify their answers. The interview guide for both employers and employees is found in the appendix, the original guide was in Swedish although I have translated the guide in the appendix to English. In table 1 and table 2 the information of the respondents is presented.

Table 1. The employer respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R1</th>
<th>R2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Position</strong></td>
<td>Manager at Hotel Blue</td>
<td>Manager at Hotel Orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience of Managing Hotels</strong></td>
<td>- 4 months manager at hotel Blue</td>
<td>- 3 years manager at hotel Orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Working in industry since age of 12</td>
<td>- Former manager at two different hotels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. The employee respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R3</th>
<th>R4</th>
<th>R5</th>
<th>R6</th>
<th>R7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job position</strong></td>
<td>Receptionist</td>
<td>Waitress</td>
<td>Bar/Cleaner</td>
<td>Waitress/Bar</td>
<td>Receptionist (Nights)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment type</strong></td>
<td>Part time</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Full time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience of Hospitality Industry</strong></td>
<td>-3 years at hotel Orange</td>
<td>-4 months at hotel Orange + Long experience from other workplaces</td>
<td>- 4 months at hotel Blue +Long experience from other workplaces</td>
<td>-5 years at hotel Blue +Long experience from other workplaces</td>
<td>-1 year at hotel Blue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The hotel manager at hotel Blue has only worked as the manager at the hotel for 4 months and has not worked at the hotel before. Her father is the CEO of hotel
Blue and she has a very long experience of working in the hotel industry as she
grown up in the industry and already started at the age of 12 helping in the industry.
The manager at hotel Orange had also been the manager of two other hotels before
moving to Östersund and hotel Orange. Regarding the age of the employees, I did
not ask for it. However they were all between 20-30 years old, meaning a rather
young workforce.

4.3 Transcribing, Coding and Analyzing data

After the interview I transcribed all conversations to writing. All interviews
were conducted in Swedish and hence all transcripts were also written in Swedish. I
clarified some words that were expressed in an everyday language. I wrote the
transcripts nearly literally from the conversation, making it clear who said what. The
idea of transcribing is for the researcher to map out not only what the respondents
say, but also in which way they say it. For example, a laugh or pause may also have
an influence on the meaning (Bryman, 2004). Although I choose to not include
unnecessary sounds or words like ‘mmm’ and ‘okay’, that for instance I said
sometimes while the respondent was talking. I also chose to delete phrases that were
thinking pauses or unfinished words. If the respondent or I referred to something
specific, for instance to a person, but just said he/she I wrote in the transcript what
the respondent referred to in parentheses. This to make it easier for myself later in
the coding stage. I also wrote in parentheses if there was a clear laughter from me or
respondent. In the transcriptions, I also wrote a short summary in order to get a brief
overview of the content, which Creswell (2009) argue is good to do.

After the transcripts the next step was coding the data, the process was done
entirely in English and it was done in three steps. I started with searching for
keywords in all the interview transcripts. Silverman (2011) highlights the importance
of doing the coding step by step in order to not jump to an immediate conclusion.
Bryman (2004) also notices that one should start with the coding as soon as possible
and, similarly with Silverman, not make any interpretations too soon. In the second
step I created categories to sort the keywords I gathered from the first step. Bryman
(2004) says on the second stage of coding that the researcher is supposed to review
the codes from the first stage in order to see if there is a pattern in the interviews. In
the third and last stage, the theoretical findings should be developed in order to get
answers to the research questions (Bryman, 2004). Hence, in this stage I developed themes that were connected to the theory of the study, these themes are presented in chapter 7. Creswell (2009) mentions a few recommendations to bear in mind during the coding process. First of all, one should find codes that are clearly relevant, for instance based on literature. Furthermore, codes that have an unusual or surprising relevance for the results that can be drawn to the theoretical framework are the interesting part for the researcher (ibid.). During the coding process these are the instructions I had in mind; going from a wide range of codes to narrowing them down to the themes that are the final result of the coding process.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are very important to include in a research (Bryman, 2004; Creswell, 2009; Silverman, 2011), especially in qualitative research where the participants are few and they share personal information. SH can be experienced quite sensitive to some, especially if a person been a victim, thus, the ethical considerations are extremely important part of my study. The researcher should also consider the possibility of invading the privacy of a person by for instance asking questions that are too personal. Moreover, anonymity and confidentiality are important, (Bryman, 2004) hence, all respondents and hotels have been given pseudonyms.

Ethical guidelines are also important to follow throughout the research process. The researcher should have the approval of respondents’ participation in the study. Participants also have the right to be informed about the aim and topic of the research and the possibility at any time withdrawing from participation (Ryen, 2004 cited in Silverman, 2011). Consequently, before starting the actual interviews I informed all respondents about the topic of my study. I additionally explained to them how the material will be used in my research, where it will be published and who will have access to it. I informed the respondents that they will be anonymous in my study, that the information included in my study is their job position and that the hotel is located in Östersund. None of the respondents had further questions or wished for further anonymity. After introducing myself and my study I asked the respondents if they agreed to have the interview recorded which they all did. By recording the interviews the researcher can pay full attention to the participants and be present in the
conversation (Bryman, 2004). Finally, I offered all respondents to send the transcript of the interview, however none of the respondents wished for it. Additionally the participants were instructed about the possibility to withdraw at any time. For the managers the first “meeting” was over e-mail and phone. The ethical considerations were described in both the first email and before starting the interview. For the employees at hotel Orange the process was explained at the first meeting when the appointment was scheduled, and then (as with the managers) at the beginning of the interview session. As I met the employees at hotel Blue the first time when the interviews took place they were informed in the beginning of the interview session. All this happened before starting to record the actual interview. Silverman (2011) mention the importance of having ethical considerations in mind also after data collection, for instance if the researcher thinks the consent of the respondents to participating are the same. As none of my respondents asked for transcripts or was eager to know more about the study I consider this not being an issue.

4.5 Reliability & Validity

The qualitative research has some features regarding reliability and validity that was considered. According to Silverman (2011) one important part of the reliability in studies that uses interviews as the method is to 1) Record interviews 2) Put effort in doing the transcribing and coding in order to support the analysis process 3) Present the data in the report thoroughly. All these three steps were carefully followed. Moisander and Valtonen (2006) state that one technique to improve the reliability of the study is to rehearse the interviews in order to become a better interviewer. I performed a test interview with a former hotel worker to see if the interview guide was sufficient. The test was made external from the thesis process. During the interviews, one needs to recognize that also the presence of the researcher may affect the responses of the respondents (Creswell, 2009). The fact that I am a young woman myself might have influenced the interview situation positively in that the respondents were more comfortable in speaking. Some of the respondents were also students, or recently finished, they, therefore, were very aware of my thesis process and perhaps took the situation with a more relaxed approach. Furthermore as English is not my native language, I have paid attention to the
translations of the quotes in the data findings, this is vital when a researcher write in a language that is not the mother tongue (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006).

There are three typical errors researchers may do in the qualititative methods according to Kirk and Miller (1986, cited in Flick, 2014): 1) the researcher identify a relationship where there is none 2) reject a relationship that actually exists and 3) the researcher ask the wrong questions. Another way of creating a stronger validity is to ask the respondents to read the transcripts to see if the researcher misinterpreted something (Silverman, 2011), which I did.

Another part of reliability in a research is the personal bias and the objectivity of the researcher (Creswell, 2009). Maintaining a complete objectivity is nearly impossible, in either quantitative or qualitative research, but keeping the research objective to a certain degree is still vital. To further reflect on the objectivity and subjectivity of this research I have chosen to include a positionality statement in this master thesis.

### 4.5.1 Positionality Statement

I have argued that in qualitative research with interviews as a method, the researcher have a significant role in the validity of the results. Because of this, my personal reflections and opinions need to be discussed in order to give the credibility of the research higher values. I have chosen the theme of my master thesis based on what I consider a problem and in need of further contribution.

My interest for the hospitality industry and the rights of employees has been developed after I have myself been a part of the industry a few years as a worker. I have worked as a cleaner, a waitress and receptionist. As a waitress, I have been working in both restaurants that offer fine dining but I also in places with less deluxe atmosphere, for instance a café. I have not experienced a situation where I felt a direct sexual harassment, however especially as a waitress, I experienced the subservient feeling to customers. I can relate to the stories of the employees and the organization existing at certain workplaces in the industry. Furthermore, the special jargon in the hospitality context is also familiar for me. As the waitress in, for instance restaurants, you work as the link between kitchen and customer, although that also means that you are often the person who needs to hear complaints from both sides.
I am aware that my personal bias might have influenced the objectivity in my research results. However I also argue that my own experience may have helped me understand the problematic climate that exists in the working environment in hospitality and understand the respondents’ descriptions.

4.6 Limitations

Limitations of my research are also important to include as there are some that could have affected the final result of my study. A limitation in the interview techniques is that the view given is based on the opinions of a few respondents (Creswell, 2009), which was perhaps the situation for me, however within qualitative research that is often the case. Time is a major limitation for my research, as I followed the time frame of a master program. With more time I would have conducted more interviews in order to gain more reliable data. There could have been a more diversity in the respondents and equal many women and men participants. However, SH might be considered as a sensitive topic, due to that reason I found it even more important to first contact the hotel managers and ask their permission to further take contact with their employees. As the managers were the gate-keepers to the further data sampling the respondents were not e.g. equal many men and women. An additional limitation to this fact is how the study now focuses mainly on front-of-house workers. Furthermore, I am the only one that has interpreted and coded the data, this could be seen as inadequate, and this is something I have kept in mind during the process.
5 FINDINGS & RESULTS

5.1 Managers Perspective

As mentioned before, two hotel managers are representing the management perspective on how SH is dealt with within the companies. Both hotel Blue and hotel Orange are a part of bigger hotel chains, although not belonging to the same one. This means that the hotel managers are not working under complete freedom in running the hotels, I will start with presenting the organizational structure of the hotels and how it affects the power of the hotel managers. I continue with presenting the experiences and possible prevention plans of the hotels in order to find answers to my research questions.

5.1.1 Hotel Blue Management

The hotel manager at hotel Blue describes their part of the hotel chain as more of a membership, meaning the manager has a lot of freedom in running the business. For example, the chain does not have any specific demand on the decor, what the staff should wear, or the price range of the rooms. The only requirement is to have a high standard of the service for the guests. There are hence no directives from the hotel chain to the hotel managers regarding issues like sexual harassments. However, hotel Blue is additionally a part of a company that owns in total five hotels in Northern Sweden, this company has nothing to do with the hotel chain that Hotel Blue is a member of. The five hotels included in this company are not all a part of the same hotel chain that Blue is. Because the hotel chain does not have any impact on the managing style of hotel Blue, the company that owns the five hotels is more relevant for this study as they make regulations for their hotels. Furthermore, the manager at hotel Blue explained that she is about to become a part-owner of this company, and it is within this company she has worked since an early age. The manager is hence very involved in the work that the company is doing at these five hotels.

5.1.2 Hotel Orange Management

Compared with hotel Blue, hotel Orange has a lot more directives from the chain. All employees at the hotel, including the manager, are employed by the chain.
The property is rented and the management is built up according to the structure of the hotel chain. The directives are regulations that should be followed concerning for instance the valuation and vision, the looks and dress codes for workers. However, although these regulations exist the hotel manager still have independence in running the hotel according to her own business goal. The manager together with the three department managers, the business controller and revenue manager set up a budget and business plan for hotel Orange. It is up to the management in hotel Orange that the hotel is successful, but there is always a present support of the chain departments such as Human Resources (hereafter HR). The manager expressed that her power is very much, as she has the freedom to adjust the regulations so it suits this specific hotel profile, and the manager may also improve the regulations.

5.1.3 Experience of Sexual Harassment

The manager at hotel Blue has never experienced SH as an issue at any of the five hotels that the company owns, not to herself or to her employees. However, the manager has heard about SH being an issue within the industry and has had employees working at other working places that have been a victim of SH. Although as she has not been in contact with the persons herself, just heard about it, she could not declare anything further about the incidents. The manager had never experienced it to be an issue in hotel Blue either. The SH that the manager at hotel Blue referred to as being the biggest issue is SH from customers to the employees. Although she has never experienced any of the categories, she could very well believe it existed.

The manager did explain that within the hospitality industry, where the customers can be affected by alcohol, the worker may experience some unpleasant comments or similar. However she has never had an employee reporting to her that it would be an issue out of control, the manager experienced that the customer usually stops with inappropriate comments when being told. This sort of acting she would not call SH, as it had never become a bigger problem in her opinion. She furthermore believed nightclubs or similar places where customers drink more alcohol have bigger issues with SH.

Similar to the manager at hotel Blue the manager at hotel Orange first thought about the customer as the harasser in the hospitality industry. She also believed alcohol is the main contributing factor to that SH exists within the industry. As hotel Orange mainly has families and business men as guests, the SH is less occurring than
in for instance a bar, which manager at hotel Blue also believed for her hotel. The manager explained they have one returning guest that is quite sexist and is making the female workers a bit uncomfortable, although not to an extent that it would cause a problem. As he is a guest the manager explains they simply need to accept it and serve him, she says:

“But he’s a guest, so we try to just bite the bullet”

However, the hotel manager had experienced one case of potential sexual harassment between two of her employees, a male employee harassing a female employee. Although, this situation was complex because the story of both parties was contradicting. The female worker expressed to the manager that she felt abused, although the male employee was likewise upset and did not understand the reaction of his co-worker as he claimed he had never done anything like that. This was the first time the manager in her career experienced a situation like this and was therefore at first very shocked when hearing about the incident. After the female employee first approached the manager with the issue, and after talking to the potential harasser and he denied it to be true, the manager called the HR department. As she could not determine whose story was correct, the situation was even harder for her. If it was proven that the employee actually harassed she would have reported it to the police and fire the person. The HR department gave her further instruction in how she should deal with the situation, which was to have a meeting with both parties and write minutes during this meeting. The chain has a database with templates for different kind of situations that may arise, and the manager used a template designed for a situation like this. It is still to date unclear what really happened as there were no witnesses to the incident, none of the other employees had experienced similar behavior from the co-worker.

The female employee worked in the restaurant and she quit the job due to the incident. However, the male worker is still working at the hotel in the kitchen. The female employee was offered to go and talk with someone through health section within the company, also after leaving the job. As this situation was word against word the manager did her best to solve the issue and follow the instructions of the HR department. Although the situation was difficult, the manager felt that the situation was handled as good as it could be. Thanks to her long experience in the industry she still felt confident in her actions and explains that one needs to use
common sense as well when tackling a problem like this. Furthermore, the incident has made her reflect more about SH.

5.1.4 Prevention of Sexual Harassment

Hotel Blue does not have any directives or instructions from the chain management on how to deal with problems like SH, as the hotel members of the chain are working independently. However, the company that the hotel is a part of has developed a plan for any sort of situation that could happen in the workplace, for instance bullying, robbery, bomb threat and there among also SH. The plan consists of strategies on how to handle the situation and who is in charge of doing what. The plan is adapted to four of the hotels within the company as the fifth hotel is a part of a bigger chain that has its own regulations. The manager feels secure with the plan as she knows what is expected of her as a manager. Although she also mentions that naturally it may feel difficult to handle any of these situations, but at least it is comforting to know what is expected of her. In the hiring process, the new employee also needs to sign a contract against zero tolerance regarding alcohol, drugs and bullying at the workplace. In that process the employees are informed about the company policy of zero tolerance, however, SH is not a part of the information. Furthermore, this plan has not yet been communicated to the staff. They have arranged education for the ones in charge for each hotel, so the people in higher positions are aware of how they should react to any unpredictable situation. Although the manager mentions she has been thinking about having education for the staff regarding these issues that the plan consist of, as to date they have not been informed about how to act if robbery, SH or similar would occur. She further explains that the reason for not arranging education yet is that she has worked only a few months as the manager and is still working on getting into the routines and getting trust from her employees.

Hotel Orange do not have any strategy or plan on how to deal with issues such as SH, nor has it been discussed at the workplace. However within the hotel chain, there are strategies, the people in charge of the issue are the HR department. There is no information communicated about this to the managers at the chain hotels. The HR department were also the ones the manager reached out to when the SH incident between two of her employees occurred. That was the first time the manager was getting in touch with strategies on how to act by the chain management. There are
protocols and certain things that need to be done by the manager, for instance having a meeting and go into depth to the problem in order to get to an understanding and find solutions. However, there have never been any information or education on how the manager is expected to act if SH occurs. The chain offers education in areas such as safety precautions for instance if there is a fire, but nothing about SH. Similar as with hotel Blue, hotel Orange also require their new employees to read the chain hotels policy against zero tolerance, how they employees are expected to dress and behave. It is important for the manager that the employees are standing for the same valuations and are tolerant towards everyone working in the hotel.

To conclude, hotel Blue have a strategy plan where the issue of SH is included. The plan has been developed by the company that runs hotel Blue. However the manager were not familiar with for instance what the company defined as SH and it has not been shared with their employees. Weather a plan or policy exists at hotel Orange is unclear because the HR department is in charge of the matter, however this particular hotel do not have any plan.

5.1.5 Issues with Sexual Harassment

The manager at hotel Blue acknowledges that a part of the issues with SH is that the employees do not dare to speak to their manager because they do not want to cause problems:

“One can see that today many are quiet, do not dare say anything because you do not dare to cause more problems.”

She further speculated that this can contribute to the fact that employees are only relying on their colleagues with their problems. As the manager only worked a few months at hotel Blue she has noticed it to be a challenge for her to get into the employee “clique”. Most of the employees have worked a long time at the hotel and are used to certain routines. The current manager is, therefore, working hard to make changes and establish herself as someone the employees can trust and turn to regarding all sorts of issues and situations. The former manager was not someone they could talk to and she, therefore, believes that explains why the employees are working so closely with each other and in a way protecting each other. The manager recently had meetings regarding the issue within the whole company, raising
awareness about how the employees need to speak with their hotel manager when there is a problem.

Both the manager at hotel Blue and hotel Orange consider the deviant behavior of some customers as one of the issues in the hospitality industry, implying that they are the most potential harasser. The manager at hotel Orange does believe that SH is an issue within the society still. When she thinks about SH in the hospitality industry her first reaction is that men are harassing women, however, she further implies it can very well be women harassing men as well. Regarding the relationship she has with her employees she trust that they all feel safe to talk with either her or one of the department managers if there is a problem. Naturally she cannot be completely sure that the workers dare to speak, but according to her, the working climate at the hotel is good.

5.1.6 Further Improvements Suggestions by the Managers

As already mentioned the manager at hotel Blue has considered having education for her employees regarding how to act in different situations such as sexual harassment. She also highlights the importance of immediately acting if she hears of some kind of problem within the hotel. Out of experience, she believes it is better to act as soon as possible, or else the issue may become even worse than it was at the start. The experience of the SH situation between two of her employees made the manager at hotel Orange further wish she would have had information in any form from the hotel chain management. She admits it would not be a bad idea to have education for all managers but also for employees, so situations like SH could be dealt with better. The manager also suggests that as information about zero tolerance is given when the employees are hired it could be repeated after a while, as there is a lot of new information given when one starts a new job. She furthermore considers it important that all hotels within the chain have the same routines and gives same information to all hotels.

5.2 Employee Perspective

The following part presents the findings from the interviews that were obtained with the five hotel employees.
5.2.1 The Employees definition of Sexual Harassment

All employee respondents defined SH as an act that can take a verbal and non-verbal shape. R3, at hotel Orange, defined SH like this:

“That someone puts a hand on the bottom or says things of a sexual nature. It can actually also just be small hints, it depends partly on how they say it and how I interpret it. Well, there really is no right or wrong, the main thing is how a person interprets this. Even if the intention is innocent, but I interpret it [differently] it is not good.”

R4 (hotel Orange) defined SH similarly with R3 as a form of unwanted touching or comment. Defining SH in her opinion is independent for everyone, one person may feel that a comment was too vulgar and would define it as SH, but another person may not interpret the comment as SH. Due to the different personalities of persons, R4 feels that it is quite hard to define SH. R3, R4, R5 and R6 all describe SH as an action that is defined by the victim and interpreted differently. R4 further explains that the meaning of the words and the touching is a way of knowing if it feels like SH or not. R7 consider a verbal and non-verbal action as SH if she as the victim feels bad or uncomfortable about the incident. If the harasser does not listen when being told or is behaving in a way that does not feel good for her R7 would say it is an SH. R6, at hotel Blue, further explains this:

“If someone says something I interpret as wrong or if a guest touches your bottom when you are passing them, of course that is a sexual harassment. But, I rarely get offended, if I tell the person ‘stop it, it is unacceptable’ they usually stop. It is more if they continue that I feel like god, this is not okay”

The employees can relate to SH in the hospitality industry and that it exists although no one would say they experienced it as a problem or issue. R7 describes it as follows:

“Well, an issue, if you are working within this you get used to it...you have to learn to be harsh, speak up and not accept it...You have to have thick skin and
confront the person, then it usually goes well if you speak with confidence but in a friendly way”

R6 further believes that the acceptance of for instance an unwanted touching or comment is something you get used to the more you have worked in the industry:

“But I think it depends a lot on where you worked before, what you’ve done before, then the tolerance level rises. Which of course is unacceptable, but that’s how it is, it actually rises.”

All respondents agree that SH can be either a verbal or non-verbal action, but what classes as SH is up to the person being harassed to decide. Furthermore a part of the respondents argue that certain forms of acting, that perhaps may be classed as SH, is still manageable and even a need to accept in order to work in the hospitality industry.

5.2.2 Experiences of Sexual Harassment

R3, working as a receptionist, mentioned one experience she had where a group male hotel guest, affected by alcohol during the evening, made suggestions in intention to getting her to their hotel room. The situation took place at hotel Orange. The respondent did not consider herself ever being a victim for SH, the situation with male customers was also nothing she would consider as sexual harassments, more of an unnecessary incident. R3 had never experienced touching, only comments of sexual nature and never heard or knew about any SH between co-workers or from supervisors. R4 has worked in many different workplaces as a waitress in the hospitality industry and have experience of both verbal and non-verbal forms of SH, but only from customers. For instance customers have acted rude and giving inappropriate comments when she was working. There was also an incident where a customer grabbed her breast when leaning over him to serve his meal, note that this situation did not take place in hotel Orange or Blue but at a former workplace of R7. R4 immediately confronted the customer and showed that it was not appreciated. Eventually, the man got kicked out of the restaurant and even expelled for three months. R4 was not uncomfortable and felt more of a revenge feeling when the customer was expelled. Although she experienced a lot of verbal and non-verbal SH,
it was still incidents that she felt secure in and was not so uncomfortable that she would feel bad. R5, at hotel Blue, did not consider himself being a victim for SH, although he had experienced women flirting with him and even touching him during his work in the bar. This is how he reflects on it:

“You don’t feel sad to put it like that, but due to work I cannot do anything back because it is not appropriate, it can be wrong for the job. You might find that someone is attractive, but as I said, you don’t do that at the job, it is not suitable.”

R6 also had a very long experience of working in the hospitality industry, including night clubs. She had been exposed to verbal and non-verbal SH from guests, such as touching and inappropriate comments, although the respondent had never experienced the situations to be out of control or felt a need to report the incidents. She defined it as SH but still considered these actions as something a worker are at risk of and need to accept when working in the hospitality industry. R7 had only worked in the hospitality industry for a year, she had not heard a lot about SH and never experienced it from a co-worker or supervisor. The respondent only had one experience she could consider as SH and that was from a customer. R7 is working during nights and under one of her shifts, a guest at the hotel called for room service. As he opened the door he only had a pair of pants on him and was asking if he could give her a hug or if she wanted to come into his room. R7 immediately felt that it was an uncomfortable situation so she just walked back to reception. The guest continued calling the reception a few times before R7 asked him to please stop, which he then did. The respondent felt that the situation was annoying and a bit intimidating, but as the guest stopped bothering her after a while she wouldn’t say that she had been scared. In summary, none of the respondents considered themselves as a real victim for SH, but they all had in one way or another experienced verbal or non-verbal forms of inappropriate behavior from customers at the hotel. However, none of them had experienced any trouble from co-workers or a supervisor.

5.2.3 Information Provided by the Employers

None of the respondents have been given any information about SH or even discussed the topic at the two hotels. R3, R5 had never spoke about or gotten any
information at all from a former working place either. R4 had been working at a fine dining restaurant and casino in another city where they actively worked with acknowledging SH. The respondent believed the reason to that is because it is an important topic for the company and it is a luxury place and they, therefore, wanted to keep a certain image. The employees’ had team building days where topics, like SH, were dealt with. They were given a folder with information about how to act and encouraged to immediately report to the manager if they experienced something unusual at the workplace. The information was also on the noticeboard in the workplace for all employees to see. R4 says:

“...that is perhaps really the most important, that you are actually aware that if this occurs (SH) then you go to this person and so on.”

R2 felt it was good because it provided a security, although she also felt as it was a bit too much for her as she was quite secure in her acting already. However, she considered it to be good for a person that is not as secure as her, for instance a shyer person. R4 and R6 both pointed out that the personality of the worker as one of the reasons to whether or not further information about SH needs to be given at the workplace. R6 says:

“I as a person speak up when I think it is enough, but perhaps someone else would need it.”

And R4 says:

“But there might be someone that is shy and do not dare to speak about it, then it might be good for them [getting information].”

R4 and R6 further imply that the age and experience of the worker may be influencing the actions of the person. As the ones that are young and new in the industry may be more insecure and feel unsure of what to do if SH would occur. R4 says:

“...a person that is new in the workplace. For them is it probably quite important that they are informed about how they should act if something would happen.”
R6 and R7, both working at hotel Blue have not received a formal education or information about SH, although they have discussed the issue informal among employees. If a customer makes them feel really uncomfortable they know they can and should report it immediately. R6 always felt the support from the management and did not consider it to be a big step to talk with them at any of the places she worked. As R7 is working on her own during nights in the reception, the managers are very clear with letting her know that she is the one in charge and make the decisions. She does not need to act nice to rude customers. All employee participants felt support from the management and had the feeling that they can report issues to them.

In the question if they feel that SH should be more spoken about, all respondents feel it would be necessary, however, it is not something that is an urgent matter. R3 reflect on the question as follows:

“Of course, it is always good to have clear instructions on how to deal with the issue, so you don’t need to think about if it is right or wrong [incident]…Of course, it would be better to talk about the issue before the incident happens.”

R5 seems to also believe the same:

“It can turn into something wrong if you do not know how to act, you can be hurt pretty bad…Sure, I think it is important to talk about it. It can only be a short occasion, the meeting, but it can mean a lot”

To sum up, all respondent agree that more information regarding SH could be given, but it is not something they actively reflected about before. However according to some of them, the personality, age and experience of a person may make a person more vulnerable and in more need of information provided.

5.2.4 Groups Exposed to Sexual Harassment

The respondents revealed that some job positions within a hotel may be more in risk of experience SH than others. R3 consider room attendants as an exposed group because their working environment is interacting with the guest’s bedrooms. However R3 never heard of an incident with room attendants feeling exposed, but it
was her first thought when thinking about risk groups. R7, working in the reception, believes that waiters and waitresses are a more exposed group than her job position, as they are in closer contact with the customers. R4 and R6 also felt that waitresses are more at risk of being a victim to SH. R7, R4 and R6 also felt that young girls are more exposed than others, as R6 puts it:

“We [young women] are affected, but then of course there are men that are also affected. But I don’t believe the way men act towards girls, women do not act the same way towards guys.”

R4 also describe that a person who just entered the industry are more at risk for being a victim for SH and rude customers in general. She explains that there is a certain work culture in especially the restaurant industry that needs to be learned:

"You need to learn that the jargon is a bit rough. But as I said it’s still on a friendly level, because we should have fun at work too. If you never worked before it can be quite hard to enter, I’ve been there myself when I started to work. “

R4 further says that it if a person does not dare to speak up and tell the customer to stop, a person is at risk of getting exposed for SH. R6 also reflect on this when she explains that the longer work experience in the hospitality industry a person have the more tolerant you are. R6 says that she would probably not reflect in the same secure way five years ago. R7 also explains that the worker needs to be tough in the industry and there simply are some behaviors you need to accept. R6 also highlight the importance of different personalities of the employee and that you need to consider them all:

“Just because I consider something as ‘whatever’ doesn’t mean that my co-workers feel like ‘whatever’. “

R6 means that the level of what is accepted and not should be the same for everyone, so everyone follows same regulations. R6 thinks that it creates a better working environment if everyone feels secure and is not afraid of talking about problems. All employee respondents explain the importance of supporting your
colleagues in order to have a better working environment where everyone can feel secure to speak up. R5 says:

“I would support my colleagues, we spend so much time together. We are like a family, you spend more time here than home.”

R4 also says that she feels that the employees at hotel Orange are very close, for instance she spends a lot of time with her co-workers outside of work as well, and she feels that the working environment becomes better if you get along with your co-workers. R6 also mention she would support all co-workers in case of SH, including the people she perhaps does not consider as close friends at work.

The respondents acknowledges, as shown in the former chapter, that a person with less experience and a less confident personality might put you in a vulnerable, ‘weaker’, position with higher risk of getting sexually harassed. However the psychosocial environment is of high importance, as pointed out by all the referents, there lays a family mentality and a will of helping each other out among the workers.

5.2.5 Employees Action plans

The respondents felt relatively similar towards how they would act if a customer was the harasser, however some more confident than others in their action. If a guest would be the harasser R3 describe that she would probably respond as follows:

“I would probably tell the person working after my shift... And I would possibly report it to the reception manager. If I felt that it [incident] made me feel uncomfortable I would probably report it, but I wouldn’t do something directly to the guest.”

Similarly, R5 and R6 would only report incidents to the manager if it made them really uncomfortable. R4, R5 and R6 all do not consider it to be a problem to speak up if a customer is bothering you. But for instance R4 believes the customer also reads the worker in order to know who you can ‘take advantage’ of:
“..if you are an outgoing person people notices that ‘this one we shouldn’t touch’.”

Similarly, R7 explains that you need to read the guests:

“Usually you notice when it starts and then you need to stop it at once before it starts; give a person an inch and he will take a mile.”

All respondents said that they use different strategies to deal with troublesome customers. R3, R4, R5 and R6 work with humor and try to not take the customer too serious, especially if the person has been drinking too much. R3 explains how she rather uses humor as a way to deal with customers that are not acting nicely towards her. R4 explain it like this:

“..or make jokes, although sometimes that neither works, you need to work around the problem and meet halfway to try and find a solution”

If a customer really does not listen to her and is really upset, R4 just walk away to wait for the person to calm down. R7 says she would walkway and ignore the customer if they do not stop for instance giving comments although she told them to stop. R7 adds that as she is working mostly by herself in the night she would feel more easily afraid than if she had a colleague to back her. Being a young girl she explains that the action from a customer does not need to be much for her to be worried. But she feels safe in that she has control of locking the doors, there is an alarm in the reception and she can always call the security guards.

If the harasser would be a co-worker, which none of the respondents experienced, they would report it to the manager. However for instance R3 would be more cautious and talk to colleagues to find out whether or not the person is harassing other colleagues as well, she would also try to avoid the person. R4, R5, R6 and R7 would all confront the co-worker immediately and make them stop and report it to the manager. R4 and R6 also highlight the importance of having a nice working environment and therefore feel it is very important to act immediately. They feel even more confident to report it if the SH takes place between two co-workers and they are aware of the situation. R3 also feels that it would be easier to report the
incident if she was not a victim but one of her colleagues. She would feel more secure in confronting the other co-worker as well.

The worst group of harassers the respondents feel would be a supervisor, although no one has ever experienced it. R3 and R4 find it difficult as they are reliant on the manager, R4 says:

“I would perhaps not dare to speak up to an employer, I might lose my job.”

She further speculates that she would go around the manager, to another manager that also can help her in the matter. R7 also would feel insecure in who she would talk to, but she would talk to her colleagues to find a solution. She would try to find out if the person understands that the action is making her uncomfortable. R6 has no issue in confronting the supervisor and explain how she feels.

The respondents feel safer to act if a customer would act inappropriate against them, than if the harasser would be a supervisor or colleague. They all use strategies to avoid difficult meetings with the customer and further give examples on how they believe that they would act if they were harassed by a supervisor or co-worker. However by far, the last two groups are considered harder to deal with.
6 DISCUSSION

The following chapter will connect empirical findings with the literature review and the theoretical framework. Themes have been developed in order to answer the research questions presented in chapter 1.3.

6.1 Employees acceptance of SH – Research Question 1

The first research question was: *What sort of sexual harassment has workers in the hospitality industry experienced?*

The employee interviewees definitions of what SH is supports the argument that it is an unwanted action (MacKinnon, 1979; Lu & Kleiner, 2001; Carstensen, 2004; del Sante & Schwarzenberger, 2013). Furthermore all workers claim that SH is something with a strong personal interpretation and that the victim decides whether or not it is SH, which also Ram (2015) argues. The looks and sounds of the worker; the aesthetical aspects (Warhurst & Nickson, 2009), can be reasoned to be one reason for SH. R6 explains that she believes male and female harassers are acting differently. This was further shown by the employee respondents in that the women and the man were reflecting differently about SH caused by customers. The women all felt that the comments or touching that customers can do are not charming, while the man however, R5, claim that these actions do not bother him. In fact, he sometimes appreciates the attention. Obviously, one male perspective is not enough to draw any conclusions. However there might be differences in the embodiment of a male and female worker, which is also a contributing factor to why females have been revealed to be more in risk than men to be sexually harassed.

My findings reveal that the employees participating in the study have experienced some forms of SH. The female respondents have experienced touching, for instance a hand on the breast or bottom, and inappropriate comments of sexual nature from male customers. The male respondent similarly experienced verbal and non-verbal forms of SH from female customers. Most of the respondents have reflected about SH to some extent before and do agree it can be an issue in the industry. However the respondents would not consider them as a real victim of SH, as the harassments they experienced ‘weren’t that bad’ because the situation was controllable situations from their side. That fact leads to my first theme:
Theme 1: Sexual harassment is ‘a part of the job description’

I suggest that what is defined as SH in hospitality industry is quite personality dependent. Likewise with that Bergold and Vedin (2015) argue the respondents show that as a front-of-house worker you need to accept certain rude or inappropriate behavior from customers. Although as a worker in the hospitality industry, the respondents argued, it is required to be tough and be able to speak up. Based on what the employee respondents explained, SH is an issue if the person being a victim is afraid to speak up. E.g R7 says this:

“...they might touch you on the back and be like ‘how kind’, ‘you’re so good’, ‘you’re so beautiful’. But then you’re just like ‘thank you very much’ and then you walk away. If they continue you need to say that now you need to put away your hands so I can continue working, that this is my job.”

Furthermore, few of them would report ‘just a comment’ to a manager. The respondents that have been working a long time in the industry and had a more ‘secure’ personality, believed that ‘the vulnerable’ ones were in more need to be informed about SH. The respondents’ statements are connected with what Poulston (2008) argued, that the personality of a worker may be a reason for SH in the industry, which could illustrate that a ‘victim blaming’ situation exist among some of the workers opinions. This further connects with the importance of ‘breaking the silence’, which is further developed in theme 6. The arguments of Williams (1999), Weber et al. (2002) and Poulston (2008) also support this idea as the hospitality workers seem to accept certain behavior in the hotel context that would probably be unacceptable in another. The combination of acceptance and expectancy’s of the worker in the hospitality industry has lead me to believe that one could even say that SH is an indirect ‘part of the job description’.

The acceptance is a part of a deeply rooted culture of the hospitality working environment. This is complicated for the person who is not as secure, perhaps young and has less working experience from the industry. If a person feels that a situation is making him/her uncomfortable, but the toughness mentality culture demands the worker to accept it, it seems as it is not a healthy working environment. Another part that connects to the characteristics of the working environment is how ‘the customer
is always right’ is supposed to be followed by workers. This makes the fine line of what is classed as SH even harder. Furthermore, I would here even argue that customer is indeed not always right.

According to the sex-role spillover model the work role and sex role are highly interacted (Gutek & Morasch, 1982); there are certain expectations on the body of a person. SH occurs more often at workplaces where the sex role is of importance, such as hospitality. Although it seems as if the respondents are well aware that their bodies may attract or encourage to harassment situations. The way the respondents, especially the females, explains casually that for instance someone touching your bottom is something that simply occurs within the job, further proof the acceptance. The one harassing were identified most frequently to be customers that the respondents meet in their work, which leads to my next theme:

Theme 2: Customers is seen as the most potential harasser

The main category that all the respondents, both employees and employers, felt were harassing is guests or customers at the hotels. In the study process I was following the idea that SH to a worker in the hospitality industry may occur from three different categories; customer; co-worker; or colleague (Gabinus Göransson et al. 2013). None of the respondents had experienced SH from a co-worker or supervisor. Nevertheless, one of the manager participants revealed that there had been a situation at her hotel where one of her employees claimed that another employee sexually harassed the person. Bergold and Vedin (2015) also state that in Sweden, SH from someone that is not your colleague or supervisor is most common in health and social care, followed by hospitality and trade. This implies that also the health and social care may be dealing with this issue.

The customer is a gray area and not dealt with as serious or often as the two other categories (Handy, 2006). Furthermore the Swedish law against SH, the DA act, do not regard SH from a person you meet in work, for instance a patient or a guest. However, SH that potentially would occur from a co-worker and supervisor is regarded as more complex by the respondents and should therefore not be completely neglected. Three of the respondents felt that SH from supervisors would be the worst group of harassers, partly because the person is supposed to be a person you can talk to. Two respondents additionally felt that they have a dependent relationship to the
manager as he/she provide their job. Poulston (2008) mentions that the worker is in a more vulnerable position as he/she shall please both the managers and the customers, which seems as though the respondents do. A reason that all respondents felt that the customer is the most potential harasser might also be because none of them experienced SH from a colleague.

Because the respondents accepted deviant behavior to a certain degree from customers, the material proves the argument of Sherman (2007); the employee develops a naturalized subservient feeling to the customer. This contributes to the fact that SH to some extent is considered to be a social norm (Kensbrock et al., 2015, Ram, 2015). According to the organizational model (Tangri et al., 1982; O’Hare & O’Donohue, 1998; Kensbrock et al., 2015) in the hospitality context, one could argue that the customer – worker relationship is uneven and that the customer is nearly a class above the worker. Hall (1993), Sherman (2007) and McDowell (2009) argue similarly that there exist unequal statuses of the two parties within the industry. As reported by the employee interviewees they do consider their job is to please the customer and be the one who adapts to the customer, not the other way around. The respondents simply put the customer a status above themselves, because they believe that it is needed from them in their work. This finding is a further contribution to the complexity of the hospitality working environment. SH might not be accepted but it is definitely tolerated. For this reason I argue the importance for bringing more attention to the industry in order to further light the issue.

### 6.2 Employee Coping Strategies – Research Question 2

The second research question was: *What strategies do the employees develop to handle sexual harassment or to avoid being harassed?*

Based on former research (see Hochschild, 2003; Yagil, 2008; Ivarsson and Larsson, 2009) and my empirical findings I developed coping strategies that employees may use in order to prevent or deal with SH in their work. As the customer was seen as the most potential harasser group, the coping strategies developed also mainly deals with that group, however, they can also be adapted to the other two groups which I will argue for next.
Theme 3: Employees develop different strategies to cope with potential situations of sexual harassment

Table 3 show the different strategies that I developed based on my data findings and the literature review.

Table 3. Coping strategies among employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGY:</th>
<th>RESPONDENTS’ EXPERIENCE EXAMPLE:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joking</td>
<td>R3: “But I can rather take it [comments] with humor.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance</td>
<td>R4: “...but then I simply just walk away instead, so they can calm down, and later go back and check on them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depersonalization</td>
<td>R6: “...I think it depends a lot on where you worked before, what you’ve done before, then the tolerance level rises...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biting the bullet</td>
<td>R2: “But he’s a guest, so we try to just bite the bullet”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading the situation</td>
<td>R4: “...you try to fix it before it is out of control, you simply have to meet them at their level and work your way in to make things right again.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thick-Skinned</td>
<td>R7: “But you learn pretty fast that you need to speak up and have thick skin.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most frequent strategies among the employees when dealing with rude customers where to either use humor (joking) or to ignore the person (avoidance). Using humor as a way to cope was also found by Kensbrock et al. (2015), to be the most commonly used strategy by the room attendants. Similarly Hughes and Tadic (1998) respondents reported using humor. The respondents in this study use humor if for instance the customer gives a flirty comment or implies something of a sexual nature. I have chosen to call using humor as a strategy the ‘joking strategy’. Avoiding the customer by, for instance walking away from the situation (as seen in Table 1) instead of managing one’s emotions to deal with the situation, I simply call for the ‘avoidance’ strategy.

‘Depersonalization’ strategy is a way of distancing oneself. The strategy is acted out in that the worker does not take for instance rude behavior from customers personally (Ivarsson & Larsson, 2009) and accept certain comments or touching. As
R6 explains, the tolerance level rises the longer one worked within the industry. The ‘depersonalization’ is additionally a form of acting, and the interaction between the customer and worker has indeed shown to be a form of acting (Sherman, 2007). I would also argue that the ‘depersonalization’ strategy is shown by all respondents when they claim that alcohol is a major issue for the occurrence of SH. Intoxicated guests are even more than others granted to certain behavior according to the respondents. The ‘depersonalization’ strategy was mentioned already by Hochschild (2003), and as my findings show that respondents take on this strategy I have chosen to use the same name for it in this context.

Regarding Hochschild's (2015) concept of ‘surface acting’, the employees’ are doing it in that they are acting nicely to the guests by the ‘joking’ or ‘biting the bullet’ strategies. The concept of ‘deep acting’ (Hochschild, 2003) is also shown by the respondents as a form of dealing with customers. For example R4 says this:

“If a guest is for instance really rude you know that you need to watch your words so the guest won’t behave even ruder... you need to find a solution instead of having him or her continuing.”

This way of trying to find a solution, which R4 talks about, is an interpretation of a situation and yet another strategy that is adapted to avoid SH. I have chosen to call this for ‘Reading the situation’ strategy. The respondents explained that they prevent uncomfortable incidents that could evolve to SH by reading the customer and pleasing them so nothing worse will happen. However as mentioned, if SH would occur or there would be a situation that would make the respondent feel unsafe, most of them explained that they would speak up to the harasser. Whether or not they would speak up is both personality and situation dependent.

Pleasing the customer in order to deal with a situation where a customer is acting offensive I call ‘biting the bullet’ strategy. This is a strategy that has been developed only based on the empirical findings of this study. Within this strategy the worker might be annoyed by the situation, but do not show the emotion with their body language. In my opinion, the reason for ‘biting the bullet’ is due to ‘the customer is always right’ mentality, this because the findings reveal that a worker believes they cannot act as they perhaps would like to deep within. The employees are doing emotional labor (Hochschild, 2003) as they adapt themselves to the
customer and their need and expectations, simply because they felt that that is their job. The respondents do seem to put a lot of weight on being hospitable, and one could surely say that the respondents represent the ‘hospitable body at work’. Furthermore looking at the body as a territory, where the worker controls what is absorbed from the ‘outside’ is applicable to the findings of this study. The respondents give examples of different approaches they use to negotiate with the customer in order to make a situation less uncomfortable, alternatively pleasing the customer so a situation will not escalate.

‘Thick-skinned’ is a coping strategy referring to the toughness demanded of the workers in the hospitality industry. R7 talks about not giving the customers too much as a way of preventing SH: “give an inch and they will take a mile”. R6 also says that it is important to immediately show that certain behavior is unacceptable, for instance if a customer says or touches the worker in a way that is not appreciated. In that sense R6 explain one need to speak out and not be afraid of confronting the person.

If the harasser is not a customer but a supervisor or co-worker the respondents had rather similar answers to how they would deal with the problem. R4, R5, R6 and R7 showed a confident side in that they would report incidents to the manager or talk to their colleagues. R3 said that if a co-worker was harassing she would first talk to her colleagues, then maybe management. However these answers are more of speculations from the respondent in how they think they would act, as none of them considered being a victim of SH from supervisor or co-worker. As R3 comment shows:

“I would like to believe I would tell, that is what I would like to believe I do, to tell about it to a colleague or supervisor.”

This further relates to Yagil’s (2008) strategy ‘support-seeking’, where the worker turns to people he/she trust to share the story of the experience. This strategy was the most common among the respondents if a co-worker would be the harasser. Also ‘avoidance’ was a strategy that the empirical findings showed, for instance R3 said she would perhaps try to change her shifts so she would not work with the person.
Regarding the supervisor as the harasser, it was the toughest form of harasser and the respondents mainly felt that it would be difficult to know how to act. However none of them had ever been or thought about that situation before and it is consequently hard to draw any conclusions on how they would cope with a situation like that. I suggest that this situation is very much personality independent.

In conclusion, the coping strategies presented have been developed in order to explain how the respondents described that they are dealing with SH. As the strategies presented in chapter 3.5 have been developed by former studies based on the employees perceptions of for instance rude customers and not specifically SH, the empirical finding show similarities but also additional preventions. For example being ‘thick-skinned’ was proven to be an important part of the worker package according to the respondents. Even though there are no specific policies of how to deal with SH when it occurs between a customer and a worker, the respondents still indicate that they somehow trust the authorities. Calling the security or the comfort of having an alarm button is one way of showing that the role of the employer or work place plays an important part.

### 6.3 Managers Responsibility - Research Question 3

My third research question is: *What strategies do the employers in the hospitality industry use to prevent sexual harassment at the workplace?*

The roles of the employers are crucial towards solving the issues of SH in a workplace (Handy, 2006). The first theme that my findings show is the following:

**Theme 4: Management is not working enough with issues regarding sexual harassment**

First of all, how SH is dealt with differs between hotel Blue and hotel Orange, but neither of them is actively working on the issue. There also lays organizational structures in these large hotel chains that could be improved, especially at hotel Orange as they are more controlled by the management of the hotel chain. Hotel Blue had a policy and strategy plan within the company regarding the things that might affect the working environment, such as bullying, robbery, fire and among these also SH. This is a positive outcome as SH have been discussed in the workplace, however
the plan has not been shared with the employees, and one might argue that the plan is quite pointless then. The HR department at hotel Orange does have a strategy of some kind, as they gave the manager instructions on how to deal with the incident of SH, this happened when the manager had an employee who expressed being sexually harassed by a co-worker as presented in chapter 6.1.3. However if there is a policy at the management of the hotel chain at Orange, it is not communicated enough with the managers of the chain hotels. This means that the people in charge of the matter are one step further up the management ladder, more precisely the management of the hotel chains. Likewise with hotel Blue the plan, if it exists, could be argued to be rather pointless. These results is a further contribution to the fact that the management should be taking more responsibility in working with the issue, as other researchers also found (see Gilbert et al., 1998; Worsfold & McCann, 2000; White & Hardemo, 2002; Puolston, 2008; Mkono, 2010; Daunt & Harris, 2011).

Both managers had a personal plan on how to act if SH occurs. The manager at hotel Blue felt secure in her position, as she had the company strategy plan in a folder, and knew what was expected of her. The hotel manager at hotel Orange also felt safe due to long experience and appreciated the support of the HR department. However both of these so-called ‘personal plans’ are on how to act after SH, occurred, not by preventing it. There is a definite need to not only have a plan on how to react in the situation of SH, but to have a prevention strategy as well.

According to Swedish law and DA act companies are obligated to deal with SH and should have a policy in order to prevent it (Gabinus Göransson et al. 2013). Additionally the Swedish Work Environment Authority’s new directions in 2016 demands active work from the management to prevent negative working environment for the employees (Arbetsmiljöverket, 2015). It seems as the Swedish law does not have the right impact, and is perhaps working more as recommendations than regulations. Furthermore, both managers expressed to have a great power and control in leading their hotels independently from the chain, at least to some extent. This means that one cannot only blame the management of the hotel chains for not taking enough responsibility, as the managers could very well implement regulations of their own.

The hotel chain of Orange gives instructions in for instance fire incidents, educations that concern the both employees and customers’ safety. It is a basic part in the creation of a good working environment and something that the law probably
requires of a workplace. Similarly, both hotels had a zero policy for drug and alcohol that was shared with the employees as they are hired, which is a need to have in this industry (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2013; Nordic Union – HRCT, 2015). This is clearly an area that has been categorized as important in the hospitality industry. ‘Zero tolerance’ has probably not always been as important in the industry, but has gained the attention today. The question then remains, if these are important topics, why not SH? Could SH even be implemented as a ‘zero tolerance’ policy in the hospitality industry? Naturally, alcohol or fire evacuations plans that are something tangible are easier to control than SH. SH it is an interaction of two people making the controlling of it much more complex. Even though it is more difficult it should not be completely excluded or ignored.

6.3.1 Management prevention strategies

To further contribute with knowledge to my third research questions I have developed an example of how a strategy plan at a hotel could consist of. Reynolds and Harris (2006) divided employees coping strategies into pre, during and after the incident. I have this in mind when I further develop the stages that could be involved in hotel management’s prevention strategies towards SH in the workplace.

I suggest that the content of strategy plans should involve three different stages; 1) Company policy regarding SH (pre), 2) prevention strategy (pre and during), 3) plan on how to act after SH (after). The company policy should simply explain what the company defines as SH, however as it has high levels of personal interpretation there should not be an too narrowed definition. For instance, a person that is ‘thick-skinned’ may define SH differently than a worker that is new in the industry. The prevention strategy should consist of concrete actions plans on how the company encourage and expect an employee to act in different situations. To further proof the importance, all respondents acknowledge that it would be appreciated to get information about SH and how to deal with it. As R4 says, it would be appreciated to know who the management thinks they should turn to. For example, employers could give guidelines on how the employee can deal with inappropriate touching from a customer. Should they report all sorts of touching to the manager? Should they just speak up to the customer? How should they speak up? What if they feel intimidated by the harasser, who should they then talk to? These are only a few examples of questions that the strategy plans could involve. Nevertheless, worth
mentioning again, no point of having strategy plans if they are not shared with the employees. In the final stage of the plan there should exist a strategy on how the company are dealing with SH after it happened. For instance, who is in charge of investigating the incident? How does the investigation process look like? We saw an example of this stage in Hotel Orange, as the HR department had clear suggestions on how it should be handled after an incident. This stage is furthermore quite obvious as the Swedish law requires the employers to investigate (Gabinus Göransson et al. 2013), although certainly the investigation shall also be done if the customer is the harasser.

6.4 Discussion about Sexual Harassment at the Workplace – Research Question 4

The fourth and last research question is: Are workers within the hospitality industry informed about sexual harassments?

Here I wanted to find out if the respondents had ever experienced that the management gave instructions or education regarding SH. The data I gather revealed my next theme:

Theme 5: Sexual harassment is not discussed enough in the workplace

None of the respondents had gotten any information from the managers at their current working place, which is rather natural since the managers at hotel Blue and hotel Orange both admit they have not provided their employees with information. Bergold and Vedin (2015) report reveals that few managers inform their employees about SH strategy plans, which also my findings support. Furthermore, as Ineson et al. (2013) noticed the workers need to be more aware of their rights as one small step towards opening the discussion. The respondents also stated that they have never formally reported an incident of SH. The presumable lack of reporting incidents to managers and how there exist no debate regarding SH in the hospitality industry has lead me to my last theme:
Theme 6: There is a need for ‘Breaking the Silence’

According to respondents, the personality of workers is the reason to why some accept SH and some not. The special jargon is also something that needs to be learned and accepted according to for instance R4. Furthermore the age and years of experience is additional factor that differ the workers from each other. A young person that recently entered the industry may not feel the same toughness as the more experienced ones. Because the hospitality industry has a lot of seasonal and part-time workforce (Riley, 2002), this was also the case at hotel Blue and hotel Orange, it may increase an uncertainty among employees. R3 and R4, who worked in the industry a while, even felt that they had a reliant relationship to the manager and therefore doubted at first if they would report it. How is then e.g. an 18 year old person, working part-time acting in a situation if SH occurs? A seasonal or part-time worker might face an even greater challenge in knowing if they can speak up or report an SH incident. For this group the role of the management is crucial, and mediating prevention strategies are highly important. R4 and R6 even mention that they have also been ‘the rookies’ once when they entered the industry. The toughness seems to be something a hospitality worker develops over time. The manager at hotel Blue further believed it to be a big issue that employees do not dare to speak up. This also is connected with the personality of the worker, as the manager believed some to be quieter than others. Whether or not you are a quiet person there should not be a reason to accept SH and suffer in silence.

According to my findings, ‘breaking the silence’, which follows the direction of del Sante and Schwarzenberger (2013), is not necessarily only restricted to encouraging the victims of SH to report the incidents, there is also a need for a discussion regarding SH at the workplace. In that sense ‘breaking the silence’ refers to speaking about SH in order to highlight the importance of it and creating a safer environment for all employees to speak up. This concept is further connected with the role of the management as their part on encouraging the employees to speak up is tremendous. Not only does the manager have to focus on the giving a good service quality for the customer, but creating a good working environment for the employee is equally important.
7 CONCLUSION

This study has set out to investigate issues related to sexual harassments in the hospitality industry in Östersund. The study has examined the development of coping strategies among front-of-house employees’ to handle situations where SH might occur or has already occurred. The study has as well included a manager perspective on SH, in order to find out if there is an active work with prevention of SH in the industry.

Sexual harassment in the hospitality industry is a part of a deeply rooted social structure; there is a lack of respect towards the workers and a silent acceptance of this. The hospitality industry seems to be suffering from a working environment characterized by workers tolerating a certain deviant behavior by customers that could be defined as a sexual harassment. There are high expectations of the worker, as they should be both the smiling, friendly person, but at the same time be the thick-skinned, tough person who can stand up for oneself. This is a pressure coming from managers, co-workers and customers. The findings of this study also developed coping strategies that workers develop to prevent situations that may turn into SH. It seems as the strategies are a must for the worker in front-of-the house in the industry and an additional part of the job.

Changing something that is part of a societal structure will not happen over a night, it might be a rather long process. However, in my opinion, in order to work with the issue of SH in the hospitality industry the working culture needs to be changed. This ‘culture of silence’ needs to be broken in order to work with the issues around SH. Managers should have both prevention and action plan towards SH, but most importantly communicate it with their employees. The employee should feel a support and encouragements in reporting every time someone is behaving in a way that make them feel uncomfortable. The employee needs to feel that their working role is a respected one. This study has mapped out a somewhat greater understanding of the issue of SH in the hospitality industry, although there are still many uncovered areas and questions about the topic. I will as a final comment give instructions of what I found would be important in future research.
7.1 Future Research

The management has shown to have a crucial role in preventing SH at the workplace, hence their perspective should be more focused on in further research. The management perspective is the least uncovered one, as the victim and harasser perceptions have been studied to some extent already. Strategy and prevention plans are indeed important, but implementing them and doing the education for employees is a much more complex process, therefore finding and studying examples of successful cases would also be needed.

The hotels participating in this study are part of bigger hotel chains. The size of the two hotels differed in that hotel Orange was more dependent on the hotel chain management than hotel Blue. It would be interesting to investigate one step further up the hierarchy, to get a greater understanding of how they are working with SH. Especially at hotel Orange that is working under more demands from the chain management.

An interesting outcome of research would be to study the management perspective in smaller hotels, for instance private owned hotels. Or even compare the work of the management of larger and smaller companies in the hospitality industry to see if there is a difference in how SH is worked with, or if it is even worked with at all. Comparing the occurrence of SH in hospitality industry to other industries could also generate highly interesting results. Especially within health and social care more research should be done, as this industry and hospitality are the ones where SH occurs most often from a person that is not your colleague or supervisor (Bergold & Vedin, 2015).

It could also generate some interesting results to have a more variation among the respondents, especially to have a more equal number of male and female respondents. First of all the perception of certain comments or touching from customers to the worker might vary from gender, as the male in my study reported, the incidents more as flirting and a more appreciation than the females did. But similarly this could also generate expectations of male employees in the hospitality industry that they have to accept even further inappropriate behavior than the females do, due to the possible nature of that males appreciate the actions. Four of the five employee participants in this study worked full-time. The voice of the workers with longer experience in the industry has been the focus of the outcome. Although, as one of the results of the study were that a person that is younger or
have less experience may be more exposed to SH, doing a research on only their perspective would be highly recommended as well. Similarly studying only part-time or seasonal workers could generate some highly interesting results due to the fact that these groups might face even a higher barrier towards dealing with issues around SH, making them a vulnerable group.

As I already mentioned in the method chapter, the very first intention was to investigate the back-of-house workers. This group would be highly relevant to further investigate, as their status might be even worse than front-of-house workers. This group should not in any way be neglected. The people working in the back might for example be immigrants that do not have the language skills to work in front-of-house (Zampoukos, & Ioannides, 2015). Or, as explained in chapter 2.5 there are expectations on the body of the worker; certain bodies might be more suited for front-of-house and the other way around. I do not doubt that investigating this perspective would generate further contributions to the complexity of the work and the expectations on the worker in the hospitality industry.

The core of this study is the deeply rooted culture that characterizes the hospitality industry, and the vulnerable positions many employees in the industry has. Sexual harassments need far more further attention. This study has only revealed the perspectives from two hotels in a Swedish small town and as this has been an explorative study, I request for more research in the topic towards answering the question of:

- What are the perspectives on SH among front-of-house/back-of-house and employers in the hospitality industry?

The jargon in the industry, the customer as the most frequent harasser, silent acceptance and lack strategies and implication of this from the management are crucial factors that needs further understanding and contributions.
References


APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Interview guide - Employer

- Short introduction about me and thesis topic
- Participation voluntary
- How the material will be uses – send transcript?
- Anonymity

Opening questions:

- Can you briefly tell me about yourself and your role at the hotel?
- How long have you worked as hotel manager?
- What is your previous work experience? Within hospitality?

Hotel organization

- Can you briefly tell me about the hotel and the structure of the work?
- How many employees?
- How does the organization look like in the company?

Sexual Harassments within hospitality industry

- What is your opinion on sexual harassments in the hospitality industry? Do you consider it to be a problem within the industry?
- Have you ever been touch with the issue? How?

Management and their responsibility

- Is there a strategy in how to work with SH within the company?
  - On this workplace?
- Do you have a routine that you follow in case an employee feel exposed? If so how does the strategy look like?
- Has there been a need for working with these questions on this hotel?
- Have you ever experienced that someone felt exposed on this hotel? What happened? How did you react?
- What do you consider to be your responsibility as hotel managers to work with this issue?
- How would you act if one of your employees felt sexually harassed?
- What precautions can you take in order to work against the issue on your hotel?

Ending:

- Anything else you would like to add?
Appendix 2

Interview guide - Employee
- Short introduction about me and thesis topic
- Participation voluntary
- How the material will be uses – send transcript?
- Anonymity

Opening questions:
- Can you tell me about yourself and your role at the hotel?
- How long have you been working here?
- What is your previous work experience? Within hospitality?

Sexual Harassments - Experience
- How would you define sexual harassment?
- What is your opinion on sexual harassment in the hospitality industry? Do you consider it to be a problem? Why do you believe it is a problem?
- Who do you think are in risk of getting exposed of sexual harassment in the hospitality industry? By who?
- Have you ever been in a situation in your work where another person made you feel uncomfortable? How did the situation look like? Would you call it a sexual harassment? Why/Why not?
- Who was the person that made you feel uncomfortable in that situation?
- Have you ever been in a situation you would not call a sexual harassment but you considered being uncomfortable? How did the situation look like? How did you react in the situation? Who was the person who made you feel uncomfortable?

Employees ’strategy”
- How do you think you would react if you would be exposed by a sexual harassment from a customer?
  o From a co-worker?
  o From a supervisor?

Preventing SH
- Have you ever been given information on how to act if you were exposed of a sexual harassment? Info from for instance employer?
- In your opinion, do you think there is a need for discussion sexual harassments at this workplace? Why/Why not? If so, do you have a suggestion to what sort of information that should be given?

Ending:
- Anything else you would like to add?