



What is social responsibility?

An analysis of social responsibility in hotel SMEs in Tällberg, Dalarna

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Abstract

There is a lack of attention and understanding of how smaller hotel businesses understand and engage with social responsibility. The lack of understanding has led to a situation where the knowledge of how hotel corporations operate regarding Corporate social responsibility unproblematically is applied across scales onto Small and medium sized hotels behaviour regarding social responsibility. This thesis examines this lack of understanding by analysing discourses related to social responsibility that can be found in online reviews written by former guests of SME hotels in Tällberg, Sweden. The results of the discourse analysis show that SME hotels mainly perform social responsibility through the performance of hospitality and by acting as cultural brokers allowing socialisation to happen. They suggest that the notion most SMEs have of hospitality links into social responsibility without them realising it. However, the unreflective conflation of knowledge across scales regarding social responsibility and the term Corporate social responsibility risk disrupting this performance, as it makes SME hotel owners and managers act counterproductively to this. Thus, this thesis suggests that the very use of the term CSR when talking about SMEs in the hotel sector is problematic. Furthermore, the findings also suggest that the creation and performance of social responsibility in hotel SMEs are mainly dialogic, unlike previously assumed, as it is created in the interaction between two persons.

Keywords

Hospitality, Hotels, Small and medium sized enterprises, Social responsibility, Corporate social responsibility, online reviews, discourse analysis

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1. Introduction

In the opening chapter of this thesis the topic is presented and problematised. The research problem leads to the aim and research question of the study, which is presented at the end of the research problem section. The chapter finishes by clarifying how some of the most important terms in this thesis are used throughout the thesis.

In business management social responsibility is usually associated with the term Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). CSR has become an increasingly popular field of study in business and management over the last decade (Coles, Fenclova, & Dinan, 2013). This includes the hospitality sector of the tourism industry, where many studies on the social impact of the industry, what kind of social responsibility can be placed upon it and what social responsibility the industry de facto takes have been done. In the hotel sector CSR is often suggested as something that is being performed by big hotel chains (Coles et.al., 2013). In this context hotel chains who runs hotels in multiple locations, often with a centralized administrative location (Coles et.al., 2013; Stoian & Gilman, 2017). Whilst neglecting scale of business, Wong, Leung, & Law (2015) suggest that CSR in the hotel sector at large should consist of the following five aspects: community, policy, mission and vision, workforce, and environment.

However, while the concept of CSR is often taken for granted, there exists no agreed upon definition of the term (Christensen, Morsing, & Thyssen, 2013; Coles et.al., 2013). In fact, the term and concept CSR have been criticised since the 1970s for being hard to define and a moving target that can change depending on the prevailing political or socio-economical view (Churchill, 1974; Ramanathan, 1976). Today, many scholars claim that it is more important what social responsibility activities the company communicates that it does rather than the activities themselves (Ettinger, Grabner-Kräuter, & Terlutter, 2018; Moisescu, 2015; Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2014; Öberseder, Schlegelmilch, & Murphy, 2013) (see section 3.3.).

Many research papers are quick to suggest the common understanding of CSR in the hotel sector, that it is about communicating acts of responsibility to guest and other stakeholders to gain a competitive advantage (Cagliano & Longoni, 2015; dos Santos, Méxas, & Meiriño, 2017). They also apply this knowledge across scales and assumes that it is true for the entire range of hospitality businesses, from the biggest corporations to the smallest enterprises (Stoian & Gilman, 2017). That being said, some researchers have suggested that Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the hospitality industry needs to be considered differently to larger organisations (Mzembe, Melissen, & Novakovic, 2019; Stoian & Gilman, 2017). The thing these studies allude to is that SMEs need to focus their social responsibility on the local community rather than on the other four aspects put forward by Wong et.al. (2015), as they have found that the support from the local community in which the SME hotels operate is crucial for the success of these hotels.

Research problem

As stated above, hotel SMEs do not function the same way as corporate hotels (Coles et.al., 2013; Salloum, Bouri, & Samara, 2013; Stoian & Gilman, 2017), and thus need to work with social responsibility in other ways. However, despite this, little attention has been paid towards understanding *social responsibility* in SMEs in the hospitality sector. With the use of the term CSR, ideas and models from research on corporately run hotels are often and widely applied to research on social responsibility in SMEs in the hotel sector (Coles et.al., 2013; Floričić, 2016). This lack of attention to how smaller hotel businesses understand and engage with CSR, has resulted in the conflation of knowledge across scales: knowledge of how larger organisations operated is used unproblematically to explain smaller business behaviour regarding (Coles et.al., 2013; Mzembe et.al., 2019).

Coles et.al. (2013) have identified the lack of research on SME social responsibility and the misconception of the CSR concept in this context as a problem that can affect social responsibility work negatively, and suggest that it is something that needs to be examined further to develop a theoretical understanding of the phenomenon. Coles et.al. (2013), Stoian & Gilman (2017) and Mzembe et.al. (2019)

goes further to suggest that it might be as much a conceptual problem as a practical problem, as the word corporate in Corporate social responsibility often misleads both research and practical implementation of social responsibility initiatives in firms that are not corporate.

This study approaches this gap in the literature by looking at the social responsibility being performed by SME hotels through the perspective of former guests of SME hotels in Tällberg, Sweden. This is achieved by analysing discourses related social responsibility found in online reviews consumers have written after their visit to hotels in the destination. By looking at the SME social responsibility in the hotel sector from a new perspective using a method that has not been used before, this approach allows the study to add a new perspective to the existing literature of what social responsibility in SME hotels is.

Research aim

This study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how social responsibility is being performed by SMEs in the hospitality sector by interpreting the experiences of former guests in small, privately owned and operated hotels in the destination of Tällberg, Sweden.

Research question

Based on the research problem and aim of this study the following research question have been formulated:

- Based on the retelling of ‘experiences’ from former customers how do SMEs in the hospitality sector perform social responsibility?

Terminology

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility is far from being unequivocal (Christensen, Morsing, & Thyssen, 2013; Coles et.al., 2013). No commonly agreed upon definition of the concept exists in academic literature (Coles et.al., 2013; Matten & Moon, 2008) nor in social or corporate practice (Christensen et.al., 2013).

Coles et.al. (2013) lists some of the alternative terms that are frequently used either interchangeably with CSR, or to describe a concept similar to, but not identical to CSR. These terms are: ‘corporate responsibility’, ‘social responsibility’, ‘corporate citizenship’, ‘corporate sustainability and responsibility’, ‘corporate social and environmental responsibility’, ‘corporate sustainability management’ and ‘company stakeholder responsibility’ (pp. 123).

For the purpose of this study the terms Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Social Responsibility (SR) will be used to describe two similar, yet different phenomenon. Both these terms are presented and problematised in chapter 2, were it is also made clear exactly how these terms are being used in this thesis. The distinguishing of the two terms is essential for the discussion in chapter 4.

In this chapter first chapter I set out to introduce the topic of this thesis: How social responsibility is performed by Small and medium sized hotels. The topic is problematised and a study context is established. The research problem combined with the context leads to the aim of this thesis. The chapter finishes by explaining how prominent terms such as Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Responsibility will be used throughout the thesis. The following chapter provides the conceptual framework for the thesis setting up the frame the discussion later is based upon.

2. Conceptual framework

In this chapter the conceptual framework needed to analyse and discuss the results of the study is presented. The framework is presented as a literature review, divided into multiple sub-chapters.

2.1. What is CSR?

As stated in the introduction chapter, no commonly agreed upon definition of the term Social Corporate Responsibility (CSR) exists. Whilst most organisations have recognised that they have a responsibility towards society, many different opinions on what that responsibility means and should include exists (Panayiotou, Aravossis, & Moschou, 2009). Thus, term CSR have been criticised for being too vague, unclear and intangible (Frankental, 2001; Lantos, 2001). The concept has often been criticised. Already in 1974 (Churchill, 1974) and 1976 (Ramanathan, 1976) the social responsibilities of corporations was criticised for being a moving target and hard to define. Despite the criticism, the concept has seldom been problematised.

However the common perception of CSR, that most people agree on, is that it is about good corporate governance regarding a company's relations with the people and environment in the community in which it operates and the people and environment to which it export (Christensen et.al., 2013; Mazurkiewicz, 2004; Öberseder et.al., 2013). This governance is often performed by the establishing and communication of policies (Tölkes, 2018).

2.2. Corporations

2.2.1. Corporate social responsibility in corporate hotels

Social and environmental sustainability in tourism, and therefore also the hotel industry is of growing concern as more and more people are starting to travel (Cagliano & Longoni, 2015; Mazurkiewicz, 2004). One way for hotels to try to be as sustainable as possible is to implement CSR policies into their operation and to engage in CSR related actions and initiatives (Ettinger et.al., 2018). Decision makers in the hospitality-industry are progressively trying to implement more sustainable

practices in their businesses to be able to offer more sustainable accommodation alternatives to travellers (Tölkes, 2018). Furthermore, many guests also request and demand more sustainable practices (Schmeltz, 2012). However, many researchers believe that the consumers perception of the hotels CSR initiatives before visiting the hotel is not based on what the hotel does, but rather on what the hotel communicate that it does (Ettinger et.al., 2018; Öberseder, Schlegelmilch, & Murphy, 2013). Some researchers mean that communicating CSR initiatives is a must, otherwise all the initiatives will stay invisible (Ettinger et.al., 2018; Moisescu, 2015; Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2014; Schmeltz, 2012). However, not all researchers agree, and the statement has been criticised (Fleming, Roberts, & Garsten, 2013). The critics claim that by viewing CSR this way it becomes only a marketing tool and not about taking actual social and environmental responsibility (Christensen et.al., 2013; Coles et.al., 2013; Mzembe et.al., 2019). And that even when CSR is not used as a marketing tool to further public relations, it is usually not high on the list of priorities for most companies (Fleming et.al., 2013). Another issue with this is that it gives companies an incentive to report and communicate that they engage more with CSR related activities than they actually do (Christensen et.al., 2013; Font, Walmsley, Cogotti, McCombes, & Häusler, 2012). This has been found to be a bigger problem in bigger hotel companies than in smaller hotel groups (Font et.al., 2012).

A study by Wong, Leung, & Law (2015) suggest that CSR in the hospitality sector consists of five different aspects: community, policy, mission and vision, workforce, and environment. Based on the results of their findings they suggested that hotels should focus on the environmental and the mission and vision aspects in their CSR programs as those were the aspects that had the biggest impact on customers willingness to pay and the brand image of the hotels. Therefore, Wong et.al. (2015) suggests that environmental issues and mission and vision should be given priority over the other aspects when developing CSR programs, as they mean that these aspects needs to be emphasized to gain a competitive advantage over other hotel businesses.

2.3. The Corporate in CSR

Much of the academic research that claims to be about what is traditionally called CSR is only focused on one aspect of responsibility. Often the environmental (Levy & Duverger, 2010; Wong et.al., 2015) or the economic aspects (Wong et.al., 2015). The reason for this is that some studies have shown that focusing on and communicating these aspects can lead to higher willingness to pay in guests and help develop the brand image of the company (Levy & Duverger, 2010; Martínez, Pérez, & del Bosque, 2014; Wong et.al., 2015). This way of thinking about CSR has gained criticism for being only about commercial interests and not about taking social responsibility at all (Coles et.al., 2013; Fleming et.al., 2013; Mzembe et.al., 2019). The criticism claim that the contemporary concept of CSR was born in an economic discourse, not a social responsibility discourse (Fleming et.al., 2013). And while some argues that financial gains is an important aspect of CSR (Elkington, 1994; Martínez et.al., 2014; Orlitzky, Siegel, & Waldman, 2011), others counter this argument by saying that by allowing financial gains to be one of the goals of CSR it can never be true social and environmental responsibility (Coles et.al., 2013; Fleming et.al., 2013). This economic discourse is illustrated by the suggestions from Wong et.al. (2015), that hotels should focus on the environmental and vision and mission aspects of CSR to increase customers willingness to pay and to increase the brand image of the hotel. The authors that advocates for this economic discourse in CSR, mean that by focusing on the aspects of CSR the customer wants businesses to focus on it will lead to win-win situation for both society, the environment and business corporations (Elkington, 1994).

Orlitzky, Siegel, & Waldman (2011), while arguing that one of the most important end results of CSR activities should be improvement of financial performance, points out that it is important not consign the CSR concept to any one discourse. Nor should it be assumed that CSR is homogenous as different contexts requires firms to take on different types of responsibilities (Coles et.al., 2013; Orlitzky et.al., 2011). Based on these assumptions Orlitzky et.al. (2011) claim that CSR cannot be a real construct were one-size fits all, rather it is a multi-faceted concept that is socially constructed and can vary in character depending on the situation.

2.4. The Social in CSR

Some researchers that focuses on focuses on stakeholder theory while examining the concept of CSR claims that the S (social) of the of the original concept gradually have faded away in the mind of both business leaders and many researchers in the last two decades (Coles et.al., 2013; Freeman & Velamuri, 2006; Jamali, 2008). Instead, following the global discourse on climate change, CSR has taken a turn towards a greater focus on environmental issues (Coles et.al., 2013). As showcased by the previously mentioned works by Wong et.al. (2015) and Levy & Duverger (2010), some of the the academic literature on CSR have followed this turn, suggesting that environmental issues is the most important aspect of CSR to focus on to build a strong brand image. The critics claims that the consequences of this environmental focus is that social aspect is forced to take the backseat, downplaying the importance of the responsibility firms have towards their employees, customers, local community and supply chains (Coles et.al., 2013).

The incommensurateness between the multifaceted reality of CSR as a socially constructed concept and the mainstream discourse on the concept (Coles et.al., 2013; Lynes & Andrachuk, 2008) presents a methodological challenge to this review of which aspect to focus more on, as both play a role in the examining of the research problem of this study. This challenge is not limited to CRS, but is also true for most of the alternative concepts presented by Coles et.al. (2013) mentioned in terminology section of the introduction chapter. This makes it hard to say what ‘real’ corporate social responsibility or social responsibility is and contributes to issue of finding an agreed upon definition of the terms mentioned in the first section of this chapter.

2.5. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME)

What is defined as a Small and medium-sized enterprise differs from different parts of the world. However, since this study is set in a European Union (EU) country, the EU definition will be used. The EU definition is also commonly referred to by the United Nations (UN) when they use the term (United Nations, n.d.).

The EU defines a SME as:

...a micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is made up of enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million.

(European Commission, 2003)

Within the term SME the EU also makes the distinction between micro, small and medium enterprises. Micro being firms with less than 10 employees or less than €2 million in turnover, a small enterprise being a firm with less than 50 employees or less than €10 million in turnover and a medium sized enterprise being a firm with less than 250 employees or €50 million in turnover (European Commission, 2015). All the hotels included in this study is by this definition either micro or small enterprises.

2.5.1. Social responsibility in SME's

However, many scholars have criticised the traditional CSR concept (Coles et.al., 2013; Fleming et.al., 2013; Lynes & Andrachuk, 2008). This critic is relevant to how the concept is used in much academic literature on hospitality management, as it points out that much of the literature makes general assumptions that CSR works the same in the whole hospitality industry, something they claim it does not, as the sector is not homogeneous and businesses of different sizes functions differently (Coles et.al., 2013; Mzembe et.al., 2019). Thus, it is important to discuss this critic for the purpose of this thesis.

SMEs make up the majority of all businesses in the world (Stoian & Gilman, 2017). Still, the term Corporate social responsibility is often used to describe the social responsibility work that is being performed by SMEs, even though most of them are far from being corporate and even fewer have the ambition to become corporate (Sheedy, 2011). Stoian & Gilman (2017) found that SEMs should focus on community focused CSR activities to enhance firm growth in all types of businesses. Another find in their study was that responsibility actions focused on employees in

SMEs are essential to avoid sales declines. What these claims mean for hotel SMEs will be further explored in the following section 5.6 Hotels as SMEs.

2.6. Hotels as SMEs

The hotel accommodation sector in Europe is dominated by small businesses. Of the total number of beds hotel SMEs provide 90 % while only 10 % is provided by the big hotel operators (Floričić, 2016). Yet, when it comes to social responsibility in the hotel sector most research is done on the large hotel companies (Coles et.al., 2013). One reason for this might be that small hotel business generally do not engage in strategic planning to the same extent as the larger companies (Floričić, 2016; Morrison & Thomas, 1999; Sheedy, 2011), thus making them harder to study. The reason for this being multiple planning-barriers, such as, lack of time, inadequate knowledge of the planning process, lack of communication or lack of the necessary expertise (Jaafar, Abdul-Aziz, Maideen, & Mohd, 2011; Morrison & Thomas, 1999).

Sheedy (2011) argues that the motivation for small business owners can be either pushed or pulled. The pull factors are driven by their own financial interests while the push factors include motivations that is not only driven by self-interest. To illustrate one such push factor, Carter & Jones-Evans (2009) points out that growth is not always an important business objective for owners of hotel SMEs. Instead, they identify the preservation of historical heritage, cultural identity and other elements tied to non-material cultural heritage as factors that often is of importance for owners and managers of hotel SMEs. These owners and managers can see tourism, and as an extension, their own business, as a way to help preserve the heritage and identity of a place while providing the local community with job opportunities and other economic benefits (Jones & Haven-Tang, 2005). However, Lee-Ross & Lashley (2010) argues that this perusing of non-financial objectives is one of the things that contributes to the uninterest from many SME hotel owners towards strategic planning. The lack of strategic planning due to the planning-barriers mention earlier in this section sometimes make SME hotel owners and managers thing that they need copy the strategies used by their bigger counterparts

(Coles et.al., 2013). This can be problematic as it often leads to the unreflective conflation of knowledge across scales mentioned in the introduction (Stoian & Gilman, 2017).

2.6.1. Guest or customer?

In the hotel sector, the terms guest and customer are often used interchangeably. However, for the purpose of this study it is important to note that they are not the same. Lashley (in Lashley, Lynch, & Morrison, 2007) argues that a customer can never be a 'true' guest as long as there is a monetary exchange involved in the relationship with the 'host'. Ritzer (in Lashley et.al., 2007) takes this one step further by arguing that if there exists a commercial aspect true hospitality cannot exist. Yet, he also notes that that does not automatically make commercial hospitality inhospitable.

This chapter set out to provide the reader with the necessary concepts needed to understand the framework from which the findings of this study later will be analysed and discussed in chapter 4. Based on the distinctions made in the terminology section of the introduction this chapter has explained the concepts CSR and SR and how they are viewed and used depending on the viewpoint of the researcher and the scale of the business they are applied to. In the next chapter the method and methodology of this thesis will be explored. It explains the methodological approach to this study, explores the study context in more detail and describes the study process.

3. Method and methodology

In this chapter the methodology of this study and the study process is presented, and the methodological approach is briefly discussed. The method used is presented and the rationale of the method choices is explained. This chapter also includes a more detailed background of the study context.

3.1. Initial approach

Initially this study aimed to explore how visitors of smaller independent hotels in Sweden perceived the hotels CSR activities. The intended method to try answering this research question was to do a content analysis of online reviews. The coding was going to be theory driven, with predetermined codes mostly based on categories identified by (Ettinger et.al., 2018), including for example energy usage, sustainable construction, ecological food, waste behaviour etc. However, During the initial data collection problems arose.

The theory driven coding did not work as expected. Many of the themes the theory said should be found could not be identified in the reviews. None of the reviews mentioned anything about the hotel's energy usage, as was suggested by Ettinger et.al. (2018), and only one review briefly mentioned the lack of trash bins, which could be categorised into the theme of waste behaviour. However even in this case it was hard to determine if the lack of trash bins was related to CSR or if it was just a complaint about the inconvenience of the lack of a place to throw away wastes. Other themes were only noted by the few reviewers directly affected by the lack or presence of certain things for example accessibility for handicapped and vegan friendly. Since these things do not affect most visitors, they did not write about them in their review. In the few cases these things were mentioned, it was hard to relate them to the lack or presence of CSR related activities by the hotels.

The one category that was present in most reviews was product and service quality. This was to be expected as the data being examined consisted of reviews, whose primary purpose is to give feedback on just product and service quality (Park & Lee,

2019). However, this category is also the one that is hardest to connect to the prevalent definition of CSR. In fact, the CSR concept that the codes were based on was to a large extent absent from the online reviews. The corporate part of Corporate Social Responsibility was missing. All the bureaucratic aspects of the CSR that can be found in literature on the topic, things like policy documents and other types of official statements, was completely absent in all the reviews. Instead, the aspects of social responsibility that was brought up was to a large extent the type of social responsibility that arises in a relationship between individuals. The social responsibility the guests writing the reviews described was deeper and more meaningful than any policy document.

3.1.1. A change of methods due to connotations

Indeed, while based on previous literature the decision to use content analysis as the method of data analysis was made, the realisation that the social responsibility these small hotels produce is something far more abstract and transformative than the theoretical framework the intended content analysis was based on suggested, it became clear that the theory driven content analysis intended would not be able to explain how this social responsibility is created and mediated. Instead, to be able to understand this social responsibility it is crucial to look behind the actual words written in the reviews and try to figure out what the guests have experienced during their visits. Thus, the intended theory driven content analysis with predetermined themes was abandoned in favour of an analysis that more resembles a discourse analysis.

While the discourse analysis is not widely used on online reviews (Park & Lee, 2019), it is used extensively in the study of social responsibility (Choi, Mattila, Van Hoof, & Quadri-Felitti, 2017). Moreover, online reviews do consist of words and sentences written by an individual, expressing their experiences and opinions regarding something, in this case their stay at one of the small hotels included in this study. The fact that the reviews expresses opinions and describes experiences means that the words and phrases they consist of includes both connotations and denotations. When trying to understand these connotations one needs to look beyond

the actual words written to find the underlying meaning. For these reasons Park & Lee (2019) argues that discourse analysis is a good method to use when examining online reviews.

3.2. The chosen context

This study is limited to the hotels in Tällberg, Sweden. There are eight hotels in Tällberg. Out of these, six have been considered to be SMEs, and thus included in this study, these hotels are presented in detail further down in this section. The hotels that have been excluded are, at the time of writing, part of large Scandinavian hotel chains. Dalecarlia Hotel & Spa are part of Best Western through their Sleeping Fox Hotel Group (Sleepingfox Hotel Group, 2019) and First Hotel Gyllene Hornet Tällberg is part of First Hotels group (First Hotels, 2019). While both these hotels themselves are small enough to be considered SMEs their parent companies have a central management, far away from Tällberg, including company spanning guidelines and policies on Corporate Social Responsibility. Thus, these hotels do not qualify to be part of this study according to the aim of the study and have been excluded.

Klockargården and Villa Långbers do have the same owner as First Hotel Gyllene Hornet Tällberg. However, they are not part of the First Hotel franchise. Klockargården and Villa Långbers were considered borderline cases when contemplating which hotels to include in this study. Yet, they were included due to the fact that the owner of the hotels is a local resident and thus, the central management of these hotels are located only 15 kilometres away from the hotels in Leksand. Both Åkerblads Hotell och Gästgiveri and Tällbergsgården is owned by members of the Åkerblad family. However, the hotels are run as two separate businesses. According to the website of Tällbergsgården the two hotels do have some sort of partnership and collaboration (Tällbergsgården Hotell, 2019).

Tällberg as a destination is both unique and at the same time the archetype of a small, rural weekend destination in Sweden. Its archetypical aura makes it an excellent case to study from a discursive perspective, as the national romanticism has painted the picture of the local culture, architecture and traditions, the so called

Dalaromantiken (Dala romanticism), as the symbol of the archetypical and ideal Sweden (Leksands kommun, 2004; Stiftelsen Ingmar Bergman, 2019) A picture that still remains to this day and is, indeed, deeply embedded in the cultural identity of Tällberg. This cultural identity will be discussed in relation to the findings of this study in chapter 4.2.3.

3.2.1. Tällberg location and information

Tällberg is a small village with medieval roots in the county of Dalarna in Sweden. Located in the municipality of Leksand village is situated on the shore of lake Siljan halfway between the towns Leksand and Rättvik (see figure 1).



Figure 1 Tällberg, location in Sweden and by lake Siljan

(Tälbergs Byamän, 2019a)

Tällberg has a long tradition of being a weekend resort and is today the community with most hotels per capita in Sweden with its eight hotels and more than 1000 beds (Tälbergs Byamän, 2019a). The hotels all have their own websites, but seven of the eight hotels do also collectively market the destination and all the hotels on a common website (Upplev Tällberg, 2019). The common website, named Upplev Tällberg (Experience Tällberg) functions as a privately-owned Destination marketing organisation (DMO). The DMO is also present on and markets the destination on the social media platforms Facebook and Youtube.

The size of the local community differs depending on how it is measured. However, either way it is measured it is still smaller than the number of beds in the destination. The village, of were all the hotels are located (see figure 2) has a population of just over 250 (Tälbergs Byamän, 2019a), while the urban area including smaller nearby villages has 883 inhabitants as of 2017 (Leksands kommun, 2019). As a destination Tällberg has more than 250 000 visitor a year¹ (Tälbergs Byamän, 2019a).



- A: Hotell Siljanstrand Tällberg
- B: Åkerblads hotell och gästgiveri
- C: Klockargårdens hotell
- D: Tällbergsgårdens hotell
- E: Green hotel Tällberg
- F: Dalecarlia hotel & spa
- G: First hotel Gyllene hornet
- H: Villa Långbers

Figure 2 Tällberg hotel locations

(Tälbergs Byamän, 2019a)

3.2.2. A unique yet representative destination

There are a few things that make Tällberg somewhat of a unique destination. The beds/local inhabitant ratio and the high number of visitors all year around are one of these things. While the occupied beds/local inhabitant ratio can be matched by some skiing destinations during winter and by other destinations in smaller places during special events the thing that makes Tällberg unique is that ratio is high all year around (even if the ratio is higher still during the summer months and around Christmas and New year).

¹ Based on estimations from Tällberg Byamän (Tällberg village association). No exact official statistics could be found.

Another thing is the symbolic value of the place itself. The region around lake Siljan is considered to be the heart of the region that itself by many is considered to be the heart of Sweden (Crang, 1999; Leksands kommun, 2004; Stiftelsen Ingmar Bergman, 2019). This picture comes from the late national romanticism in Sweden in the late 19th century and early 20th century when the local culture was idealised and adopted to represent Sweden as a whole internationally (Bergsten, 2016; Crang, 1999). World famous painters like Carl Larsson and Anders Zorn and poets and authors like Erik Axel Karlfeldt helped create this idealised picture of Dalarna as the most *Swedish* region of Sweden (Bergsten, 2016; Näsström, 1937). This archetypal picture has later been reinforced, both in Sweden and abroad (Crang, 1999), by for example the films by Ingmar Bergman and the continued use of traditional Dalarna symbols such as the Dala horse² and Falu rödfärg³ as symbols of Sweden internationally (Bergsten, 2016)

Över verklighetens Dalarna svävar som en luftig och sommargyllene hägring en idealiserad reflex av landskapet, en bild av Dalarna såsom svensk nationalsymbol.

(Näsström, 1937)

The quote above from Gustaf Näsström's 1937 book *Dalarna som svenskt ideal* (Dalarna as the Swedish ideal) translates: Over the reality of Dalarna, floats, like a silky and summer golden mirage, an idealised reflection of the region, a portrait of Dalarna as a Swedish national symbol.

Tällberg is one of the places where this culture is most deeply rooted, with its turn of the twentieth century architecture in the typical *Dalaromantisk* style (see figure 3) and strong local traditions (Leksands kommun, 2004; Tälbergs Byamän, 2019b). So much that the local municipality located in nearby Leksand in 2014 issued a report setting guidelines for where and how new buildings are allowed to be built to preserve the unique characteristics of the village (Leksands kommun, 2004).

² A carved wooden horse, usually quite small, painted in a unique and traditional pattern.

³ A red facade paint originally made from a side product of calcination of copper ore from Falu copper mine.



Figure 3 Åkerblads hotell och Gästgiveri. A house built in the typical early 20th century dalaromanisk style

(Åkerblads, 2019)

Despite the uniqueness, the extreme concentration of hotels being run as SMEs still makes Tällberg an good case to study. While being unique in its atmosphere the business themselves are still SMEs in the hotel sector meaning they share the same core business model as any other SME in the sector. They face many of the same challenges, including competition from corporations as well as from other SMEs and the growing peer-to-peer marketplaces for accommodation led by sharing-economy companies like AirBnB (Zervas, Proserpio, & Byers, 2017).

3.2.3. Hotels

All the hotels included in this study will briefly be presented below. The presentation of each hotel individually aims to further establish the relative uniqueness of the destination. It also acts as a background to the discussion on cultural identity in chapter 4.2.3.

Villa Långbers

Villa Långbers focuses mainly on business meetings and weddings. They do also market many weekend packages with accommodation, food and activities on their homepage on their website. On the bottom of their website they display their Nordic

Swan certificate⁴ and their Visita Svensk Besöksnäring membership (Villa Långbers, 2019).

Klockargården

(Hotell Klockargården, 2019)

Klockargården was turned into an inn in 1960. Before that the facilities had been used as a handicraft shop for more than 30 years (Leksands kommun, 2006). The handicraft tradition still lives on in the hotel's facilities. On the courtyard of the hotel is a small workshop, an old bakehouse and a farmhouse café (Tälbergs Byamän, 2019a).

Green Hotel Tällberg

Built in the early 20th century dalaromantiska style and turned into a hotel in 1947 (Leksands kommun, 2004), Green hotel is the biggest hotel in Tällberg with 100 rooms and 200 beds (Green Hotel, 2019). It can also boast about an impressive art collection with works by among others; Pablo Picasso, Johannes Nielsen and Carl Milles (Tälbergs Byamän, 2019a).

Focus in the restaurant is on local and seasonal ingredients. All the fish served is fished in Siljan. They have also chosen to promote local breweries and local brands of beverage on their drinking menu. The hotel displays their Nordic Swan ecolabel on the bottom of their website (Green Hotel, 2019).

Åkerblads Hotell och Gästgiveri

Åkerblads Hotell och Gästgiveri (see figure 3) is a hostelry, hotel and spa (Åkerblads, 2019). The hospitality business started all the way back in 1912 when the local shopkeeper decided to start renting out rooms on the upper floor of the shop (Leksands kommun, 2006). Focus is on local tradition, gastronomy and wellness. However, they do also offer business meetings and weddings. In their restaurant they focus on local ingredients and a flexible menu for people with special needs or requests regarding food (Åkerblads, 2019).

⁴ The official ecolabel of the Nordic countries.

Tällbergsgården

Tällbergsgården markets themselves as the only boutique hotel in Tällberg (Tällbergsgården Hotell, 2019). It is one of the hotels that have the most dalaromantiska atmosphere surrounding it (Tälbergs Byamän, 2019a). They focus heavily on the history of the hotel and local tradition (Tällbergsgården Hotell, 2019). Two market segments they seem to be targeting, based on their home page, is business meetings and weddings. According to their website the hotel restaurant focuses on local dishes and local and organic ingredients. Meat, vegetables and dairy products from local farmers, fish from Swedish waters and fruit from the hotel's own garden are some of the things mentioned. They also claim to try to be as sustainable as possible when choosing and buying ingredients that cannot be found locally, always trying to choose organic ingredients (Tällbergsgården Hotell, 2019).

Hotell Siljanstrand Tällberg

The grounds and facilities of Hotell Siljanstrand Tällberg is in the style of a rural community centre and folk museum (Leksands kommun, 2004), making it stand out from the rest. The oldest building of the facility dates from 1332, making it one of the oldest log houses in Sweden (Hotell Siljanstrand, 2019).

3.3. Method

As stated in chapter 3.1 the method used in this study have been a discourse analysis. The data being examined consisted of online reviews written by former guests to the hotels in Tällberg presented in the previous section of this chapter. In this section the research process and the rationale of the method choices are presented.

3.3.1. Online reviews

Online social platforms have become an important source of information for both travellers and companies in the tourism industry (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016; Huete-Alcocer, 2017). Former and potential guests often visit these platforms, both to share information in the forms of reviews and comments and to gather information ahead of a potential trip (Mkono & Tribe, 2017).

The use of online tools, such as websites, blogs and social media platforms, to share one's opinion about products and services is and have been growing rapidly in the last few years (Huete-Alcocer, 2017). In academic literature this sharing of opinions online has been called Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Yang, 2017). The easy accessibility to eWOM via online platforms have quickly made it the most influential source of information gathering for most consumers (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016; Zhang, Wu, & Mattila, 2016). It has also led to an increased academic interest in these platforms, as they become huge databases of information that most often is accessible for academics to access and study (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016; Yang, 2017; Zhang et.al., 2016).

3.3.2. TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor is one such online platform. Today, TripAdvisor is the biggest travel website in the world (TripAdvisor, 2019). The website consists of over 795 million user generated reviews and has more than 490 million unique visitors monthly (TripAdvisor, 2019). TripAdvisor have been used in an increasing number of tourism studies in the recent years (Holder & Ruhanen, 2017). The main reason for this being that it is the largest existing travel community and the fact that all the reviews and opinions posted on the website by visitors is publicly available. Making the platform the by far biggest available database. Due to the widespread of use of the website, both academic literature and by reviewers (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016) as well as the general public knowledge it (TripAdvisor, 2019), TripAdvisor was chosen as the source of reviews for this study.

There are important things to be aware of when using publicly available reviewing platform such as TripAdvisor. Many of these platforms, including TripAdvisor is designed to show the most reviewed and the highest rated alternatives on top of the lists of available alternatives on a destination. As most visitors do not read through all available alternative they tend to make their choice from the alternatives presented at the top of the list (Jepsen, 2007). This gives hotel owners and other stakeholder an incitement to manipulate the ranking. There are a few different ways this can be achieved. One way is by posting false top-rated reviews for their own establishment. Another is to bribe guests to give the establishment a top rating (Choi

et.al., 2017). Yet another, somewhat less occurring, but still existent phenomenon is that users on reviewing platforms get compensation from business managers to write negative reviews about competing businesses (Choi et.al., 2017). By doing this they can make sure that their hotel is rated higher than their competitors, thus being presented higher up in the list of search results and being perceived as a more attractive alternative by potential guests looking for a place to stay in the destination during a visit.

TripAdvisor makes it clear that they initiate an investigation if they suspect that ratings are being manipulated or that misleading reviews have been posted (TripAdvisor, 2018b). If they find something have been manipulated, they delete the misleading information and correct the ratings (TripAdvisor, 2018b). If a company have been found guilty of exploiting or manipulating the system TripAdvisor posts a warning symbol next to the name of the company and the company receives a ranking penalty in the search results on the site (TripAdvisor, 2018a). They do however not remove the company from the website or exclude the it from search results.

3.3.3. Sampling

The reviews were purposely sampled based on two criteria; (1) The reviews are written in Swedish or English. Those being the languages the researcher has an advanced understanding of. (2) the reviews are written in the timeframe between January 2011 and May 2019. This timeframe was chosen because all the hotels included in the study had reviews on the TripAdvisor from 2011. While a couple of the hotels had reviews older than this, one dating as far back as 2006, these reviews were few and far in-between. Thus, these were excluded as they might not fully represent the current situation in Tällberg.

As of the time of the data collection there were a total of 976 reviews in Swedish (820) and English (156) of the hotels included in this study on TripAdvisor. The length of the reviews varied, with the shortest being around 25 words and the longest up to around 700 words.

3.3.4. Data collection and analysis

As mentioned in chapter 3.1 the method for data collection and analysis for this thesis was originally intended to be a content analysis. Thus, the initial analysis process started as a content analysis. This initial approach was largely based on how the likes of Wong et.al. (2015) and Ettinger et.al. (2018) suggested CSR is performed in the hospitality sector. However, when very little of what they are saying could be found in the source material for this study, and with the realisation that source material needed to be approached from another angle a slight rework of the theoretical framework set up in the literature review as well as the inclusion of new literature in the discussion and analysis chapter to guide the discussion was needed. With an adjusted theoretical approach and another methodological starting point as mentioned in chapters 3.1, I restarted collecting and analysing the data. The reviews were collected on 6 May 2019. All reviews were copied and put into six different word documents, one for each hotel included in the study. The reviews were numbered so it would be easier to keep track of them in the analysis process. The data was first analysed using thematic analysis. In thematic analysis the goal is to identify themes, patterns or concepts within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). In this case the goal of the thematic analysis was to find themes related to the social responsibility being performed by the hotels. Themes are presented in detail in chapter 4.

The themes identified in the data were further analysed using discursive psychology. Discursive psychology is not a method in itself, but rather a philosophical approach on how to view knowledge and reality through the use of language. The word discourse is derived from the Latin word *discursus*, which translate into something like making an argument. However, it has little to do with the English word argue as in fighting, instead, it translates to the aspect of *argument* that is the exchanging of ideas or viewpoints (Wetherell & Potter, 1988). The discourse analysis was thus used to understand what the themes found in the data actually meant in regard to social responsibility. This process is described in more detail in section 3.4.2 and the main findings and how they have been interpreted is presented in chapter 4. Analysis and discussion.

3.4. Methodology

3.4.1. Social constructionism and discourse analysis

Most discursive methodologies are derived from a social constructionism orientation towards knowledge (White, 2004). So is this study. Social constructionism builds on the philosophical assumption that there can be multiple legitimate views of the world. For the purposes of this study, this implies that the text being analysed is open to multiple readings and that the reading of it being presented in this thesis is just one of many possible interpretations of the texts. Meaning that the interpretation made from the analysis of the data in this thesis is not an objective truth, but rather the interpretation of a socially constructed reality.

A central idea in discourse methodology is that words are not always descriptive, yet they still can hold meaning (Fairclough, 1992). Therefore, it is not always the words being spoken or written that matters in themselves, but rather the language that is used to communicate these words (Fairclough, 1992; Wetherell & Potter, 1988; White, 2004). One of the early philosophers discussing discourses Austin (1975), in his book *How to do things with words* from 1955, put forward the idea that many speech acts are not describing something, but rather they are doing something. Thus, according to this view the way language is used influences the way social phenomenon are perceived.

3.4.2. Discursive psychology

To perform a discourse analysis, it is important to clarify what one considers a discourse to be. There exist multiple interpretations of the term discourse and what it implies. As stated in section 3.3.4. this study uses discursive psychology to analyse the themes related to social responsibility in SME hotels. The way discourses are perceived in discursive psychology builds upon four pillars that determines what a discourse is: 1. Discourse is action oriented. 2. Discourse is situated. 3. Discourse is both constructed and constructive. 4. Discourse is produced as psychological (Potter, 2012). The main purpose of discursive psychology is to identify different interpretative repertoires used to build social actions (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The term interpretative repertoire can be described as a collection of idioms, terms

and categories that are conceptually tied together, usually around a metaphor or mental image of something (Potter, 2012). This is the framework that has guided the analysis of the data in this study.

3.4.3. The issue with multiple languages

The fact that the data collected for this study consists of reviews in two different languages is an important matter to discuss. Especially how it may have affected the interpretations and connotations of words and phrases. Different cultures, and thus, languages have different interpretative repertoires (Wetherell & Potter, 1988). The same way a word can have different connotations for different persons, similar words can have different, or additional meanings in different languages. While this study is written in English, most of the reviews that have been analysed is in Swedish. One way to overcome the potential problems this may cause would have been to translate all the reviews to English before analysing them. However, in translating the reviews significant parts of the discourse risked getting lost in translation. Although the finds relevant to the research question still needed to be translated to be presented in this thesis it was considered preferable to do the translation in this stage. Making the translation when writing the report instead of before analysing the discourses in the reviews gives the researcher the opportunity to explain certain connotations and underlying meanings of words and phrases. Something that would have been much harder to do if all the reviews had been translated before analysing the discourses. In support of this, Fairclough (1992) argues that when researching discourses, text should always be analysed in its original language. He states that: "*discourse analysis papers should reproduce and analyse textual samples in the original language, despite the added difficulty for the readers*" (Fairclough, 1992. p. 196). However, since the findings still needs to be translated to be put in this thesis it is important to note that the process of translations mean that the meaning is being reproduced (Castro-Sotomayor, 2019; Fairclough, 1992), thus, the interpretation of the translator will slightly alter the meaning. Related to this is the dual role of the author as researcher and translator. Zhu, Duncan, & Tucker (2019) argues that researcher successfully can take on the double role of researcher and translator because of the in-depth understanding of the subject they study acquired before the translation process. However, they note that it is of

highest importance to be as transparent as possible and not misrepresent the material and/or person being translated (Zhu et.al., 2019).

3.5. Study inclusion in the literature review

As mentioned in chapter 2.4, and influenced by the social constructionism approach in this thesis, the view of CSR as a multifaceted and socially constructed concept that only exist in the form that people believe it to exist, given by Orlitzky et.al. (2011), and the mainstream discourse on the concept are not entirely the same. Instead of problematising the concept its meaning has most often been assumed (Coles et.al., 2013). The lack of epistemological nuances regarding the concept in tourism studies specifically (Coles et.al., 2013; Lynes & Andrachuk, 2008) only further problematises how the concept should be presented in a review of this nature.

Yet, as both CSR as a socially constructed concept and the mainstream discourse is important for the research problem of this study it made it a challenge to decide how much space to give each perspective. However, since most tourism literature, while stating that CSR is a complex concept, still assumes the mainstream perception of the concept, this is the perspective that is presented first and is given more space in both the introduction chapter and the literature review in chapter 2.

3.6. Ethical considerations

Reviews posted on TripAdvisor are all written by users who agree for their texts, often containing some personal information and personal experiences, to be displayed on TripAdvisor. TripAdvisor is an open source website, meaning that all the user generated content on the website is available publicly.

All the sampled data for this study was collected from TripAdvisor without the review authors consent. The collecting of data from public websites can be equated to sampling data from newspapers and popular magazines in regards to permission and ownership (Scheyvens, 2002). It is, however, not entirely clear if this also applies to user generated content on websites. Consequently, while it is the customary course of action in research to not ask for permission when sampling this

type of user generated content, it can be considered a grey area. Therefore, as a precaution, all names mentioned in the quotes from the reviews included in this thesis have been anonymised.

In this chapter I set out to describe the methodological approach to this study, as well as explain the method used to explore the research problem. The chapter started by describing how the intended method had to change with the realisation that social responsibility in the SME hotel sector did not work the way previous literature had led me to think. Then the rationale of the method choices was explained based on the methodological approach of social constructionism. The study context, Tällberg was described in more detail. The chapter finishes by discussing the main ethical considerations of this thesis.

4. Analysis and discussion

In this chapter the results of this study are discussed in comparison to the research question. Each theme identified in the analysis (see chapter 3.3.5) have been given its own subchapter. The conceptual framework presented in chapter 2 is used to guide the guide the discussion. However, due to the complexity of the identified themes new theoretical knowledge related to the themes have been adapted to be able to explore the themes in depth.

4.1. CSR vs. SME-social responsibility

The five different aspects Wong et.al. (2015) suggest Corporate social responsibility exist of in the hotel sector: community, policy, mission and vision, workforce, and environment, mentioned in chapter 2.2, cannot fully be found in the social responsibility that is being performed by Small and medium sized enterprises in the same sector based on the findings of this study. Some aspects do however resemble each other. The Community aspect Wong et.al. (2015) talks about is as important, if not more for social responsibility work by small SME's than for larger hotel groups. This is not very surprising as the SME's have bigger incentives to foster good relations in their immediate surroundings due to the fact that they are more dependent on its support to be able to run their business (Mzembe et.al., 2019; Stoian & Gilman, 2017). The owners of SME's are often themselves part of the local community and have personal relations with other businesses, the local population and maybe the local authorities (Mzembe et.al., 2019). The relations with the place and the people often lead to a strong local proudness, thus, making them more likely to promote the local culture and tradition (Floričić, 2016). Something that is apparent in the reviews being analysed in this study, in which it is apparent that all the hotels included works hard to do. This aspect is discussed more in depth in section 4.2.3.

4.1.1. Responsibility in the commercial or social domain?

As Brotherton & Wood (in Lashley & Morrison, 2010) states, the creation and maintaining of social relationships is at the very centre of the social domain of hospitality, and that it is in the host-guest relationship that most of the social responsibility happen. This could be found in many of the reviews sampled for this study.

The hardest thing analysing the discourses connected to this aspect was to distinguish between when the hosts are just being highly service minded and effective in the creation of the hospitality product and when they performed actual social responsibility. Often the two things were undistinguishable, and no clear-cut line could be drawn. The fact that it often was impossible to separate the two illustrates and strengthens Benmore's (2010) argument that small hotels operate in the space of co-existence between a social and commercial host-guest relationship. An example of this:

Quote 1.

The staff were not only efficient and friendly, but also gave the impression that you were a family guest.

In this quote both the commensal domain and the social domain of responsibility are showcased simultaneously. The use of the word *efficient* implies that the staff have lived up to the guest's expectations as a customer thus that part of the quote is mostly in the commercial domain. As the word *friendly* is connected to the word *efficient* by the conjunction word *and*, it too, in this case, seems to be connected to the commercial domain. However, then the guest goes on to say that they got the impression that they were a family guest. By the definitions of hospitality and the host-guest relationship by Lashley & Morrison (2010) and Benmore (2010), this part of the quote is well within the social domain of responsibility. So, in this, just one-sentence long quote, the social and the commercial domains of responsibility are clearly overlapping. Another, less obvious, yet exemplary quote is:

Quote 2.

The staff are wonderful – friendly, competent and helpful

The word *competent* in this sense is referring to their abilities in their professions as hotel staff, and yet again the conjunction word *and*, thus links the *helpfulness* to the commercial domain of responsibility. Although, the way the first part of the quote is formulated “*The staff are wonderful -...*” suggests that this guest have received values that exceeds what can be expected from a purely commercial domain of responsibility. Unlike in the first quote, it is impossible to understand exactly how the social aspect of responsibility have been performed. However, later in the same review the author talks about how the hotel and the staff helped introduced them to the local culture, implying that it might be the aspect of social responsibility being transferred. This aspect of the review will be further analysed and discussed in chapter 4.2.3 were the role of the hosts as advocates, mediating and sharing the local culture and heritage as part of cultural identity, as implied by Benmore (2010) are discussed.

These examples, along with many others found in the data analysis demonstrates that the performance of social responsibility is an important aspect of the responsibility work by hotel SME as suggested by Benmore (2010), Stoian & Gilman (2017) and Sheringham and Daruwalla in Lashley, Lynch, & Morrison (2007).

4.2. Social responsibility in the host-guest relationship in SMEs

To understand what differentiates smaller hotels from their bigger counterparts, that are most often part of a corporate hotel chain, it is important to explain how the host-guest relationship impacts each business. Lashley & Morrison (2010) notes that the weaker host-guest relationship together with the anonymity big hotels provides for the guests can be one of the things that makes them attractive for certain people. The commercial domain of hospitality gives the customer a freedom of action that would be unimaginable to demand in a more intimate relationship in the more social domain of hospitality (Benmore, 2010; Lashley et.al., 2007; Lashley & Morrison, 2010). Smaller hotels, while still being in the commercial domain, operate to a larger

extent than their bigger counterparts in the social domain of hospitality (Lashley & Morrison, 2010). Brotherton & Wood (in Lashley & Morrison, 2010) remark that the creation and maintaining of social relationships is at the very centre of the social domain of hospitality. In this creation of social relationships, Benmore (2010) suggest that for small hotels the mediation and sharing of the local culture through for example local traditions or local food can have an important role. The mediation of social values and culture this way can help the establishing of trust between the guest and the host making their relationship deeper and more meaningful (Lashley & Morrison, 2010). It is also in line with how Stoian & Gilman (2017) suggest social responsibility should be performed by SMEs.

Since the guests reviewing their stay are recounting their experiences and opinions, they will, in most cases, not explicitly write about social responsibility. However, in many of the retellings of interaction with the hotel owners and staff something deeper and more meaningful than just the interaction between a buyer and a seller could be distinguished. Many of the guests created social bonds with their hosts. One of the most distinguishable things indicating this social bonding is that in quite a few of the reviews the guests mentions individuals from the staff by name.

Quote 3.

“Special mention must be made of the restaurant manager, Sara, who went out of her way to help prepare a cake at relatively short notice (despite being one of the busiest times of the year for the hotel).”

Quote 4.

“Anna and all of the staff made this one of the most delightful experiences we’ve ever had in any country.”

Anna in this case being the hotel manager.

The guests referring to the staff using personal names implicitly indicates that a social bond has formed between them. Using the framework on host-guest relationship in hotel management by Benmore (2010), this demonstrate an important step in the visitors transformation from customer to guest. Moreover, it also

transforms the staff from being service personnel whose only task it is to satisfy the visitor's wants and needs to instead take on the role of hosts.

4.2.1. Hospitality

Hospitality was an important and interesting theme found in the analysed reviews. While chapter 2.6.1 briefly mentions the concept when describing the differences between guest and customer the following section will explain the concept in more detail.

Hospitality is the central aspect of the host-guest relationship (Benmore, 2010). Yet, while being a central aspect the term hospitality is also a term that is remarkably hard to define. Selwyn in Lashley & Morrison (2010) defines hospitality as a “...*symbolic interaction and the making of friends out of strangers*” (pp. 27). Selwyn, thus, takes a strong anthropological viewpoint on hospitality. Ritzer (in Lashley et.al., 2007) rejects the these anthropological view on hospitality in commercial hospitality management. He states that “...*commercial hospitality is inhospitable because hospitable behaviour is being provided for ulterior motives to gain commercial advantage.*” (pp. 129).

Sheringham and Daruwalla in Lashley, Lynch, & Morrison (2007) gives this definition of hospitality ‘[hospitality is]...*a negotiated interaction between host and guest and is ...not an act of unconditional giving*’ (pp. 34). Another quite similar, yet slightly different, definition of the term comes from Guerrier and Adib (in Lashley & Morrison, 2010), they define hospitality as “...*a series of complex negotiations between guests and service providers about what is and what is not acceptable behaviour...*” (pp. 266). Sheringham and Daruwalla (in Lashley et.al., 2007) do not entirely dismiss Selwyn's anthropological explanation, however, they do point out that the anthropological perspective on hospitality, given by Selwyn, often comes in conflict with commercial expediency. They do, nonetheless, not reject the transformative perspective on hospitality. Rather, they highlight the possible tensions that can arise between transformation and transaction in hospitality management, and the fragile nature of the host-guest relationship. They, as well as Tucker (in Roberts, Hall, Morag, Roberts, & Ioannides, 2017), suggest that the

social aspect of the host-guest relationship can co-exist with a commercial aspect. And thus, be both a transformation and a transaction simultaneously. It is in this space of co-existence between a social and commercial host-guest relationship that most small hotels operate (Benmore, 2010).

As this chapter has shown, hospitality in commercial hospitality management is most often seen by some as just a part of the product being bought by a customer in a transaction of money. This being said, a circumstance that resembles ‘real’ hospitality, as described by Selwyn (in Lashley & Morrison, 2010) can still exist in commensal hotels, just as well as it can be absent in SME hotels (Benmore, 2010).

4.2.2. The host as a gatekeeper

Unless the host actively makes the effort to offer hospitality and not only provide service the host-guest relationship mentioned by Benmore (2010) cannot form. Only by offering hospitality, socialisation can happen. The host is the cultural broker and act as the gatekeeper to the local community and its traditions and culture. In this metaphor the host opens the gate by forming a relation with the guest. One of the most illustrative examples of found in the reviews is:

Quote 5.

“I chose this hotel to experience the Swedish midsummer celebration and I was fully relished by the experience they provide. The key to me was to be part of the activities as close as possible and this family owned hotel does a marvelous job at sharing their roots. The hotel offers a midsummer package that includes activities such as flower picking, maypole decoration, lifting, and dancing around the pole. Throughout the activities they explain the meaning and the traditions.”

In this quote, the author even talks about a key to be able to take part in the local traditions. The metaphorical key this person is talking about fits perfectly into the metaphor of the host as the gatekeeper opening the gate to the local community with its culture and traditions.

4.2.3. Traditions, heritage and identity

As alluded to in the previous chapters of this analysis the local community and its tradition and the cultural heritage of Tällberg seem to play a big role in the creation of social responsibility. It is also in line with Benmore's (2010) conclusion that the mediating and sharing of local culture is an important factor in the creation of social relationships in small hotels. Two of the things Benmore suggest a host can use to do this is food and local traditions such as symbols or celebrations. Both those things featured frequently in the reviews collected. One review titled "Iconic Swedish experience" mentions many of the most famous local symbols (described in chapter 3.2 and its subsections):

Quote 6.

Akerblads is a many generational family hotel dating back to the middle ages. It is in the Dalarna region where the Dala horses, symbols of Sweden, are manufactured. The red wooden buildings throughout this heritage region establish a unique ambience before you even reach the modest approach to the hotel

This quote from the showcases the use of symbolism to get the visitor invested in the place. It shows that Åkerblads Hotel och Gästgiveri have been successful in their framing of local culture mentioned in section 3.2.3 The reviewer talks about a *unique ambience*, according to Benmore (2010) this unique ambience puts the guest in a mindset that makes the creation of social relationships easier.

As mentioned in chapter 4.1.1. local traditions and heritage play a key role in the socialisation process. Carter & Jones-Evans (2009) argues that the preserving and re-enacting of local heritage and culture is essential to a place's cultural identity. By this reasoning, the identity is closely connected to both place and people. It is because of the people that lives and have lived in Tällberg that the cultural identity of the place exists. The importance of cultural identity is not limited to SMEs; identity can still be important for bigger hotels. However, since SME hotels often have a closer connection to the local community (Coles et.al., 2013; Stoian &

Gilman, 2017) identity usually play a bigger role for SMEs (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2009). In Tällberg the cultural identity is very strong, as have been described in chapter 3.2. The importance of cultural identity is further reinforced by the findings in this study. The following quotes from the collected reviews are just some of the examples of how important the cultural identity is:

Quote 7

This hotel oozes tradition, with its wooden buildings and friendly staff dressed in folk costumes.

Quote 8

What a warm welcome we received in this wonderful hotel. The local artists Anders Zorn, Anders Stahl and Carl Larsson have painted breathtaking scenes of this beautiful area but mere human effort is insufficient to portray the beauty of the views across Siljan from this magical place.

Quote 9

Old country style, traditional good food, fireplaces and staff in folk costumes.

Quote 10

Celebrating midsummer in Tällberg in Dalarna is as authentic as it gets

These quotes showcase how identity is embedded in both place and people, both tangibly and intangibly. The tangible aspects, such as the folk costumes, buildings, food and paintings mentioned in these quotes as well as the intangible aspects of the culture, represented in the examples by the way quote 10 describes midsummer celebrations and how quote 7 describes the place as oozing of tradition both help create a mental image of what or who Tällberg is, giving the place its cultural identity. Quote 8 illustrates how the actual landscapes itself both influence and is influenced by the cultural identity, even describing it as something magical.

Socialisation and transformation

It is necessary to understand the importance of cultural identity to be able to discuss socialisation. Socialisation is the process of a person moving from being a stranger, being something alien and threatening to the cultural identity of place and people, to becoming something known and accepted. In other words learning to adjust to a group by behaving in a manner that is socially accepted by the group (Mayer, 2004). With the hosts acting as gatekeepers, described in section 4.2.2, they become the mediators, acting as cultural brokers, allowing access to the local culture and as an extension the opportunity for socialisation to happen. It is this socialisation process that Tucker (in Roberts, Hall, Morag, Roberts, & Ioannides, 2017) can lead to personal transformation. While this transformation is hard to pinpoint in the reviews it can sometimes be spotted in the reviews.

Quote 11.

The hotel has many rooms on the main level where you can sit and visit or quietly read a book. There is a large deck, however it was too cold during our early May visit to enjoy a coffee or wine outside. The people working at the hotel were true professionals and interesting to chat with. The owner was charming and engaging! We typically stay in large cities and large hotels so this was a new experience for us.....and one the we plan to repeat.

In this quote the very stay at a small rural hotel can be interpreted as a transformative experience. The fact that the author explicitly states that they want to repeat this new experience implies that the experience indeed has been transformative at some level. The first sentence of the quote suggests that the hotel itself and the atmosphere within it brings a form of peacefulness to this person. Furthermore, the interesting chats with the people working in the hotel combined with the way they describe their interactions with the owner suggests that socialisation and sharing of ideas have contributed to how they view small rural hotels thus allowing the reviewer to go through a transformation.

Another thing this way of viewing cultural identity implies is that the social and the environmental aspect of CSR and SR cannot be entirely separated. This contradicts many of the of the studies on CSR brought up in chapter 2. For example, the claim by Wong et.al. (2015) that CSR consists of five different aspects: community, policy, mission and vision, workforce, and environment, and that the environmental aspect should be given priority over the others. If there exist a cultural identity that is embedded in both place and people, it means that all these aspects are interconnected with each other and such a simple distinction that Wong et.al. (2015) makes is not possible. And the suggestion from some to replace the social in the term CSR with environmental (Carbone, Moatti, & Vinzi, 2012) would be impossible as that suggests that they are separate, a view that is incompatible with the idea of cultural identity. It implies that CSR or for that matter social responsibility are concepts that are far more complex and deeper than commonly suggested (see chapter 2.1).

4.3. Monologic vs. Dialogic responsibility

Based on previous literature on CSR it was assumed that the discussion on the social responsibility would be mostly monologic. In most literature it is indeed presented as monologic, with the company as the sender of a social responsibility message and the guest or potential guest as the receiver of that message (Ettinger et.al., 2018; Levy & Duverger, 2010; Moiescu, 2015; Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2014). However, the idea that social responsibility is something created in the interaction between two persons (Benmore, 2010) indicates that the social responsibility in SMEs in the hotel sector is created in the interaction between the host and the guest and is therefore more dialogic than initially thought. While Benmore (2010) does not explicitly use the word dialogic her entire thesis builds on the idea that social responsibility in the hospitality sector can be, and often is dialogic. The findings in this study supports Benmore's (2010) idea. If the social responsibility is mainly created in social interactions as the analysis of the reviews from the guests indicates, it means that the social responsibility indeed is mostly dialogic.

The dialogic aspect of social responsibility seems to far more important for the guests than the monologic. Very few reviews mention the things you would expect to find based on the literature on monologic social responsibility. With the initial approach this study had with a content analysis based on this literature (see chapter 4.1), including Ettinger et.al. (2018) and Wong et.al. (2015) among others, the expectation was to find a lot of monologic communication of CSR. Yet, with the finding that small hotels mainly operate in a space between the social and commercial domain of social responsibility as also suggested by Benmore (2010) and informed by Tucker (in Roberts, Hall, Morag, Roberts, & Ioannides, 2017) and Sheringham and Daruwalla (in Lashley et.al., 2007) in their definitions of hospitality, it makes sense that the social responsibility being created in small hotels would be more dialogic than monologic.

From the guests point of view, another, uncontradictory, explanation could be that they expect to be less exposed to monologic social responsibility communication when visiting a smaller nonaligned hotel than when they are visiting bigger corporately own hotels as implied by Stoian & Gilman (2017) and Lashley & Morrison (2010). Therefore, they may not find it important to mention the presence or lack of monologic social responsibility communication. If they arrive to the hotel expecting a familiar environment and a more personal experience, that is presumably what they will write about in their review. However, without knowing what expectations the guests had prior to their visit no concrete conclusions can be drawn. And while a few reviewers actually do share what expectations they had before arriving, most of them do not. A few writes expressions like “*I had higher expectations!*”, without specifying these expectations.

This chapter set out to analyse and discuss the data collected for this study. It has focused on the main themes related to SME hotel social responsibility found in the analysis of the collected data. Those themes being: Commercial vs. social domain of social responsibility; Host-guest relationship, including hospitality, the host’s role as a gatekeeper and tradition, heritage and identity; and social responsibility as something dialogical. In the following chapter the main conclusions from this study

as they relate to the research problem established in the introduction chapter is presented. It also remarks the limitations of this study as well as gives suggestions for future research related to the results of this study.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter the main conclusions that can be drawn from this study's analysis is summarised. The conclusions aim to be linked to the research problem and research aim of the thesis. This chapter also highlights some of the limitations of the study as well as gives suggestions for future research based on the findings and discussion of this thesis.

This study set out to provide a deeper understanding of how social responsibility is being performed by SMEs in the hospitality sector by interpreting the experiences of former guests in small, privately owned and operated hotels in the destination of Tällberg, Sweden.

To research this aim the following research question was formulated:

- Based on the retelling of 'experiences' from former customers how do SMEs in the hospitality sector perform social responsibility?

While many small hotels are similar, they are all unique, and thus, guests will have different expectations on each hotel, and the hotels have varying capabilities to take social responsibility action, meaning that a one-size fits all approach to social responsibility is not suitable (Orlitzky et.al., 2011). However, the analysis of the reviews included in this study indicates that in these hotels social responsibility is something that is created when the guests interacts with their hosts. And even more so if the host and guest manage to form a personal relationship. For the guests visiting these SMEs, this aspect of social responsibility seems to be far more important than the aspects put forward by Wong et.al. (2015). This suggests that the social responsibility being performed in SMEs as well as the guest's expectations on social responsibility in SMEs is distinctly different from the common definition of CSR. The findings also supports the notion put forward by Sheringham and Daruwalla (in Lashley et.al., 2007) and Tucker (in Roberts, Hall, Morag, Roberts, & Ioannides, 2017) that a commercial and a social aspect of hospitality can coexist.

For some guests that invest a lot in the personal relationship the social responsibility being performed by the host seems to be able to lead to a transformative experience through socialisation. This especially seem to happen in the cases where the host acts as a cultural broker, allowing the guests access to the local community and by doing so facilitating this socialisation. Giving the guest the opportunity to truly connect with a community and place with a cultural identity they otherwise would have a hard time connecting with.

These findings indicate that the notion most SMEs have of hospitality links into social responsibility without them realising it. However, the way the term CSR unproblematically is applied across scales (Mzembe et.al., 2019; Stoian & Gilman, 2017) makes many SMEs think they need to act a certain way to take responsibility, often by copying the policies and actions of their bigger counterparts (Coles et.al., 2013). This is problematic as when they do so, they risk losing aspects of the ‘real’ social responsibility many of them already do, by offering something that is close to true hospitality and as close to a true host-guest relationship that is possible in relationship that still involves the exchange of money for a service.

To summarise the conclusions and try to give an answer to the research question formulated for this study: SMEs in the hotel sector perform ‘true’ social responsibility without realising it by allowing their visitors to transform from customers to as close as true guests as possible. This is being done through a socialisation process in which they (the hosts) acts as a cultural broker allowing the visitor access to the cultural identity embedded in the place. However, the unreflective conflation of knowledge across scales regarding social responsibility and the term Corporate social responsibility (Mzembe et.al., 2019; Stoian & Gilman, 2017) risk disrupting this performance, as it makes SME hotel owners and managers act counterproductively to this. Thus, this thesis suggests that the very use of the term CSR when talking about SMEs in the hotel sector is problematic.

5.1. Limitations

Some of this thesis limitations such as the issue of having data in multiple languages and the considerations that the researcher acting in the role of translator and

researcher simultaneously have been put forward in chapter 3. Method and methodology. However, there are other limiting factors as well. The themes found in this study deserves to be explored in more depth than a thesis of this extent allows for. While this thesis has tried to explore how hospitality and the admission to access the cultural identity of a place can lead to socialisation and transformation, these themes are far too complex to fully explore how these concepts are connected to social responsibility.

5.2. Suggestions for future research

While it has contributed the understanding of social responsibility performed by SME hotels, this study has only scratched the surface regarding how social responsibility is being performed by SMEs. This study chose to examine this subject from the perspective of former guests. To broaden the understanding of the subject it needs to be examined from other perspectives as well. The hotel owners and hotel staff are on the other side of the host-guest relationship thus their understanding of social responsibility is one interesting aspect to examine. Another approach could be to examine how the local population views the socialisation process the hotels allows to happen. Furthermore, it needs to be examined how the conflation of knowledge across scales regarding social responsibility and the term Corporate social responsibility affects other sectors than Hotel SMEs.

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