The Hague University

International Communication Management

Bachelor Thesis

The utilization of *iFeedback®* in the German hospitality industry

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Isabel Nitsche   The Hague, the Netherlands, November 17th, 2014

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that the final paper entitled *"The Utilization of iFeedback® in the German* hospitality industry" has been carried out in the Faculty of International Communication Management and European Studies, The Hague University of Applied Sciences, The Hague, under the guidance of Mirad Boehm.

The work is original and has been submitted in full by me and not for any degree or diploma at any other university. I am aware of the University's regulations concerning plagiarism, including those regulations concerning disciplinary actions that may result from plagiarism. I further declare that the material obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged in the paper.

Isabel Nitsche   The Hague, the Netherlands, November 17th, 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BHM Media Solution GmbH (BHMMS), an innovative media and IT service company, designs and markets web-based software solutions with the focus on new media and telecommunications. Its primary distributed product constitutes the application iFeedback®, a digital questionnaire, which is created to send customer feedback to the manager in charge in real-time. The most successful employment of the application is detected in the hospitality industry. Consequently, BHMMS has given the assignment to carry out research concerning guests' attitude and behavior in regards to iFeedback®, in order to design a successful communication strategy within the German hospitality industry, with particular focus on the target group of German business guests.

For that matter, the goal of this research report was to determine the barrier that prevents business guests from using iFeedback®, as well as to ascertain and communicate a benefit that triggers their desire to give feedback. Therefore, desk and field research was conducted with the objective of devising a communication strategy that offered BHMMS's solutions on how to attract business guests, as well as on how to induce a lasting behavior change.

On the basis of desk research, the company and its environment were examined and subsequently, the strengths and weaknesses of BHMMS as well as the resulting opportunities and threats were determined. The company's flexibility and independence of investors enables BHMMS to adapt to clients' and end consumers' needs. However, the lack of knowledge of end consumers' needs and wants makes it difficult to reach and connect with this target group effectively. In addition, the highly competitive environment makes it difficult for iFeedback® to stand out.

On account of the Literature Review and the subsequent in-depth interviews, it was ascertained that a combination of traditional, new and social media should be used to communicate iFeedback® to the guest. Moreover, it was gathered that the current approach needs to be optimized. Hence, the communicated benefit on the display material needs to be adjusted, and more explanatory information on iFeedback® as well as facts of conducted changes need to be provided, in order to make the application's usage appealing. However, these changes need to be undertaken by BHMMS as well as its clients.

Consequently, it was recommended to devise a communication strategy particularly for German business guests in the hospitality industry. Important components of this strategy constitute clear targets, explanatory and appealing messages, in order to attract guests, as well as plans to exceed business guests' expectations, by the means of communication.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BHMGRP ……………………. BHM GROUP

BHMMS ……………………. BHM Media Solutions

BHMCO ……………………. BHM & Company

MICE ………………..……… Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions/Events

SWOT ………………………... Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

AIDA …………………………. Attention, Interest, Desire, Action

POP …………………………… point-of-purchase

CHAPTER -1- INTRODUCTION

The final thesis constituted the completing assignment of the ICM program. Carried out during the final placement, this thesis was executed in cooperation with the BHM GROUP in Hamburg, Germany. Therefore, a communication problem of the BHM GROUP was ascertained as research topic, and set out to be analyzed in accordance with the Bridge Model.

1.1. CLIENT BRIEF

The assignment was provided by the customer engagement company BHM GROUP, which operates in the field of telecommunications, new media and IT. Its predominant offered service constitutes the application iFeedback®, which depicts a digital questionnaire that is customized according to the industry the client is operating in. At the moment, iFeedback® is utilized by clients of several industries, such as the medical, retail and hospitality industry. According to BHM GROUP's senior marketing consultant Sebastian Kriegel, the most profitable utilization of iFeedback® is seen in the hospitality industry (S. Kriegel, personal conversation, August 26, 2014). In consequence, it was decided to focus particularly on the hospitality industry in Germany.

1.1.1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The product iFeedback® is already used by several high-class hotels within Germany, however, the predominant problem lies with the end consumer, the hotel guest. Instead of using the product to their advantage, many guests remain inactive. Presumably, this inactiveness is caused by several different factors, or else complaint barriers. These constitute a) lack of knowledge of the product and/or its benefit b) significance of the problem c) no appealing benefit d) QR code is not appealing e) preference of public rating portals. Nonetheless, no in-depth research has been carried out to determine, which barrier constitutes the primary problem. In addition, no research has been conducted in regards to suitable communication strategies to overcome these barriers and make guests active users of iFeedback®. An in-depth illustration of these barriers and their interrelation to the guests' inactiveness can be found in appendix I.

Consequently, all of the previously illustrated challenges constitute serious issues that prevent guests' from giving feedback. Therefore, all of them were taken into consideration during the course of this research.

As a result, the research was based on the following advice question: *How does the option to give feedback influence and (dis)benefit the hotel guest? And in turn how can that benefit be used to engage the guest to give feedback?*

1.1.2. BHM GROUP'S OBJECTIVE

The goal of the BHM GROUP was to make the product iFeedback® a well-known and profitable product in the hospitality industry. Therefore, the primary aim was to raise hotel guests' awareness of the product and subsequently trigger their desire to give feedback to the hotel in question. For that matter, BHM GROUP's objective was devised in reference to the SMART criteria: The company aims to attract and engage inactive business guests to use iFeedback®, and hence raise the usage rate by 10 percent in all its three-to-five star hotels between the 01st of December 2014 and 31st November 2015. However, as the BHM GROUP does not have an extensive annual communications budget the recommendations on how to realize this objective predominantly contained a low-budget solution.

1.2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research was to raise the end consumers' awareness of the product iFeedback® and to design a communication strategy that makes them active users of the application by:

1. Understanding the key characteristics and benefits of using iFeedback®
2. Understanding the needs, wants and habits of the hotel guests
3. Understanding what triggers behavior change
4. Understanding which communication channels and promotional tools are most effective to raise awareness of the iFeedback® application

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Central Research Question

Considering the communication needs, wants and habits of the end user of iFeedback®, which communication tool is suitable to communicate the benefits of iFeedback® that subsequently motivates inactive end users to become active?

Sub-Questions

General Sub-Questions

1. How is the product iFeedback® currently communicated to the target group?
2. How does the option to give a feedback influence and (dis)benefit a hotel guest?
3. How do you induce a behavior change?

4. What are the current trends and developments in the hotel industry?

5. Who are the strongest competitors of iFeedback® and how do they position their product?

Hotel Guests' Sub-Questions

1. What are the (communication) needs, wants and habits of hotel guests?

2. What does the target group, who is completely unfamiliar with the iFeedback® concept, associate with the product/brand?

3. What does the target group, who knows iFeedback® and already gave a feedback, associate with the product?

4. Does an immediate reaction to the feedback change a hotel guest's behavior? If so, how?

5. In what way can iFeedback® help satisfy the needs and wants of the target group?

6. Does the product iFeedback® need to be modified for the target group? And if so, in what way?

7. Does the appertaining display material need to be modified for the target group? And if so, in what way?

1.5. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The first chapter focused on a brief introduction to the company BHM GROUP and the detected communication problem, which was illustrated in the problem statement. Thereupon, the company's objective and the research scope were demonstrated. Subsequently, the theoretical framework as well as the devised research objective, research questions and the selected research methods were stated. The ensuing 2nd Chapter will comprise the Situation Analysis of the BHM GROUP, which concentrates on the evaluation of the company's micro, macro and meso environment. The 3rd Chapter will present the Literature Review, which will examine relevant literature based on the findings of the previous chapter, and will further provide important insights. The 4th Chapter constitutes the preparation to the in-depth research and will consist of a research methodology that was based on the ascertained knowledge gap. Chapter 5 then covers the findings of the in-depth research, which is followed by a conclusion in Chapter 6. On account of these findings, the 7th and last Chapter will present the recommendations, and therefore the devised communication strategy.

CHAPTER -2- SITUATION ANALYSIS

2.1. MICRO ENVIRONMENT

2.1.1. THE COMPANY

The company BHM GROUP was founded in 2010 by the entrepreneurs Alexander Bauer, Tobias Hiddeman and Stefan E. Muth. The GROUP's headquarter is located in Hamburg, Germany and is operated by a workforce of ten employees. As the GROUP represents a holding company, its primary function is based on the management of its two subsidiaries, namely the BHM & Company (BHMCO) and the BHM Media Solutions GmbH (BHMMS). Since the product iFeedback® is designed and marketed by the BHMMS subsidiary, this research exclusively focused on the BHMMS subsidiary.
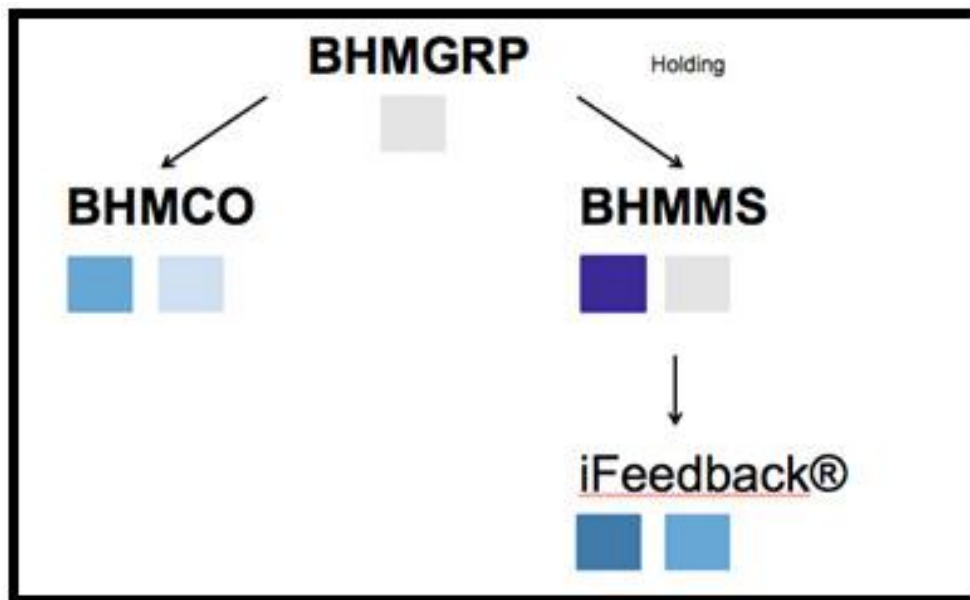
FIGURE 1: BHM GROUP CORPORATE STRUCTURE (KRIEGEL, 2014)

BHMMS's vision is to make (customer) communication profitable for both sides. Following this, the company pursues precisely three strategic communication missions:

1. To become the customer experience and engagement expert
2. To enable all customers and companies to interact with each other
3. To ensure value creation for sender and receiver

(A. Bauer, personal interview, July 18, 2014)

In order to fulfill these missions BHMMS not only markets its application iFeedback®, but also consults personally with clients to design individual communication solutions and to initiate strategic

projects. Nonetheless, the marketing and development of the iFeedback® application constitutes the primary business focus.

2.1.2. THE PRODUCT iFEEDBACK®

Based on the products' values "unique, interactive, fascinating" BHMMS engages its clients to buy the iFeedback® app as well as the appertaining display-material and terminals[1] to actively solicit feedback from their hotel guests. Because, once problems or areas with optimization potential are discovered, clients are enabled to solve these issues immediately on-site[2] and are further in the position to perfect their offerings according to guests' wishes. (S. Kriegel, personal conversation, August 26, 2014).

Since the application iFeedback® is marketed in a business to business context, the marketers line of argumentation during a sales talk predominantly focuses on the clients tangible benefits. This is mainly, because no specific research concerning the end consumer's (tangible/intangible) benefits has been conducted, yet. At this point, the client decides whether his guests receive a tangible benefit, such as a voucher, for the use of iFeedback®. Generally, BHMMS considers these vouchers to be suitable incentives and advises its clients to make use of them once their guests give negative feedback. Apart from that, it is said that the forwarding of the guest feedback to the manager in charge as well as the hotel's immediate reaction to the feedback constitute the greatest added value for the guest (S. Kriegel, personal conversation, August 26, 2014). Nonetheless, it was questionable whether the guest believes that his feedback really reaches the right contact person. Furthermore, depending on the clients' capacities an immediate reaction cannot be guaranteed. Therefore, the concluding question was whether guests' actually believe in the promoted product benefit. However, BHMMS already aims to promote the product further as well as tries to interact with the end consumer by the means of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Nonetheless, there was no significant interaction to report, as it is unclear who is actually reached via these platforms. In addition, further information on the company's client base, marketing strategies and goals can be found in appendix II.

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[1] These constitute iPads that are mounted in a theft-proof stand.
[2] The problem's severity influences how fast the staff reacts to a given feedback. For instance, a guest at the Kameha Grand used iFeedback®, saying 'what a nice room and stylish coffee maker. Unfortunately, I am a tea drinker'. Three hours later, another feedback reached the manager, saying 'thanks for the extraordinary service!' (A. Bauer, personal interview, July 18, 2014). While the guest checked in at the Spa, the staff used its chance to exchange the coffee maker with a tea set. In this way, iFeedback® enabled the client to provide his guest with a surprising service extra.

2.2. MESO ENVIRONMENT

Having analyzed the company itself, the next important step embodied the analysis of the current developments within various public groups. As these groups were directly linked to the company, one was able to look for opportunities to try to influence these developments in favor of BHMMS's goals (Vos, 2003).

2.2.1. STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

The following table lists all stakeholders involved in the company's business and further delivers an insight into their particular interests, their possible influence on the company's image, and on any ongoing developments.

STAKEHOLDER	INTEREST	INFLUENCE
Reseller	- Sign new clients to receive a comission	- High impact: have an influence on how valuable iFeedback is perceived
Clients	- Customized offers - Satisfied guests - Good (online) reputation - No bad reviews online - Realize optimization potential - Cutting costs	- Stand in direct contact to the guest --> ability to promote iFeedback further --> can influence the image of iFeedback - Can use incentives (specials, sweepstakes etc.) to engage guests to use iFeedback
Consumer (Hotel guest)	- Complain about sth. - Be/feel valued - Praise the hotel, because of a great stay/experience - Receive a goodie for one's feedback	- High impact: they determine how profitable/successful iFeedback is for the client --> this determines the clients' satisfaction with the product --> determines whether the clients extends or upgrades the contract with the BHM GROUP - By using iFeedback consumers can influence the quality of their own stay
Internal Employees	- Profit - Positive outcome of BHM GROUP's offers - Good relationships	- Communicate with clients - Have the knowledge/expertise - High influence on success of BHM GROUP, as their good work reflects positively on the company
Partners (Reputami)	- Promotion - Raise awareness - New clients	- High impact: they can influence how valuable the product iFeedback as well as BHMMS's corporate image is perceived
Competitors (Revinate)	- Offer the best product --> dominate the market	- If they continuously provide a better offer, BHMMS could go out of business

TABLE 1: STAKEHOLDER MAP

2.2.2. CONSUMER ANALYSIS

Since the focus of this research was set on the hospitality industry, the consumers of the application iFeedback® were determined to be German business guests of various three-to-five star hotels[3] in Germany. A description on how this target group was determined can be found in the Appendices.

The next key step was grounded on the discovery of the target groups behavioral traits. Starting off, business guests can be segmented in freelancers and employees, who equally appreciate the hotel stars as orientation guide (Deutscher Hotelverband, 2014), and therefore value high quality service. Aged 25 to 45, the business guests' are characterized as smart and technology savvy individuals, who are in the possession of a smartphone, and are hence familiar with the utilization of various applications.

Based on the four business personality types determined by the Houston Chronicle, the targeted business guest is primarily grouped within the dominant and expressive business types (Houston Chronicle, n.d.). Therefore, the former type represents high-energy business leaders, who are defined by their hard-working and straightforward attitude. Particularly, Burton defined these as "a driver type [that] is results-oriented and has a very strong motivation to succeed" (Burton, 2008, p.54). Likewise, the expressive business type is characterized by his high-energy, optimism and competitiveness (Houston Chronicle, n.d.), which makes him a "great marketing professional and even business trainer" (Houston Chronicle, n.d.). Naturally, these business types illustrate leaders, who are not afraid of confrontations and are used to voice their opinion directly. Therefore, it appeared ideal to engage these to use iFeedback®, instead of more introverted business people.

Subsequently, it was of importance to classify guests' stance towards iFeedback®. Until now BHMMS solely distinguishes between active and inactive guests. Concerning guests' activeness, BHMMS determined four objectives that drive current guests to use iFeedback®. These are listed as follows:

- The guest genuinely wants to express his satisfaction in the form of a positive feedback
- The guest wants to communicate his frustration or anger in form of a negative feedback
- The guest gives feedback because he expects a so called 'goodie' in return
- The guest plainly wants to make a suggestion or inform the hotel on something

(S.Kriegel, personal conversation, August 18, 2014).

Consequently, the in-depth interviews discerned whether these objectives also constitute relevant reasons for the inactive business guests.

2.2.3. COMMUNICATION ANALYSIS

The next decisive step was based on the investigation of the current communication tools that were used to target the business guests' and were applied in the promotion of iFeedback®. Therefore, the by the BHMMS utilized communication tools read as follows: website, social media, iFeedback® app, display material, newsletter, sales calls/webinar.

The first communication tool to consider was the product's website (www.ifbck.com). Once a visitor enters this website, the following choices are given: "for businesses", "special guest program[4]" and "give feedback" (iFeedback, 2014). None of these constitutes an appealing option for guests' who want to inform themselves about the product. Even though the last two options are particularly designed for iFeedback® users, both do not offer any explanatory information. Instead, both options solely request the end consumer to take a specific action. The "for businesses" button directs the visitor to a neatly designed homepage with a detailed overview of iFeedback®'s benefits and functioning (iFeedback, 2014). On that account, it appears that the primary intention of the website is the encouragement of clients to buy the product.

The second communication activity to examine was the maintenance of several social media channels. These channels include: Facebook, Google+, Instagram, Twitter, Linkedin and XING. The first three to four channels are used to call the end consumers' as well as clients' attention to the existence of iFeedback®. BHMMS generates one post per week, which comprises a picture and an invitation to use iFeedback®. However, even though BHMMS incorporates incentives like a free dinner to engage consumers to use iFeedback®, the rate of interaction remains low. Consequently, end consumers' are either not interested in these incentives or they are not reached via these platforms.

The third communication tool was based on the iFeedback® application and the appertaining display material. This application presents the connection between the hotelier and the hotel guest, and the connection to BHMMS. However, even though iFeedback® is considered to be the connecting instrument, it does not enable clear two way communication. Although handing out iFeedback® business cards that read "feedback directly to the management" can be interpreted as the hoteliers way of saying "We value your opinion. Please share your feedback with us", the act does not equal a personal invitation. Therefore, it is questionable whether the hotel guest receives the right message through the display material. As a result, the hotel guest is the only one sending a clear message with his feedback. Unfortunately, he does not know whether his feedback has been read or his concerns have been taken seriously. Only if the management reacts with a personal gesture he realizes that giving feedback benefits him personally. Moreover, the company BHMMS does not provide direct

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[4] The special guest program should offer guests' benefits, such as a hotel's loyalty program does.

messages to the hotel guest either. However, integrating personal messages as well as further explanations on the app itself represent a great possibility to connect the end consumer to the app.

The analysis of the newsletter and sales calls can be found in appendix II, as the findings of these were not relevant to the problem of this research.

2.2.4. MARKET ANALYSIS

In order to have determined possible threats and opportunities for the company BHMMS, the competitors as well as the market trends needed to be analyzed. Consequently, the following three dimensions were further investigated:

- Hotel industry
- Questionnaire software
- Public rating portals

Concerning the first dimension, one could detect the rising importance of effective complaint management, as this provided the basis for successful customer retention management (Waskönig, 2003, pp.47-48). As consequence, more and more businesses focus on providing the industry with the essential tool to navigate complaint management, leading to the creation of a highly competitive environment. Therefore, the strongest competitors operating in the hotel industry are listed as follows: Customer Alliance, Revinate and TrustYou. The most serious opponent is considered to be Revinate, as they not only offer the same services as BHMMS, but further provide clients with additional features, such as social media monitoring and revenue reports (Revinate, 2014). In addition, Revinate thrives through its leading experts in the hospitality, social media and software industries, as well as through extensive funding, immense power and a vast client base. (Revinate, 2014). In comparison to Revinate, BHMMS still functions as a start-up that aims to market iFeedback® to hotels that, have not yet heard of or considered to use a complaint management tool.

The World Travel Market Industry Report defined guests' increased usage of social media as well as of mobile technology as key hotel trends in 2014. However, the former trend is primarily applies for vacationers. Concerning the latter, it is denoted that, nowadays, guests book their hotel room via smartphone within 24 hours (ITB Business Publishing Ltd, 2014). The chief operating officer of the Jumeirah Group, Nicholas Clayton, explains this as the guests' need of instant gratification. In addition, Clayton stresses that, "[providing] a personalized guest experience across [all] platforms, [is] [now] [just] [as] [important] as is having enough well-trained talent on the ground to make the most of the opportunities for interactive customer service that digital technologies present" (ITB

Business Publishing Ltd, 2014). This trend provided BHMMS with a great selling point, as iFeedback®️ depicts the ideal technology.

Considering the second dimension, similar conclusions can be drawn. According to Kriegel, BHMMS is regarded as one of the pioneers in the development and distribution of questionnaire software. Therefore, due to its 'innovation benefit' BHMMS was able to acquire a vast client base as well as was the first to gain valuable knowledge about the industry (S. Kriegel, personal interview, August 25, 2014). Nonetheless, more questionnaire-software developing companies continue to emerge. Among these are Honestly, Qnips and Feedbackstr. The last two embody the most serious competitors (S. Kriegel, personal conversation, August 25, 2014). Again, the propositions of Feedbackstr are similar, but also include additional features, such as the possibility to send the digital questionnaire directly to consumers via e-mail, newsletter or social media (Feedbackstr, 2014). Therefore, end consumers are immediately made aware of the product. In contrast, while looking at Qnips' website an advantageous difference was detected; namely, the direct address of end consumers. Whereas the benefits Qnips provides its clients appear to be the same, the user profits from vouchers and loyalty offers once he gives feedback (Qnips, 2014). By using these incentives, users are evidently drawn to use the application. Another difference to denote is the sole use of QR codes on the clients' bills. In contrast to iFeedback®️, the end consumer is required to download the Qnips app to scan these QR codes to subsequently receive said voucher. Therefore, the question remains whether it is smarter to request end consumers' to download the app, give feedback and get a voucher in return (Qnips) or to enable end consumers' to give feedback without downloading the app and have somebody tend to the problem right away (iFeedback®️); assuming the feedback was negative of course.

Due to the publics' and therefore the end consumers' high involvement, it was assumed that the developments within the third dimension are already of general knowledge. Since 2008, the utilization of rating portals became increasingly important to end consumers', as each review eases another consumer's decision as to which product to buy or service to use (Delp, 2009). In regards to the hospitality industry, the most serious competitor is Holidaycheck. There, end consumers' frequently express their anger or satisfaction about the hotel in question. However, as guest reviews are entered delayed in time and directed to the public instead of directly to the management, hotels usually do not have the chance to make amends. Presumably, these portals are not designed to help businesses to improve. Moreover, as these as these portals depict the common tool to rate business, overcoming business guests' bond with these in order to turn the attention to iFeedback®️ may constitute the greatest challenge; assuming that business guests' do use these.

2.3. MACRO ENVIRONMENT – DESTEP ANALYSIS

After the analysis of the company's meso-environment, the examination of the trends and broader developments within society ensued. Although these developments cannot be controlled, it was necessary to consider their possible effect on BHMMS's business activities (Vos, 2003). However, it was decided to leave out the environmental and political environment, as these did not have an impact on the research objective.

2.3.1. DEMOGRAPHIC ENVIRONMENT

As of July 2014 the population of Germany amounts to 82,678,629 people (World Population Statistics, 2014). In order to investigate the potential size of the target group, the current employment rate was ascertained. In 2013, one can assess an employment rate of 83.2 percent among the population aged 25-54 (OECD, 2013). The self-employment rate on the contrary amounts to 11.6 percent. Considering the total unemployment rate which constitutes 5.5 percent together with the evident improvements in each area one can conclude that, the number of the potential target group is increasing (OECD, 2013). Moreover, the GDP and the disposable income of each household experienced a considerable growth as well (OECD, 2013). This increased financial budget particularly benefits freelancers.

2.3.2. ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Apart from the current slower economic progression, which is illustrated in the Appendices, the German economy is stable and appears to go strong; a characteristic that, can at least partly be based on the continuous consumer spending. "Consumers continue to be in a buying mood, thanks to rising household income, the positive situation on the labor market and low inflation" (Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy, 2014). Again, this initial situation suggested that the target group continues to frequent high class hotels.

2.3.3. SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The German nation is primarily characterized by its high quality lifestyle. Therefore, an individual's level of education is of high importance, as this lays the foundation of an individual's "credibility, social status, and level of employment […]" (Frankfurter Societäts-Medien GmbH, 2014). Depending on these achievements Germans are able to pursue their desired high-quality lifestyle, which includes the enjoyment of various foods, national and international travel, the celebration of events,

pursuit and celebration of sports, cultural and modern entertainment (Frankfurter Societäts-Medien GmbH, 2014). Consequently, Germans value to balance enjoyment with responsibility.

2.3.3. TECHNOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT

Developments within the technological sector needed to be closely monitored as these could have a direct impact on iFeedback®'s product value. According to Statista's statistics, the number of smartphone users continues to increase exponentially, as well as the reliance users place on these (Statista, 2014, a). As consequence, the amount of newly designed and released applications and the number of downloaded mobile applications experienced a similar boost (Statista, 2014, b).

Considering businesses' dissemination and adaptation of QR codes one cannot detect a notable change. Although these became increasingly popular in 2009, the acceptance and usage of these remains crucially low; only 14 percent of smartphone users scan QR codes in Germany. Therefore, scanning a QR code continues to be an alien concept to most people (ishp Consulting, 2013). According to Herbert Peck, the greatest challenges constitute the download of a QR code scanner application and the unattractiveness of the QR code itself. Therefore, even if the business guests' awareness of iFeedback® is raised, it stands to reason whether this challenge can be overcome.

2.4. SWOT ANALYSIS

The SWOT describes the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the resulting opportunities and threats for the company BHMMS.

STRENGTHS

BHM MEDIA SOLUTIONS
- knowhow of the industry and connection to experts
- Existing customer base
-> innovation benefit
- Independence of investors
- Not offering a standardized product
-> Flexible to adjust to clients' needs

END CONSUMERS/iFeedback
- Institution of terminals already engages guests to make use of iFeedback

WEAKNESSES

BHM MEDIA SOLUTIONS
- Less financial leeway in comparison to the competition
- Technologically inferior

END CONSUMERS/iFeedback
- Lack of QR code/browser usage due to lack of product recognition
- Communication to end consumer is one sided (display material & social media)
-> Unable to connect
- iFeedback usage does not offer a tangible benefit

OPPORTUNITIES

BHM MEDIA SOLUTIONS
- Independence of investors indicates higher chance of continued existence
-> number of financed competitors already decreases
- Existing clients help attract new ones
- Feedback consulting allows growth in different areas
- Interactive customer service becomes increasingly important in the hospitality industry

END CONSUMERS/iFeedback
- Shift attention from terminals towards the display material
- Smartphone and application usage rises
- Qnips users download the app due to the incentive
-> engage guests to download the iFeedback app and circumvent the QR code challenge and provoke activation

THREATS

BHM MEDIA SOLUTIONS
- Not enough capital to sustain in the market
-> lack of experienced full-time employees means the company develops slower than its competitors
-> lacking budget means the company misses out on possible investment opportunities, i.e. for promotion purposes
- Competition develops faster and thus adjusts better to clients' needs
- Not a sustainable market -> clients can terminate their contract after two years
- Clinets defect to competition due to better offers

END CONSUMERS/iFeedback
- People only see a benefit in giving feedback on public rating portals
- People do not want to use QR codes even if they know iFeedback and the benefit its usage contains

TABLE 2: SWOT ANALYSIS FINDINGS

2.5. CONCLUSION

After the investigation of the angles relevant to the defined problem, internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats were determined.

Starting off with the interrelationship between the strengths and opportunities, the primary internal strength can be seen in BHMMS's flexibility. Not offering a standardized product, enables the company to adjust to clients' and guests' needs. Furthermore, based on the high usage rate of the iFeedback® terminals, it is assumed that once guests are playfully introduced to the product, they are inclined to use it. Furthermore, an opportunity can be seen in the continuous increase of smartphone and application usage, as this indicates the growth of the target group. Moreover, considering that Qnips managed to convince users to download their app in return for a voucher, the chances are high that, once BHMMS communicates a clear product benefit guests are prone to download and use the app. In this way the QR code challenge could be eluded as well.

In terms of the interrelationship between the weaknesses and threats, Kriegel highlighted BHMMS's smaller financial leeway and their product's technical inferiority, as this could result in BHMMS trailing behind competitors as well as in the company's inability to adjust to clients' and guests' needs. In addition, if the lack of product recognition and BHMMS inability to communicate an appealing usage benefit continues to exist, one can conclude that the identified inactive guests will remain inactive.

On account of this analysis, it was decided to focus on the problem of inactive guests, which might be due to a lack of product recognition. As a consequence, several main causes can be detected:

Looking at the technological environment and at the current market and hospitality trends one can argue that, most guests are accustomed to using a variety of apps and giving feedback via online rating portals. However, currently giving feedback is either done personally, which is metonymic with an inconvenient confrontation, or after the guest's stay. As consequence, the idea of giving instant feedback on-site by the use of a simple application might appear strange to most guests. Moreover, because there only exists insufficient knowledge regarding this form of complaint channel, the guest is confronted with several questions. Such as: Is my feedback welcome? What is my feedback used for? What is my benefit? Thus, based on this uncertainty it stands to reason whether it is possible to achieve the desired behavior change through the mere provision of information.

In conclusion, it is necessary to ascertain the role communication plays in solving the delineated problem. Accordingly, communication could be used as tool to clarify that iFeedback® is the primary tool to use for complaints and praise on the one hand, as well as to inform guests about the product and its benefits on the other hand. This in turn might make the usage more appealing and accessible.

CHAPTER -3- LITERATURE REVIEW

With BHMMS's primary research objective in mind, the next important step embodied the review of experts' opinions and therefore, the study of literature regarding the following key areas:

- Marketing Mix
- Business Guests' Needs
- Behavior Change Theories

3.1. MARKETING MIX

According to the marketing guideline by Pelsmacker et al. (Pelsmacker, Geuens & Van den Bergh, 2010, p.2), the subsequently listed and analyzed marketing tools, which consist of the marketing mix instruments, were tailored to the objective of raising the target groups' awareness, as well as triggering the usage of iFeedback®. Therefore, it was decided to focus on the product and promotion category. While concentrating on these, one was able to extract specific actions, in terms of product changes and promotion that could be carried out by BHMMS as well as their clients.
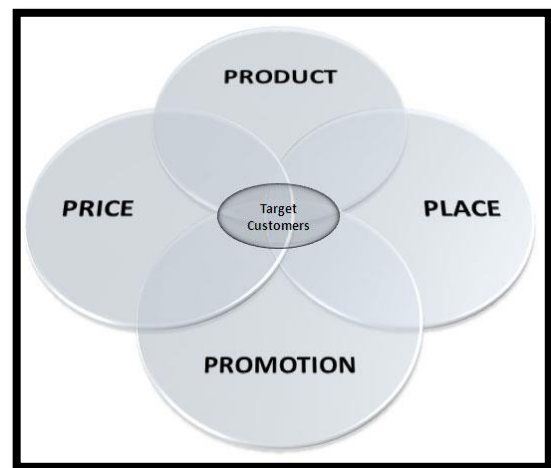
FIGURE 2: MARKETING MIX (NOTES DESK, 2009)

3.1.1. PRODUCT

Concerning the product category, Pelsmacker highlights the importance to differentiate between three layers that ultimately define a product. The first layer illustrates the core product and thus, the unique benefit that consumers should associate with the product. The second layer marks the aspects that make the product tangible, such as the "features, […] quality, […] options and design" (Pelsmacker, Geuens & Van den Bergh, 2010, p.2). The third layer is described as service layer and signifies an additional value, such as an after-sales service, which makes the product more appealing (Pelsmacker et al., 2010, p.2). Aiming to attract business guests to use iFeedback®, the first layer was considered most relevant. Additionally, as the target group has not yet tried the product iFeedback®, the second layer was irrelevant, as the products tangible propositions of the second layer cannot be objectively judged.

Concerning the first layer, one could determine the guests' ability to send feedback digitally to the manager in charge within 30 seconds as benefit. In consequence, this depicts the benefit business guests' presumably associate iFeedback® with. However, as BHMMS already promotes this benefit on its display materials, it stands to reason whether the guest actually perceives this as unique benefit or whether he lacks the interest, or even belief in the benefit.

In regards to the third layer, one could count the hotel staff's immediate reaction to a feedback as added value. However, this added value is not communicated. Generally, this added value becomes effective once a guest gives negative feedback. However, as the iFeedback® check-out page enables guests' to click the option "contact me personally", guests which give positive feedback could equally enjoy this additional product value. Clearly, the provision of this added value solely depends upon the clients' will and capacities. Therefore, BHMMS could consider increasing its product branding efforts likewise, in order to provide an intangible added value, for instance an emotional connection to the product.

3.1.2. PROMOTION

In terms of the promotion category, one had to investigate all tools that BHMMS used to promote iFeedback® and the company itself to its target groups (Pelsmacker et al., 2010, p.3). In this way, one could decide on how the effectiveness of the currently instituted communication tools could be enhanced by additional tools.

As the communication tools needed to fit within the limits of BHMMS's resources, the limited communications budget and BHMMS's ability to reach the business guests' were taken into account. As BHMMS does not stand in direct contact with the guests', the company cannot visualize the guests' reaction to the positioned marketing materials and thus cannot measure its efficiency. Hence, it was necessary to investigate the guests' reaction, in order to discern whether material changes could indeed make a difference in the guests' behavior toward iFeedback®.

FIGURE 3: PROMOTIONAL MIX (BUSINESS CASE STUDIES LLP, 2014)

Taking BHMMS's resources as well as the AIDA marketing model into account, the tools considered viable to create attention and interest among the target group were considered to be sales promotions and public relations (Lamb, Hair & McDaniel, 2011, p.515).

Starting off with sales promotions, which depict short term incentives that aim to encourage product trial (Pelsmacker et al., 2010,p.4), one can detect a suitable tool to catch guests' initial interest. Disadvantageously, this communication tool can only be deployed by the hotel itself, in form of vouchers or reward programs. As BHMMS does not charge users for the usage of iFeedback®, the company is unable to offer business guests' an appealing incentive. In consequence, once the effectiveness of sales promotions is statistically proven, BHMMS can advise its clients to use these to increase the iFeedback® utilization rate.

Secondly, public relations represent a sufficient method to create attention about the company BHMMS and the product iFeedback®. Therefore, the company's own press releases as well as articles written and published by other well-known newspapers and magazines would serve as great starting point to create awareness and further, build a strong corporate image. However, since this tool is categorized as mass media tool, it is not possible to target a specific audience or send tailored communication messages. For that matter, BHMMS can primarily use this tool to create general publicity and develop a stronger corporate image.

Apart from these tools, Nurhan Tosun, professor in Marketing and Public Relations, advised to use point-of-purchase (POP) communications in cooperation with public relations to create a stronger corporate image. According to him, "[when] carrying out strategic planning to create synergy between POP communications and public relations, maximum productivity [can] [be] [achieved]" (Tosun, n.d., p.4). Nonetheless, it stood to reason whether it was necessary to strengthen BHMMS's corporate image to make iFeedback® more appealing to the business guest. This question was taken into account during the in-depth research.

Looking at the tools that are counted among POP communications, one could identify i.a. "displays, advertising within the shop, merchandising, article presentations, store layout, etc." (Pelsmacker et al., 2010, p.4). Knowing that BHMMS already provides its clients with display material that is positioned at various guest contact points, the in-depth interviews needed to discern as to how effective these are and whether other POP tools could yield better results.

With the goal of devising an integrated communication strategy, the branding communications specialist Dave Dunn suggests to find a suitable mixture between traditional media, new media and social media (Branding 2.0., 2009). Consequently, tools and channels of the second and third needed to be determined next.
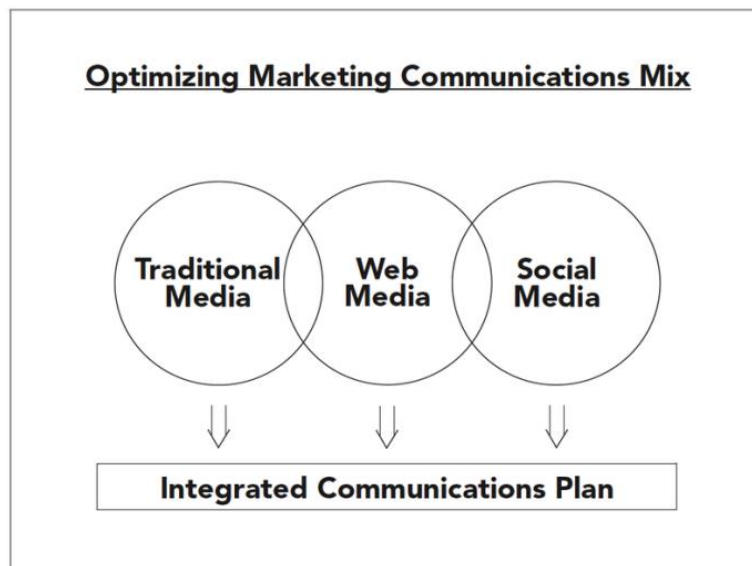
**FIGURE 4: OPTIMIZING MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS MIX
(BRANDING 2.0, 2009)**

According to the economic dictionary Gabler, web media is identifiable by three unique differentiators. The first indicates multimodality[5], the second machine interaction[6] and the third, personal interaction (Gabler Wirtschaftslexikon, n.d.). Based on the known and relevant guest contact points, the following known media sites were determined useful for attaining the guests' interest: iFeedback® website, clients' hotel website, booking portals, public rating portals. In order to determine their relevance, the guests' usage rate was investigated during the in-depth research.

Social media in contrast, was considered to be the most fitting means of communication, as it allows particularly small companies with a low marketing budget to raise awareness among consumers (Zarrella, 2012, p.11). Furthermore, due to the interactive two-way communication on social media platform, it appeared viable to actively engage business guests' through these. According to Zarrell, the microblogging platform Twitter, which is easily and quickly operated, depicts a suitable tool to raise awareness, to gather an insight into guests' wishes, and to keep the readership informed on company news and events (Zarrella, 2012, p.39). Apart from these Zarrella highlights the utilization of various social networking platforms, such as Google+, Facebook and Xing, in order to connect with people and strengthen the relationship with these. However, as no essential data was gathered as to which individuals' use these platforms, as well as which are already effectively utilized in the hospitality industry and hence could be used for the promotion of iFeedback®, the social media expert Janine Schneider was interviewed. The findings of this interview were included in Chapter five.

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[5] Multimodality: correlation of text, image, video and audio
[6] Machine interaction: influencing the user's information intake

3.2. BUSINESS GUESTS' NEEDS

With the objective to discern how iFeedback® can further fulfill the inactive guests' needs the general needs and wants of business hotel guests were investigated. Using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to examine the needs first, it became evident that the guests' wants should be the primary determinant of this research. According to Maslow there exist five different levels of needs. Once one need level is satisfied, the individual can move on to fulfill the next. The first level describes the basic human needs, such as food, which can easily be satisfied by any hotel. The second level already highlights needs that cannot be satisfied by any operating hotel, as they include i.e. the need for safety of employment and health (Pride, W., Hughes, R., Kapoor, J., 2011, p.281). To conclude, a business guest who stays at a three-to-five star hotel presumably expects more than the fulfillment of his basic needs. In turn, this guest desires to have his expectations met and further, expects to receive a certain customer value in exchange for his payment.

In order to gather a better understanding of this customer value, it is deemed crucial to take a closer look at Bowie et al.'s hierarchy of customer value.

According to this hierarchy, hotels need to pursue the fulfillment of four consecutive levels, in order to create a memorable guest experience. Naturally, this memorable experience equals the highest customer value and hence, should constitute the ultimate goal of every hotel. That is because the creation of exceptional experiences allow hotels to stay competitive, as the guests' decision whether or not to return and recommend the hotel in question is based on this event. (Bowie, D., Buttle, F., 2011, p. 7). Consequently, once guests' and clients' make

FIGURE 5: HIERARCHY OF CUSTOMER VALUE (ADAPTED FROM ALBRECHT 1991)

serious use of iFeedback®, such memorable guest experiences can easily be created.

Aiming to discern how these expectations can be met as well as exceeded, guests' current expectations needed to be determined. Therefore, the recent study of Anu Björn served as point of reference. While researching the different needs and wants of leisure and business tourists, Björn discerned seven factors that business guests' value the most (Björn, 2013, p.26):

- Quiet room
- Location of the hotel
- High quality service
- Free Wi-Fi

- Room cleaning everyday
- Loyalty program
- Space to work

The first three factors stressed those being valued the most. Although the hotel cannot influence the second, it can clearly influence the guests' level of satisfaction concerning the first and third. Nonetheless, in order to be able to exceed the expectation of the third, it is necessary to determine each guest's interpretation of high quality service first[7]. In order to verify whether these values match the ones' of the German business guests', the in-depth interviews contained a section on the guests' expectations.

3.3. BEHAVIOR CHANGE THEORIES

While aiming to discern how the inactiveness of the guest can be addressed, and the desire to make business guest active users of iFeedback®, the next key step was based on the analysis of behavioral models devised by experts in the field.

The first examined theory was the theory of planned behavior (TPB), which presumes that humans "take account of available information and implicitly or explicitly consider the implications of their actions. [Consequently] the theory postulates that a person's intention to perform a behavior is the most important immediate determinant of an action" (Ajzen, 2005, p.117). However, one has to take into account the three different factors influencing a human's intentions. Therefore, the first comprises the individual's attitude toward the behavior and its expected outcomes. The second embodies the subjective norms which the individual feels compelled to adhere to, and the third comprises the perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 2005, pp. 117-118). To conclude, Ajzen stresses that "people intend to perform a behavior when they evaluate it positively, when they experience social pressure to perform it, and when they believe that they have the means and opportunities to do so" (Ajzen, 2005, p.118).

This showed that both, BHMMS and the client, need to provide business guests' with a positive outcome, such as a benefit, once they made use of iFeedback®. Moreover, as no social pressure persists, the second factor is not relevant. The third can easily be fulfilled as the means and opportunities to use iFeedback® are readily available.

The second model to take into account is labeled 'stages of change', and is often applied for changing health related problems. It highlights five different behavior stages, namely "pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance" (Chui & Wilson, 2006, p.43). Naturally, these

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[7] Personally questioning guests on this matter would presumably lead to varying subjective and hence unemployable results. Thus, it was considered unsuitable to raise this question during the in-depth research.

stages constitute a process which needs to be passed through in order to acquire a lasting behavior change (Chui & Wilson, 2006, p.43). Consequently, the model is used as a guide to determine an individual's readiness to change and therefore, enables e.g. marketers to tailor their measures and messages in accordance to their target group's needs.

Based on the suggested reasons for the business guests' inactivity, it is presumed that the stages relevant are pre-contemplation [8] and contemplation [9]. In regards to the first stage, BHMMS is required to provide the guests with significant information that, allows them to think about and evaluate the suggested action. On account of the second stage, BHMMS needs to increase the appeal of the action in a way that, guest actually consider taking the desired action.

The third theory constitutes Roger's diffusion of innovation theory (DoI), where an innovation constitutes the driver that changes behavior. Hereby, an innovation is defined as "an idea, practice, or object perceived as new" (Roger, 2003, p.12). In addition, the DoI denotes a behavior change process based on the following four factors: "innovation, communication channels, time and social systems" (Rogers, 2003, pp.11-38). Hence, in order to diffuse an innovation, it is necessary to [communicate] [the] [innovation] through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (Rogers, 2003, p.15). Depending on the type of channel, different objectives can be pursued. For instance, whereas the utilization of mass media could raise users' awareness, the usage of interpersonal channels could initiate users to adopt the innovation; as a user is inclined to listen to a like-minded person's opinion first, before turning one's attention to a publicly advertised expert statement (Rogers, 2003, p.36). In addition to that, Roger further illustrates the importance of social network members being heterophilious as well as homophilious [10]. Most of the time, the latter is preferred as it eases the sharing of stories and experiences. Nonetheless, homophily can "act as a barrier to the flow of innovations in a system" (Roger, 2003, p.306) as it does not support different views and knowledge. For that matter, a mixture is deemed crucial.

Viewing iFeedback® in the context of the DoI, several conclusions could be drawn. Since the practice of giving digital feedback directly to the management on-sight remains new to the inactive guest, the product was presumably perceived as innovation. The innovation's most prominent attributes would comprise its easy accessibility, easy usability, and instant need for gratification through direct communication. Hence, these would be communicated to the members of a social system. Since

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[8] The pre-contemplation has to be considered, once the guests' inactivity is based on his lack of knowledge in regards to iFeedback® existence.

[9] The contemplation stage indicates that the business guest has at least thought about the behavior already, but did not take action yet. This could presumable be linked to all other mentioned barriers, such as the perceived insignificance of a problem or the lacking appeal of the presented benefit.

[10] Homophily describes people that are like-minded and are similar in their behavioral stance and viewpoints. Heterophilious people constitute the exact opposite. Their difference generates new and different views.

interpersonal communication is seen as a key factor, it seems logical to create a virtual platform, where guests can exchange their experiences of the innovation's utilization and, guest relation managers further receive the chance to respond to these. However, this would require time an effort from both sides. In line with this, one could presume that the clients' guests' evident difference in knowledge and behavior, would contribute to the precipitation of the innovation diffusion.

Another model to consider was the technology adoption lifecycle (Fleisher & Blenkhorn, 2003, p.231). Knowing that the product iFeedback® was already partly accessed via smartphone and thus, via scanning the QR code, it was safe to assume that the currently active guests can be categorized as early adopters or early majority. However, looking at the German population's adaption of applications and particularly QR codes, it was clear that this evolution took a considerable amount of time. Therefore, one could presume that it is easier to induce a behavior change once the strategy includes the download of the iFeedback® app instead of scanning the provided QR code [11].
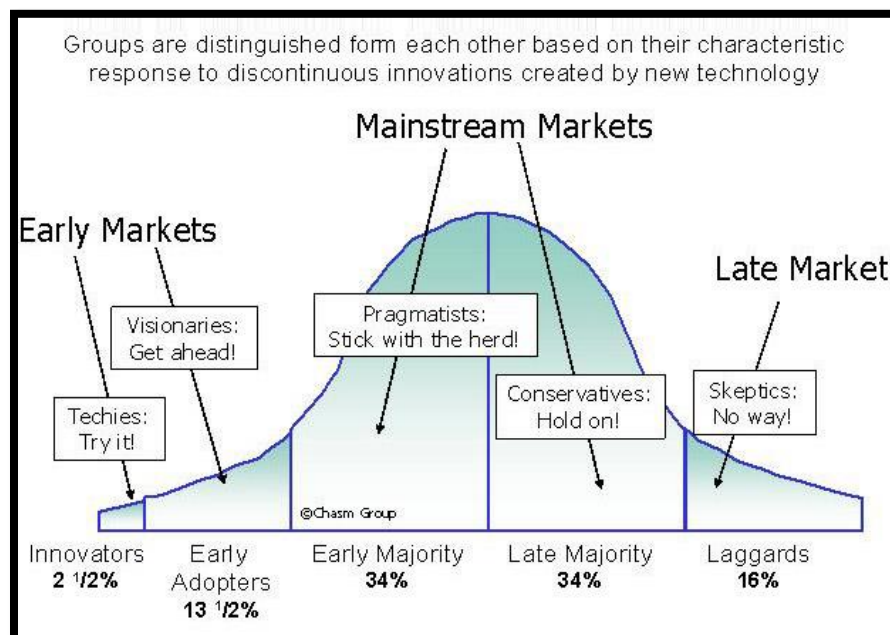
FIGURE 6: TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION LIFE-CYCLE (INFRAE, N.D.)

3.4. CONCLUSION

While taking the core problem, the research objective and the advice question as guidance, the Literature Review served as a tool to investigate possible product benefits, promotional tools to raise awareness, business guests' needs in general as well as various behavior change theories that could

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[11] That is based on the fact that, it took people longer to adapt to the use of QR codes than it took to use applications. Applications have been widely promoted and are excessively used. QR codes have not become general knowledge yet, as their usage is not actively promoted. Thus the current utilization rate remains low.

possibly animate guests to become active iFeedback® users. In consequence, case studies and literature were examined.

It was ascertained that a mixture of traditional media, new media and social media should be used for a successful promotion. Concerning the first category, a combination of PR, POP communications and sales promotions was deemed appropriate. By using the former two tools the guests' attention could be drawn to the product, and by using the latter the business guests' interest for product trial could be influenced. Concerning the second category, it was decided that the guests' could best be informed via the current ifbck website as well as the clients' website. Thus, both should contain user friendly and self-explanatory information on the use of iFeedback® and the intention of its institution. In regards to the third category, Twitter, Xing, and Linkedin were determined as most adequate tools to further engage and interact with the business guest. Their utilization should help make the product and its logo more recognizeable.

Once the promotional tools were decided upon, it was important to research the business guests' needs and wants during their hotel stay. While applying Maslow's hierarchy of needs, it was depicted that the guests' expectations are a more adequate indicator than their needs, as only humans' basic needs, such as food, can be fulfilled by hotels. In consequence, guests' expect to have their expectations met, and further desire to be given a certain customer value in exchange for their money. Apart from that, a case study on the Marriot Hotel was taken as reference to examine business guests' general expectations. In this way, a first insight was gathered in regards to the activities hotels need to undertake, in order to provide their guests' with a memorable guest experience.

Subsequently, behavioral models that could help change the business guests' inactive user state were investigated. For that matter, it was evident that the used promotional tools and messages have to be adjusted to the guests' current behavioral stage, which is set to be the pre-contemplation and contemplation stage. During these stages, it is important to provide information that animates the guests' to think about using the product. Additionally, as iFeedback® is presumably perceived as innovation, the Diffusion of Innovation theory seemed applicable. As consequence, it is vital to investigate the innovations attributes, the channels business guests' are most receptive to as well as the social system they can be grouped in. Moreover, as interpersonal communication is denoted as key factor, the viability of a virtual platform for an experience exchange needed to be ascertained. These and the following aspects comprise the knowledge gap and highlight the aspects to be examined during the in-depth research: a) business guests' expectations b) media channel usage c) suitable promotional messages d) iFeedback® benefits e) motives to give feedback f) business guests' position in the innovation adoption lifecycle.

CHAPTER -4- IN-DEPTH RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

On account of the previously established knowledge gap, it was clear which information needed to be ascertained during the field research. Therefore, the ensuing step included the creation of an in-depth research design, which comprises three different research questions. Once these questions were answered, an informed conclusion on the set research objective and questions was drawn.

4.1. IN-DEPTH RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1.1. CONCEPTUAL DESIGN – RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Accordingly, the first research question reads as follows: *"What selective criteria do German business guests apply when downloading and using a new application?"*

The resulting objective of this question was the discovery of relevant criteria, or trigger, that influence the German business guests' buying, and else download decision. In turn, once suitable criteria are identified, it can be decided whether the application iFeedback® fits within these or whether changes need to be undertaken to make the application more appealing.

With the objective of gathering and processing only relevant information, it was necessary to devise an operationalization for the set research question. This comprises an abstract concept, the appertaining variables and various indicators. Therefore, the abstract concept to be studied is the guests' general 'application usage'. In order to evaluate this, it is considered necessary to investigate the business guests' behavior in relation to the guests' knowledge on the application in question. Therefore, the selected variables to measure the abstract concept are "knowledge[12] & behavior[13]". By analyzing the degree to which these impact the guests' buying decision, it can subsequently be decided whether the provision of additional information on the product as well as the company could help change the business guests' current behavioral stance toward iFeedback®. However, in order to effectively measure their impact the following four indicators serve as guideline: 1) advertised product image 2) perceived product value 3) knowledge of the product and company 4) willingness to trust the product.

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[12] Knowledge defined by the Oxford Dictionaries: "Facts, information, and skills acquired through experience or education; the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject" (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d., a).
[13] Behavior defined by the Oxford Dictionaries: "The way in which an animal or person behaves in response to a particular situation or stimulus" (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d., b).

4.1.2. Conceptual Design – Research Question 2

The secondly devised research question states: *"Which of the predefined barriers constitutes the primary reason for the guests' inactivity and in relation to that, which communication channels and promotional messages can be applied by BHMMS and the hotel to overcome these barriers?"*

Posing this question follows the goal of examining which of the previously identified barriers constitutes the most prominent, and further which of the suggested promotional tools can be effectively applied to raise product awareness and hence, turn guests' into active users. Consequently, the abstract concept to be examined was "barriers and tools". In order to measure said concept, the variables "opinion and knowledge" were chosen. Since the former is defined as "what a person thinks or believes" (Cambridge Dictionaries, n.d., a), a subjective assessment was to be obtained in regards to the perceived barriers as well as the preferred channels and messages. Concerning the latter variable, which is specified as "information or what is known" (Cambridge Dictionaries, n.d., b), data in terms of suitable tools were gathered. Additionally, the indicators selected to evaluate these variables read as follows: 1) lack of knowledge 2) perceived significance of the problem 3) public rating portal usage 4) QR code usage 5) impact of communicated product benefit 6) media usage 7) messages.

4.1.3. Conceptual Design – Research Question 3

What appealing benefits can three-to-five star hotels as well as BHMMS offer guests in return for using iFeedback® and in relation to that, what are the greatest expectations of business guests' that they wish to be met during their hotel stay?

The first objective of this research question was to determine whether the previously highlighted guest expectations by Anu Björn equal those of the targeted business guests. The second objective comprises the discovery of incentives or services that three-to-five star hotels can offer to satisfy their business guests', and to possibly exceed their expectations. In this way, it can be assessed whether the hotels are in the position to offer their guest the highest possible customer value.

With the goal of insuring an efficient evaluation of the third research question, an operationalization was designed anew. Therefore, the abstract concept to be explored, states "benefits and expectations". The variable chosen to measure this concept is "knowledge". As consequence, the stressed definition in the second conceptual design equally applies. In order to only gather relevant information the following indicators express the topics to be covered: 1) tangible benefits offered by hotel 2) intangible benefits offered by BHMMS 3) business guests' expectations.

4.1.4. TECHNICAL DESIGN – RESEARCH QUESTION 1-3

As stated in the research proposal, the initial research method considered suitable for the in-depth research was quantitative research. During the course of this research, however, it was decided to conduct qualitative research instead. That is because qualitative research "[provides] an in-depth understanding of the research issues that embraces the perspectives of the study population and the context in which they live" (Hennink, M., Hutter, I., Bailey, A., 2011, p.10). Furthermore, this research strategy is termed especially effective "for explaining people's beliefs and behavior" (Hennink et al., 2011, p.10). For that matter, conducting qualitative research would allow gathering detailed information on the business guests' application usage criteria, the primary barrier, suitable communication tools, as well as offered benefits and considered expectations in the hospitality industry. As consequence, one had to choose a suitable research method. Available methods included "in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation, content analysis, visual methods, and life histories or biographies" (Hennink et al., 2011, p.10).

Since the in-depth interviews enabled the collection of detailed and clear data, ten semi-structured interviews were conducted among the previously identified sub groups. By choosing these over focus group discussions, one was guaranteed that the participants could answer freely, as no interviewee was driven by "group-related patterns of behavior" (Kaar, 2007, p.2). Additional advantages of in-depth interviews were seen by their quick execution as well as by the asking questions that were not anticipated and hence, prepared beforehand. Therefore, one was able to discern "why a particular answer was given" (Kaar, 2007, p.3).

Appendix III provides the planning schedule for the interviews and further demonstrates potential errors that could have occurred during the in-depth research.

CHAPTER -5- IN-DEPTH RESEARCH ANALYSIS

Once the interview questions were defined, the consecutive step comprised the actual interviewing of the defined target group. In order to receive relevant answer, particularly in regards to the business guests' usage barrier(s), it was decided to conduct interviews on sight, meaning at one of BHMMS's clients' hotels, i.e. the Kameha Grand in Bonn. However, the clients' denied the personal questioning of their guests. As consequence, the participants of the in-depth interviews included business travelers of my own network as well as business partners of these, which matched the criteria listed in the consumer analysis as well as the criteria mentioned by Lindner's guest relations manager[14].

With the objective of gathering a profound insight, the interviews consisted of various open questions. In this way, the participants were enabled to "define and describe a situation or event" (Saunders, M., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A., 2009, p. 337), which in turn allowed them to respond as they pleased (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 337). Moreover, as the majority of the participants were frequent travelers, eight interviews were conducted electronically via phone.

The ensuing data analysis of all ten interviews was subdivided into three sections. Each section covered all information relevant for the devised research questions one to three; furthermore, these questions included the information that needed to be collected for the report's central research question. As a result, the subsequently illustrated abstract concepts served as indicators for the respective questions.

5.1. APPLICATION USAGE

Concerning general criteria participants apply during their application 'buying decision', seven out of ten participants stressed their initial critical stance, as the application's proposed value is closely assessed beforehand. Primarily, this value either comprised the perceived potential to increase one's own productivity, be it in regards to work related matters or sports, or the perceived potential to make one's daily life easier and more efficient, such as a travel planner. These two criteria were equally mentioned. Other criteria that were noted to be evaluated were: Fast operation, responsive design, easy and intuitive usage, cost free, low data volume, low battery consumption, no utilization of personal data and customer ratings. Among these criteria, the latter depicted another of high importance. Two-thirds of the participants said that they use customer ratings as guidance.

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[14] An e-mail interview was conducted to gather an insight on the business guests' behavior. The transcript can be found in appendix V.

Therefore, negative ratings are evaluated based on their perceived relevance to one's own values as well as based on their perceived validity[15].

Regarding the applications advertised image, all participants agreed that this was not relevant. Many denoted that they bought and used applications of well-known businesses, which conclusively have a well-established image, but all of them agreed that the purchase of these was grounded on the continuous positive experience they had with the business in question. Moreover, it was stressed that actively advertising a particular image only becomes effective once the product or business is already known, or rather well-established. This further related to the provision of a strong company image. In regards to BHMMS a strong company image was not deemed important, which implied the inapplicability of PR. In contrast, more importance was placed on seamlessly interconnecting iFeedback® with the clients materials and offerings.

Considering whether further knowledge on the product and the company behind it was deemed relevant, participants' answers varied. On the one hand, the participants said once they were interested in a product they would inform themselves in detail about its offered propositions and the company behind it. On the other hand, the participants said they would solely read the information provided in the app store and subsequently give the product a first try. Based on this experience, they would judge the applications value. As a result, knowing about the product and the company is only crucial to a certain extent.

In terms of the factors considered most relevant to trust the application, the participants gave similar answers. Trust can be established once family or friends voice a sincere recommendation. Likewise, ratings of unknown customers offer the participants a reason to trust a product. However, it was stressed that trust does not mark the decisive factor. Products are given the benefit of the doubt before their initial trial. Therefore, only trial and the resulting experience is crucial during the decision of placing one's trust in a product.

As consequence, the second indicator 'perceived product value' was of highest significance. Being professional business people, buying decisions are always connected to close evaluations of the perceived value and the perceived costs.

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[15] The validity was based on the number of ratings. However, only two participants mentioned a precise number, namely 50 and 10.000. As the other participants indicated their moderate importance, it is concluded reasonable to depict the former number as reasonable.

5.2. BARRIERS, TOOLS AND EXPECTATIONS

Since the participants were not actual guests of BHMMS's clients, the resulting answers on the barriers were primarily of hypothetical nature. However, as the participants matched the criteria mentioned in the consumer analysis, a valuable insight was gathered still.

At first it was vital to examine the participants' general stance towards giving and receiving feedback, as this could indicate underlying reasons for the behavior displayed at a hotel. Despite of small variances, all participants termed receiving feedback as essential for personal growth and development. Nonetheless, the first detected difference was seen between the introverted and the extroverted dominant business type. Two participants of the former expressed that they were not the type to give feedback to others. For them, the sole reason to give feedback was once co-workers actions had a negative impact on them. Six participants of the latter emphasized that, the main reason to give feedback is grounded on something being really good or really bad. In that case, the required time and effort is expedient. This implied that, once a hotel's service is simply good, participants would feel no need to give feedback. However, if time does not play a relevant factor, many also added that they neutrally informed or advised co-workers on various aspects. In contrast, this suggested that participants would give feedback in form of suggestions.

Investigating which barrier presented the predominant reason for the guests' inactivity, all previously determined reasons were questioned.

With reference to the first barrier, the lack of knowledge of the product iFeedback®, nine out of ten participants responded that they had not yet recognized the product anywhere. Only one participant realized that he had seen the product at Hamburg's airport, but did not give feedback due to lack of time. Subsequently, it was illustrated how iFeedback® is presented at various hotels. Based on this, participants should reflect whether they feel inclined to use the product[16]. The majority responded that they would give the product a try, if they had the time and if it did not concern a severe problem. However, all participants agreed that the probability of using the product again remains low once one of the following cases applies: it is unknown what is done with the feedback, one cannot determine any result, or one does not receive a reaction based on the given feedback.

In consequence, it was examined to what extent the perceived significance of the problem was relevant. Based on the received answers, one could ascertain a clear parallel to the previously defined feedback behavior. Once a problem is perceived as insignificant, all participants said they would not bother to mention it, due to the factors time and effort. If it concerned a severe problem,

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[16] This question adverted to the low provision of information in regards to the products functionality and its purpose.

all participants pointed out that they would personally address this issue at the reception. This act ensures the participant that his problem is heard and presumably dealt with soon.

Regarding the usage of public rating portals, six out of ten answered that they had given feedback via public rating portals before with the objective of helping others make an informed decision. However, the utilization of these portals never constituted a frequent task. Moreover, if a particular aspect was already mentioned by another user, two participants said that they did not see the point in highlighting it again. Further, one participant said that she would revise a previous negative rating, once a hotel improved. In addition, all participants admitted that they use these portals as booking guide[17].

In regards to the perceived QR code barrier, it was detected that their utilization does not necessarily indicate a problem. All participants were familiar with the concept. Eight out of ten said they have a QR code scanner on their smartphone and further, considered it a smart marketing tool. However, the majority admitted that they rarely use these, as their usage never seemed to obtain a convincing benefit. Hence, if iFeedback® provides an appealing benefit, QR code usage could ensue. Concluding, some said they would try out iFeedback® via QR code and download the application once its usage is perceived valuable.

Last but not least, the communicated benefit "feedback directly to the management" was reviewed in regards to its appeal and credibility. Apart from two participants, the benefit was perceived as credible as well as valuable. However, it was not perceived valuable enough for repeat usage. The lack of belief stemmed from the participants' association with the word management. For them, this indicates high level employees who do not have the time do deal with each guest feedback. A detailed explanation of the guests' desired benefit was included in the benefits section.

While investigating whether the channels determined in the Literature Review were indeed suitable, the participants were asked about their usage rate of these. Yet beforehand, the proposed social media platforms by Schneider were listed first.

In regards to the utilization of social media in the hospitality industry, she stresses that "social media plays a very important role for each kind of guest as a communication, information and service channel" (Schneider, 2014). Nonetheless, business guests' primarily use these for information and service (J. Schneider, personal e-mail, October 24, 2014). Concerning the platforms used in the hospitality industry, she lists the following: Facebook, Google+, Twitter, Xing and LinkedIn. These are used for various purposes, and are operated with varying messages. Considering the social networks, such as Facebook, Schneider highlights how images are used to emotionally address guests. The

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[17] Employed participants who book via their company's internal booking portal said that, they would use the portals as guide once they have the possibility to choose between several hotels.

content of the messages sent generally relates to trend topics and events concerning the hotel, which is particularly interesting for the business guest. In business networks, such as Linkedin and Xing, Schneider emphasizes the publication of press releases and company news. However, in order to effectively disseminate information, promote new campaigns and directly communicate with guests' – business guests' in particular – the social media expert considers the use of the micro blogging platform Twitter as most suitable (J. Schneider, personal e-mail, October 24, 2014).

As consequence, the proposed social media channels only comprised one common denominator, namely the business platform XING. However, the usage purpose solely comprised networking and the interexchange in various groups. Additionally, four out of ten participants said they were active on Facebook. The utilization of this social platform, however, was primarily grounded on the desire to stay connected to one's friends. Hence, it was not used to research or receive information on products or businesses. Instead, suggestions made on Facebook's behalf in this regard, are generally perceived as highly annoying. Only the youngest participant said that, she was receptive to such suggestions. Another exception to the rule constituted a creative and compelling layout. In that case, a few participants' might take a look at a product's advertisement.

Concerning the POP communication tools, all participants agreed that these are most effective. Regarding iFeedback®, it was indicated that the layout and message of the display material was not appealing enough. One participant clearly illustrated the paradox between the material and the product itself. More precisely he said that, giving feedback represents a process and generally symbolizes two-way communication. The QR code, however, is static, dead, and symbolizes only one-way communication. Therefore, the guest cannot link them together. As solution, the participant suggested to print a small stickman story, which explains the feedback process. In addition to that, two participants emphasized the effectiveness of a tall banner at the check-in, and three stressed a friendly and personal introduction to iFeedback® during the check-in. Furthermore, the majority agreed that additional information on the app's functionality and purpose should be provided in form of a flyer as well as on the hotel's homepage. In addition, the message printed on the display material should be honest and simply state facts.

Regarding guests' expectations, Lindner's guest relation manager Liane Ruebenach was asked to provide an initial insight. According to her, business guests' "constantly expect upscale service, quick and effective executions (check-in, check-out, breakfast), recognition, cost free and fast WLAN, modern TV system and fitness offer" (L. Ruebenach, e-mail interview, October 23rd). These expectations are similar to those discovered in the Literature Review. Concluding, all these factors were mentioned by the participants except for cost free WLAN. Additionally, participants stressed the importance of a quiet room, general modernity and a late check-in. On account of these high

expectations, it was ascertained that the creation of memorable guest experiences is difficult. Questioning the participants whether they can recall a positive memorable experience, only four could mention an incident. These comprised welcome drinks at the check-in, swan formed towels, and the staff's remembrance of personal details. As consequence, small gestures and attentive service constituted the key to creating memorable guest experiences, which in turn could easily be realized through the use of iFeedback®.

5.3. BENEFITS

As was indicated before, the benefit "feedback directly to the management" is considered valuable, but not appealing enough. Therefore, the majority agreed that, in order for them to repeatedly use iFeedback®, the guest wants to know that his feedback was received, read and is reacted upon. On the one hand, this suggested that BHMMS should undertake a change in iFeedback®'s functions, and on the other hand, the display material needs to communicate that the staff immediately reacts if the guest' wishes to be contacted. Consequently, the currently resulting uncertainty plays the major problem, as the guest' does not know whether he is being taken serious and whether his effort was worth his time. In addition, the participants suggested that, the clients' should publish the actions that have been taken after guest feedback was received. In this way, it is seen in writing that the hotel aims at sincere and persistent changes. In order to illustrate the efforts taken, participants suggested consistent updates on the client homepage as well as in the client newsletter.

Based on the gathered information, the question was raised whether the guest would use iFeedback® instead of giving feedback personally, once the previous benefit was given and the POP materials optimized. The introverted participants answered with yes, as they could avoid an unwanted confrontation. One older and dominant participant answered with no, as he considered a personal conversation as a sign of good education. The seven remaining participants answered 'both', depending on their current whereabouts[18] as well as on previous experiences[19].

With the objective of creating a situation, where all participants agree to use iFeedback®, the following question was raised: *"If the hotel sincerely expressed that it welcomes any of your feedback and that, it wants to make a genuine effort to improve its propositions, would this be a reason to use iFeedback® frequently?"* All participants answered yes. Based on this insight, eight new communication messages were created, and tested upon their appeal. As a result, the following messages were perceived as conveying the clients' sincere intentions and hence, perceived as appealing benefit:

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[18] If the guest is currently at the lobby or reception, he would proceed to give personal feedback.
[19] Meaning using iFeedback® provides a fast and satisfactory outcome.

- "Our quality depends on you. Share your feedback with us."
- "Our quality depends on you. We take your feedback serious."
- "Be our quality/change advisor. Share your feedback with us."
- "Your feedback is our chance/incentive to change."

Since the application of sales promotions was suggested during the Literature Review, their suitability was examined as well. Since these offer a tangible benefit, it was presumed that these are appealing. However, offering these as usage incentive was predominantly perceived as unnecessary. However, in terms for compensations they were welcomed. Moreover, a few said they do already participate in hotel loyalty programs etc. and thus, if the cost and time related to the promotion was perceived as being worth the proposed value, they would participate.

5.4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the findings gathered in this chapter will be evaluated in accordance with all previously stated research questions in the following conclusions chapter. Thereupon the last chapter ensues, the recommendations, which demonstrate the implications of the research conclusions and further illustrate the actual communication strategy.

CHAPTER -6- CONCLUSION

On account of the ascertained problem of inactive business guests', this research report was conducted to investigate suitable communication tools to raise hotel guests' awareness of iFeedback®, and to discover an appealing benefit as well as an applicable behavioral model that, could instruct on how to turn business guests' into active iFeedback® users. Therefore, desk research was conducted to collect and analyze information on existing literature in this respect. Subsequently, field research was carried out in form of ten interviews, which determined the validity of the gathered information and provided initial insights to the research questions. Consequently, this chapter will aim to deliver the answers to all stated research questions.

Regarding current trends and developments within the hospitality industry, one could detect the importance clients' place on effective complaint and reputation management. Likewise, the increased mobile technology usage and guests' desire of personalized guest experiences and interactive customer service constitute key trends. In turn, this implied the necessity of utilizing a digital technology such as iFeedback®, and further served as indicator for a highly competitive environment. Accordingly, the market analysis findings indicated BHMMS's need to adapt to end users' needs, in order to avoid the risk of trailing behind competitors.

To evaluate the product's effectiveness, it was examined how clients' and BHMMS' introduced iFeedback® to business guests'. Findings from desk research stated that clients' hand out various display materials that read "feedback directly to the management" by means of QR code or browser. Furthermore, terminals are positioned at various contact points, in order to invite guests' to give feedback. In this way, guests' were introduced to the product's existence, but did not receive any explanatory information on its functioning and purpose. In turn, interviewees voiced their disinterest in the product, as the benefit "feedback directly to the management" was perceived as nice, but not appealing enough for repeat usage. Concerning BHMMS's promotional efforts, it was researched that this information was equally missing in the application itself, the social media postings and the product's website. Except for two interviewees', the majority stressed that social media postings were an ineffective promotional tool. In contrast, explanatory information on the product's and clients' website was considered crucial.

On account of the Literature Review findings, successful promotion requires a mixture of traditional media, web media and social media tools. For that matter, POP communications, PR, the clients' website, the iFeedback® website, Xing, Facebook and Twitter were selected as suitable communication tools. Based on the guests' media usage and interests, field research depicted the impracticality of PR, Xing, Facebook and Twitter. As a strong company image does not necessarily influence guests' usage behavior, PR was not needed. Again, social media tools were termed

unsuitable, as guests' either used these for different purposes or not at all. However, the most effective promotion was stated to ensue through a combination of POP communication, such as flyers and tall banners, and personal communication during the check-in.

In order to induce a successful behavior change, the following four behavioral models were assessed in the literature review: Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Stages of Change, Diffusion of Innovation (DoI) theory and the Innovation Adoption Lifecycle. Based on the in-depth interviews, one could conclude that, the DoI theory and the Adoption of Innovation Lifecycle were inapplicable. The former indicated the need of a social system that was non-existent, and the latter stressed various answers that did not allow drawing a coherent conclusion. Regarding the stages of change theory, business guests' could be grouped within the first, the pre-contemplation stage. Naturally, although business guests' theoretically knew of the product's existence, a lack of additional product information persisted, which contributed to the guests' missing intention to change. Therefore, moving on to the contemplation stage required the provision of information on the usage process and purpose, as well as the communication of a valid benefit. Similarly, the TPB indicated that an individual's intention determines whether an action is being taken. This intention is based on three factors, of which the first, the expected outcome, and the third, the perceived behavioral control, are relevant. Therefore, the first indicated the necessary provision of a positive outcome to the guests' feedback, which can be achieved as the benefit demonstrated in the subsequent paragraph highlighted. In contrast, the third, could already be easily fulfilled, as the means and opportunities to use iFeedback® are readily available. To conclude, both theories were applicable.

With the objective of identifying an appealing benefit, the target groups' needs, wants and habits needed to be taken into account. However, as the examination of the habits served as indicator for the stated barriers, which one wanted to break through on the basis of a suitable benefit, these were illustrated first. For that matter, the interview findings highlighted guests' general positive stance towards giving feedback, as this was associated with personal growth and development. However, as the time and efforts connected to this behavior is decisive, business guests' primarily give feedback once something is extremely positive or negative. Nonetheless, if these factors are less pressing, more neutral suggestions are made as well. Concerning guests' feedback habits in hotels, similar behavior was detected. Extremely positive situations drive guests' to voice positive feedback during their check-out. Pressing problems, which point towards the barrier of the problem's perceived significance, are generally voiced immediately and personally at the reception. This is due to the guests' want of an immediate reaction[20] and solution, which equals the benefit of giving feedback. Accordingly, if the problem is perceived insignificant and no valid benefit is detected, no feedback is

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[20] Consequently, an immediate reaction does influence a guests' behavior. This reaction indicates that the feedback, and hence the guest, was taken serious, which in turn creates trust in the client.

given as the costs outweigh the benefits. Moreover, based on the interview findings it was possible to rule out two barriers, namely the preference for public rating portals and the inexperience with QR codes. As consequence, the proposed barriers "lack of knowledge of the product" and "no appealing benefit" presented the primary reasons for the guests' inactiveness. Once the interviewees were enlightened on the feedback process, and hence on the product's functioning and purpose, the majority felt inclined to use it; on condition that an emergency or direct contact button was provided, guests would use iFeedback® for urgent problems. Accordingly, giving feedback was perceived beneficial once the guest knew that his feedback was received, read and reacted upon. This indicated the need to undertake a product modification, because as of now, the guest solely receives a generic thank you mail after sending his feedback.

Furthermore, the illustration of the product's purpose, which was expressed as 'the clients' sincere wish to change based on guest feedback, in order to improve its propositions' was perceived as benefit as well; as the clients' efforts evidently lead to an increased value for both parties. On that account, it was ascertained best to provide guests' with an explanatory flyer on the product iFeedback®, as well as with optimized display materials that could read "Our quality depends on you. Share your feedback with us". Likewise, it was suggested to make the invitation to give feedback more personal by showing a picture of the responsible contact person. These activities would catch the guests' initial interest. However, it was particularly highlighted that the validity of this benefit needed to be proven and displayed on the clients' website and newsletter in form of a list of carried out actions by the client.

Regarding the examination of the guests' needs and wants the findings of the literature review and the interviews stressed that, needs were not significant to the problem. Expectations on the other hand, constituted a crucial factor, as exceeding these meant providing the highest customer value. However, as business guests' continuously expect upscale and high quality service, this does not constitute an easy task. For that matter, the usage of iFeedback® is ideal to provide surprising service extras once the guest does not expect the client to react, for instance when purely suggestive feedbacks are given.

Lastly, the interviewees' majority denoted their intention of informing themselves further on the clients', and product's website as well as in the app store, once their initial interest was caught. This indicated the need to optimize the given information, and the need to receive more ratings, as these constituted the crucial factor in the guests' download decision making process. To conclude, the next chapter entails the recommendations for BHMMS and its clients, which are comprised of a strategic justification and the resulting communication strategy.

CHAPTER -7- RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of this research was to devise a communication strategy that enables BHMMS to raise the business guests' awareness of the product iFeedback® first, and animate them to become active users second. In order to fulfill that objective, it was necessary to determine appropriate communication tools and messages for the promotion, as well as to discover usage benefits that suited the guests' needs and subsequently triggered the desired behavior change. As consequence, desk and field research was executed to conclude possible solutions, which are illustrated in the following chapter. However, in order to attain the research objective, it was clear that the proposed activities needed to be undertaken by BHMMS as well as its clients. Therefore, all necessary activities were listed, but only BHMMS's activities were included in the organizational planning and budgeting section.

7.1. STRATEGIC JUSTIFICATION

On account of the executed research it was ascertained that, BHMMS, in cooperation with its clients', has to design a communication strategy, in order to successfully engage business guests to make use of iFeedback® via smartphone. Therefore, it was necessary to develop clear and attainable objectives as well as appropriate messages to communicate, connect and engage with the target group.

7.2. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

BHMMS aims to interest the following target group in the usage of iFeedback®: German business guests, who are hard-working and technology savvy business people, and further distinguished through their straightforward manner and value of high quality. This target group is defined as inactive users' and lacks the knowledge of the complete iFeedback® process, the purpose of the tool application, and the subsequent benefits its usage contains. For that matter, the fundamental communication objectives for the target group reads as follows:

KNOWLEDGE-BASED OBJECTIVE

Within four months of the start of the communication campaign, 25 percent of German business guests will be consciously aware of the product iFeedback® and hence, of the affiliated process and the clients' desire for guest feedback.

The goal of this objective is to raise the knowledge on how iFeedback® works, meaning the complete feedback process, and the clients' purpose of the tool's utilization. In this way, the guest is made

aware that, the usage is simple, fast and effective as well as that, the client actively seeks guests' opinions to successfully improve the guests' satisfaction as well as its own propositions. The client's objective in turn constitutes the guests' benefit.

ATTITUDE OBJECTIVE

Within six months of the start of the communication campaign, 20 percent of the German business guests' will take a look at the application, visit the iFeedback® or the clients' website, and will be aware that their feedback is desired by the client, as he illustrates the actions being taken based on the received feedback.

The goal of this objective is that German business guests' display an interest in iFeedback® and the opportunity the tool provides. This interest is displayed by either one of the following activities: taking a look at the application via QR code, browser, terminal, or app store, visiting the clients' or the iFeedback® website. This can only be accomplished once the behavioral objective has been fulfilled and hence, the guests' interest has been caught. By achieving the second objective, BHMMS and the client will gain more visitors on their website, which gives them the opportunity to present themselves and their propositions better.

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVE

Within nine months of the start of the communication campaign, 10 percent of German business guests will display an interest in iFeedback®, and in their opportunity of changing the quality of clients' propositions, by trying out and repeatedly using the product iFeedback®.

The goal of this objective is that German business guests acknowledge the clients' intentions and thus actively give feedback, in order to provide the client with the needed information. By achieving the third objective, the guest will benefit from more qualitative propositions, and contribute to the increased attractiveness of the client's hotel. In addition, the client will receive useful feedback that enables him to realize the hotel's full potential, which in turn might increase its customer retention rate. Furthermore, BHMMS benefits from increased product recognition, and based on its clients' successes, from an increased product quality perception.

7.3. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The subsequently developed communication strategy, which is a promotional strategy for the hospitality industry, illustrates how the defined objectives can be achieved.

7.3.1. THE KEY IDEA

The key idea delivers profound instructions on a suitable target group approach as well as positioning, and further provides a concept of fitting communication messages and instruments.

THE APPROACH

The first aspect that needed to be decided upon for approaching business guests' successfully was the form and style of communication. Therefore, it was determined that a one-way communication approach is fitting for the first two objectives, and direct two-way communication for the third. In terms of the appeal, it was decided to go with a rational one as plain information was preferred. As was gathered by the in-depth interviews, business guests are interested in supporting hotels in their desired improvement, as long as these make a serious effort. Therefore, business guests' need to be given hard facts on the actions that were taken based on received feedback, and further need to experience firsthand that their feedback is taken serious and is reacted upon. In consequence, the rational appeal can be applied to all three objectives, in order to raise awareness on the product, promote the clients' intention of improving its propositions with their guests' help, and to provide tangible results.

THE POSITION

With the objective of differentiating iFeedback® from public rating portals, paper questionnaires and other competitive feedback tools, it was decided to use a dual positioning[21] approach. In this way, iFeedback® benefits[22] can be linked to the business guests' values of high quality propositions and services.

THE CENTRAL THEME & MESSAGE

Based on the defined communication objectives, the central theme was defined as 'realizing hotels' full potential'. With reference to the message, one should explain the simple and effective feedback

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[21] Dual positioning is used to "[position] the functional product properties, both with the product benefits as well as with the values of the connected consumer. This positioning is thus a combination of informational and transformational positioning" (Cash Advance Loans, 2012).
[22] The benefit is based on the clients' proof of undertaken improvements, which mean the minimization of deficiencies and the maximization of quality.

process, publicize the clients' purpose of using iFeedback® and previous actions taken, which then ultimately present the needed incentive to make use of the product. Moreover, it should be pointed out that the guests' feedback contribution not only benefits himself, but also the client and other hotel guests. As business guests' generally give suggestive feedback and act as advisors, the message needs to convey that this constitutes the guests' role in the hotel. An example would be: "Be our change advisor. Share your feedback with us".

7.3.2. COMMUNICATION INSTRUMENTS

While deciding on suitable communication instrument to promote the message to business guests, the insight gathered during the in-depth interviews served as guide. Therefore, it would be most effective to introduce iFeedback® personally during the check-in as well as through the optimized business card and an additional flyer, which explains the complete feedback process. Based on this first product contact, it would be vital to reinforce the message, in order to display the clients' sincerity and engage guests' to take action. As a result, these instruments need to be incorporated in the communication strategy that has to be devised for the German hospitality industry by BHMMS and its clients'.

Firstly, BHMMS needs to adjust the display material's message according to guests' needs. This suggests that the communicated benefit should be changed as well as additional information on the feedback process and/or the clients' purpose should be included.

Secondly, BHMMS needs to optimize its website according to iFeedback® user needs, and therefore has to provide an easily understandable guide on the complete feedback process. Currently, no information exists in this regard. Hence, past visitors presumably aborted their information search despite of their initial interest.

Thirdly, BHMMS should consider asking its clients to state their iFeedback® experiences, and share their stories of success, on the iFeedback® website. By doing so, the perceived quality of the product rises and thereby, possibly its recognition rate among prospective clients and users.

Fourthly, BHMMS needs to continue doing research in regards to the hotel guests' preferences and expectations, as these can change over time, in order to advise their clients' on suitable ways to provide exceptional and appealing services. These findings can be incorporated in the monthly newsletter sent to clients. In this way, BHMMS becomes more indispensable and therefore, gives the client a reason to renew their contract.

Sixthly, it is of importance to consider various changes to the apps functions. First off, there should be a notification that the user only needs to answer the, to him, relevant question. In this way, the break-off rate can be decreased. Secondly, it should be examined whether it is possible to let the

iFeedback® user know when his feedback was received, read and whether an action has been or is about to be taken. Thirdly, based on the chosen category, the guest could be notified on who the feedback receiver is, making the communication more personal and valuable.

ADVISED CLIENT ACTIVITIES

Firstly, the client needs to incorporate any undertaken changes based on guest feedback on its website, in order to demonstrate that each feedback is taken seriously and used to improve the propositions and services in accordance to guests' wishes. This, increases the perceived product value and hence, the iFeedback® usage rate.

Secondly, the client should further include these changes in its monthly newsletter. As these are particularly sent to members of the client's loyalty program, the continuous updates on said improvements would reinforce the hotel's high-quality image and further, influence the guests' next booking decision.

7.3.3. ORGANIZATIONAL PLANNING

In order to effectively carry out the task of the communication strategy, the expertise and cooperation of four employees is required. Taking their performance of other work tasks into account, the execution of the ensuing actions will take place over a period of four months. In addition, two activities should be carried out repeatedly; hence the initial timeframe of this strategy is set on two years.

Instrument	Time	Frequency
Revising display material and designing one central message to communicate	December 2014 – January 2015, once	1x
Revising product website and devising an explanatory iFeedback® guide	December 2014 – January 2015, once	1x
Designing flyer with explanatory iFeedback® guide	December 2014 – January 2015, once	1x

Instrument	Time	Frequency
Gathering client input for product website in terms of product experiences	December 2014 – January 2015, every six months	4x
Revising application and developing a plan on how to realize and integrate the suggested features	December 2014 – January 2015, once	1x
Research hotel guests' needs, expectations and key trends, in order to gather suitable input for client newsletter	December 2014 – January 2015, every four months	3x a year

TABLE 3: ORGANIZATIONAL PLANNING

7.3.4. ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGETING

The organizational budgeting focuses on the changes that need to be undertaken, and therefore includes the activities carried out in the first four months.

PERSONNEL COSTS

Marketing Consultant

Needs to devise a central communication message and create an explanatory iFeedback® guide (once) = 1 1/2 working days

➢ Total: 12 hours = 960,00 EUR (80,00 Euro per hour, gross)

Graphic Designer

Needs to design a flyer and incorporate the guide, and further needs to adjust the current display materials (once) = 2 1/2 working days

➢ Total: 20 hours = 341,00 EUR (17,05 Euro per hour, gross)

IT programmer

Needs to devise a plan on how to adjust the application, and needs to implement the suggested features (once) = 6 working days

➢ Total: 818,40 EUR (17,05 Euro per hour, gross)

Marketing Intern

Needs to conduct research on hotel guests' needs and on general hospitality trends. Based on the findings, he needs to devise suitable communication input for the client newsletter. In addition, he has to gather client input in terms of their product experiences, which needs to incorporated on the product website = 4 working days within four months

➢ Total: 360,00 EUR (11,25 Euro per hour, net)

Personnel costs in total

➢ 2479,40 Euro (960,00 Euro + 341,00 Euro + 818,40 Euro + 360,00 Euro)

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APPENDICES

I. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION – INTRODUCTION

According to previously conducted research by the former BHM GROUP employee Florian Becker, there exist several different complaint barriers that prevent guests from using iFeedback® (Becker & Hadwich, 2013, pp ?). Two of these established complaint barriers were considered relevant to this research. Classified as enterprise related factors, these barriers read as follows: knowledge of complaint channels as well as significance of the problem (Becker & Hadwich, 2013, pp ?). Concerning the first barrier, many hotel guests either do not use iFeedback® because they lack the knowledge the product exists or they have seen it but did not recognize the benefit of using it; which in turn indicates that the product does not convey any effective appeal yet. In regards to the second barrier one could assume that the guest thought of giving feedback, but did not do so as the problem was not perceived as being significant enough. Naturally, both scenarios implicated that the currently used communication message on the iFeedback® display material - "Feedback directly to the management" – might not be sufficient enough to trigger the guests' activation. Likewise, the QR code[23] on the display material might not appear as appealing and hence does not spark the guests' interest to use it. Reasonably that is because QR codes depict an alien concept to most people. However, based on the results of the ensuing in-depth research one can later conclude whether this is also the case for the target group in question. Additionally, one could assume that the lack of knowledge could be further connected to a lack of brand awareness or an image gap. This in turn stressed the urgency to improve the positioning and promotion of the product and brand. In contrast, those guests who did give feedback predominantly gave it via the terminals, because these caught their attention and playfully engaged them to give feedback. Thus, it can be said that the sole iFeedback® usage ensues once an interesting gadget, such as the terminal, comes into play. The iFeedback® evaluations of various clients proof this statement. Once the client accesses his personal iFeedback® account, he can click on the category sources. There, one can see which terminal or display material was used to give feedback. Terminals generally rate the highest, while the access via smartphone remains between 5-15 percent.

Another barrier to consider was hotel guests' preference to use public rating portals to give feedback. Portals such as HolidayCheck or Tripadvisor are both well-known and hence enjoy a high top-of-mind awareness among guests. This in turn clearly represented another challenge, as the competitive behavior, namely the usage of iFeedback®, needed to be perceived as more appealing.

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[23] According to the Oxford Dictionaries a QR code is defined as "a machine-readable code consisting of an array of black and white squares, typically used for storing URLs or other information for reading by the camera on a smartphone" (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d., c).

Micro Environment

Over 1.000 clients within 30 countries and in five different industries successfully integrated the iFeedback® application already. However, acquiring new clients does not constitute an easy task. Therefore, the company pursues three different marketing strategies to acquire new clients. The first being direct distribution, the second distribution based on recommendations and the third the attraction of interested clients through the provision of valuable online content. Naturally each strategy has its assets and drawbacks. According to the senior marketing consultant Sebastian Kriegel, the most promising strategies however are the first and second. Despite the required high effort, the first strategy proves to be effective as you can target the desired clients and reach a considerable audience. Considering the second strategy, one cannot control when and how many potential clients contact BHMMS. However, the marketing advantage lies in the clients' belief in the product once they do inquire to learn more about iFeedback®. Meaning that, clients' who contact BHMMS usually recognized that the guests' immediate feedback enables them to realize their full service potential. (S. Kriegel, personal interview, August 26, 2014).

The ultimate goal of the company's is to grow its' workforce and client base. However, since the company does not benefit from any external funding, the objective is to take one step at a time. Therefore, in spite of an internal variance of opinion, the company is still considered to be a start-up (S. Kriegel, personal conversation, August 26, 2014).

More precisely, the variance in opinion is seen between the CEO Alexander Bauer and his marketing consultant Sebastien Kriegel. Bauer views his business as fully established. Kriegel considers it to be a start-up, mostly because of the company's primary hiring of interns and trainees. However, in order to lead a successful business, the CEOS' need to guide their company according to the current market situation. Clearly, the uncertainty prevails as to how many contracts will be signed or how many clients' will end their contract and therefore, costs and benefits have to be assessed carefully. Thus, the company only hires a small amount of full-time employees and depending on the current budget, more freelance collaborators.

Communication Analysis

In regards to BHMMS's posts on Linkedin and Xing, one can detect that clients do occasionally comment or like these posts. The last two to three channels are utilized to target potential clients. Since Linkedin and Xing are known as business networks, it was decided to create a GROUP as well as BHMMS company page. The content published on these is based on varying topics, like effective

customer relationship management, digital communication and engagement strategies. Since Linkedin allows to sponsor one's own articles to a specific target group, for instance to hoteliers or general managers, BHMMS already managed to gain 60 followers for its "engaging hospitality" company page. In this way, BHMMS is able to extend its clients network and further strengthens its image as an engagement expert. However, the actual image that clients as well as end consumers behold of the company and the product is not known and hence, would have to be ascertained during the in-depth research. Only then, one can determine whether an image gap exists.

The fourth communication tool to examine is the company's newsletters. The recipients of these are new potential clients on the one side and existing clients on the other. Reasonably, the content of these differ accordingly. Generally, existing clients receive information about application examples and product updates, or are offered a free consultation. New clients by contrast receive information on how to solve customer complaints, improve customer satisfaction and achieve a loyal customer base through the integration of iFeedback®. Sending these newsletters has proven to be an essential step in catching the interest of new as well as existing clients, especially since both versions always link to relevant sections on the iFeedback® website and hence generate valuable website traffic.

The fifth and last communication tool to consider is/are sales calls. Carried out by the senior marketing consultant, sales calls are used to attract potential clients. Usually these calls are combined with a webinar, in order to show the exact functioning of the application iFeedback® directly to the client.

Economic Environment

Taking the findings of the latest Economist issue as well as the press release of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy into account, one can detect a slower economic progression in the second quarter. On the one hand, this is based on the increased construction caused by a mild winter and on the other hand, on the current Ukraine conflict. Naturally, the latter event is the reason for the prevailing uncertainty and hence, companies' decision to put a hold on further investments (Economist, 2014).

Consumer Analysis

Considering the latest facts of the German Tourism Association's report (DTV) one could determine that, Germany remains among the most popular destinations for native travelers. In 2013 the number of overnight stays amounted to 339.95 million by native travelers alone (DTV, 2013, p.7). Additionally, according to an earlier conducted DTV city tourism study, there exist two

distinguishable motives for city tourism. The first highlights culture oriented travel, which accounts for the primary city tourism. The secondary city tourism is based on various motives; the leading motive however constitutes business and MICE. Both motives stress the German's preference for short stays (DTV, 2006, p.37). Moreover, based on these facts as well as on the study's in-depth behavior evaluation of these travelers, it was decided to target German business travelers in this research report. In addition, based on initial field research it was decided that the targeted business guest needs to be between the age of 25 and 45, because younger guest generally do not stay at these high-class hotels and older guests generally have too many difficulties with understanding applications. Therefore, the age 45 was considered a suitable limit.

III. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION – IN-DEPTH RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

TECHNICAL DESIGN – PLANNING SCHEDULE

Interviews	
Quantity	**Ten**
Interviewees	**Week 42**
	Katja (Telekom, B2BC2C Manager) on 14th October, 19:00
	Robert (CSCS, IT) on 15th October, 21:00
	Nils (Telekom, IT) on 16th October, 12:00
	Peter (Consultant) on 16th October, 19:00
	Jan (Consultant) on 17th October, 11:00
	Oliver (Talents Connect, Sales Promoter) on 18th October, 15:00
	Week 43
	Marco (Consultant) on 22th October, 18:00
	Daniela (Talents Connect, Sales Promoter) on 22th October, 20:00
	Yvonne (Flight Attendant) on 23th October, 13:30
	Markus (Consultant) on 25th October, 14:00
Duration	**Each interview takes +/- 45 minutes**
Timeframe	**Conducted within two weeks (13th October – 26th October)**
Preparation	➢ Activity 1: contact Interviewees (8th October – 15th October)

> Activity 2: schedule interviews within weeks (13th October – 26th October) → intermediate product
>
> Activity 3: prepare interview questions within one day (13th October)→ intermediate product
>
> Activities 1 and 3 are running simultaneously

Evaluation	Analysis of all five interviews will take one week
	End product: conclusions of all conducted interviews

TECHNICAL DESIGN – ERRORS

During the in-depth research it could have been possible that, among all the criteria ascertained during the interviews, one was not able to find any applicable criteria for the iFeedback® application. Therefore, one would have gathered an insight, however, not a suitable one for BHMMS. Moreover, it could have been possible that the feedback barriers determined in this research were not relevant for the target group or that, several barriers were considered relevant. In this way, it would not have been possible to devise an effective communication solution. In addition, it could have been difficult to gather suitable answers of just ten participants, especially as these did not meet all the desired criteria. Consequently, interviews among actual guests of BHMMS clients would have been a better solution. Furthermore, it could have happened that no appealing benefit was discovered or that, no suitable promotional tools were found to catch the guests' interest, which in turn should trigger the desire to give feedback.

IV. TRANSCRIPT SOCIAL MEDIA INTERVIEW

Interview with Janine Schneider, social media expert and manager at Lindner Hotels & Resorts, carried out on Friday, 24th October, 16:00 in Düsseldorf.

Duration: 40 minutes

I = Isabel (interviewer)

J= Janine Schneider (interviewee)

I: What role does social media play for hotel guests? Do you think it has a different meaning/significance for business guests?

J: "Social media" is a broad term. In our understanding social media means each virtual community, network or technique that allows the creation and exchange of content. So if we think about the role

of social media for our guests, we have to differentiate between business and leisure guests as well as between the different types of social media like social networks, location based services, user rated review portals, blogs and so on.

Social media plays a very important role for each kind of guest as a communication, information and service channel. But to discuss the matter in detail for the most part there are differences in the significance of social media for each guest group. Our leisure guests mostly experience their hotel stay as a consciously time-out. They are more likely to share their impressions with the community and engage on social platforms. Furthermore they are more sensible for hotel photos that brings their last stay in mind or provides holiday feelings. One could say they often use social media pretty emotional whereas business guests are more focused on information and service.

I: Can you name all communication channels that Lindner Hotels & Resorts use to address the guest?

J: Active communication:

- Facebook
- Google+
- Twitter
- Xing and LinkedIn (company news)

I: What do you consider to be the most important social media platforms for business guests aged 25-45?

J: It depends very much on the business guest's intention. For example Google+ offers many functions to get a quick overview of the hotel (e.g. Google Maps Business View, Photos, Reviews, Information), whereas Twitter allows a fast communication for example about service needs.

I: What kind of messages do you send on the various platforms?

J: By the use of social media platforms we aim to inform our fans through a strong visual language as well as through an emotional approach. By doing so, the content used is focused on current news, events in and around the hotel, as well as business campaigns. Business networks, like Linkedin and Xing, on the other hand are used to publicize press releases and company news. In addition, the microblogging network Twitter is used for the diffusion of information.

I: Do you use social media simply to inform your guests or also to engage them? Or else, do you manage to illicit a reaction from your guests? And if so, how?

J: Our social media activities are true to the motto "experience Lindner". Above all, the goal is to introduce the hotel authentically to the guest as well as to get them enthusiastic about the hotel, in order to subliminally prompt them to book. Ultimately, there is a certain information or message behind every post. Evidently, we try to involve the guest as well, in order to get to know him and make use of viral effects. However, we never enforce them to do so. For instance, by saying 'if you

are for option A click like, if you are for option B click share'. In contrast, our goal is to provide our guest with content that has an added value and further, make use of aimed questions.

I: Which platforms/channels should be used to engage guests?

J: There is no general way to answer this question. It's not the platform alone that decides about the success. The greatest social media challenge is to reach the right target group over the right channel with the right content at the right time. This selection is necessary to attain the highest possible business value. In this way, it can be important to use various platforms depending on the target group.

I: How do you introduce a new product or service? (Channel, Message, Tone)

J: Previously, we used various methods. For instance, during the renovation of one of our hotels we disclosed bits of details on the new designs over a longer period of time, in order to bridge the closing timeframe and boost the excitement.

I: Do you use different channels to reach different target groups?

J: Yes, we use different channels to reach different target groups. While we use social media networks like Facebook and Google+ to address leisure guests, we use communication via Twitter to address business guests and opinion leaders (journalists, blogger). As mentioned before, it is vital to know where each target group is located.

I: Do you think guests value your social media activities? Or do they directly benefit from certain activities?

J: Only a few industries can obtain a good distribution via social media. The hospitality industry is not among these, because the decision to stay at a hotel is not one that is made off-handedly. Instead the travel period is chosen, prices are compared, customer ratings are considered and fellow travelers involved. Even if the first travel impetus arose through social media, the subsequent planning is carried out on external booking portals or the hotel website itself. For that matter, our social media objective is to inspire, activate and retain our guests. Their feedback shows us that our efforts are appreciated. Our guests do not want to be coerced to stay with us, but instead wish to receive   suggestions   and   the   ability   to   relive   and   talk   about   their   stays.

I: For which purposes do you use social media?

J: Social Media backs various purposes:

- Infotainments and communication with the guest via social networks and Twitter
- Guest service via Twitter and social networks for direct contact
- Plain information (twitter, social business networks, rating portals)

- SEO-goals (v.a. Google+, Blogs)
- Marketing (v.a. Twitter, social networks)
- Customer retention and care

I: Do you think the value placed on social media will continue to rise?

J: In my view, social media is an integral part of business activities, but in the long term in expanded form. Previously social media was automatically connected to funny pictures on Facebook and Twitter, however, the future integration of social media will play a much larger role in other divisions. Nowadays, social media already intervenes in the hotel industry category customer service (reviews, bookings, complaints), marketing, SEO, rooms division and many more. Optimally controlling these interfaces and integrating social media holistically within the company is the challenge of the coming years.

An important example is the area of customer service. The guest uses the channel to contact that is familiar to him and just accessible. Sometimes, this can be the phone, e-mail and even a social media channel. While the telephone and e-mail contact is already focused upon of each customer service, social media is often focused on in other departments. Therefore, the aim must be to optimally link the channels and departments to respond quickly and appropriately to guest inquiries.

V.Transcript Guest Relations Manager Interview

E-mail interview with Liane Ruebenach, guest relations manager at Lindner Hotel City Plaza, received on Thursday, 23th October.

I = Isabel (interviewer)

L = Liane Ruebenach (interviewee)

I: Do your guests ask you about the product iFeedback® and its application purpose?

L: Up until now our guests used iFeedback® naturally and without any queries.

I: Do you react upon positive feedback? If so, how?

L: First of all, we answer to every feedback, provided that the guest wishes to be contacted. Secondly, we forward the feedback to the department in charge for informational purposes, as long as that didn't take place automatically already.

I: If a hotel guest gives negative feedback, how much time does it generally take to react upon these?

L: Provided that the guest data is available, immediately.

I: What can you offer the guest as compensation?

L: Compensations ensue based on the internal 'compensation-guideline', and are dependent on the following criteria: the severity of the problem, whether a damage has been caused by the hotel, which compensations appear suitable for the guest and his needs.

I: Is there a product or service that you can offer the guest as compensation without making any losses?

L: To 99 percent compensations are related with costs (treatments, price-reductions, cost free drinks/food or night stay's, upgrades to a higher room category subsequent stays)

I: On a percentage basis, how many guests could you satisfy or positively surprise through a quick reaction?

L: 99 percent of the questionnaires are anonymous. Therefore, it is not possible to answer this question.

I: How do you present iFeedback® at your hotel? Do you make use of display material and terminals? Did you integrate iFeedback® in various hotel documents?

L: We positioned two terminals (one at the banquet foyer, one at the hotel lobby), stand-up displays in the rooms, and new business cards are handed out during the check-in together with the room key.

I: Which communication channels are used to communicate directly with business guests? Or, how do you inform them about new propositions?

L: The communication channels are widespread. Among these are the reception, newsletter, social media and brochures.

I: What are the prevailing needs of business guests? Whereupon do they place the most value?

L: Business guests are price sensitive and constantly expect upscale service, quick and effective executions (check-in, check-out, breakfast), recognition, cost free and fast WLAN, modern TV system and fitness offer.

I: Concerning which areas do business guest complain the most?

L: The predominant complaints are voiced for Internet costs. After that ensure costs for the garage and breakfast.

I: A colleague mentioned business guests are the last to use iFeedback®, because they voice their problems and needs directly/personally. Why do you think, differentiate business guest and leisure guest in this way?

L: Business guests, especially regulars, consciously do not want to give anonymous feedback; they know their contact person at the hotel and know that, the problem might be solved immediately through the direct contact. Personally, I think that only a few of these business guests are really interested in iFeedback®, or else take the time to try it out.

I: Do you have a loyalty program that offers regulars a bonus?

L: Linder Nights is the loyalty program of Lindner. Among others, this is very appealing for regulars and business guests, because the WLAN is cost free from day one of the membership at all Lindner hotels. Moreover, guests are able to collect points and can subsequently convert them to nights' stay.

I: Do you have an assumption, as to what your guests (particulary business guests) associate with the product iFeedback®?

L: See the second last question.

I: Do you think, personal ratings made on public rating portals, such as HolidayCheck, are more important to the guest? If so, why?

L: The amount of ratings on hotels and restaurants in various portals rose exponentially in the last years. Many guests inform themselves before their booking about the hotel in question and decide whether or not to book (at least partly) based on other guests' comments.

I: Is there anything that you would improve in regards to the product iFeedback®?

L: We consider iFeedback® to be an excellent product, which is very much used by leisure guests, primarily on weekends. However, many guests shy away from entering their name or room number. For that matter, it is difficult for us to promptly resolve possible mentioned criticism (i.e. curtains in the room hang crooked.)

VI.Transcripts and Conclusions of all In-Depth Interviews

Interview with Katja (25), T-Systems B2BC2C Manager, on Tuesday 14th October, 19:00

Duration: 55 minutes

Interviewer: Isabel Nitsche

Interviewee: Katja Tibbe

[Turned on memo recorder]

I: Hi, Katja. Thanks so much for taking the time for this interview. I really appreciate it. Did my brother tell you what the interview is about, or shall I explain it again?

K: Hi, Isabel. Sure, it's no problem. I actually got of work early tonight so this works out perfect. Yeah, your brother did tell me a little bit about it last week when he tested whether or not I am a viable candidate for you, but if I am honest, I forgot most of what he said again. So, I would definitely not mind, if you gave me a little introduction.

I: *Sure. Well, the interview is part of my last research project for the university, which is connected to the internship I did during the last six months. Thus, I decided on a research topic based on the company's distributed product. To clarify, I worked for a small company called BHM MEDIA GROUP, which primarily markets the application iFeedback®. It's a digital questionnaire that is used to gather real-time feedback. Have you heard of the product yet?*

K: At the moment I can't recall whether I've heard of it yet. I might have seen it, but I probably did not really recognize it yet.

I: *Alright, that's not a problem. Well, the application is used by clients of several industries, but the main focus for me was set on the institution in the hospitality industry in Germany. And the issue that you might have guessed already is that, the knowledge of the product hasn't effectively spread yet. Therefore, there are many guests that do not make use of the product, and among these are business guests. To sum things up, my goal is to examine to what degree iFeedback® currently appears appealing to you, and find a way that makes you want to use the product.*

K: Haha, okay. It sounds interesting. So let's see how I can be of help.

I: *Okay. First off, I have sent you the definition of the four business types. Do you consider one of them fitting in regards to your personality?*

K: Yeah, I actually remembered them from my studies. I would say I am the dominant and expressive business type.

I: *What kind of lifestyle do you pursue?*

K: I am very active. I work quite a lot, meaning I usually work after hours. So leisure activities are only taking place during the weekend. Yeah, and I try to balance my workload by doing sports during the week. So ultimately, my day ends around seven or eight o'clock.

I: *Sounds exhausting, but fits the profile. Alright, let's move on to the next question. Are there any criteria that you apply when you download or even buy a new application?*

K: At this point, I use quite a lot of social media applications. Games less. And otherwise I am always looking for apps that can increase my productivity. Or those that seem to make my daily life easier. Whether or not I actually use these is another question. Apart from that, I really like those

applications that help you trigger sportive activities. Mostly this is some form of planner, which is good because I am kind of chaotic.

I: Yeah, I know the feeling. I actually downloaded apps of that kind as well, but eventually you stop using them as they do not help you conquer your weaker self. But the idea itself does sound appealing. Okay, so which apps would you say are the most important to?

K: Well, the ones I use daily are Facebook, Whatsapp and my e-mail.

I: How about newspapers or magazines?

K: No, I don't use any apps for that. If I want to read the news or any other interesting article, I use the internet browser.

I: Okay. To what degree does the image of the application or the company behind it play a role in your decision making process?

K: To certain degree it's important to me. In terms of safety, I take the distributor/company behind it into account, especially for banking apps. Otherwise, if there are several options to choose from, I'll generally choose the application that is known to me. I mean, if I look for a new image editing application I am most likely to choose something from Photoshop.

I: Sure. We are prone to buy or use the products that we recognize and trust. Okay, this is more or less connected to my next question. Well, do you buy a product based on its advertised image and your subsequent association with it?

K: Yes, I do. I guess the easiest example is always Apple. There are three Apple devices lying on my couch alone. So for me Apple users fit the image of being young, dynamic etc. which suits me.

I: Are you receptive to emotional factors that are connected to an application, such as humor?

K: Well, you named the one that's definitely effective. For instance, I use this 9gag application. It's always good for pastime during the way to work.

I: Which media channels do you make use of most frequently? Any maybe, you can differentiate between those used during as well as for work and those used in your private life.

K: Well, I am mostly active on social media. In regards to my private life I mostly use Facebook, and in terms of work I use Xing and Skype a lot. I don't have Linkedin.

I: Okay. So, if you are interested in a product, are you most likely to use social media to inform yourself about it?

K: Well, I might use Facebook to do that. But most certainly I would just google it and take a look at its own website.

I: Does it interest you when a company, or let's say a hotel, informs you via Twitter on its latest offers or events?

K: I must admit I am not using Twitter. Somehow, this trend totally passed me by. I suppose Facebook is the best way to inform me on new apps or offers. Last week I downloaded the HRS app and surely Facebook is aware of that, and displays products related to it saying "you could also like this". Comparing Facebook to Xing it becomes evident that the business channel does not have the same capacity to reach me. It's more technical.

I: Are you interested in sales promotions? Does for instance the membership in a hotel loyalty program interest you, where you receive certain discounts once you continue to book there?

K: Yes, of course.

I: Which kind of information interests you the most in regards to a new product? For instance, do you book for test reports or feature descriptions?

K: The first aspect that I look at is customer ratings. For instance, on Amazon I always look how many stars the product received, then who wrote the rating and particularly when it was written. Then I look at the product's features. I ask myself, what does the product offer in comparison to others?

I: Okay. Then are you interested in sweepstakes? For instance, if the hotel offers you a free dinner in turn for your participation, would you take that offer serious and participate?

K: Yes, but my participation depends on one important factor. Namely, what is my data used for. Does the distributor only want to know my e-mail address to send me eight offers a day? In that case I am not interested. If my data is only used for commercial purposes, I am not doing it. Otherwise, yes.

I: Okay, then let me give an example. A hotel offered guests three different prices in return for giving feedback on their service. The name and e-mail address that guests needed to enter were then used to contact the chosen winners. Of course, the check-out page also offered guests to sign up for the hotel's newsletter, but that was optional. So, I suppose this form of data usage would be fine for you?

K: Most definitely. That's not the problem. The only problem is when my mail is used for spam.

I: Okay. Are you familiar with the concept of QR codes, and are you a user of these?

K: Yes, I actually used these for my job application. Instead of writing down my phone number, I incorporated a QR code, in order for them to call me directly. I have to admit it took me a while to figure out how to do this, but it was worth it as I made a good first impression.

I: That's really a neat idea. So where would you see yourself in the innovation adoption lifecycle in regards to the use of QR codes?

K: I would say I belong among the early adopters. I know the QR code usage has not reached the mainstream yet, so it's difficult to correctly group yourself in the lifecycle. However, I use them quite a lot and I now that I am ahead of this trend as opposed to my friends.

I: *Okay, how does it look in terms of applications? Do you see yourself as an early adopter there as well?*

K: Well, surprisingly not. I don't know why it took me so much longer to adapt to applications, but I would rather group myself in the late majority category.

I: *Okay. Generally, where do you see yourself in terms of the adoption of new applications on the market? Are you one of the first to try them out, or do you wait a while until you have more information on their functionality and value?*

K: Well, I am not the one to try the newest apps. Instead, I rather browse the app store category called "most-popular". Therefore, I like to know what other people already successfully use and for that matter, I would say I am one of the last ones to join the club.

I: *Alright, good to know. Let's continue with applications. I have sent you various benefits that can, or are, associated with an application. Could you name me between three or five that you look for the most?*

K: Yeah, I actually noted them down already. The most important ones to me are: Happiness, efficiency, savings, entertainment and pleasure/avoidance of pain.

I: *Okay, thanks. Last question concerning you application usage behavior. What is the most relevant aspect that makes you trust an application and therefore, triggers you to try it?*

K: Well, I can't really generalize that. There are various factors that come into play. The first would evidently constitute experiences of other customers. When you don't know the application, you need this information as guidance. Secondly, I would look for test reports, such as etrusted or so. And I would listen to word-of-mouth recommendations. Thus, I pay attention to how many times the application was mentioned in my network and by whom. Apart from that, it would definitely help when friends or members of my family mentioned the application before. Those are the people I am most likely to trust. And well, to me trustworthy information only comes from a reliable source. So I am rather going to believe what Spiegel tells me than the Bild newspaper, as it's publicly accredited.

I: *Yeah, I get that. Okay then, let's move on to the next interview section, namely your business trips. How often are you on a business trip? For what reason, and how long do you usually stay?*

K: I am travelling every two months. Usually because a new project is initiated by a client or a problem has arisen. Therefore, I generally travel together with a few colleagues. Oh yeah, and we usually stay between one or two consecutive nights.

I: Alright, what kind of hotels do you stay at and how do you make your booking decision?

K: Well, since I am a full-time employee for the Telekom I can only book my hotel through the company's internal booking portal. The hotels I can choose from are generally three or four star hotels.

I: And what do you expect from those hotels? Or what do you value the most while you are there?

K: Since most of the hotels I stay at are four star hotels, I expect a certain degree of comfort. My room needs to have an acceptable bathroom and should be 'newly' renovated. And of course, it has to be clean; but that's the absolute basic one can expect. Another important factor plays modernity. I don't like these old hotels, where you feel as you've just travelled to the last century. Apart from that, the service needs to friendly, fast and efficient. When I arrive at the reception and introduce myself, I don't want to wait ten years until they have my room ready or pressure me to fill in some unnecessary forms. Everything has to fit right away.

I: okay, what are you looking forward to when you come to the hotel?

K: I want to be given comfort, a functioning TV, and I need my quiet. I need these three factors to calm down from work and relax.

I: Did you ever have a memorable guest experience, be it good or bad, due to the hotel's service?

K: Yeah I can give you examples for both. There was a negative incident, where the receptionist didn't realize that she double booked my room. And when I opened the room I stood face to face with a half-naked grandma. I told myself I am never ever going to stay at that hotel again. I mean, the receptionist apologized and gave me another room, but it just annoyed me too much at that point. However, I can also remember a positive experience. I was in Hamburg and couldn't find a hotel. So I stayed at this tiny biological hotel, where there was also only one room left. And while they filled in all necessary information at the reception, I was offered a nice drink while I waited. That made a really good first impression on me and I thought, I'd like to come back here.

I: Well, I can image the shock standing in front of a half-naked guest. So, if a negative incident occurs or a problem arises, do you complain? And if you do, which channel do you use?

K: Yes, I do complain. Whenever a problem arises I don't wait until the next day, I voice it immediately at the reception. I do it in person, because I want my problem to be dealt with as soon as possible. And in this way, the staff is most certainly going to take me seriously. However, if the

problem is not resolved after this personal talk, I am going to call the reception or the customer service again or I write an e-mail.

I: *Okay, to you the time and effort connected to this complaint is then worth it?*

K: Yes, because I want to relax during my stay. If I don't say anything, I continue to be pissed off and that's not going to help with the relaxation plan.

I: *Sure. So, do you also make use of public rating portals, such as HolidayCheck, to give feedback?*

K: Yes, I use these sometimes, as I also appreciate the ratings of others. I use their ratings as guide during my decision making process. And I want to give the hotel the chance to improve or the chance to keep up the good quality. Therefore, I write about aspects that were good, because I want them to stay that way and enable the staff and management to keep up the good work. I also write about negative aspects, in order to emphasize what needs to be improved. And if something negative occurred and no action was taken to change it, I mention it because I don't want other prospective guests to make the same mistake as I did when I booked that hotel.

I: *But I presume that you use these portals after you stay, is that correct?*

K: Yes, that's right.

I: *If something was exceptionally good, do you tell the staff personally about it as well?*

K: If something was good, I will let the staff know. But I am not going to go downstairs to let them know at that exact moment. I will just tell them once I check out.

I: *Okay, surely you expect the staff to react immediately to your complaint. However, if you use public rating portals to complain, do you also expect a reaction on behalf of the hotel?*

K: Of course, I like it if they do. I actually experienced that once, as a restaurant commented on my rating. So yes, I do expect it, but usually that expectation is not met.

I: *Okay, assuming the staff made a mistake do you give them the chance to make amends?*

K: It is out of the question that mistakes occur. But in my opinion, it is not acceptable when the staff takes too long to eliminate that mistake. If it's a triviality, and the staff tells me that it takes about half an hour and meanwhile, I should go to my room, relax a little and drink a coffee, that's totally fine for me. I mean, I am not going to turn in a fury just because they don't solve the issue within five minutes. However, at some point my patience snaps. For instance, when I am told the manager will be back in three hours or they don't have time for me right now, then I get furious.

I: *Do you like to publicly share your service experiences with others? Or else, what makes you want to share?*

K: I do share my experiences with others on Facebook, but I am only doing that when I am asked by somebody. So I need that as trigger.

I: Okay, then we move on to the last section, iFeedback®. First off, what do you associate with feedback?

K: I know that it is not true, but to me feedback still has a negative connotation as I connect it to criticism. So I am rather prone to give feedback once something is really bad; or else, once something is very good. If something is only good or okay, it's difficult to give feedback in it.

I: Okay, then let me tell you a little bit more about iFeedback®. As I said before, it's a digital questionnaire. This means that BHMMS particularly designs questionnaires in accordance with the client's wishes, in order to enable guests to rate various categories. In the hotel, the top categories would i.e. constitute the conference area, the spa, the restaurant and the hotel itself. Now, based on the chosen area, the guest then has the chance to give feedback on a sub category, such as the cleanliness of his room. This feedback is based on a one-to-five star rating and an optional comment. Once the rating has been completed, the guest can decide on the check-out page whether he leaves his contact details and says he wishes to be contacted, or whether he sends his feedback anonymously. So far so good?

K: Yes, I got everything.

I: Alright, as you might have guessed already the iFeedback® questionnaire can be accessed via Smartphone, by the use of the provided QR code or browser link on various display materials. The advantage here is that, the guest does not have to download the app or fill out a registration to give feedback. In addition, hotels also provide so called terminals. These are simply iPads in a theft-proof stand, which are positioned at various contact points, such as the hotel entrance or the reception. And up until now, the greatest iFeedback® usage ensues through the terminals. Therefore, it is assumed that these are used because it's a nice gimmick and the QR codes are not appealing enough. And, oh yeah, the display material has the QR code together with the benefit "feedback directly to the management" printed on it. Now the question is, whether guests find this benefit appealing and whether they realize that using iFeedback® is even more effective than giving personal feedback.

K: Well, that reminds me of something I have seen at the Steigenberger in Hamburg last time. There, a flyer was handed to the guest that read "If you have any problems, suggestions or wishes you can contact me directly". And the flyer itself, had a picture of the manager together with his contact details printed on it. Therefore, I think a picture always makes it easier and more believable. It doesn't have to be the manager's picture, it could also be two different staff members that can be contacted anytime. So, I think saying feedback directly to the management makes it more difficult to trust, as if you make a personal and convey the motto "I am always there for you".

I: True, that's a good idea thanks. Okay, knowing what you know about iFeedback® now. What would you associate with the product? Would you think it is helpful and using it gets you what you want?

K: If this tool really has a direct connection to the management, I would question whether it is possible to include the option contact me. For instance, if I sit in my room and something bothers me excessively, I only have two options. For one I can go down to the reception or I can call. Both are not really pleasant. Therefore, if I there was an option "contact me. I am available in the next five minutes" and subsequently, somebody would come to my room and ask how he or she could help me that would be perfect. Then, I would definitely take the tool serious and use it. Otherwise, sure I would believe the slogan "feedback directly to the management" if you subsequently feel that it's true.

I: Right. Nonetheless, it is difficult to convey that message. Apart from that, the company that distributes iFeedback® advises clients to incorporate vouchers etc. on the check-out page once negative feedback was given. Some clients do it, but many don't. Consequently, would you rather consider giving feedback, one you are promised an incentive?

K: Sure. I think you should just explain the tool a little bit during the check-in and then, tell guests that in return for their feedback, they can get an hour of free Wi-Fi, for instance. That's an incentive that isn't too costly and is pretty much appreciated by everybody. Generally, when you are not a member in the hotel's loyalty program, you have to pay for Wi-Fi. But usually you don't pay for it, unless you need it in order to work. And as offering an hour of free Wi-Fi wouldn't be enough time for them, this wouldn't constitute a loss for the hotel. It's the perfect giveaway.

I: True, free Wi-Fi is always a catch. Okay, if you have the choice, would you rather use your smartphone or the terminal to give feedback?

K: Difficult. But using the terminal means I am bound to stand somewhere in the hotel, so I guess I would rather use my smartphone. Then I am free to give feedback when and wherever I want to.

I: Alright. And I mean, once a problem arises and you are in your room you won't have a terminal anyway. So smartphone is the perfect chose. So, since you are familiar with QR codes, would you rather use them or the browser, or download the application?

K: Well, at first I would use the QR code. However, if I stay at the hotel more often, such as the NH hotels, I would download the application.

I: Okay, knowing what you know about iFeedback® now, would you continue to give personal feedback or use the application?

K: Well, I would definitely use iFeedback® once something positively surprises me and once something of mediocre importance occurs. Then I rather make suggestions or so. However, if

something urgent happens I would continue to tell that personally. Except, if there was like an emergency button, then I'd use iFeedback® too.

I: Sounds good. Okay, iFeedback®'s brand essence states "loyalty for life". Does that sound appealing to you? Or else, can you associate with it?

K: No, it's not appealing at all. Nowadays, loyalty is tainted negatively. It expresses everything and nothing. I understand that the product should promise that the guest is loyal towards the hotel, no matter what, but no guest would ever do that. Nowadays, all offers are closely assessed and therefore, one always decides on the best offer. So, you are loyal to your partner or your family, but never to a hotel or a product.

I: Okay, based on what you said before. I wonder whether you would use iFeedback®, if you knew that your feedback is always appreciated and you the hotel sincerely wants to improve its propositions and services?

K: Yes, I would definitely be willing to do that. If someone is willing to improve, I am pleased to give him feedback. Once you realize your feedback falls on deaf ears, I would not make the effort. For instance, if I give a feedback about something that bothered me in the elevator and based on that I would receive a personal e-mail three days later that says, "We took a look at the elevator and found a malfunction. It was immediately fixed. We thank you very much for your feedback and support", I would definitely give feedback more often. Additionally, based on such a reaction, I would also revise a previously negative statement on a public rating portal. Moreover, I think this approach would work in smaller hotel chains, but I doubt that it works for bigger ones. I believe, once a hotel chain goes global, the hotels only aim to collect data, but don't use these to draw any conclusions.

I: Well, I don't know whether one can actually say that, but would you like to give feedback because you appreciate your role as supporter?

K: I don't know whether I would go in that direction. As you generally give feedback to complain about something or someone, I don't know whether it is right to say you are a supporter. Of course, when I criticized something and the hotel takes the time and effort to change something based on that, then I would feel somehow important; even if it was trivial. But you know at that point that your opinion was valued. And if the management then says yes you were right, well that's just plain awesome.

I: Would you consider it useful to integrate the iFeedback® logo and QR code on the client's promotional materials or business documents? Meaning, would you take iFeedback® more serious once it's better interconnected to the hotel?

K: Yes, definitely. It is always good when the logo is repeatedly seen or when you can connect the color pattern.

I: *Okay, if I may ask. What would you consider to be the most important aspects to inform the guest on in regards to iFeedback?*

K: Most definitely, I would advise the company who distributes iFeedback® to inform on what the product stands for, what its utilization can accomplish and, which hotels already use it. And in order to raise more awareness on the product, I would suggest to incorporate it in the hotel's Facebook page and to hang a tall banner at the reception of the hotel.

I: *Alright, awesome. Last but not least, I devised some messages that could be used instead of the previously communicated benefit "feedback directly to the management". Maybe you could tell me your opinion on them, and whether there is one, which you would consider better or unsuitable for that matter. I just sent them to you by mail.*

1. *"Be our quality/change advisor. Feedback directly to the management."*
2. *"Be our greatest advisor and share your feedback with us."*
3. *"Our quality depends on you. Share your feedback with us."*
4. *"Our quality depends on you. We take your feedback serious."*
5. *"Our quality depends on you. We take immediate action."*
6. *"We want you to get your money's worth. Please share your feedback with us."*
7. *"Your feedback is our incentive (…to grow, develop, improve, change)."*
8. *"Let us make your stay memorable. Feedback directly to the management."*

K: Okay, sure. Let me just open them. Well, I like them in that order: 8, 3, 4, 5. However, in regards to five I would switch the word incentive with change. Considering, why I like them I would have to say that, these suggest that my opinion counts without seeming false. It is easygoing as well as challenging. This is a great combination. The others are not bad, but from a marketing perspective these are not really appealing. Moreover, I would be careful by setting this in relation to a financial value. A negative feedback could then turn out even more negative. And in regards to the fifth, I think the formulation is a little unfortunate. Assuming that all hell is breaking loose at the hotel and the staff is not able to take remedial action, the guest presumable feels kidded. Thus, I think one shouldn't promise that, don't you?

I: *True, that could always happen. Well, this was it! I thank you so much for all the insights you've given me.*

K: You are welcome. If you should have any more questions feel free to contact me anytime.

[Turned off memo recorder]

Interview with Robert (34), IT programmer for CSC, on Wednesday 15th October, 21:00.

Duration: 45 minutes.

Starting off, the reason as well as objective of this report was explained to the interviewee. On that account, the product iFeedback® was introduced and the question raised, whether the application was already familiar to the participant. The participant responded with no. In turn, the participant was asked to introduce himself. First off, the participant works as a full-time employee at CSC. This constitutes a huge IT consulting firm that mainly does large-scale projects in terms of logistics worldwide. Although the participant works as a programmer, he indicated that he frequently goes on business trips to meet with clients, solve problems or initiate new projects. Therefore, the participant highlighted his heavy workload and simultaneously stressed his happiness about being an employee and not a freelancer. For him being a freelancer would mean never being able to disconnect from work. Because, even though he happily works a 60 hour week, he still values his private life and therefore leisure activities. Subsequently, the participant characterized himself as hard-working but introverted business type.

On account of the question whether the participant applied any criteria during his application buying process, the participant firstly stressed the low number of applications he uses. The applications he uses constitute those needed in one's daily life, such one's e-mail, the weather forecast and several newspapers. He adds, of course there are more, but the preference is placed on applications that have a practical benefit in one's daily life. Therefore, the applications in the app store needs to have a description that proposes an appealing value. Asking whether knowing the company behind the application played an important factor, the participant answered with "not really". Of course, he would look at an application where he had heard the name of before, or where he knew that the company always offered valuable products or services. Nevertheless, these do not depict the knock out criteria. Therefore, he said that he also uses "no name" applications, once initial trial emphasized that they functioned effectively as well. Based on the question whether there are any criteria that make him trust an application more easily, he replied that the download of the application shouldn't require a registration. In addition, the proposed application should not ask for personal information that is not relevant for the service the application offers, such as one's personal pictures. These kinds of applications always create doubt and make him shy away from downloading these. Additionally, the participant highlighted that his own experience as well as the experience of others would make him trust a product. Of course, if one does not have any experience with the prospective product yet, one has to build on the comments and ratings of other customers.

Regarding whether he used applications due to their advertised image, he answered with no. He told about his use of Apple products, however, clearly stated that he started buying these before the

hype about Apple started. As consequence, he stayed with Apple because he made good experiences with their products. Nevertheless, he further stated that seeing a particular image or brand over a long period of time would definitely influence his buying behavior. It's just how we unconsciously function, he says. In addition, he considered emotional factors not necessarily effective.

Concerning the participant's media usage, not much information was gathered. In regards to social media, the participant replied that these did not appeal to him. His only activity could be seen on Xing, however, only for networking purposes. According to him, this network is always good to make new contacts, especially through their offered groups. Therefore, he stressed his participation in a group called "colleagues in cologne" and said that these were nice, as one always receives various event invitations. Apart from that, the participant denoted that he frequently browses the internet, but does not visit any particular websites. Except for computer related matters.

Asking whether sales promotions constituted a suitable incentive, the participant replied that this varied depending on the offer and the company offering it. For instance, any form of collecting points was considered too laborious. The only time he was interested in doing so, was once he could receive discounts at the Shell gas station. The perceived benefit was greater. Concerning sales promotions in form of discounts offered at a hotel, he displayed a general disinterest. Since CSC has fixed prices with every hotel, discounts were not relevant to him.

In terms of the participant position in the Innovation Adoption Lifecycle, one could not draw a clear conclusion. On the one hand, the participant describes himself as computer and technical nerd, who always tries out new gadgets that most people haven't even heard of yet. For that matter, he mentioned his interest in the Apple watch with great enthusiasm. However, in regards to QR codes and applications, the participant grouped himself in the early majority category. He denoted the problem that QR codes still aren't of general knowledge. Hence, their usage isn't deemed effective according to him. On that account the participant was asked whether he would use the iFeedback® terminals, instead of the QR code. He answered that he would prefer the terminals, given that he had the time and felt the need to give feedback. This need would basically constitute an incident that he did not like. Therefore, he stressed that he would never use such a tool to vent his complete frustration to the management. Instead, small suggestions would do it for him.

Consequently, the participant was questioned on his business stays next. Therefore, it was ascertained that the participant generally travelled alone, stayed between two and seven nights, and usually frequented four star hotels. The reasons for his business trips were manifold. Among others, these comprised sales pitches, presentations, trainings or fixing a client's problem. Based on the question what time and place would suit him best to introduce him to a new product or offering, the participant said during the evening, when he checked in at the hotel. In regards to his expectations of

a four star hotel, the participant named the following factors: generally quiet, a quiet air conditioner, a modern TV, a good breakfast offer, good quality. Concerning the latter he clearly emphasized the need of an appropriate value-for-money ratio. In terms of factors that annoyed him most, he stressed loud music and bad breakfast.

Examining what high quality service meant to the participant, the answer constituted the attention to details. For instance, he explained that one hotel, which generally provided acceptable service, remembered his birthday once and surprised him with a little birthday cake. This was the greatest experience I ever had with a hotel and it continued to be the reason I come back to it.

Asking whether the participant also made negative experiences with a hotel before, and whether these moved him to give feedback, his answer was yes. However, the problem needed to be severe. In that case, he would voice his complaint personally at the reception. An example for negative experiences was the hotel bar's extremely loud music. However, voicing this complaint did not help as the staff put him off and said it will be quieter around 11. In this case, the participant didn't expect a special treatment, but he definitely wished for one to make up for his frustration.

In terms of his attitude and behavior in regards to public rating portals, one could detect his clear interest and value of these portals. According to him, these customer ratings deliver a great point of reference, and help him to get an idea of the hotels offerings. However, he also questioned the validity of these, as one never knows whether the hotels wrote many of these ratings themselves. For that matter, the participant acknowledges his dependency of these, is happy that these exist to guide him, but continues to be skeptical.

Subsequently, the participant was asked what he associated with giving feedback and whether he was the person to do so frequently. As a result, the participant firstly characterized himself as not being the type to give feedback. He does give feedback seldom; however, this indicates that something must be really wrong. In addition, he clearly recognizes the value of feedback, as it helps others to develop and improve. Nonetheless, to him feedback means an unwanted confrontation.

After explaining the product's design, functioning and purpose further to the participant, it was asked what he associated with the product. The first comment was the "I" of iFeedback® reminds me of Apple. And since I love everything about Apple, I think I like the product too. Following that comment, the participant highlighted that he liked the idea that his feedback was directly send to the management. However, to him it raised the question what level of management was meant. Generally, he associated the word management with highly important people, such as the hotel director, who definitely has to carry out more important work and wouldn't have the time to react to his personal feedback. For that matter, the benefit "feedback directly to the management" was

perceived as unsuccessful. To him, knowing that the management stood behind the product and supported its use would be more efficient.

Asking whether the participant would download the application or use the browser to open the digital questionnaire, the participant responded that this would depend on the usage frequency. If more than one hotel used the application, the participant stressed that he would prefer to download the application. Another important decisive factor during the download decision constituted the degree of the product's effectiveness. If using iFeedback® would guarantee an instant reaction, meaning a staff member would knock on his door after ten minutes and ask how he could help, the participant immediately agreed to use the application instead of giving personal feedback. In this way, he could prevent an unwanted and unpleasant confrontation at the reception.

Thereupon, an interposed question was raised, in order to examine whether the participant considered the product's brand essence "loyalty for life" appealing and suitable. This was not the case. According to him, this slogan did not have any meaningful relation to the product iFeedback®. Of course, the goal is that the hotel guest is loyal to the hotel, but never to the product.

Based on the question whether the participant would make use of iFeedback® once it was clear that, every feedback was welcome and even desired, as the hotel sincerely aimed to improve its propositions and services, the participant answered with yes. He said, once he knew has the feeling that it is actually important to the hotel, he would use iFeedback®.

With the goal of catching the participants interest in iFeedback®, it was asked whether further information on the product and its purpose or the repeated contact to the logo at other contact points were considered more effective. As consequence, the participant assumed that most people would consider iFeedback® to be a tool similar to thousands of others, once they saw the material for the first time. Consequently, nobody would ever think that this tool actually provides the direct contact to the management. Based on that, the participant said once the hotel just needed to inform their guest that using this tool means that somebody will and wants to tend to the guest's problem right away. This would be the suitable solution. In contrast, repeatedly seeing the logo would not constitute a strong appeal. In addition, as the product needs to be connected to the hotel, in order to emphasize its importance to the hotel, the participant advised to inform on the product's process and purpose in form of explanatory flyers that are handed out during the check-in. Once one reads that somebody is going to react, one will not make the effort of calling the reception or going there personally to voice one's opinion.

Interview with Nils (32), IT programmer for Telekom, on Thursday 16th October, 12:00.

Duration: 40 minutes.

To begin with, the reason and the objective of this report were illustrated to the participant. On that account, the product iFeedback® was introduced and it was asked, whether the application was already known. On that account, the participant responded with no. In turn, the participant was asked to introduce himself and illustrate his job as well as lifestyle a little bit further. First off, the participants said that he worked for the T-Systems in Bonn, as a master data manager. More precisely, he handles all address data and control systems of t-systems clients. As he is in the position to manage several employees in this regards, he bears a lot of responsibility and handles a heavier workload than his co-workers. On the one hand, he likes his position and on the other hand, it stresses him a little bit as he considers himself an introverted business type. For that matter, he does not enjoy business trips as much.

Based on the question whether the participant applied any criteria during his application download decision process, the participant highlighted that he orients himself at what the majority buys, such as the application WhatsApp. Apart from that he stressed that the application shouldn't send push notifications in form of advertisings on the one hand, and shouldn't deplete too much of his battery on the other hand. In both cases, the application would be deleted immediately. Subsequently, the participant was asked whether knowing the company behind the application played an important factor during his decision making process. Therefore, the participants answered partly. As stressed before, his buying decision is based on the opinion of the majority. Consequently, these applications usually have a company behind it that he already knows well. For that matter, knowing about the company is not necessarily important, but he usually does know about them due to his buying behavior. Nevertheless, he also indicated that he would use no-name applications once a friend or family member would advise him to. In turn, this also constituted the reason that allowed him to trust an application. Additionally, the participant said that the most frequent used applications were Whatsapp, e-mail and his camera, as these provided a tangible benefit within his daily life.

In terms of whether the participant was prone to buy an application due to its advertised image, the participant answered no. However, this wouldn't mean that he didn't buy well-known brands. For instance, he buys HTC or asus products, but only because he has good experiences with them and knows that these are of good quality. In terms of emotions, the participant said that these are less relevant. Generally, he considers advertising with an emotional appeal as unrealistic. To name an example, Telekom's latest advertising with a guy in a tutu telling a personal story, is definitely not effective. Therefore, he stresses that one always has to be careful with using emotions. It is important not to overdo it. The only positive emotional appeal he could recall was connected to an

Audi advertising that used a rather funny appeal. Hence, the emotions fun and happiness were seen as appropriate.

Regarding the participant's media usage, the answer resembled those of the previous participant. Consequently, the participant did not value social media platforms, except for his private life. Meaning that he wants to know what his friends and family is doing. Any form of advertising is perceived as annoying and hence ignored. In general, the participant stressed his hatred for advertisings and therefore, explained his use of an ad blocker. For that matter, the participant explained that he mostly browsed the internet to gather information on the topics that interest him. This included topics related to cars, car sports, or new technologies in general. On that account, the participant was asked which kind of information interested him the most in regards to a product. The participant stated that once he was interested in a product, he would look at test reports and experience statements of other customers.

Questioning the participant whether sales promotions depicted a suitable incentive, the participant answered partly. He stressed that he was not the type to continuously collect points to eventually receive a product that he didn't need. The only time he participated in a form of "collecting action" was to receive a discount at the gas station as well as for miles&more. Therefore, using sales promotions as incentive in a hotel did not necessarily appear appealing to him. Particularly, once the hotel used sweepstakes to animate him to engage, he displayed his disinterest, as he considered his chance to win as too small. However, he further denoted that he would not turn down a free drink, or something related for that matter.

Looking at the Innovation Adoption Lifecycle, the participant stressed that he saw himself as being part of the early adopters as well as of the late majority. In terms of his application usage, he denoted that he was one of the last to adapt to these, as he continuously used his browser. However, in terms of QR codes he considered himself being one of the first to try these. Asking whether the use of these was appealing to him he answered that, there are cases where these are useful. In these cases, their use appealed to him. However, he further denoted that these were mostly disguised as advertising. In addition, he explained that there are not many situations where QR codes are used effectively in Germany. In this regard he mentioned that, in Japan these were used for grocery shopping from home. In that case, he considered to make more frequent use of these. Furthermore, the participant added that he was one of the first to make use of smartphones, as he bought the first sony smartphone on the market, the sony p910i.

Thereupon, the participant was questioned on his business stays. Accordingly, the participant stated that he usually stayed at four star hotels, such as the Ibis, and travelled about once a month. Among others, the reason for his stays constituted seminars, presentations or trainings. Regarding the time

and place that would suit the participant best to be informed about a new product or offering, the participant answered that the only chance depicted the time of the check-in. Concerning his expectations, only basic examples were given, such as cleanliness, friendliness, a comfortable bed and a good breakfast offer. If one of these factors were not given, the participant would be annoyed and possibly complain.

In regards to memorable guest experiences, the guest could not recall any relevant incident, and further did not give an example of how he imagined this positive experience to be like. However, there were negative experiences that drove him to give feedback. However, instead of voicing his complaint personally, the participant said that he used the feedback paper in his room, as the problem was not that severe. Furthermore, once he uttered his negative complaint he also added comments on positive aspects. Nonetheless, he indicated that, if everything would have been fine in the first place, he would not have made the effort to give feedback. In case a severe problem occurs, the participant added that he would bite the bullet and confront the receptionist personally.

In terms of the participant's attitude and behavior in regards to public rating portals, it was ascertained that he did not make use of these. He stated that the ratings on these were not relevant to him, as the company's internal booking portal generally included ratings of co-workers. These were more valuable to him.

Consequently, the participant was asked what he associated with giving feedback. In general he said that, it is nice to receive positive feedback. Reasonably, that is not always the case, which is also good, as negative feedback rather allows oneself to improve. Apart from that, he stressed that he wasn't the most communicative person and therefore, would solely give feedback once one of his co-workers did not deliver good work; and this in turn had a negative effect on his work.

Subsequently, the product's design, functioning and purpose were explained to the participant. On that basis, it was asked what associations the participants had with the product. Based on the display material, the participant said that he would not believe in the product. Apparently, the message "feedback directly to the management" is not believable. According to him, the management would have better things to do than react to his feedback. Therefore, he considers it a nice advertising slogan, but not effective enough to catch his interest. As consequence, the participant deemed it necessary that the staff pointed out their desire to receive guest feedback. Otherwise, it appeared that the deployment of this tool was solely used to gather data on guest preferences, but not to solve problems or to improve.

Asking whether the participant would download the application or use the QR code to open the digital questionnaire, responded that he would use the QR code first. Once he tried the application and assessed its value, he would consider downloading the application. If using iFeedback® would

guarantee an instant reaction as well as the prevention of an unpleasant confrontation, the participant explicitly stated his interest in using iFeedback®.

Therefore, an interposed question was raised, in order to examine whether the participant considered the product's brand essence "loyalty for life" appealing and suitable. This was not the case, as the word loyalty reminded him of the British Empire and the population's pledge to be loyal to the queen. Nonetheless, apart from this association he considered the message unfitting.

In addition, the participant stated that the hotel should rather report on the activities undertaken based on guest feedback. Once the client demonstrated his determination to go the extra mile, this would be incentive enough to give feedback to the hotel.

Consequently, the participant was asked whether he considered said message as well as additional information on the product more effective than, having seen the iFeedback® logo somewhere before. The participant said the former would be most effective. Preferably, there should be a guide on how to use iFeedback®, which further explains what is done with my feedback. For that matter, it was asked in what form this guide should be present. Thereupon, the participant said that this guide should be printed on a flyer and further displayed on the hotel's website.

Interview with Peter (36), Consultant and Scrum Trainer, on Thursday 16th October, 19:00

Duration: 45 minutes.

At first, the reason as well as objective of this report was explained to the interviewee. Then, the product iFeedback® was introduced and the question raised, whether the application was already familiar to him. The participant responded with no. Thereupon, the participant introduced himself as a freelance consultant and scrum trainer. Due to his profession he explained that he was frequently on business trips, and therefore leads a rather unbalanced lifestyle. As consequence, work and travel constituted the greatest part in his life. On that account, the participant described himself as the expressive business type. Since his profession included teaching, this was appeared reasonable.

Regarding the criteria the participant applies during his decision making process, the participant stated the need of a tangible benefit. More precisely, he illustrated that all applications used by him entailed a function that eased his daily life. Therefore, he critically assesses the proposed value before he makes the final decision to download the application. While asked to give an example, the participant mentioned Google Maps, Dropbox and several journey planners. Regarding the relevance of the company's image behind the application, the participant clearly stated its irrelevance, as he saw himself as functionalist. It was only important to have a suitable value. However, he clearly

stressed the importance of an explanatory feature description. Once he downloaded an application, he deemed it important to read the newest support updates.

In terms of the participant's media usage, one could detect that social media channels were not a suitable tool to promote the product. Accordingly, Facebook is used with reluctance. Viral advertisings are perceived annoying and as common evil. The primary usage reason constitutes the connection to friends. For that matter, the participant states that the massive amount of advertisings used make it difficult to maintain an overview over one's friends' activities. Xing and Linkedin on the other hand are perceives as valuable platforms. There, the participant participates in several groups, such as a scrum group and a Berlin group. These allow him to exchange experiences and knowledge, and further enable him to connect with new people.

Regarding the appeal of sales promotions, the participant replied that he was prone to use these. Based on the fact that the participants had to cover his travel expenses by himself, price reductions at the hotel were seen as suitable incentive.

Regarding the Innovation Adoption Lifecycle, the participant was grouped among the late majority in terms of the adaptation of applications as well as QR codes. The participant possesses a QR code scanner and is familiar with the concept, as he engaged himself in the concept after creating QR codes for a particular event. Nonetheless, the participant denotes that their utilization generally does not entail a valuable benefit; therefore he seldom makes use of these. For that matter, the participant was asked whether he would use the QR code or the provided terminal to use iFeedback®. The terminal seemed interesting to him, however, he stressed that he wouldn't use these. As he prefers to give a quick feedback, it would be easier to do so personally. He could only picture using these during the check-out, when his bill is sorted out and he needs to pass the time anyway. However, he questioned whether giving feedback after his stay would be of any help then. Furthermore, he stated that he would possibly try the product via the QR code, and based on his experience he would look at the application and its features more in-depth at the app store.

Concerning the participant's hotel stays, it was ascertained that he travelled between three and five times a week, generally stayed between one or two nights, and further stayed at three star hotels. The reason for his business trips were evidently based on consulting projects and scrum trainings. In terms of his expectations, the participant mentioned a comfortable bed, quietness and a good breakfast without chocolate cereal. Apart from the basics, he expected the staff to be attentive, and valued once they recognized him after his first stay. As consequence, high quality service to him meant that the staff is sovereign, friendly and sincerely interested in his wellbeing. Therefore, he considered bad service as people falsely displaying an interest in you, as this behavior only embodies an empty phrase.

In terms of negative guest experiences, the participant illustrated the latest incident that happened at a four star hotel. There, the receptionist managed to wrongly issue his bill for three consecutive times. To add to that, she did not react friendly once he pointed out that these were wrong. According to the participant, a guest can definitely expect better service than that. Clearly, everybody makes mistakes, but one should admit to these and at least have the decency to remain friendly. Therefore, this depicted an incident that made him question whether to visit this hotel again.

In regards to his attitude and behavior towards public rating portals, it was ascertained that these were of value to him. Naturally, based on the customer ratings he would decide which hotel to book. In addition, once the hotel managed to provide him with a satisfactory stay, he considered it his duty to inform other prospective guests about the hotel's ideal service. Likewise, he submits negative ratings. However, this only happens after he complained personally and no reaction or change on behalf of the staff ensued. As consequence, he always gives the staff the chance to make amends. Nonetheless, once these ignore him or react snotty, he knows that they don't value their chance to improve. Therefore, the participant's attitude towards giving feedback was made clear. He considered every feedback to be valuable, as it gave oneself or others the opportunity to learn from mistakes. Nonetheless, he stressed that he was primarily prone to give negative feedback, as this usually depicts a pressing matter that needs to be resolved.

Subsequently, the product's design, functioning and purpose were explained in more detail. The first association voiced by the participant was its positively perceived quickness. He realized that using the application could mean saving precious time and energy; assuming that his problem was immediately tended to. After the introduction of the product's benefit "feedback directly to the management", the participant stated that it constituted a reasonable benefit, but further questioned in what way this actually applied. Consequently, he perceived the benefit as valid, but did not completely catch its meaning. To conclude, the participant said that further information on the product and the feedback process would be useful.

After the participant was given more in-depth information on the product, it was asked whether he would still prefer to give personal feedback over using iFeedback®. The participant replied that he would still give personal feedback, because he considered that giving digital feedback did not have an effective impact. More precisely, he wanted a "visual intervention into the system". In this way, he could indirectly assess the situation and evaluate the possible outcome. However, this view concerned giving negative feedback, which therefore dealt with pressing issues. Therefore, the participant was asked whether he would consider using iFeedback® for change suggestions, as the hotel wished to improve itself. In that case, he said yes.

In terms of downloading the app or scanning the QR code, the participant voiced his preference for the QR code, as he considered them to operate quicker. Regarding the product's brand essence "loyalty for life", a clear rejection was perceived. Although the participant considers himself to be a friend of loyalty, he said that this "appeared Greek to him" as this clearly constituted a form of coercion. Particularly, he perceived the statement as meaningless in connection to the product and reformulated it as "submission at any cost". As a result, seeing this statement would make him reconsider the usage of the product. In contrast, he highlighted that iFeedback® needs to create an emotional bond that ensures him that he is taken serious.

With the goal of catching the participants interest in iFeedback®, it was asked whether further information on the product and its purpose or the repeated contact to the logo at other contact points were considered more effective. The participant responded with a marketing rule, which stated that seeing the logo for seven times clearly influenced an individual's buying behavior. Apart from that, he stated that further information was not only useful but vital. Therefore, he indicated that hotels need to display what they have done based on previous given guest feedback. If one realizes that one's feedback does not peter out, guests' would rather tend to make an effort and use iFeedback®. The hotel's website needs to illustrate how it handles mistakes, and should hence list all actions undertaken during the last month; evidently, these actions need to be updated every month. In addition, this information could also be provided on the display material that is handed out.

Interview with Jan (41), Consultant and Scrum Trainer, on Thursday 17th October, 11:00

Duration: 40 minutes.

After the objective and the focus of this research report were introduced to the participant, he was asked to introduce himself and his occupation. Similarly to his brother, the participant operates as a freelance consultant and scrum trainer, which leads him to travel around 120 days a year. Therefore, he considers his lifestyle as stressful and fulfilling at the same time, as he loves his job. Since the participant described himself as an optimistic and expressive person, it appeared suitable to count him among the expressive business type as well. Furthermore, based on his frequent travels, the participant was asked whether he can recall seeing the application iFeedback® at one of the hotels. Unfortunately, he was still unfamiliar with the product.

In terms of relevant application criteria, the participant highlighted the need of a fast operation. He frequently experiences that applications crash and take forever to reload. In turn, these are generally deleted after their initial trial. In addition, the prospective application needs to have a value that contributes to the effectiveness of one's daily life. Among these count travel planners, such as the DB

navigator, as well as applications that track and evaluate one's sportive activities, such as runtastic. In addition, the participant perceives the ratings of other customers as suitable indicator for an application's value. Once these are predominantly negative, the participant does not consider using the app. Furthermore, he considers the image of the company behind the application as irrelevant, and is of the opinion that emotional appeals are not effective. Concerning the factors that created trust in an application, the participant stated that its proper functioning would create trust.

Regarding his media consumption, one could detect an evident activeness. According to him, being a consultant drives him to wanting to improve and change himself. For that matter, he frequently reads blogs that cover new scrum methods or experiences, new technologies and productivity tips. In addition, he is prone to listen to Podcasts and using Twitter. The latter is mainly used to receive updates on the products or companies the participant is interested in. Furthermore, the participant is active on Xing and Facebook. However, the former is again solely used for networking purposes and the latter for his private life.

Sales promotions sometimes depict a suitable incentive to the participant. However, based on his thirst for knowledge and his purpose to improve, suitable sales promotions generally include book related deals. Apart from that, as the participant is prone to use QR codes – he uses these for the contact details on his business card – he counted himself among the early adopters. On that account, the participant was asked whether he would use iFeedback® via the provided QR code or via terminal. He first stated his preference for using his smartphone and secondly, his tendency to download the application instead, because QR codes can only be accessed with internet access.

Concerning the participants expectations during his hotel stay, general basic factors were mentioned, such as a reasonable price, cleanliness, free internet and a good breakfast. Factors that caused annoyance included missing personnel at the reception as well as the closure of the reception at seven o'clock. Naturally, business trips indicate long travelling times, which means that the participant generally arrives around ten at the hotel. In addition, having an appointment with a client the next day requires to work long hours, therefore the internet has to work seamlessly.

In terms of negative guest experiences, the participant replied that he usually suppresses these. In contrast, he could recall positive guest experiences. One of these included the hotel's readiness to help as he was stranded at rail station. Instead of ordering him a taxi, the hotel personally picked him up. This constituted high quality service to the participant. Based on such positive experiences, the participant stated that it is only fair to share this experience with the personnel on-sight as well as via public rating portals. On that account, he added that he only uses these portals to give positive feedback. Concerning his association with giving feedback, the participant expressed his positive stance, as he considers feedback to be a chance to improve. Consequently, he would also give

suggestions or inform a hotel on particular aspects, in order to provide them with such a chance. However, the participant did not perceive iFeedback® to be the suitable tool to do so. He explained that, digital feedback systems do not have the same capacity as a personal conversation. According to him, it's about the personal connection that makes a feedback valuable. Therefore, the benefit "feedback directly to the management" was perceived as just so and so. It seems nice at first, but when you think about it, it doesn't provide you with a real value. There is no connection between the guest and the management. Therefore, the participant questioned whether his feedback would be taken serious as well as contained a real value to the management, as there did not exits any two-way communication. Accordingly, once a severe problem occurred, the participant would continue to give personal feedback. However, if the hotel was able to express the importance and value of his feedback given via iFeedback®, and further showed that it used these to improve its services, the participant declared that he would make use of the product. As consequence, the participant stressed to use a message such as "Give us feedback. We take you serious". This message should then be underlined by facts, such as the number of solved guest complaints. A suitable channel to publicize these facts was considered to be the hotel's website. In addition, by doing so the hotel would definitely stand out among its competitors and could presumable attract a greater number of guests.

In terms of suitable tools to inform the guest on the product iFeedback® as well as on the activities undertaken by the hotel, the participant listed the following communication tools: flyer/brochure, newsletter, website, blog and personally at the check-in. Preferably, it should be a combination of these, as this would highlight the hotel's sincerity. Furthermore, plain facts were preferred.

Interview with Oliver (36), Insurance Broker and Account Manager for Talents Connect, on Saturday 18th October, 15:00

Duration: 70 minutes

While working two jobs, the participant firstly highlighted his heavy workload and frequent business trips. However, he immediately mentioned that he could not recall seeing the product iFeedback® during one any of his business trips. In terms of relevant application criteria, several factors were mentioned. These are listed as follows: quicker operation than through browser, low battery usage, responsive design, intuitive usage and valuable benefit. The image of the company behind the application was not considered relevant. However, the participant does place value on original and interesting advertising. For that matter, the emotional factor fun was considered suitable. Regarding the factors that make the participant trust an application more easily, the participant stated that customer ratings, perceived high quality and a positive cost-value ratio were of importance.

In regards to the participant's media usage, several channels were discovered. The most frequently used channels constitute Facebook, Xing, Newsletter and general websites. In contrast to the previous participants, Facebook is also used to gather information on new products or services. Here is to denote that the participant preferred information on the company, test reports and community insights. Xing, however, is solely used for networking purposes again. Twitter and Google+ on the other hand, are not used by the participant due to the lack of time. In terms of his receptiveness to sales promotions, the participant answered that this depended on the situation and product. If these are offered in the hotel, he would consider these effective, depending on the time and effort one had to invest.

QR codes represented a familiar tool to the participant. More precisely, he heard of these about one and a half years ago and subsequently downloaded a QR code scanner. However, since no valuable benefit was perceived by scanning a QR code yet, he never makes use of these. Consequently, the participant counted himself among the late majority. In terms of applications, he groups himself among the early adopters. As these constituted a practical and valuable benefit, he soon became a fan of these. Therefore, once he detects a problem or has a question, he asks himself whether there exists an app that could help him solve this problem or answer his question.

Regarding his business trips, the participant stated that the generally reason for these constitute marketing and distribution, and therefore the buildup of new contacts as the maintenance of the relationship with these. The expectations stressed by the participant were cleanliness, professional and affectionate personnel, free internet, parking spaces, and a functional room; meaning the provision of enough shelf space. In regards to the participant's positive and negative guest experiences, the participant particularly highlighted that he valued staffs' attention to detail, and therefore remembering personal details always leave a positive impression. In contrast, negative experiences would arise once the staff ignored his complaint or did not act professional once a complaint was voiced. In addition, the participant said that he always gave feedback once something was really good or really bad. On that account, the participant stressed that he always gave personal feedback, as he considered paper questionnaires as unsuitable. However, he further stressed his usage of public rating portals. While he uses these as guide during his booking decision, he further considers it fair to leave detailed ratings about the hotels he visited. Furthermore, as he works in the service sector himself, he realizes how important feedback is to improve. On that account, he likes to give as well as to receive feedback, and always gives personal tips once he has the chance.

After introducing the product iFeedback®, and therefore its functioning, and used messages further, the participant expressed his disbelief in the promoted benefit. Evidently, it does seem valuable, but not necessarily believable. For that matter, he doubts that his interest could be caught through the

currently used display materials. In order to effectively catch his interest, the participant states that he needs to be confronted with the application through a channel he usually uses. Therefore, he states it would be good to have seen a report or other customer experiences at a rating portal or Facebook, for instance. Otherwise, it would work if he repeatedly saw the product at various hotels. Once he recognizes the logo, he would be more curious and probably take a closer look at the application. In that case, he deemed it fitting to have an iFeedback® guide and informs him in detail on what is being done with his feedback.

Regarding the question, whether terminals or the smartphone would be used, the participant replied with terminal. As these are specifically instituted at the hotel and solely used for this purpose, he would associate these more with the product. In contrast, the effort of scanning the QR code or downloading the applications seems higher.

Additionally, once the hotel conveyed the importance of guest feedback and proved that it wants to use these feedbacks to improve, the participant would definitely make use of the application. However, he further adds that there should be some sort of ticket system that indicates whether his feedback has been read and whether it is reacted upon. Preferably, the participant would like to receive a mail that updates him on the feedback status and further updates him on the outcome. Moreover, the outcome, or rather all actions taken should be published on the hotel's website.

Interview with Marco (34), IT Consultant, on Wednesday 22th October, 19:00

Duration: 40 minutes

First off, the participant characterized himself as dominant business person, as he considered himself to be a hard-working, objective-driven and straightforward individual. While asking about the criteria the participant applies while downloading a new application, the participant firstly highlighted his preference for cost free applications. He considers himself to be a saver, who always carefully assesses the proposed value. Therefore, his downloading decision is guided by other customer ratings. Furthermore, the participant is interested in applications that enable him to track is sportive activities, and therefore incorporate a tangible benefit. Even though the added value is of primary importance, the participant adds that a well-known company name could enhance his interest and therefore, influence his buying decision. In contrast, emotional factors are not considered interesting. In addition, trust in an application could be created through positive ratings in various test portals. However, once an application requires him to enter his banking details as well as asks him to enable the access to private information, the participant does not trust and use the application.

Concerning the participant's media usage, it was ascertained that his first interest in an application is caught by simply stumbling upon it while browsing the internet. Once a news report or advertisement managed to catch his eye, he would inform himself further on the product's website. Regarding his general media consumption, the participant stressed the ineffectiveness of radio, Facebook and Twitter. The only social media platform he utilized was Xing; but only for work related matters. Regarding his interest in sales promotions, the participant stated his disinterest. He did participate in loyalty programs and such in the beginning of his career, but at this point the required effort to participate is perceived as too high.

Although the participant has a QR code scanner on his smartphone, he counts himself among the late majority in terms of his adaptation to QR codes as well as applications. He tends to wait for an in-depth evaluation of others first, instead of taking a risk with a new product.

In regards to his business trips, the participant states that the primary reasons for his trips constitute a seminar or a client project. In terms of his expectations, the participant listed the following factors: neat reception, 24 hour accessibility, modern room, appropriate space, fridge and a small kitchen. However, the latter definitely constituted a positive service extra, which he first experienced during a stay at the NH hotel in Munich. In addition, the participant considers himself to be low-maintenance. For that matter, he usually ignores aspects that bother him. Among others, annoyances would constitute loudness, inappropriate price and sparsely furnished room.

Consequently, the participant depicts that he usually does not give feedback, unless a severe problem occurs. However, there are negative incidences that drive him to do so; such as the inability to close the window during winter. In this case, the participant voiced negative feedback personally at the reception. However, he further stresses that he always carefully evaluates whether giving feedback is really necessary. Therefore, he usually decides ad-hoc, whether a situation is still acceptable or not. As he is usually under time pressure, he does not make use of public rating portals or paper questionnaires. Although he considers their utilization to be a nice gesture, the perceived costs are too high.

In general, the participant regards feedback as positive, as it allows a person to reflect on his actions. Consequently, he does utter criticism, in order to allow others to improve themselves. However, he does not do so in a negative way, therefore, he considers his criticism to be suggestions or a well meant advice.

After introducing the product iFeedback®, it was asked whether the participant had any associations with the product and whether he believed the promoted benefit. On that account, the participant said that the first impression was good. Nevertheless, he needed to deal with the subject more in-depth, in order to get a relevant picture. Generally, he would just try the product and see whether its

usage contained a real benefit to him. Solely voicing his opinion to the management hence, was not considered appealing enough for repeat usage. In addition, the participant was asked whether he would use the terminals or his smartphone to give feedback. Accordingly, the participant stated that this depended on his whereabouts. However, he said that he probably try out both and decide which way depicts the quickest and easiest. For that matter, he thought using the QR code would lead him faster to the right questionnaire.

Instead of using the brand essence "loyalty for life", which the participant could not set into relation with the product, he suggested to say "best choice of life". Therefore, using the product would mean making the best out of a situation.

While asking whether the participant would make use of iFeedback® once he knew that his feedback was always appreciated and the hotel used these to improve, the participant replied that this would depend on the added value. Therefore, an added value would constitute reaching the right contact person as well as receiving an immediate reaction. In addition, experiences and information should be shared on the hotel's website, in order to raise the importance of the deployed tool. Moreover, the participant stressed that the information provided should plainly state facts. Furthermore, as he did not understand the product's functioning and purpose by looking at the display material itself, he suggested to either optimize these and add more information or to design a separate flyer that explains how the product works and what the feedback is used for.

Interview with Daniela (31), sales promoter for Talents Connect, on Thursday 22rd October, 20:00

Duration: 45 minutes

I = Isabel (interviewer)
D = Daniela (interviewee)

[Turned on memo recorder]

I: Hi Daniela, I would say I introduce myself first. So, as Oliver might have told you, I am conducting these interviews for my last research report, which is connected to the internship I did during the last six months. Thus, I decided on a research topic based on the company's distributed product. To clarify, I worked for a small company called BHM MEDIA GROUP, which primarily markets the application iFeedback®. It's a digital questionnaire that is used to gather real-time feedback. Have you heard of the product yet?

D: Yeah he told me a little bit about it. Unfortunately I haven't heard of iFeedback® before. I mean I have stayed at many different hotels already, but I can't recall seeing it right now.

I: *Alright, that's not a problem. Well the focus of this project is set on the applications usage in the hospitality industry in Germany. And the issue that you might have guessed already is that, the knowledge of the product hasn't effectively spread yet. Therefore, there are many guests that do not make use of the product, and among these are business guests. To sum things up, my goal is to examine to what degree iFeedback® currently appears appealing to you, and find a way that makes you want to use the product.*

D: Okay.

I: *Well, good. Then I am going to ask you questions on three different areas, namely on your application usage behavior, your feedback behavior during your business trips, as well as on iFeedback®. But before we start, maybe you could introduce yourself, and tell me a little bit about your job?*

D: Sure. I am a sales promoter for Talents Connect, just like Oliver. Thus, I am often on business trips for various fairs. Apart from that, I am also an opera singer. And I know what you think. People always think how do these jobs fit together, but to me both jobs are perfect.

I: *Oh wow. So are you a freelancer then?*

D: Yes. I am thinking about becoming a full-time employee for Talents Connect, but I haven't decided anything officially. But one more question before we go on. Is this interview going to be anonymized? I know that usually they are, but I just wanted to check, because I would like my name to be left out of it.

I: *Of course, I understand. In the end I would have asked you which way you would prefer, so yes that's fine with me.*

D: Alright, thanks.

I: *Okay, so one more question before I start with the first section. Well, I have given you a description of four different personality types. Which one would you say, suits you best?*

D: Well, as promoter you have to be outgoing and you need to have a good sense for people. And as I like to think of myself as a natural salesperson, I would definitely go with the expressive business type.

I: *Alright, sounds good. So, are there any selective criteria that you apply when you buy or download a new application?*

D: The first aspect I look at is the volume of the application, meaning how large the application is. That is because I am a person that depletes the data volume pretty fast. For that matter, I only have slow internet when I am on the go and cannot download any application and well, quickly deplete my volume. Otherwise, the description, other customer ratings and the given stars are important to me. After I read a description that excites me and I think I need to have this app, I subsequently look at the ratings. However, if the customer ratings are really bad, I closely evaluate the apps benefit again and decide whether I actually need it. And yeah, I also look at the screen shots to decide whether I like the style. And based on these criteria I decide whether or not to download a new app.

I: Alright are there any criteria that enable you to trust an application more easily?

D: Of course, when any of my friends tell me "hey I downloaded this really good application that you need to try' then I would definitely do that. Otherwise, if I know the company behind the product, and the company stands for good quality, I would surely trust the application more.

I: Okay. Which sort of application are you interested in? Or which application do you use most frequently?

D: Definitely no games. I am more interested in useful apps, such as picture editing apps, post-its or those that check your spelling. So I use those apps that have a tangible benefit. And concerning the applications I use most, I would say that's WhatsApp, my e-mail, calendar and Safari.

I: I see an apple user.

D: Yeah I have been addicted to apple products from early on.

I: Alright, as we are speaking of Apple already, do you use applications or products due to their advertised image? I mean, I don't know what people exactly associate with Apple as I am not a user of their products, but I imagine it communicates a sort of hip and luxurious image. So is that a reason for you to buy?

D: To some degree, the image plays a role. However, it never goes as far that I see I need to have the new iPhone, because it's out and everybody has it. I am surely interested when new products or innovations enter the market, and hence I take a closer look at them and decide whether this constitutes a greater benefit for me or not. If it does, I will buy it. I am just such an Apple fan, because I am used to it and I made good experiences with it. Thus, I will continue to buy from Apple.

I: Okay, so you don't set your focus on any particular brands?

D: No, I wouldn't say that.

I: Do emotional factors play a role for you? I mean in any kind of advertising a particular emotion is introduced, humor for the most part. Do these factors make the product more appealing to you, yes or no?

D: I think, when somebody says that these emotion do not have any effect on him, he's definitely lying. Sure, if emotions are used they are generally appealing. For instance, I think about the thrilling and emotional Telekom commercials. Also the new commercial for deezer, the new music app on the market - I don't know if you heard about it – but this is really cool designed. It is funny, it appeals to me and hence, catches my interest. That's when I take a closer look at a product.

I: No I haven't heard of that one, but I'll definitely take a look at it. So, would you say that humor is the most effective emotion to be used?

D: It surely depicts a good one. But those who use really deep emotional stories that, eventually go viral on Youtube, they work also really well.

I: Okay. Are there any media channels that you are most receptive to when a product is introduced, and which ones do you use the most to inform yourself?

D: Print media definitely comes last. And there are also not any news sites or blogs that particularly interest me. Mostly, I make use of social media platforms and television. And if I want to inform myself about a particular product or company, I just google these.

I: Okay, and which social media channels do you use most frequently? For instance, are you active on Twitter, Xing or Facebook?

D: Facebook and Xing are important for me. Linkedin, Google+ and Twitter are platforms I don't use at all. Especially, Twitter is a trend that caught my interest.

I: Okay. Then are you active on these two platforms for personal or work related matters?

D: It's a definite mixture. I mostly use Facebook privately, to stay connected to my friends. But I also have my musical connections there, so I use Facebook for announcing new concerts for instance. Personally, I don't share anything on Facebook, or at least not much, and hence the main purpose to use Facebook is to make my concert announcements and to read what my friends are doing.

I: Alright, so you never had a really amazing experience or the perfect day that engaged you to share that publically with your friends?

D: No, I'd rather do that in a personal conversation.

I: Okay. Are you interested in the products or businesses that are introduced to you? Do you like or share anything related in that area?

D: For the most part, I am annoyed. You feel kind of haunted, when they show you advertisings of products that you previously looked at. But, if it is creatively and good designed I might take a look at it. However, it's seldom that this happens.

I: *You also mentioned that you are active on Xing. For what purpose, may I ask?*

D: Well, for one I use it for networking, i.e. for the people I have met during the fairs. On the other hand, I participate in a few sales and music related groups.

I: *Are you receptive to sales promotions? For instance, do you take part in any loyalty programs?*

D: Yes, I am an absolute fan of it! I'll take part in discount actions and programs wherever I can. Meaning I'll collect points to receive a reduction or a bonus at the cinema, in restaurants or at the hotel. Thus, I'll do it as long as my participation is not connected to any costs, or rather substantial costs, where the benefit is lower than my invested effort.

I: *Yeah, I get that. I think those programs are pretty sweet myself. Okay, so if an application caught you interest, which kind of promotional messages interest you the most?*

D: Well, on the one hand I take a look at other customer ratings or online test reports. If these turn out to be bad, I am not going to give the application a try. If these convey a mixed image at first, I will take a closer look at it. If it appears fine to me, I will give it a try. Naturally, trying it out is always the best solution.

I: *For the next question I would need to know whether you are aware of the innovation adoption lifecycle?*

D: Yes.

I: *Perfect. Okay then, where would you see yourself in the IAL in terms of QR codes and applications?*

D: Well, as I do not really use QR codes I would say late majority. And in terms of applications that would be early majority.

I: *May I ask for what reason you are not using these?*

D: Well, I do have a QR code scanner on my smartphone. But once I try to make use of QR codes, my volume is already depleted as it usually takes too long to connect to the end page. On the other hand, it has come to my attention that there were cases where these codes were falsely connected and hence, let to unwanted viruses on your phone. So this was the reason that appalled me to use them again. I know it's a little bit stupid, but it kind of stuck with me.

I: *Understandable. Then let us move on to the next section, your hotel stays. What kind of hotels do you stay at and how do you book your hotel? Via which platform?*

D: Well, usually these are three star hotels. However, since it is usually pretty busy during fairs, it is always difficult to find something suitable. So I have to look what is still available and then settle for that. In order to find something good, I usually compare the prices on public booking portals, such as Trivago, and subsequently look at other guest ratings to make the right decision. However, I have to add that I usually give each hotel some 'bonus points' so to say, as I think most ratings are way too critical.

I: That's nice. Do you travel alone or with colleagues?

D: As the reason for my business trips constitute fairs I mostly travel with colleagues. This is definitely more fun, as there is always something going on after the fair.

I: Oh yes, I should have thought of that sorry. So, how many nights do you usually stay?

D: Between three or four.

I: If the staff wants to introduce you to a new product or offering, what would be the best time and place to talk to you?

D: On the one hand, directly during the check-in. This is the only time where you are not in a hurry. So then the receptionist could talk about new offers etc. However, if I am not interested I will also tell her that. During the check-out it wouldn't make much sense, because then I am in a hurry and also not able to make use of any offerings or products anymore. I mean maybe I am going to remember it for my next stay, but the chance is small.

I: What are your general expectations in regards to three to five star hotels?

D: Puh that is a wide range. But first of I would say I am relatively undemanding in this regard. Nonetheless, there should be some sort of view from my window, as I would not like to stare at a wall. Apart from that it should be quiet, there need to be parking spaces, a good breakfast offer and of course good transport accessibility.

I: Alright, do you have any specific expectations in regards to the service? Or did you always make good experiences?

D: Well, there are always small shortcomings. But, whenever I said something the staff was really helpful and acted quickly.

I: So, if something arises that bothers you, you tend to say that personally to the staff?

D: That depends on the situation. Last time, after my room was cleaned the staff forgot to bring new towels. As I definitely need these I mentioned it at the reception and got them immediately delivered to my room. However, if the TV does not work, I could live with that for one or two nights. So instead

of mentioning that personally I would only leave a note. So, I'd say it always depends on how urgent you need it.

I: Would these kinds of experiences be a reason to write a post on public rating portals? And if yes, do you use them frequently?

D: Not really. I have given ratings before, but not that often. It takes too much time and effort.

I: Are there any factors that could annoy you during your stay?

D: Well for one, the internet has to work flawlessly and quickly. If I experience difficulties to connect with the network I am easily annoyed.

I: Did you ever have a memorable (positive) guest experience?

D: Most definitely, yes. But I have to think whether I can come up with one right now. Well, I cannot recall anything particular now, but for me exceptionally good service is always memorable. When the service is attentive and fulfills your wish before you even said it out loud. So I don't have to run after the staff to get what I want. But, it has to be said, it is seldom that this happens.

I: Would you say that bigger hotels provide less of these surprising moments than small hotels?

D: It's just different. In bigger hotels, the staff is more seasoned. Particular staff groups can be more unfriendly. Small hotels on the other hand have different qualities. If small mistakes occur you excuse them, as it is only human to make them. Bigger hotels have more capacities to respond to guest needs, consequently one expects more from them. A greater gesture so to say.

I: Do you expect that the management immediately reacts to your complaint? Taking the towel incident you mentioned earlier as example.

D: It doesn't have to be in the next five minutes. But a reaction should occur within an hour. There was one incident in Italy, where I ran out of toilet paper, and even after two hours I didn't get any new paper. That's unacceptable.

I: Yeah, I totally understand. In that case it is clear that a reaction needs to be fast.

D: Yes, I would say that this depicts an urgent matter. So I would have expected better service. On the other hand, if the television didn't work, I wouldn't mind if nothing happens actually. If my window wouldn't close properly, I would expect something to be done of course. If I mention it in the morning, I expect it to be fixed until I go to sleep at night. If the problem occurs right before I want to go to sleep, an immediate solution would need to be found.

I: Are you interested in sharing any of your guest experiences? Be it the staff, friends or family?

D: With friends and family definitely. If it was a really positive experience, I would tell them that they should try it. For instance, in the beginning of the year I tried out Motel One for the first time. And I was positively surprised by the design. I was welcomed with a chimney fire on the TV and I was able to choose between various lightings. That was definitely appealing. So I told my friends about it, as it positively surprised me. If something is particularly bad, I talk about that too. Otherwise, you only talk about it, if you are asked.

I: The positive aspects which you liked at Motel One did you also inform the staff about it?

D: Yes I did during the check-out.

I: Alright, then we move on to the third section, where we talk more detailed about iFeedback®. First off, what do you associate with giving feedback?

D: I have a positive association with feedback. Naturally that is because feedback helps you to change something, to improve yourself as well as to reflect upon your actions.

I: So you like to give as well as to receive feedback?

D: Yes.

I: The company, which distributes iFeedback® has determined four main reasons why guests give feedback in a hotel. I would like to read them out loud to you, and then maybe you could tell me which you can relate to.

D: Sure.

I: Okay, guests give feedback because: a) the guest genuinely wants to express his satisfaction in the form of a positive feedback b) the guest wants to communicate his frustration or anger in form of a negative feedback c) the guest gives feedback because he expects a so called 'goodie' in return d) the guest plainly wants to make a suggestion or inform the hotel on something.

D: I would say all except for the third.

I: Alright then let me tell you a little bit about iFeedback® now. As I said before, it's a digital questionnaire that allows guests to rate various categories. In the hotel, the top categories would i.e. constitute the conference area, the spa, the restaurant and the hotel itself. Now, based on the chosen area, the guest then has the chance to give feedback on a sub category, such as the cleanliness of his room. This feedback is based on a one-to-five star rating and an optional comment. Once the rating has been completed, the guest can decide on the check-out page whether he leaves his contact details and says he wishes to be contacted, or whether he sends his feedback anonymously. So far so good?

D: Yes, go on.

I: Alright, the iFeedback® questionnaire can be accessed via Smartphone, by the use of the provided QR code or browser link on various display materials. The advantage here is that, the guest does not have to download the app or fill out a registration to give feedback. Then my first question would be, do you pay attention to print display materials?

D: I know I haven't recognized iFeedback® anywhere yet. However, if there are a few promotional materials in my room I do take a look at them. But, if there are too many of them I tend to ignore these.

I: Okay. Well, hotels also provide so called terminals. These are simply iPads in a theft-proof stand, which are positioned at various contact points, such as the hotel entrance or the reception. And up until now, the greatest iFeedback® usage ensues through these. Therefore, it is assumed that these are used because it's a nice gimmick and/or the QR codes are not appealing enough. And, oh yeah, the display material has the QR code together with the benefit "feedback directly to the management" printed on it. Now my next question would be, would you believe the communicated benefit feedback directly to the management? And does it catches your interest in a way that would make you want to try the product?

D: That is a valid question. If I imagine that every guest makes use of this application, then an incredibly high rate of feedbacks would be sent to the management. In the first moment I would think this is a really cool thing, my feedback is directly sent to the management. However, after that I would question whether my feedback would sink into insignificance among all the others. However, if I fill out a paper and hand that in, the same question arises. So, I am not sure whether I would use it. I guess I would need more information on how this product works or what is done with my feedback.

I: Sure, I get that. Then let me explain the whole thing a little bit more. For instance, if you chose the category restaurant and rated the quality of your food, then the feedback would be sent to the restaurant manager. More precisely, he receives an e-mail within 30 seconds. In case you were unsatisfied, he would be able to come talk to you and try to make amends. This means you could get a faster reaction without much effort and frustration. Therefore, would this change your mind about the presented benefit?

D: Oh cool! Yes, it would. As you just talked about that, I realized how seldom I usually leave a rating. For instance, at Amazon I have never done it. The only business, which made me give ratings is ebay. There I rate everything, because I know how important it is for others to know how trustworthy the seller is.

I: Do you think that relates to it being public and you having a personal account, or is it only the fact that you can help?

D: I think it is just the genuine wish to help out others in my situation.

I: *Okay that leads me to another question. Would you use ifbck if you knew that your feedback is always appreciated and you would help the hotel improve?*

D: Yes, most definitely.

I: *Okay. You said that you are a fan of sales promotions. Would the usage of iFeedback® appear even more appealing to you when the hotel would give you some form of incentive in return?*

D: Not necessarily. I am a huge fan of sales promotions, but I guess it's more about this collecting thing. As I said before, if the hotel wants to improve and is happy about any feedback, I would surely do that. And if it actually changes something according to my wishes, that is incentive enough.

I: *According to you, what would be the best way to communicate the hotels sincere effort to change and the request to you to give feedback?*

D: I would like it if the lady at the reception tells me that, and hands me a flyer together with my room key that simply says, please give us feedback as it helps us to improve. Or something else. It just needs to be an honest and simple sentence, which conveys that they want me to give feedback. If there's just a flyer lying in my room then I might think that's from the previous guest, and it doesn't matter if I give feedback or not. In this way I know it's important. The lady needs to seriously say that it's important to them that I give feedback, and then I also going to.

I: *So the personal touch is important. Alright, as I said before you have the chance to either use your smartphone or the terminals to give feedback. Which one would you rather use?*

D: I think that depends on the urgency. If I had to bridge some sort of waiting period, I would rather use the terminal. For instance, the last hotel I was at had an elevator that took forever. This would be a good chance to give feedback. It would definitely a better use of my time. And since I am usually on business trips with colleagues, you always have to wait until everybody is ready before you go out. So that would be another chance to use the terminal.

I: *Okay, knowing that your feedback is directly send to the person in charge and that, if you wish, somebody contacts you directly, would you continue to give personal feedback or use iFeedback®?*

D: Of course, giving personal feedback is ice. But sending it via iFeedback® doesn't mean that it is not personal. I mean you can still add a personal touch through your comment. So if you know the feedback was received and that, at the next visit, you see that a serious effort was made to change, then I think it's a good tool and I would definitely use it. And apart from that, I could still say something personal during the check-out.

I: *Alright. Can you tell me what you associate with the product at this point?*

D: Well, I still don't know really how it's constructed. Is it text-heavy, does it have many questions, does it take forever to click through every single question. Thinking of ebay, there you have five categories, can rate via five stars and can still enter a text. That's quickly done. It takes about half a minute and that's all you need. However, if it is text-heavy and it takes forever to click through everything then I would presume that, the break-off rate is not only high for me but also for others. To give you an example, have you taken a look at Talents Connect yet?

I: *Sorry, not yet.*

D: Well there people always say it takes so long to register. But eventually, it doesn't take long. Of course, it takes a little bit of time to enter your CV, which can take more time if you have done a lot already. But once this is done, you have to fill out the questionnaire of 15 questions. These are easily clicked through. And usually, people question whether the algorithm can actually judge your personality based on only 15 questions, but yes it works. So it's really not much work, as you don't have to click through thirty complicated pages or so. And I think, as long as iFeedback® can be accessed quickly and easily, it works. Otherwise, a high break-off rate is guaranteed.

I: *True. That reminds me that many people assumed that everything needed to be filled out. However, that's the good thing about iFeedback® you only have to rate what's relevant to you. So I suppose, if you have this digital questionnaire in front of you, it wouldn't be clear that you could just fill out one question?*

D: No. I would have thought that I need to fill in everything. That's needs to be made clear somewhere. Okay, so, if one evening I am at the Spa and send in a feedback, can I give another feedback the next day I am there again, based on the impressions I made, or is it only possible to give feedback one time?

I: *You can give as many feedbacks as you like. That's the idea. To give feedback at any time or moment, so whenever it suits you and/or something pops into your mind.*

D: That's good. Then it's quickly done. I don't feel pressured to fill out everything. And whenever I see something that I like or don't I can give a comment, sounds good!

I: *Okay. iFeedback® uses the slogan "loyalty for life", does that sound appealing to you, or rather can you see it in connection to iFeedback®?*

D: To be honest, I don't get the connected between the product and the slogan.

I: *Let me explain. Up until now, the main focus was set on promoting the product to prospective clients. Hence, the end users interest wasn't really taken into account. To clients, the product should convey that using iFeedback® presents them with loyal guests. So my question is, whether the slogan needs to be adapted, in order to make the product more appealing to you?*

D: It fits to the hotel, but definitely not to the guest. So when I inform myself on the product and see that slogan I would ask myself 'why say that'? And I would think it's a little bit over the top. So it's rather unfitting and I think it would be better to find a solution for both sides.

I: That's what I thought. Alright, to trigger your interest in iFeedback® at the hotel, would you consider it more important to have seen the logo before or to have more information on the app and the company beforehand?

D: In my opinion, seeing the logo is necessary. Once it is etched on the memory it has a greater recognition value. So, if you go to the hotel and can ultimately recall seeing it before, it definitely helps in catching my interest. And based on that I would browse what the product is and what it is used for. Furthermore, I think it would be good to integrate the logo in the hotels brochures or any form of document that is handed to the guest. The continuous confrontation would move me to deal with the product. And in this way, you would rather realize how important it is to the hotel that you give feedback.

I: Okay, which type of message would you need to highlight this need further? Is it enough to provide you with plain explanatory information or would you expect something creative, like a story or promotional video?

D: At some point, the iFeedback® material needs to set itself apart from all the other flyers and brochures that hotels usually have lying around. Thus I suppose, it wouldn't be bad to try a more creative approach and make a video or so. I mean the display material is also fine, but I would use a different message than "feedback directly to the management".

I: Yeah, I have also devised some different messages. Maybe you could tell me which one of these you like and which you consider unfitting.

D: Sure.

I: Alright these are:
   1. *"Be our quality/change advisor. Feedback directly to the management."*
   2. *"Be our greatest advisor and share your feedback with us."*
   3. *"Our quality depends on you. Share your feedback with us."*
   4. *"Our quality depends on you. We take your feedback serious."*
   5. *"Our quality depends on you. We take immediate action."*
   6. *"We want you to get your money's worth. Please share your feedback with us."*
   7. *"Your feedback is our incentive (…to grow, develop, improve, change)."*
   8. *"Let us make your stay memorable. Feedback directly to the management."*

D: The third and fourth are the best. In terms of seven I would add "to improve". And well number four is not bad either. They are definitely more convincing than "feedback directly to the management".

I: Alright, thanks! That will be it. Thank you so much for your time and insight.

D: You are welcome. If you have any more questions, you know how to reach me.

[Turned off memo recorder]

Interview with Yvonne (33), flight attendant, on Thursday 23rd October, 13:30

Duration: 45 minutes

Being a flight attendant, the participant firstly highlighted her constant stays at various hotels, and further categorized herself as expressive business type. While asking about relevant application criteria, the participant illustrates the importance of positive customer ratings as well as an explanatory app description. Moreover, due to her frequent travels she values applications that offer an added benefit for her daily life, such as a travel planner. Nevertheless, she further values various communication applications, such as Whatsapp and Facebook. In terms of knowing about the company behind the application, the participant replies that this is not necessary. Instead she likes to get an idea of the application through the initial trial. Additionally, the participant stressed that the emotional factor fun would be suitable, as one never forgets these easily. Moreover, in terms of trust, the participant mentioned that recommendations of her friends and family would make her trust a product more easily. However, trusting an application before its initial trial does not really constitute a necessity.

Regarding the participant's media usage, Facebook, TV, radio and the internet were mentioned. Facebook, however is solely used for private matters and considered unsuitable for product advertisements and messages. In terms of the Internet, the participant stressed that she generally browses the topics of interest to her. Therefore, no particular websites were mentioned. Nevertheless, once she was interested in a product, the participant explained her interest for test reports and new offers. Furthermore, she stressed her interest in sales promotions, once these did not require a high effort.

QR codes are familiar to the participant. However, up until now their usage never seemed appealing. As consequence, the participant counted herself among the late majority in regards to QR codes as well as applications. Concerning the latter, she added that now these depict and appealing tool, however, it took her so long to adapt to these as she was so used to typing it into the browser. To conclude, the participant stated that she would rather download iFeedback® than use the provided QR code.

Concerning her business trips, the participant stated that she usually stayed at four star hotels, between two to five days. Generally, as the flights are primarily the same, she usually stays at the same hotels. As consequence, her expectations read as follows: cleanliness, comfort, minibar, excellent service. These depict the factors that are important, and therefore allow her to feel

comfortable at the hotel. Annoying factors include the unfriendliness of the staff as well as a broken TV. However, once an annoying instance occurs, she would proceed by nicely telling the personnel at the reception. If it concerned a severe problem, she would tell the staff immediate. If it concerned an insignificant problem, she would voice it during the check-out. Furthermore, public rating portals are not used by the participant. Due to the participant's constant business trips, the effort of writing a rating is perceived as too high.

In terms of memorable guest experiences, the participant mentioned that there were several small gestures during her career that left a positive impression, such as a swan towel. Therefore, these gestures were definitely appreciated and drove her to give a positive feedback after her stay. However, these special gestures as well as negative incidents were the primary reason for her to give feedback, as she usually likes the time and nerves to do so frequently. In addition, positive experiences would also lead her to share this information on Facebook.

Feedback itself is perceived as necessity in her business. Working in the service industry, feedback depicts a constant part of her life, as every flight attendant is prone to improve himself/herself. Subsequently, after introducing iFeedback®, the participant said that she would try the application once a very positive or negative incident occurred. Based on that experience, she would then decide whether the application depicts an added value to her. Consequently, an added value would embody an instant reaction as well as seeing an undertaken change activity. In addition, the participant added that she would use the terminal as well as her smartphone to give feedback. However, using the terminal would imply that she had more time. In regards to the promoted benefit, the participant stated that she believed the benefit, but would need a better incentive to repeatedly use the application. On that account, it was asked whether she would use the application more, once she knew that the hotel welcomed every guest feedback, as it genuinely wants to improve. Provided that she would see a change, or the improvements made by the hotel, she answered with yes. However, she also added that this needed to be made clearer. As of now, the display material is rather meaningless. Therefore, she suggested devising a flyer to explain the functioning and purpose of the application further and to provide facts on the undertaken changes. In addition, she stressed that said display material should be positioned at the lobby as well as her room. Last but not least, she considered the following two communication messages as suitable: "Our quality depends on you. Share your feedback with us", "Be our change advisor. Share your feedback with us".

Interview with Markus (45), scrum coach and consultant, on Saturday 25ʳᵈ October, 14:0

Duration: 45 minutes

To begin with, the participant characterized himself as dominant and expressive business type. As he works as a trainer and leads several projects for various companies, he stressed that it was a necessity to be hard-working, objective-focused and expressive. On that account, the participant was asked whether he applied any particular criteria while thinking about downloading a new application. First off, he stressed that he seldom buys an application, but that he does so once there exists a need. For instance, he stressed that he recently purchased a $50 application that allowed him to easily navigate his flights. However, this purchase was further initiated through the recommendation of a mentor. As consequence, he highlights that is always a need first. Based on this need, he receives or gathers recommendations. He does not simply browse the app store to see what's new on the market. Therefore, all his applications include a benefit that is useful in his daily life, and have the ability to increase his productivity and effectiveness. Among others, the primary applications used are based on the following topics: newspapers, stock exchange portals, traffic and hotels. In addition, the participant explains that he does not rely on the applications advertised image and hence, always aims to get an idea of the proposed product himself. As a result, emotional factors do not play a valid role. Additionally, the participant pointed out that empirical values and a sophisticated company depicted factors that would make him trust a product more easily. However, he further denoted that he carefully evaluated other customer experiences based on the relevance to him.

In terms of the participant's media usage, it was ascertained that blogs and news websites constitute the tools of the most interest. These were necessary to consult in his job, he explains. In addition, he does use Xing and Linkedin, but only for networking purposes as well as for his private interest, such as scrum and flying. In regards to sales promotions, it was discovered that taking part in hotel loyalty programs as well as miles&more were important. Therefore, suitable incentives would drive the participant to book a particular hotel.

In earlier days, the participant depicted himself as part of the mainstream. However, through his work as well as knowledge thirst, he grouped himself among the early adopters. Therefore, QR codes were familiar to him and also used sometimes.

Concerning his business trips, the participant illustrated that he currently travelled about two thirds of the year. Therefore, as frequent traveler he considers the best time to introduce a product or offering to him during the check-in. In terms of his expectations, the participant lists the following: uncomplicated check-in, not needing to fill in any forms, functional division of his room, cleanliness, comfortable bed, quietness and noise protection. Moreover, trivial aspects drive him to be annoyed.

Therefore, if something does not meet his expectations, he voices his complaints personally at the reception. According to him, this is the only method that helps. If the staff does not react to his complaint or reacts unfriendly, he writes an online rating. For example, last week there was an incident at the Ramada hotel, where his room key did not work. In this case, the participant had to go to the reception six times to receive a new room key. The problem, he expected the manager to come with him and solve the problem, instead of letting him walk all the way six times. However, the participant further denotes that there have been positive incidents as well. Mostly, these occur in hotels he frequently visits. There, he receives upgrades and is being treated like a member of the family. As consequence, he continues to book at these hotels, and frequently gives positive feedback during the check-out. In addition, the participant denotes that he always gives the management the chance to make amends. However, he also expects a reaction to occur in a timely manner, based on the urgency of the problem.

Feedback itself is perceived as valuable. Therefore, the participant does not like it if he does not receive any feedback in return. He values to receive personal feedback, in order to see that one cares and personally tends to him. For that matter, he considered it to be important that the hotel reports what has been done about his feedback, as this constitutes his reward for his effort. Therefore, he gives feedback once something is really positive or negative, as well as once he wants to make a suggestion or inform on something.

While asking whether the participant had heard of the application iFeedback® yet, the participant answered with yes. He recognized a terminal at Hamburg's airport. There, you could even rate the cleanliness of the toilets. However, he also added that he did not make use of these, as he was in a hurry. Nevertheless, he thought that iFeedback® would be a suitable tool to give general feedback, in form of suggestions. Regarding personal related matters, he would prefer to give personal feedback, as this is more efficient and has more value.

Considering whether he would use iFeedback® more when his feedback was always welcome and desired by the hotel, in order to enable them to improve, the participant answered with yes. For that matter, he said that he would use the terminal once he had more time. However, in case he used the application more frequently, he would consider downloading the application. On that account, he added that he would like to create a personal profile. In that way, he wouldn't need to fill in his personal details over and over again. In addition, his repeat usage required the application to be intuitive to use and fast to operate. Hence, it needed to be said that one can solely fill in the most important area in the questionnaire. Moreover, he explained that it was necessary to illustrate the actions that have been taken based on guest feedback. These facts should plainly be demonstrated on the hotel website. Apart from that, he suggested to devise a flyer with the exact feedback

procedure and additional information on the product, as the current display material did not appeal to him. The problem depicted with the current materials was, the static of the QR code which did not indicate a two-way process on the one hand, the unsuitable communicated benefit. Therefore, he suggested these communication messages: "Our quality depends on you. We react immediately", "Our quality depends on you. We take your feedback serious".

VII.RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The Organization BHM GROUP

The client at hand is the IT and media company BHM GROUP. Founded in 2010 by the managers Alexander Bauer and Stefan Muth, the BHM GROUP's headquarter is located in Hamburg, Germany and possesses a workforce of 10 employees. Operating in the field of telecommunications, new media and IT, the company's vision is to make (customer) communication profitable for both sides. Following this, the company pursues precisely three missions:

4. To become the customer experience and engagement expert
5. To enable all customers and companies to interact with each other
6. To ensure value creation for sender and receiver

In order to fulfill these missions the BHM GROUP not only markets its application iFeedback®, but also consults personally with clients to design individual communication solutions and to initiate strategic projects. Nonetheless, the majority of the company's business is based on the application iFeedback®, which is distributed in over 30 countries and utilized within various industries. Among these industries are for instance the gastronomy, retail, hotel and medical industry. According to the marketing consultant Sebastian Kriegel, the most profitable utilization of iFeedback® is seen in the hotel industry.

Currently iFeedback® is instituted in about 40 hotels in Germany. Even though every hotel is in the position to integrate the feedback application, the predominant target groups of the BHM GROUP are three-to-five star hotels. These have the necessary financial budget to sign a two year contract and further see the value of using/renting iFeedback® terminals. A further description of the terminals functionality as well as benefits will be given after the following in-depth illustration of the iFeedback® application.

The product iFeedback® is a web application and is best described as a digital questionnaire. It can be easily accessed via smartphone, either by scanning the QR code or by entering the URL in the browser. Both, the QR code and the URL, are printed on various display materials, which the BHM GROUP provides for the client. Additionally, the app can also be downloaded via app store. Once a

guest scans the QR Code he is immediately directed to the questionnaire, whose setup concerning the design, the number as well as the content of the questions is based on the client's wishes. The questionnaire of a hotel client usually first provides the guest with four main categories to choose from. These are hotel, gastronomy, conference area and spa. Once one of these categories is chosen, the guest is led to further sub categories. For instance, if the guest wants to complain about his dirty bathroom he would choose the following categories: hotel, room, cleanliness. After that he will be ask "How satisfied are you?". Subsequently, he can give a one to five star rating and leave an optional comment in the provided text box. Thereafter, he can either give more feedback on other categories or he can send his feedback off. If he presses send, he will be directed to the check-out page. There, he is given the option to leave his personal information, like his name and room number. Moreover, he can decide whether he wishes the staff to contact him personally. After the feedback is sent, the guest either receives a "thank-you-mail" (4-5 stars) or an "I-am-sorry-mail" (1-3 stars) based on how many stars he gave. In case the guest was unsatisfied and received a "sorry-mail" many hotels decide to integrate a voucher as compensation. Now, based on the chosen category, the guest feedback is then directed to the manager in charge. Within 30 seconds the manager receives an e-mail, containing the guest's feedback and personal details. At this point, it is up to him to use this information advantage to resolve the problem immediately.

Apart from the smartphone usage, the iFeedback® questionnaire can also be accessed via the previously mentioned terminals. These are iPads, which are integrated in a theft-proof floor or table stand. Considering their usage in hotels, terminals are usually positioned at various guest contact points, such as the reception desk, the stairway or the restaurant entrance. In this way, the guest's attention is easily caught and captured. Moreover, looking at the detailed analysis of the feedbacks in the hotel's online reporting system it appears that, these terminals represent the best way to engage guests to give feedback – about 70% of the received feedback is entered via terminal.

When the BHM GROUP markets iFeedback® to a new potential client, the company engages the hotelier to integrate the iFeedback® app as well as the appertaining display-material and terminals in order to actively solicit real-time feedback from his guests. In this way, the hotelier receives valuable information on the guest's preferences and needs during his stay at his hotel. Moreover, it does not matter whether the feedback is positive or negative, both contain crucial information. Whereas the positive feedback illustrates the areas that run smoothly and contain praise that encourages the personnel to keep up the good work, the negative feedback enables the hotelier to detect problems or areas with optimization potential. Subsequently, the hotelier is then in the position to solve these problems immediately on-site and is further able to perfect his offerings according to guests' wishes.

Furthermore, as iFeedback® is marketed under the motto "criticism to you, praise to the community" clients are also in the position to improve their online reputation. More precisely, while iFeedback® clients receive negative reviews only internally they are able to receive positive reviews publicly through the so called Holidaycheck-Widget. The link to this widget is integrated in the previously mentioned "thank-you-mail". Giving this second, public feedback is optional and does not contain a specific benefit for the guest. Consequently, as a suitable incentive is missing, it is assumed that not many guests make use of this widget.

Problem Definition

Whereas many hotels know about the product and the benefits of iFeedback® the predominant problem lies with the end consumer, the hotel guest. According to surveys, many people either do not know anything about the product or they have seen it but did not see the benefit of using it. According to several hotel clients, the target group not using the product at all, constitute business guests. However, it is unclear what the reason for their inactiveness. Therefore, several different complaint barriers have been detected and are taken into account throughout this research. The detected complaint barriers constitute a) lack of knowledge of the product and/or its benefit b) significance of the problem c) no appealing benefit d) QR code is not appealing e) preference of public rating portals.

As consequence, if the BHM Group does not raise awareness of the product iFeedback® among end consumers and does not communicate the benefits of the product clearly, the hotel guest will not make use of the application. In that case, the company will surely be surpassed by their competitors at some point. Thus, it is the BHM GROUP's goal to raise business guests' awareness of iFeedback® and to engage more guests to make use of the application. Consequently, the research shall be based on the following advice question: how does the option to give a feedback influence and benefit the hotel guest? And in turn how can that benefit be used to engage the guest to give feedback?

Scope of the Project

As the research project will be conducted during the ICM Internship, the time available is very limited. In order to still provide sufficient research, results and recommendations for BHM GROUP, the scope of the project will also be limited. The target group will contain business travelers between the age of 25 and 40. According to previous desk research, this target group constitutes employees or self-employed people, who own a smartphone, are technology savvy and prone to using applications. In addition, these are described as dominant and expressive business types, and

therefore characterized by their straightforwardness, high energy, and hard work. As a result, these depict business guests' who are used to handle a heavy work load and are further known to speak their mind openly. As consequence, the business guests' stance towards iFeedback® has to be ascertained as well as a suitable benefit. Apart from that, research regarding potential benefits hoteliers could offer guests will be conducted as well.

Research Objective

The objective of this research is to raise the end consumers' awareness of the product iFeedback® and to design a communication strategy that makes them active users of the application by:

5. Understanding the key characteristics and benefits of using iFeedback®
6. Understanding the needs, wants and habits of the hotel guests
7. Understanding what triggers customer engagement/behavior change
8. Understanding which communication channels/promotional tools are most effective to raise awareness of the iFeedback® application

Research Questions

Central Research Questions

Considering the communication needs, wants and habits of the target group, what is the best way to communicate the benefits of iFeedback®?

How can the BHM GROUP engage the identified target group to become active users of iFeedback®?

Sub-Questions

General

6. How is the product iFeedback® currently communicated/advertised to the target group?

7. How does the option to give a feedback influence and (dis)benefit a hotel guest?

8. How do you induce behavior change?

9. What are the current trends and developments in the hotel industry?

10. Who are the strongest competitors of iFeedback® and how do they position their product?

Hotel Guests

11. What are the (communication) needs, wants and habits of hotel guests?

12. What does the target group, who is completely unfamiliar with the iFeedback® concept, associate with the product/brand?

13. Does an immediate reaction to the feedback change a hotel guest's behavior? If so, how?

14. In what way can iFeedback® help satisfy the needs and wants of the target group?

15. Does the product iFeedback® need to be modified for the target group? And if so, in what way?

16. Does the appertaining display material need to be modified for the target group? And if so, in what way?

Theoretical Framework

In order to put the problem into context, existing expertise and communication theories will be used that can be applied to the situation. Nevertheless, just a first screening of literature was made. As soon as the problem and the details of research become clearer, it can be searched for more defined literature.

Until now, relevant literature is considered to be books and studies on the following four areas:

- Behavior & Behavior Change Strategies
- Marketing Mix (Product & Promotion in-depth)
- Social Marketing Tools

In order to determine what the term behavior precisely means, which stages are involved in a behavior change as well as which theories and models can be applied, the study "Theories and models of behavior and behavior change" by Morris et al. will be used. Moreover, in order to gather more information on how to effectively communicate the benefits of iFeedback® William A. Smith's book "Social Marketing Behavior" appears to be a viable choice, as he outlines various promotional tactics and advises on different marketing communication strategies. In addition, the presentation on consumer behavior in the hotel industry of the Temple University will help discern the hotel guests' wants and needs. Moreover, literature regarding other feedback tools and their promotion concepts will be helpful to develop a successful strategy that can help induce the desired behavior change.

Research Methods

In order to provide a well-founded research report and recommendations for BHM GROUP, methods of desk research as well as of field research will be used.

In terms of desk research, I will use the sources available inside the company as well as the internet to derive information about the industry, the company, trends, etc. In addition, literature will be used and analyzed in order to put the problem in the context of existing expertise as well as existing communication theories. During the situation analysis, I will get a more detailed insight into the

situation and the aspects that need to be researched very well. Thus, some research methods will be developed during the next phases.

In terms of field research, I intend to use a mix of research methods. In order to research how iFeedback® is currently introduced/presented to guests I will conduct interviews with several clients. Moreover, through these interviews can be determined which trends in the industry exist as well as which possible benefits the hotelier could offer the guest in return for his feedback. Apart from that, current clients will also be asked how many guests (in percentage) actually use iFeedback on average. This will help determine whether having the app in their hotel automatically tempts guests to use it. In finding the right contacts I will get much support from my mentor. Moreover, to research what hotel guests associate with iFeedback® and how they are influenced by and (dis)benefit from the option to give feedback, I will devise a questionnaire that targets employed/self-employed business travelers between the age of 25 and 45 with a high(er) level of education. To gain a sufficient insight, the questionnaire will be given to people who are acquainted with the concept of iFeedback® as well as to people who haven't heard of and used the product just yet. By surveying hotel guests that know as well as don't know of iFeedback® - I will develop a representative sample frame that helps me get an insight into the needs and wants of each target group. This sample frame will be developed out of my network as well as all already existing contacts and clients of my mentor. If the data derived from this questionnaire is not sufficient enough, I will conduct two additional focus groups. Last but not least, I will conduct an interview with a marketing professional in order to discuss the pros and cons of various promotional tools and marketing communication strategies.

1. **Planning Schedule**

When	What
01.09.14	Hand in Final Research Proposal
01.09. - 09.09.2014	Write and finish Situation Analysis
10.09. - 17.09.2014	Write and finish Literature Review Supervisor meeting via skype
18.09. - 20.09.2014	Write and finish In-depth Research Methodology Meeting supervisor via skype
21.09. - 05.10.2014	Carry out in-depth research
06.10. - 13.10.2014	Write Analysis of in-depth research Contact supervisor (meeting if necessary)

14.10. - 21.10.2014	Write and finish conclusions
22.10. - 26.10.2014	Write and finish recommendations Meeting supervisor
01.11.2014	Hand in Final Draft
17.11.2014	Hand in Final Paper