

Research in the Grisons

Grüezi, my name is Pepper

A social robot as a hotel employee

Virtual assistants and intelligent machines support us in many areas of life, often without us paying any particular attention to this fact anymore. “Pepper” and “Cruzr” are nevertheless likely to attract attention. Pepper has been welcoming guests at the Opera Hotel in Zurich since fall 2019. His colleague Cruzr has been working at the Hotel Allegra Lodge in Kloten since July 2020. The two social robots support hotel staff with checking guests in and out, as well as during their stay. With the help of Pepper and Cruzr, Jan Mosedale and his four-person project team from the Institute for Tourism and Leisure at the University of Applied Sciences of the Grisons want to investigate the opportunities and challenges associated with the use of robots in the Swiss hotel industry.



Cruzr (pictured) and Pepper (not pictured) can still be seen in action this summer. Photo credit: Avatarion Technology AG

Mosedale, a tourism researcher, explains the genesis and goals of the innovative project: “The manager of the Opera Hotel, Michael Böhler, approached me with the idea of using a robot in his hotel. The hoteliers’ goal is to create added value for guests and to relieve employees in certain situations. Arrival, stay and departure of the guests should be simplified and digitalized, thus increasing the positive guest experience. We at the Institute of Tourism and Leisure want to investigate whether the use of robots in hotels makes sense based on the two case studies at the Opera Hotel and the Allegra Lodge Hotel.”

Mosedale and his team are looking into the phenomenon of robots in the hotel industry from different angles and with different methods: “We are using a pre-arrival questionnaire to find out what the general attitude toward robots is and, in particular, towards robots in the hotel industry. Which factors are decisive for guests to use the robot? In which situations would guests be more likely to use the robot, or when would they prefer to go to the front desk? For example, if we find that time is a big factor, it’s worth using a robot at rush hour at the front desk. After the guests have arrived and encountered the robot, we use another questionnaire to determine whether and how their perceptions have changed. The guest surveys are currently ongoing. Additionally, a project team member is observing guest-robot interactions in the hotel lobby.”

Mosedale continues, “The employee perspective is naturally also very important, so we are conducting workshops to collaboratively develop ideas on how to incorporate robots into the organization. The employees are not afraid of being replaced by robots. Rather, they are thinking about how to develop the robots further. One idea was that the robot could take orders, for

example, if the reception desk has an integrated bar. This year, we want to evaluate all the data and complete the project. In a next project, it would certainly be exciting if the robots could use artificial intelligence to interpret guests' reactions and thus adjust their behavior towards guests.”

Authors: Jan Mosedale & Daniela Heinen

Institute for Tourism and Leisure, University of Applied Sciences of the Grisons

The Institute for Tourism and Leisure is the tourism department of the University of Applied Sciences of the Grisons. As an important Swiss institution for education, training and research in tourism and the leisure industry, it has a national and international impact. www.fhgr.ch

The content of this article was provided by Academia Raetica, the association for the promotion of science, research and education in the canton of Grisons and its surrounding areas: www.academiaaetica.ch.



Jan Mosedale

The German version was published in the Bündner Woche on June 23, 2021.

June 23, 2021/DH