



**Bachelor thesis, 15 credits, for a  
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration:  
International business and Marketing  
Spring 2019**

**Exploring the customer journey**  
**An exploratory study investigating the customer journey**  
**Marcus Bolinder & Philip Boström**

Faculty of Business

**Höskolan Kristianstad | [www.hkr.se](http://www.hkr.se)**

**Författare/Author**

Marcus Bolinder & Philip Boström

**Titel (Svenska)**

Undersökning av kundresan: En utforskande studie av kundresan

**Title (English)**

Exploring the customer journey: An exploratory study investigating the customer journey

**Handledare/Supervisor**

Jens Hultman

**Medbedömare/Co-examiner**

Karin Alm

**Examiner**

Helene Tjärnemo

**Abstract**

The customer journey is a re-submerged subject which has become increasingly relevant. The focus derives from the increased focus on customer experience as touch points are increasing as well as becoming more accessible. This is creating problems for companies to allocate their resources in marketing. Previous literature on customer journeys are also limited, mostly originating from research on customer experience. This motivates research within the field with the purpose of exploring the customer journey and connected phenomena.

The basis of this thesis was the customer journey which derives from customer experience. Further, the theoretical framework presents theories about customer experience, consumer buying decisions, customer journey and its touch points. The theoretical framework also presents two conceptual models concerning customer journey and customer experience. Focus was here on exploring the formulation of the customer journey, its steps and components. But also, on investigating how customer experiences affects customer journeys.

This thesis had a qualitative research strategy and empirical material was collected through interviews. The empirical findings and the analysis resulted in several conclusions as this was an exploratory study. Reason for use of route, use of different touch points, customer experience impact and were found. Furthermore, the customer journey itself was identified as a reason for conducting a purchase.

The result of this thesis might help companies allocate their resources more efficiently between touch points. As well as understanding how to create positive customer experience and the importance of it.

**Keywords**

Customer journey, customer experience, touch points, consumer buying decision process, e-commerce, information overload

---

# Acknowledgement

---

**We would like to thank our supervisor Jens Hultman who has been supporting, providing us with inspiration and knowledge during the writing of this thesis. Also thank you to our co-examiner Karin Alm, who provided us with feedback and insights.**

**Further, a big thank you to all our respondents who made the writing of this thesis possible.**

**In addition, we would like to give a thank you to Simon Stoltenborg who has made our time at the university one of the best experiences of our lives. This thank you also goes to all of you who have kept us company and fought with us, side by side, during these three years.**

**Lastly, we would like to thank our families and loved ones for supporting us during the writing of this thesis.**

*Thank you!*

*Kristianstad - 2019*

---

Marcus Bolinder

---

Philip Boström

## Table of contents

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background .....	1
1.2 Problematization.....	3
1.3 Purpose .....	5
1.4 Research question.....	6
1.5 Outline .....	6
<b>2. Theoretical Framework .....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 The changing conditions of the retail market.....	7
2.2 Customer journey .....	8
2.3 Touch points .....	9
2.4 Customer experience .....	10
2.5 Decision process.....	11
2.6 Pains and gains .....	14
2.7 Conceptual model: the customer journey.....	15
2.8 Conceptual model: the customer experience cycle .....	18
<b>3. Method.....</b>	<b>20</b>
3.1 Research approach.....	20
3.1.1 Research philosophy .....	21
3.1.2 Choice of methodology .....	21
3.1.3 Choice of theory .....	22
3.2 Research design.....	22
3.2.1 Research strategy.....	23
3.2.2 Data collection.....	23
3.2.3 Participant selection .....	24
3.2.4 Interview respondents .....	24
3.2.5 Interview guide.....	25
3.3 Data analysis .....	26
3.4 Reliability and validity .....	27
<b>4. Empirical findings .....</b>	<b>29</b>
4.1 Exploring eight customer journeys .....	29
4.2 Empirical findings from the interviews.....	29
4.2.1. Customer journey one – “Feeling satisfied”.....	31
4.2.2. Customer journey two – “Enhancing studies” .....	32
4.2.3. Customer journey three – “Quality time” .....	33
4.2.4 Customer journey four – “Facilitated financial and social endeavor” .....	34

4.2.5. Customer journey five – “Easier daily routines” .....	35
4.2.6. Customer journey six – “Keeping in touch with friends” .....	36
4.2.7. Customer journey seven – “Finding a replacement” .....	37
4.2.8. Customer journey eight – “Physical relief” .....	37
<b>5. Analysis of the empirical findings.....</b>	<b>39</b>
5.1 Need/recognition .....	39
5.2 Gains.....	40
5.3 Pains .....	41
5.4 Customer experience .....	42
5.5 Touch points .....	43
5.6 Route used .....	45
<b>6. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>47</b>
6.1 Summary of the thesis .....	47
6.2 Conclusion.....	47
6.3 Critical review .....	50
6.4 Suggestions for future research .....	50
<b>7. List of references .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>8. Appendices .....</b>	<b>57</b>
Appendix A: Interview guide in Swedish .....	57
Appendix B: Interview guide in English.....	59
Figure 1: The consumer decision-making process .....	13
Figure 2: Conceptual model: the customer journey .....	16
Figure 3: Conceptual model: the customer experience cycle.....	18

# 1. Introduction

---

*This chapter introduces the subject of customer journey, its key components and how they are connected to each other. Furthermore, current research of the subject is covered and the research gap existing in the field of customer journey.*

---

## 1.1 Background

The earliest publication on the customer journey dates to 1991, but most peer reviewed papers on the topic are published in 2009 or later. This points to the increased relevance of the topic (Foelstad & Kvale, 2018). This renewed attention arises from an increased focus on the customer experience. The customer journey is essential in the case of being a retailer to understand how to add value for customers who look for buy a good or service (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The retail market is evolving and changing rapidly (Kunc & Križan, 2018; Falk & Hagsten, 2015). Digitalization and increased transparency give the customer a whole new perspective when purchasing a good (Homburg, Jozic, & Kuehnl, 2017). For example, the e-commerce sector has proliferated during the 2000th century because of progress in technology and the increased use of broadband, 3G and 4G networks which are all available on computers and mobile devices such as tablets and smartphones (Enache, 2018). As such technology becomes more accessible and cheaper for the consumer, markets grow wider for companies who want access to a further range of possible customers. An example is consumers who live in a non-urban area who because of digitalization, have the same opportunity to search for information and browse over the Internet (Rosen & Howard, 2000). The benefits for retailers are also convincing, explaining the surge of companies using the Internet as it offers increased market access (Rosen & Howard, 2000). Thus, the customer journey is evolving, hence the importance of exploring it.

Understanding the customer journeys is useful for companies, providing insights and a versatile tool to manage the customer experience. For example, by accessing tools necessary to, not only understand the customer journey but to design the customer experience (Foelstad & Kvale, 2018). The importance of this should not be diminished as marketers are facing challenges by the increases of touch points in resource allocation (Baxendale, Macdonald, & Wilson, 2015). The customer journey is identified as a tool for understanding, adding value too and

designing the customer experience. Vajpayee and Gowda (2014) also identifies customer experience as one significant challenge for the upcoming years for companies. The customer experience can be defined as "encompassing every aspect of a company's offering – the quality of customer care, advertising, packaging, product and service features, ease of use, and reliability. It is the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company" (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). In general, researchers have accepted that customer experience consists of a multi-dimensional construction which contains cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial and social components. Each step along the customer journey is to be infested with an experience of some or all these components which once again is linking the customer journey with customer experience (Temkin & Bliss, 2011).

Furthermore, customers interact with firms through an increasing number of channels before making a purchase which results in more complex customer journeys. The increasement of channels and complexity of the customer journey is showing the importance of understanding the customer journey (Smith, 2015). Improving customer experiences is the top priority by executives (Smith, 2015). Big firms like Amazon and Google has also added 'chief customer experience officers' responsible for their customer experiences which exemplifies the relevance of the topic (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The customer journey is a relevant topic as the number of channels available for retailers and customers is increasing. The signification of 'customer journey' seems to lack a common understanding and there are several ways to define the customer journey (Edelman & Singer, 2015). The different definitions available converge into the use of various touch points activities by the customer in a decision process. The customer journey is therefore explained as defining the customer decision process from being aware of a good to go through with the purchase including various touch points in between (Foelstad & Kvale, 2018).

There are four types of touch points identified which are; brand-owned, partner owned, customer-owned and social/external-touch points (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The brand-owned touch point is such as advertising and loyalty programs which are under the company's control. Partner-owned touch points are managed jointly by the company's partners which could be a marketing agency. Customer-owned touch points are where the company has no control, for example, external websites connected to the company. Social/external touch points are

identified as other customers and independent information sources. Depending on the customers need and expectations the customer will encounter one, some or all these touchpoints when buying a good or service (Hanssens, 2015).

One of the reasons for the increase of channels is the blow-up of e-commerce which has increased dramatically during later years due to progress in technology. E-commerce consists of a range of elements and is to be defined as "distributing, buying, selling, marketing, and servicing new products or services over electronic systems such as the Internet and other computer networks" (Enache, 2018). E-commerce adds to fragmentation and an increase of touch points by for example accessibility to information through the Internet (Stein & Ramaseshan, 2016). The use of fragmented touch points is leading to a loss of control for firms in customer experience and the customer journey. This results in customer loyalty diminution and difficulties in adding value for the companies (Homburg et al., 2017). Further, the definition of touch point varies between literature but is by this study to be considered "instances of interaction and communication as well as tangible and intangible objects and the physical surrounding," (Foelstad & Kvale, 2018). This definition includes, for example, physical meetings with the company, customer assistants and websites.

## 1.2 Problematicization

The customer journey is constantly evolving and changing its dynamics since customers are changing their demands (Dhanapal, Vashu, & Subramaniam, 2015). Companies must adapt to these new demands in order to be successful. Dhanapal et al. (2015) claims that young people are the ones who are setting the demands while, Gomez-Herrera, Martens and Turlea (2014) argues that all age groups control the changing demands. In addition, Gomez-Herrera et al. (2014) claims that going to physical stores is a thing of the past. Companies who are not active in e-commerce will not exist in the next three years. However, what route to use during the customer journey is only a small part of the topic. Scholars researching the topic of the customer journey discusses how companies can tackle the new demands of customers (Schmitt, Joško, & Zarantonello, 2015; Foelstad & Kvale, 2018; Temkin & Bliss, 2011; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Foelstad and Kvale (2018) claims that there is no standard definition regarding the term "customer journey". The reason for this claim is that there has not been enough research done

on how people of different ages go through the customer journey (Edelman & Singer, 2015). However, according to Schmitt, Joško and Zarantonello (2015) the general agreement amongst researchers is that the most critical components affecting the customer journey are social, cognitive, behavioral, emotional and sensorial. In addition, aspects like a specific brand or improved technology are essential and affects the customer journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). All these components and aspects are found in various touchpoints that affects the customer journey (Temkin & Bliss, 2011). The touch points are important for both the customer but also for the companies. If a company knows how to affect a customer's decision regarding a purchase through a specific touchpoint that would help the company sell more products (Teixeira, Patrício, Nunes, Nobrega, Fisk, & Constantine, 2012). Knowing how the customers navigates through the customer journey is very useful for a company trying to increase profits (Temkin & Bliss, 2011). However, Anderl, Schumann and Kunz (2016) claims that it is missing scientific backed result of the understanding regarding how the customer acts when purchasing products or services. According to Anderl et al. (2016), to fill the gap, people of different ages and sexes needs to be interviewed in order to find what path they take during their customer journey. Furthermore, Anderl et al. (2016) suggest that further research should focus on the different touchpoints that affect customers during their journey. In addition, Teixeira et al. (2012) claims that there is a research gap regarding the different paths that the customer journey can take in comparison to who the person is. It is not obvious what affects customers to choose a different path in their journey (Teixeira et al., 2012). This problem is something that companies in all kinds of industries struggle with (Baxendale et al., 2015).

To the best of our knowledge, the area regarding what paths the customer chooses during the customer journey is somewhat unresearched. A thesis within this area, which is exploring the customer journey, would contribute with increased knowledge. Exploring the customer journey means that we will investigate how different customers acts during the customer journey and why they act in that way. By the exploration of the customer journey it might create knowledge about how to create positive customer experience. The positive customer experience would mean that both the retailer and the customer benefit from a more accommodating interaction. The positive customer experience could also mean that the customer would feel a more wholesome relationship with the retailer. Further, what affects customers should be researched to benefit both companies and customers. If a company know how to affect customer journeys, the company will benefit in increased revenues (Temkin & Bliss, 2011). In addition, the

customer would also benefit since companies would be able to meet their demands. This thesis will make it clearer how companies can enhance the customer journey in the retail market. In addition, various themes that affects different customers will be, identified, analyzed and discussed. These themes could be factors or aspects that is vital for understanding the customer journey. For example, the reasons for conducting shopping online rather than in a physical store. Further, it could also be how the customer compares pros and cons of a product or a retailer. The research field of the customer journey will also be broadened since this thesis adds empirical material regarding the topic. As mentioned above, this thesis might create improvement for both companies and customers. The reason for this is that companies will have an easier time adopting to customer demands which could derive stronger relationships between the retailer and the customer. Further, if companies within the retail market understands the customer journey and how to enhance it, this could benefit both parties.

Exploring the customer journey might uncover interesting themes that surrounds the topic which might help retailers to improve the customer experience. These might be part of the customer journey which means that they could correlate when investigated further. As mentioned above, what affects the customer during the customer journey and creating knowledge of how to create a positive customer experience is vital for companies within the retail market. This means that increasing the knowledge of these areas might help both companies and customers. Further, the results of this thesis might help retailers to understand what they can do differently in order to enhance the customer journey. This derives to the purpose of this thesis.

### **1.3 Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to explore the customer journey of today and to identify what affects the customer. In addition, interesting themes which surrounds the customer journey will be identified and analyzed. Furthermore, the goal is to provide retailing firms with a better understanding of how to create positive customer experiences by exploring and analyzing the customer journey.

## 1.4 Research question

How can companies enhance the customer journey in the retail market?

## 1.5 Outline

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter explains the importance and relevance of the customer journey. In addition, the scientific problem regarding the customer journey will be put forward. The second chapter will focus on different theories with connected explanations. This chapter helps the reader understand different theories and our conceptual models that surrounds the customer journey. The third chapter contains of both the research methodology and empirical method. The research methodology part explains how the thesis will be conducted and in what way. The empirical method part explains how the empirical material were collected and used. The collection of the empirical material was by semi-structured interviews. Further, in chapter four the empirical findings from the eight studied customer journeys were presented. In chapter five these customer journeys were analyzed thru five identified themes and the conceptual models. The themes were gains, pains, customer experience, touch points, the route used, and need/recognition. Lastly, chapter six is presenting a summary of the thesis, conclusion, critical review and suggestions for future research.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

---

*In this chapter theories and models that are relevant regarding the customer journey is presented. The chapter will cover the impact of e-commerce, customer journey, touch points, customer experience and customer behavior. Two conceptual models are also presented. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the concepts used that will be discussed.*

---

### 2.1 The changing conditions of the retail market

The retail market changes constantly, shopping centers are becoming more common and city centers struggles to keep the traditional forms of retailing alive. Together with shopping centers the emerging e-commerce market is gaining market shares from the typically traditional physical city center retailing (Kunc & Križan, 2018; Zhu, Nakata, Grewal, Sivakumar, & Grewal (2013). The e-commerce is an exciting and emerging topic which are growing rapidly and where new opportunities are arising constantly. The retail market is facing relentless innovations by the digitalization and new technology. Companies must evaluate and apply these innovations to stay or become competitive (Chaffey, 2011). This is crucial as according to Laudon and Traver (2011) e-commerce is the fastest growing commerce.

E-commerce is useful for customers by for example providing them with information regarding companies, products and other customer reviews by word of mouth. This kind of usage is increasing amongst companies by for example the use of smartphone applications. Companies are also offering augmented reality in further extension. One example is IKEA who lets the customer use the camera through their smartphone application in its home to place out furniture in order to see how the result would be. Converse Footwear offers a similar solution where the customer can “try on” their shoes by aiming the camera on the foot using their smartphone application. Other functions who are arising with e-commerce are chatbots appearing on companies’ websites. These chatbots are coded to answer easy questions from customers and constructed to enhance the customer experience and loyalty (Enhance, 2018). These kinds of functions offered by companies are designed to increase the rate of repeated purchases and loyalty from customers. But also, to encourage new customers in engaging with the company to reach a larger customer base (Chaffey, 2011).

The changing conditions of the retail market is due to a more e-commerce concentrated market in symbiosis with the development of the internet of things and the digitalization era occurring. New technology in manufacturing and delivery will allow companies to accelerate their supply chains which will change the retail market furtherly (Enhance, 2018). One of the biggest drivers for business adaption regarding e-commerce is the cost reduction achieved by e-commerce through reduction of staff costs and transportation costs. This is giving the companies the possibility to lower the prices online (Chaffey, 2011). Customers will demand higher levels of transparency concerning for example prices, giving the e-commerce an edge over the traditional retail market (Enhance, 2018).

## **2.2 Customer journey**

The increasing number of sales channels and accessibility to information has made the customer journey a relevant topic (Foelstad & Kvale, 2018). One of the significant problems for today's retailers is the development of e-commerce due to the rapid expansion of the internet and technology progress (Rosen & Howard, 2000; Enache, 2018; Edelman & Singer, 2015). This means that the customer journey is changing, and the consumers are now in the driver's seat. As they have easy access to information for research, price comparisons and product comparisons (Edelman & Singer, 2015). Furthermore, the customer journey lacks a common definition but consists of a widespread of definitions throughout peer-reviewed literature. Thus, the customer journey lacks a standard definition, it converges into the use of various touch points in the buying process of a good or service (Foelstad & Kvale, 2018). Foelstad and Kvale (2018) therefore explains the customer journey as defining the customer decision process from being aware of a good or company to go through with purchase including various touch points in between.

The customer journey is tightly connected to customer experience as it is identified as being a tool for understanding how to add value to the customer (Rawson, Duncan, & Jones, 2013). This is considered confirmed as big firms like Amazon and Google has appointed individual "chief customer experience officers". Furthermore, Smith (2015) claims that customer experience was a top priority by executives. Thus, the customer journey is essential to understand in order to create and design the customer experience (Foelstad & Kvale, 2018). Researchers have accepted that the customer experience is consisting of a multi-dimensional construction of social components. The touch points which may occur along the customer

journey will be affecting some or all social components through an experience. This links customer experience to customer journey which then consists of various touch points (Edwards, 2014).

## 2.3 Touch points

As introduced to earlier, the customer journey is consisting of various touch points whom all symbolizes a step on the journey from a pre-purchase to a post-purchase of a service or a good (Stein & Ramaseshan, 2016; Meyer & Schwager, 2007). Making touch points metaphorical of building blocks of the customer journey, hence the importance of understanding them. As stated, touch points are defined by Foelstad and Kvale (2018) that they are to be considered the "instances of interaction and communication as well as tangible and intangible objects and the physical surrounding". This definition is thereby including social interactions in a store, the usage of external and internal websites, information search and more. This angle strengthens that touch points are occurring amongst all stages of the customer journey (Verhoef et al., 2009). All these different interactions amongst the customer journey are further to be coded into a genre which is to be any of; brand owned, partner owned, customer-owned or social/external- touch points (Pauwels, Zeynep, & Lackman, 2016).

The brand-owned touch points are identified as actions that a customer performs under the control of the company. These interactions are designed by the company in order to give a specific customer experience. Typical brand-owned touch points are advertising conducted by the company but also company-controlled elements of the marketing mix in use by the firm. The use of CRM (customer relationship management) is another typical brand-owned touch point referring to the use of loyalty programs (De Haan, Kannan, Verhoef, & Wiesel, 2015). Loyalty programs are designed, in the company's point of view as a reply to the increasing competition in retail to retain customer loyalty by rewarding profitable customers (Evanschitzky et al., 2012).

The partner-owned touch points are identified as actions that a customer performs with a partner of the specific company. These touch points are jointly managed by the company and the partner, such could be marketing agencies and multivendor-loyalty programs that span over

more than one company (De Haan et al., 2015). Multivendor-loyalty programs refer to a network of providers connected to the same loyalty-program. The multivendor-loyalty program collects a more significant number of potential customers but where the customer may be loyal towards the loyalty-program itself rather than the company (Evanschitzky et al., 2012).

The customer-owned touch points are identified as actions the customer perform within customer experience but who are out of reach from the companies control and thereby not able to influence (Baxendale et al., 2015). The customer-owned touch point is prevalent during the pre-purchase of a good where the desires and needs are considered by the consumer. Another example of this kind of touch point is customer made instructional or reviewing videos of products uploaded for example on Youtube (De Haan, Wiesel, & Pauwels, 2016).

The social/external touch point is lastly identified as the role of others within the customer experience. As the customers proceed along the customer journey, it will be influenced by external and social touch points. These touch points vary from other customers, friends, family, social media, independent information sources as websites and environments (Baxendale et al., 2015).

## **2.4 Customer experience**

As the retail landscape is changing the importance of understanding customer experience and delivering valuable interactions to the customer is crucial. The companies will have to engage their customers with valuable interactions consistently in order to create loyalty with profitable customers (Grewal, Levy, & Kumar, 2009). Customer experience is identified as one of the significant challenges coming up for companies. Puccinelli et al., (2009) claims website are becoming standardized and easier to use. Checkout options on website makes shopping online convenient (Puccinelli et al., 2009). They need to develop to meet the increasing complexity of the customer journey due to increasement of touch points. This is further argued for by Verhoef et al., (2009), Puccinelli et al., (2009) and Grewal et al., (2009) who claims that customer experience value creation is of great importance in today's retail environment. As introduced earlier, Smith (2015) did a significant study on the market leading firm which confirmed that improving the customer experience were a priority amongst these firms like Amazon and Google (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Before delving further into customer

experience, it is necessary to repeat the definition considered in this study by Meyer and Schwager (2007); "encompassing every aspect of a company's offering – the quality of customer care, advertising, packaging, product and service features, ease of use, and reliability. It is the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company". This definition is strengthened by the claim that customer experiences emerge whether the company recognize this interaction or not, for example by indirect contact (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015).

The perspicuous mapping of customer experience can be conceptualized through three overall stages; pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase (Puccinelli et al., 2009). The pre-purchase stage is considering the aspects of which the customer encounters the company before the purchase. This stage is including the consideration, information search and need of recognition which arise from the need/goal/impulse of a good (Rawson et al., 2013). The purchase stage is when the purchase of the good is performed. Typically, this covers all the interactions of which are done with the company during the purchase. This stage is including behaviors of choice, ordering, and payment (De Haan et al., 2016). The post-purchase stage is when the purchase has already been performed. This stage is including usage and consumption of the product, various post-purchase engagements and service requests (De Keyser, Schepers, & Konus, 2015).

Furthermore, according to Lemon and Verhoef (2016), customer experience is a multidimensional construct which consists of the customers cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial and social components. These components are then exposed through responses to any interaction with the company, in any stage or by any touch point. In order to simplify the explanation of the customer experience construction, the mentioned components would be identified as responding factors to a peculiar interaction with a touch point. For example, satisfaction by an interaction would be cognitively evaluated by the customer (De Keyser et al., 2015).

## **2.5 Decision process**

During the customer journey, one of the crucial aspects is the decision process. This process is focused on how the customer chooses to create a purchase, and what affects that decision. In

1961, research started to focus on the customer's decision process when it came to make a purchase. During this time two authors called Robert Lavidge and Gary Steiner created a theory that explained how customers go through the purchasing decision process (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961). The theory was based on the knowledge customer had about different products. The authors explain that customers without previous knowledge of a product would rather buy a product they had knowledge about (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961). In addition, the theory explained that customers relied on previous experiences before making a purchase. These experiences were the foundations of the customers decision process. It was hard for companies to affect a customer's decision (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961).

Since 1961, the customer journey has changed significantly with the introduction of e-commerce. This in turn has also affected the decision-making process for the customer. There are new ways to create a purchase and companies has several new forms of ways to affect the customer's decision (Juaneda-Ayensa, Mosquera, & Sierra Murillo, 2016). Juaneda-Ayensa et al. (2016) claims that in recent years customers must adapt to evolving and enhancing technology. Also, how companies affect the customers buying behavior. There are more channels to reach customers than ever before; however, it is also easier for customers to research various products they are planning to buy (Juaneda-Ayensa et al., 2016).

To further understand the consumer buying decision process, the diagram (see figure 1) by Fahy and Jobber (2015) is adapted into this research. The diagram is called *the consumer decision-making process*. According to Fahy and Jobber (2015) this is the typically decision-making process for consumers. The diagram consists of five different stages of which the consumer passes through during the customer journey. These stages are also represented in the customer journey (see figure 2) which are presented in the next section. Connection points are identified in all three purchase stages of the customer journey by for example need recognition, research, determination and evaluation of the purchase (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Further, the buying decision process consists of following stages in order; need recognition/problem awareness, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase and post-purchase evaluation of decision. Following, these stages are illustrated (see figure 1) and further explained.

Figure 1: The consumer decision-making process



The stage *need recognition/problem awareness* are to be both functional, unpredictable or emotional. For example, functional by the routine of buying groceries and unpredictable as something breaks and the consumer needs to replace that item. Emotional need is when there is no functional or unpredictable trigger but a want for a specific item or purchase (Fahy & Jobber, 2015).

The stage *information search* includes information search that can be both external and internal. The internal information search refers to when the consumer got a specific experience with a brand, company or product which will influence the determination of the consumer. The external information search refers to for example asking acquaint people and salespersons, advertisements, product reports and reviews. The external information searches are usually taking place through the Internet (Fahy & Jobber, 2015).

The stage *evaluation of alternatives* is where the consumer considers the risk of the purchase. The consumer is also screening the options of retailers as of where to buy the actual product. Further, evaluation of alternatives can be categorized in to two genres; high-involvement and low-involvement purchases. High-involvement purchases is when there is a high risk and/or price, for example an expensive watch or a computer. In these purchases the retailers need to provide the consumer with enough of information to go through with the purchase. Low-involvement purchases are typically quick evaluations mirroring purchases with low risk and/or cost. An example would be the purchase of Pepsi versus Coca-Cola (Fahy & Jobber, 2015).

The *purchase* stage considers when the actual purchase is made, the consumer has done the evaluation and made a choice for a retailer and/or product.

The *post-purchase evaluation of decision* stage is where the consumer evaluates the decision of buying the specific product and/or the decision to buy from the specific company. For example, did the company deliver a positive customer experience and if the product did meet the expectations of the customer (Kumar & Anjaly, 2017; Fahy & Jobber, 2015).

## 2.6 Pains and gains

Osterwalder, Pigneur, Clark and Sjösten (2010) claims that the success of a purchase being carried out by a customer depends on the different pains and gains. In the early stages of a customer's decision process the potential products are compared (Osterwalder et al., 2010).

Firstly, the pains of a certain product are analyzed. The pains can be fears, frustrations or obstacles regarding the product. These three aspects do not necessarily need to be attributes of the product itself. It might be something concerning how the customer purchase the product. For example, if the product cannot be ordered online that might be an obstacle. Secondly, the gains of the products are analyzed. The gains can be measures of success or wants/needs. When the customer is deciding between products the product with highest measure of success to please the customer will be chosen. In addition, the product must meet the need of the customer. If a customer needs a coffeemaker that makes a full can of coffee in less than seven minutes then the product must be able to meet this need (Osterwalder et al., 2010).

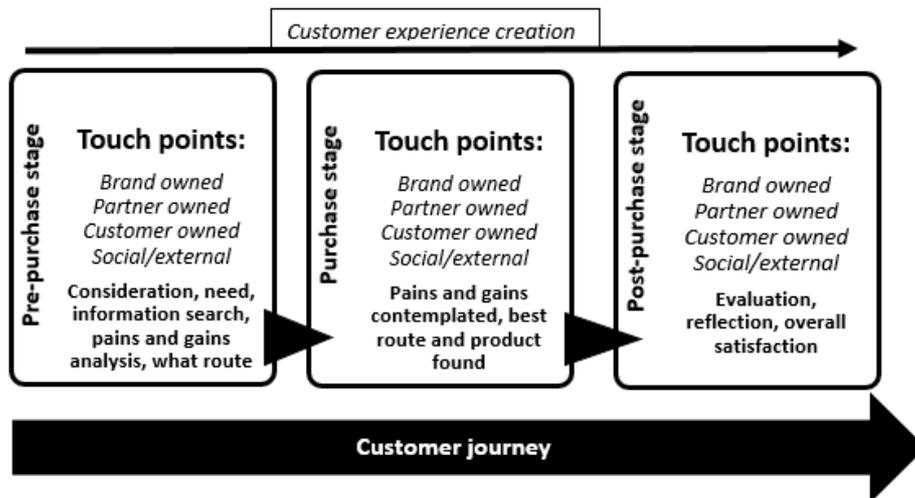
A customer that has a need to buy a vacuum cleaner for example would have several pains and gains to compared between different kinds of vacuum cleaners. Fears regarding the vacuum cleaner might be that it will not reach the quality demands that the customer has. A frustration might be that the cord length of the vacuum cleaner is too short. An obstacle of the product might be that the product can only be bought in a physical store and not ordered online. The measure of success for the vacuum cleaner can be measured by how much dust the cleaner can take in before becoming full. A special need for the vacuum cleaner could be that it needs to be cordless. This need would drastically remove several vacuum cleaners that would be optional. (Osterwalder et al., 2010).

## 2.7 Conceptual model: the customer journey

To better understand of how the customer journey is constructed the *customer journey model* (see figure 2) was created which is based on Lemon and Verhoefs (2016) *process model for customer journey and experience*. The model is divided into three different stages. All of these are infested with touch points the customer may encounter during the customer journey. These are brand owned, partner owned, customer owned and social/external touch points. Along with the customer journey the *customer experience creation* arrow has been added. This shows that customer experience is created as the customer journey progresses through all stages and touch points. This is of importance since the customer journey has been identified as a tool of creating and designing customer experience. The customer experience is a multidimensional construction of cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial and social components. These are triggered by interactions with touch points in any stage of the customer journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Further, as customer experience is created during the customer journey it will have implications on future customer journeys considering how it was perceived by the customer. For example, if the customer had a positive or negative experience of a company or product. This will be further explained in the *customer experience cycle* (see figure 3).

There are three different stages within the model. The first stage is the pre-purchase stage; during this stage the awareness of the customers need to purchase a specific product arises. Here the customer gathers information and conducts research regarding the product and where the best place to purchase said product. The second stage is where the actual purchase occurs, during this stage the customer is purchasing the product in either a physical store or online. The third and final stage is the post-purchase stage; it is now that the customer evaluates the purchase and decides if he/she is satisfied or not (Lizhen, Duan, & Whinston, 2014). In the next sections the model's different stages will be further accounted for.

Figure 2: Conceptual model: the customer journey



The first part of the model is the pre-purchase stage, which is where the recognition of need arises. As mentioned earlier, this is the stage where the customer encounters the company before making the purchase (Pieters, Baumgartner, & Allen, 1995). When the need for a product is recognized by the customer, the customer starts to consider viable options of how the product could be acquired. The customer starts searching for information regarding the product in order to find the perfect product that suits the needs (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). All these touchpoints are part of the customer experience and affect the customer in different ways. Pains and gains of different options are analyzed, and the best routes for making the purchase is created. During the pre-purchase stage, the research of a product through hundreds of different stores is made through a website. This has made it possible for the customer to map out several distinct options of the purchase in brief time (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

However, an abundance of information has a risk to confuse the customer. Park and Stoel (2005) claim that too much information from companies might overload the customer. According to Park and Stoel (2005) it is the quality of the information, not the quantity, that matters to the customer. This is extra important when it comes to customer journeys via the internet. Through a search in a search engine, several offers regarding the desired product will become visible (Aswani, Kar, Ilavarasan, & Dwivedi, 2018). This means that the information that contains more quality affects the customer the most.

As mentioned earlier, it is crucial for companies to keep the information regarding a product to a decent level in order to avoid overloading the customer. The customer bases its decision on the information it gathers in the pre-purchase stage (Pieters et al., 1995). According to Broilo, Espartel, and Basso (2016) if a customer is exposed to too many different choices, there is a risk for the customer to experience choice and information overload. This term refers to the situation when a customer experiences a harder time to make a specific decision regarding a purchase. This is due to the amount of information and available options which are too many for the customer to handle (Broilo et al., 2016).

The second part of the model is the purchase stage, it is here the actual purchase is made. This is after all pains and gains have been contemplated, the best route and products has been found. The product is either bought in a physical store or online through a website (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Further, Park and Stoel (2005) claims that if the customer trusts and recognizes the company the likelihood of the purchase happening will increase.

The choice between physical store or e-commerce varies from customer to customer. Hsiao (2009) explains that the final touch that affects where the customer makes the purchase is based on accessibility. Something simple as a company having the product in stock might change the choice of company to purchase from. If the customer does not feel like waiting until it gets the product this might make the customer go to a physical store. While at the same time some customer might enjoy the comfort of shopping from their couch. (Hsiao, 2009). Availability is one of the most critical aspects that the customer reflects over; this can be both a pain and a gain depending on the experience of the customer (Pieters et al., 1995).

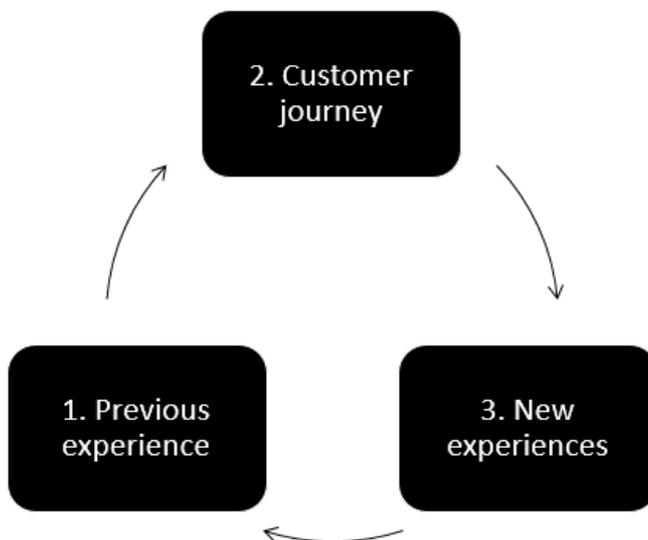
The third and last stage of the model is the post-purchase. During this stage, the customer evaluates the purchase to see if it was a good or bad purchase (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). This stage reflects the customer experience of the purchase. The customer contemplates regarding what went right and wrong of the journey (Rawson et al., 2013). According to Kumar and Anjaly (2017), this stage seriously affects the future customer journeys of customers and helps shape how a new journey could take form. The essential touchpoints of this stage are how the company acted toward the customer. Depending on the customer experience regarding a specific company they can affect how other customers thinks and feels about the same company. If the company failed to satisfy the customer during the journey, the customer can

through blogs, social media, and word-of-mouth make other customer distance themselves from said company (Kumar & Anjaly, 2017).

## 2.8 Conceptual model: the customer experience cycle

As mentioned in section 2.3, customer experience, which is created during the customer journey, will have implications on future customer journeys. In order to understand how different customer experiences, affect the customer journey the following conceptual model was created. The model is called *the customer experience cycle* (see figure 2). This model relates to *the customer journey model* (see figure 1) since it explains in detail how a current customer journey can affect future customer journeys. It will clarify how important it is for companies to emphasize their customer experience design.

Figure 3: Conceptual model: The customer experience cycle



The first stage of the model is “previous experience”. In this stage the customer has previous experience regarding different customer journeys that have been completed. The arrow between previous experience and customer journey represents how the first affects the latter. When a customer enters a new customer journey the customer will include the previous experiences during start of the customer journey. Whatever experiences the customer has before starting a customer journey will affect the customer (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). These previous

experiences will lay the foundation of how the customer will collect information regarding a product after the need has occurred (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015).

The second stage of this model is “customer journey”. It is during this journey that the previous experiences of the customer are formed into new experiences. The arrow between customer journey and new experiences represents how information gathered during the journey is converted into new experiences. The customer journey model (see figure 1) explains that the customer journey is divided into three different stages; pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase. The customer will rely on his previous experiences during the pre-purchase stage. During the customer journey these change and become new experiences when the customer has completed the journey. Hence the customer will be affected of various touchpoints during the customer journey which might create new experiences of a company (Baxendale et al., 2015). An example of this would be if the customer has a negative experience of a company. This in turn will lead to the new experience to not buy from that specific company in the next customer journey (Homburg et al., 2017).

The third stage of this model is “new experiences”. When the customer enters this stage, new experiences have been created. The new experiences will become previous experiences when the customer is about to enter a new customer journey. This is represented by the arrow between new experiences and previous experiences. The new experiences have become the current mindset which the customer takes with him in a new customer journey. A customer goes through several journeys per week, which means that the experiences change frequently (Teixeira et al., 2012). New experiences affect the customer by creating a new way of reasoning which leaves room for companies to affect the customer (Teixeira et al., 2012; Puccinelli et al., 2009). If a customer changes its customer journey due to new experiences it might be positive for one company but negative for another (Stein & Ramaseshan, 2016).

### 3. Method

---

*This chapter will present the research methodology and the empirical method of this thesis. This first section will present the choice of methodology for this study. The choices of research philosophy, research approach and the choice of theory for this study is also be accounted for and presented. This second section presents the empirical material collected and how it was collected. Also, the research design, research strategy, and data analysis method are to be presented. Furthermore, the interview guide is explained which contributes to a deeper understanding of how the customer goes through their journey.*

---

#### 3.1 Research approach

According to Lind (2014), the research approach is the interaction between empirical data and theory. There are three different research approaches. The first approach is the deductive research approach which is based primarily on the theories in a study. Through the theory's hypotheses will be created and tested with the collected empirical data. The second approach is the inductive research approach. This is the opposite of a deductive approach since the inductive approach starts with the empirical data rather than the theories. The empirical material will be collected by the researchers during the study of theories. The researchers will not create any hypothesis at the beginning of the study since they will rely on the new empirical data for their research. The third approach is the abductive research approach. This approach combines the deductive and inductive approach into one approach. The researchers will base their study on both theories and the new empirical data (Lind, 2014).

This thesis used an abductive research approach since neither theories nor empirical data had more focus (Lind, 2014). The research used an interpretive perspective in order to form the data to fit the topic. The analysis and discussion of the results need to converge with new findings of the customer journey. The aim of thesis was not to show evident and simple results but new findings that added to the improvement of understanding the customer journey.

### 3.1.1 Research philosophy

When researchers choose a research philosophy for a thesis it must be evaluated carefully as this is used by the researcher to interpret and understand the context of a study. The importance of choosing a research philosophy was due to the containing assumptions of the chosen philosophy. The term research philosophy is relating to the development of specific knowledge and its development of nature (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). It can be further interpreted as how research philosophy explains how humans view the world and the underlying assumptions on the physical surroundings. There are three main research philosophies used by researchers. These are positivism, interpretivism, and realism (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019).

The interpretivism philosophy, where inspiration for this study was collected from, is considering human actions and the nature of the world as complex. Thus, it is striving to understand human behavior and the "why" and "how" of actions taken. Inspiration collected from the interpretivism philosophy were further strengthened by the purpose of interpreting actions from, in this study, the customers' point of view in order to create an understanding of their actions and experiences (Bell et al., 2019). Inspiration from interpretivism philosophy was also regarded as suitable for this study on the assumption that the reality we live in is constructed of human actions and meaning making (Denscombe, 2018).

Furthermore, this is a qualitative study which focus on "observing, describing, interpreting, and analyzing the way that people experience, act on, or think about themselves and the world around them" (Bazeley, 2013). This correlates with both the purpose of this study and the choice of using inspiration from the interpretivism philosophy in order to explore, analyze and understand the customer journey.

### 3.1.2 Choice of methodology

The methodology was done through semi-structured interviews with different kind of customers who are preparing to make a substantial purchase. The respondents varied in age and sex with the addition, that the product they are planning to purchase would be different from what the other respondents would purchase. The use of semi-structured interviews created reliability and validity regarding this thesis (Denscombe, 2018). The respondents were

interviewed firstly before the purchase and again after their purchase. The reason for the second interview was so the respondent could evaluate their purchase. The answers of the two interviews was then compared to see if, what the person thought in the first interview, was correct according to the second one. (Denscombe, 2018).

### 3.1.3 Choice of theory

Several different theories surround the topic of the customer journey that is built on various concepts. A theory is created in order to gain a deeper understanding of a particular matter and to classify our sensations (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015). This thesis focus is on the topic customer journey; however, several different sub-topics are embedded in the customer journey.

## 3.2 Research design

After choosing the research question and the purpose of the study the researcher must choose the research design. The research design needs to correlate with the research question, purpose and research philosophy in order to be justified. The research design refers to the overall plan for the research and how it will be conducted, collected and analyzed (Bell et al., 2019).

According to Saunders et al. (2009), there are three main methods for the research design. These are; exploratory studies, descriptive studies, and critical studies. The exploratory study refers to finding out "what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to asses' phenomena in a new light". The exploratory research design was adapted to this study as it correlates with the research question and purpose by understanding, analyzing and exploring the customer journey and its touch points. The exploratory research has the advantage of being adaptive and flexible to change due to the initial broadness which narrows as the study continues. The choice of the exploratory research was further strengthened by using a qualitative method through interviews and literature search (Saunders et al., 2009).

The descriptive study refers to "portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situations" (Saunders et al., 2009). The purpose is therefore interpreted as providing the researcher with a detailed description of a phenomenon, which is convenient when such phenomenon can be described in detail. The explanatory study refers to "studies that establish causal relationships

between variables (Saunders et al., 2009). The purpose was to study a relationship between variables within a specific situation or problem.

### 3.2.1 Research strategy

According to Bell et al. (2019) when research is being conducted, empirical material is collected and analyzed in order to generate new knowledge regarding a subject. A sufficient research strategy is vital in order to conduct business research, no matter if the method used is quantitative or qualitative (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015). A research strategy is also a great tool of orientation regarding the conduct of business research (Bell et al., 2019). This thesis was using a qualitative method in order to understand the individuals' decisions when it came to their actions and surroundings (Saunders et al., 2009). According to Denscombe (2012), standard methods used during qualitative methods are interviews, observations and focus groups. A qualitative method uses words and pictures to create a better understanding of the empirical material collected. The quantitative method relies on numeric data produced from coded surveys (Denscombe, 2012). A quantitative method would be used if the causal relationship between concepts were of interest; however, in this thesis, this was not the case (Bell et al., 2019). The choice of using a qualitative method will create a deeper understanding of the customer journey as a phenomenon (Alvehus, 2013).

### 3.2.2 Data collection

This thesis was done using a qualitative method through semi-structured interviews. This resulted in useful empirical material being collected which can be classified as primary data. According to Alvehus (2013), data collected for a thesis can be divided into primary and secondary data. Primary data can be explained as empirical data which has been collected for the research project specifically. Secondary data, on the contrary, is data that was collected for a different research project (Alvehus, 2013). For this thesis, the data collected was primary data. The reason for this was because data regarding how certain people go through their customer journey is useful for this thesis. Data that has been collected for other research projects will not be viable for this thesis which means that secondary data would not be useable (Alvehus, 2013).

The use of semi-structured interviews is a tool to collect empirical material regarding thoughts, feelings, and views of the respondents (Alvehus, 2013). These three aspects affect the decisions of the customer during the journey. The different routes, choice of company to buy from, pains and gains and touch points are all affected by the customers' thoughts, feelings, and views (Stein & Ramaseshan, 2016).

### 3.2.3 Participant selection

This research focused on understanding and exploring the customer journey. Therefore, the respondents, which were customers for this research, were self-selected through convenience sampling. The self-selection was done through convenience sampling because it let us ask friends, family and acquaintances to take part in the research as respondents. This gave a broad availability to possible respondents which would help the collection of empirical material (Bell et al., 2019). Self-selection through convenience sampling let us ask possible respondents in our availability to take part in our research by being interviewed twice with the only demand of planning to buy something for 500 Swedish kronor or more. This gave a higher possibility to collect rich empirical material as the respondents were informed by the subject in advance and would participate if they found it interesting and were qualified. The respondents who participated in this research was chosen based on who they were and what they would buy. The selection of respondents was spread equally between gender and age to collect broad empirical material. Further, as this research was an exploratory study the self-selection sampling was especially useful (Saunders et al., 2009). The selection of respondents resulted in eight respondents varying in gender and age. In addition, it resulted in eight different customer journeys being carried out.

### 3.2.4 Interview respondents

In order to generate higher credibility and transparency of the empirical material, the need of presenting the respondents in this research were of importance. To diminish the possibility of an undistorted social reality by the respondent fictive names were adapted when transcribing to ensure the anonymity of the respondents. The insurance of fictive names and anonymity gave the respondents a feeling of safety. This increased the possibility of expressing their own thoughts and experiences unfiltered. Further, qualitative research may create tensions between

the need of obtaining knowledge and ethical dilemmas. As a researcher the strive was for obtaining deep, rich, empirical material without violations of the respondent's integrity, the use of fictive names was to ensure this (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Further, is a table providing an overview of the interview respondents (see table 1).

*Table 1: Overview of interview respondents*

<b>Name of respondent:</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Prefers online/physical store</b>	<b>Planned purchase of at least 500 Swedish kroner</b>
<b>Customer one</b>	24	Male	Kitchen salesman	Online, even groceries	Couch
<b>Customer two</b>	25	Female	Studying economics	Online but uses physical store as a shopping window	Laptop for school
<b>Customer three</b>	59	Male	Economist	Online	Rainwear for grandson
<b>Customer four</b>	23	Male	Studying economics and works as greenkeeper	Online	Coffee machine
<b>Customer five</b>	78	Female	Retired	Physical store	Shopping bag with wheels
<b>Customer six</b>	86	Male	Retired	Depends, mostly physical stores	Fishing boots
<b>Customer seven</b>	23	Female	Studying to be a nurse and works as an assistant nurse	Online	Headphones for training
<b>Customer eight</b>	55	Female	Hygiene nurse	Depends, both	Steamer-iron for clothes

### 3.2.5 Interview guide

Semi-structured interviews made it possible to use open questions while at the same time be able to go outside the interview guide and use follow-up questions. This made it possible for the respondent to elaborate on their answers (Alvehus, 2013). The use of semi-structured interviews was suitable for this thesis in order to gain vital knowledge. The interview guide used (see appendix 1 & 2) contains enough controlled questions to keep the empirical material within the topic customer journey. While at the same time create room for the respondents to speak freely about how they went through the customer journey (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015).

The interviews were divided into two parts, the pre-customer journey interview, and the post-customer journey interview. The use of a follow-up interview with the same respondents created the opportunity to gather knowledge of the customer journey (Alvehus, 2013). If only

one interview would be conducted the results of the customers' thoughts and feelings after the purchase would not be known (Bell et al., 2019).

The first interview conducted took place before the product has been bought. This means that the person being interviewed had to have a purchase in mind that they were planning. During this interview, all the customers beliefs regarding how their customer journey would look like was mapped out (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015). This information was vital for the analysis in the later chapters of this thesis. It created a base regarding how people believe they will go through their journey (Bell et al., 2019).

This interview took place after the respondent went through with the planned purchase. It was a follow-up interview for the first interview. The reason for this interview was to create an understanding if what the customer believed before the purchase was made were correct or not (Bell et al., 2019). The answers from these interviews was compared to how the person answered in the first interview. The reason for this was to see what assumptions were correct and wrong. Also, what changed in the planned customer journey and why it changed.

### **3.3 Data analysis**

The data that was collected through the interviews was transformed into qualitative information by the person who conducted the interview. Ahrne and Svensson (2015) claim that for the information to be free of errors and understood correctly, the person interviewing should be the person who also writes the transcription. All interviews with the respondents were conducted in Swedish. The reason for this was to make it simple for the respondents to express their exact thoughts regarding the questions being asked (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015). In order to make the empirical material easier to interpret, the transcripts were then coded and categorized. Denscombe (2012) claims that the empirical material collected from semi-structured interviews should be coded and categorized in order to make the material easier to understand.

During the coding process specific parts of the empirical material was highlighted. The reason for this was to create a better understanding regarding the meaning of the material. Denscombe (2012) explains that it is important to understand the material in order to analyze it. Different colors were used when statements were highlighted in order to get an overview of how statements differed. For example, green was used for the most meaningful statements regarding the research. These statements were the once which could be of most use for the research. Red was used for statements which contradicted most of the other statements. This was done to get an understanding of how the different respondent thought about their customer journeys. In addition, orange was used for statements which were alike each other in meaning. These statements showed what parts the respondents agreed on.

The categorization process begun after the empirical material had been coded. The most meaningful statements were processed in order to see how they could be organized. These statements were to become the base of the main categories of the research. The categorization of the most meaningful statements was repeated several times in order to narrow down the amount of categorize. This resulted in the five main themes; need/recognition, gains, pains, customer experience, touch points and route used. When the material was organized following the coding and the organization, the material could be analyzed. The main themes were integrated with all the eight respondents which can be seen in *Table 2: Summary of collected empirical material*. This was done for the reader to get a better understanding of the collected empirical material.

### **3.4 Reliability and validity**

When pursuing a qualitative research, the criteria of *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability* are important to follow up in order to assessing the quality of the research (Bell et al., 2019). Paying emphasis on these criteria's will according to Saunders et al. (2009) reduce the possibility of getting the answers wrong through a qualitative research. The criteria *credibility* considers that the research, in this case the interviews, has been conducted of good practice. Credibility also refers to having the findings accepted, confirming that the researcher understood the social reality correctly (Lind, 2014). Concerning the *transferability*, it is according to Bell et al. (2019) important to provide rich descriptions of findings in detail. The

criteria of *dependability* refer to being trustworthy throughout the research which suggests keeping records of interviews transcripts, data analysis and fieldwork notes (Bell et al., 2019). Lastly the criteria of *confirmability* were emphasized by ensuring that the research would be conducted in good faith and would not be infested by personal values which could sway the research findings (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015).

## 4. Empirical findings

---

*This chapter will present the empirical findings that were found when semi-structured interviews with the eight respondents were conducted. The empirical material was collected from sixteen interviews, as two were conducted with each respondent. The two interviews were divided into pre- and post-customer journey.*

---

### 4.1 Exploring eight customer journeys

The purpose of this study was to explore the customer journey of today and to identify how the customer was affected. The eight customer journeys that were explored generated empirical material that were compared with each other. In order to compare the customer journeys, five themes of the customer journey were identified during sixteen semi-structured interviews. These themes were gains, pains, customer experience, touch points and route. The answer to the thesis research question, “How can companies enhance the customer journey in the retail market?” was answered through the exploration of the customer journeys combined with the five themes.

### 4.2 Empirical findings from the interviews

The two conceptual models of this research, *the customer journey model* and *the customer experience cycle* (see figure 2 & 3), in addition with the consumer buying-process (see figure 1) were used to facilitate the empirical material. The theoretical framework was of importance to interpret the customer journey in order to ease the exploration of the term. Hence, the theoretical framework is the body of the research, which was compared and matched to the empirical material. As the analysis of the empirical material concurred with the theoretical framework, there are parallels drawn in-between. Table 2 is a summary of the collected empirical material (see table 2). It presents the respondent's pains and gains, the perceived customer experiences, the genre of touch points used, the route used, and what kind of need/recognition that generated to a purchase. The section that follows is a brief explanation to clarify the meaning of these terms. These were gathered from the theoretical framework and identified which were of interest for further analysis and discussion.

*Need/recognition* are, according to Fahy and Jobber (2015) to be either functional, unpredictable, or emotional. *Gains* are, according to Osterwalder et al. (2010) referred to as wants/needs or as a measure of success. For example, the decision between X or Y will conclude in the choice that gives the highest measure of success and/or pleasure of wants/needs. *Pains* are, according to Osterwalder et al. (2010) referred to as fears, frustrations, or obstacles regarding the product but does not necessarily identify with attributes of the product. For example, the choice of route regarding a purchase. *Customer experience* is, according to Meyer and Schwager (2007), referred to as the perceived quality of the overall customer care delivered to customers by the retailer. *Touch points* are, according to Foelstad and Kvale (2018), instances of interactions between the customer and the retailer. Furthermore, there are four genres of touch points which are presented in the theoretical framework; brand owned, partner owned, customer owned and social/external (Pauwels et al., 2016). *Route* refers to either physical retailing or online retailing. The emerging e-commerce creates relevance of what route the customer chooses as new opportunities continuously arise (Chaffey, 2011). The relevance of choice of route is strengthened by Kunc and Križan (2018) who claims that e-commerce gains market shares from traditional retailing.

Table 2: Summary of collected empirical material

	Need/recognition	Gains	Pains	Customer experience	Touch points	Route used
Customer journey one	Emotional	Change of environment, psychological solution	Quality demand, color scheme on product, delivery, information overload	Positive	Brand owned, social/external	Online
Customer journey two	Unpredictable	Affecting study quality, Removing restrictions	Knowledge of the product, information overload	Positive	Customer owned, brand owned, social/ external	Physical retailer
Customer journey three	Emotional, unpredictable	Quality time with grandchild, Helping grandchild	Secondary opinions of daughter, quality demand	Positive	Brand owned, social/ external	Physical retailer
Customer journey four	Functional	Currently expensive upkeep costs, social solution	Delivery, information overload	Positive	Brand owned, social/ external	Online
Customer journey five	Unpredictable	Easier fundamental solution, physical solution	Overall performance of the product, quality demand	Positive	Brand owned, social/ external	Physical retailer
Customer journey six	Unpredictable	Stimulates a want, enables hobby and social goal	Quality demand, information overload	Positive	Customer owned, partner owned, Social/ external	Online
Customer journey seven	Unpredictable	Exercise solution, replaces old broken product	Overall performance of the product, information overload	Positive	Brand owned, social/ external, customer owned	Online
Customer journey eight	Emotional	Physical solution	Overall performance of the product, information overload	Positive	Brand owned, social/external, customer owned	Online

Furthermore, are presentations of the empirical findings from each respondent who are referred to as customer one to eight (see table 2). The presentations are constituted from the transcribed material that was collected through the semi-structured interviews (see appendix 1 & 2).

#### 4.2.1. Customer journey one – “Feeling satisfied”

*Pre-customer journey:* Customer journey one was conducted by a man at the age of 24. He works as a kitchen salesman. He prefers to buy products online where he also conducts most of his grocery shopping to be able to allocate his spare time efficiently. Customer one planned to buy a new couch together with his partner as they wanted to refurnish their living room. Hence, a new couch would be more than just a new furniture to sit on.

*“At this moment me and my girlfriend feels like our current couch is just ugly and does not match the rest of our living room. We just feel bad when we see the couch and it would be so much better if we could find a good-looking couch to match the rest of the room” – Customer one*

The customer believed that if the customer journey would be successful a need to feel satisfaction would be fulfilled. This showed that customer one’s need is emotional and that he will get an improved mindset regarding the home. The research he will do is based online through Google as a tool to find retailers suitable for his need. The importance of the research relies on information regarding delivery time, quality of the couch, and other customers experiences. Regards to other customer’s experiences, this was not necessarily online but for example through acquaints and family. Regarding contact with the retailer, fast response and updates about for example delivery was of importance. He was keen on use retailers he knows delivers good customer experiences. Thus, he has already decided what retailer to use and the route would be online. The retailer did not have a physical store within a reasonable distance, but he would not buy the couch in a physical store even if this would be possible. However, he might would have gone to a retailer look at the color of the couch. The risks of the purchase were perceived high by the customer, as delivery on time was a high priority since it was a long delivery time. Another perceived risk was if the couch’s color does not match the online pictures.

*Post-customer journey:* Customer one was mostly worried about the color of the couch since it was hard to evaluate from his research online, and it had not been delivered yet. Although he found most of the information he looked for, but when considered information about warranty was missing. Further, he felt an information overload when doing his research online. He bought the couch as planned online and perceived his customer experience as positive against the retailer. He was particularly pleased with the feedback he got from the retailer after the purchase regarding the home deliverance of the couch. The likelihood of another purchase conducted like this, online, was high. A customer loyalty program was not used, but he was logged on to his customer profile during the purchase.

#### 4.2.2. Customer journey two – “Enhancing studies”

*Pre-customer journey:* Customer journey two was conducted by a woman at the age of 25 which studies economics. She had the preference to buy products online but likes to use physical retailers as shopping windows. Customer two planned to buy a laptop primarily for her studies as her old one was slow, had a bad battery, and got small memory storage for photographs. The customers need was to enhance her studies through the purchase of an improved laptop.

*“I have a huge problem in the university because I cannot take notes during classes due to my current laptops battery. It only lasts about 30 minutes and then I must charge it. Problem is that there are not many places in the lecture rooms to charge” – Customer two*

The need was unpredictable since the old laptop must be replaced. The research she conducted was based online through reviews and visits to physical retailers. The importance of the research was on the specifications of the computer. Regarding contact with the retailer, she hoped to get help from the salesmen in the physical store as her knowledge on laptops was low. Loyalty towards a specific retailer was not prioritized but the price was. The risk of the purchase was perceived as the salesmen might trick her or that it would not match her needs.

*Post-customer journey:* Customer two did read a lot of reviews and product specifications online during the research. Two visits to different physical retailers were also done where she got help from salespeople to get further understandings of laptops. She felt an information overload during the research as there are so many retailers who sells laptops. She also felt that

the salesman at the first physical retailer tried to oversell laptops to her. However, a laptop was bought at the second physical retailer but loyalty towards a specific retailer was not accounted for. At the second physical retailer, she got help to understand specifications and to find one who fitted her needs. She perceived the customer experience as positive at the retailer where she bought the laptop. The likelihood of another purchase to be conducted like this is high. A customer loyalty program was not used.

#### 4.2.3. Customer journey three – “Quality time”

*Pre-customer journey:* Customer journey three was conducted by a man at the age of 59. He works as an economist on a medium size company. He preference buy products online as he valued his spare time. However, groceries and household items are bought through physical retailers. Customer three planned to buy a set of rainwear for his grandson. The grandson outgrew his old rainwear, so he wanted to help his daughter and get to spend quality time with the grandson at the same time. The need could not be solved by a product but rather with the time spend during the journey itself.

*“I do not like shopping cloths in physical stores since it is more convenient to do it online. However, this time I really like it since it means that I get to spend quality time with my grandson.” – Customer three*

The need of customer three was both unpredictable and emotional. It was unpredictable since the grandson’s need was to replace his old rainwear. In addition, it was emotional since customer three wanted to spend quality time with his grandson. The research he conducted was very simple as he asked for the proper size from his daughter and if she wanted him to have something special. The importance of research was usually on price, quality, and specifications. An example was how much rain the rainwear will tolerate. When he shops for himself, the research is conducted online, but this time it was during the visit at the retailer’s physical store. Regarding contact with the retailer, he hoped to get help from the salesmen in the physical store if it was necessary, for example, if the right size was not found or any other questions occurred. Loyalty towards a specific retailer was not prioritized, but the quality was. The risk of the purchase was perceived as if the quality demand is not met or if his daughter will not like the rainwear he buys.

*Post-customer journey:* Customer three did not do much research which was expected. The actual research was done in the physical stores to find a fitting set of rainwear matched the needs. There was no information overload perceived by the customer, however, if the purchase were conducted online, he would expect there to be. Now he only got the information he looked for by information in the stores and from asking salespeople. A set of rainwear was bought, but loyalty towards a specific company was not accounted for. He got help to find the right size from a salesperson and perceived the customer experience as positive. The likelihood of another purchase conducted like this was, however, low as he rarely uses physical retailers on his own. A customer loyalty program was used but did not affect the choice of retailer.

#### 4.2.4 Customer journey four – “Facilitated financial and social endeavor”

*Pre-customer journey:* Customer journey four was conducted by a man at the age of 23. He studies economics and works part-time as a greenkeeper. He had the preference to buy products online because it is more comfortable. However, he buys groceries in physical stores. Customer four planned to buy a coffeemaker as he only had a capsule machine. The capsule machine was expensive to use as he drank a lot of coffee. The need was connected to financial but also a social problem.

*“Since I live very close to my friends, I often have them over to drink coffee and hang out. Overtime I use a lot of capsule which is expensive, however I still want to invite my friend over.” – Customer four*

The need was functional since it affected daily routines of the customer. The research he conducted relied on what coffeemaker his acquaintances use and what they recommended. He would also research online to compare prices and read reviews. The importance of the research was on specifications, quality, and price. Regarding contact with the retailer, it was not of importance if it would be delivered in time. Also, if there are no problems with the quality of the product. Loyalty towards a specific retailer is not prioritized, but he thinks the purchase will be conducted online. The risk of the purchase was perceived as it may break during transport or that it would not be delivered in time.

*Post-customer journey:* Customer four did the research through acquaints and online from various websites. He looked for information regarding warranty, price, and specifications and

found it. Further, he felt information overload during the research as there were a lot of information and retailers offering the product. However, a Moccamaster coffeemaker was bought, and a loyalty program was somewhat considered as he focused on established retailers. He perceived the customer experience as positive as it was delivered in time and without problems. Customer four also says that he was positively surprised by Moccamaster as there were filters and other extras included that he was unaware of. The likelihood of another purchase conducted like this is high as most of his purchases are conducted online. A customer loyalty program was not used, but he was logged on to his customer profile during the purchase.

#### 4.2.5. Customer journey five – “Easier daily routines”

*Pre-customer journey:* Customer journey five was conducted by a woman at the age of 78. She is a retired confectioner. She had the preference to buy the product through physical retailers. This was because of her knowledge on computers and the Internet was low, and she appreciates contact with people. Customer five planned to buy a shopping bag on wheels. Her old one was timeworn and heavy to use. The need was connected to make her daily routines easier.

*“I feel that it is really hard to carry all my groceries up the stairs, especially since my shopping bag is very heavy and unpractical.” – Customer five*

It was an unpredictable need since customer five must replace her old shopping bag. The research she conducted relied on visits to physical stores to get help from salespeople. She also asked her daughter to help her look for advertisements and special offers. The importance of the research was on how much the shopping bag could fit and the easement of taking it up the stairs to her apartment. It was essential that this new shopping bag would have triangle shaped wheels that would ease the use in stairs. Regarding contact with the retailer, it was essential for her to get help from a salesman and to have the product demonstrated before the purchase. Loyalty towards a specific company was not prioritized, but the helpfulness of the salesmen and the price was. The risk of the purchase was perceived as low, but it had to work accordingly and be of good quality.

*Post-customer journey:* Customer five did the research by visits to different physical retailers until she found a suitable product. The importance of it was to get the product demonstrated.

She did not feel information overload. However, a shopping bag on wheels was bought at a physical retailer, but loyalty towards a specific company was not accounted for. She perceived the customer experience as positive because of the helpfulness of the employed and the demonstration of the product. The likelihood of another purchase conducted like this is high. A customer loyalty program was not used.

#### 4.2.6. Customer journey six – “Keeping in touch with friends”

*Pre-customer journey:* Customer journey six was conducted by a man at the age of 86. He is a retired ship captain. The preference to buy online or through physical retailers depends on the product, but most of his purchases are physical. Customer six planned to buy new fishing boots. He had plans for fishing, and his old fishing boots were timeworn. In order to solve the need, the old fishing boots had to be replaced for the customer to be able to join his friends on fishing trips.

*“I usually go fishing with my old friends once a month in order to stay in touch with them and because it is very fun. However, my old fishing boots are not up to the task anymore.” – Customer six*

The need was unpredictable since the old fishing boots broke and needed to be replaced. The research he conducted would be based online through websites focused on fishing. The importance of the research was on the quality of the product. Regarding contact with the retailer, it was not of importance since he would do the research on his own and decide what to buy. Loyalty towards a specific company was not prioritized. The risk of the purchase was perceived as low, but the size may be wrong since he thinks the purchase will be conducted online.

*Post-customer journey:* Customer six did the research online by visits to different fishing related websites, reading product tests and reviews. The importance of it was to get an understanding of the quality. He did feel an information overload as there were so many reviews available. However, the fishing boots were bought through an online retailer where he found the best price. Loyalty towards a specific company was not accounted for. He perceived the customer experience as positive since they were delivered in time, and the size was correct. The likelihood of another purchase conducted like this is high since it was easy, fast, and comfortable to try the fishing boots on at home. A customer loyalty program was not used.

#### 4.2.7. Customer journey seven – “Finding a replacement”

*Pre-customer journey:* Customer journey seven was conducted by a woman at the age of 23. She studies to be a nurse and works part-time as an assistant nurse. She had the preference to buy products online. This was because it is comfortable. Customer seven planned to buy new headphones for listening to music. Her old ones were broken, and she wanted cordless headphones. The need was to be able to keep her daily routines intact.

*“I use my headphones every day, on the train, when walking to school, during my daily exercise, basically all the time. So, I need to find a new pair quick.” – Customer seven*

It was an unpractical need for the customer since her old ones broke and she needed to replace them with a new pair. The research she conducted was based online through comparisons and reviews. The importance of the research was on the quality, the design, and the price of the headphones. Regarding contact with the retailer, it was not of importance. She was rather without it since her experience was that they would try to oversell products. Loyalty towards a specific company was not prioritized, but it had to be an established retailer. The risk of the purchase was perceived as high since she did not have good knowledge on headphones. Other risks were the fitting on her head and that the design would not correspond with her want.

*Post-customer journey:* Customer seven did the research online with comparisons between retailers and reviews on different headphones. The importance of it was to understand the overall quality, the sound quality, and the price. She did feel an information overload as there was too much reading to do. However, the headphones were bought through an online retailer where she found the best price of the product. Loyalty towards a specific company was not accounted for. She perceived the customer experience as positive since the product meets her needs and wants even if the color did not match the pictures online completely. The likelihood of another purchase conducted like this is high since she usually buys the product online. A customer loyalty program was not used.

#### 4.2.8. Customer journey eight – “Physical relief”

*Pre-customer journey:* Customer journey eight was conducted by a woman at the age of 55. She is works as a hygiene nurse. The preference to buy online or through a physical retailer

depended on the product. It was explained by her as some products are annoying to return online. Customer eight planned to buy a steam iron. The reason for this was that her back was hurting when using a regular iron as she had to bend down a lot, a steam iron is also faster according to her. The need was to facilitate a chore that is done often.

*“I really iron clothes a lot, usually every day or so, so I strain my back a lot which causes backpain.” –  
Customer eight*

It was an emotional need since the customer wanted to find a relief for a physical routine. The research would be conducted online through product comparisons and reviews. She believed that she would also go and look at physical retailer stores. The importance of the research was to get knowledge of how the product worked and how fast it was compared to a regular iron. Regarding contact with the retailer, it was not of importance unless the product would not work accordingly. Loyalty towards a specific company was not prioritized. The risk of the purchase was perceived as low. However, the product may not work as she wanted but returning it would be easy since the purchase probably was thought to be conducted through a physical retailer.

*Post-customer journey:* Customer eight did the research online through reviews, product comparisons, and a YouTube video demonstrating the product. She did feel like there was an information overload as there was a lot to read regarding steam irons online. However, the product was bought through an online retailer as she did not feel like they were helpful enough when visited a physical retailer store. Loyalty towards a specific company was not accounted for. She perceived the customer experience as positive as she returned the product through the online retailers' physical store and got very good treatment. The product did not meet her needs and wants as it was slower than anticipated. The likelihood of another purchase conducted like this is high as it was a very comfortable experience. A customer loyalty program was not used.

## 5. Analysis of the empirical findings

---

*This chapter will present the analysis of the empirical material retrieved from interviews with the respondents. The empirical material will, as mentioned in chapter three, be categorized accordingly to need/recognition, gains, pains, customer experience, touch points and route used which will be connected to the theoretical framework. The reason for this categorization is because of the identification of these specific themes that were especially interesting to further analyze and discuss. The analysis derives from eight studied customer journeys. The analysis was conducted with the help of the two conceptual models of this research, the customer journey model and the customer experience cycle (see figure 2 & 3). The customer journey model was tested as a tool to better understand the possible components of the customer journey (see figure 2). The customer experience cycle helped explain how experiences might affect the customers (see figure 3).*

---

### 5.1 Need/recognition

The need/recognition derives from the consumer buying decision process (see figure 1). The model describes the process of decision the consumer goes through before, during, and after the purchase is done (Fahy & Jobber, 2015). The need/recognition step was focused on as it could explain why the consumer enters the pre-purchase stage of the customer journey (see figure 2). The pre-purchase stage of the customer journey is where the customer searches for information in order to find a suitable product (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Further, there are three reasons for entering the pre-purchase stage by need/recognition; emotional, functional, or unpredictable need. As most of the studied customer journeys were entered by one identified need/recognition, customer three were identified with two, emotional and unpredictable (see table 2).

*"My grandchild outgrew his rainwear that he had last summer. I like helping my daughter with this kind of purchases as I get to spend time with my grandson while I am helping her" – Customer three*

This crossover between two need/recognition was unique in this research. The customer was identified as having an emotional need/recognition while still carrying out an unpredictable need/recognition for his daughter and grandson. It is possible that this is common while carrying

out purchases for others, as this was the only customer purchased for someone other than their self.

## 5.2 Gains

As mentioned earlier, the customer journey contains several different parts and aspects that the customer could interact with (see figure 2). The need/want of the customer could be the foundation of the customer journey. Osterwalder et al. (2010) claims that the need/want can be solved with a specific item that meets the requirements of the customer. However, this might not always be the case as shown below.

*"Usually I do not like wasting time going to physical stores when I can easily do it from home. However, this time I really enjoyed going to physical stores since I got to spend a lot of quality time with my grandson. That is what I valued during this purchasing process, not the product itself." – Customer three*

Customer three's need/want did not depend on what product he purchased. Instead, it was solved with the quality time he spent with his grandson. This showed that the customer journey could be completed in different ways and for different reasons. Customer five's need/want also showed that the customer journey itself could be a part of the measure of success. This since she was keen on having direct contact and meeting people while making her purchase.

*"I do not like buying through computers or online, I like the direct contact with people, I like going outside and meeting people while I make my purchases." – Customer five*

Thus, it should be essential for companies to look at the big picture when it comes to the customer journey. A company is not only selling a product, it could be that it is creating an experience that will affect the customer now and for future decisions (see figure 3). The respondents all had different reasons to go through their customer journey. However, it might be up to the company to make sure that the customer has a positive experience during and after the product is purchased. The respondents all wanted different results from their customer journeys. Some respondents needed a product because their old one broke. Others bought products to ease their day to day routines, like shopping for groceries. While some, like customer three, saw the customer journey to gain quality time with the grandson. For some, the customer journey could be the goal itself.

### 5.3 Pains

The empirical material shows that customer was affected by pains during their customer journey. In addition, the customer journey model shows that pains might affect the customer during the first two stages, pre-purchase and purchase stage (see figure 2). During the first stage, the customer did information searches regarding a product that can fill the need. This has been made easier due to the advancement of technology and the impact of e-commerce (Osterwalder et al., 2010). However, the advancement of technology and the impact of e-commerce on the customer journey might not only bring positive contributions. A recurring theme that was unveiled from the empirical material was the feeling of information overload amongst six of the respondents. This was a clear majority amongst a total of eight respondents. In addition, the six respondents who felt that they were overloaded with information did their research online. The two respondents, customer three and five, both skipped researching online and did not feel like they experienced information overload.

*"I did not experience any information overload this time. However, when I shop online, I always feel like there is so much unnecessary information everywhere. This time I got my questions answered quickly by an employee in the store." – Customer three*

*"I frankly did not feel overwhelmed by the information I received in the physical store. The employees were very helpful and listened to my questions without talking about other irrelevant products." – Customer five*

Customer three and five went straight to a physical store and asked the employees for help. This resulted in that the respondents felt like they got their exact questions answered with no unnecessary information to go through. Respondents who used the Internet for their research experienced overwhelming amounts of information. Customer two experienced that it interrupted with her customer journey so much that she had to stop researching online and go to a physical store for help.

*"It is really hard to screen for the information that is of use for me. There were several times during my research that I just stopped and went to do something else since it was so confusing." – Customer two*

This shows how companies could diminish their successes to create a purchase. Customers get confused while scrolling through lots of information sent from companies (Broilo et al., 2016). For companies, it could help to be more precise and scale down on the information sent out to

customers. The companies could make the information in their messages towards customers more precise and relevant. If the amount of information becomes too much for a customer, it might confuse the customer (Broilo et al., 2016). This might affect negatively on the company's products. As seen above, customers are sensitive towards too much irrelevant information. This could create negative experiences regarding information searches online. The customer experience cycle, (see figure 3) shows how negative experiences from the completed customer journey might become new experiences for the customer. The customer could then use these as previous experiences when entering a new customer journey. As the model shows, this might make an impact on how the customer conducts the next customer journey. This could be negative for a company who created information overload for the customer during the last customer journey.

#### 5.4 Customer experience

The outcome of the customer journey is of great importance for companies (Verhoef et al., 2009; Puccinelli et al., 2009; Grewal et al., 2009). As demonstrated in the customer journey model (see figure 3) the customer might contemplate the level of satisfaction during the post-purchase stage of the customer journey. It was during this stage that the customer could decide if the experience was positive or negative. Table two shows that all eight respondents had a positive experience during their customer journey (see table 2). This was even though not all customer journeys resulted in a purchase. Some even resulted in the respondent returning the purchased product.

*"The product did not meet my requirements at all even though I did thorough research. I would still say that my journey was positive. The employees at the store were helpful with my return of the product. I do not see anything negative about my customer journey." – Customer eight*

The product's negative performance was not enough for customer eight to experience a negative customer journey. However, if the company that customer eight bought from were to give her a hard time to return the product, it could have changed the journey into a negative customer experience. Customer eight stated in the first interview that he felt that there was a low risk of his customer journey resulting in a negative outcome. This could be the result of previous experience gained from earlier customer journeys as shown in conceptual model, the customer experience cycle (see figure 3).

*"No, I do not really see any risk with this purchase that would make my experience negative. If I am not satisfied with the product itself, I can just return it and get my money back." – Customer eight*

This was a reoccurring answer amongst the respondents. All of them explained that there was little that would make their customer journey negative. One of the few things that would make their customer journey negative would be unfriendly employees of the store they purchased from.

*"First, I went to store number one, however, the employees at that store were very unhelpful and unpleasant to talk to. I later went to store number two instead where the employees were much nicer and helpful, so I bought my product in store number two. I would say that my customer experience was positive, the unfriendly people at store number one did not affect me that much." – Customer five*

Customer five explained that it would take a lot to affect her negatively during her customer journey. Most of the respondent expressed that they knew what outcome to expect of their customer journey, especially when shopping online. Websites have similar standardized layouts and checkout options, which has made it easy for customers to shop online (Puccinelli et al., 2009). This has resulted in customers expecting similar service and outcome everywhere (De Keyser et al., 2015). However, according to the respondents, mishaps and companies who does not deliver on the expected outcome do not affect their customer experience. The customer experience cycle explained this by showing that the respondents might learn from previous negative experiences (see figure 3). The respondents took previous negative experiences into their new customer journey. This resulted in the respondents knowing more about what to expect, which lowered the negative effect.

## 5.5 Touch points

Touch points are earlier explained as building blocks of the customer journey, which could create customer experience hence the importance to understand these for companies (Stein & Ramaseshan, 2016; Meyer & Schwager, 2007). This is illustrated in the conceptual model, the customer journey model (see figure 2). The touch points of the customer journey are brand-owned, partner-owned, social/external, and customer-owned (Pauwels et al., 2016). Further, it is of importance to know what touch points that are essential for the consumer. This is to provide

retailers with the mean to allocate attention and resources between the different touch points as they face challenges by the increasing available touch points (Baxendale et al., 2015). Following is a table showing the use of different types of touch points by the respondents (see table 3).

*Table 3: Touch points used by customers*

<b>Touch point</b>	<b>Brand-owned</b>	<b>Partner-owned</b>	<b>Social/external</b>	<b>Customer-owned</b>
<b>Times used</b>	7	1	8	4

As shown in table 3 (see table 3) there was most of the usage of social/external touch points followed by brand-owned touch points by the respondents. The social/external touch points were, according to this research, the most important for companies as every respondent claimed usage of it. The social/external touch point refers to the use of others, such as family, friends, social media, and independent information sources (Pauwels et al., 2016). This touch point is connected to customer experience and influences through, for example, word of mouth and reviews (Baxendale et al., 2015). Further, customer experience has already been identified as one of the biggest upcoming challenges for companies (Verhoef et al., 2009). This claim is strengthened by this research as all respondents used the social/external touch point. The importance of customer experience is also further illustrated in figure 3, which explains how customer could experience affected customer journeys (see figure 3). For example, customer eight bought the product from another retailer than expected. The salespeople were not helpful enough at the retailer she first visited, she perceived negative customer experience and changed retailer.

*"They were not helpful, so I drove and ordered it from a different retailer instead" - Customer eight*

Further, this phenomenon was also clearly exemplified by customer one as he explained that some sort of customer experience with the company was of importance before going through with a purchase.

*"I googled and visited the websites I know sell trendy couches that I already have a good experience of by myself or if my friends have bought from them before" – Customer one*

The brand-owned touch point was the type of touch point that was the secondly most used (see table 3). The brand-owned touch point refers to those that are under the companies' control. These could, for example, be advertising, company websites, or customer relationship management such as the use of loyalty programs (De Haan et al., 2015). However, loyalty programs were only used by one of the customers in this research, which indicates that this might not should be the focus for the companies. The use of company websites was the main part of the brand-owned touch points by the customers. This also intertwines with the high use of purchases conducted online. For example, six out of eight respondents made their purchase online, and seven out of eight visited the retailer's website (see table 2). Further, customer one highlights the importance of a fast, simple website. He did not use a loyalty program but a customer profile which was perceived as positive.

*"No, I did not use a loyalty program, but I had a customer profile on their website, so everything went smooth. All my orders and information are gathered and saved there, so you do not have to fill it all in again, I like it when it is that smooth" – Customer one*

The customer-owned touch points are the thirdly most used touch point (see table 3). This kind of touch point also refers to customer experience, once again showed the importance for companies to design good customer experiences (Baxendale et al., 2015). One example of this touch point is instructional videos of products (De Haan et al., 2015).

Lastly, are the partner-owned touch points that only were used by one customer (see table 3). The partner-owned touch point refers to touch points that are jointly managed by the retailer and the partnering firm (De Haan et al., 2015). Customer six used a partnering website to read up on products before going through with the purchase.

## **5.6 Route used**

The customer journey model (see figure 2) shows that it might be during the pre-purchase stage that the customer chooses what route to use during the customer journey. The eight respondent

all had different preferences when choosing a route for their customer journey. The majority, however, answered that they preferred to shop online over in a physical store. The main reason for online being better than going to a physical store according to the respondent was convenience. The sensitivity of inconvenience was a reoccurring theme amongst the respondents. E-commerce has made it easy and convenient to shop from the couch (De Haan et al., 2016). However, some of the respondents preferred going to a physical store depending on their need. As mentioned earlier, customer three usually shop online since it is convenient. However, since the need for his customer journey was to spend time with his grandson, the inconvenient of going to a physical store did not matter as much. The same goes for customer eight whose need was to buy a steam iron. The demands that customer eight had on the product made the chance to test the quality of the product more important than the conventions of the purchase.

*"I really have high demand on the product itself since I expect a certain level of result from using the product. It would be more of a hassle ordering a steam iron online that does not meet my requirement. Only to notice that I have to send it back compared to go to a store and test the different product on site in the store." – Customer eight*

Customer eight rated inconvenience over conveniences because of the high demand that was placed on the results of the product. This was not the case for customer six whose need was to buy new fishing boots. In this case, convenience was rated very high due to the respondent's age.

*"Shopping online is a great tool for me since it is hard for me to try on new shoes in a store. I look up the product I want, order it and then walk down the street to the post office and pick my product up. Then all I must do is try them on in peace in my own home, no hassle of going to a physical store." – Customer six*

For customer six, the stress-free environment at home was one of the top criteria's in the customer journey. Depending on the need, that is the base of the customer journey, customers are sensitive towards inconvenient. Sometimes it even is the trip to the physical store that is the requirement of the customer journey.

## 6. Conclusion

---

*This chapter will present a summary of the thesis, conclusion and a critical review. Suggestions for future research will also be presented.*

---

### 6.1 Summary of the thesis

The thesis focused on that the customer journey derives from the attention gained from the upcoming challenges which are facing marketers. As the retail landscape changes quickly, it is important to allocate themes which affects the customers and to design a positive customer experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Baxendale et al., 2015; Kunc & Križan, 2018; Falk & Hagsten, 2015). These facts make the customer journey interesting to explore as there has been a comparatively low number of researches done regarding the subject. Considering this, the thesis main aim was to create a better understanding of the customer journey by investigating what themes the customer is affected by. In addition, how companies can create positive customer experiences was equally important. To understand this, the thesis was built on a broad theoretical framework. This was in order to efficiently categorize the empirical material which was gathered through semi-structured interviews. The theoretical framework includes different part that has a high probability to affect customer journeys. Further, a conceptual model of the typical customer journey and a conceptual model defining how customer experiences affect customers were included. The interviews that were conducted had a focus on understanding these phenomena and then analyzed to be matched against the theoretical framework. The empirical material showed that brand-owned and social/external touch points were the most frequently used. The empirical material also showed that creating a positive customer experience, or already have a positive customer experience were of great importance to the customer. Further, information overload could be contemplated by retailers as most of the respondents perceived this. Lastly was the analysis and the conclusion where the empirical data were presented.

### 6.2 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the customer journey of today and to identify what affects the customer. In addition, this study was conducted to answer the research question “How can companies enhance the customer journey in the retail market?”. In order to answer

this question semi-structured interviews were performed to collect qualitative empirical material. The empirical analysis was based on the collected empirical material. All the respondents went through different customer journeys compared to each other. Due to the empirical materials collected from the eight studied customer journeys, four conclusions could be made with connections to the conceptual models and the theoretical framework. These conclusions concerned perception of information overload, route used, touch points and a newly identified need for undergoing a customer journey. Two conceptual models were tested against the empirical material (see figure 2 & 3). These two conceptual models were adapted as a tool to create better understanding of the result.

Firstly, the amount of information regarding a product will make or break a purchase (Broilo et al., 2016). Companies need to make sure to keep the information regarding their products concise and limited to a decent amount. If a company sends out too much unnecessary information regarding the product, the customer might suffer from information overload. The information overload will confuse the customer, and the purchase will be less likely to occur. The empirical material showed that most of the customers perceived information overload. Further, the empirical material showed that the information overload was perceived in the pre-purchase stage during the research, which correspond with the conceptual model, the customer journey (see figure 2). The respondents who perceived information overload were negatively affected as there were too much information considering what they researched about. Hence, it should be of importance for companies to be precise and concrete when providing customers with information. The reason was because the respondents based their decisions on information gathered through research in the pre-purchase stage. According to McColl-kennedy et al. (2015) if a customer perceives information overload, the customer will use this as a new customer experience. The conceptual model, the customer experience cycle (see figure 3) illustrates that experiences who appears during a customer journey will become new experiences. This was the case for all respondents who claimed that they will use their new experiences in their next customer journey. Furthermore, information overload could be solved by retailers through shorter and more meaningful messages. This might confuse the customer less and increase the chance of the customer purchasing from the company.

Secondly, most of the respondents conducted their purchase through the online route. The main reason for shopping online instead of in a physical store was convenience according to the empirical material and analysis. E-commerce has enhanced the way customers go through their customer journey by providing the customer with easily accessible information (Enhance, 2018). However, through e-commerce, the demands of the customers have increased (Enhance, 2018). The empirical findings showed that the sensitivity of inconvenience has increased since the advancement of e-commerce. If the customers need can be solved with a specific product, then shopping online is usually used (Osterwalder et al., 2010; De Haan et al., 2016). This was, according to the analysis, motivated by the convenience of conducting a purchase from home. However, some customers' needs are not only about a certain product. The need could be to get out of the house and interact socially with people. Even though these people are employees in a store, the social interactions between the customer and employees will solve the need of the customer. Sometimes, the inconvenience was worth the trouble in order to solve the need. Companies can take advantage of this by making sure that visiting their store is a positive experience.

Thirdly, social/external touch points are the ones which affect the customers most of the four according to the empirical material and analysis. Word of mouth and reviews by other customers is of importance for the customer, this is included in the social/external touch point (Baxendale et al., 2015). This touchpoint can be managed by retailers by making sure that the products meet the promised requirements but also by delivering a positive customer experience. Overselling the performance of a product will lead to bad reviews and customers not trusting the company. Hence, the social/external touch point is closely tied to the customer experience (McCull-Kennedy et al., 2015). Employees in physical stores should be helpful and friendly towards customers in order to avoid creating negative experiences. However, the analysis shows that customers are resilient to negative affection. Customers expect certain treatment and outcomes of their customer journeys. In these outcomes, some negative affection was accounted for. Retailers who create negative experiences for customers will, however, lose the customer to another company. This shows how important the customer experience is for retailers. Furthermore, brand-owned touch points also affected the customer's research stage during their customer journeys. Through websites, the customer gathered information regarding the products being sold by the company (De Haan et al., 2015). As mentioned earlier, several of the respondents in this research suffered from information overload. Retailers can solve this

problem by, as stated above, limit their information to the vital information that the customer seeks.

Lastly, research of the customer journey focuses heavily on the customers need being solved by a certain product (Broilo et al., 2016; Meyer & Schwager, 2007; Homburg et al., 2017). However, the analysis in this thesis shows that the need can be solved by something different than just a product. Social interaction was part of a need of one respondent who wanted someone to talk to but also needed a certain product. The needs were solved by leaving home and going to a store and buying a product. The interaction between the customer and the employees of the company solved the need for social interaction. In addition, the company was selling the product, which solved the second part of the need for the customer. Furthermore, one respondent's need could not be solved by a product at all. The quality time the respondent could get with his grandson when visiting a store was the need. Retailers can not only focus on their products alone but the whole customer experience the customer has through all stages of the customer journey (see figure 2). A store could be as simple as a place to visit with grandchildren. This shows how the need of a customer not only has to do with products, but with completely different things. For some customers, the customer journey itself is the goal.

### **6.3 Critical review**

As this was a qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews, it implies that the truthfulness of the respondents can be questioned. This could lead to a misleading result. In addition, a qualitative study cannot be generalized. A quantitative study needs to be made which can guide the way of a qualitative study. The respondents in this thesis were at different ages and stages in life, a different result could be found if a higher concentration of a specific generation was investigated. Further, the reviewed papers of this study can be considered a limitation as the customer journey is a relatively undiscovered topic deriving from the customer experience

### **6.4 Suggestions for future research**

When writing this thesis, we found interest in areas that we would like to propose further research on. Firstly, we were surprised that the use of customer relationship management tools

like loyalty programs was not used frequently amongst the respondents. Only one out of eight customers used a loyalty program. Even though customer experience is identified as one of the key challenges and focuses for marketers in the upcoming years. Hence, customer relationship management is widely spread amongst retailers, but why does not the customers tend to use it, and how can retailers make customers use it? Secondly, another interesting finding we want to suggest further research on is the phenomenon when the customer journey is the goal itself. Two customers were identified with social interaction and quality time as the needs. How can retailers target and appeal to these kinds of customer journeys? Lastly, a quantitative study focusing on touch points are suggested as this would enable generalization of the findings which would help marketers within retailing further in resource allocation.

## 7. List of references

- Ahrne, G., & Svensson, P. (2015). *Handbok i kvalitativa metoder*. Stockholm: Liber.
- Alvehus, J. (2013). *Skriva uppsats med kvalitativ metod: en handbok*. Stockholm: Liber AB.
- Anderl, E., Schumann, J., & Kunz, W. (2016). Helping Firms Reduce Complexity in Multichannel Online Data: A New Taxonomy-Based Approach for Customer Journeys. *Journal of Retailing*, 185-203.
- Aswani, R., Kar, A. K., Ilavarasan, P. V., & Dwivedi, Y. K. (2018). Search engine marketing is not all gold: Insights from Twitter and SEO Clerks. *International Journal of Information Management*, 38(1), 107-116.
- Baxendale, S., Macdonald, E. K., & Wilson, H. N. (2015). The impact of different touchpoints on brand consideration. *Journal of Retailing*, 91(2), 235-253.
- Bazeley, P. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis: Practical strategies*. London: SAGE.
- Bell, E., Bryman, A., & Harley, B. (2019). *Business research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Broilo, P., Espartel, L., & Basso, K. (2016). Pre-purchase information search: Too many sources to choose. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 10(3), 193-211.
- Chaffey, D. (2011). *E-business & e-commerce management: Strategy, implementation and practice*. New York: Financial Times Prentice Hall.
- De Haan, E., Kannan, P., Verhoef, P. C., & Wiesel, T. (2015). *The Role of Mobile Devices in the Online Customer Journey*. Cambridge: Marketing Science Institute.
- De Haan, E., Wiesel, T., & Pauwels, K. (2016). The Effectiveness of Different Forms of Online Advertising for Purchase Conversion in a Multiple-Channel Attribution Framework. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 33(3), 458-493.
- De Keyser, A., Schepers, J., & Konus, U. (2015). Multichannel Customer Segmentation: Does the After-Sales Channel Matter? A Replication and Extension. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 32(4), 453-456.

- Denscombe, M. (2018). *Forskningshandboken: För småskaliga forskningsprojekt inom samhällsvetenskaperna*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Dhanapal, S., Vashu, D., & Subramaniam, T. (2015). Perceptions on the challenges of online purchasing: A study from “baby boomers”, generation “X” and generation “Y” point of views. *Journal of retailing*, 34(8), 107-132.
- Edelman, D. C., & Singer, M. (2015). Competing on customer journeys. *Harvard Business Review*, 1, 112-128.
- Edwards, G. (2014). How to Embrace Retail’s Newest Trend: Webrooming. *Journal of retailing*, 30(3), 55-58.
- Enache, M. C. (2018). E-commerce trends. *Annals of Dunarea De Jos University*, 67-71.
- Evanschitzky, H., Ramaseshan, B., Woisetschläger, D. M., Richelsen, V., Blut, M., & Backhaus, C. (2012). Consequences of customer loyalty to the loyalty program and the company. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 40(5), 625-638.
- Fahy, J., & Jobber, D. (2015). *Foundations of marketing*. London: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Falk, M., & Hagsten, E. (2015). E-commerce trends and impacts across europe. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 170, 357-369.
- Foelstad, A., & Kvale, K. (2018). Customer journeys: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*, 28(2), 196-227.
- Gomez-Herrera, E., Martens, B., & Turlea, G. (2014). The drivers and impediments for cross-border e-commerce in the EU. *Information Economics and Policy*, 28, 83-96.
- Grewal, D., Levy, M., & Kumar, V. (2009). Customer experience management in retailing: An organizing framework. *Journal of Retailing*, 85(1), 1-14.
- Hanssens, D. M. (2015). *Empirical Generalizations About Marketing Impact*. Cambridge: Marketing Science Institute.
- Homburg, C., Jozić, D., & Kuehnl, C. (2017). Customer experience management: Toward implementing an evolving marketing concept. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 45(3), 377-401.
- Hsiao, M. (2009). Shopping mode choice: Physical store shopping versus e-shopping. *Journal of marketing*, 45(1), 86-95.

- Juaneda-Ayensa, E., Mosquera, A., & Sierra Murillo, Y. (2016). Omnichannel customer behavior: Key drivers of technology acceptance and use and their effects on purchase intention. *Frontiers in Psychology, 7*, 7-11.
- Kumar, A., & Anjaly, B. (2017). How to measure post-purchase customer experience in online retailing? A scale development study. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, 45*(12), 1277-1297.
- Kunc, J., & Križan, F. (2018). Changing european retail landscapes: New trends and challenges. *Moravian Geographical Reports, 26*(3), 150-159.
- Laudon, K. C., & Traver, C. G. (2011). *E-commerce: Business, technology, society*. Boston: Prentice Hall.
- Lavidge, R., & Steiner, G. (1961). A model for predictive measurements of advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Marketing, 24*(2), 59-62.
- Lemon, K. N., & Verhoef, P. C. (2016). Understanding customer experience throughout the customer journey. *Journal of Marketing, 80*(6), 69-96.
- Lind, R. (2014). *Vidga vetandet*. Lund: Studentlitteratur AB.
- Lizhen, X., Duan, J. A., & Whinston, A. (2014). Path to Purchase: A Mutually Exciting Point Process Model for Online Advertising and Conversion. *Management Science, 1392*–1412.
- Macdonald, E. K., Wilson, H. N., & Konus, U. (2012). Better Customer Insight—in Real Time. *Harvard Business Review, 2012*(9), 102-108.
- McCull-Kennedy, J. R., Gustafsson, A., Jaakkola, E., Klaus, P., Radnor, Z. J., & Perks, H. (2015). Fresh perspectives on customer experience. *Journal of Services Marketing, 29*(6/7), 430-435.
- Meyer, C., & Schwager, A. (2007). Understanding Customer Experience. *Harvard Business Review, 80*(6), 117-126.
- Osterwalder, A., Pigneur, Y., Clark, T., & Sjöstén, L. (2010). *Business model generation: A handbook for visionaries, game changers, and challengers*. Hoboken, N. J: Wiley.
- Park, J., & Stoel, L. (2005). Effect of brand familiarity, experience, and information on online apparel purchase. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, 33*(2), 148-160.

- Pauwels, K., Zeynep, A., & Lackman, A. (2016). Like the Ad or the Brand? Marketing Stimulates Different Electronic Word-of-Mouth Content to Drive Online and Offline Performance. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 33(3), 78-102.
- Pieters, R., Baumgartner, H., & Allen, D. (1995). A MeansEnd Chain Approach to Consumer Goal Structures. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 10(3), 227–244.
- Puccinelli, N. M., Goodstein, R. C., Grewal, D., Price, R., Raghurir, P., & Stewart, D. (2009). Customer experience management in retailing: Understanding the buying process. *Journal of Retailing*, 85(1), 15-30.
- Rawson, A., Duncan, E., & Jones, C. (2013). The Truth About Customer Experience. *Harvard Business Review*, 91(9), 90-98.
- Rosen, K. T., & Howard, A. L. (2000). E-retail: Gold rush or fool's gold? *California Management Review*, 83(8), 72-100.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research methods for business students*. Manchester: Pearson Education.
- Schmitt, B., Joško Brakus, J., & Zarantonello, L. (2015). From experiential psychology to consumer experience. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 25(1), 166-171.
- Smith, J. (2015). Improving Customer Experience Is Top Business Priority for Companies Pursuing Digital Transformation. *International journal of marketing*, 45(9), 14-32.
- Stein, A., & Ramaseshan, B. (2016). Towards the identification of customer experience touchpoint elements. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 30, 8-19.
- Tax, S. S., McCutcheon, D., & Wilkinson, I. F. (2013). The Service Delivery Network (SDN): A Customer-Centric Perspective of the Customer Journey. *Journal of Service Research*, 16(4), 454-470.
- Teixeira, J., Patrício, L., Nunes, N. J., Nobrega, L., Fisk, R. P., & Constantine, L. (2012). Customer Experience Modeling: From Customer Experience to Service Design. *Journal of Service Management*, 23(3), 362-376.
- Temkin, B., & Bliss, J. (2011). Customer Experience Overview. *Journal of retailing*, 43(4), 50-62.
- Vajpayee, B., & Gowda, D. (2014). Research Priorities 2014–2016. *Journal of marketing*, 12(6), 87-91.

- Verhoef, P. C., Lemon, K. N., Parasuraman, A., Roggeveen, A., Tsiros, M., & Schlesinger, L. A. (2009). Customer experience creation: Determinants, dynamics and management strategies. *Journal of Retailing*, *85*(1), 31-41.
- Zhu, Z., Nakata, C., Grewal, Sivakumar, & Grewal, D. (2013). Fix It or Leave It? Customer Recovery from Self-Service Technology Failures. *Journal of Retailing*, *89*(1), 15–29.

## 8. Appendices

### Appendix A: Interview guide in Swedish

#### First interview: Pre-purchase stage

*This interview was conducted before the purchase has been made.*

#### Introduction Quentins

- 1: Vad heter du?
- 2: Hur gammal är du?
- 3: Är du man eller kvinna?
- 4: Vad är ditt yrke?
- 5: Föredrar du handla i en fysisk butik eller online?

#### The body of the first interview regarding customer journey

- 1: Har du något köp, som kostar mer än 500kr, planerat för den kommande veckan?  
Vad?
- 2: Varför uppstod behovet för denna vara?
- 3: Kan du beskriva hur du gör research gällande varan?  
4: Vad är viktigt för dig att få veta när du gör research?
- 5: Hur jämför du olika återförsäljare?
- 6: Vad är viktigast gällande varan?
- 7: Vad för sorts kontakt med återförsäljaren är viktig för dig?
- 8: Spelar en speciell butik/hemsida roll?
- 9: Har du redan bestämt dig var du ska köpa varan?
- 10: Varför online/ varför i en fysisk butik?
- 11: Vad ser du för risker med ditt köp?
- 12: Vad skulle göra dig nöjd med ditt köp?

#### Second interview: Post-purchase

*This interview will be carried out after the purchase has been made.*

#### The body of the second interview regarding customer journey

- 1: Hur skulle du utvärdera det du fick ut av din research?

- 2: Hittade du den informationen du var ute efter?
- 3: Tyckte du att du kände av ett överflöd av information?
- 4: Kände du att dina känslor gällande ett företag påverkade ditt sökande?
- 5: Köpte du varan?
  - Om nej, varför inte?
  - Om ja, varför?
- 6: Var köpte du varan?
- 7: Tror du att du ändrat dina åsikter om varan, om du köpt den online/butik istället?
- 8: Blev du nöjd med din vara?
  - Om nej, varför inte?
  - Om ja, varför?
- 9: Hur förändrades din uppfattning och tankar om företagen du integrerade med?
- 10: Kommer du utföra ett liknande köp på samma sätt som du gjorde detta?
- 11: Använde du dig av ett lojalitetsprogram när du utförde köpet?
- 12: Kan du beskriva hur du gjorde din research?
- 13: Hur gick köpet till?

## **Appendix B: Interview guide in English**

### **First interview: Pre-purchase stage**

*This interview was conducted before the purchase has been made.*

#### **Introduction questions**

- 1: What's your name?
- 2: How old are you?
- 3: Are you male or female?
- 4: What's your occupation?
- 5: Do you prefer shopping online or in a physical store?

#### **The body of the first interview regarding customer journey**

1: Do you have anything planned that you will buy the upcoming week, for 500 Swedish kroners or more?

What?

- 2: Why did the need for this product arise?
- 3: Could you describe for me how you do research considering this product?
- 4: What is important for you to figure out during your research?
- 5: How do you compare different retailers?
- 6: What is most important considering the product?
- 7: What kind of contact with the retailer is important to you?
- 8: Is a special retailer or website important for you?
- 9: Have you already decided where to buy the product?
- 10: Why online/a physical store?
- 11: What kind of risks do you identify with your purchase?
- 12: What would make you pleased with your purchase?

### **Second interview: Post-purchase**

*This interview will be carried out after the purchase has been made.*

#### **The body of the second interview regarding customer journey**

- 1: How would you evaluate what you got from your research?
- 2: Did you find the information you were looking for?
- 3: Did you feel an overload of information?

4: Did you feel like your feelings for a special company affected your research?

5: Did you buy the product?

If no, why not?

If yes, why?

6: Where did you buy the product?

7: Do you think that your opinions regarding the product would be different if you would have made the purchase online/in a physical store instead?

8: Were you pleased with the product?

If no, why not?

If yes, why?

9: How did your perception and thoughts change considering the companies you interacted with?

10: Will you conduct a purchase like this again?

11: Did you use a loyalty program when you conducted the purchase?

12: Could you describe how you did your research?

13: How did you do the actual purchase?