See what I'm saying?

A qualitative study of how sensory stimulation enhances the customer shopping experience in e-commerce

Authors:
Ida Andersson
Filippa Lebenius
Filippa Skoglund

Tutor: Viktor Magnusson
Examiner: Åsa Devine
Date: 2015-05-27
Subject: Marketing
Level: Bachelor thesis
Course code: 2FE16E
“Nothing ever becomes real 'til it is experienced”

- John Keats
Abstract

Course: 2FE16E

Authors: Ida Andersson, Filippa Lebenius & Filippa Skoglund

Tutor: Viktor Magnusson

Examiner: Åsa Devine

Title: See what I’m saying? - A qualitative study of how sensory stimulation enhances the customer shopping experience in e-commerce.

Keywords: Experience economy, sensory marketing, e-commerce

Research question: How do the utilization of the human senses affect the customers' shopping experience within e-commerce?

Purpose: The purpose is to describe how brands within e-commerce can create an enhanced shopping experience for its customers.

Method: Cross-sectional design, semi-structured in-depth interviews

Conclusion: The study revealed that in order to create an enhanced shopping experience for its customers, brands within e-commerce should treat the shopping experience as extended, which enables stimulation of multiple senses.
Thanks

This bachelor thesis was done during the spring of 2015, to accomplish three years of the marketing program at Linneaus University. The aim with the study was to describe how brands within e-commerce could create an enhanced shopping experience for its customers. The research process has provided us with a deeper understanding and knowledge within the field of marketing. The study would not have been possible without the significant input and support of a number of people with their academic knowledge and expertise.

A special thanks is directed towards our tutor, Viktor Magnusson, who constantly has been there to support and guide us during the process. We would also like to give a special thanks to our examiner, Åsa Devine, who has provided us with constructive critique, which enabled us to improve the thesis as a whole. Furthermore, we want to thank our opponents who have given us valuable advises during the seminars. Last but not least, we give many thanks to our 12 interviewees who shared their experiences, which made this study possible.

Växjö, 2015-05-27

____________________  ______________________  ______________________
Ida Andersson        Filippa Lebenius         Filippa Skoglund
## Table of Content

1. Introduction ............................................................................................................. 1  
   1.1 Background ......................................................................................................... 1  
   1.2 Problem discussion ............................................................................................. 3  
   1.3 Purpose ................................................................................................................ 4  
   1.4 Research question ............................................................................................... 4  
2. Theoretical framework ......................................................................................... 5  
   2.1 Sensory experience ............................................................................................ 5  
      2.1.1 Sight ............................................................................................................. 6  
      2.1.2 Sound .......................................................................................................... 7  
      2.1.3 Smell ........................................................................................................... 8  
      2.1.4 Touch .......................................................................................................... 9  
      2.1.5 Taste .......................................................................................................... 10  
   2.2 Sensory experience in e-commerce .................................................................... 11  
   2.3 Summary of theory chapter .............................................................................. 13  
3. Method .................................................................................................................... 15  
   3.1 Research purpose .............................................................................................. 15  
   3.2 Research approach ............................................................................................ 16  
      3.2.1 Inductive vs. Deductive .............................................................................. 16  
      3.2.2 Qualitative vs. quantitative ........................................................................ 17  
   3.3 Research design .................................................................................................. 18  
      3.3.1 Selection of cases ..................................................................................... 19  
   3.4 Data collection method ..................................................................................... 19  
      3.4.1 Semi-structured interview ....................................................................... 20  
      3.4.2 Operationalization .................................................................................... 21  
      3.4.3 Interview schedule .................................................................................... 23  
      3.4.4 Pilot study .................................................................................................. 25  
   3.5 Data sources ....................................................................................................... 26  
      3.5.1 Primary and secondary sources ................................................................. 26  
   3.6 Sampling ............................................................................................................ 26  
      3.6.1 Quantitative vs. qualitative ........................................................................ 27  
      3.6.2 Probability vs. non-probability sampling .................................................. 27  
      3.6.3 Sampling in qualitative research ............................................................... 28  
   3.7 Data analysis method ........................................................................................ 29
Reference list .................................................................................................................................................. 59
Appendix 1 .................................................................................................................................................. 66
Appendix 2 .................................................................................................................................................. 67
Appendix 3 .................................................................................................................................................. 68
1. Introduction

The following chapter contains an overall introduction where the reader is introduced to the research area. A background is first presented where the reader gets a general understanding of the topic. This is followed by a problem discussion where the area of research is problematized. Finally, this lands in the purpose of the study and its related research questions.

1.1 Background

One of the most vital aspects that need to be fulfilled in order to achieve success in any industry and economy is to understand and satisfy the wants of the customers' (Lane, 1978; Puccinelli et al., 2013). The evolution of the economies is in constant movement and it is said that customers today "want to buy the real from the genuine - not the fake from some phony" (Pine and Gilmore, 2008, p. 1). Pine and Gilmore (2008) further explain that the underlying message is that authenticity has grew to become vital for the growth of brands and their offerings and that this is created and reached by staging an experience for the customers'. This gets supported by many researchers, amongst them, Blázques (2013), Rickard (2006) and Zwilling (2014) who argue that companies today no longer can rely on their core offerings but rather have to create experiences in order to stay competitive in the market place. The causes of the emerging importance of authenticity is said to be multiple, however, it is declared that the roots of the phenomenon can be found in the rise of the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore, 1999).

According to Pine and Gilmore (2011) the experience economy is the next economy following the economies of services, goods and commodities. Within this sector it is all about staging an experience for the customers, instead of just deliver, make or extract as in the three other economies (Pine and Gilmore, 2011). The aim for brands to stage experiences is to create memorable events, which customers perceive as valuable and hence are willing to get charged for (Pine, 2011). This phenomenon has come to be extremely important for brands since it is stated that focusing on just the core offer of the business no longer is enough to sustain growth within the market place (Maklan, 2011; Pine and Gilmore, 2011; Rickard, 2006; Zwilling, 2014). The opinions of what exactly an experience is, in terms of where it starts and where the experience actually ends, are often diverse among researchers. The experiential phenomenon within traditional retail settings is, however, often described in
terms of the customers’ shopping experience and refers to the customers' natural interface with the marketplace (Davis, 2013). Davis (2013) further clarifies that the interface with the marketplace is all the physical and psychological interactions the customers have with the brand from the moment they enter the store until they leave it.

For brands that want to stage enhanced shopping experiences for its customers there are multiple possible approaches to track. To engage the human senses sight, sounds, smell, touch and taste is, according to Biswas (2014) and Hultén (2011), an extremely successful method to utilize. The importance of the human senses is not something that only Hultén and Biswas perceived as vital, but gets supported by many other researchers as well. Lindstrom (2005), for instance, argues for the sight as being the most powerful sense to exploit within sensory marketing and Andersson et al. (2012) discusses sound as a tool possible to utilize for creating behavioral changes among customers. Anggie (2011) states that a pleasurable scent makes customers spend more time in a certain place and Peck and Wiggins (2006) conclude that the touch is important for customers purchase decision. The taste is, according to Hultén et al. (2009), not a very common marketing tool but can however affect the consumer both negatively and/or positively depending on if the customers have a positive or negative experience with it. By engaging the five senses a brand can stage memorable experiences to its customers and the more effectively an experience engages the senses, the more memorable the experience will be (Pine and Gilmore, 2011).

The rise of the experience economy has clearly come to change the way of making businesses. What must not fall into oblivion is the fact that the phenomenon of staging brand experiences occurs in parallel with the ever-increasing e-commerce sales (eMarketers, 2014). Jordan (2014) explains that there is a pending and huge shift from physical to digital retail. He further clarifies that this change is due to the fact that online retail has strong cost advantages over its offline counterparts and can hence increase their share in the marketplace through better pricing, selection and service. Due to the conclusion made by Pine and Gilmore (2011) that goods and services no longer are enough to improve economic growth, create new jobs and maintain economic success, combined with the rapid expansion in e-commerce sales (eMarketer, 2014), makes it vital for brands operating in the e-commerce sphere to adopt the concept of experience economy.
1.2 Problem discussion

There is no doubt that e-commerce is of great importance in the global economy and Novak et al. (2000) argues that staging components of an online shopping experience is an important first step in achieving desirable marketing goals such as repeated visits, longer visit duration and purchase objectives. Researchers who have approached the customers' shopping experience within e-commerce have, up until today, merely put focus on the experience that occurs immediately on the website i.e. in the online environment. Among them, Fiore and Kelly (2007) who argues that auditory features on a website are of major importance for the perceived overall customer shopping experience. Khakimdjanova and Park (2005) claim that the best e-commerce shopping experience is created by developing visual merchandising techniques, which would provide a sensory experience for the costumers. In parallel with these statements, Eroglu et al. (2001) argue that staging customer shopping experiences within e-commerce lacks some capacities in comparison to traditional in-store environments. Eroglu et al. (2001) claim that the creation of sensory experiences online today is automatically limited to the stimulation of the two human senses sight and sound, due to the fact that the other senses are not possible to stimulate in an online environment. Since the online environment appears like it does today, where taste, touch and smell not yet are possible to experience for customers, e-commerce brands may benefit from "thinking outside the box", in terms of stop focusing merely on the online-stimulation of the human senses, when staging a customer shopping experience. Hence, by approaching the online shopping experience in a new way it could enable the stimulation of more senses than just sight and sound. This is, according to Hultén (2011), in line with what the sensory experience is all about. Hultén (2011) claims that by stimulate several of the human senses simultaneously the customer shopping experience will be enhanced and become more memorable for the customer.

According to Novak et al. (2000) the online environment cannot be approached with the same techniques as the offline environment. Therefore, existing theories that are developed for traditional in-store contexts cannot simply be utilized within e-commerce, without reconsidering the extent of an online shopping experience. With regard to Novak et al. (2000) and their way of distinguishing between offline and online contexts, Davis (2013) definition of a shopping experience i.e. that a customer’s shopping experience starts at the first interface with the store and ends when the customer leaves the store after a purchase, may hence not be applicable in e-commerce. Since it is stated that these two different context should be treated
differently, it is not justified to claim that the customer's shopping experience in e-commerce starts with the customer's first interface with a website and ends when he or she orders an item and leaves the website. Instead, with the notion that these two contexts should be approached differently it seems more accurate to treat the shopping experience within e-commerce as extended and not completed until the customers actually receive the order. By adopting this perception, the customer shopping experience within e-commerce could be enhanced.

1.3 Purpose
The purpose is to describe how brands within e-commerce can create an enhanced shopping experience for its customers.

1.4 Research question
How do the utilization of the human senses affect the customers' shopping experience within e-commerce?
2. Theoretical framework

The following chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part concerns a general review of the concept of Sensory experience, in retail setting, and its five building blocks; sight, sound, smell, touch and taste, which then merge into a more in-depth description of the importance and function of each building block. The second part of the chapter discusses sensory experience once again but now with connection to e-commerce – what research that has been done within the area of e-commerce until today.

2.1 Sensory experience

Sensory experience, also known as sensory marketing or as Hultén (2012) chooses to call it, the multi-sensory brand-experience concept refers to a brand's attempt to engage the five human senses sight, sound, smell, touch and taste when creating an experience for its customers. The study made by Hultén (2012) reveals that it is vital for brands to create an experience for the customers in order to distinguish the brand, differentiate it from competitors and also to enhance the brand's identity. The study further declares that this is obtained by applying sensorial approaches, which are put across through sensors, sensations and sensory expressions in relation to the mind and senses of the human. Several researchers have approached the investigation of sensory experience in the same manner as Hultén (2012) does in his study. Among them Krishna (2012) who agree on the proposition that sensory experience is all about engaging the five human senses in the creation of customer experiences. In this study it is further revealed that the engagement of the human senses can be used as subconscious triggers that can be utilized to affect the customers' perceptions, judgment and behavior. Professor Charles Spence who is an experimental psychologist at the University of Oxford has also emphasized the recent emergence and importance of the concept of the sensory experience and states that what everyone strives for today is to sell experiences (Spence et al. 2014). In the article "Store Atmospherics: A Multisensory Perspective" Spence et al. (2014) discuss the visual (sight), auditory (sounds), tactile (touch), olfactory (smell), and gustatory (taste) aspects as the most vital marketing techniques today. The article concludes that the atmosphere within a store has significant influences on the modern customers' behavior and that the atmosphere can be managed by the engagement of the human senses. A conclusion made by both Spence et al. (2014) and Hultén (2012) is that the concept of engaging multiple of the human senses in the creation of customer experiences still needs plenty of research since it is yet fresh and undeveloped. Spence et al. (2014) also argue that various visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile and gustatory engagements independently
affect the perception and behavior of the customers. What the authors further conclude is that a combination of the different sensory cues is likely to have an even greater impact on the customers' experiences, than what the sum of their parts has.

2.1.1 Sight

Out of the five existing human senses, sight is the most prominent one and most decisions and experiences in our daily life are based on visual impressions (Hultén et al., 2009). Krishna (2011) also states that sight is clearly the most dominant sense and there is a huge amount of research on visual stimulation within the field of marketing. Sight is one of the most powerful senses in advertising and it is the sense that marketers and brand builders has traditionally concentrated on the most (Lindstrom, 2005). Different kinds of sight stimulations are stored as experiences in the customers’ mind, which in turn allows them to relate to prior experiences. One way of stimulating consumers’ sight in order to create an experience is by using different colors and shapes. This helps brands to differentiate themselves from competitors (Hultén et al., 2009). The logo, shape and color of a brand are features that could entail a memorable experience for consumers (Hultén et al., 2009).

In a study by Pecoraro and Uusitalo (2014) they confirmed that the environment and visualization inside a store has an impact on customer’s every-day life. Pecoraro and Uusitalo (2014) further state that it is crucial to pay attention to store design, space and materials of the environment in order to improve customers shopping experience. Wu et al. (2013) conducted a study regarding the effect of different visual display methods on the customer’s shopping experience in a fashion retail environment. It was shown that the customer shopping experience could be improved by style coordination i.e. when demonstrating how items can be worn together. Color was also shown as an important element and the study showed that customers prefer colorful stores since it has visual attractiveness and a pleasant atmosphere. Bottomley (2006) likewise argues that color is very important to consider when it comes to experience creation by stimulating the sight sense. Different colors can be used to create impressions and associations (Hultén, 2012) since different colors represent diverse feelings and connotations (Hultén et al., 2009). For instance, red is often seen as an intense color that really catches the attention of the eye (Hultén, 2012). Wu et al. (2013) means that different types of colors should be considered depending on what kind of effect you want. For example, similar or one-colored schemes could create a harmonic atmosphere, but still a visually stimulating experience (Wu et al., 2013).
Kent (2007) emphasizes the importance of combining window display and visual merchandising in retail stores, so that the design is coherent throughout the store environment, which creates an explicit visual experience for the customers. In most selling environment the sight is seen as the key sense to stimulate. Color can be used in this sense and different colors can affect customers’ emotional condition. Lighting cannot only point out information and focus points but also provide meaning (Loe, 2002 in Kent, 2007). The visual impression affects the customer experience and preference. However, it is important for brands not to overexpose visual elements such as pictures, colors and information. This could result in that the customer is exposed to too much information, which decreases attractiveness and uniqueness (Jia et al., 2014).

2.1.2 Sound

When the use of sound is discussed in a customer shopping experience context, many researchers refer exclusively to the utilization of music in retail settings. According to Hultén (2011) the stimulation of sound is one approach that can be undertaken in order to change the behavior of people. The author further states that the auditory sounds do not only have an impact on attitudes and feelings, but also on moods and buying habits among customers and is the reason why many stores today utilize in-store music to stimulate the sense of sound. “What is music for?” and “What functions does music serve in modern life?” are two questions that Hargreaves and North (1999) bring to the table in their article concerning the psychology aspects of music. The researchers reveal that the social function of music is manifested in three principal ways for the individual, which are self-identity, interpersonal relationship and mood. In 1999 Hargreaves and North made a field study where they investigated to what extent music influences the purchases among customers. The research concerned stereotypical German and French music and to what extent they affected supermarket customers' selection of German and French wines. The study revealed that the French music seemed to have an increasingly sales impact on the French wines. The same was disclosed for the German music, which clearly increased the purchases of the German wines. Andersson et al. (2012) investigated the effects that music has on consumer behavior in different retail contexts. The underlying research question of the study was to investigate whether music has a noticeable effect in a real-world setting, which has previous been shown in laboratory experiments. The results of the study reveal that consumers who are exposed to music tend to spend both more money and time in a store (Andersson et al., 2012). The
importance of congruity between sound and other senses has also showed to be of significance in retail settings. Mattila and Wirtz (2001) conclude in their study that when the arousal levels of ambient smell and background music match, consumers' evaluation of a shopping experience tends to be enhanced.

In line with the previous mentioned researchers, Langrehr (1991) also discusses the utilization of music as an important variable in the creation of a customer experience, but also stresses the significance of noise in general. The author claims that noisy environments in retail settings have a negative impact on the customers' shopping experience. It is further declared that this will not just affect the customer experience in a negative manner, but will also result in customers leaving the store sooner than what they had done if the environment would not have been noisy. Another approach to the auditory aspect of a customer experience is also discussed by Hultén (2015). The study concerns to what extent the sound, in terms of storytelling, affects the shopping behavior of children and their parents. The study reveals that children who listens to auditory stories during their shopping trip in a grocery store tend to be quieter, more relaxed and not move around. It is also stated that this has an indirect effect on the parents' shopping behavior since they do not get stressed when shopping.

2.1.3 Smell
The sense of smell is viewed as very influential and powerful since we cannot really turn it off. Despite this fact, less than 3 percent of the 1000 most fortune companies have considered giving their brand a unique smell (Lindstrom, 2005). Within the field of smell there has been a lot of research done about how the smell sense affect product and store evaluation as well as how it affects time spent by the customer inside the store (Krishna, 2012). Researchers within the area have found that pleasant smells can enhance customer evaluation of products and improve the experience inside the store (Bosmans, 2006; Spangenberg et al., 1996) In a study by Anggie (2011) it is proven that a pleasurable smell affects visiting customer in a way that they are more likely to spend more time at the place. The study by Morrison et al. (2011) also shows that the use of aroma results in higher levels of pleasure among the consumers, which also positively affect customer behavior in terms of increased time and money spent, and overall satisfaction with the shopping experience. Physical stores often make use of the sense of smell in order to evoke emotions amid the customers, which often result in acquisition. The strength of a smell should moreover be considered since it could make a difference to the consumer; e.g. a really mild smell might only be perceived subconsciously (Hultén et al., 2009).
The smell sense has the power to impact behavior without the customer actually being aware of it (Ward et al., 2003). According to Hultén et al. (2009) the smell sense could have a great impact on customer emotions, since earlier experienced smell tend to recall memories. Different smells or aromas induce signals to the brain, which evokes connections to past experiences. Brands can take advantage of the fact that customers often identify products through certain smells (Hultén et al., 2009). Bosman (2006) demonstrates that a pleasant smell can generate emotional semantic connections based on memories of past experiences. Morrin and Ratneshwar (2003) conducted an experiment of the impact smell has on brand memory, by manipulating smell in an environment where participants evaluated branded products on a screen. The study showed that when the smell was surrounding the brand exposure point, in contrast to no smell, the participants spent more time inspecting the product. It was also showed that an ambient smell improves people's recognition of brand names (Morrin and Ratneshwar, 2003). Buck (2005) was granted a Nobel Prize for revealing how people can distinguish between the huge amounts of different smells and remember one specifically. The study, for the first time, identified smell-receptors in the human brain and the various combinations of these receptors enable humans to recognize approximately 10,000 distinct smells (Buck, 2005).

Using pleasant smells gives a brand promising opportunities in terms of its marketing practice (Bosmans, 2006). A brand can create a smell strategy based on the sense of smell, in order to draw more attention, make a nicer atmosphere and increase customer wellbeing (Spangenberg et al., 1996). Furthermore, the study of Bosmans (2006) demonstrates the importance of product congruence i.e. that the smell should match the product in question. If the smell is congruent with the product type it will positively affect the customers brand or product evaluation regardless of how salient the smell is (Bosmans, 2006). Parsons (2009) further emphasizes the importance of which smell you uses, since it has been shown that the chosen smell should distinctively represent the brand or the product. If there are difficulties with associating the smell with the brand, there is a risk of decreasing sales instead of the other way around (Parsons, 2009).

2.1.4 Touch

By utilizing the sense of touch a brand can make a consumer change his or her perception of something, without even noticing the fact that it was the touch itself that changed the earlier held perception (Hultén, 2011). Peck and Wiggins (2006) conclude that the touch is important
for customers purchase decision but that the degree of importance is based on the customers' personal NFT (need for touch). It is further concluded that touch is not important just because it brings structural information about the product but also because it can be used as a persuasive element by providing a pleasant hedonic experience for the consumers. An interesting finding made by Hultén (2011) is that both visual and olfactory sensory cues seem to have a positive impact on shoppers' touching behavior which in turn is proved to enhance the purchase intention and sales for companies. The role of tactile versus visual inputs in customers’ product evaluations is discussed by Balaji et al. (2011). The authors’ claims that touch have a major and significant impact on the customers' evaluations of products. The study further reveals that consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions are significantly more impacted by tactile than visual information. It is also concluded that consumers tend to show significantly larger undesirable feelings when the ability to touch a product is denied than what they do when the vision of the product is taken away. The study of Balaji et al. (2011) also declares that a combined presence of both visual and tactile information leads to heightened product evaluation for products. This reveals that visual cues may interact with tactile information and together create enhancing effects on consumers' product evaluations (Balaji et al., 2011). The conclusion drawn by Balaji (2011) that tactile cues can interact with other sensory cues, finds support in a study conducted by Krishna et al., (2010). This study concerns the interaction between touch and smell and reveals that smell has a great and meaningful impact on touch. The authors of the study stress the importance of congruence between the two different senses and claim that consumer perceptions and product evaluations are enhanced in a positive manner if there is a semantic congruence between smell and texture of the product. In a study compiled by Grohmann et al. (2007) it is clearly demonstrated that making it possible for customers to touch products influences their product evaluation. It is stated that retailers can benefit from allowing customers touch the products but it can, however, also be the other way around. Grohmann et al. (2007) declare that when both high quality products and low quality products are evaluated simultaneously, the tactile inputs only have a positive impact on the high quality products whereas the low quality products are evaluated negatively.

2.1.5 Taste

Hultén et al. (2009) argues that the taste sense cannot be used in the same way as the other human senses when creating experiences with sensory marketing. Taste is quite hard to make use of since it cannot be felt from a certain distance. Furthermore, customers are not really
able to express their preferences regarding their taste experience. Therefore, using the sense of taste as a marketing tool is not very common. Sight, smell and sound have a big part in how a taste is perceived by customers (Hultén et al., 2009). Krishna (2012) also highlights the fact that taste is a combination of all human senses. She means that every single taste is a combination of how it smells, how it feels i.e. temperature, greasiness, and texture, how it looks and also how it sounds – such as the cracking of a bite in a potato chip. The sense of taste is being influenced by external elements such as brand name, physical attributes, packaging and advertising (Krishna, 2012). Paradis and Eeg-Olofsson (2013) shed light on the sensory experience in the genre of wine reviews. They concluded that “we cannot taste something without smelling something, and we cannot taste something without feeling something, and over and above everything is the sight of something” (Paradis and Eeg-Olofsson, 2013 p. 38).

If a customer has a positive experience i.e. positive reaction of the taste, it is more likely that he or she stays longer with the brand and it also positively affects the consumption process. Prior knowledge about a certain taste will result in a stronger taste, since the person is prepared for what is to come (Hultén et al., 2009).

2.2 Sensory experience in e-commerce

It appears like the utilization of the five human senses in the creation of a customer experience until today not has been as investigated in the context of e-commerce as it has been in in-store context. Some researchers have, however, approached the area and among them Citrin et al. (2003) who discuss the shortcomings of Internet-based retailing since people are unable to touch products during their purchase decision-making process. The research reveals that products that require more tactile cues are negatively affected in terms of purchases. Eroglu et al. (2001) also argue that staging customer shopping experiences within e-commerce lacks some capacities in comparison to traditional in-store environments. The study implies that the creation of sensory experiences online today is automatically limited to the stimulation of the two human senses sight and sound (Eroglu et al. 2001).

Within the area of sensory experience in e-commerce most research has been done regarding visual impressions but investigated from different aspects. Ha and Lennon (2010) discuss the importance of personalization, Jiyeon and Forsythe (2009) emphasize 3D product demonstrations and Khakimdjanova and Park (2005) treat overall visual merchandising techniques. Jiyeon and Forsythe (2009) investigated in their study the impact of sensory
enabling technologies on the customer shopping experience within e-commerce. Sensory experience technologies (SETs) provide sensory input in e-commerce environments, as a proxy for sensory experiences in direct product exposure (Jiyeon and Forsythe, 2009). The study merely concerns visualization technologies used to stimulate the sight sense. It was shown that visual sensory input in terms of 3D product demonstrations improved the experience since it generated higher buying intentions than what static product presentations did (Jiyeon and Forsythe, 2009). Ha and Lennon (2010) revealed in their study concerning visual merchandising online that there is a difference between highly involved online consumers and those without purchase intention. Highly involved customers felt excited and aroused by extensive product-related visual stimulation, while online browsers without purchase intention were pleased by websites with rather irrelevant cues e.g. patterns and color of the background (Ha and Lennon, 2010). Ha and Lennon (2010) further explains that sensory stimulation through visual elements can make websites more personalized by welcoming frequent shoppers by name or suggesting products based on prior shopping history, which amplifies the experience. They also suggest that e-commerce brands should use different strategies for different consumers in order to ensure a superior shopping experience. According to Ha and Lennon (2010), new potential customers should be encountered by a standard website design with low task content with some decorative images and animations. Frequent recurrent customers should be encountered with a more advanced and personalized website design, with information and presentations of desired products and mix and match suggestion, which strengthens the possibility of purchase (Ha and Lennon, 2010). According to Khakimdjanova and Park (2005) the best e-commerce shopping experience could be created through developing visual merchandising techniques. This would also provide a sensory experience for the consumers and create an e-commerce environment that would compete with traditional retail channels. The shopping experience could be enhanced by adding visual features such as 3D product presentation with manual or automatic rotation, human models, zoom-functions, and focus views for product (e.g. clothing) details that are otherwise hard to discover (Khakimdjanova and Park, 2005). Khakimdjanova and Park (2005) argue that an e-commerce brand might have to create similar shopping experiences to those in traditional stores. The website design must be carefully developed so that it is easy for visitors to navigate and obtain visual stimulation. Khakimdjanova and Park (2005) conclude that the area of visualization online needs to be improved and e-commerce brands should undoubtedly improve their techniques to create a stronger experience in virtual terms.
Fiore and Kelly (2007) discuss the issues surrounding the integration of auditory features in online stores. The authors conclude that only a fraction of existing online stores utilizes sound as a marketing tool for the brand and its products. They also declare that the use of auditory sounds both enhances the social and experiential qualities among the customers when they shop online. The most prominent finding from Fiore and Kelly's (2007) study is, however, that the use of audio-visual features, in terms of product evaluations from former customers, can be extremely useful. The authors state that the impact of seeing and hearing another customer demonstrate a product in their own terms, goes far beyond a written description.

Regarding the utilization of smell in a shopping experience context within e-commerce, not much has been discussed up till today. In the book Sensory Marketing written by Hultén et al. (2009) there is an emphasis on a statement made by South Korean researcher. In year 2007 these researchers claimed that, thanks to technological development, it would in year 2015 be possible to communicate and convey messages via smells on the Internet (Hultén et al., 2009). In line with the South Korean researchers, Hultén et al. (2009) describes this as an innovation that adds a whole new aspect to the Internet and other digital media.

2.3 Summary of theory chapter

The table below demonstrates a summary of the collected theory from reviewed literature. Different factors that affect the sensory experience are outlined and categorized into sight, sound, smell, touch and taste. The last part of the table represents the existing factors that have been researched within the area of sensory experience in e-commerce up until today. All factors are supported and inspired by the referred articles.
### Theoretical summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory:</th>
<th>Factors:</th>
<th>Inspired by article:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Sight** | Colors | Hultén et al., 2009  
Wu et al., 2013  
Bottomley, 2006  
Kent, 2007 |
| | Shapes | Hultén et al. 2009 |
| | Logo | Hultén et al., 2009 |
| | Design | Pecoraro and Uusitalo, 2014 |
| | Material | Pecoraro and Uusitalo, 2014 |
| | Style coordination | Wu et al., 2013 |
| | Overexposure | Jia et al., 2014 |
| **Sound** | Music | Hultén, 2011  
Hargreaves and North, 1999  
Andersson et al., 2012  
Mattila and Wirtz, 2001  
Langrehr, 1991 |
| | Noise | Langrehr, 1991 |
| | Auditory storytelling | Hultén, 2015 |
| **Smell** | Product | Krishna, 2012  
Hultén et al., 2009 |
| | Pleasant aroma | Bosmans, 2006  
Spangenberg et al., 1996  
Anggie, 2011  
Morrison et al., 2011 |
| | Strength | Hultén et al., 2009 |
| | Re-experienced | Hultén et al., 2009 |
| | Surrounding | Morrin and Ratneshwar, 2003 |
| | Congruence | Bosmans, 2006 |
| | Type | Parsons, 2009 |
| **Touch** | Combination with other senses | Balaji et al., 2011  
Krishna et al., 2010 |
| | Congruence | Krishna et al., 2010 |
| | Product quality | Grohmann et al., 2007 |
| **Taste** | Combination of senses | Krishna, 2012 |
| | External elements | Krishna, 2012 |
| | Smell | Paradis and Eeg-Olofsson, 2013 |
| | Positive reaction | Hultén et al., 2009 |
| **Sensory experience in e-commerce** | Sound | Sound features  
Fiore and Kelly, 2007 |
| | Sight | Visual features  
Jiyeon and Forsythe, 2009  
Ha and Forsythe, 2010  
Park, 2005 |
| | Audio-visual review | Fiore and Kelly, 2007 |
| | 3D demonstrations | Khakimdjanova and Park, 2005 |
| | Personalized | Ha and Lennon, 2010 |
| | Website design | Khakimdjanova and Park, 2005 |

Table 2.1 Theoretical summary
3. Method

This chapter explains how the research was conducted and performed. The chapter includes theoretical framework for available research methods combined with the authors’ motivations for the chosen approaches.

3.1 Research purpose

Research is usually classified in terms of its purpose and are most often divided into exploratory, explanatory and descriptive. The most vital aspect to take into consideration as a researcher is to choose the one out of these approaches that suits the study's stated purpose the best. If this is not achieved the study's purpose and research questions will not be able to be answered (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Bryman and Bell, 2011).

As the name can tell, an exploratory study is carried out in order to explore a certain subject and is mainly utilized within quantitative research. This kind of approach is most useful when the researchers do not have enough understanding to carry on with or to advance the research project. The main objectives of exploratory research is to help defining a research problem and generate hypotheses and/or research questions which then could be worked upon in a later phase (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This approach of research could basically be seen as the groundwork that has to be done in order to do further, often more in-depth, investigations within the area. Exploratory research is often conducted by either using the method of surveys and/or analysis of secondary data (Appannaiah et al., 2010). Explanatory studies often focus on the question why (Gratton and Jones, 2010). This approach is often used when the researchers seeks to investigate the relationship between two variables. The explanatory approach is well structured and only utilized within quantitative studies (Appannaiah et al., 2010). Within explanatory research it is also important to keep careful track of the independent variables in order to detect if and how they affect the dependent variable(s) (Bryman and Bell, 2011). When a new area of investigation emerges, descriptive studies are often the ones who lay the scientific groundwork for this. Descriptive research is most often connected to qualitative studies but can, however, be utilized for quantitative studies as well. The characteristic of a descriptive study is that it always has a well-defined research problem and the main purpose is to go in depth into a specific phenomenon. The most commonly utilized data collection methods for this approach is questionnaires and interviews. The results from a descriptive study can never be used as an absolute answer used to reject a hypothesis. The
information can, however, be extremely useful for future research (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Willig, 2013).

Since the research area that was chosen for the current study still is undeveloped, it seemed natural for the authors to chose a descriptive approach for the study. This was based on the previous arguments that a descriptive approach is suitable when laying the groundwork within a new research area.

3.2 Research approach

3.2.1 Inductive vs. Deductive

There are two main approaches to make use of when conducting a research. The two different perspectives are referred to as *deductive* and *inductive*. The deductive perspective involves the creation of new science and it is the most common approach when studying connections between collected data and theories (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Deduction often involves the testing of hypotheses, after which an assertion is being confirmed or rejected (Gray, 2009). The variables used in hypothesis testing have been deducted from already existing theories and the purpose is to help research within its area to take a step forward (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005). Principally, deductive research concerns the formation of a new theory that is being tested empirically (Gray, 2009). Bryman and Bell (2011) declares that deductive research requires a lot of work before conducting the study in order to create a broad theoretical base. The theoretical framework is based on a profound review of existing literature around the theories or concepts that will be studied. Hypotheses are being formed based on the theoretical framework and through operationalization the theoretical concepts are being measureable in reality (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The inductive approach involves, in contrast to deductive, the formation of theory as a result of the empirical data. To clarify, theory is the outcome of the research conducted (Gray, 2005). Inductive research is based on observations and data collection, after which the data is analyzed to discover possible patterns or relationships. However, it is not accurate to say that an inductive approach does not take any kind of pre-existing theories into consideration. In an inductive study the researcher fluctuate between earlier theories and data to establish consistencies and patterns instead of validating or falsifying a theory (Gray, 2009). According to Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) we draw general conclusions based on our empirical observations. Though it is important to mention that we cannot be completely certain about inductive conclusions since they are based on a number of observations that could be mistaken (Ghaur and Gronhaug, 2005).
In this study the authors have used existing theories in order to select the research issue. The existing theory of sensory experiences was applied in a new context, which resulted in modified theory within the research area. Hence, a deductive approach has been utilized throughout the current study.

3.2.2 Qualitative vs. quantitative

Qualitative and quantitative studies are often grounded in their either inductive or deductive approaches. Qualitative studies often have an inductive approach whereas quantitative studies usually are associated with deductivism. The reason why the qualitative studies usually are approached in an inductive manner is due to the fact they often are less formal than the quantitative studies (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Gummesson, 2000). Studies with a qualitative research approach have their roots in the interpretivism which means that the interpretation of peoples' experiences, thoughts and feelings is in focus (Gratton and Jones, 2010). What this implies is that the data that is collected in a qualitative study should be treated in a manner where it is observed and carefully analyzed, rather than measured and quantified. Quantitative research, on the other hand, is the absolute opposite to qualitative research and its deductive approach has its roots in the positivism. Within the positivism there is a belief that the world is external and that there is only one objective reality. This implies that research with a deductive approach has its starting point in already existing theories but aims to test new hypothesis (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Gratton and Jones, 2010). Quantitative research are often recognized by its approach where a large amount of numerical data is collected and further analyzed through mathematically based methods such as statistic (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Qualitative methods are appropriate to utilize when the purpose of the research is to explore and/or describe a reality. The data is often collected via observations, focus groups and/or interviews. The usage of a qualitative approach can often yield a deeper understanding regarding a complex phenomena or problem (Gummesson, 2000).

Even though the present study had a deductive research approach, which often is connected to quantitative studies, the authors found it most suitable to conduct a qualitative study. The chosen qualitative approach seemed to be most suitable since the current study had a descriptive purpose, which goes hand in hand with studies of qualitative natures. Another aspect that was taken into consideration was the fact that not so much research has been done within the chosen research area today and hence, a qualitative approach seemed most appropriate to utilize in order to gain knowledge.
3.3 Research design

According to Bryman and Bell (2011) there are five prominent research designs that most often are utilized when collecting data for business research. These are the experimental design, the comparative design, the longitudinal design(s), the cross-sectional design and the case study design. What these five different designs indicate is that there are different possible courses of action that researchers can make use of when collecting data and conducting research. The gathering of information can either be collected during one specific occasion, or it can be gathered during a determined period of time. If the data is collected from a larger population it will be possible to generalize the found results in the analyzing stage of the process. Sometimes it is, however, more suitable to focus on specific cases and then perform fewer observations but instead go more in depth (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Bryman and Bell (2011) further explain that two main detectors to what research design that is appropriate for a study is first of all resources, in terms of economical factors, but also what the study aims to answer.

When peoples' attitudes are supposed to be assessed both before and after a manipulated treatment of the environment, the experimental design is the one to be utilized. The experimental design rule out alternative explanations derived from it and is analyzed with help from statistical procedures and hypothesis testing (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Creswell, 2009). The comparative design can be utilized both in qualitative and quantitative studies and involves the comparison of two or more cases. This is done in order to clarify existing theories or to generate theoretical insights, which are revealed as a result of the comparison (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Within the longitudinal design data is collected on the same sample of people on at least two occasions. This is done in order to detect if there are any differences in the results between the two different occasions (Bryman and Bell, 2011). It is further stated that all three of these previously mentioned research designs requires a lot of resources and it are also time consuming. Within the case study design the researchers attempt is to go in depth in a specific case in order to investigate new or problematic/complex areas. This kind of research design is closely connected to the qualitative approach since the aim is to investigate areas that not are suitable for generalization (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Creswell, 2009). The cross-sectional design implicates that data is collected from more than one case and at a single point in time. This is done in order to gain a large body of data that possibly can be used to generalize the outcome to a bigger population (Bryman and Bell, 2011).
The current study was based on a cross-sectional design for gathering data from three different cases at a single point in time. The aim of the research was hence not to generalize the information and/or data but rather to go in depth in the different cases. The cross-sectional design was chosen for the ability to gather data from different groups and hence make the study broader.

### 3.3.1 Selection of cases

Three different cases were chosen as the foundation for the study and each case represented one brand operating within e-commerce. The three chosen brands were Nelly.com, Adlibris and NordicFeel. Nelly.com is an internet-based fashion retailer, offering a wide range of the latest trends within clothing, accessories, shoes, etc. Adlibris is an online reseller of books within all categories, everything from children's books to cookbooks and course literature. NordicFeel is an e-commerce based reseller of beauty products, offering a wide range of product categories such as perfume, make up, hair care and much more. These three companies were chosen based on the fact that they all operate within e-commerce, delivers the items to the customers and thereby offers an extended customer shopping experience. Additionally, they all operate within three different product categories. This was a conscious decision made by the researchers since it was believed to give the study more breadth.

### 3.4 Data collection method

When collecting data for a study there are several different research methods to choose from. The different methods of data collections are more or less suitable depending on whether the study is qualitative or quantitative. Within quantitative research the most common research methods used are survey questionnaires, structured interviews, structured observations or content analysis (Bryman and Bell, 2011). However, these quantitative methods were excluded since the current study is of qualitative nature. In qualitative research, data is mainly being collected by conducting *focus groups, semi- or unstructured interviews, or unstructured observations* (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

*Unstructured observations* involve the researcher entering the field, attempting to document as much information as possible about the participant’s behavior. The researcher only has a general notion of what will be observed and tries to uncover themes of interest (Gray, 2009). The method of unstructured observations was immediately disregarded in current study since it is not possible to observe peoples’ behavior within the research topic. The *focus group* is a method where a number of people are being gathered and interviewed at the same occasion.
The emphasis lies on a pre-determined topic that the participants discuss and create joint meaning about. Focus groups are often used when researchers want to investigate individuals understanding of something in their conjunction with others. The method helps researchers to understand why people have a certain opinion about something. However, a downside of focus groups is that the social nature of answering could have an influence (Gray, 2009). Since focus groups enable people to argue against each other’s opinions it could make them change or revise their views. This could be a limitation for the study since some perspectives might be repressed or biased. Focus groups imply a huge amount of data that quickly proceeds, which makes it quite difficult and time-consuming to analyze. Also, it could be very difficult to transcribe focus group dialogues since people tend to talk over each other and not even a high-quality microphone could handle this problem (Bryman and Bell, 2011). These limitations, in combination with that the researcher has less control over the procedure, eventuates in that the method was not employed in the current study.

Within qualitative research, Bryman and Bell (2011) argues that, the interview probably is the method most commonly employed. The main reason for its attractiveness has to do with its flexibility. Since the purpose with this study is to go in depth to investigate the new area, interviews are preferred over focus groups since interviews enable a more profound response from specific cases. There are two main types of interviews, the unstructured interview and the semi-structured interview, which sometimes are encapsulated into one term: qualitative interviews (Bryman and Bell, 2011). During an unstructured interview the interviewer simply have a range of topics to cover and not any predetermined questions to ask. This gives the respondent a lot of freedom and the interview could be classified as more of a conversation (Saunders et al., 2009). Semi-structured interviews, on the other hand, involve a set of predetermined questions in an interview guide. However, the interviewer must not follow it precisely and he or she has the freedom to add or change questions in the meantime. Semi-structured interviews were employed in this study since the researchers had a rather clear focus in the beginning, and not just a brief notion, of the research area of interest (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009).

3.4.1 Semi-structured interview
In semi-structured interviews the same questions are asked to all interviewees but involves various response opportunities. This gives people an equal chance of expressing their thoughts and opinions. By including open-ended and adjustable questions it allows the
researcher to identify new understandings of the subject (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Semi-structured interview was chosen as the research method in the current study since the aim was to collect reliable, comparable and qualitative data, which is provided by the semi-structured interview guide. In the present study the researchers' exclusively utilized face-to-face interviews when gathering the data. It was done in order to eliminate the risk of missing out or lose important indications regarding body language and/or intonations from the interviewees.

The interviewees from three different companies (Nelly.com, Adlibris and NordicFeel) that were chosen as the foundation and framework for the current study all functioned as qualitative data providers. Each of the three companies constituted one specific case respectively where data, in terms of in-depth interviews, were collected from four participants within each case. The interviewees were all customers of the company in the case they were involved in. Altogether twelve interviews were held. A brief representation of the respondents can be found attached in Appendix 2. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were held with all twelve of the three different cases' participants and all of the interviews were recorded and later on carefully transcribed word-by-word. Recording and transcribing interviews has great advantages since it allows researchers to repeatedly examine the interviewees’ answers, since things could have otherwise easily been forgotten, which allows a further exhaustive study (Saunders et al., 2009).

During the interviews two of the current study's researchers were participating where one of them actively conversed with the interviewee, whereas the other researcher took notes regarding the interviewee's body language. All of the interviews were held with one interviewee at a time in a calm and relaxed setting and lasted for approximately 25 to 35 minutes. The produced and final transcripts were repeatedly reviewed by all three of the current studies researchers, both individually and simultaneously. This was done in order to both establish the internal reliability (Bryman and Bell 2011; Gratton and Jones, 2009) within the study and to get an overall understanding of each of the interviews before in-depth starting to analyze them (Denscombe, 2010).

3.4.2 Operationalization

Operationalization is a process where existing theories are broken down into operational terms, which later on are used by the researchers when collecting the data (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The approach for the operationalization in the current study was based on four
different columns (see Table 3:1 Operationalization table). Concept refers to the theories that the present study is based upon. Definition of concept is a description of how the researchers of the current study have approached and defined the different theories. The operational definition refers to how these concepts are applied in the present research and the variables are the information that constitutes the foundation for the developed interview guide (see Table 3:2 Interview guide).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Definition of concept</th>
<th>Operational definition</th>
<th>Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sensory</td>
<td>Also known as sensory marketing or the multi-sensory brand-experience concept. A brand's attempt to the engage the five human senses sight, sound, smell, touch and taste when creating an experience for its customers (Hultén, 2011).</td>
<td>Describe how this concept can be applicable within e-commerce.</td>
<td>• The engagement of the five human senses in the creation of customer experiences (Krishna, 2012).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight</td>
<td>The most prominent human sense, based on visual impressions (Hultén et al., 2009).</td>
<td>Describe how visual impressions affects customers' shopping experience within e-commerce.</td>
<td>• Colors • Logo • Design • Space • Material • Style coordination • Overexposure • Visual features • Audio-visual features • 3D demonstrations • Personalized • Website design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One of the five human senses based on auditory impressions, for instance music (Hargreaves and North, 1999).

Describe how auditory impressions affects customers’ shopping experience within e-commerce.

- Music
- Noise
- Auditory storytelling
- **Sound features**
- Audio-visual review

A very influential human sense based on olfactory impressions (Lindstom, 2005).

Describe how olfactory impressions affects customers’ shopping experience within e-commerce.

- Product
- Pleasant aroma
- Strength
- Re-experienced
- Surrounding
- Congruence
- Type

A human sense concerning tactile impressions (Peck and Wiggins 2006).

Describe how tactile impressions affects customers’ shopping experience within e-commerce.

- Combination with other senses
- Congruence
- Product quality

A human sense based on gustatory impressions (Hultén et al. 2009).

Describe how gustatory impressions affects customers’ shopping experience within e-commerce.

- Combination of senses
- External elements
- Smell
- Positive reaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sound</strong></th>
<th>Describe how auditory impressions affects customers’ shopping experience within e-commerce.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Smell</strong></td>
<td>Describe how olfactory impressions affects customers’ shopping experience within e-commerce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Touch</strong></td>
<td>Describe how tactile impressions affects customers’ shopping experience within e-commerce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taste</strong></td>
<td>Describe how gustatory impressions affects customers’ shopping experience within e-commerce.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3:1 Operationalization table

#### 3.4.3 Interview schedule

In the very beginning of all of the twelve interviews the interviewers gave the interviewees an overall explanation of the research. It was further explained what the experience economy is all about and how stimulation of the human senses has a big part in this. Thereafter, the
Interviewees were asked a question regarding what a shopping experience within e-commerce is according to them, and they were also asked to describe their last shopping experience from the company in which case they were involved. Subsequently, the researchers further explained their perception of what a shopping experience within e-commerce is, in terms of being extended, and the interviewees were asked to keep that perception in mind throughout the whole interview. The interview questions were then asked in the order of the interview guide, which is to found below in table 3:2. The questions were, if needed, complemented with follow-up questions based on their related theory variables from the operationalization table. This was needed if the respondents did not really understand the question, or if they did not have much to say. Follow up questions were then asked to lead the discussion forward. The variables that formed the follow-up questions can be found in Appendix 1, in terms of a checklist where all of them are connected to the related areas. Since the researchers of this present study claim that a shopping experience within e-commerce do not end when the customers leave the webpage, the interviews were hence developed to suit this perception. The aim of the interviews and the questions was to cover the whole shopping experience process, from the very first interaction with the webpage until the customers' receive the product. Therefore, the questions were asked from both an online and an offline perspective. This approach was undertaken based on Armstrong et al. (2009) belief that customers' go through different phases, in terms of problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post purchase evaluation in their buying decision process. Hence the researchers of the current study assumed that the impact of the human senses might differ depending on what stage in the process the customers are in.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Interview questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sensory experience / Sensory</td>
<td>- What is a shopping experience within e-commerce according to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experience in e-commerce</td>
<td>- Can you describe your last shopping experience at Nelly.com/NordicFeel/Adlibris?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight</td>
<td>- What visual impressions on the website attract you more and what visual impressions attracts you less?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Can you mention any visual impressions that would enhance your overall e-commerce shopping experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound</td>
<td>- Would you appreciate if some kind of auditory features were applied at the website?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Can you think about any other sounds or noises that could</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
affect your overall e-commerce shopping experience?

| Smell                              | - Do you ever reflect over any specific smells when you receive your order?  
|                                   | - What if Nelly.com/NordicFeel/Adlibris added some kind of scent into your parcel, would that affect your shopping experience? |
| Touch                             | - Since you are not able to touch anything online, how come you decide to buy a product?  
|                                   | - Is the feeling/touch of the parcel itself important to you? |
| Taste                             | - How would you react if Nelly.com/NordicFeel/Adlibris included something tasty with your order? (In terms of e.g. a chocolate bar) |

Table 3:2 Interview guide

3.4.4 Pilot study

Pilot studies are conducted in order to test the quality of the questions for data collection and to ensure that the respondents perceive the questions as intended. This enables the researchers to make necessary modifications in the procedure, so that the research instruments functions well, before the final research is performed (Bryman and Bell, 2011). A pilot study can be described as a small-scale study used to test for instance the interview checklist. The purpose is to minimize possible problems that could appear during the interview, such as respondents having problems to understand or answer the questions. Also, it is a way of minimizing problems in practical issues such as data recording and it permits evaluations of the questions in terms of validity and reliability (Saunders et al., 2009).

According to Bryman and Bell (2011) a pilot study should not be performed with persons that could also be included in the research sample. Therefore, the participant in the pilot study of the current study was not included in the sample for the final research. The researchers performed a pilot study consisting of one semi-structured interview where the interview guide and checklist was tested, as well as the performance as a whole. This ensured the quality of the questions by making sure that the questions could be connected to the theoretical framework and that the questions were not of leading nature. Since the research was based on semi-structured in-depth interviews, it was of great importance to make sure that the interviewee got enough space to express opinions and share his or her experiences.
3.5 Data sources

3.5.1 Primary and secondary sources
When conducting either a quantitative or a qualitative research there are different strategies for collecting data. The researcher could in some cases choose to collect either primary or secondary data depending on the research purpose. Primary data is collected through first-hand experience, by the researcher, for the specific purpose under consideration. In the case of primary data, the researcher develops a research project and collects data that is then being analyzed. Secondary data represents past published data that was collected by someone else for a different purpose (Hox and Boeije, 2005). Examples of primary sources are interviews, surveys, and focus groups. For secondary data some of the main sources are websites, documents, annual reports, newspapers, government survey statistics etc. (Saunders et al., 2009). There are advantages and disadvantages with both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources bring data that is up-to-date and exactly that information the researchers want for a specific purpose. However, a disadvantage with primary sources is that it could be very time-consuming and in some cases expensive to employ (Hox and Boeije, 2005). Secondary sources are quite the opposite since the utilization often involves low costs and fast access to relevant information. However, someone else originally collected secondary data for a different purpose and therefore the data might not be ideal for the new research problem. In particular for qualitative research, secondary data could be very hard to interpret since the researcher lack information about the respondents and the context (Saunders et al., 2009).

Primary sources were employed in the current study since qualitative interviews was used as data collection method for each case. Furthermore, there are not any secondary data existing, such as already existing studies or information about the research problem, which could have been used within this research area.

3.6 Sampling
One of the most vital aspects to take into consideration when carrying out a research, regardless if it is of a qualitative or quantitative nature is to utilize a suitable sample for the study. Sampling can be described as the method where you as a researcher are studying a few selected items instead of the entire big number of units. What information and/or knowledge the sample is supposed to yield is, however, based on if the research has a qualitative or quantitative nature (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Krishnaswami and Satyaprasad, 2010).
3.6.1 Quantitative vs. qualitative

When researchers within the field of qualitative studies choose sample(s) for their study it is all about finding the components of the system that has to be included to provide a valid representation of it. This differ a lot from the process of sample selection within the field of quantitative studies where the researchers focus on determining how many of what types of cases or observations that are needed to yield a reliable representation of a whole population (Krishnaswami and Satyaprasad, 2010). You can basically say that the selection of a sample within qualitative and quantitative research is grounded in two different philosophies.

Within the field of quantitative research your attempt as a researcher is to select a sample as free from bias as possible, which hence are supposed and valid to represent the population from where you selected it. However, within qualitative research you undertake a whole different approach when selecting your sample(s). In the case of qualitative sample selection, effort is put on the attempt to select a sample that is either similar to the rest of the population or one that is totally different. These approaches are not accepted within quantitative research. The aim of the sample chosen within the quantitative research is to make assumptions regarding the population you selected the sample from. In qualitative research you as a researcher have designed a sample aimed to be utilized to gain in-depth knowledge about a certain event and/or situation. Based on the fact that the sample selection within qualitative and quantitative research is grounded in two different theories, so is the selection of the size of the samples. In quantitative research the sample size is predetermined based upon a number of factors. In the qualitative research you undertake another approach. Here you are striving for saturation in your data collection. When you no longer receive new information from your respondents you have reached saturation and hence you stop the collection (Krishnaswami and Satyaprasad, 2010; Levy et al., 2011).

3.6.2 Probability vs. non-probability sampling

There are two possible ways of defining your sample(s). You can do it either through probability sampling or non-probability sampling. The probability sampling is the act when every person within the population has an equally probability/chance of getting selected. This approach is also characterized by the fact that the persons of the sample are selected based on some kind of random procedure. The non-probability sampling on the other hand is the total opposite to the probability sampling. This is a sampling technique where the sample(s) are gathered in a process that does not give all individuals within the population an equal chance to be selected. The techniques for selecting sample(s) within the probability approach are
simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling and cluster sampling and the techniques within the non-probability approach are availability/accidental sampling, quota sampling, purposive/judgmental sampling, snowball sampling and dimensional sampling (Krishnaswami and Satyaprasad, 2010; Levy et al., 2011).

3.6.3 Sampling in qualitative research

The three most commonly used sampling techniques within qualitative research are purposive sampling, quota sampling and snowball sampling. The purposive sampling technique is most suitable when data review and analysis are made simultaneously with data collection. Within this technique the participants are chosen based on pre-selected criteria that are relevant for the particular research purpose. The size of the sample(s) can, but do not have to, be decided before the data collection and it is usually based on time, resources and the study's objectives. Quota sampling is characterized by the act where the number of people and their specific characteristics is decided simultaneously with the development and design of the study. These specific characteristics can be anything from age, sex, profession etc. By choosing certain criteria for the people in the sample it gives the opportunity to focus on people who are most likely to have insight into the research area (Levy et al., 2011). Purposive sampling and quota sampling are very much alike in that sense that they both seek to identify people for the sample based on pre-selected criteria. However, the most prominent difference between the two of them is that quota sampling is more specific when it comes to the size and proportion of subsamples. When researchers want to find populations that are not easy accessible through other sampling strategies, they often use snowball sampling as their technique. Within this approach other participants inform the researchers about which people they believe could be include in the sample since they have a better insight within the field (Krishnaswami and Satyaprasad, 2010; Levy et al., 2011).

Purposive sampling seemed to be the most suitable technique to be utilized for the current study since pre-determined criteria had to be met. The requirement of the sample participants was that they all had to be customers of one of the present study's three chosen companies. Another criteria was that the participants had to be relatively frequent customers and that they had made approximately four purchases in the past year. Four customers from each company were chosen as participants for each of the three different cases. No other variables were taken into consideration in the sample selection.
3.7 Data analysis method

In qualitative research the collection of data tend to result in a very large amount of data in form of interview transcripts for instance. Qualitative data could be quite complicated to analyze and there are not any specific rules, unlike for quantitative research where there are clearly stated directions about the data analysis (Bryman and Bell, 2011). According to Bryman and Bell (2011) there are two main strategies frequently utilized in the analysis of qualitative data, which are referred to as *analytic induction* and *grounded theory*. *Analytical induction* involves the researcher searching for universal explanations of the phenomena by carrying on data collection until no more inconsistent cases, in relation to the hypothesis, can be found. Each time a deviant case is found the researcher can redefine the hypothesis in order to exclude the case, or, the researcher can reformulate the hypothesis and move on with the data collection (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009). *Grounded theory* has become one of the most influential approaches within qualitative data analysis (Gray, 2009). It is today the most widely employed method for analyzing data and is often defined as “theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: p.12. in Bryman and Bell, 2011). Grounded theory involves close connections between data collection, analysis and theory (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The grounded theorist begins researching with a proficient level of knowledge about the area, but without any prior assumptions about the study. The research starts with a stated purpose, but with the understanding that this purpose could be redefined along the research process (Gray, 2009).

3.7.1 Application of the grounded theory

The grounded theory approach was utilized in the current study in order to analyze the collected data. This approach was chosen since it is the most widely used approach within qualitative investigations and said to yield deeper understanding within specific areas of research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It was also chosen due to the fact that it is a method suitable for small-scale research and for studies concerning topics that are yet, more or less, unexplored (Denscombe, 2010).

The data collected from semi-structured in-depth interviews was recorded and transcribed. Once the transcripts were reviewed the researchers started to analyze each of them, in terms of coding. Coding can be described as the reviewing of transcripts, and to label, separate, compile, and organize the collected data (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The utilized approach for the coding process was in this current study made up of three different phases where the
The researcher started with opening coding, continued with axial coding and finally arrived in selective coding (Bryman & Bell 2011; Denscombe, 2010). The initial opening coding was fairly descriptive where the researchers labeled/named important words basically based on their content and plenty of concepts were hence generated. By dint of these concepts it was possible for the researchers of this current study to let categories emerge. The categorization of the concept was created by using the approach of axial coding, where the key components were identified and compiled under broader headings. This identification was done by a constant comparison between the different concepts and their meaning/content, which made it possible to determine what category it best fitted into (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The two previous utilized coding approaches made it possible for the researchers to arrive at the selective coding. By this point in time it was possible to, based on the study's purpose, determine which of all these categories that were of significance and then select only these specific components/categories to pay further attention to. The categories were identified and hence came to be the cornerstones when developing the theories regarding how brands within e-commerce can create enhanced shopping experiences for its customers. An example and visualization of how the coding was performed is to be found in Appendix 3.

3.8 Research quality

When assessing the quality of quantitative studies there are several experienced methods to utilize. When it comes to qualitative studies there are, however, no such methods to make use of. The two most commonly used concepts when assessing the quality within research are validity and reliability but both of these are, however, constructed to be used within the quantitative sphere. This has led to that researchers within qualitative studies have redefined these two concepts and created new metrics more suitable for the qualitative purpose. However, these qualitative metrics differ a lot in terms of names and functions depending on what researcher who is discussing them (Krishnaswami and Satyaprasad, 2010). Bryman and Bell (2011) discuss several different quality determinants, amongst them external reliability, internal reliability, internal validity and external validity. As the labels indicate, these four criteria are all stated to have their roots in the quantitative reliability and validity.

3.8.1 External reliability, internal reliability, internal validity and external validity

The external and internal reliability refers to the concept that researchers who are interested in reproduce a study should reach the same conclusion. The external reliability can be explained as to what degree a measure is constant over time or to what degree the study can be replicated (Bryman and Bell 2011; Gratton and Jones, 2009). In order to ensure the external
reliability of the current study, an interview guide is included in the paper for future potential replications. Additionally, the present study contains a well-elaborated methodology chapter, which enables possible future replication of the research. The internal reliability is the extent to which all elements of an assessment actually are measuring the same construct. This is ensured by the act where the different researcher within a specific study are discussing the data they obtain and make sure that they agree about what they hear and see (Bryman and Bell 2011; Gratton and Jones, 200). In the current study the researchers obtained a mutual interpretation of the gained information by together in-depth discussing the held interviews before constructing and analyzing the transcripts. The validity of cross-sectional studies is of great importance and should be taken into consideration from the very first phase of the study. It is all about selecting and utilizing proper methodology that takes account of threats in the analysis. This can be obtained by carefully collecting and analyzing the data in the right way. If the study is designed properly the threats can be both lowered and avoided (Host et al., 2012). If there is a high-quality internal validity within a study it means that there is a good match between the observations of the researchers and the developed theoretical ideas (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The internal validity within the current study was established through the utilization of grounded theory. Additionally, a well-elaborated operationalization was developed and presented which enables the researchers of the current study to establish a solid match between the study's observations and theories. The external validity refers to the generalizability of a study's findings. It is to what degree the findings can be seen as universal across social settings (Bryman and Bell 2011; Host et al., 2012). The external validity within the present study was established by the utilization of the concept of triangulation. This concept represents the act where several sources are used when gathering the data in order to increase the validity of the research (Host et al., 2012). In the current study this was obtained by collecting data from customers from more than just one company.

3.9 Source criticism

The foundation on which a research study is build upon is provided through a critical review of the literature. Existing sources gives a deeper understanding that helps developing a new research area. Source criticism is therefore of great importance to assure its accuracy (Saunders, 2009). Thurén (2013) further emphasize the importance of source criticism, and that the author should be able to determine what is a trustworthy source. According to Thurén (2013) the principals of source criticism consists of four different criteria’s. The first criteria involve authenticity, which indicates that the source should be what it purports to be. The
second criterion involves the time proportion and describes that a source become less credible the older it is, since new developments might have arisen subsequently. The third criterion is referred to as independence, which means that the source should be independent and not be a report or include transcriptions of another source. The last criterion is entitled as tendency freedom and stands for that a false picture of reality, which could be due to the authors’ personal interests, should not be suspected in the source. Economical, political or other interests for twisting the truth could have affected this kind of false content (Thurén, 2013).

A large amount of sources has been used in the current study to build a foundation of theories, to be use in the new context. All sources, mainly scientific journals and articles, were critically reviewed to assure credibility. Most of the articles used in the theoretical framework were relatively newly published. However, the article by Lane (1978) is despite of its old age relevant in the manner it is used in the background since it is a broad statement about vital aspects for success still relevant today. Three other articles could be regarded as outdated since they were published during the 90s. Langrehr (1991) and Hargreaves and North (1999) both concerns music/sound and its affect on the customer experience. There is not much existing literature, that has been published subsequently, on this specific topic and therefore these articles are relevant despite of its rather old publish date. The study of Spangenberg et al. (1996) concerns the sense of smell and within this are there more contemporary research, however, Spangenberg et al. (1996) is widely recognized within the area and still referred to by many researchers today. Therefore, this source is relevant for the current research.

3.10 Social and ethical issues

Social and ethical issues might arise when conducting research and it is not something that can be ignored. Ethical issues concern the appropriateness of the researchers behavior and how the respondents are treated (Saunders, et al., 2009). Research should be conducted in a responsible and morally defendable manner (Gray, 2009). There are four main areas of ethical principles that should be complied with, and the researcher should hence avoid harm to participants, ensure informed consent, respect participant’s privacy, and avoid deception (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Gray, 2009). Harm to participants could involve several facets such as physical harm, harm to self-esteem, stress, harm career prospects and employability, or induce participants to make wrongful acts (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The researcher should ensure informed consent, i.e. that the participants’ consent is given based on complete information about his or her rights and also how the data will be use (Saunders et al., 2009).
Invasion of participant’s privacy could occur if the topic is perceived as sensitive and private by the interviewee. Therefore, each individual case should be treated sensitively and the researcher should give each respondent the opportunity to withdraw. Deception arises if the researcher represents the study as something else than what it actually is, which should be minimized as much as possible (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Social and ethical issues were reduced in the current study by clearly informing the participants, before the interview, about the actual purpose of the study and how the data was going to be used. The participants were also informed that they would remain anonymous and that they had the choice to withdraw any time during the interview. The study was performed in a fair and appropriate manner, in terms of the researchers behavior as well as the treatment of the participants.
4. Empirical data

In the following chapter empirical primary data from the three different cases and its in-depth interviews are presented. The empirical material is presented based on categories that emerged out of a coding process made by the researchers. The interviews took place the 11th and 12th of May 2015 and all of the twelve interviewees remained anonymous.

4.1 Empirical data Nelly.com

4.1.1 Sight

When the respondents were discussing their overall perception of what a shopping experience within e-commerce is, they all stated that the experience is highly dependent on the websites visual impressions. All four of the respondents claimed that Nelly.com's combination of the colors and the design on the website gives it a clean impression which they all find really important. Three out of four respondents revealed that the ability to see all of the clothing in a catwalk setting at the website is vital for them when deciding whether to purchase something or not. Two of the respondents claimed that this facility do not only help them to see what the clothes actually look like, but also helps them to get a perception of the feeling and the structure of the fabric. One of the interviewees stated that that it is extremely important to see the clothes from different angles before deciding whether or not to make a purchase, but argued that it could be obtained by looking at the different pictures that Nelly.com offers instead of watching the catwalk clip. Two of the respondents would like to see audio-visual product evaluations from former customers to be applied at the website. They explained that an audio-visual tool like this would enhance the overall shopping experience and one of the interviewees stated that:

"If I saw a former customer evaluate the product that I'm about to purchase I think his or her arguments would be vital for my purchase decision making. It would not at all be the same if I just listened to an evaluation. The fact that I would be able to see this person and his or her body language would make it feel very trustworthy."

All of the respondents claimed that they are overall satisfied with Nelly.com's delivery system but at the same time none of them seemed to be delighted by the packaging of the products. They all stated that the packaging is a bit dull since the products most often come in plastic bags and one of the respondents said that it would feel more luxurious if Nelly.com used boxes instead of plastic bags. Another respondent claimed that:
"I do not really care if my products are delivered in a plastic bag or a box I just want the parcel to be big. It is always more fun to receive a big parcel than a small one".

One of the respondents mentioned the movie Nelly Pool Party that is available to watch at Nelly.com at this point in time. It is a movie where Swedish celebrities are having a pool party together and are all dressed in clothes, accessories, shoes etc. from Nelly.com. The interviewee stated that it was very valuable for her to see the products be worn by people she is familiar with and that the movie itself got her in to a really nice shopping mood.

4.1.2 Sound

All the interviewees expressed that auditory features such as music or other sounds on Nelly.com’s website would be annoying and negatively affect the shopping experience in e-commerce. There was a general opinion by all the interviewees that sounds could be okay in some cases if you are able to choose whether to play it or not, and that it is not turned on automatically. One respondent commented on this in the following manner:

“I think it is really annoying and it upsets me when music suddenly starts to play when I’m browsing at a website. Especially when you cannot find the turn off button.”

One respondent stated that in campaigns by Nelly.com, in terms of promotion video clips such as Nelly Pool Party, it is appreciated with music since it gives a more vibrant perception of the website and the brand. This kind of feature positively affect the shopping experience since it provides inspiration and the sound enhance the overall impression. It was stated by two of the respondents that audio-visual reviews, by customers speaking about and reviewing a product, at Nelly.com’s website would induce a positive shopping experience. One interviewee expressed that it would be confidence inspiring to listen to another customer speaking about the product and that if Nelly.com implemented this it would improve the shopping experience. One respondent stated that it is even more trustworthy to hear the voice of another customer review, than to just read a text.

4.1.3 Smell

None of the interviewees had ever noticed any specific scent when receiving their orders from Nelly.com other than that it smells like “new”, as three of the respondents expressed. The smell of “new” was described by one person as a smell with a hint of storage warehouse or plastic, which is not very appealing. According to the same interviewee this smell could be removed by adding an aroma inside the parcel. All the interviewees said that they would
appreciate a pleasant smell when opening the parcel form Nelly.com and that it could really enhance the shopping experience overall. One interviewee stated that the smell should in that case be fresh and mild. It was further emphasized, by two other interviewees, that if Nelly.com would include a smell in the parcel it is important that it is not too strong. All of the interviewees said that it would then be important that the clothes do not smell - only the parcel. One interviewee described the inclusion of smell as following:

“I believe it would be very nice to feel a pleasant aroma when opening my parcel from Nelly, I mean, you go around waiting and longing for the parcel to arrive for a couple of days, which means that it is always very exciting to finally open it - and perfume would be a pleasant surprise.”

One interviewee would really appreciate getting a perfume sample inside the parcel, either a recognized branded perfume sample or if Nelly had its own labeled perfume or aroma. The same respondent described this as being memorable and something that would improve the shopping experience and the preference of Nelly.com.

4.1.4 Touch
None of the respondents said that they were neither disappointed nor satisfied with the feeling of the parcel itself from Nelly.com. It was actually revealed that none of the interviewees ever had thought of what the parcel feels like when holding it. One of the respondents stated that:

"I have never paid any attention to what the parcel feels like when holding it in my hands. But let's say that Nelly would deliver my products in velvet boxes instead of plastic bags, then I would notice the feeling for sure! Everything would then feel much more luxurious and I would probably feel very special every time I received my delivery."

All four of the respondents mentioned that it is really important for them to touch and try the product before deciding whether or not to keep it. They also stated that they do appreciate that it is effortless to return products to Nelly.com if the products appear to not meet the set expectations regarding colors, fabric texture, size etc. However, one of the respondents claimed that even if it is unproblematic to return products, it is still extremely annoying if the texture of the fabric would vary much compared to what it looked like at the catwalk clip on the website. This respondent claimed that by watching the available catwalk clips you can assume the features of the fabrics and materials and if these assumptions are not met once you receive the product, the whole experience of Nelly.com will be affected negatively.
4.1.5 Taste
Three of the interviewees expressed their approval and positivity regarding if Nelly.com would include something tasty with the order. The same three participants all agreed that it would be a pleasant surprise and very much appreciated. It was also evident that the interviewees' face expression changed, into a grin, and radiated happiness and enjoyment of the idea of getting something tasty inside the parcel from Nelly.com.

“I would really appreciate if I got something tasty inside my parcel, especially if it is something that is a personal favorite of mine. It would make me feel unique and it would also feel like Nelly cares about their customers by putting in some extra effort. It would really add value for me.”

One participant thought the opposite of the others and perceived the inclusion of something tasty in the parcel would give a non-serious impression since it neither suit the image nor concept of Nelly.com. This respondent expressed it as following:

“I don’t think it suits the concept of Nelly to include a chocolate bar or something like that in the parcel. It might be suitable for other types of companies though and I could probably appreciate it in some cases. I enjoy to get something for free included inside the parcel that I have ordered, but concerning Nelly I think it would be weird to get something eatable.”

4.2 Empirical data NordicFeel

4.2.1 Sight
All of the interviewees described the importance of visual impressions in the overall shopping experience in e-commerce. The website was expressed as being of great importance with its attributes in terms of being visually appealing as well as being easy to navigate on. All the respondents stated that the website of NordicFeel has a really nice layout and design which enhances the shopping experience online. Two of the interviewees mentioned the main color on the website, purple, as a good choice of a color that attracts them. One interviewee said that the color of purple is very feminine. One person stated that the logo is distinct and provides recognition and thereby trust. Two interviewees expressed that the presentation and display of different discount offerings on the website improves the shopping experience since it gives you the change to make bargains.
“I just love discounts when I am shopping, it makes the entire experience so much better to feel like you make some savings. So, when NordicFeel helps you to find these discounts, by demonstrating these offerings visually on the website it really brings me pleasure.”

One interviewee said that the fact that NordicFeel displays price comparisons between their prices and in-store price really adds value to the shopping experience since it clarifies the benefits with choosing this particular shopping site. The same interviewee further explained that it is valuable to see written reviews about the products since it is helpful in the decision-making. Another interviewee expressed, with regard to this, that reviews or descriptions about the products facilitates the whole shopping process and increases positive feelings. Concerning the parcel of NordicFeel, two of the participants expressed that the box is really nice with its purple color and that the cardboard material is more appealing than if it had been for instance a plastic bag instead. One person said that the box would be more visually appealing if it had more colors and if there was e.g. silk paper inside the parcel, around the product. That would, according to the same interviewee, improve the feeling when opening the package and result in an enhanced shopping experience. The personalization of the shopping experience was emphasized by one interviewee who stated as following:

“I have previously experienced that online-companies have included a small card inside the parcel with a personal greeting, which makes you feel special. I think NordicFeel could do more with the parcel and the customer experience when receiving the order and opening it.

But it is important that they do not go to the extreme and exaggerate, partly with the environment in mind.”

One interviewee stated that NordicFeel has too many products and categories, which complicates the searching process and entail negative impressions. Another interviewee stated that the huge amount of products makes the shopping experience feel less exclusive. One of the respondents explained that the ability to see the products in 360° would very much improve the shopping experience since it gives a clearer picture of the product, which is vital when shopping online since you cannot see it in real unit.

4.2.1 Sound

Two of the four interviewees were absolutely hostile about the idea of NordicFeel integrating sounds at the website. They stated that noises in general, no matter if it is music or other auditory features, do not belong at a website and is something that they absolutely not want to be exposed to while shopping. One of them said that if music were played as soon as he
entered the website he would leave the webpage immediately and would never make a purchase from them in the future. Nevertheless, they both claimed that they most often are listening to music while shopping at NordicFeel but that it is vital for them to decide exactly what music to listen to. The idea of the company keeping record of what music each one of their customers likes and then play this personalized music when the specific customer enters the website was not seen as positive of these two interviewees. One of them stated that:

"It doesn't make sense to me if they would try to play my kind of music since it varies from day to day".

The other two respondents were more positive regarding the idea of NordicFeel integrating music at the webpage. One of them claimed that it would be nice if some calm and slow pace music were played for her while shopping at NordicFeel and that this action probably would enhance her overall shopping experience. She also stated that it would be crucial for her to switch on the music herself and not being exposed to it at once when she enters NordicFeel's webpage. The reason for this was because she most often do purchases from this website while in school and at lectures. One thing that these two, more positive, interviewees would see as favorable was the idea of personalized music. They both reveled that personalized music would make them feel very unique and "seen" by the company and is something that, indeed, would enhance their overall shopping experience at NordicFeel.

Three of the respondents expressed positive reactions and thoughts regarding the idea of audio-visual product reviews at the webpage. They stated that a service like this would yield a really trustworthy and honest perception of the company. However, just one of the interviewees stated that she definitely would utilize this service if it was available. One of the other respondents claimed that an audio-visual product review really would enhance his shopping experience but just if it was properly done and not recorded with, for instance, a cell phone. The fourth respondent stated that she would not appreciate audio-visual product reviews since she prefer to read evaluations regarding products. One of the interviewees claimed that she would feel extremely unique if NordicFeel sent her a birthday card that played music for her. She said that:

"If NordicFeel would send me a card that played music for me on my birthday I would definitely be extremely happy and it would almost feel like the company was my friend!"
4.2.3 Smell
None of the participants had ever observed a specific smell of the parcel from NordicFeel. One interviewee said that it sometimes could smell a bit musty when opening the box and that it is probably due to storage. The same interviewee further stated that this smell could be remote by adding a pleasant scent in the parcel. All the participants expressed that an aroma could imply some improvement to the shopping experience as a whole. However, they all stated that the aroma should in that case not be too strong or too apparent. One of the interviewees said that it would be appealing if the parcel included silk paper with a hint of perfume. One interviewee said that the smell of the product itself is important for a positive shopping experience.

“If the product that I have bought would smell bad, it would affect the whole experience.”

4.2.4 Touch
Three of the respondents claimed that the touch is of importance for them and their overall shopping experience when purchasing from NordicFeel. However, all of these three respondents did just mention the feeling of the packaging as important and not the products per se. Two of the interviewees stated that the box that NordicFeel delivers their products in not just look good but also feel steady and/or neat to carry. One respondent claimed that if the products had been delivered in plastic bags the whole experience of shopping from NordicFeel would be negatively affected since plastic feels very cheap. Another respondent said that since he find the webpage a bit messy and not very luxurious it is vital for him that NordicFeel delivers the products in a box instead of plastic bags. He stated that it feels like he has bought something really important and expensive when he goes to the post office and pick up a box instead of a plastic bag.

4.2.5 Taste
There were divided opinions regarding the idea of including something tasty inside the parcel from NordicFeel. Two of the participants stated that they would appreciate getting something tasty with their order and that it would enhance the shopping experience as a whole. Another interviewee stated that it depends on what kind of eatable item it is:

“It is always appreciated to get something extra for free when shopping - as a fun bonus. I think NordicFeel could include bubblegum or mint pastilles or something like that. It would not be suitable to their concept if they had chocolate bars in the parcels. They could for instance have free mint pastille samples labeled with NordicFeel, I would really like that!”
One of the interviewees was not very fond of the idea to get something tasty in the parcel form NordicFeel and expressed it as following:

“If I got a Snickers or something else eatable I would be like ‘What the hell is this!?’, and it would feel very tacky to get some caramels with my hair wax.”

The same interviewee stated that it has to do with what kind of company you make an order from. If a company that sell food online adds something free and tasty in the parcel, it would be appreciated since it would be more suitable than if a company selling beauty product would include e.g. a chocolate bar.

4.3 Empirical data Adlibris

4.3.1 Sight

One of the interviewees described the shopping experience at Adlibris as inspiring and easy accessible. Another interviewee emphasized the importance of a logic and visually appealing navigation system on the website. One interviewee expressed that the colors of Adlibris makes her happy and in combination with the layout and design it attracts attention, while another person stated that the signature color of Adlibris (red) appeals to her. Three of the interviewees mentioned that it would be beneficial with 3D demonstration of the books at Adlibris, and that it would improve the shopping experience. One interviewee said that it would be great to see how the inside of the book looks like, especially when it comes to course literature, in terms of text size and occurrence of pictures. One interviewee stated that the advantage of 3D demonstrations depends on what kind of book it concerns. The same interviewee further explained that if it is a regular fictional paperback it is not as important to see the inside of the book, as it is with course literature or children’s stories.

All of the four interviewees said that they would enjoy a more personalized experience when receiving the parcel from Adlibris. Based on that, two of the interviewees stated that adding personal information sheets or suggestions of books matching the kind you personally like, inside the parcel, would enhance the shopping experience. One interviewee stated that suggestion sheets or a personal note inside the parcel would improve the experience and simplify the next shopping process. One person said that personalized messages or sheets inside the parcel could be both either positive or negative. The same respondent further explained that it is important that it does not go to the extreme and may be perceived as offensive.
"I definitely think it would be nice to get a more personal treatment from Adlibris in terms of e.g. personal newsletters in the parcel or messages online, but sometimes it feels like companies nowadays knows a little too much about their customers. I think Adlibris should consider this and take it to an adequate extent."

Three of the interviewees stated that Adlibris could benefit from improving the parcel you get delivered home. One interviewee made a comparison with a shoe company online that delivers the product in a fancy box, which really enhance the shopping experience, and that Adlibris could adapt this. One interviewee said that Adlibris packaging is okay today and that it does not have to be extravagant.

"All that matters when it comes to the packaging is that the company is careful with the books, which is obvious that Adlibris is since they wrap the books in cardboard."

**4.3.2 Sound**

All of the four respondents were more or less positive towards the idea of Adlibris integrating sound on the webpage. One of the interviewees stated that he did not want music to be played immediately when he enters the website and nor he wanted to hear any music what so ever while searching for books for private use. The reason for this was due to the fact that he usually visits Adlibris webpage while in the school's library and hence he did not find music appropriate. He also argued that people who like books probably are not that into music in general. However, what he thought would enhance the shopping experience would be if Adlibris played some kind of music when entering the kids section. He argued that this would improve the experience for him while browsing around on the webpage together with his young nieces. It was revealed that the general opinion among the interviewees was that they would appreciate if some kind of music were applied on the webpage. Some of the respondents claimed that they would like to listen to genre specific music while browsing around among the literary books. They claimed that the shopping experience would be enhanced if coherent music were played immediately when entering a specific section or genre at the webpage.

One of the respondents claimed that a shopping experience according to her is the ability to easily find what she is looking for at the webpage and she also argued that this is something that Adlibris do not always live up to. She would like to see an auditory guided tour to be applied at the webpage where she can learn where and how to easily find what she is looking for. Two of the interviewees argued that they really would appreciate if auditory features were
applied when they were about to pay the selected items. One of them argued that it would be a cool detail if the sound of sealing a cardboard box were applied when making the final decision regarding what books to purchase. Another respondent argued for an auditory summary of the purchase:

"It would be so cool if there was a voice telling you exactly what you have put into your trolley before you're making the payment!"

All of the respondents claimed that they would like to see audio-visual evaluations of the books they consider to buy. Three of the respondents claimed that they would use this service in combination with written reviews about the books but that an audio-visual review defiantly would have a major impact on their decision making. One of the interviewees argued that:

"A video evaluation made by a former customer would really yield a personal opinion of the product and that is something that I do find very valuable."

4.3.3 Smell

All of the respondents made it very clear that one of the first things that they pay attention to when receiving their order from Adlibris is the smell. All of the interviewees stated that the smell of a new book really is appealing and one of them said that:

"When I smell the book when unpackaging it I really get the feeling that I'm the very first owner of it and that it belongs to no one else than me - it's a bit of a luxurious feeling about the scent".

Another respondent claimed that it is a shame that the scent of the new book goes away pretty fast and would like to see Adlibris add more of the "new-book-scent" into the books themselves. One interviewee stated that the scent of something else than paper or wood not would be suitable to add neither into the books nor the delivering parcels. He stated that he would not appreciate if his book had a smell of, for instance, bubblegum since it is not in line with the formal perception he possesses regarding Adlibris as a company. Other respondents claimed that they would like to see gender/genre/season specific smells to be added into the parcels and the books since this was stated to enhance the experience of the purchase. One of the respondents claimed that it would be nice if the book had a scent of strawberry if it was a book about love. Someone else claimed that it would be nice if the books were scented with a "girly perfume" if they were aimed for girls and vice-versa if the books were ordered by a boy or a man. Another respondent claimed that it would be nice if the parcels was scented with
season specific smells in terms of, for instance, cinnamon if it was an order made during the Christmas. All of the respondents argued that no smell would be appreciated if it was too strong or intense.

4.3.4 Touch

None of the interviewees expressed that the feeling of touching the product or touching the parcel itself enhances the shopping experience to a greater extent. The fact that you cannot touch the books before ordering them was not seen as something negative by the interviewees. One interviewee stated as following:

“I don’t think it is important since I know how a book feels to hold in my hands and it does not really matter for my experience. There are occasions when it has a greater importance – when it concerns other types of products.”

One interviewee said that if Adlibris added 3D demonstrations of books and its content on the website, it could compensate for the lack of touch ability. The feeling of touching the cardboard parcel was described by two of the interviewees as improving the experience to a certain extent since it gives a stable and proper impression. Two interviewees thought the opposite and emphasized that the touch is unimportant and does not affect the shopping experience in any way.

4.3.5 Taste

Three of the interviewees stated that it would be merely positive for the shopping experience if Adlibris added something tasty in the parcel with the order. In contrast, one interviewee said that it would not be suitable at all since it does not match the concept of Adlibris. The same person stated that Adlibris in conformity with a bookstore should be seen as quite formal and therefore it is not suitable to add candy or something like that. However, he further stated that it could be viewed differently when it comes to children’s books, and that something tasty would be more understandable to add in those cases.

One interviewee expressed that if Adlibris added something tasty it would improve the overall experience and it would feel like the company really has put extra effort into creating a superior shopping experience for its customers. The same respondent said that if Adlibris added something they knew precisely was ones favorite; it would further strengthen the positive experience of the purchase and the company per se.
“I think it would have been very much appreciated, no matter what it is you get, a small snack is always nice! It would feel like I got more of a connection with the company and I believe I would perceive Adlibris as special.”
5. Analysis

The following chapter contains an analysis of what emerged out of the collected empirical data. The empirical material was analyzed in close connection to the theories concerning the five human senses. The authors present an interpretation of the empirical data, the theoretical concepts and also the new variables that characterizes the theoretical concepts. The five human senses are analyzed one by one under their own subheadings and contain information from all of the study's three different cases. Under each heading the different cases are separately analyzed. This is done in order to establish a structure that is easy to follow but also to ensure that all empirical data of significance is covered. The analysis makes it possible for conclusions to be drawn.

5.1 Sight

The empirical information from Nelly.com revealed that all of the four respondents within the study thought that the website's visual impressions were one of the most prominent determinants of the experience regarding the website. This information finds immediate support from Krishna (2011) who argues sight to be the most prominent of the five human senses. The respondents also made it clear that it is the combination of Nelly.com's color and design choices that make the website attractive. This information finds support from numerous of authors, among them Hultén et al. (2009) who claim that visual impressions in terms of, for instance, colors and design are vital for the creation of a customer's shopping experience. Wu et al. (2013) discussed the importance of visual displays and style coordination in terms of demonstrating how different items can be worn together. This theory was shown to be congruent with the opinion of Nelly.com's case respondents since three out of four revealed that the ability to see the clothing in a catwalk setting is vital for them in their decision making process. An interesting finding was that two of the respondents claimed that the ability to watch the clothes in a catwalk setting helped them to get a perception of what the fabric felt like when touching it. Both Citrin et al. (2013) and Eroglu et al. (2001) discuss the shortcoming of Internet-based retailing and Citrin et al. describe this as a disadvantage since people are unable to touch products during their purchase decision-making process. These authors further claim that purchases, because of this, is negatively affected. In the case of Nelly.com the statement made by Citrin et al. (2013) seems possible to question, since two out of four respondents actually argued for the catwalk demonstration as an advantage more than a shortcoming. However, the interviewees did not state whether or not this service would lead to a purchase and hence the conclusion made by Citrin et al. (2013) may be valid. What
on the other hand indicates that these two respondents actually would make a purchase, thanks to the catwalk demonstration, is a statement made by Jiyeon and Forsythe (2009). What these authors conclude in their study is that 3D product demonstrations within e-commerce both improve the shopping experience and also generate higher buying intentions. The theory of Wu et al. (2013), regarding the importance of visual displays and style coordination, also seemed to be relevant for the respondent who mentioned the movie Nelly Pool Party. This interviewee perceived the movie as very valuable since she was able to see the clothing in a genuine setting. Two of the four respondents would like to see audio-visual product evaluations from former customers to be applied at Nelly.com's webpage. They argued that a service like this would enhance the shopping experience and that it would feel very trustworthy. Fiore and Kelly's (2007) discussed this phenomena and came to the conclusion that audio-visual product evaluations by former customers has a major impact on customers and that these kind of evaluations go far beyond written reviews. Hence, this conclusion seems to, to some extent, be supported by this studies collected data. All of the interviewees had opinions regarding Nelly.com's packaging of the products when delivering it. None of the respondents were delighted by the way Nelly.com pack the products and hence suggested them to use boxes instead of plastic bags, since it would yield a more luxurious impression. These opinions get supported by Pecoraro and Uusitalo (2014) who argues that choice of design and material is crucial in the creation of a customer shopping experience. One other respondent claimed that the material of the parcel did not matter to him as long as the parcel was big.

All of the interviewees in the case of NordicFeel described the visual impressions of the website to be of importance in their overall shopping experience. The visual impressions were described in terms of attractive layout, nice design and that it is easy to navigate on the webpage. These are factors that Khakimdjanova and Park (2005) support, when stating that it is important for brands within e-commerce to carefully develop webpages that are both visually appealing and easy to navigate on. The respondents talked about NordicFeel’s purple color choice that permeates the webpage. The interviewers were told that this color choice was very attractive and one of the respondents claimed that the purple color yields a feminine perception of the webpage. The purple color seemed to evoke emotions among the interviewees and this is something that is discussed by Loe (2002 in Kent, 2007) where it is stated that different colors affects customers' emotional conditions. One of the interviewees stated that NordicFeel's logo is distinct and provides recognition and thereby trust. This is
something that Hultén et al. (2009) discussed and concluded that well-made logos can lead to memorable experiences for customers. Khakimdjanova and Park (2005) argued for the importance for brands within e-commerce to utilize offline visual merchandising techniques when creating a customer shopping experience. This argument seems legitimate since some of the respondents expressed their positivity towards NordicFeel's presentation and display of different discount offerings on the website - something that is commonly displayed in offline settings. The interviewees stressed the importance of the possibility to see written product reviews at the webpage and seemed not so fond of the idea of audio-visual product reviews by former customers. This contradicts the theory of Fiore and Kelly (2007) who claim that audio-visual products reviews go far beyond written reviews. Some of the respondents were satisfied with the boxes that NordicFeel delivers the products in, in terms of the color and material that the company uses, whilst others though it could be improved. Pecoraro and Uusitalo (2014) support this by arguing for the importance of both the design and material when creating a customer shopping experience. The respondents also mentioned that they would feel unique if they found a personal greeting inside the box from NordicFeel. What one of the respondents found frustrating was the perception of NordicFeel having too many product categories. This phenomenon was discussed by Jia et al. (2014) who conclude that brands should not overexpose visual elements such as colors, pictures or information since it decreases the attractiveness and uniqueness. The advantages of 3D product presentations is something that both Khakimdjanova and Park (2005) and Jiyeon and Forsythe (2009) discuss, where they state that it enables people to see details that otherwise is hard to detect. This seems to be reasonable since one of the respondents explained that the ability to see the products in 360° would very much improve the shopping experience of NordicFeel, since it would yield a clearer picture of the product.

Regarding Adlibris, all of the four respondents brought up the significance of the visual impressions in terms of the visually appealing navigation system and the choice of colors. It was shown that the red color that Adlibris uses evoke emotions among the customers', which gets supported by Hultén (2012) who argues that the color of red really catches the attention of the eye. The majority of the respondents stated that the shopping experience would be enhanced if there were a 3D visualization of the book at the webpage. This is something that gets supported by both Khakimdjanova and Park (2005) and Jiyeon and Forsythe (2009) who states that 3D demonstrations of products are vital concerning customers' evaluations. All of the four interviewees mentioned that their shopping experience at Adlibris would be
improved if they, together with the delivery, received personalized greetings and offerings. The majority of the respondents would like to see an improvement regarding the packaging of the products of Adlibris, since it was stated that the parcels today not are too visually appealing. These statements show that design and material is important for the customers’ shopping experiences, which also is discussed by Pecoraro and Uusitalo (2014).

5.2 Sound

The fact that all interviewees in the case of Nelly.com stated that auditory features on the website would be annoying, does not find support in the theory that music or other sounds tend to influence people towards spending more time and money at the place (Andersson et al., 2012). Langrehr (1991) claims that noisy environments in retail have a negative impact on the customers’ shopping experience, and this is supported by the interviewees’ thoughts and opinions. In accordance to this theory, the customers’ would most certainly leave the website of Nelly.com sooner if there were any auditory features than if there was no noises at all (Langrehr, 1991). According to Hultén (2011) the use of sound can impact customer attitudes and feelings and it can also affect a person’s mood. If Nelly.com would add sounds on the website, that were automatically turned on, it was clear that it would upset the interviewees and negatively affect their attitudes. However, the use of sounds at Nelly.com could according to one interviewee provide pleasure if it is a part of an audio video campaign such as Nelly Pool Party. In that case, it would positively affect mood and perhaps even result in the person spending more time and money, which is supported by Andersson et al. (2012) and Hultén (2011). Two of the respondents stated that audio-visual reviews would be very useful and appreciated in the shopping process. One interviewee said that it would be much more trustworthy to listen to a former customer review than to just read a text. This goes in line with the findings of Fiore and Kelly (2007), that audio-visual reviews are extremely useful. The respondents seemed to accept sounds on the website if it is combined with video as something further stimulating the sights sense. This could be connected to the theory of Mattila and Wirtz (2001) who emphasize the importance of congruity between sound and other senses for an enhanced experience.

In the case of NordicFeel, two of the interviewees were hostile about the idea of any kind of sound on the website whilst the other two were quite sympathetic. The negative attitudes could be related to the study of Langrehr (1991) who claims that noisy environments negatively affect the customer experience. The two respondents who were hostile stated that auditory features does not belong on the website and that they would leave the website
instantly if there were any sounds added. One of them said that he would probably neither visit the website nor make a purchase from them again if NordicFeel added sounds. This is an indicator on that stimulation of the sound sense can change the behavior of people and impact attitudes and feelings as well as buying habits (Hultén, 2011). The respondents who were hostile to the idea of auditory features on the website stated that they often listen to their own music while shopping in e-commerce. Therefore, after all it seems like music has a significance for them in the shopping process as long as it is not coming from the website. This could be supported by the theory that music is an important variable in a customer shopping experience (Langrehr, 1991) but whether it is appreciated or not depends on the sound source. Two respondents were positive towards the idea of NordicFeel adding music at the webpage, although one of them would demand the condition to decide yourself whether to play or not. This means that the option to listen to music or not is important since it is not suitable in all situations. This indicates the importance of congruency between situation and sound for it to be appreciated (Mattila and Wirtz, 2001). It was mentioned that personalized music would improve the experience and two interviewees stated that it would make them feel unique if their own favorite music was played at the NordicFeel website. Three of the interviewees were positive towards the idea of audio-visual product reviews at the webpage where they could listen to former customer evaluations. This goes in line with the notion that auditory sounds enhance the social and experiential qualities of the customer shopping experience (Fiore and Kelly, 2007). Also, since the interviewees would prefer auditory reviews, it is related to the finding of Fiore and Kelly (2007) that listening to a review goes beyond a written review. However, one interviewee preferred written reviews before audio-visual, which contradicts the theory of Fiore and Kelly (2007). One interviewee stated that she would very much appreciate if NordicFeel sent a birthday card playing music, and that it would make her feel very special. The evaluation of the shopping experience due to this occurrence could be linked to the conclusion of Mattila and Wirtz (2001) that a combination of senses is often significant. In this case, a birthday card that is playing music, and therefore stimulates both sight and sound, affects the person’s evaluation of the shopping experience.

All the interviewees in the case of Adlibris were more or less positive towards the idea of adding sound on the website. This could be connected to the research of Langrehr (1991), which indicated that the utilization of sound is important for the customer experience. One interviewee stressed the importance of the option to listen to music or not, and that it should not be played automatically when entering the website. In that case the sound would be
annoying and could lead to that the customer have a negative experience and exit sooner (Langrehr, 1991). In accordance with Hargreaves and North (1999), that the sound or music should be congruent with the product, the interviewees expressed that auditory features at Adlibris website should match the different departments or sections of books. This would positively affect their behavior, which could be connected to the theory of Hultén (2011) who says that stimulation of sound affect people’s feelings and buying behavior. It was mentioned by one interviewee that she would appreciate an auditory guided tour of the website since it would simplify the shopping process and positively affect the buying habits. Two interviewees stated that they would appreciate auditory features as a tool during the payment. All the respondents were unanimous in that that they would really like to see audio-visual evaluations of the books. The interviewees expressed this as very valuable, which is in line with the theory of Fiore and Kelly (2007) that audio-video reviews can be extremely useful. This feature also emphasizes the significance of combining sound with another sense (in this case sight), as Mattila and Wirtz (2001) describe as important for an enhanced sensory experience.

5.3 Smell

From the very beginning all of the four interviewees stated that they had never noticed any specific smell when receiving their orders from Nelly.com and then they suddenly changed their minds and argued that they have noticed the scent of "new" when unpackaging the delivery. This indication is congruent with conclusions drawn by both (Hultén et al. (2009) and Ward et al. (2003) who state that the sense of smell has the power to impact customers subconsciously. The reason for why the interviewees from the beginning stated that they never had noticed any smell stimulation could hence be due to the fact that it happened without them being aware of it. It was also mentioned by some of the interviewees that the scent of "new" not was perceived as appealing and suggested that it could be removed by adding some kind of aroma into the parcels. This could be explained by findings from both Bosmans (2006) and Spangenberg et al. (1996) who argues that pleasant smells have positive impacts on customers' shopping experiences. The discussions regarding the addition of aroma into the parcels also revealed that it seemed important for Nelly.com's customers that the added scent not should be too strong or intense. These statements find solid support from Hultén et al. (2009) who argue that the strength of aromas used in the experiential creation should be utilized with caution. The interviews with Nelly.com's customers also disclosed that it would be very much appreciated if the company added samples of perfume into the parcels.
when delivering the orders. One of the interviewees said that it would be a great thing to get a perfume sample of either a well known brand or if Nelly.com had their own signature smell and further explained that an act like that of Nelly.com would be memorable for her. That statement can partly be connected to findings from both Bosman (2006) and Hultén et al. (2009) who claim that previous experienced smells tend to recall memories among customers. The information regarding that this interviewee was also positive towards receiving a perfume sample of a possible signature smell of NordicFeel, can be an indication in line with Morrin and Ratneshwar (2003) who state that smells can improve customers' recognition of brand names.

One of the interviewees stated that the deliveries from NordicFeel sometimes have a funny smell and would like to see that to be removed by adding a pleasant scent into the parcels. This indicates the importance of pleasurable smells which both Bosmans (2006) and Spangenberg et al. (1996) discuss and conclude have an enhancing effect on customers' products evaluations and experiences. Before the interviewees made some further thinking about whether or not they ever had noticed any smell and came to the conclusion regarding that the deliveries sometimes smell a bit funny, all four of them claimed that they never had noticed any specific scent. This information can be connected to Ward et al. (2003) who say that smells have a tendency to impact customers subconsciously. All of the four respondents claimed that they liked the idea of NordicFeel adding some kind of scent into the parcels and explained that this would have a significant impact on their overall shopping experience. This is in line with what Krishna (2012) argues for when concluding that the utilization of smell stimulation affects the customers' evaluations of a brand. However, what also seemed to be of importance for NordicFeel's customers was that the ordered products themselves have a desirable smell since it is most often beauty products that you, as a customer of NordicFeel, order. Congruence between product and smell is something that Bosmans (2006) claims as vital in order for the customer to make a positive assessment of the brand.

Adlibris' respondents seemed to pay direct attention to the smell when receiving their orders and stated that the smell of new books are really appealing. One of the interviewees would like Adlibris to add more of that "new book scent" into the parcels, which is a statement that finds support from Spangenberg et al. (1996) who claim that a brand can create a smell strategy based on the sense of smell, in order to draw more attention, make a nicer atmosphere and increase customer wellbeing. It was also mentioned that this specific smell is perceived as luxurious. This is an indicator that the books very much represent the expectations the
customers have of their purchases and of Adlibris as a brand and hence goes in line with what Pearson (2009) discuss, where it is stated that a signature smell distinctively should represent the brand or the product. Bosmans (2006) stressed the importance of product congruence and claimed that if a smell is congruent with a product it will positively affect the customers’ brand or product evaluation. This is something that seemed to correspond with the yield information from the interviews with Adlibris' customers, since it was stated by one of them that he would not appreciate if the book had a scent of something else than paper or wood. Bosmans (2006) theory found further support from the interviewees who stated that they would like their books to have an added scent, congruent with and depending on, gender, book genre and/or season. All four of the respondents were, however, unanimous about their statements regarding that the smell in no event should be too strong or intense. Hultén (2009) discussed this and claimed that the strength of an added smell should be well considered since it is said to have a major impact on the consumers' perception of the product.

5.4 Touch

None of the interviewees had any particular opinions regarding the touch of the parcel from Nelly.com, since they had never really given it a thought. However, one respondent stated that it would feel very luxurious if the products were delivered in a velvet box, which is supported by the fact that touch stimulation can be used as a persuasive element to provide a hedonic experience (Peck and Wiggins, 2006). The same interviewee also stated that the feeling of the parcel would definitely be noticed in that case, and that it would make her feel special every time. This indicates that stimulating touch can change a customer’s perception of the shopping experience (Hultén, 2011). All of the interviewees emphasized the importance of touching and trying the products from Nelly.com before deciding whether to keep it or not. This connects to the conclusion of Peck and Wiggins (2006) that touch is important for customer purchase decision and thereby the shopping experience as a whole. The importance to touch the products, uttered by all the interviewees, is also supported by Balaji et al. (2011) who states that touch has a significant impact on the evaluation of the product as well as the shopping experience. The fact that you cannot touch the products before making an order at Nelly.com seemed to be compensated by visual demonstrations on the website. According to Balaji (2011) tactile cues can network with other sensory cues, such as sight and touch, which can be seen in the case of Nelly.com where the interviewees stated that it is important that visual demonstrations match the product de facto. If visual cues are combined with tactile cues it enhances the effect of the customers evaluation (Balaji et al., 2011). This could be
connected to what one interviewee said; that the experience is negatively affected if the assumptions based on visual cues are not met.

The touch of the parcel from NordicFeel was described as important for the overall shopping experience, by three of the interviewees. Two persons mentioned that the parcel does not just look good but also feels steady and neat to carry, which can be connected to the study of Balaji et al. (2011) that reveals that customers attitudes are impacted more by tactile cues than just visual information. Grohmann et al. (2007) declares that touch of low quality stuff is evaluated negatively, which goes in line with the respondent who claimed that if the parcel were a plastic bag the whole experience of NordicFeel would be negatively affected. One interviewee stated that it is vital that NordicFeel delivers products in a box since it makes him feel like he has bought something important and expensive. This finds support in the study of Peck and Wiggins (2006) who conclude that touch can be used to provide a pleasurable hedonic experience.

The touch of the parcel, or the touch of the books, from Adlibris was not seen as very important for the interviewees. This contradicts the conclusion of Peck and Wiggins (2006) that touch is important for customer purchase decision. As Peck and Wiggins (2006) further explains, the degree of importance to touch is based on a person’s NFT (need for touch), which in this case is very low. Two interviewees had no need for touch at all since they described it as unimportant and without any affect on the shopping experience. The fact that you cannot touch the books before ordering was not seen as a problem, due to the kind of product it concerns. One interviewee expressed that visual 3D demonstrations of the book could compensate for the lack of touch ability. This is supported by the theory that visual cues could interact with tactile information and create enhancing effects on the customers’ product evaluations (Balaji, 2011). According to two interviewees, the material of the parcel has a nice touch and gives a proper and stable feeling. This relates to the use of touch in order to provide a satisfying shopping experience (Peck and Wiggins, 2006).

5.5 Taste

The thought of getting something tasty with the order from Nelly.com was positively received by three of the interviewees. They further stated that it would be a pleasant surprise and very much appreciated. This could be related to the theory of Hultén et al. (2009) that if a customer had a positive taste reaction it would positively affect the relationship with the brand and improve the shopping experience. One interviewee mentioned that it would be even more
appreciated it the tasty item was a personal favorite, and that it would make her feel unique and add value. If the tasty item is a familiar favorite, it could be connected to that prior knowledge about a taste result in stronger taste since the customer is prepared of what is to come (Hultén et al., 2009). One person thought it was unsuitable for the concept and image of Nelly.com to include something tasty, since it appears unserious.

There were both negative and positive attitudes towards getting something tasty in the parcel from NordicFeel. Two interviewees stated that a pleasant taste would improve the shopping experience, which according to Hultén et al. (2009) positively affects the consumption process. Some interviewees explained that it depends on what kind of eatable item it concerns, which indicates that taste should in some way be congruent with the product or the brand. One person was hostile about the idea of getting something tasty in the parcel since it would not be suitable to get something eatable with your beauty products. The same respondent stated that it would be okay if the company were selling food. Again, this could be rooted in the significance of congruity.

According to three of the interviewees, it would positively affect the shopping experience if Adlibris added something tasty in the parcel. This relates to the theory that stimulating the taste sense could improve the consumption process and thereby the shopping experience (Hultén et al., 2009). Furthermore, it was stated by one interviewee that something tasty would improve the experience additionally if it was e.g. the customer’s favorite candy. This would imply that the customer is prepared of the taste to come, which according to Hultén et al. (2009) enhances the sensory experience further. One interviewee emphasized the importance of the taste matching the product or brand. He stated that candy for instance would not be suitable for a bookstore, unless if it were included with children books – then it would be a bit more suitable. This relates the significance of congruence between the kind of tasty item and the concept of the brand.
6. Conclusion

In order to create an enhanced shopping experience for its customers, brands within e-commerce should treat the shopping experience as extended. By considering the whole shopping experience; from the customers first interaction with the website until the customer receives the product, it gives more room for stimulating multiple senses. The study revealed that brands would benefit from developing their website design and add visual demonstrations. However, sight should not only be stimulated online in order for the shopping experience to be enhanced. It was shown that visual features of the delivery are significant as well as personalized visual content inside the parcel. Concerning music on the website, it was shown to be vital for customers to be able to choose themselves whether it should be played or not. Furthermore, if the music was to be played automatically, it should be either congruent in its context or personalized. In an offline setting it was evident that the sense of smell could be stimulated through the utilization of pleasant aroma, in order to enhance the customer shopping experience. However, it was shown that stimulation with scents inside the parcel should be utilized with caution to not cause undesirable and/or opposite effects than the ones intended. The study revealed that visual cues on the website tend to compensate for the inability to touch. By further elaborating visual product demonstrations it could hence give the customer a sense of how the product feels to touch and thereby enhance the shopping experience for them. It was clear that customers would appreciate something tasty along with their order as long as it is congruent with the brand and/or product or personalized according to the customers’ taste. The study’s findings have yield a vast amount of information regarding how a brand within e-commerce could stimulate the human senses in order to create an enhanced shopping experience for its customers. Something that was consistently emphasized by the interviewees in the study was the importance of personalization. What must not fall in to oblivion is that sense stimulation not equals personalization. Hence it is important that brands within e-commerce are aware of its customer’s unique preferences and the key is to obtain knowledge about what enhances each individual customer’s shopping experience.
7. Implications

7.1 Theoretical implications
This study contributes with information that enables the authors to describe how an enhanced customer shopping experience within e-commerce can be created by stimulation of the human senses. This was partly achieved by applying already existing theories regarding sensory marketing into a new context, but also by treating the customer shopping experience within e-commerce as extended. A vast amount of the existing theories available today within the area of sensory marketing is, first of all, limited to an offline context which disables its conclusions to be applied into an e-commerce context. Secondly, the research that actually has been done regarding sensory marketing within e-commerce appeared to be solely limited to the two senses sight and sound which, according to the current study's findings, did not seem to be completely accurate. Also, the research that is available today regarding how the human sense can be stimulated in order to create a shopping experience within e-commerce showed to be focusing exclusively on the events that occur online. Accordingly, up until today research has seemed to be absent within the area of the creation of a customer shopping experience within e-commerce, when perceiving the customer shopping experience as extended. The current study's qualitative approach has yield a deeper knowledge than what would have been possible if a quantitative course of action would have been undertaken. However, the investigated area is still relatively unexplored and hence further research is suggested to be done.

7.2 Practical implications
Brands within e-commerce can practically apply the findings of this study. The study can function as a guide of how a company can provide an enhanced customer shopping experience by engaging the human senses. Companies would benefit from focusing on improvements of visual appearances on the website, in terms of 3D or video demonstrations. This would not only enhance the experience on the website but it would also yield a perception of the products’ tactile features. The material and colors that companies use for their packaging is also suggested to be considered, since it was shown to have a great impact on the customers’ overall shopping experience. Music on the website seemed, in some cases, to be appreciated. The suggestion is, however, to not add music that goes on automatically when entering the website since the majority of the interviewees would perceive this as something negative. If music is to be played it should be either personalized or congruent
with its context. Adding a scent inside the parcel in order to improve the customer shopping experience is suggested, but recommended to be utilized with caution. It is important to keep in mind that the scent should not be too strong or intense and that the effect of adding perfume also depends on whether it is coherent with the company’s concept and/or other features of the product. A discovery of the study was that customers overall would appreciate if the brands send them some kind of eatable gift together with their delivery. This is hence an act that this study recommends companies to consider. Worth to keep in mind is that this also, to some extent, differed from one case to another and should thereby be utilized with caution depending on what industry the brand operates within. Furthermore, brands should aim towards obtaining deeper knowledge about its customers specific desires in order to create an enhanced shopping experience for them.
Reference list


Ha, Y, & Lennon, S 2010, 'Online visual merchandising (VMD) cues and consumer pleasure and arousal: Purchasing versus browsing situation', Psychology & Marketing, 27, 2, pp. 141-165.


Hox, J, & Boeije, H 2005, 'Data Collection, Primary vs. Secondary', Encyclopedia Of Social Measurement, pp. 593-599


Jiyeon, K, & Forsythe, S 2009, 'Adoption of sensory enabling technology for online apparel shopping', European Journal Of Marketing, 43, 9/10, pp. 1101-1120


Krishnaswami, O, & Satyaprasad, B 2010, Business Research Methods, Himalaya Publishing House, Mumbai, IND.


Pecoraro, M, & Uusitalo, O 2014, 'Exploring the everyday retail experience: The discourses of style and design', Journal Of Consumer Behaviour, 13, 6, pp. 429-441.


# Appendix 1

## Interview schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables checklist</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Five human senses   | - What is a shopping experience within e-commerce according to you?  
|                     | - Can you describe your last shopping experience at Nelly.com/NordicFeel/Adlibris? |
| Colors              | - What visual impressions on the website attract you more and what visual impressions attracts you less?  
| Logo                | - Can you mention any visual impressions that would enhance your overall e-commerce shopping experience? |
| Design              | - Would you appreciate if some kind of auditory features were applied at the website?  
| Space               | - Can you think about any other sounds or noises that could affect your overall e-commerce shopping experience? |
| Material            | - Do you ever reflect over any specific smells when you receive your order?  
| Style coordination  | - What if Nelly.com/NordicFeel/Adlibris added some kind of scent into your parcel, would that affect your shopping experience? |
| Overexposure        | - Since you are not able to touch anything online, how come you decide to buy a product?  
| Visual features     | - Is the feeling/touch of the parcel itself important to you? |
| Audio-visual features | - How would you react if Nelly.com/NordicFeel/Adlibris included something tasty with your order? (In terms of e.g. a chocolate bar) |
| 3D demonstrations   |           |
| Personalized        |           |
| Website design      |           |
| Music               |           |
| Noise               |           |
| Auditory storytelling |           |
| Sound features      |           |
| Audio-visual review |           |
| Product             |           |
| Pleasant aroma      |           |
| Strength            |           |
| Re-experienced      |           |
| Surrounding         |           |
| Congruence          |           |
| Type                |           |
| Combination with other senses |           |
| Congruence          |           |
| Product quality     |           |
| Combination of senses |           |
| External elements   |           |
| Smell               |           |
| Positive reaction   |           |
**Appendix 2**

Information about the 12 interviewees’ gender, age and occupation, in each case separately.

**Case 1: Nelly.com**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent A</th>
<th>Respondent B</th>
<th>Respondent C</th>
<th>Respondent D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Case 2: NordicFeel**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent A</th>
<th>Respondent B</th>
<th>Respondent C</th>
<th>Respondent D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Case 3: Adlibris**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent A</th>
<th>Respondent B</th>
<th>Respondent C</th>
<th>Respondent D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3

As 3.7.1 *Application of the grounded theory* revealed the coding of the gathered empirical data was divided into three phases; *open coding, axial coding* and *selective coding*. To clarify how the coding process was approached and utilized in practice, below is a exemplified visualization of how the empirical data was processed.

1. **Open coding**
   - Red, Blue, Looks nice, Colors, Celebrities, Musty, Perfume, Intense, Mild, Strawberry, Music, Disturbing, Own choice, Loud, Mood, Silk, Fabric

2. **Axial coding**
   - **Olfactory**
     - Musty, Perfume, Intense, Mild, Strawberry
   - **Noise**
     - Music, Disturbing, Own choice, Loud,
   - **Flavor**
     - Chocolate, Mint, Surprise, Not coherent, Tasty
   - **Feeling**
     - Silk, Fabric, Soft, Holding, Big
   - **Visual impressions**
     - Red, Blue, Looks nice, Colors, Celebrities

3. **Selective coding**
   - Sight
   - Sound
   - Smell
   - Touch
   - Taste